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Involving social partners in dual VET governance:
exploring the contribution of social partners in the
design, renewal and implementation of dual VET.

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Research objectives and country coverage

INVOLVE project has two main research objectives. First it aims to analyse the degree of social partners' integration and participation in the governance of dual VET systems. Second, it aims to develop national scenarios on how to establish integrative governance structures of dual VET systems.

The project focuses on **four countries** that have recently developed projects of dual systems of VET or are **attempting to strength, reinforce or improve dual VET systems**, and represent models of industrial relations where social partners play a comparatively low institutionalised role in policy making, namely Spain, Greece and Portugal ('State centred' model) and Poland ('Mixed' or 'Transitional' model).

Desk research results

Dual VET programmes identified in Greece, Portugal Poland and Spain

Desk research results show that the **four countries studied** in the INVOLVE project have in place different **VET programmes which can be classified as dual VET or apprenticeship** schemes based on the definitions we took as a reference for the desk research (Rauner and Smith, 2010).

Programmes identified are also labelled as dual VET or apprenticeship schemes **based on international criteria** (e.g., Cedefop European database on apprenticeship schemes) **and national definitions**.

Moreover, the four countries have in common to have implemented in recent years educative and VET reforms which have modified or introduced new dual VET or apprenticeship programmes which have strengthen in-company training with a view to addressed different structural problems (youth unemployment, early drop-out, skills mismatches, etc.).



In **Greece**, two main laws approved in 2013 (Law No 4186/2013) and 2016 (Law 4386/2016) have introduced two novel apprenticeship programmes within the Initial Vocational Education and Training subsystem (IVET): EPAL (Post-secondary Apprenticeship Class) and IEK apprenticeships schemes.

Both programmes differ from traditional school-based IVET provision offered at EPAL and IEK schools. They enable students to alternate theoretical training with in-company learning and provide a formal apprenticeship qualification connected to the National Qualification Framework (NQF).

In both EPAL and IEK apprenticeship schemes there is an apprenticeship contract between the apprentice and the employer. Apprentices receive a pay set at 75% of the legal statutory minimum wage for unskilled workers. Besides, it is worth noting that Greece has an apprenticeship scheme withing the Continuous Vocational Education and Training subsystem (CVET) which has been in place since 1952, although with several variations.

The so-called EPAS scheme is managed by the Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED), which is Greek Public Employment Service (PES). The programme provides a formally recognised qualification at level 4 NQF/EQF (which will become level 3 due to a recent new law) and the relationship between the company and the apprentice is also regulated through an apprenticeship contract.



In **Poland**, main apprenticeship programme is the [vocational preparation of juvenile workers](#). The programme originates from craft. Apprentices under this programme are formally employees subjected to an employment contract, regulated by the Labour Code, which is concluded

between the juvenile worker/apprentice and the employer. Besides, two alternative dual VET programmes are identified in Poland.

First, the professional preparation at the employer's premises on the basis of a contract for practical training, concluded between the school headmaster and the employer admitting students for apprenticeship.

Second, the student internship or apprenticeship, which is a new option introduced by means of the amendment to the Act - Educational Law approved on 22nd November 2018. This second scheme is addressed to learners in vocational upper secondary programmes and first-stage sectoral programmes, who are not juvenile workers. The internship is based on an individual agreement between the student or parents and the employer and may by exempt for the student from the obligation to undergo practical training in other forms. A unique feature of this type of training is that it may extend the school curriculum.

The scope of the education content and the weekly duration of the internship is determined jointly by the school headmaster, the employer and the student. A student may receive a salary, but not higher than the statutory minimum wage (approx. EUR 580 per month in 2020).



In **Portugal**, apprenticeship or dual VET programmes mainly exist in Initial and Continuous VET subsystems. Indeed, the only programme identified by Cedefop as an apprenticeship or dual VET scheme is the so called “apprenticeship system” (Sistema de Aprendizagem), organised by the training centres, the participatory management centres and external entities of the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), under the Ministry of Labour.

The programme was introduced in 1984 and is addressed to students who have completed lower secondary education, mainly aged 20 to 24. The duration of the scheme ranges between 2,800 and 3,700 hours, of which 1100 to 1500 hours are dedicated to in-company practical training, split in three periods of training. Generally, the time spent in the workplace is near 40% or more, depending on the area of education and training. The scheme provides a double certification: an education certificate (upper secondary level/12th year of compulsory schooling) and a vocational qualification (level 4 of the QNQ) upon successful completion. It also provides access to tertiary education.

Learners under this programme is based on a training contract between the trainee and the training provider , although does not generate subordinate labour relations . There is however an apprenticeship contract which needs to be signed between the learner and the school. In the IVET subsystem, programmes offered at secondary (ISCED 2), upper secondary level (ISCED 3) and post-secondary level (ISCED 4) have been labelled as “school-based programmes”, considering the low proportion of time devoted to training in real work

environments, and the status of learners as students (Cedefop, 2018). In this context, Portuguese government experimented with dual IVET programmes from 2012 to 2016, incentivised by different European initiatives and recommendations.

These novel programmes were introduced in lower secondary education (ISCED 2) in 2012 and later, in 2013, they were extended to upper secondary education (ISCED 3). However, the programme was cancelled in 2016.



In **Spain**, there is only one specific dual IVET programme, which has its origins in school based IVET programmes which have enhanced the in-company training element.

Dual VET was regulated in 2012 by means of the Royal-decree 1529/2012, of 8 November. This Royal decree was aimed at favouring an active participation of the company in the training process of the learners and to narrow the linkages between the company and the training centre. This kind of apprenticeship programme requires that a minimum of 33% of the vocational training takes place in a company, which is proportion much lower than traditional apprenticeship programmes.

The relationship of the trainers with the company can rely on a labour contract (employee), training and apprenticeship contract (subjected to labour legislation), internship (becario) and voluntary relationship. A key feature of Spanish dual VET system highlighted by the literature is that state regulation does not establish a unique model of dual VET. Rather, it provides a general framework that can include different dual integrated training schemes. Regional variations are principally observed in the regulation of the relationship between apprentice/internship and the company (apprenticeship contracts, grants, etc.) and on the minimum time required for in-company training. In relation to this last aspect, some regions (e.g., Basque Country) have increased in-company training up to 40% of total training time.

Dual IVET provide the same diploma and qualification that alternating VET. They offer IVET diplomas equivalent to EQF 3 (Intermediate IVET cycle) and EQF 5 (higher level of IVET cycle).

Social partners involvement in VET governance in Greece, Portugal Poland and Spain

In order to analyse social partners integration in dual VET governance, INVOLVE project distinguishes the **three VET governance levels** analysed by Emmenegger and Seitzl (2020), namely:

a) political-strategic, where stakeholders make decisions on the system's long-term

developments in need of political legitimization;

b) technical-strategic level, which is equally concerned with system's long-term developments but involve technical specialists as decisions rely on expert knowledge;

c) technical operational level, which focused on the efficient policy implementation on the ground.



POLITICAL-STRATEGIC LEVEL

Desk research shows that in **Portugal**, **Spain** and **Greece** social partners are formally involved at *political-strategic* level. They are represented in tripartite bodies in charge of developing long-term political priorities and they play a formal advisory role. The actual influence social partners have in policy making through their representation in these bodies is however an issue which should be further explored in the fieldwork, considering the irregular and politicised character of social dialogue in these countries (Sanz de Miguel et al., 2020). On the contrary, in **Poland** social partners do not play any role at this level.



TECHNICAL-STRATEGIC LEVEL

At *technical strategic* level, social partners in **Spain** and **Portugal** are represented in most important bodies. They also indirectly contribute to the development and renovation of qualifications by appointing the sectoral experts involved in the process. In **Greece**, social partners are not represented in some relevant technical bodies recently created and do not play a formal role in the process of development and renovation of qualifications. However, they have contributed to co-regulate working conditions of apprenticeship through tripartite national social dialogue. In **Poland**, social partners are involved in sectoral and regional bodies at this level.



TECHNICAL OPERATIONAL LEVEL

Finally, research shows that only in **Poland** and **Portugal** social partners play a formal role at *technical operational* level.

Planning and next steps

INVOLVE project has started in May 2020 and will last two years.

Since January 2021, the research team is conducting the fieldwork, which includes, first, semi-structured interviews conducted with state/government authorities and social partners involved or potentially involved at the three governance levels. Second, mini-case studies are conducted studying initiatives of cooperation and coordination between companies, VET schools/training centres and trade unions at company level (working committees, etc.) aiming to implement a dual VET scheme.

In July 2021, the project's **second scientific meeting** will be held to discuss the fieldwork results. After that, the research team will conduct the participatory scenario methodology addressed to develop scenarios about potential governance integrative structures improving social partners' involvement in VET systems.

During the first half of 2022, the project team will publish the comparative report and will disseminate the project results through a final conference.



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