
CEDEFOP OPINION SURVEY
ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

SPAIN





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The thematic perspectives series complements the general information on vocational education and training (VET) systems provided in 'VET in Europe' reports. The themes presented in the series feature high on the European agenda.

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Introduction

Cedefop's opinion survey on vocational education and training (VET) aims to improve understanding of people's opinions on awareness, attractiveness and effectiveness of vocational education and training in Europe and, in this way, be in a better position to address the challenges placed by the Copenhagen's objectives; and make VET a more attractive choice for young people.

The survey was conducted in June 2016 among 35 646 respondents from different social and demographic groups who were interviewed face-to-face at home in their mother tongue. A total of 2 215 respondents were interviewed in Spain.

The survey's target population was people aged from 15 onwards in June 2016, that is, those born after 1951. Over this period of fifty years, Spanish society has seen significant changes in a wide range of political, economic and social aspects, which are shaping the Spanish education system, including VET. Annex I offers an overview of the main education reforms undertaken in Spain during this period which have surely influenced respondents' opinion and awareness of VET.

Recently, several surveys and studies have been carried out internally in Spain on diverse aspects of VET, generally from private or academic areas. Among these research studies, it is worth mentioning the following ones, which will be used to complement Cedefop's survey in this thematic report:

- (a) The report 'The future of work' ⁽¹⁾ includes the conclusions to a survey carried out among 12 760 upper secondary students (16-19 years old) all over Spain between January and April 2017, conducted by the Educa2020 forum, with the technical assistance of the demo company GAD3, and the Axa Foundation.
- (b) A forum organized in May 2017 ⁽²⁾ by two private foundations (Fundación ATRESMEDIA and Fundación MAPFRE) with 70 students, between 14 and 22 years old (from lower and upper secondary and university education) to analyse, debate and have a first-hand perspective of young people's opinion on VET.
- (c) Observatory on Innovation in Employment is an initiative of the Spanish private sector promoted in 2014 by Adecco that currently groups 25 companies ⁽³⁾. Their common goal is to improve the current labour market situation. They conduct

⁽¹⁾ See more at <http://educa2020.es/2017/05/23/seguimos-presentando-la-encuesta-13-000-toda-espana/>

⁽²⁾ See more at http://www.descubrelafp.org/noticias/fundacion-atresmedia-fundacion-mapfre-reunen-jovenes-conocer-opinion-formacion-profesional_2017052600552.html

⁽³⁾ Acciona, Adecco, Agbar, Amadeus, Banco Sabadell, Bankinter, BMW, Capgemini, Coca-Cola, Delaviuda Confectionery Group, EY (before Ernst & Young), Gas Natural Fenosa, Grupo Pascual, IKEA, LG, Línea Directa Aseguradora, L'Oréal, Mahou San Miguel, McDonald's, Pelayo, PSA Peugeot Citroën, Red Eléctrica de España, Sephora, SEUR y Xerox. For the Observatory on Innovation in Employment, see more at <http://www.oie.es/es/>

different surveys among companies, VET and university graduates and young people in general.

Vocational education and training, as we understand it nowadays, has been going on in Spain for quite some decades. The number of intermediate VET students in Spain has risen in the last years from 225 479 in the 2002/03 school year to 348 512 in 2016/17 (Table 1).

Table 1. Variation of enrolment in upper secondary education and higher level VET in Spain, 2002-16

School year	2002/03	2007/08	2016/17*	% Var. 2002-16*	% Var. 2007-16*
Education level					
High School	679 773	622 133	687 692	1.16%	10.54%
Intermed. level VET	225 479	239 559	348 512	54.57%	45.48%
Higher level VET	232 193	222 933	380 575	63.90%	70.71%

* Advancing data.

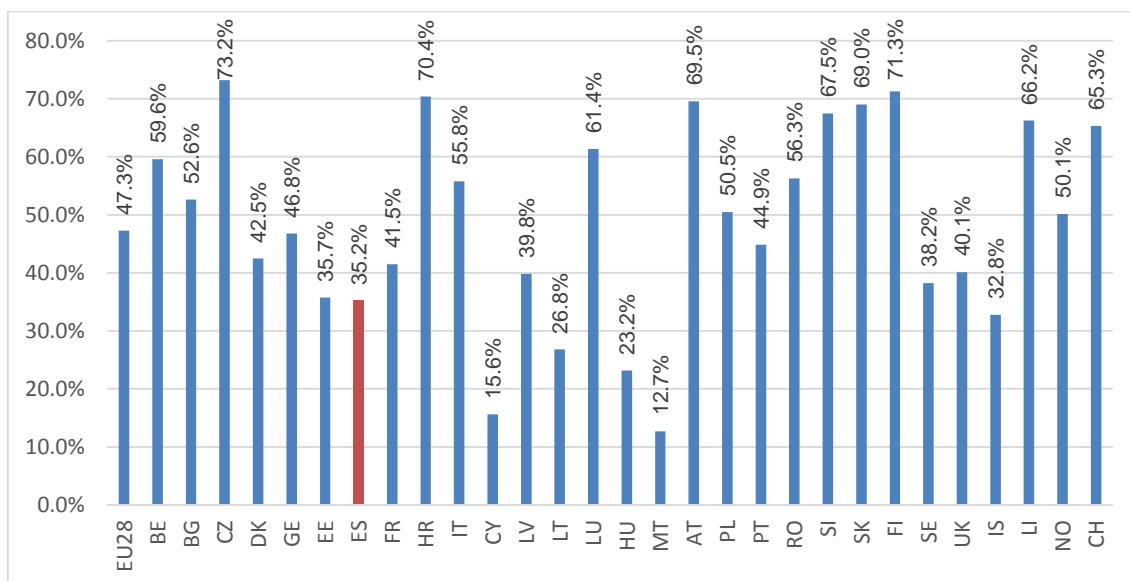
Source: (MECD). Estadísticas de las enseñanzas no universitarias [Statistics of non-university education].

Nevertheless, as Figure 1 illustrates, the share of students involved in VET varies significantly across the European Union. In the case of Spain, levels of participation are still below the EU average (34.4 % in 2014 compared to 48 % in the EU, 35 % in 2015 compared to 47 % in the EU ⁽⁴⁾). The percentage of upper secondary VET graduates in 2014 at 29% was also below the OECD (46%) and the EU22 average (50%) ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽⁴⁾ Source: Eurostat table educ_uoe_enrs04. 2015 data

⁽⁵⁾ Source: OECD (2016). *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD. Table A.2. 1

Figure 1. Percentage of pupils enrolled in upper secondary education – vocational (ISCED 3) 2015



Source: Eurostat, Pupils enrolled in upper secondary education by programme orientation, sex, type of institution and intensity of participation [educ_uae_enrs04]. Last update 24.07.17. Extracted on 04.09.17

Cedefop's survey focuses on initial vocational training (IVET) at upper secondary level (16 to 18 years old) although at the start of the interview a few questions were asked about VET in general without reference to a specific level. However, this might have not been taken under consideration when answering questions, as in Spain VET (*formación profesional* – FP) is considered as a whole. Policy makers, education experts, teachers, etc. differentiate between upper secondary level – what is called Intermediate VET in Spain – and the next level – Higher level VET – which is tertiary education (and so not subject of this survey), and basic level at the lower secondary stage, but public in general is usually not aware of these different levels in VET.

The following analysis draws on the survey results Cedefop shared with ReferNet Spain, which encompass data from the 28 European member states and the ones specific for Spain, considering separately those who followed general or vocational education. Findings are presented around four main concepts:

- awareness and knowledge;
- attractiveness;
- experience and satisfaction;
- outcomes and effectiveness.

CHAPTER 1.

Awareness and knowledge of VET

VET is a very well-known education option in Spain, but traditionally it was considered as a less prestigious path than the academic baccalaureate. Families and parents preferred their children to choose the general education route, leading straight to university, as a mean of social progression, whereas VET was regarded partly as the choice for less talented students in some periods (Annex I).

However, this image has fortunately been changing for the last 20 years due to several reasons. On the one hand, policy makers have made efforts to promote the quality of VET qualifications and communication campaigns were launched to refute misconceptions; on the other hand, the good results VET students present, (better employment prospects, more connected to companies' needs and more practical) are proving it is a valuable option for future professional life. It is still chosen by a minority of students but the number of enrolments in VET grows steadily each year, as seen in the Introduction.

Cedefop's survey confirms that VET is a widely known option in Spain with 84% (versus EU 71%) stating that yes, they had heard of it and knew what it was about. This is not surprising since VET studies have been on the public scene for many decades (see Annex I). Only 6% (lower than the 13% at EU level) declare they have not heard of it. Among those interviewed who had actually studied a general or vocational programme, predictably the proportion who declares they know what VET is, is even higher (93 and 98% respectively).

It also confirms there is quite an accurate knowledge about what VET consists of. The results are quite similar in Spain and in the EU28: 91% of those interviewed in Spain think VET prepares one for a specific occupation and 87% in the whole of Europe; at the same time they see it as an option for personal development (82% in Spain and 79% in Europe).

In Spain, the proportion of people who believe VET takes place before starting working life at 85% is higher than in the EU28 – 75% – which might be explained by the fact that in several European countries dual VET is more common (in countries such as Germany and Austria). In Spain, although VET students always spend at least 20% of their training at a company, this has only been a widespread practice since the 1990 education Act. Besides, the student does not usually have a work contract during this period so it is not considered as 'work' in a strict sense.

The survey reflects people's perception of VET in Spain taking place in a combination of school and work environment, although the belief that it occurs in a school environment is higher at 84% than in a work environment 65%. This is consistent with the Spanish VET system as more time is spent in a school environment with a work-based component in the sense they learn and receive a great deal of their training in workshops and simulated real work settings. Dual VET does indeed take

place in a combination of school and work environment but it is not yet an extended practice in Spain ⁽⁶⁾.

Regarding whether VET takes place in higher education such as university or not, the proportion of those who think one thing and the opposite is quite similar. Nearly half of respondents in Spain (49%) believe VET does not take place in higher education such as university but at the same time 38% think it does. Similarly, in Europe, 45% think it does take place in higher education such as university, but nearly the same amount (44%), think it does not. In Spain, this difference in opinion could be because higher level VET (supposedly not considered in this survey) is indeed part of higher education, but the inclusion of higher level VET in tertiary education took place in the 2006 Education Act. These programmes are not offered by universities, so general public may not associate higher level VET with tertiary education.

In any case, considering future rounds of this survey, at least for the Spanish case, the question could be stated in more clear way, as VET can take place at lower secondary, upper secondary and tertiary level.

Although VET covers a wide range of varied occupations, it is still associated with manual work (blue-collar jobs): more than three out of four (78%) in Spain think VET is often or always about doing manual work. These proportions are even a little higher if the respondents have followed VET education (82% agree VET is always or often about doing manual work). These rates are somewhat lower in Europe, 70% believe so, but 22% disagree.

For some experts ⁽⁷⁾, VET's social prestige in Spain is still more connected to perceptions and subjective social appreciations than to real objective reasons and data, and linked to the consideration that the professions for which the students are qualified have in society.

Concerning information about vocational education to students, CEDEFOP's survey reflects that more than three out four people (77%) who followed vocational education in Spain received this kind of service, slightly higher than in Europe (72%). However, only around half of those who took general education declare they did (54% in Spain and 48% in EU28).

In the same sense, the Eurobarometer carried out in 2011 by the European Commission ⁽⁸⁾, in relation to vocational information and guidance, showed that 61% in Spain agreed that young people received sufficient advice on education and work opportunities in their schools, a view shared by only 52% of EU citizens.

⁽⁶⁾ More information in Cedefop ReferNet Spain (2017). *ReferNet VET in Europe – Spain Country report 2016*.

https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_CR_ES.pdf

⁽⁷⁾ Guardiola, P. (n.d.). *El prestigio social de la FP [The social prestige of VET]*.

http://www.um.es/docencia/pguardio/publica/Art_nfp.pdf

⁽⁸⁾ European Commission (2011). *Eurobarometer 75.4. Attitudes towards vocational education and training, Results for Spain*.

http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_369_fact_es_en.pdf

These results are consistent with the important role counselling services available in all secondary schools have been playing for several years now. An analysis of the respondents by age would probably yield significant differences between answers of older population who studied years ago and younger respondents.

In the Educa2020 study, views are divided given nearly 44% think they did receive enough and useful information to decide what to do after finishing upper secondary, whereas 46% think they did not. In any case, 57% of those who are in VET did think so, versus 38% of those in general education.

In the forum organised by two private foundations ⁽⁹⁾ some students mentioned that secondary education centres do not usually provide information and vocational guidance on the possibility of studying VET, as an alternative to University.

Regarding what factors might have played a role in people's choice when opting for general or vocational education, Cedefop's survey reveals that in Spain the possibility of continuing to higher education ranked first for those who took general education. For people who chose a vocational path, the most important driver was the likelihood of finding a job. These two same factors were also most considered in EU28 although to a lesser extent. Career prospects was the second most important element taken into account by all interviewees in Spain, both those who followed general and vocational education (43% and 40% respectively). In Europe, however, the second reason in importance was being interested in the subjects.

Families and friends' advice is a crucial element too, as nearly a third of people who took general programmes were influenced by this and a fifth of those in vocational programmes. In Europe, this also seemed to have a large influence, as one third (31% for vocational and 33% for general) declared this had influenced their choice. In Spain, being interested in the subjects was important for one third (31%) of those who undertook a vocational programme and for 24% of those in a general programme, less important than for the EU28. The most significant differences one can see comparing the situation in Spain and Europe is that being good at the subjects is a factor, which people in Europe take into account more than those in Spain (more than 10 points in difference for both kind of routes).

In the previously mentioned Forum, some students declared that they chose general education because, at that time, they were not sure about what career path to follow. In this way, they managed to postpone their decision for two more years, up to 18 years of age.

According to the Educa2020 report, for the young people interviewed, parents were their strongest influence in choosing what to study, and specifically their mother. Their counsellors and tutors did not appear until the seventh place in the list of people who advised them according to this survey.

The 2011 Eurobarometer revealed for Spain that the decision of young people and their families to increase their educational level, with the cost in time, money and effort

⁽⁹⁾ The ATRESMEDIA Foundation and MAPFRE Foundation.

this entails, was based on the prospects of improving their employability, their position in the labour market, and a higher salary.

CEDEFOP's survey shows that in Spain 82% of those who followed a general programme declare that nobody advised them against choosing vocational studies (75% in EU28). In any case, this question could be more relevant if those who had followed vocational education had been asked too, because it is probable that those who chose the general path never considered choosing VET, so nobody had to advise them against it.

In conclusion, despite vocational education in Spain traditionally not having a very good reputation, the survey results seem to show that this impression has changed and VET presents a good image in this aspect also in comparison to its European partners. People in Spain are aware and have a good knowledge of what VET is, though provision of information and guidance on VET should be stressed.

CHAPTER 2.

Attractiveness and access

Cedefop's survey highlights some existing contradictions with respect to VET's attractiveness and access. On the one hand, VET has a much better image than years ago, and over one in three, in Spain (70%) and in Europe (68%), say that these days vocational education at upper secondary education for those aged 16-18 has a positive image. On the other hand, general education both in Europe and Spain, still has a better image than vocational education, idea which is supported by 78% of survey respondents in Spain and 74% in Europe. These rates are higher for those who took general education in Spain (83%) or a vocational route (80%).

A majority (68% in Spain and 75% in Europe) believe students with low grades are directed towards vocational education, an opinion equally shared by those in Spain who took general or vocational education (74%).

Nearly a third (63%), both in Spain and Europe, believe it is easier to get a qualification in vocational education than in general education, with even slightly more people who took vocational education thinking so in Spain (68%). This opinion can in a way reinforce the idea of VET being for less talented students. Knowing respondents' ideas on VET according to their age could provide more information as the way in which VET was organised in Spain at the time of their responses and thus, understand better what might have influenced their opinion.

Although a majority of people, according to the survey, agree that VET provides learning skills which are needed by employers (88% in Spain and 86% in EU28) and that the jobs VET prepares one for are highly regarded (70% in Spain and 60% in EU28), at the same time, a perception which probably discourages participation in VET is that only 54% of respondents in Spain think vocational education leads to well paid jobs. The perception in Europe is somewhat better as 61% think so. In any case, for both Spain and EU28, more than a third of interviewees think VET does not lead to well paid jobs.

Latest reports ⁽¹⁰⁾ show that earnings of 25-64 year-olds with a tertiary degree in Spain have a 53% advantage over those with upper secondary education. The average earnings advantage for tertiary-educated individuals across OECD countries stands at 56%.

The high unemployment rate in Spain, and even higher youth unemployment – 58.67% ⁽¹¹⁾ for young people between 16 and 19 years old and 39.83% for those between 20 and 24 in 2016 – may be the reason for only 48% of respondents in Spain

⁽¹⁰⁾ OECD (2017). *Education at a Glance 2017. Spain – Country note*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-67-en>

⁽¹¹⁾ Source: Observatorio de las Ocupaciones (2017). *Informe del mercado de trabajo de los jóvenes estatal: datos 2016 [Report on youth and labour market. 2016]*. Madrid: SEPE. http://www.sepe.es/contenidos/que_es_el_sepe/publicaciones/pdf/pdf_mercado_trabajo/mt2017_datos2016_estatal_jovenes.pdf

thinking VET allows one to find a job quickly, nearly as high as those who do not think so (42%). In Europe the vision is less bleak: 67% do think VET helps one find a job in a short time. Yet, last figures published by OECD ⁽¹²⁾ show that young adults (25-34 year-olds) with a vocational qualification in Spain have an employment rate of 74%, compared with 63% for those with a general qualification. This is also the case across OECD countries with average rates of 80% and 70% respectively.

The need to invest in vocational education rather than in general education is more felt in Europe on average (49%), than in Spain (37%), where a similar proportion (33%) think general education should be given priority. However when one asks those who followed general or vocational education, each group think there should be more investment in the route they followed, although this opinion is more firmly supported among those who took vocational studies.

The need to invest more in VET in Spain is confirmed by the fact that there is indeed a lack of VET places and each year a significant number of students cannot follow the VET programme they desire.

When asked if it is easy to continue into higher education such as university after vocational education at upper secondary, nearly half of those interviewed in Spain (54% in EU28) believe it is easy, but 23% do not think so and 28% declare they do not know.

For the Spanish context, this question could be misleading, because currently from intermediate VET (Upper secondary) one can continue into higher level VET which is higher or tertiary education, but not onto University without doing higher level VET or baccalaureate.

In any case, considering nowadays in Spain one can pass straight from vocational education at upper secondary education to upper vocational education (which is tertiary level) and from there to university, the public should be made more aware of this possibility in order to improve VET's image.

Opportunities to study or work abroad for VET students are almost equally perceived in Spain by the respondents (52% and 54%), regardless their general or vocational orientation. However, more people in Europe (61%) think so than in Spain where this opinion is shared by a half of the respondents. Nevertheless, Spain, after France, was the second top sending country for VET traineeships abroad (in absolute numbers), a fact that could be made more aware to the general public ⁽¹³⁾

The Educa2020 report questioned young people whether they plan to study outside Spain after secondary school, but only 16% state they will, a response that contrasts with the fact that most (59.3%) believe they will develop part of their professional career abroad.

Regarding whether it is easy to switch from VET studies to general education, there does not seem to be a clear picture, neither in Spain nor in Europe. The survey

⁽¹²⁾ OECD (2017). *Education at a glance 2017. Spain – Country note*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2017-67-en>

⁽¹³⁾ European commission (2015).

results show that 44% do think it is easy (41% in Europe) but if one adds those who do not know and those who think it is difficult, they represent more than half of respondents (56% in Spain and 59% in EU28). This point is interesting because it might reflect the reality and it may be one of the issues which hinders VET's attractiveness. In any case, 53% of those who followed vocational education see this transition easy versus 47% of the ones who did general education.

Concerning access and attractiveness in VET, according to some sources, one issue which should be addressed in Spain is, in general terms, the mismatch between supply and demand, considering individuals' interests, companies' needs and education resources.

On the one hand, employers complain that the training offer does not meet their needs in terms of skills and number of graduates. On the other hand, certain VET specialities are more appealing to students and their applications exceed the number of learning places available; in addition to this, other VET teachings need more resources to be implemented and so fewer centres are available or willing to offer them.

Distance learning in some VET specialities has been in place now for a few years, with growing enrolment rates, especially in the higher level, helping to cater for the exceeding demand, and at the same time making work-life balance easier. It would be interesting to see if this modality influences VET perception.

The mismatch in Spain is also relevant in the different learning choices that male and female students do, with a higher weight of female students in certain professional branches and comparatively smaller or practically testimonial in the more technical branches.

Educa2020 corroborates the different choices that boys and girls make when asked what VET studies they would like to pursue at the next level of VET: female students are more inclined to focus on education, health and management, while boys prefer IT and Management and Finance.

Another issue which may be affecting these results in Spain is VET level structure, whether basic, intermediate or higher level, entitling different entry requirements, in terms of age and education attainment, for example, and leading to diverse occupations and employment conditions in the labour market.

Spain suffers from high levels of early school leaving (ESL) as well as of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). The issue in Spain is not defined as a question of more people choosing general education than VET but rather keeping them at an environment which will allow them to develop to their full potential, either at school or work.

Last education reform (LOMCE) introduced new measures to curb early school leaving and improve access to VET. A new vocational training level (basic VET or *formación profesional básica* FPB) was laid out and implemented (from 2014/15), as another possibility for some students of lower secondary for whom it is the best alternative to continue in the education system and achieve a higher qualification level. It also eased access to higher level VET coming from the previous level, and from the

higher level to university studies. In future survey waves it might be possible to see the impact of these reforms.

CHAPTER 3.

Experience and satisfaction

In relation to people's experience of VET at upper secondary concerning the skills – general and work related – equipment and quality of teaching, the results for Spain are encouraging, for both general and vocational education, but even more so for VET.

A large majority of respondents who went on vocational education (88%) say they were satisfied with the general skills they developed, while similar proportions were satisfied with the quality of teaching (86%) and the work-related skills they developed (82%). The same percentage say they were satisfied with the equipment that was available.

General education fares slightly below for work related skills (64% are satisfied or very satisfied, but 30% are not) and for equipment (68% are satisfied or very satisfied and 31% are not). Perceptions in Spain and Europe as a whole are quite similar.

In line with this, the survey developed by Educa2020 among upper secondary students, reveals that 82% of VET students believe the education they are receiving is adequate to enter the labour market, while that percentage barely reaches 51% among those in general studies (baccalaureate). 47% of those currently attending a VET programme also consider that their job search will be easier than nowadays – only 26% in baccalaureate – and 73% are convinced that they will find work in the profession or occupation they are training for, whereas that percentage rests at 61% among those who follow general studies. Another interesting result from the Educa2020 report is that 26.7% of students who were interviewed think they will work in a position that does not yet exist.

CEDEFOP might consider carrying out a similar survey to employers to know their opinion. The 2011 Eurobarometer also concluded VET had a positive image both in the EU and in Spain, although it was slightly lower (69%) in Spain compared to the EU (71%). Also, three out of four citizens in Spain and Europe strongly agreed that VET offers quality learning.

Considering the skills people declare they acquired during their general or vocational studies, CEDEFOP's survey reveals that in Spain both groups perceive the ability to work with others as the skill which was most developed (89% for those who followed VET and 79% for general education). The next in importance for those who took the vocational route are the ability to pursue and organise their own learning, the ability to be creative and communication skills – all 'soft skills'. For those who followed general education, the next skills which were most developed are similar, but instead of the ability to be creative, mathematical skills stand out. The situation is alike in Europe, with the only difference in general education where the ability to think critically is more important than communication skills.

The survey confirms one of Spain's opportunities for improvement which is the learning of a foreign language: more than half (56%) of those who took vocational

studies, declare they did not develop this skill. For those that took the general route, the situation is not much better considering 38% said the same. Another set of skills which should be bolstered, according to this survey, are digital and computer skills, since more than half of respondents both in Europe and Spain, as well as for those who followed the general or vocational route, declared they had not developed these kind of skills during their studies.

Similarly within the forum conducted with more than 70 young people (between 14 and 22 years old), participants said that VET should include languages, specifically English on its agenda, promote key competences more, and instil more of a humanist, education than simply a technical one

The Educa2020 study however reveals that only 2% of young people surveyed declare they do not speak English, while practically half (44%) say they have an average level, 24% say it is high and 30% rate it as basic.

In any case, the European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC) shows Spain needs to improve students' level of proficiency in foreign languages.

Recent curricular developments concerning both the introduction of English into vocational training curricula in various regions, as well as the experiences regarding the implementation of both secondary and vocational training courses in bilingual English instruction, are currently trying to improve this situation.

The observatory for the innovation on employment also shows findings in respect to skills acquired by VET students: more than half of the respondents (52.3%) believe that teamwork is the most required skill by companies, followed by communication skills (33.3%). However, creativity is ranked in a secondary position and only 14.4% of the respondents give priority to this ability. When asked about the competence in which they stand out, 44.7% say that it is teamwork, communication skills is pointed out by 31.1%, and creativity by 24.2%; but when the question is about their weak point, a majority of 43.2% declare communication skills, followed by creativity (40.2%). Teamwork, on the other hand, is not a pending issue for them and only 16.7% consider it their weak point.

As to where education at upper secondary education takes place, Cedefop's survey reflects that 67% of those who followed vocational education declare it all took place at school and 21% express it took place partly at the workplace. If we compare with those who took general studies, nearly all (94%) say it took place all at school and only 2% partly at the workplace. This is consistent with how VET works in Spain because at least 20% of the training takes place in a company although a larger percentage is carried out at training institutions' facilities and workshops which simulate real work situations (work based learning). Dual VET, which involves more time spent in a company, is gradually being developed in Spain and might change this perception too.

When analysing people's opinion on VET it gives food for thought to see that views in Spain are divided, as approximately one third recommend vocational education, one third recommend general education and another third say it would depend on the person. In Europe, vocational training is recommended by a larger

proportion, 40% and only 27% recommend general studies. When asking this same question to people who actually followed general or vocational education, those who took vocational training are more enthusiastic about what they studied as 48% recommend vocational education, whereas only 40% of those in general education vouch for their choice. In both cases approximately one third of interviewees think it depends on the person.

CHAPTER 4.

Outcomes and effectiveness

VET is seen as an effective education choice, given that approximately 80% of those interviewed agree that VET strengthens Spain's economy, helps reduce unemployment and contributes to tackle social exclusion. Overall, these perceptions are similar to those expressed in Europe.

On the other hand, the high level of unemployment in Spain during the last years, might explain the difference in appreciation compared to the rest of Europe, regarding ever experiencing difficulties in finding a job. In Spain, 36% of respondents who are currently working, unemployed or retired declare they did have difficulties in finding a job whereas in Europe only 27% declare the same. In any case, more than half – 60% in Spain and 68% in Europe – state they did not find difficulties. It is interesting to see that the results for this question in both Europe and Spain are two points better for those who followed VET studies, than for those who chose general education. As stated in point 2, those with a vocational qualification have better employment prospects than those with a general qualification.

Most citizens say that they are satisfied with their professional career. Among respondents who were employed, unemployed or retired at the time of the survey, 78% of Spanish respondents (81% for EU28) declare they are fairly or very satisfied with their professional career. This proportion is very similar among respondents whose upper secondary education was primarily vocational (84%) and those who went on general education (82%).

Nearly three in four of the respondents who followed general education continued their studies at a higher level, whereas only 42% of those who took vocational education did. The situation is very similar in Europe, but a slightly less percentage continued after vocational education (39%).

This finding is consistent with results from the Educa2020 study which shows that most high school students (85%) want to study a university degree, 11% will continue to higher VET studies and only 3% want to work after completing this stage of education. On the other hand, more than half of VET students want to continue to study VET at a higher grade, only 9.7% are considering going to university and almost a third (31%) want to work after finishing secondary education.

In respect to participation in continuing training, Cedefop's research shows there is room for improvement both in Europe and in Spain, as when asked if people had participated in any work-related training during the last 12 months, only 17% in Spain and 19% in overall Europe, declared they had. Adult participation in lifelong learning in

Spain was also, according to Eurostat ⁽¹⁴⁾, below the EU average (9.9 % in 2015 and 9.4 % in 2016 compared to 10.7 % in 2015 and 10.8 % in 2016 on average in the EU).

In the future, and in order to improve knowledge about the effectiveness and effectiveness of VET systems, it would be interesting to combine the information gathered among citizens, with another European-level survey to analyse employers' perception on this particular.

(14) http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/images/3/39/Lifelong_learning%2C_2011_and_2016_%28%C2%B9%29_%28%25_of_the_population_aged_25_to_64_participating_in_education_and_training%29_YB17.png

CHAPTER 5.

Conclusions

Vocational education and training is widely recognized as vital to the economic future of Europe: it facilitates the school-to-work transition and is crucial for social cohesion and employability, key to economic competitiveness in the context of globalization.

Its attractiveness is improving, but it is still low both in Europe and in Spain compared to general education, despite the recognized benefits of VET. Its prestige depends on internal quality elements, but also on external features which may encompass from broader education and training arrangements to welfare state institutions and employment systems.

More objective, clear and revealing information on Vocational Training is needed to increase the number of young people who use vocational training as a career path.

In Spain, VET evolution has been reflecting the tensions amid different forces and ideas, for example the weight that other establishments should have in students' skilling or between formal or non-formal education; the selection of students in terms of academic requirements; or how to enhance the prestige of an educational path that prepares for professions with less social prestige than the university.

Overall, Cedefop's survey reveals that the perception about VET in Spain is good. The majority agree it strengthens Spain's economy, helps reduce unemployment and contributes to tackle social exclusion. It is seen as a quality option providing skills demanded by companies although general education still has a better image. People believe it is easier to get a qualification in vocational education; it is seen partly as the route for less talented students; and people do not think it leads to well paid jobs.

It would be interesting to reflect on to what extent the survey results have been influenced in those countries where the economic crisis has had the greatest impact and to observe the evolution in future surveys carried out at a time when the economic situation is substantially different.

In spite of the recent regulatory developments of the Spanish educational system, improving the knowledge of the possibilities offered by the different training programmes, remains a challenge, particularly with regard to access to university after completing Vocational Training. Moving towards an effective extension of VET in Spain will need the cooperation of the vocational guidance system, to allow for effective coordination of three basic components: labour market and future forecasts of new professions; supply of VET learning places; and interests and preferences of the students and their families.

Families are a crucial element, according to the survey, so vocational information and guidance should reach students but parents as well. Education sociology shows the reproduction power of education which needs to be broken in order to make a society more equal and just.

Cedefop's survey also provides a good insight about the skills VET systems should stress, according to people's perception about how they have developed them.

Some proposals for the future regarding the survey would be the following:

It would be enlightening to collect and disaggregate information by geographical area, gender or age groups, socio-economic background of participants, as education systems may have undergone a very important transformations in recent years and this information could be very relevant. It would also be interesting to see if the perception is influenced by the field of study.

It would be important to consider if possibly some of the survey questions not only condition the response but can even contribute to perpetuate the negative image of VET and cliché ideas, for example the question of whether general education has a more positive or negative image than vocational training, and also the question that asks if students with worse results are directed to VET.

Regarding data on the percentage of students who did not access higher education after completing VET studies, it would be interesting to add information on how long after is considered, because there are many people who continue to higher education quite some time after completing their VET studies.

In future waves, some differentiating aspects could be explored more profoundly, for example why respondents did not choose VET (due to how VET is organized, the type of work to which it leads to (working conditions, salary) etc.); how career guidance contributed to their choice; if the person already knew that occupation or discovered it at the time of the election; the value that people assign to their VET degree at the time of their recruitment in companies, that is, to what extent do VET graduates believe their qualification and training was the determining factor for their employability.

Understanding the difficulty of comparing data between the results of different countries, given the great variety of vocational training systems in the European Union, some questions could, however, be more adapted to each country's system to make the results more relevant.

In order to complete the picture on the perception of VET in Europe it would be useful to conduct another European-level survey to study teachers and employers' perceptions.

ANNEX

Overview of the main education reforms in Spain linked to VET in the past 50 years

Year	Education Act	Main features related to VET
1955	Organic Act of Industrial Vocational Training [Ley Orgánica de Formación Profesional Industrial] http://todofp.es/dam/jcr:bfb5a7dd-af03-456c-a07d-bcc47b9fa70a/ley-de-formacion-profesional-industrial-1955-pdf.pdf	The Organic Act of Industrial Professional Training replaces an old Statute (1928) and tries to integrate vocational training into the regulated teaching system by creating specific schools. It marks off the start of VET's consolidation process.
1970	General Education Act. [Ley 14/1970, de 4 de agosto, General de Educación y Financiamiento de la Reforma Educativa – LGE] https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1970-852	Vocational training is integrated into the education system in connection with general education, incorporating many diverse training activities (for example health training or commercial training) which were in private hands or under other ministries. VET (FP in Spanish) is organised in two levels (FPI y FP II). FPI (14 years of age) was designed for those who finished general education without achieving the corresponding qualification, and thus, turning FPI into a refuge for school failure, and becoming a second-class pathway (parallel to the baccalaureate). FP II (16 years of age) was for those who finished upper secondary education. It led to very low enrolment rates in VET compared to other studies, but it helped to spread the number of students, centres and teachers.

Year	Education Act	Main features related to VET
1990	<p>Organic Act of General Management of the Educational System</p> <p>[Ley Orgánica de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo –LOGSE]</p> <p>https://boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1990-24172</p>	<p>Schooling lasts till 16 years of age, organised through a common core structure, with methodological alternatives. Thus, secondary education is organised in compulsory secondary education (lower secondary); baccalaureate or intermediate VET (upper secondary, 16-18 years of age); higher VET (18 years of age) or University.</p> <p>It sets academic requirements to enter these specific levels of vocational training.</p> <p>It reorganizes the education system by establishing a general and a special regime (for example, for artistic or sports education programmes and languages).</p> <p>It recovers the idea of communication bridges between levels, not implemented in the 1970 Law.</p> <p>Integration of VET into Secondary Schools.</p> <p>Development of distance VET learning.</p> <p>Workplace training in companies becomes a general practice.</p> <p>It sets the basic aspects of the curriculum (objectives, contents, methodology and evaluation criteria).</p> <p>Changes regarding access requirements to VET meant an important initiative in terms of raising social value of VET. So far, the existence of a double qualification at the end of the basic education was discriminatory, since it made possible for those not finishing general education successfully enter VET, making VET a subsidiary alternative or second-class studies.</p> <p>It can be considered as the beginning of the National Qualifications System, developed in the 2002 Act.</p>
2002	<p>Act on Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training</p> <p>[Ley Orgánica 5/2002, de 19 de junio, de las Cualificaciones y de la Formación Profesional – LOCFP]</p> <p>https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2002-12018</p>	<p>Creation of the National System of Qualifications and Professional Training, and the legal framework for the development of all its instruments. Rules governing qualifications and public VET offers derive from it, as well as the systems for the evaluation, recognition and accreditation of qualifications and professional competences.</p> <p>It is responsible for the current linkage between of VET under education and labour remits.</p>

Year	Education Act	Main features related to VET
2006	Organic Act of Education [Ley Orgánica de la Educación – LOE] https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2006-7899	It adapts VET in the same terms as the LOCFP, making it more flexible: the new structure comprises a set of training cycles with a modular organization, of varying duration and theoretical and practical contents. Therefore, the training cycles are of intermediate and higher levels and are referred to the National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications. The curriculum of these teachings is adjusted to the requirements derived from the National System of Qualifications and Vocational Training (SNCFP). This modular structure of the cycles, allows the enrolment by modules and not only by complete courses. Within the new structure of VET, training in work places is contemplated.
2011	Law of sustainable economy [Ley 2/2011, de Economía Sostenible – LES] https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2011/BOE-A-2011-4117-consolidado.pdf	It amends certain aspects of the LOCFP to facilitate the adaptation of the training offer to the demands of the productive system, to increase the offer of vocational training, to advance the integration of vocational training throughout the education system and to strengthen the cooperation of educational administrations (greater mobility between vocational training, baccalaureate and university, increased offer and possibilities of vocational training, new regulation of access and admission, fostering of entrepreneurial culture and other measures under the scope of active employment policy)
2013	Ley orgánica para la mejora de la calidad educativa [Organic Act for the Improvement of Educational Quality] https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2013-12886	It aims to improve student performance and curb early school leaving. It introduces an alternative vocational path (Basic VET or FP Básica in Spanish) open to lower secondary students aged 15 years. It gives direct access to Intermediate VET cycles and the possibility of sitting the exam to obtain the lower secondary education qualification. Intermediate and higher levels VET remain, but with changes, towards more flexibility in the entry requirements to intermediate and higher levels and from this last level to university studies. It also opens up a dual VET pathway, which is gaining momentum since then, though it is still a minor option. Training programmes are adjusted to meet the requirements of the different professional profiles demanded by the productive sectors and to improve the professional insertion

For a brief description of Spain's recent VET system, please check *Spotlight on VET – Spain* produced under ReferNet framework

2015: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8104>

2014: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8054>

2010: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/8035>

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