



## **Involve project: Field work report from Portugal**

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## Table of Contents

<b>1. Methodology.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. General views on dual VET.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Involvement of the social partners on recent dual VET/apprenticeships reforms</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. Dual VET and collective bargaining.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Dual VET governance at political-strategic level.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>6. Dual VET governance at technical-strategic level.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7. Dual VET governance at technical operational level.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>8. Technical operational level: dual VET in practice (cross-case study analysis) .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>9. Some conclusions and findings.....</b>	<b>19</b>

## Glossary

Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e Ensino Profissional – National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP)

Associação dos Industriais Metalúrgicos e Metalomecânicos de Portugal – Association of Metallurgical and Metalmechanics of Portugal (AINMAP)

Associação Nacional de Escolas Profissionais – National Association of VET Schools (ANESPO)

Câmara de Comércio e Indústria Luso Alemã – German Luso Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCILA)

Comissão Permanente de Concertação Social – Permanent Commission for Social Concertation (CPCS)

Comunidades Intermunicipais – Intermunicipal Communities (CIM)

Confederação Empresarial de Portugal – Business Confederation of Portugal (CIP)

Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses – General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers – (CGTP-In)

Confederação do Comércio e Serviços de Portugal – Confederation of Commerce and Services of Portugal (CCP)

Confederação do Turismo de Portugal – Tourism Confederation of Portugal (CTP)

Conselhos Sectoriais para a Qualificação – Sectoral Councils for Qualifications (CSQ)

Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações – National Catalogue for Qualifications (CNQ)

Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional – Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP)

Lei de Bases do Sistema Educativo, 1986 – Law of the Education System, 1986 (LBSE,1986)

Plano de Estabilização Económica e Social 2020 - National Plan for Economic and Social Stabilisation 2020 (PEES)

Plano de Recuperação Económica 2020-2030 – National Plan for Economic Recovery 2020-2030 (PRR).

Quadro Nacional de Qualificações – National Qualifications Framework (QNQ)

Quadro de Referência Europeu de Garantia de Qualidade para o Ensino e Formação Profissionais – European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)

Sistema de Aprendizagem – Apprenticeship System

Sistema Nacional de Qualificações – National Qualifications System (SNQ)

Sistema Nacional de Antecipação das Qualificações – National Qualification  
Anticipation System (SANQ)

União Geral de Trabalhadores – General Union of Workers (UGT)

## 1. Methodology

The field work took place between May and the first half of July 2021, and it was developed through interviews based on a semi structures script and carried out on line with a number of social partners and actors in the education and training system.

A total of 26 interviews were conducted with the following entities:

Social Partners	
Employers Confederations and Workers Unions	5
Works council (case study 1)	1
Government /Public entities – Ministries and VET Regulatory Agencies	3
Sectoral Associations/VET Associations/ Chambers of Commerce	3
Training Centres /Academies /VET Schools	6
Companies with Apprenticeship Internship	8

The research team conducted three case studies by interviewing the main providers of Dual VET and Apprenticeship courses in the country and the main partners of the IEFP for the Apprenticeship. For case study one (CS1) were interviewed) two companies (C1 and C2) who are institutional partners of the IEFP for the Apprenticeship. For case study two (CS2) were interviewed (CS2) three companies (C3, C4 and C5) who are partners of a major training centre in the areas of metallurgy and metalworking for the Apprenticeship and continuous vocational training. For case study three (CS3) were interviewed two companies (C6, C7) who are partners of the German oriented training centre that provides Dual VET and Apprenticeship courses. In this case study, one of these companies facilitated the interview conducted with his works council. A fourth case study was conducted involving a partnership between a private VET school that provides Apprenticeship courses, but only one company (C8) that is a partner of this school for Apprenticeship responded to the call for interview.

The opinions, and statements, of the different interviewees were transcribed in full in "quote" format and placed in the text contributing to a better understanding of the positions taken by each in relation to the issues raised.

Throughout the report, reference is made to the “New Agreement for Vocational Training and Qualifications” that was signed between the government and the social partners sitting on the Permanent Commission for Social Concertation (Comissão Permanente de Concertação Social – CPCS), on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2021<sup>1</sup>.

The Government (Ministry of Labour) convened a working group with the participation of the Ministry of Education, of social partners with a seat in the CPCS, regulatory

<sup>1</sup> Acordo “Formação Profissional e Qualificação: Um Desígnio Estratégico para as Pessoas, para as Empresas e para o País” <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc22/comunicacao/documento?i=acordo-de-formacao-profissional-e-qualificacao-assinado-entre-governo-e-parceiros-sociais>

agencies of VET and Dual VET, education and training experts, and the association for private VET schools, to discuss the policy measures contained in this new Agreement.

These policy measures are thus considered in this report as contributions of the social partners to the design, renewal and development of the Dual VET in Portugal, although no further interviews were conducted in order to ascertain the role of each of the social partners in the formulation of these policy measures.

## 2. General views on dual VET

The INVOLVE project, relies on Rauner and Smith, (2010) definition of dual VET. These authors have distinguished two basic types of vocational learning: First, dual *VET or apprenticeship* system, where classroom teaching and learning on the job alternate at relatively short intervals so that an immediate systematic reflection of the work experience is possible. Second, *alternating VET* is where relatively long phases of full-time school-based vocational education are followed by a phase, usually shorter, of on-the-job learning.

In Portugal Dual VET runs under the Apprenticeship system (*Sistema de Aprendizagem*), regulated and supervised by the Ministry of Labour through the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional – IEFP).

There are other vocational VET programmes of the education and training system in Portugal, that fall within the context of vocational and/or technological education and are supervised by the Ministry of Education. These are *alternating VET* courses with long phases of full time school-based where students spend less than 30% (from 19% to 27%) of training time in the workplace. The training providers of these courses are mainly the public schools and the network of VET private schools that engage with employers in establishing partnerships for workplace training and ensuring the technical components of the curriculum as well as the evaluation of the internships

The Apprenticeship system confers dual certification equivalent to ISCED 3 and to Vocational Level IV QNQ and has been developed by applying the Dual VET model with more than 40% of the training occurring in a workplace context.

The first question asked in the fieldwork was whether the interviewees agreed with the analysis of the Portuguese desk research that the only Dual VET programme in Portugal was the Apprenticeship system. This was an introductory open question. All the interviewees, from employers' confederations to trade unions, sectoral association, VET association, and to training centres that provide apprenticeship, the opinions were quite similar and confirmed the desk research findings. One example of what was stated and shared by the interviewees was from the country's largest employers' confederation (CIP) that stated: '*In fact what we have in Portugal on Dual training is the Apprenticeship system*'.

However, following their answers to this question most of the interviewees made a point of saying that the Apprenticeship in Portugal could not be compared to the German Dual

VET, presenting their opinions on the main differences in the programmes they considered to exist between the two countries. These differences were related to: i) the financing of the Apprenticeship; ii) the role and relevance given by the companies to the training; iii) the economic structure of the country. The main statements were:

i) In what concerns the financing, in Portugal the Apprenticeship is entirely financed by the State through the single tax and the European Social Funds. In German it was stated that the companies fully fund the training. Some interviewees, considered this a major difference between the programmes in the two countries, that does not help the valorisation of the training in Portugal.

A trade unionist (UGT) stated that: *‘German Dual VET system is entirely financed by companies’*. A representative of training centre in the area of commerce and services stated: *‘In the German Dual system companies pay for the training, but in Portugal this is not so’*. The German-Portuguese chamber of commerce and industry also stated that: *‘the companies in German are the ones that finance the on-job training, whereas in Portugal it is difficult to obtain companies’ availability for training’*. A German oriented training centre that provides Dual VET and Apprenticeship courses stated that: *‘In Portugal the companies do not pay for the training’*. This training centre further stated that because of lack of financing of the companies in the training as well as their availability for training, *‘the companies in Portugal do not value training as a return of investment’*. A trade unionist (CGTP) agreed with this statement indicating that they discuss this issue about the valorisation of the training/Apprenticeship by the companies in the CPCS in an *‘attempt to get companies to value training by financing it and to create conditions to welcome trainees’*. A company (C8) from a case study stated that: *‘the training is a cost for the company and the companies end up shying away from training’*.

ii) About the role companies play in the two countries, the main comparison was related to the way German companies are involved in Dual VET. The different interviewees stated that in German the companies seek out the trainees, by defining the number of people they want to train and by establish a link with the trainee. In Portugal, by contrast, it is the training entities that seek out the companies, trying to make a mismatch between the training areas provided and the activity sectors in which the companies operate. It was stated that companies are not proactive in finding trainees to develop internships, and this statement is confirmed by the companies interviewed for the case studies and by the training centres. One of the companies interviewed stated that: *‘We are not the ones asking for trainees or internships, the training centre is the one who contacts us’*. The German oriented training centre interviewed, *‘in Germany the companies push the apprenticeship, in Portugal this is not the reality; the students are pushed to the companies’*.

iii) The Portuguese business structure consists predominantly by micro and small and medium size companies. This was pointed as another major difference between the two countries. The representative the IEFP that regulates the Apprenticeship made this his first statement by saying: *‘what we certainly do not have is the business structure that Germany has; ours is much more fragile’*. A trade unionist (UGT) stated that: *‘It is difficult to adapt the German Dual system to our country essentially because of the type of business structure we have; to have a German Dual system we need to have bigger companies’*.

On the **importance of the Apprenticeship** system the opinions are virtually unanimous. Most of the interviewees considered the programme efficient in providing better skills and qualifications to the needs of the companies. The employer's confederation from commerce and services (CCP) stated: *'The dual model is extremely effective and efficient because it provides knowledge and skills acquired in the companies'*. The German Luso chamber of commerce and industry (CCILA) also referred to the qualifications the system brings to the companies, stating that, *'The apprenticeship system is what companies want most due to the qualifications it provides'*. One of the companies interviewed valued the Apprenticeship for the technical training component it provides, referring this as a critical need for the companies, stating that, *'The strong point of the Apprenticeship is the technical training that provides'*.

Others referred to the know-how the Apprenticeship brings to the companies. The country's largest employers' confederation (CIP) stated, *'The Apprenticeship system responds to a concrete need and, in addition, is an added value to the know-how introduced in the companies'*. The representative of the sectoral association (AINMAP) also stated, *'The Apprenticeship is also a know-how introduced in the companies'*. Moreover, the works council considered the programme a 'win-win' experience stating that *'The Dual system is a way to show our know-how and for us it is also a learning experience'*.

The employability factor was also highlighted by most of the interviewees as an extremely important advantage of Dual VET programmes in relation to school-based VET programmes. The country's largest employers' confederation stated: *'We have an employability rate of 98-99%'*. A training centre stated that, *'The Apprenticeship system is a key factor of employability'*.

For these main reasons it was emphasised that this type of vocational programme should be further enhanced. The country's largest employers' confederation stated: *'the importance given to dual training has to be greater because companies are already going to war to keep apprenticeship trainees'*, adding that, *'we have to change the view that it is the university graduates that are qualified'*.

But the Apprenticeship system ended up being valued, also, if not primarily, for the dual certification it provides, i.e., education and vocational certification (ISCED 3 and Level IV vocational qualification), thus conferring social mobility. The VET Association (ANESPO) and a VET school, made reference to the dual certification as *'an added value of the Portuguese VET and Apprenticeship system'* saying that *'this makes it the best in relation to other European VET systems countries'*.

Despite the advantages and value attributed to the Apprenticeship system, there was another reality assessed by most of the interviewees. Dual VET programmes, as well as VET programmes are a second choice and not recognised nor valued as a path for regular students but mostly as a path for students coming from families with disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. We have tackled this issue in the desk research identifying a set of academic studies that address impact of the students' socioeconomic background on their reasoning towards education paths and choices. Moreover, most of these studies (e.g., Justino, D; Santos, R, 2017; Comenda, 2017; Doroftei, 2020) point to the stigma associated to the Apprenticeship, some of them concluding that the weak social relevance



of the functions for which VET and Apprenticeship students are being prepared for the labour market, somehow have contributed to the devaluation of VET. This is a stigmatisation that was confirmed by most of the interviewees in the fieldwork who even considered that this issue is an obstacle to the growth of the system. One of trade unionist (CGTP) stated that: *'The Apprenticeship system is the last resort for young people'* and the other one stated that, *The Apprenticeship is linked to weaker students'*.

Moreover, the VET Association as well as one sectoral training centre have referred to the Apprenticeship as *'the broom-car of the system'*, meaning that in order to sweep the indicators of school failure from the statistics, pupils are pushed (swept) into the Apprenticeship.

Asked about what could be done to reverse this perceptions, most of the interviewees opinions were that to improve the social perception associated to the Apprenticeship programmes, one of the possible future solutions would be the upgrading level of qualifications of the Apprenticeship to level V. As CGTP stated, *'level V is the recognition of the competences acquired by the young people in Apprenticeship, and the idea is to facilitate the progression to higher education of those young people who cannot pass to this level of education'*. UGT stated that *'the introduction of level V in the Apprenticeship is a very positive measure because it will contribute to the recognition of the competences provided by the system'*.

The creation of level V in the Apprenticeship is a measure discussed within the New Agreement for Vocational Training and Qualifications negotiations, and later included in the final draft of this Agreement. However, the issue of level V in the Apprenticeship is not new as it has been discussed among the VET and Dual VET stakeholders and social partners in the board of IEFPP prior to the Agreement. As IEFPP stated, *'the question of apprenticeship going to level V is an old one, and the social partners have been included in this discussion'*. The introduction of level V is a policy measure included in the 'Portuguese Recovery and Resilience Plan for 2026', but the timeframe of the implementation of this measure is not yet defined.

The opinions between social partners on this measure for the Apprenticeship system were consensual. The representatives of the VET Associations stated that: *'We mobilised UGT and CGTP to address level V in Apprenticeship and this new agreement is consensual between the social partners'*. The CGTP stated that, *'Level V is the recognition of acquired skills and allows the Apprenticeship to facilitate the progression of these young people in education'*; UGT stated that *'the introduction of level V in the Apprenticeship is a very positive measure because it will contribute to the recognition of the competences provided by the system'*. The largest employers' confederations (CIP) stated that: *'We are moving in the positive direction and as regards the Apprenticeship because there is recognition of the importance of this level V of qualification, and the employer's confederation for commerce and services (CCP) stated that 'We see the extension of level V in Apprenticeship as a favourable future'*.

In general, the **concept of Dual VET** was not questioned, but its development was understood by most of the interviewees (employers' confederations, trade unions, VET association, training centres, sectoral associations and VET schools) to be conditioned by financing mechanisms and respective regulation, mainly because:

- i) It does not finance shorter classes: the funding is defined by number of students per class (minimum 20 students). One of two things happen with the current legislation: in regions with less population, applications are not eligible because, in most of these cases, this number is not reached; or the eligibility is guaranteed if the proponents combine different courses in one class. For that it was considered that the funding should take in consideration the specificity of the regions in terms of the school population, allowing the funding of classes with fewer students than regulated.
- ii) It does not finance shorter courses: the curricula of the Apprenticeship system are similar to the curricula of VET courses, in terms of total hours of training. The proposal of some social partners is to allow the creation of shorter courses, under an Apprenticeship programme with a less demanding curricula in terms of number of hours, e.g. individual training workshops and learning-projects, to be financed within the framework of existing financing instruments. It does not confer transparency because there are differences in the financing model of VET and Apprenticeship. This issue of transparency was referred to the model of financing of VET and the Apprenticeship, due to: the different sources of financing (budget from the Ministry of Education and the budget from the IEFP resulting from the social tax the Single and the European fundings); and allegations of VET providers offering discontinued courses. Most of the interviewees also considered the need to integrate the two current models of financing (VET and Dual VET) in order to bring more transparency to the system. The research team found interesting the statement of the representative of IEFP who said: *‘The Apprenticeship is a very well hidden system in our country’*, referring to the fact that no one knew exactly some of the rules of the system. The country’s largest employers’ confederation stated that, *‘The financing model is not transparent’*. One of the companies interviewed stated: *‘If the funding mechanisms were clearer more companies would join’*. Moreover, about his issue of transparency, one of the trade unionist (UGT) stated that, *‘When it comes to European funds, everyone pulls its own strings, and the Ministry of Education is calling the shots’*.

Another obstacle to the further development of Dual VET programmes was addressed by most of the interviewees as being the weak involvement of companies in the training, the weakness of its organisational structure to receive trainees due to their dimension (micro and SMEs), as well as in its funding. The representative of the IEFP stated, *‘More could be done to involve the companies in the training but there are financial constraints’*. This statement has been corroborated by one of the employers’ confederation (CCP). One trade unionist (CGTP) said, *‘The question of financing has to be studied and we have been in dialogue with companies so that they finance the training, and we discuss this issues in the CPCS’*, adding that, *‘We have been in dialogue with companies so that they finance training’*. One representative of a company that is a IEFP partner for Apprenticeship since the beginning of the programme, stated that: *‘If we had more companies funding training, we would have much more Dual’*.

It was further mentioned as critical to the development of the system, the urgent need to update and provide greater flexibility to the National Catalogue for Qualifications (Catálogo Nacional para as Qualificações – CNQ) and to the creation of new training courses required by the new economy (digital economy). Although most of the social partners and stakeholders have referred to their positive intervention in ANQEP’s

Sectoral Councils for Qualifications, the outcomes of this intervention seems to be missing the needs of skills in companies. One of the representatives of a company said that: *‘We are now needing hydrogen skills because we are already working on hybrid cars and the CNQ references do not match’*. Another company said, *‘We have a great shortage of injection moulding technicians, but we can't get an answer from the IEFP’*. One unionist (UGT) emphasised this issue by stating: *‘We have great need for a restructuring of the skills and competencies’*. Moreover, there was the reference made by the sectoral association that stated: *‘The national qualifications catalogue (CNQ) has a very theoretical top-down design’*

### 3. Involvement of the social partners on recent dual VET/apprenticeships reforms

The most recent reform in the Apprenticeship has been worked within a New Agreement for Vocational Training and Qualifications. The Apprenticeship system is one of the subjects included in this reform, and one of the issues addressed by the social partners and other stakeholders has been the upgrading of the qualification level in the system (creation of level V Apprenticeship courses). This measure was already framed within the National Plan for Economic and Social Stabilisation 2020 (Plano de Estabilização Económica e Social 2020 - PEES) and the National Plan for Economic Recovery 2020-2030 (Plano de Recuperação Económica- PRR).

As reported above, the upgrading of Apprenticeship courses to level V of qualification, had the agreement of most of the social partners that consider the measure an important step to the valorisation of the programme.

The main objective of this upgrading was not only to dignify the Apprenticeship but to expand the courses to post-secondary level as well as the (re)organisation of the post-secondary Technological Specialization Courses (CET). This issue was of major importance to one of the larger training centres in the mechanical sector in the country that stated: *‘CETs are outdated. The level V in Apprenticeship will not only dignify the system but also integrate the CETs in this training offer, giving it a row structure in terms of curricular design’*.

We have been referring to the changes foreseen by the new Agreement for Vocational Training and Qualifications, as a stepping stone to the improvement of the participation of the social partners in the governance of the Apprenticeship, through the extended social dialogue undertaken. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security convened a working group with the participation of the Ministry of Education, of social partners with a seat in the CPCS, regulatory agencies for VET and Dual VET (IEFP and ANQEP), education and training experts, and the association for private VET schools. The different social partners and stakeholders, including the public (regulatory) entities, and all the other participants presented their proposals for initial and continuous training. The first draft was then discussed by the main social partners in the tripartite CPCS. The social partners were given the opportunity to make their views known, incorporating any contributions they deemed necessary. After this discussion the final version of the document was signed by all social partners with a seat in the CPCS, but one.

In this Agreement it was established to “extend the Apprenticeship System to Level 5 of the National Qualifications Framework (*Quadro Nacional de Qualificações – QNQ*) (mentioned above), in order to deepen the dual training experience, to intermediate qualification levels in areas of strong qualification levels and of strong employability and to consider the labour market needs” (p.14-15).

As referred, one trade union, the CGTP, did not sign the Agreement, arguing that: “matters considered fundamental for workers are absent in the document proposed by the Government in Social Concertation, besides the insufficient and sometimes inadequate nature of the measures put forward”.<sup>2</sup>

The main arguments presented by CGTP were<sup>3</sup>:

- i) The proposals that envisaged a reinforcement of the participation of trade unions in the companies were not accepted, namely in the monitoring of the training provided. This would contribute to the reinforcement of its quality and adequacy to the workers' needs.
- ii) The access to vocational training of those workers with deregulated working hours, night work and rotating shifts is still not resolved, because the student status for the employees was not strengthened in the agreement and has not been made compulsory for companies to articulate working hours.
- iii) The workers with precarious employment contracts were excluded from access to training.
- iv) Nothing is foreseen in the agreement in terms of wages and career development for workers who obtain higher qualifications, adding that there is no reference to "stimulating collective bargaining".

This position of CGTP confirms the statements made during the interviews by most of the social partners that there is consensus on general issues regarding the importance of vocational training, but that this is no longer the case when it comes to detailed issues. As the country's larger employers' confederation stated: ‘*Social dialogue has a common denominator in vocational training*’ reinforcing that: ‘*In terms of major principles of training there is a very broad base and no divergence*’ but also adding that: ‘*vocational training has a very broad base of consensus although the trade unions link training to careers*’. The trade unionist, in this specific case, the CGTP, stated that: ‘*If we are talking only about the principles of vocational training, there is consensus; the problem is when we get down to concrete issues*’.

#### 4. Dual VET and collective bargaining

Collective bargaining in matters of initial training of young people (work-based training and internships) was not observed. The compliance with the regulation, established in the training contract (*contrato de formação*) of the Apprenticeship is carried out by the training centres jointly with the companies. These companies have implemented their own organisation structure to provide the training and to guarantee the compliances with the regulation.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://observador.pt/2021/07/27/cgtp-in-rejeita-subscrever-acordo-de-formacao-e-qualificacao-profissional/>

<sup>3</sup> CGTP on the Vocational Agreement: <https://observador.pt/2021/07/27/cgtp-in-rejeita-subscrever-acordo-de-formacao-e-qualificacao-profissional/>

There is not a negotiation process with the involvement of trade unions and employers that determine the terms of employment and/or internships and the training in the Apprenticeship. As the CGTP stated, *‘a consequent training policy is collective bargaining. But when we go for this type of question, the agreement is immediately over’*.

As referred above, the terms of the training and the internships are legislated by the state (*contrato de formação*) and regulated by the respective regulatory agencies, that in the case of the Apprenticeship is the IEFP. The compliance with these regulations is verified by this institute which affirms the confidence it has in its training providers with whom it contracts. As stated by IEFP, *‘There is a monitoring system in place, and we are outsourcing a service entrusted to us by the State, so, scrutiny applies to all funded entities with whom we have a relationship of trust, accountability and evaluation’*.

## 5. Dual VET governance at political-strategic level

The training policies and strategies, whether initial or continuous, are discussed in the CPCS with the participation of social partners. As one of these social partners (UGT) stated: *‘Social Dialogue essentially takes place in the CPCS’*.

The CPCS is the institution who currently possess or have formally the legal competences to negotiate, through social dialogue, general regulations of the VET systems, or negotiate strategic priorities with regard to VET and dual VET. It can organize working groups to discuss policy measures and regulations on vocational training and these have the participation, by invitation, of other partners, stakeholders or institutions, such as representatives of the ministry of education, and of labour, VET school’s associations and regulatory agencies. Other working groups are formed at the invitation of ministerial entities to discuss VET or Dual VET matters in order to ensure wider consensus. The key participants in these groups are the social partners with a seat in the CPCS. These social partners are the four employers’ confederations (business confederation, tourism confederation, agriculture confederation and the confederation for commerce and services) and the two main workers’ confederations, the UGT and CGTP.

The strategies to implement continuous training and Apprenticeship (Dual VET) policies are discussed in the IEFP, which is the institution with legal competencies on Dual VET (Apprenticeship) and has the participation of representatives of social partners with a seat in the CPCS, in its board of directors. Other government agencies participate in this board such as the National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Training (Agência Nacional para as Qualificações e o Ensino Profissional – ANQEP).

The IEFP's board of directors meets monthly, with the presence of the President of this institute and the representatives of the social partners. They discuss the plan of activities of IEFP in all matters of employment policies, initial and continuing vocational training and funding issues approving the respective plan. As the representative of the IEFP stated: *‘All social partners are involved in the decisions’*.

Thus, social partners are represented in these two main tripartite institutions where they present their proposals and express their opinions about VET and Dual VET strategies and policies. However, all of them stated that their role is merely consultative. In fact, all of them agreed with the statement forwarded by the country’s largest employers confederation that their role in these two main tripartite governance institutions is mainly

advisory. This confederation (CIP) stated: *‘We certainly have an active voice, however, do not have the decision’*. The UGT added: *‘Social dialogue is discussed primarily in the CPCS, where social partners have only an advisory role’*. This trade unionist presented recent concerns following covid-19 stating that: *‘The pandemic worsened the social dialogue; even at CPCS it is difficult to improve the conversations’*.

Despite considering that IEFP is a more flexible structure, financial issues were pointed out as the main constraint to a more effective role in its governance. In IEFP social partners discuss the allocation of funds to each of the regional delegations, but the negotiations end up being inconsequential given the financial constraints perceived by the IEFP representative. The most critic to this institution was the CGTP in relation to the lack of responses to requests for information that would allow an assessment of the system and, thus, enable social partners to understand where they can intervene to the improvement of quality of the training. This trade unionist indicated that they have been critical to the method and type of training, as they feel *‘this training is it is not qualifying’*, stating that *‘often this training is a training that works for statistics’* and reinforced the critics stating that: *‘We participate in the board of directors of IEFP, and we have been very critical of the training, its means and functioning’*.

Moreover, some social partners considered that results on negotiations often occur if the government is present. The country’s largest employers’ confederation stated that: *‘The most important spaces for social dialogue are those we have with the presence of the Government and where IEFP is also present’*. The employers’ confederation for tourism (CTP) stated that: *‘We get results when we have the government present’*.

The public entities interviewed have a different perspective on the effectiveness participation of social partners in governance structures. The IFEP stated: *‘the trade union confederations could go much further but are more reactive than proactive’* adding that: *‘All social partners are involved in the decisions, but their weakness is that they themselves are training providers’*.<sup>4</sup>

The lack of dialogue between unions in the Apprenticeship was also pointed as a difficulty to further negotiations and influence in the decision process. This issue was pointed by the UGT that stated: *‘Social dialogue with results requires partners on both sides with joint priorities and common goals to negotiate’*. This social partner gave the example of what he considered a success of European social dialogue, where all unions are represented and share common goals, referring particularly to the European Alliance for the Apprenticeships, in which other stakeholders and organisations are involved in the negotiations, stating that: *‘The issue of social dialogue in Portugal has to be something integrated, holistic, in which everyone can participate’*.

## 6. Dual VET governance at technical-strategic level

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<sup>4</sup> Referring only to the school-based VET system, and not to the Apprenticeship, the Secretary of State for Education was even more critic to the role of the social partners stating that: *‘We need everyone but we do not have much need for corporatist positions’*.

The IEFP and ANQEP are the most important state institutions (regulations agencies) to conduct research on VET and Dual VET aiming the evaluation of the system, link it with the labour market, provide technical advice to the government, and recognising and developing training regulations and curricula.

IEFP has legal competencies on Dual VET, implements active employment policies, matches job supplies and demand, provides training directly or in collaboration (contractual) with other entities, and ensures the development of policies of the employment system.

ANQEP has legal competencies on VET, regulates and boosts the supply of VET, coordinates the design of pathways as well as curricula developments and methodologies and manages the QNQ. Social partners are involved in the ANQEP's general council (*concelho geral*) and in the Sectoral Councils for Qualifications (*Conselhos Sectoriais para as Qualificações*) to incorporate the skills and qualifications required by the labour market.

The general council<sup>5</sup> is a body for consultation, support and participation in the definition of the general lines of action of the ANQEP, and the deliberations of its directive council. This body meets twice a year, and the social partners attend these meetings on invitation to discuss the VET policies of the agency. The Sectoral Councils for Qualifications<sup>6</sup> are consultative bodies that support the ANQEP in updating the National Catalogue of Qualifications, whose main task is to identify the strategic and essential qualifications for the different sectors of the economy as a response to the challenges of the labour market. These Sectoral Councils meet whenever it is necessary to update or introduce a new qualification by the suggestion of professional schools, or by companies and/or sector associations. The social partners and other stakeholders are invited to participate in the process of updating or of creation of these qualifications.

Social partners, specially the trade unions, were very critical on their participation in the general council of ANQEP on what concerns the regularity with which meetings are held and also concerning their contributions to the policies and general actions of this Agency. About the meetings they do not always take place during the year, and when they do occur social partners consider that their role results in the fulfilment of the norm of their formal participation since they go to these meetings to sign documents already prepared by the institution without their intervention or in-put. As the country's largest employers' confederation stated, *'we are represented in the ANQEP, but our role is merely advisory, and we sign what they put in front of us already in final version'*.

The opinions on their participation in the Sectoral Councils for Qualifications is more positive than that of their participation in the general council of ANQEP. Social partners participate in the upgrading or in the creation of a new qualification to be included in the National Catalogue for Qualifications (*Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações*). When a new qualification has the agreement of all the participants (social partners, stakeholders, companies, experts, etc...), in its design and the approval of the government, the next step is the creation of a sectoral council. About a more positive role of the social partners in

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<sup>5</sup> Order nº 4065/2020, 2 of April. This more recent order extended the representation of other organisations beyond the representation of the social partners.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dgert.gov.pt/conselhos-sectoriais-para-a-qualificacao-csq>

the governance of CSQ, one trade unionist (CGTP) stated: *‘CSQs work relatively well, but in the end ANQEP is the one who decides’*.

Despite the more positive opinions on their interventions in this sectoral governance structure, there were critics to the slowness of the processes of implementing the negotiated and approved updated or new qualifications. One of the trade unionist (UGT) stated about this issue that: *‘ANQEP bases its activity in the sectoral councils, and there we have more intervention although the proposals take time to be implemented’*. This trade unionist added: *‘There is a structural slowness of the system to adapt more quickly to the needs of the market and of workers’*. The other trade unionist (CGTP), stated: *‘It is very difficult to enter our proposals for the CNQ as the changes are not quick enough’*.

The curricular of the Apprenticeship courses, however, does not have their intervention. The Apprenticeship curriculum, as well as the VET courses, has four training components: the sociocultural, scientific, technical and practical (work based training).

The contents and the training hours of the first three components are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. The practical component is where the intervention of the social partners and other stakeholders intervene in the Sectoral Councils for Qualifications, although some intervention can occur in specific training areas in the technical training component of the curriculum, particularly if the representatives of the social partners have the expertise to contribute to this work. The upgrading of a qualification or the creation of a new one, must correspond to the curricular matrix.

There is often close collaboration between the trainer and the company tutor for a more precise definition of the technical contents (e.g. electricity areas, mechanical, cooking and bar, etc...) but there is no intervention of the social partners in this methodology.

Both regulatory agencies, IEFP and ANQEP, have the participation of social partners in their board of directors: IEFP discusses continuous VET and Dual VET policies and technical issues and ANQEP discuss VET policies and its developments. The CSQ meet when it is necessary to update qualifications or create new ones. Social partners and other stakeholders of VET and Dual VET systems can ask for a meeting to discuss the upgrade or a new qualification to be introduced in the National Catalogue for Qualifications.

The information on the needs of the labour market (qualifications needs) is taken from a local survey on intermediate level training needs, that aims to allow an alignment between the supply and demand for training. This diagnosis named the Anticipation of Intermediate Qualifications Needs (*Sistema de Antecipação de Necessidades de Formação de Nível Intermédio* – SANQ) is launched and supported by ANQEP and takes into account the needs of the local and regional labour market.

The entities involved in the SANQ are the regional and local authorities, intermunicipal communities, VET schools (private and public networks), and sectoral companies located regionally or locally, which are consulted on the qualifications they most need. Social partners (employers’ confederations and trade union confederation) do not participate in this diagnosis. However, regionally, sectoral associations are involved in providing information about the respective sectors of activity.

The involvement of social partners in ANQEP was considered more productive in the CSQs than in the general council but criticise the slowness of the processes of implementing the negotiated and approved updated or new qualifications.



When asked about the quality standards of the system, only one social partners, mentioned monitoring the EQAVET programme but to the best of its ability. On this issue UGT stated: *‘UGT monitors EQAVET to the best of our ability and even here there is more need for integration between systems’*.

The representative of ANQEP mentioned that the agency was launching local initiatives to comply with the EQAVET programme, involving the Intermunicipal Communities (Comunidades Intermunicipais – CIM) and public schools with VET.

There was any reference to the EFQEA (European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships).

It was not quite clear that this issue was on the agenda of the social partners, but policies about quality of the system are contemplated in the New Agreement for Vocational Training and Qualifications, namely, the “...*strengthening of the mechanisms for periodic monitoring of the certified entities, strengthening the articulation with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (Quadro de Referência Europeu de Garantia de Qualidade para o Ensino e Formação Profissional – EQAVET)*” (p.6).

These agencies/ institutions could benefit from the involvement of social partners in the monitoring of the training process, and in the anticipation of the training needs (SANQ). As stated above, the limited or non-existent involvement of social partners in these technical and operational matters led CGTP not to sign the New Agreement for Vocational Training and Qualifications. Social partners participate in the monitoring of the training process only in those companies where there are unions represented.

There should be more information about the importance and relevance of trade union organisations on these issues, namely the monitoring of training conditions and the guarantee of the quality of training through the implementation of the EQAVET so that the social partners understand what is asked of them and can help in decision-making. The representative of UGT stated: *‘We in UGT try, through our trade unions to do something more, but we feel that there should also be more information about our role and the importance of our role in these issues in order to work on the decision-making process; at European level it is the same, there is a lack of information on the relevance of our role in the development of the system’*.

## 7. Dual VET governance at technical operational level

At state level the IEFP is the major institution that provides Apprenticeship directly, through their training centres, or subcontracting external entities to provide the training. This subcontracting creates relations of institutional dependency in both financial and technical terms. The representative of the IEFP stated that: *‘The scrutiny applies to all entities funded by the IEFP and is based on a relationship of trust’*. A sectoral training centre made reference to their dependency relationship with the IEFP in matters of training, stating that: *‘We have an institutional dependency from the IEFP in all matters related to training and monitoring’*.

There is a system in place to monitor working conditions and apprenticeship placements,

implemented and regulated by the IEFP. The compliance with these regulations is verified by this institute which affirms the confidence it has in its training providers with whom it contracts. The representative of IEFP stated that: *‘There is a monitoring system in place, and we are outsourcing a service entrusted to us by the State, so, scrutiny applies to all funded entities with whom we have a relationship of trust, accountability and evaluation’*. The representative of IEFP added to this statement that: *‘We do not have human resources to monitor the working conditions’*.

Sectoral associations monitor the working conditions of the apprentices in their own training centres together with the companies without further negotiations. This applies to all the training centres that provide Apprenticeship. One training centres said: *‘The training entities are the ones that protect the trainees and there is no social dialogue with the worker’s committees’*.

Trade unions monitor where there is a union organisation. The “New Agreement for Vocational Training and Qualifications” did not contemplate changes with regard to the reinforcement of the participation of trade unions in the companies namely in the monitoring of the training provided. As referred above, this was one of the reasons given by the CGTP for not signing this Agreement. CGTP stated about this issue that: *‘In companies where we have an effective union organisation, we manage to monitor the working conditions of apprentices; the problem is in companies where there is no such representation’*. The UGT indicated *‘We have many difficulties in dialoguing with trade unions on these issues’*.

Social partners (employers’ confederations and trade unions) have a limited role in implementing policies/measures other than in their training centres via their sectoral associations, but this role refers to training and applying for the respective funding. The country’s largest employers’ confederation stated on this issue their lack of interest: *‘It is not our job to understand whether things are going well or not. The protocol training centres, and sectoral associations have that function and we have the information’*.

The follow-up and monitoring of the training and/or internships does not have the direct intervention of the social partners. The UGT indicated *‘We have many difficulties in dialoguing with trade unions on these issues’*. This is the responsibility of the training centres that work together with the companies in the follow-up and monitoring. The same is true with regard to guaranteeing working conditions/internships where the social partners, as CGTP stated, only intervene in those companies where they have trade union representation. The works councils do not intervene in the internships let alone the working conditions or in the planning of the internships. The works council interviewed said about this issue that: *‘We will accompany if there are any problems that are brought to our attention; the union in our sector is very closed in on itself’*.

Governance at technical-operational level is delegated to the training operators, be they schools or training centres, and IEFP oversees it based on trust. Regulatory agencies monitor without direct intervention, unless there are glaring issues that require their intervention. Even the companies with internships have referred that operationally they cooperate with the training centres with which they have good relations to monitor all conditions and application of the legislation.

The works councils do not interfere in the evaluation and monitoring of the students or in training outcomes. One company interviewed said that: *‘We have a*

*workers 'council that is quite active, but they do not attend to training issues'; A training centre said: 'The involvement of trade unions bypasses us. However, there were references to the contribution of these representative structures to the fulfilment of the companies' objectives' in providing internships, by not being involved in these issues, but by being informed by the Human Resources about the traineeship programme. .*

The Governance of VET and Dual VET at strategic, technical and operational level was the target of the greatest criticism by practically all those interviewed. The main criticism referred to the lack of coordination and articulation between VET and the Apprenticeship. It was considered by some interviewees that because of the lack of effective articulation between the two systems, the training system remains a marginal structure and many of the decisions on VET (*school-based VET*) are bypassed by the training system. The Apprenticeship system is not reflected in the Law of the Education System of 1986 (*Lei de bases do Sistema Educativo – LBSE 1986*) and social partners as well as the stakeholders interviewed said that this Law should be amended to incorporate the Apprenticeship system. As a training centre stated: *'From a legislative point of view, it is important to clarify the role of apprenticeship and to integrate it into the LBSE 1986'*. The UGT stated: *'The number one priority for the education and training system was the integration of these two systems in the LBSE 1986 as only this would resolve the division that exists between the two ministries'*.

Moreover, the interviewees indicated that the integration of the Apprenticeship in the LBSE 1986 would bring more 'transparency' to the financing model of VET and Dual VET programmes. The country's largest employers' confederation stated: *'There has been an allocation of funds from the Ministry of Labour to Education; this is a struggle between these two Ministries and this war is taking funds from us'*

These views are supported by most of the interviewees that identified the role of regulatory agencies in the system, namely IEFP and ANQEP/Ministry of Education as competitive, undermining good policy integration. The IEFP was referred to as the owner of the Apprenticeship. The VET association said about the role of the IEFP in the Apprenticeship system that: *'The IEFP is Napoleonic, imperial and runs on its own track, since it manages 5% of the single social tax, which covers everything'*. ANQEP/Ministry of Education is the owner of VET. A sectoral training centre stated that: *'ANQEP today is an actor defending the cause of Education and not the cause of Education and Vocational Training'*. It was interesting the opinion of one of the companies interviewed about this issue. This company who is a major training and internships provider in the country stated that: *'The IEFP has a relative weight because who has weight in the ANQEP bodies are the VET schools and not the companies or the social partners'*.

It was also stated that IEFP had no say in the National Qualification Framework (*Quadro Nacional de Qualificações*) and that ANQEP did not have jurisdiction over the Apprenticeship system. Although IEFP is a member of the board of ANQEP it has a less intervening role in the operationalisation of the National Catalogue of Qualifications, but participates in the approval process relating to the NQF and the CNQ. The New Agreement for Vocational Training and Qualifications provides for the creation of an Interministerial Commission for the Coordination of the Education and Vocational Training system (*Comissão Interministerial de Coordenação do Sistema de Educação e*

Formação). This measure seems to be able to respond to the concerns expressed by the interviewees regarding the lack of articulation and coordination between the systems.

## **8. Technical operational level: dual VET in practice (cross-case study analysis)**

For the case studies the research team identified the main providers of Dual VET and Apprenticeship courses in the country and the main partners of the IEFP for the Apprenticeship. For each of these case studies there were two to three companies interviewed that work in collaboration, through partnership agreements, with the training providers. Eight companies that establish partnership agreements with training centres to carry out Apprenticeship placements were interviewed.

The case study one (CS1) is constituted by companies who are partners of the IEFP for the Apprenticeship. One company (C1) is a Portuguese medium sized mould manufacturer which has been acquired in 2016 by a large national group company of the named GLN, and is a member of the National Association of the Mouldmaking Industry. Another company (C2) is a Portuguese large company with more than 70 years dedicated to the automotive industry and sector and is also a training provider (initial and continuous) through its own training centre. This company has had a partnership with IEFP for training since 1983.

The case study two (CS2), is constituted by companies who are partners of a major training centre in the areas of metallurgy and metalworking for the Apprenticeship and continuous vocational training. One company (C3) is a Portuguese medium sized company of mould design and programming and is a member of the National Association of the Mouldmaking Industry. Another company (C4) is a large sized tyre manufacturer that develop pioneering technologies and services for sustainable and connected mobility. This company started as a joint venture between a Portuguese company and a German one, but since 1993 the German company became the sole shareholder of the company. The third company (C5) of this case study, is a Portuguese small to medium sized company specialised in the execution of industrial projects and equipment, developing tailor-made automation solutions.

The case study three (CS3), is constituted by companies who are partners of the German oriented training centre that provides Dual VET and Apprenticeship courses in the country. One company (C6) is a Portuguese large sized shipbuilding, repair and maintenance yard of the Portuguese Navy, other navies of NATO and commercial. The other company (C7) is a French large sized automotive equipment production and engineering group.

The fourth case study was not completed because only one company has answered to the interview. This case study was from a private VET school that provides Apprenticeship courses. Most of these apprenticeship courses are in the tourism area, but the school provides Apprenticeship in the areas of automation and electronics. None of the tourism companies' partners of this VET school for the Apprenticeship responded to the interview request. Only one company (C8) in the area of electronics and automation responded to this request. This company is a Portuguese small to medium sized company specialized

in the areas of oil-hydraulics, pneumatics and vacuum that supplies industrial automation solutions.

In the case studies, no issues were identified that went beyond the perceptions and opinions put forward in the interviews conducted with social partners, stakeholders and regulators of the VET and the Apprenticeship system. The companies have pointed out the importance of the Apprenticeship for enhancing skills necessary to develop their activity.

However, they confirmed that they do not have an **active role** in finding apprentices nor in taking the initiative to contact the VET schools or training centres that provide the training. One of the companies (C7) from the case study three (CS3) stated: *‘We only receive the trainees; we do not look for them’*. The representative of the training centre of this case study confirmed this statement saying: *‘We are the ones who make the contacts with the companies’*. Company C8 stated: *‘we do not develop any initiative to with the regulators or the training centres to ask for more training or trainees, because the companies do not respond, from a salary point of view, to the expectations of the young people and young people do not like to spend time learning’*.

Only one company (C2) from the case study one (CS1) has referenced its role in finding apprentices and training them due to the constant need to update the areas of knowledge of its activity. The representative of this company stated: *‘if there are no competencies available we train the workers and the apprentices’*, adding that: *‘the reason for our existence is to train young people for our needs; we do not train for the market, but for us, and thinking of us’*. The representative of IEFP stated about this company that: *‘in this company a practically immersion Dual system is developed’*.

Throughout the case studies interviews there were no references to problematic aspects of the **bureaucratic process** in engaging companies. The training centres referred to the effort made in finding partners (companies) to place the trainees, but did not point out any bureaucratic difficulty in engaging companies. Although there was an aspect highlighted as causing some obstacles to a greater involvement of companies in the Apprenticeship. This aspect was the size of most of the companies with which the training entities establish partnerships. A trade unionist (CGTP) stated about this issue that: *‘Not all companies can take on trainees and apprentice’*.

This question contributes, in some way, to closer relations and the establishment of collaborative actions between training providers and the companies, and the bureaucratic process is made easier or even non-existent.

All the companies from the case studies have their **organization and structure** set up to provide internships and accompany the whole process of training through a tutor or a supervisor that communicates regularly with the training centre. Company C1 from case study one (CS1) stated: *‘We have a very close tutor; we define the internship plan with the training centre and human resources monitor the fulfilment of the plan’*. Company C2 from this case study stated: *‘We are also trainers and have an organisation prepared to receive trainees who come from IEFP or other entities’*. Companies from case study three (CS3) also referred to their organisation in preparing to receive the apprentices: Company C6 stated that: *‘We have a mentoring system but before we take on trainees, we do an assessment of the skills with which they come from the training’*. Company C7 stated that: *‘The supervisor is responsible for the trainee and the director of Human Resources is the guarantor that the objectives of the traineeship are being achieved’*. The companies from

case study 2 (CS2) have similar organisations and did not present any difficulties in the process of monitoring internships.

Moreover, companies referred to the context of collaboration with training centres, both for the resolution of possible technical problems, concerning, for example, the legislation on internships, for the monitoring process and for clarifications concerning the skills obtained in training and their suitability for the company.

Cooperation, thus, takes place almost exclusively between training entities and the companies that provide internships. Some companies have referred to the relationship of dependency they have with the training providers, and this was for two main reasons: first, they do not have in-depth knowledge of the legislation inherent to the training and the internships, second, they have difficulties in finding competencies they need for their activity. To fill this gap found in the market, the training entities end up providing these competencies in bringing the apprentices to the companies. On this issue the VET Association said: *'The school or training centres must be a back-up to the needs of companies'*.

Most of the training centres have institutional relationships with sectoral associations, but the majority does not have the support of these associations for the activities they develop. This issue was mainly addressed by the companies. On one hand, one company (C5) from case study two (CS2) said that a benefit of the Apprenticeship is that: *'As we are associated with the sectoral association, we have discounts at the training centre'*. On the other hand, other companies do not see benefits in being associated. One company (C3) from CS2 stated: *'We do not see that the associations represent us'*. Moreover, this company representative stated that: *'I am a non-believer in some associative processes because I only see results for a small nucleus'*. Furthermore, the company (C5) from case study two (CS2) indicated that: *'There are some sectoral associations that play an important and strong role in training, but we do not benefit from this training' and 'we have no formal interest in the relationship with associations'*.

The exception made to one of the training centres which carries out its activity fundamentally for associated companies and large companies with foreign capital. This German oriented training centre has the support of the chamber of commerce especially in promoting dual VET, alongside the role it has been developing in Dual VET in the country. It also contracts with the IEFPP establishing partnerships with national companies for internships. This training centre said: *'We contractualise Dual VET with IEFPP'*. The training centre from case study 2 (CS2) stated: *'We have a co-management relationship with our associated companies'*.

As for the role that works councils play and the support they receive by trade unions' confederations and federations this was considered to be totally absent. The company (C6) from case study three (CS3) stated that: *'The union that represents us is outside, they have no intervention in this area'*. A sectoral major training centre from case study two (CS2) stressed that: *'The involvement of trade unions bypasses us'* but added that *'We have a proximity to the social partners but only when we go to the CSQs'*. The company (C4) from case study one (CS4) stated: *'Our negotiating entity is the works council we meet monthly, and we inform them of the trainee's programmes'*.

These statements confirm the findings in the fieldwork about the lack of involvement of the main social partners, particularly the trade unions in the training.

Another aspect addressed by the interviewees was the context of competitive action between the training providers of the two systems, VET and Dual VET, i.e., training centres, private VET schools and public schools with VET programmes, and also social partners that have VET schools or training centres. This competitiveness results from two main situations: i) Demographic decline which is accentuating the competition for students, ii) Financial mechanisms, once the funding, as mentioned, has been channelled to the Education system at the expense of the Apprenticeship (financial competition).

But overall, most of the interviewees have considered benefits of the Apprenticeship in terms of the technical qualifications it provides, the know-how transferred between the different actors involved, and the proximity of the companies with training, contributing factors to greater employability. The works council of one of the case studies stated: *'It is a way for us to show our know-how to young people and for us it is also a learning experience'*. One company (C7) from case study three (CS3) stated: *'Trainees leave here better qualified and their insertion in the labour market is perfectly facilitated'*. Other company (C5) from case study two (CS2) Another company stressed that: *'We are very positive about the apprenticeship system, although we cannot take on all the trainees who come'*.

In general, the Apprenticeship and Dual VET programmes were considered of great value and need in the country, provided that the objectives of each programme and its target population are clarified, and the financing mechanisms improved.

One of the gaps found and assumed by the interviewees was the lack of spaces for reflection and creation of critical mass that would contribute to the production of integrated information on the system and its consequent development.

## 9. Some conclusions and findings

The main conclusion drawn from the fieldwork carried out is that social partners have a merely consultative role in the governance of Dual VET and that their proposals are not considered within the framework of social concertation.

Social dialogue occurs mainly at CPCS, but social partners consider that they do not have the final say or the decisions, and some of them referred that most of their proposals are hampered by financial constraints and the slow implementation of results/outcomes.

Collective bargaining in matters of initial training of young people (work-based training and internships) was not observed. Social partners have no direct involvement in the regulation of working conditions of internships unless there is collective representation in the companies. The works council's follow-up on the trainees without interfering, unless a problem is raised directly. In such cases, they liaise with the human resources departments of the companies.

The lack of dialogue between social partners was assumed to be difficulty to the success of the negotiations since they do not present common or articulated objectives.

Dual VET programmes, such as the Apprenticeship system, were seen as important in providing better skills and qualifications and allowing immediate entry into the labour market, but some concerns were pointed out related to the structuring of the system, namely:

- i) The lack of shorter programmes, and their eligibility for funding.
- ii) The lack of partial certification to guarantee the early leavers the registration of acquired competencies.
- iii) The administrative inflexibility of the composition of the classes subject to financing, i.e., the number of students in a training class.
- iv) The misalignment of adequate training needs with the labour market (digital economy) and the inability of the social partners and other partners and stakeholders to accelerate or reverse the slow update cycle imposed by the system regulators.
- v) The frame of competition between the different VET and Dual VET providers particularly linked to demographic decline but also to the financing.
- vi) The lack of coordination and integrated policies of Education and Training that distorts the system and contributes to the accentuation of competitive frameworks between the regulators.
- vii) The conflict of interests of the different players, due to the duality of positions in the system, as providers and beneficiaries of training.
- viii) The passive role of the companies in finding trainees and/or apprentices and their lack of involvement in the programmes, unless asked by the training providers.

To improve their involvement social partners stated as necessary to have:

- i) Greater involvement in monitoring training conditions, according to the CGTP.
- ii) Involvement in the decisions regarding funding and be given more powers in the regional financial operational programmes according to the employers' confederation of commerce and services.
- iii) Greater involvement in the definition of the contents of qualifications and capacity to accelerate its updating with a view to rapid implementation in the field, according to the country's largest employers' confederation (CIP).
- iv) Promote the transparency of the system through the integration of Education and Training coordinated policies, according to CGTP, UGT, ANESPO, VET Association and one Company (C2).
- v) Increase social dialogue according to UGT.
- vi) Information on the role they are required to play in the various areas of governance, according to UGT and CGTP

In the framework of the New Agreement for Vocational Training and Qualifications most of these main concerns expressed particularly by the social partners, were taken into account in the social concertation by integrating policy measures and guidelines.

Some of the measures and policies of this Agreement are the following:

- i) Increase social dialogue and for that *“the implementation of the Agreement shall be annually the object of discussion and evaluation in the Standing*



- Committee for Social Dialogue and the Permanent Committee of Social Concertation, accompanied by a work group integrating the Government and the Social Partners that shall be created immediately to prepare the timetable and action plan referred to in the previous items and which shall function in ways to be defined jointly” (p.18).*
- ii) Improve the coordination between initial and continuous VET and Dual VET, through the *“creation of an Interministerial Commission for Coordination of the Education and Vocational Training system, within the National Qualifications System, in order to streamline the political-strategic coordination of the system in a transversal way to all qualification levels of the National Qualifications Framework” (p.4).*
  - iii) Confer more transparency to the funding through *“the concentration of vocational training measures, in particular initial and continuing training, in a single operational programme (OP) so as to combat the fragmentation of operational programmes framing vocational training existing in PT 2020” (p.4-5).*
  - iv) Increase the involvement of social partners in the decision process through the *“evaluation of the reinforcement of the role of the Social Partners with a seat on the CPCS in the governance model as Intermediate Bodies in the management of funds, through evaluation of the options for delegating competencies (p.5) as well as “promote the creation of a working group between the IEFP and the management centres to identify critical points and map out solutions associated with the administrative and financial dimensions of management (p.10).*
  - v) Debureaucratising the financing system *“promoting a working group with the objective of simplifying and debureaucratise the administrative-financial procedures regarding access to Community funding for vocational training (p.5).*
  - vi) Allow the funding of smaller training groups, *“making the number of trainees per training group more flexible, in situations and contexts where this is justifiable and duly justified (p.7);*
  - vii) Accelerate the implementation of the CNQ, to *“guarantee a deep and transversal revision of the National Catalogue for Qualifications (CNQ), and establish more transparent, simple and stable updating mechanisms, strengthening the responsiveness to strategic qualifications needs” (p.7)*
  - viii) Create shorter programmes eligible for funding *“through the creation of training paths, in response to specific sectorial needs of the labour market, of short or medium duration, certifiable autonomously but also capitalizable for the completion of qualifications integrated in CNQ” (p.7).*
  - ix) Reinforce the involvement of social partners in the governance structures by *“reinforcing the role and dynamism of the Sector Councils for Qualification (CSQ) and renew the constitution of these structures, ensuring a more agile and strong intervention of the social partners and a greater diversity of stakeholders from the world of work, in supporting ANQEP in updating the CNQ (p.8).*

Other measures directed to the improvement of the participation of companies in the training programmes are considered in the Agreement, i.e., the evaluation of the implementation of a tax benefit or other instruments that are to be negotiated with the

participation of social partners (p.11-12), among other measures concerning the involvement of companies in the education and training system.

Moreover, this New Agreement foresees the reactivation of the National Commission for Apprenticeship (Comissão Nacional de Aprendizagem – CNA) which was the governance space where all matters related to Apprenticeship were discussed and decided. This Commission had been deactivated in 2007 with the constitution of the National Qualifications System (Sistema Nacional de Qualificações – SNQ). If effective, this measure will contribute to an improvement of the level of involvement of social partners in Dual VET governance.

Looking at the main measures embodied in the Agreement it can be considered that there were some improvements in the contribution of social partners to the development and renewal of dual VET policies, through the social dialogue, because most of the concerns addressed are part of the main guidelines expressed in the document.

As noticed above, no further interviews were undertaken after the publication of this New Agreement for Vocational Training and Qualifications signed on the 28th of July, that allows us to confirm an increase in the effective contribution of social partners in the new policy guidelines for Apprenticeship.