

INVOLVE PROJECT: FIELDWORK REPORT SPAIN

Authors: Joan Antoni Serra, Pablo Sanz de Miguel and Marc Caballero



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Glossary

Basque Institute of VET Knowledge: Basque Institute of Vocational Education and Training Knowledge (Instituto Vasco del Conocimiento de la Formación Profesional)

CAFP: Andalusian Vocational Education and Training Council (Consejo Andaluz de Formación Profesional)

CCOO: Workers' Commissions (Comisiones Obreras)

CEA: Confederation of Employers of Andalusia (Confederación de Empresarios de Andalucía)

CEOE: Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organizations (Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales)

CGFP: General Council on Vocational Education and Training (Consejo General de Formación Profesional)

CONFEBASK: Basque Employers' Confederation (Confederación Empresarial Vasca)

CNCP: National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications (Catálogo Nacional de Cualificaciones Profesionales)

CVET: Vocational Training for Employment (Formación Profesional para el Empleo)

CVFP: Basque Vocational Education and Training Council (Consejo Vasco de Formación Profesional)

Dual VET: Dual Vocational Education and Training (Formación Profesional dual)

FEDEA: Applied Economy Research Foundation (Fundación de Estudios de Economía Aplicada)

Foment del Treball: Catalan Employers Federation

General Secretariat for VET: General Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training (Secretaría General de Formación Profesional)

INCUAL: National Institution of Qualifications (Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones)

IVET: Initial Vocational Education and Training (Formación Profesional Inicial)

PIMEC: Micro, small and medium-sized company in Catalonia (Micro, pequeña y mediana empresa de Cataluña)

PP: Popular Party (Partido Popular)

PSOE: Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español)

Public Agency for VET and Professional Qualification of Catalonia: Public Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Professional Qualification of Catalonia (Agencia Pública de Formación y Calificación Profesionales de Cataluña)

SME: Small and Medium Enterprises (Pequeña y Mediana Empresas, PYME)

UGT: General Union of Workers (Unión General de Trabajadores)

UP: Podemos and United Left (Unidas Podemos)

VET: Vocational Education and Training (Formación Profesional)

VET and Professional Qualification Council of Catalonia: Vocational Education and Training and Professional Qualification Council of Catalonia (Consejo de Formación y Calificación Profesionales de Cataluña)

1. Introduction: the aims and methods of this report

This report, which follows the Spanish desk research report of the INVOLVE project (Sanz de Miguel et al., 2021), presents the fieldwork results. As detailed in box 1 below, several VET schemes can be distinguished. Spanish research has mainly focused on dual IVET scheme although it has been researched considering its relationship with CVET system.

Box 1. Main VET schemes

Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET): General or vocational education and training carried out in the initial education system.

Vocational Training for Employment subsystem (CVET): Education or training after initial education and training – or after entry into working life – aimed at helping workers to improve or update their qualifications.

Dual VET or apprenticeship system: Classroom teaching and learning on-the-job alternate at relatively short intervals so that an immediate systematic reflection of the work experience is made possible. This modality is normally based on a formal contract between an employer and a learner, where the learner has a specific status as ‘apprentice’ as defined by labour law. In Spain, this is the traditional IVET system

Alternating VET: a VET system where relatively long phases of full-time school-based vocational education are followed by a phase, usually shorter, of on-the-job learning.

The fieldwork aimed to address four main research objectives:

1. Analyse the main views and discourses of governments/state authorities, trade unions and employer organisations about dual VET systems.
2. Analyse the role played by social dialogue in recent dual IVET reforms and the role played by national governments in fostering consensus on dual IVET among trade unions and employer organisations.
3. Analyse the actual role played by social partners in the dual IVET systems at political-strategic, technical-strategic and technical-operational levels and the extent to which trade unions and employer organisations are involved on an equal footing at the three governance levels.
4. Analyse the cooperation and coordination between companies, VET schools/training centres, trade unions at company level (working committees, etc.) when implementing dual VET schemes

Semi-structured interviews were the main fieldwork method. Fieldwork included 16 interviews which were conducted from March to July 2021 with state/government authorities and social partners. Only with final interview with representative from Ministry of Education was conducted in September 2021

Because Spain is a decentralised political system with 17 so-called Autonomous Communities, all of which have policy powers in educative and VET policies, interviews were also conducted at regional level. To this aim, three Autonomous Communities were selected for an in-depth analysis, namely Catalonia, Basque Country and Andalusia. The distribution of interviews is detailed in table 1 below.

Table 1. Fieldwork distribution

Organisation	Role Interviewed	Abbreviate quotation in the report
CEOE	Director of Training	EO 1
CONFEBASK	Director of Training	EO2
FOMENT DEL TREBALL	President of the Training Commission	EO3
PIMEC	Director of Employment and Training Policies	EO4
CEA	President of the Training Commission	EO5
CCOO NATIONAL	Secretary General of Training	TU1
CCOO BASQUE COUNTRY	Secretariat for Employment and Vocational Qualification	TU2
CCOO CATALONIA	Labour and Economics	TU3
CCOO ANDALUSIA	Secretary for Employment and New Labour Realities	TU4
UGT NATIONAL	Secretary General of Training	TU5
UGT BASQUE COUNTRY	Employment and Training Secretary	TU6
UGT CATALONIA	Equality and Training Secretary	TU7
UGT ANDALUSIA	Technician specialised on VET	TU8
Ministry of Education. General Secretariat for VET	Director of the Technical Cabinet of the General Secretariat for VET	PA1
Department of Education of the Generalitat Catalunya	Deputy Director General of VET Programmes and Projects	PA2
Department of Employment, Training and Self-Employment of Andalusia	Director of Vocational Training for Employment	PA3

Beyond the interviews, three **mini-case studies** have been conducted in each of the Autonomous Communities mentioned above, in order to understand the differences and the similarities between them in terms of organisation, cooperation and coordination between companies, VET schools/training centres and trade unions at company level (research objective 4).

Following this introduction, the report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 summarises key findings stemming from desk research.
- Section 3 analyses state authorities and social partners' views on exiting regulation on dual VET schemes (research objective 1)
- Section 4 analyses social partners' involvement in key VET legal reforms. Section 5 describes the role played by collective bargaining in the regulation of working conditions of apprentices (research objective 2).
- Section 4 analyses the role played by collective bargaining
- Section 6 presents key findings on the social partners' role in the dual VET system of governance (research objective 3).
- Finally, section 7 presents key findings from three mini-case studies which analyse how dual VET schemes are implemented, analysing how coordination between training centres, companies and trade unions is developed (research objective 4).

2. Contextualising fieldwork results: key desk research findings

The desk research report showed that in Spain, there is only one specific dual IVET programme (see box 1 above), which mainly relies on a school/university education logic (Markowitsch and Wittig, 2020), and has its origins in school based IVET programmes which have enhanced the in-company training element.

Dual VET was regulated in 2012 by means of the Royal-decree 1529/2012, of 8 November. This Royal-decree was aimed at supporting the active participation of the company in the training process of the learners and strengthening the relationship between the company and the training centre. This kind of apprenticeship programme requires that a minimum of 33% of the vocational training takes place in a company, which is proportionally much lower than traditional apprenticeship programmes. The relationship of the trainers with the company can be in the form of a labour contract (employee), training and apprenticeship contract (subject to labour legislation), internship (becario) or voluntary relationship. Collaboration between companies and training centres is articulated by means of agreements, the bases of which are regulated by the Employment Department or Education Department of the regional government. Compared to other apprenticeships programmes, another difference is that evaluation of learning outcomes is exclusively carried out by IVET schools – companies or chambers of commerce do not play any specific role.

Literature highlights that state regulation in Spain does not establish a unique model of dual VET. Rather, it provides a general framework that can include different dual integrated training schemes. In this sense, it has been observed that the Autonomous Communities have developed different models through regional regulations (Artiles et al, 2020; Sanz de Miguel, 2017). Regional variations are principally observed in the regulation of the relationship between apprentice/internship and the company (apprenticeship contracts, grants, etc.), and on the minimum time required for in-company training. In relation to this last aspect, some regions (for example Basque Country) have increased in-company training up to 40% of total training time.

Dual VET has experienced a continuous growth in Spain in terms of centres, programmes and students. Nevertheless, dual alternatives still only account for a low proportion of IVET studies. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Education (EducaBase, www.estadisticas.mecd.gov.es), in 2018–2019 only 3.1% of the students in the IVET system were on dual programmes, which represented 17.9% of the total IVET programmes.

At the time the fieldwork was conducted (March–July 2021), the social partners were discussing new legislation on VET. This new law was approved in the Spanish parliament on the 16 December 2021 and aims to reinforce the dual VET system and integrate the VETs from both the educational (IVET) and employment systems (CVET). It should be noted that during the interviews social partners could only provide their views on draft documents of the law.

3. General views on Spanish dual VET: the problems of fragmentation

This section assesses the views of state authorities and social partners on existing regulation on dual VET schemes (research objective 1).

Generally, it appears that dual VET has become a recurring topic on the agendas of trade unions and employer organisations. Since the first regulation on dual VET was passed (2012), social partners have invested in gaining comparative knowledge of different dual VET systems (including Germany, Switzerland and Austria) through desk research and missions (for example, visits organised to learn about foreign dual VET models). Those processes have helped social partners to develop their own views about how dual VET should be adapted to the Spanish context. Although the German dual VET model is still important as a benchmark and has a strong symbolic influence (Artiles et al, 2020), interviews revealed that both trade unions and employer organisations are taking ideas from different national models. Moreover, it was found that some trade unions (in particular, CCOO) rejected the political efforts sponsored by German private foundations to ‘import’ the German dual VET model (TU1).

When evaluating current regulation of dual VET, the main issue highlighted by all of the social partners’ representatives who were approached was the **high degree of ‘fragmentation’**. Previous research has stressed that the analysis of VET governance models requires an understanding of the degree of coordination between different agents, ranging from complete fragmentation to centralised coordination (Rauner and Wittig, 2010; Cedefop, 2016). In the Spanish context, fragmentation of governance structures applies to the distribution of competence and lack of coordination between: 1) central and regional governments; and 2) between policy institutions, at central and regional level, with competences on Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) and Vocational Training for Employment (CVET).

As pointed out by trade unions and employer organisations (CCOO, CEOE), this fragmentation means that the dual VET system in Spain is made up of 34 dual VET models because in each of the 17 Autonomous Communities there are two VET systems (IVET and CVET).

3.1. Territorial fragmentation: distribution of policy powers between central and regional governances

Regarding the distribution of policy powers between central and regional governances, it is worth clarifying that Spain is a decentralised political system with seventeen so-called Autonomous Communities, all of which have policy powers for education and VET policies. As far as dual VET is concerned, the legislation is fragmented at regional level and disparities exist between the legislative regimes of Spain’s Autonomous Communities. This decentralisation was promoted by regulations established by the Popular Party (PP) in 2012, which lead to a higher degree of autotomy for the Autonomous Community governments to implement the dual VET system in their own territories (Sanz de Miguel, 2017). According to the social partners interviewed, regional disparities exist in several crucial areas, such as the main characteristics of the provision of learning (dual VET versus alternating VET); the regulation of apprenticeship status (internship versus apprenticeship with labour contract); or even the qualifications offered, with some regions such as the Basque Country having created specific VET diplomas (so-called professional specialisation programmes) that are not recognised in other Autonomous Communities.

For the trade unions, territorial fragmentation is contributing to an asymmetrical implementation of the dual system in Spain, which creates territorial inequalities in terms of students’ access to

dual VET and apprentices' training conditions and rights (UGT and CCOO National). The employer organisations stressed the problems faced by some companies with work centres in different Autonomous Communities, which have different regulations for apprenticeships: 'A company with different centres in Spain cannot have each work centre subject to different regulations and contractual conditions' (EO3).

3.2 Policy fragmentation: distribution of policy powers between CVET and IVET institutions

In Spain, the VET system has historically been regulated through a great variety of legislation, each one addressing different VET subsystems (employment and initial training) and programmes (alternating and dual VET), at both national and regional level. Before the introduction of the new regulation, which is explicitly aimed at integrating and improving coordination between different training subsystems, VET regulation was assessed to be highly fragmented.

Two main VET systems have existed, each regulated by different legislative provisions and managed by different administrative bodies – the Vocational Training for Employment subsystem (CVET) and the Initial Vocational Training subsystem (IVET). The CVET subsystem is managed by the Ministry of Employment and the Employment Departments of the Autonomous Communities (Consejerías de Empleo). The IVET subsystem is managed by the Ministry of Education and is under the remit of the Autonomous Communities' Educational Departments (Consejerías de Educación).

Regarding dual VET, social partners agreed that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour set up two different paths towards dual VET through the Royal-decree 1529/2012:

- A labour path based on the 'training and apprenticeship contract', in which the learning can be part of education or employment systems. These training and apprenticeship contracts are a type of labour contract directed at young people aged 16–25 years.
- An internship path, where the students receive a grant – the amount of which is not prescribed – from the company or a range of other bodies (institutions, foundations or regional public administrations).

The fragmentation between CVET and IVET creates problems for the implementation of dual VET in Spain because it results in the existence of two very distinct models of dual VET with no linkages or coordination mechanisms.

One interesting first issue raised by the social partners interviewed was that all the **Autonomous Communities' Educational Departments have either explicitly or tacitly promoted the internship path. Thus, they have promoted internship agreements between students and companies instead of 'training and apprenticeship' contracts** which recognise labour law rights. This is because the training and apprenticeship contract is an instrument that is managed by Employment administration and, accordingly, it is more complex to manage for the Educational Departments. Some trade unionists also explained this situation noting that internships are more in line with how Educational Departments understand and conceptualise the training process (CCOO Catalonia). Employer organisations also noted that Education Departments have promoted internships because the 'training and apprenticeship' contract is not flexible enough for dual IVET schemes. In this regard, it was indicated that the 'training and apprenticeship' contracts are targeted towards people between 16 and 25 years, and cannot be applied to all those students who begin IVET courses at 15 years old. There are also problems related to its duration (minimum one year), which make it difficult to implement in dual VET schemes where in-company training lasts less than one year. Considering these problems, the new law foresees the creation of a new dual VET contract which will be tailor-made to IVET specifications.

A second problem relates to the **different qualifications provided by each subsystem**. CVET provides so-called Professional Certificates that officially recognise professional qualifications. These qualifications are linked to the 'units of competence' defined in the National Catalogue of

Professional Qualifications (CNCP). In contrast, IVET systems provide IVET diplomas, the content of which is designed and approved by either the Ministry of Education (55%–65%) or the regional Educational Departments (45%–35%) and are supposed to acknowledge the CNCP as a reference point. According to peak-level employer organisation (CEOE), there are no pedagogical reasons to distinguish an ‘educative VET path’ from a ‘labour VET path’ and all the training schemes should be designed with reference to the recognised professional qualifications. Some trade unionists also pointed out that this division in terms of qualification discourages workers’ accumulation of recognised qualifications through their working life (UGT and CCOO).

The third problem relates to the **difference in participation of the social partners in the educational and labour spheres**. Traditionally, the social partners have played a more prominent role in the social dialogue processes lead by the Ministry of Labour. Moreover, they all agreed that at both central and regional level they face increasing difficulties in engagement with social dialogue in relation to educative policies.

3.3 Harmonising dual VET regulation at national level: what should the system look like?

The social partners interviewed agreed with the identification of fragmentation as a key problem which hinders the development of dual VET. Both trade unions and employer organisations advocate for more harmonised regulation at national level in some key dimensions, while respecting regional policy powers in education policies. Regional policy powers on VET is considered important for adapting the VET offer to the diverse realities of the territory.

Overall, trade unions and employer organisations share a common understanding of how the **principle of duality** should be implemented, understood as the combination of classroom teaching and in-company training. In this regard, most of the interview participants were in favour of dual VET schemes 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. In this sense, interview from peak-level employer organisation (CEOE) criticised the fact that so-called dual VET projects which are implemented in some regions such as Madrid are following an ‘alternating’ model, where one year of full-time school-based vocational education is followed by one year of on-the-job learning: *‘in our view, the region of Madrid does not implement actual dual VET programmes. Having a glass of milk and a cup of coffee separately is not a cafe with milk’* (EO1).

Nevertheless, **trade unions and employer organisations also disagree on how the dual VET system should look in several ways**. First, there is ongoing debate over the **legal status of the apprentices**. While most trade unions and employer organisations acknowledge the need to create a specific apprentice contract for dual VET, the employer organisations are still in favour of giving the employers some flexibility to opt for internships. In this sense, a CEOE representative highlighted that internship in Spain meet the quality criteria defined under the ‘European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships’, as they are written agreements which provide compensation and social security rights.

Second, there is a clear disagreement on the regulation of **selection processes for students who apply to take part in dual VET**. According to both previous and current regulation, training centres bear responsibility the selection process. However, employer organisations argue that the employers should be entitled to make the final decision on the selection process. They stress the cost of participating in the programme which, in practice, limits the opportunities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to take part (EO1; EO2; EO4). On contrary, trade unions argue that only training centres should bear responsibility for selecting students to take part in dual VET, in order to ensure that equal opportunities in education are respected. In relation to this, trade unions make the criticism that companies use the IVET system as a source of recruitment and training for their future workers without economically contributing to the system.

Third, trade unions and employer organisations have different views on **the role to be played by companies in the evaluation process**. Currently, companies only have a consultative role

regarding the students' evaluation. In relation to this, employer organisations suggest an extension to the companies' role: *'there should be more connection between the company tutor and the training centre tutor [...] that the evaluation should be joint [...] or consensual'* (EO1). Related to this, employer organisations also indicate that they should have greater recognition (for example, they should be able to establish some kind of economic remuneration) and be provided with adequate pedagogical tools to train apprentices (EO1; EO2). On the contrary, trade unions maintain that only training centres should have responsibility for evaluating students' training outcomes. Nonetheless, trade unions are in favour of improving companies' capacity and knowledge to train apprentices. In this regard, they stress the importance of *'providing company tutors adequate training and specialisation, as this is the only way to ensure that tutoring is effective'* (TU6). Through this training, tutors would be able to acquire the necessary pedagogical skills to be able to teach the student, since *'knowing how to do something does not mean that one knows how to teach how to do it'* (TU7). In some cases, they indicate that their proposal involves *'a process of accreditation of qualifications for company tutors, and then a training process to be provided by an official training centre'* (TU3).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that a crucial aspect which was highlighted during the interviews with the employer organisations was concern over **how to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) take part in dual VET**. Employer organisations representing SMEs critically noted that *'small companies barely participate and that this is due to the fact that the regulation is not designed for small and micro companies'* (EO4). In order to solve this issue, most representative employer organisation at national level (CEOE) propose the creation of 'external tutors'. An external tutor can be a person working for a sectoral employer organisation who is in charge of coordinating the apprenticeships that the students carry out in different small companies. This figure is already recognised by the new regulation in Catalonia (*tutor mancomunat*), although it has not been implemented yet. There is some debate in Catalonia about who should finance this figure – the employer organisations (Guilds), the Department of Education or the companies. Another proposal is for students to be able to train in more than one SME through collaborative dual VET projects between different companies. To promote these two proposals, employer organisations highlight the role that could be played by territorial and/or sectoral employers' associations if they are set up as intermediate bodies.

In concluding this section, it is worth mentioning the Ministry of Education's assessment of the dual VET model implemented in Spain since 2012. According to the General Secretariat of VET interviewed, the regulation passed in 2012 was an attempt to import the German apprenticeship system.

'An attempt was made to transpose to the Spanish system a model that originated in Germany with some touches of Austria and other countries, and this model has evidently not worked' (PA1).

In the view of the General Secretariat of VET, this model has not worked for two reasons: *'1) there is no single recipe for dual vocational training in a country where we basically have micro and small companies and almost no large companies; 2) the productive sector in which they work was not taken into account, for example, dual VET is not the same in the automotive sector or in the commerce sector'* (PA1). So, the size of the company and the economic activity are *'two elements that determine that instead of moving towards a universal dual VET model, we are moving towards a very flexible dual training framework'* (PA1). Since Royal-decree 1529/2012, the autonomous communities have been developing 17 models of their own to meet their needs. The problem now is that a regulatory framework has to be created that both accommodates all the existing models and allows for homogenisation, guaranteeing minimum standards and progress in the future to increase participation in dual VET. The main aspects of the so-called 'Project of the Organic Law on the Organisation and Integration of Vocational Training' (621/000043) which aim to harmonise dual VET and national level and address the coordination problems discussed under this sector, are:

- **A new principle of duality.** The new regulation that the principle of duality will apply to all IVET schemes. However, two different modalities are distinguished which differ in the minimum amount of in-company training required and the legal relationship between the employer and the learner
 - General dual VET: the proportion of in-company training will be between 25% and 35% and relationship between the employer and the learner
 - Intensive dual VET: the proportion of in-company training will be higher than 35% and will require a training contract to regulate the relationship between the employer and the learner
- **Legal status of apprentice.** All apprentices under intensive dual VET will be hired under a training contract subjected to labour law and collective bargaining provisions.
- **Company role in the selection process and evaluation of training outcomes.** The companies will not be responsible for evaluation of training outcomes but will inform about the acquisition of training outcomes. Regarding the selection process, the law sets up that the companies will participate, directly or indirectly, in the assignment of the person to be trained in the company.
- **An institutionalized role to be played by social partners.** Social partners will be able to develop functions of promotion and assistance of dual VET schemes. The government will in particular favour the participation of social partners in order to promote a networking of small and medium-sized enterprises and organisations for the rotation of apprentices
- **Integration of CVET and IVET.** The new law explicitly aims to create an integrated VET system. To this aim, it creates a single accreditable, certifiable and accessible offer of VET and creates a new system of qualifications based on five grades (A, B, C, D and E)

4. Involvement of the social partners in recent dual VET/apprenticeships reforms

In 2012, the regulation to implement dual VET in Spain, Royal-decree 1529/2012, was passed. This regulation was designed without consultation with the relevant social partners. Moreover, successive reforms on the CVET systems were also approved unilaterally by the government. In this sense, several of those trade unions and employer organisations interviewed (CCOO, CEOE) referred critically to the Royal-decree 4/2015 of 22 March 2015, which excluded social partners from the management of training funds for continuous vocational training and partly excluded them from the commissioning and supply of the training courses. Their role was officially limited to detecting training needs to assist other bodies, such as regional governments.

‘The Popular Party began a campaign to demonise the role played by social partners in training, which resulted in our expulsion from the governance system’ (TU1).

“In 2015, the social partners were expelled from the governance of the system, with Royal-decree 4/2015” (EO1).

Thus, the regulation of dual VET was approved and implemented in a way that was characterised by the loss of decision-making power of the social partners involved with the governance bodies of VET in Spain. Consequently, the regulation was designed, approved and implemented unilaterally by the government, without the participation of the social partners.

Since the new coalition government (PSOE and UP) took office (January 2020), social dialogue has been reactivated. In particular, attention should be drawn to the newly formed Social Dialogue Round Table for Vocational Training, which was created to discuss reform of the education law with representative social partners (Organic Law 3/2020) and, once passed, the legal reform of the VET system (Bill 723/2021, to be passed in the Senate).

However, the social partners disagree on the extent to which the newly formed Social Dialogue Round Table has led to meaningful involvement from trade unions and employer organisations

in policy making. Employer organisations seem to value this dialogue very positively, but the trade unions (mainly CCOO) indicate that it was a consultation process rather than a joint agreement. CCOO describe the process as '*a simulated social dialogue roundtable*' (TU1) due to the small number of meetings that took place.

However, it is worth noting that the interviews with the social partners were conducted before the final draft of the new VET law was available for approval, so it was only possible to obtain the opinion of the social partners on the process followed and not on the result. Regarding the process of designing the new VET law, the social partners were working on a bipartite document between trade unions and employer organisations: this document was presented to the government. It should be noted that the social partners were somewhat uneasy about the delay in being able to see the draft law, due to previous experiences where the government only presented documents to inform them and they had no say in the matter.

The assessment made by the General Secretariat for Vocational Training was gathered after the law was accepted for processing. The Secretariat's assessment of participation is very positive, stating that '*it has been one of the most participatory processes for drafting laws*' (PA1). An interviewee indicated that, in the design process, a consultation mailbox was opened where 4,151 contributions were received; meetings were held with all the Autonomous Communities, both in the field of education and employment; meetings were held with all entities or organisations with an interest in VET (centres, teachers, students, etc.); and the State School Council was consulted. In addition, the Secretariat also highlights that a total of five meetings were held with the Social Dialogue Round Table, during which the final text was agreed. In this way, the General Secretariat for Vocational Training affirms that it has been '*a process of consultation and co-design*' (PA1).

At regional level, as mentioned above, there are different regulations and the role of social partners varies. Because it was impossible to analyse all the regulations, during the fieldwork it was decided to choose three Autonomous Communities: Andalusia, Catalonia and the Basque Country. These three Autonomous Communities are examples to illustrate the role that the social partners have played in the design and implementation of regional regulations.

In **Andalusia**, it is worth highlighting that in 2018 a social dialogue process was initiated by the Secretaries of Employment and Education to discuss a new regulation on VET. The negotiation was aimed at reducing the division between both departments and trying to create an Andalusian model of VET (CCOO Andalusia). However, a change of government brought this process to a standstill. Currently, there is not specific dual VET regulation in Andalusia. Since the 2013/2014 academic year, dual VET is implemented through annual calls for dual VET projects which set up the general criteria which training centres have to consider when applying. Public administration evaluates dual VET projects presented by training centres against those criteria. In the last call (Order 21 December 2021), these criteria referred to: 1) the quality of the training programme (relationship between training activities at the company and training outcomes linked to VET diploma, usages of 'innovative technologies', etc-) and; 2) the linkage with the sector (congruence between company activities and IVET training programme, resources and capacity of the companies to develop training activities, etc.). The social partners are part of a Commission that evaluates and awards the dual VET projects submitted to the annual call for proposals, so they are involved in this process.

In **Catalonia**, the social partners are more involved in the design of the Catalan dual VET model. In this sense, the social partners have participated in a long and complex negotiation process, due to the various changes of government that have taken place in recent years at regional level. The negotiation process ended up with the Law 10/2015 and its development. The social partners have a very positive assessment of this process. They were able to express all their points of view, they felt listened to and valued during the process of designing the new VET model that has been included in the approved law. Subsequently, the social partners have also participated in its deployment through the development of different rules and regulations that have been made. It is remarkable that the development of the law has taken just over three years. Law 10/2015

establishes and regulates the VET and Professional Qualification system of Catalonia and creates the Public Agency for VET and Professional Qualification of Catalonia. This law involves the integration of the two VET systems, IVET and CVET, at Catalan level. The law establishes an institutional structure for the VET and Professional Qualification system that involves the creation of two new bodies – the Steering Committee of the VET and Professional Qualification system and the Public Agency for VET and Professional Qualification of Catalonia. Although the social partners view this structure and their participation in its design positively, they criticised that the government holding the majority of the power is a barrier to greater parity in decision-making. More recently, social partners were also involved in the design of dual VET regulation in Catalonia (RESOLUCIÓ EDU/2085/2020). This new regulation aims to improve the organisation of alternating training in Catalonia by introducing improvements to the model, clarifying processes and identifying the different elements. The regulations define two IVET schemes: dual VET, which can be carried out through a labour contract on an internship; and simple alternating training (up to 70% of Statutory Minimum Wage).

In the **Basque Country**, there is a long tradition of social dialogue. Historically, social dialogue has made it possible to develop various experiences of alternating VET between productive employment and training in centres with the collaboration of the social partners. In this context, social partners discussed and agreed with the government the two main legal provisions currently in force, namely the Decree 83/2015, which regulates the dual VET model in the Basque Country; and Law. 4/2018, which organises the Basque Country's VET system, integrating the VET system under the creation of two new bodies: an interdepartmental body governing the whole VET system and a management body. Both bodies are led by the Department of Education and the social partners are not represented.

A summary of the role played by social partners in the main legislative provisions regulating dual VET at national and regional level is presented in table 2 below. It appears that at national level, social partners have been consulted on the most recent law regulation VET policies. At regional level, social partners' involvement varies

- In Andalusian social partners have not participated in the design of regulatory framework but are consulted/informed about parts of it, such as the dual VET projects that are implemented
- In Catalonia and the Basque Country, the social partners have actively participated in the design of general VET system and the dual VET model (Catalonia).

Table 2. Social partners' involvement in main legislative provisions for dual VET

Territorial level	Main legislative provision	Social partners involvement
State level	Bill 723/2021	Consultation
Andalusia	No specific dual VET regulation	Participation in the Commission that evaluates and awards the dual VET projects
Catalonia	Law 10/2015 and RESOLUTION EDU/2085/2020	Tripartite agreement
Basque Country	Decree 83/2015 and Law 4/2018.	Tripartite agreement

Source: own elaboration based on fieldwork

5. Dual VET and collective bargaining

Dual VET is barely incorporated in collective bargaining. At the Spanish level, there are only few cases of company collective agreements where it has been incorporated. The fact that dual VET under IVET system has been mainly implemented through an internship path contribute to explain the marginal role played by collective bargaining: *'dual VET is not included in collective agreements, but this is because there is no specific contract'* (EO3).

The social partners believe that the role of apprentice should be incorporated in collective bargaining. To this end, the UGT says that it is working on a guide for good practice in order to train its delegates on how to incorporate dual VET in collective bargaining.

6. Social partners' role in Dual VET governance

This section analyses social partners' involvement in the main VET institutions existing at the three governance levels considered in the INVOVLE project:

- Political-strategic level, where stakeholders make decisions on the system's long-term developments and need for political legitimization.
- Technical-strategic level, which is equally concerned with the system's long-term developments but involves technical specialists as decisions rely on expert knowledge. Key policy functions developed at this level concern the identification and updating of qualifications and the evaluation of the system.
- Technical operational level, which focuses on efficient policy implementation on the ground (providing and evaluating training outcomes).

6.1 Dual VET governance at political-strategic level

At state level, the most important institution is the General Council of VET. This is the consultative and institutional participation body of the Public Administrations and advisory body of the Government in the field of VET, created by Law 1/1986. Recently, with Royal-decree 498/2020, the Council was attached to the Ministry of Education and VET through the General Secretariat for VET. It has a tripartite composition, with the participation of employers' organisations, trade union organisations and the Public Administrations (General State Administration and Autonomous Communities). It is therefore a meeting point for the different VET systems (Ministries of both Education and Labour are represented) and the Autonomous Communities. The General Council may meet in Plenary or in Permanent Committee. The Plenary is made up of all members and is the highest decision-making body of the General Council. According to the rules of procedure, the Plenary must meet at least once a year. The Permanent Committee is the management and administrative body of the General Council, made up of a small number of members, namely: 5 representatives from State -central- Administration; 5 representatives from regional governments; 5 representatives from trade unions; and 5 representatives from employer organisations. According to the rules of procedure, the Permanent Committee must meet once a month.

The social partners share a negative view of the institution, considering that it needs to be improved because it is not working. Their first criticism is that it is an institution in which too many people are involved, making it difficult to manage and not operationally effective. The General Council is made up of: a president, a secretary general, 4 vice-presidents, 17 members representing the General State Administration, 17 members representing the Autonomous Communities, 19 members representing the employers' organisations and 19 members representing the trade union.

In the context of decentralised state, the committee is facing problems to integrate and coordinate CVET and IVET systems as well as the different training models existing at regional level. Something which has become even more difficult with the creation of similar bodies at regional level

‘The Council was created with the good intention of creating vocational training plans and the integration of the VET subsystems [...] Councils appeared in the different Autonomous Communities, in some Autonomous Communities have managed to create plans, but the reality is that integration has not been achieved’ (TU1).

Second, trade unions (UGT) raise an issue that seems to contradict the first – local bodies (municipalities that also manage VET, especially CVET) should participate in the institution because the *local administration promotes employment policies and it is the closest administration to the citizen* (TU5).

Finally, social partners generally agreed that its role has been changing and it has become increasingly informative, less decisive and a purely procedural body. In relation to this, social partners informed that the while the Permanent Committee has met regularly, the Plenary of the Council was called during almost a decade

‘The plenary of the council was not called for 8-9 years. It was not called until November 2018’ (TU1).

‘The uselessness of the body was so great that it did not meet for 8 years and nothing happened, the VET in this country did not collapse’ (EO1).

Some of the social partners' proposals are aimed at *‘reforming it, streamlining it and creating a body or a group or council within a bipartite or tripartite’* (EO1). So, their first proposal, formulated by an employer organisation, is the creation of a tripartite body to make the Council more operational. This would allow the Council to become a strategic and operational body, where the desired VET strategy for the coming years is developed and agreed upon; a body with *‘parity in decision-making’* (EO1). A second proposal mentioned by some trade unionist would be to create a *‘State Agency for VET’* (TU5) dependent on the Presidency, adapting the Catalan model. In this way, the differences between the Ministries of Education and Labour could be bridged. Within this Agency, there could be a specific unit for dual VET, which would include the evaluation and monitoring of the system. This model is highly valued by employers, as well as by some trade unions.

This negative view contrasts with the positive view from the Ministry of Education, which considers the General Council *‘is a useful but little exploited body’* (PA1). In this way, representative from the Ministry of Education considers the Council to be a good instrument, but its use is limited due to the lack of conviction of its members and clarity about its function. In this sense, the General Secretariat for VET policies say that it is necessary to reinvigorate this instrument.

As detailed in table 3 below, at regional level, similar tripartite institutions are identified which operate at the political-strategic level which, however, differ regarding their main functions, frequency of meetings and the degree of social partners' involvement.

Table 3. VET tripartite bodies at regional level

Autonomous Community	Body	Composition	Functions	Frequency meetings	Social partners' involvement (SP assessment)
Andalusia	Andalusian VET Council	Tripartite (CEA, UGT and CCOO)	--	quarterly or half-yearly	Information and., to a lesser extent, consultation

Catalonia	Steering Committee of the VET and Professional Qualification System	Tripartite. Government (60%) employer organisations - Foment del Treball and PIMEC (20%), Trade Unions - CCOO and UGT (20%)	Strategic planning and evaluation of VET policies	Monthly (permanent commission)	Consultation
Basque Country	Basque VET Council (CVFP)	Several Basque Government Departments, the Provincial Councils, representatives of employer organisations Confebask, trade unions (UGT and CCOO),	Coordinating the different actions related to VET policies (evaluation, law proposals, etc.)		Consultation (EO)/Information (TU)
	Basque Social Dialogue Board	Tripartite (Labour Department from Basque Country government, Confebask, UGT and CCOO)	Development of strategic social agreements on VET, translation of these agreements into technical instruments (e.g. CVPF) and monitoring and evaluation of the agreements.	Twice a year	Consultation

In **Andalusia** there is the Andalusian VET Council (CAFP), created by Decree 451/1994. This is the highest consultative body for VET in the Autonomous Community. It is made up of both the Departments of Labour and Education, and bodies such as the Andalusian Employment Service and the Andalusian Institute of Professional Qualifications, as well as the most representative social partners at regional level (CEA, UGT and CCOO). This tripartite body meets quarterly or half-yearly. Within the Andalusian Council there is a specific working group for dual VET. The consultative role of the body is criticised by the social partners, who say that *'if the Department wants to draw up any regulation it wants, there is no legal obligation to contact the social partners, it only has to present a report to the Andalusian VET Council, so it is only a formality'*

(EO5) and they even say that it is more of an *'informative body'* than a consultative one (TU4). For this reason, the social partners state that they would like to have a more important role in the governance of VET in Andalusia. In this sense, it is worth noting that *'trade unions are pushing for it to be more of an executive and policy-producing body than an informative one'* (TU4).

In **Catalonia**, Law 10/2015 created the Steering Committee of the VET and Professional Qualification System, which is the governing body for the strategic planning and evaluation of the policies of the VET and Professional Qualification system. It is a tripartite body comprising 60% Government, 20% employer organisations and 20% trade unions, so the Government has the majority of votes and *'can take forward whatever it proposes'* (TU7). The law also created the Public Agency for VET and Professional Qualification of Catalonia, which is a technical body, dependent on the Presidency Office, that represents the Government's instrument to develop the policies established by the Steering Committee. It is therefore the technical body in charge of the management of VET in Catalonia, which integrates the two subsystems and *'makes it possible to overcome the fragmentation'* (EO4) between Education and Labour. The social partners do not participate directly in the Agency, only technical staff. However, the Steering Committee has a Permanent Committee that *'is a body for consultation'* (TU7), which acts as a link between the Steering Committee (political agreements) and the Public Agency (technical sphere), helping to ensure that political agreements can be developed from a technical perspective. The Permanent Commission, in which the social partners are also present, meets monthly, *'carries out day-to-day management'* (EO3) and *'is responsible for supervising the work of the Public Agency'* (TU3). This Permanent Commission was a request from CCOO Catalonia. However, the social partners do have some influence over this body, as it depends on the mandates that they receive from the Steering Committee and supervises the Permanent Commission, in which they do participate.

In addition, there is the VET and Professional Qualification Council of Catalonia, created by Decree 21/1999 as a consultative and advisory body of the Catalan government. Different Catalan government departments, trade unions, employer organisations, the Chambers of Commerce and representatives of the two main Catalan municipal associations are represented in the Council. It has recently become part of the Public Agency. Thus, the Council is now *'a participatory and consultative body'* (TU7) integrated within the structure of the Agency.

As mentioned above, the new governance structure of VET in Catalonia is the result of social dialogue between the social partners and the government. Therefore, the social partners point out that they have had a very active participation, despite the fact, as highlighted by one of the employer organisations approached (PIMEC), *'not everything proposed' has been included in the definition of the new VET model and in the participation of the bodies that have emerged from it'* (EO4).

In the **Basque Country**, there is the Basque VET Council (CVFP) created by Decree 100/1994. Several Basque Government Departments, the Provincial Councils, representatives of employer organisations (Confebask) and trade unions (UGT and CCOO), as well as delegates from public and private training centres are represented on the Council. It is a consultative body responsible for coordinating the different actions related to VET in the region, evaluating results and making proposals to the Government for approval. The social partners have differences in their assessments of this body. These differences are due to the varied participation they have in the functioning of the dual VET model. On the one hand, employer organisations have a positive assessment because it seems to play a greater role in this body in relation to the design of VET provisions. According to trade unions, this assessment made by the employer organisation should be linked to the fact that the government takes more account of their proposals and opinions. Trade unions point out that the CVFP, which *'at the beginning had an important role in the development of all regulations, has been diluted over the years and the lack of meetings has become less and less important'* (TU6). Furthermore, trade unions also point out that their role has been reduced and state that *'the government brings its proposals, they ask us to say what we have to say and they do whatever they want, the proposals we make are not taken into account'* (TU2). Finally, trade unions commented that the government only passes through the Council

‘those regulations that require an opinion from the CVFP, the others do not’ (TU2), thus pointing out that there may be regulations on VET that are developed outside this body. Therefore, trade unions have a more critical assessment, indicating that their participation has been reduced to giving their opinion but this is not taken into account afterwards.

It is also worth noting that existence of general cross-sectorial social dialogue board where social partners discusses also VET topics. The Basque Social Dialogue Board was regulated through Decree 3/2019. Through this Decree, the board was institutionalised, becoming a permanent social dialogue body. The Basque Social Dialogue Board brings together the government, trade unions and employer organisations. In the framework of the Basque Social Dialogue Board,

According to the social partners, the loss of importance of the CVFP is partly due to the Law 4/2018, of 28 June, on VET in the Basque Country, which created two bodies within the administration for the planning and management of the VET system: 1) the Superior Coordination Organ of VET, which has an interdepartmental character (Education and Labour), and is responsible for establishing the criteria on general policies on VET as a whole and seeks the integration of the two VET systems (IVET and CVET) and; 2) the management body of the integrated VET system, responsible for exercising the functions of management, organisation and planning in the sphere of VET. Before this new governance framework was in force, the CVFP was a governing and management body of the VET system. Since the Law 4/2018 entered into force, these functions are taken away from it, becoming a third body where the policy proposals or agreements made by other bodies are developed. In the framework of this new governance structure, the social partners have worked to ensure that the Social Dialogue Board is the body where all policies related to VET are agreed and that it plays a more important role than the higher interdepartmental coordination body. So, the government works on proposals in this coordination body, but then these are taken to the Social Dialogue Board where they are approved and then passed on to the CVFP where they are developed.

Thus, fieldwork conducted at regional level shows that the model of the General VET Council is replicated in the Autonomous Communities. At this level, there are also tripartite bodies with the participation of the social partners limited to consultative functions with non-binding reports, some of which are carried out as an administrative procedure required by the regulations, and with unequal participation compared to the public administration which always has the majority of votes in decision-making. However, there are also relevant differences when comparing existing tripartite bodies in the three regions analyses.

- In Andalusia and the Basque Country, tripartite bodies are mainly seen by the social partners as institutions where social partners are informed on VET policies and, to lesser extent consulted. However, as opposed to Andalusia, social partners in the Basque Country are playing a more meaningful role in policy-making through their participation in the Social Dialogue Board, which was institutionalised in 2019.
- In Catalonia, the institutions created under the new governance structure for VET policies give the social partners a more prominent role. On the one hand, there is a specific tripartite institution devoted to strategic planning where government and social partners can discuss long-term developments on dual VET system. On the other hand, the creation of a Steering Committee which meets regularly (on monthly basis) and is placed between the bodies in charge of political strategic functions and technical functions enable trade unions and employer organisations to participate in policy making on issue related to system's long-term developments while also supervising and discussing the technical implementation of VET policies.

6.2 Dual VET governance at technical-strategic level

At the national level, the most important institution at the technical-strategic level INCUAL, created by Royal-decree 375/1999. INCUAL depends organically on the Ministry of Education and VET, and functionally on the General Council of VET. It is configured as a technical

instrument, endowed with capacity and independence of criteria, to support the General Council of VET in the observation of qualifications and their evolution; the determination of qualifications (definition and updating of the National Catalogue of Qualifications); the accreditation of qualifications; the development of the integration of professional qualifications; and the monitoring and evaluation of VET.

The social partners are mainly involved in the technical processes related to the determination and updating of the of qualifications, where they play an active role, as highlighted in comparative research (Cedefop, 2016). On the contrary, regarding **monitoring and evaluation**, the social partners indicate there is very little and poor evaluation and participation is low, only in a consultative or informative way.

'In almost 30 years I have been involved in VET policies I haven't seen an evaluation impact [...] We continue to put funds in but we don't evaluate the impact of the policies [...] There's a lot of talk about evaluations but I would like to see concrete things' (TU5).

Social partners cooperate with the INCUAL in the **determination and updating of the of qualifications**. Trade unions and employer organisations may participate directly in the assessment of a professional qualifications ('contraste de las cualificaciones') or indirectly, by appointing an expert to assist in the definition of qualification. The results of these technical proposals are then submitted to the General Council and finally approved by its Permanent Council, where the social partners are represented. In general, the assessment made by the social partners of the role played by INCUAL in these processes is positive, especially the effort to work with them despite the limited means at their disposal. Nevertheless, the social partners have some criticisms about the processes followed, the channels for identifying experts and the language used.

Regarding the process, this is assessed as *'very bureaucratic and very slow'* (TU1), which excessively slows down the process of validating new qualifications, and there is a lack of economic resources to improve this process. However, they also comment that recent changes are taking place that *'are speeding up these validation processes, in this way INCUAL's work is becoming much faster, which we value very much [...] some deficiencies we had have been eliminated'* (EO1). In this sense, the Ministry value this work they have been developing, highlighting that *'since 2018 they have gone from having updated 33% of the catalogue of qualifications to 85%'* (PA1). In relation to the slowness of the updating process, the social partners indicate that the regulatory part is slow due to procedures needed to comply with the law, which must be passed in order to approve the qualifications, but that work is being done to increase the pace of the technical aspect.

Respect to the channels for identifying technical experts who should participate in the assessment/update of the qualifications, the social partners point out that *'there is a twofold process: on the one hand, the social partners are asked for sectoral experts, on the other hand, they go directly to the expert and often do not select or do not identify the best expert'* (EO1). Thus, sometimes experts in the field are chosen, but they may only specialise in certain activities that relate to the qualification analysed and so only a partial view is obtained.

In relation to the language used in the reports, the social partners say that sometimes too much technical metalanguage is used – *'the language of the educational world has nothing to do with the language of the company and you simply have to connect with the language of the sector you are going to address'* (EO5). This causes the reports to be poorly understood by people who work in the sector or perform that qualification, making the tasks aiming to assess the qualifications difficult. So, *'the vocabulary does not help the sectoral social partners be participatory'* (PIMEC). This makes it difficult for both employer organisations and trade unions to consult the sectors and to ensure that the report is an accurate reflection of professional activities. The last aspect that the social partners criticise is that there should be more resources to allocate personnel to carry out these processes of assessing qualifications and identification of experts, pointing out that *'a minimum economic support would be necessary to be able to devote more resources to it [...] because it is an important technical and administrative work'* (EO5). This could speed up the

validation of qualifications and encourage greater participation from the sectors, companies and workers in the definition of qualifications.

Finally, reference should be made to the Sector Observatories within INCUAL, which should be the bodies in charge of identifying new professional profiles and new training needs that lead to the development of new degrees or the updating of existing qualifications. The social partners show a critical view of these and indicate that they do not fulfil this task. Social partners commented that there are too many observatories and that they do not communicate or relate to each other. In contrast, the General Secretariat of VET values the work of the Professional Observatory of INCUAL as they have instigated and processed all the initiatives to make new qualifications, and modify or eliminate outdated qualifications. They point out that the prospective work of INCUAL is to bring together, identify and provide an outlet for the exploration of sectors.

At the level of the Autonomous Communities, the INCUAL model is also replicated through regional Qualification Institutes. These institutes coordinate with INCUAL and the other regional institutes in identifying and defining professional occupations related to their region, defining the training associated with the qualifications in the framework of their territorial scope (50 or 60% of the learning time) or analysing qualification needs demanded in their territory, among other aspects. In this way, these institutes can propose to INCUAL the creation of qualifications in specific sectors that are developed mainly or only in these regions. These institutes can also participate in the updating of qualifications in sectors that have an important presence in their region or the range of qualifications proposed by INCUAL. In addition, the institutes can prepare regional reports on qualifications to take to the VET Councils in their region.

In **Andalusia**, there is the Andalusian Institute of Professional Qualifications, created by Decree 1/2003. The social partners indicate that their role in this body is consultative and they participate in the updating of qualifications. This work is carried out on a voluntary basis because there are no available resources. As indicated above, the Andalusian dual VET model is based on the annual call for projects. Here there are two bodies that evaluate these calls and in which the social partners participate. In each province of Andalusia there is a Commission that is in charge of evaluating and supervising the dual VET projects submitted to the annual call for proposals in its province. The social partners participate in the evaluation for the selection of the dual VET projects, but the Regional Administration has the decisive vote. The other body is the working group for dual VET within the CAFP. In this group, the evaluation of the dual VET projects completed in the different provinces is carried out. This evaluation is used to make proposals for improvements that are introduced in the Order of the call for dual VET projects of the following year. *‘Depending on the evaluation of projects that have been presented in previous calls, the tendency is to modify them for the better in order to correct any possible deviations that may have occurred’* (TU8).

The CAFP is also responsible of conducting quality evaluation of VET policies. However, both trade unions and employer organisations are critical with the type of evaluation conducted. As explained by one trade unionist, *‘the CAFP presents quantitative reports of the annual Orders of the dual VET projects that include ‘how many projects have been presented, how many have been approved, how many are for renewal, how many are new and little more. There is not any indicator on labour insertion or employment’* (UGT Andalusia). According to the social partners, the lack of indicators about labour insertion of VET students is explained because reports are produced by the Department of Education and they do not connect the data with the Andalusian Employment Service

In **Catalonia**, the Catalan Institute of Qualifications was created as a technical body under the Catalan Council of VET. It was later integrated into the Council and recently became part of the Public Agency for VET and Professional Qualifications of Catalonia. The Institute works on the technical reports for updating qualifications to be submitted to the Catalan VET Council. As mentioned above, social partners participate in the Council. One of the functions of the Council is to promote studies of exploration, of detection of needs or of adequacy or improvement of professional qualifications and VET. Social partners value positively the work carried out by the

Council and the consultations made to them. However, recent organisational changes have left the processes of reviewing and updating qualifications at a standstill. In this sense, the Sectoral Councils that Law 10/2015 foresees are still to be developed. These Sectoral Councils will be bodies of participation for the main productive sectors of Catalonia that will be able to make non-binding reports on matters of: qualifications, professional profiles and accreditation of professional competences; participation of companies in internships and apprenticeships, particularly in dual VET; professional training and qualification needs; and professional competence assessment needs. In relation to the monitoring and evaluation of the Catalan VET system, this is a function of the newly created Agency. The technical reports on this evaluation will be presented to the Steering Committee at a later date, with the participation of social partners. As the Agency has only recently been created, it is not possible to assess the evaluation they have carried out. However, the social partners point out that until now *'they have had a lack of access to the data'* (EO4) and that the data provided to them was old (from 2–3 years ago). They also complain, *'about not knowing the impact that COVID19 has had on dual VET'* (EO4). They also indicate that they hope that this can be improved with the entry of the Agency.

In the **Basque Country** there is the Basque Institute of VET Knowledge, until recently called the Basque Institute of Qualifications, in which social partners participate. Its main mission is to define VET qualifications, especially those of so-called professional specialisation. These qualifications are specific to the Basque Country (Order 27 July 2016) and only recognised in this Autonomous Community. Professional specialisation programmes are created to meet the special qualification needs demanded by various strategic productive sectors of the Basque Country, especially in the industrial field. Thus, companies play an important role in the definition of the title, *'we feel listened to by the Viceconsejería'* (EO2). However, trade unions point out that *'their role is more to respond to the proposal of titles made by the government'* (TU6) and they do not make a contribution, *'only present the work they do, these works are usually designs of training content and specialisation programmes that work with companies'* (TU2) and they do not work on the design of the training content of the programmes.

Regarding the professional specialisation programmes, trade unions criticise the fact these programmes have an excessive number of work hours, incorporate the learning of transferable competences that are more typical of continuous training than of a VET course, and some specialisation programmes are developed specifically for a company and not for a sector. Thus, the criticism of this body is that trade unions do not participate much in the definition of the content of the programmes, although they are consulted in the validation. Trade unions believe that they should be more involved in defining these programmes. In this way, while employer organisations play an important role in this area and view their role positively, trade unions say that their role is not adequate and view it negatively.

Another body that also participates in the technical field is the Basque VET Council, presented above, which is in charge of monitoring and evaluating the whole system, including dual VET. Nevertheless, regarding this evaluation, trade unions are very critical, pointing out that the evaluation carried out is in quantitative terms and not in terms of quality: *'the evaluation is saying the number of students that have participated in dual VET but they do not provide data on the real impact on employment'*. Regarding this aspect, it is interesting to highlight that the data on employment rates is evaluated at the end of the course, and this is generally very positive data. However, they point out that these data have some pitfalls: the students who take the dual vocational training mode are usually the best prepared and most motivated, and under this mode they take highly sought after degrees, so employment rates at the end are very high; additionally, we must take into account the different bonuses offered for hiring young people that encourage some of the dual VET students to continue in the company at the end of their studies. Further to this, the end of the courses in June helps students gain employment on a temporary basis to cover vacation periods. Trade unions argue that *'they want to know what happens two years after finishing the course'* (TU2) to know if the person has had a lasting introduction to the labour market or not and if their employment is related to their studies. Finally, mention should be made of the recently created Advisory Commission for the detection of the most demanded professional

profiles within the Basque Employment Service, which includes social partners. This Commission is supposed to work on exploring possible new profiles and their definition.

Finally, social partners in the Basque Country were very critical on evaluation processes conducted on the dual VET system. Social partners comment that the employment data provided are not entirely real and would like to have further data on these students. Regarding the monitoring of the training processes of the students in the company, trade unions are very critical, indicating that they *'have serious doubts about whether the trade union representatives of the companies are being informed as they should be'* (CCOO Basque Country), suggesting that there is a certain lack of transparency on the part of the companies in this regard and there is insufficient data provided by the bodies in which they participate to be able to carry out the monitoring. Therefore, the social partners would like to have access to current (real) and complete data, and to be able to carry out their own studies based on this data. They believe it is essential *'to work on the monitoring and evaluation of what is happening in order to be able to correct deviations'* (CCOO Basque Country). So, this aspect is very important in order to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of dual VET and to be able to make the necessary corrections.

In a nutshell, fieldwork results show a general positive assessment on the role that trade unions play in technical strategic level in relation for the task of defining, elaborating and updating qualifications. However, they expressed concern that the updating process is not quick enough to meet labour market needs, albeit it has improved in recent years. They also noted the lack of resources that the social partners currently have to support the INCUAL and regional bodies in this task. Moreover, in the case of the Basque Country, information shows that employer organisations are playing a more active role than trade unions in the process of developing qualifications.

A general critical assessment is expressing when analysing the role played by the technical bodies in evaluation the quality of VET policies. To this regard, a common critic is that evaluation barely provide information on labour insertion or VET students.

6.3 Dual VET governance at technical-operational level

In Spain, social partners are not directly involved in the implementation of dual VET – they do not provide training courses and are not involved in the evaluation of the knowledge acquired by the students in the VET courses. The formal role played by social partners at this governance level not clearly defined in the regulation. However, new VET regulation at national level foresees to reinforce the role of so-called 'intermediate organisations' to support the engagement of companies in dual VET schemes. At regional level, legislation in Catalonia foresees that employer organisations can support Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) in the provision of in-company training. Under this context, the way in which social partners participate at this governance level is by offering different tools and services to companies and work councils involved dual VET projects.

Employer organisations have been involved in promoting dual VET among their members in order to encourage companies to become more engaged. Thus, employer organisations have held promotional events and have provided guidance to companies. This promotion has been carried out in conjunction with foundations and private entities that promote dual VET in Spain. In addition to promotion, employer associations have also worked with company tutors, providing them with some tools to help them manage internships and offering some basic training.

Trade unions participate through internal training for their members and trade union representatives in the companies (work councils). Within this training, some trade unions (CCOO) include small training courses (*cápsulas de formación*) or modules on what dual VET is and what an apprentice should or should not do. In the case of Andalusia, CCOO indicates that they inform trade union representatives in companies that are part of the dual VET projects that have won the annual call to ensure that they are alerted. The main criticism is that the trade union representatives of companies do not receive adequate information about the apprentices, especially about the tasks they are expected to perform. Here, trade unions consider that trade union representatives

of the companies *'should be involved in the process, from the moment the project is approved until the trainee is incorporated in the workplace and they should have access to the information about the trainee'* (TU4). The lack of information or lack of monitoring of the trainees is one of the main criticisms made by trade unions. Part of this lack of information is because a large part of the dual VET is developed through a grant and not a contract – if it were a contract, the company would be obliged to provide this information, but in the case of the grant it is not obliged to do so. Trade unions also complain about the lack of transparency of some companies which do not provide information. In order to overcome this lack of information, a first proposal is the establishment of a dual VET contract, which will allow greater knowledge and control by the trade union representatives over the dual VET process and offer more guarantees for the apprentices' time at the companies. In some cases, it is indicated that *'the role of the trade unions should be to accompany [...] what is being done and not to supervise the process'* (TU7), seeking to ensure that the trainee is receiving training and not doing a job. In relation to this issue, UGT is trying to carry out a study on *'the good practices that are taking place in terms of trade union control in the current dual vocational training processes that are open in Spain [...] to see how we can set up the future system of what trade union control should be [...] of dual training, also from a comparative point of view of our context'* (TU5). Trade unions are also seeking 'real time' data on trainees in order to be able to carry out better monitoring – rather than only having absolute data at the end of the courses. Another aspect to highlight is that in SMEs there is no trade union representative, so they cannot play any role.

7. Dual VET in practice: evidences from three mini-case studies

This section aims to analyse how cooperation and coordination between key actors implementing dual VET actually work. The section first describes the methodologic approach, based on mini-case studies. Second, key results are presented

7.1 Methodological approach and description of the cases

Literature distinguishes between case studies providing in-depth analysis of the phenomenon studied and mini-cases, defined as shortened case studies. Mini-case studies provide less background information and are an appropriate approach when resources are scarce. They are recommended in studies where researchers will not have the opportunity to spend a lot of time for understanding the case in context through direct observation or similar methods (Karlsson, 2016). In our research, we have followed mini-case study approach considering its scope and the resources devoted.

The case study was defined as an action of cooperation and coordination between companies and VET schools/training centres and trade unions at company level (working committees, etc.) aiming to implement a dual VET scheme. Thus, the case studies have aimed to analyse:

- the coordination and cooperation between companies and VET schools/training centres;
- the coordination and cooperation between companies and employer organisation or chambers of commerce;
- the role played by employee representative bodies in supporting apprenticeships and enforcing their working and training conditions.

Three 'mini-case studies' were conducted (one in each of the three Autonomous Communities covered in the study, namely Andalusia, Catalonia and Basque Country). A multiple holistic design was followed (Yin, 2014). This meant that the purpose was to make cross-case analysis between the three mini-cases to understand the differences and the similarities between them and that each mini-case was not decomposed in smaller units of analysis.

In terms of methods, an exclusive qualitative approach was followed, based on semi-structured interviews that were conducted. In each mini-case study, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with:

- Company tutor: these persons favour coordination with the educational centre, carry out the pedagogical accompaniment of the student during the learning process and facilitate the link between theory and practice.
- Academic tutor from VET school: they are teachers from VET schools who coordinate and supervise in-company training. This tutor coordinates with the rest of the teaching staff at the VET centre and with the tutor at the company where the student is doing his/her training. Although their specific responsibilities vary according to regional regulation, their key tasks are: visit companies to inform them about Dual VET and agree with the company tutor on the distribution of the training plan; make a preliminary selection of the candidates) ensure that the training plan has been filled in and that the company has the necessary information about the Dual VET programme; and carry out the evaluation of the trainees taking into account the assessment of the company tutor (Virgós Sánchez et al., 2022).

Table 4. Description of mini-cases

Region	Training VET/Centre	Company size	Company sector	Interview acronyms
Andalusia	Public Educational centre	SME	IT	Company tutor: CT1 Academic tutor: AT1
Catalonia	Public Educational centre	SME	IT	Company tutor: CT2 Academic tutor: AT2
Basque Country	Public Educational centre	Big/multinational company	IT	Company tutor: CT3 Academic tutor: AT3

The main characteristics of the companies and VET centres approaches are summarised as follows:

- Companies: all companies develop their activities withing IT sector (industrial cybersecurity, development of websites and applications for other companies and software development). In terms of size, two companies in Catalonia and Andalusia are SMEs (one with 10 people and one with 30 employees) and one company in the Basque Country is multinational big company. The main motivation for participating in dual VET is that they do not find many candidates with technical diplomas. They participate in dual VET schemes as a source of recruitment and training for their future workers.
- VET schools: the three VET schools are public educative centres. These centres had already been developing VET cycles with an internship programme, so they were collaborating with companies before they decided to start dual VET schemes. All the centres have both dual and alternating VET schemes. The tutors interviewed were involved in dual VET cycles in the IT sector. The offer of the centres is different: in one case they offer 13 VET cycles, of which 12 can be done under the dual model; in the other, of the 5 VET cycles they offer, 2 are dual VET; and in the last one, they offer 11 VET cycles, of which 6 are under dual modality.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that each of the three regions where the mini-case studies were conducted has a different regulation regarding the implementation of dual VET schemes.

- In Andalusia, training centres must carry out biannual dual VET projects that they submit to the annual calls made by the Department of Education. In these dual VET projects, the educational centres must incorporate collaboration agreements with the companies that will participate in the project.
- In the Basque Country, the Department of Education has made the curricular adaptation of the VET cycles so that they can be carried out under the dual modality. The centres ask to carry out the cycles they consider appropriate and the Department decides whether or not to grant them. In addition, there are specialised programmes that the centres design together with companies. Companies wishing to participate in dual vocational training must sign a collaboration agreement with the training centre.
- In Catalonia, a similar system to the Basque Country is in place. The Department of Education adapts the curricula of VET cycles so that they can be carried out in dual mode. The training centres make the request for the dual VET cycle and the Department of Education decides. Companies wishing to participate in dual VET can sign a collaboration agreement with the training centre or with the Department of Education.

7.2 Cross-case analyses: key results

This section summarises key results stemming from cross-case comparison

Advantages and disadvantages for engaging companies in dual VET schemes

Previous literature has highlighted that the participation of companies in dual vocational training is conditioned by the size and characteristics of the economic sector they belong to (Artiles et al., 2020; Sanz de Miguel, 2017). Small companies do not have enough staff to host and manage the training processes that apprentices must undertake, and this is an obstacle to the participation of companies. In certain sectors, it is easier to integrate apprentices because the sectors are comprised of larger companies or because they can more easily adapt the VET cycles to the activity they carry out?

The participation into a dual VET cycle demands an important bureaucratic process from companies because a significant volume of documents must be filled in. This results in many companies being reluctant to join dual VET programmes. Our three mini-case studies show that the education centres are addressing this problem by taking responsibilities for most of the bureaucracy required themselves, thus facilitating the participation of the companies. This aspect is highly valued by the companies. However, academic tutors noted that dual vocational training involves three times as much work compared to the existing internship module. In relation to bureaucracy, the interviewees highlighted three main processes:

- Collaboration agreements: companies that want to participate in dual VET must sign collaboration agreements. The administrative burden is conditioned by regional regulation and varies in the three regions studied. It should also be noted that in the Andalusian model, characterised by the submission of calls for proposals, the collaboration agreement must be renewed every 2 years. In other models, as is the case in Catalonia, where it is also the schools that request the dual modality, the collaboration agreement is signed every four years (by the school tutor). Thus, there are some models that involve a greater administrative burden because of the need to renew papers in a shorter period of time and the need to present biannual projects.
- Work Plan: the work plan defines the tasks and activities that the apprentice must carry out in the company, and it must be attached to the collaboration agreement. The design and follow-up of the work plan by the company can become a problem. Most companies, due to their small size, do not have the capacity to design and prepare the work plan. In these circumstances, companies often choose to simply adapt the pre-defined training activities of the curriculum included in the collaboration agreement, so that they fit more smoothly with the activities already carried out by the company. For example, in the case

of Andalusia, they seem to be more flexible and adapt to the needs of the student (CT1). In the case conducted in Catalonia, the work plan is like a form where the activities to be carried out are already defined in template form for each dual VET cycle and the company only has to select those to be carried out by the apprentice. In this case, these are generic activities that allow companies to adapt them to their production activity.

- Recruitment/hiring of the apprentice: despite the existence of a specific training and apprenticeship contract, in most cases an internship path is chosen. The fieldwork shows that educational centres tend to recommend the internship path because it is a more direct and less bureaucratic procedure. This is partly because the training and apprenticeship contract must be processed through the Employment Service of the Department of Labour and not through the Department of Education. This means that, in case it is chosen to hire an apprentice with the training and apprenticeship contract, a fourth actor has to be involved, which increases bureaucracy and time: *'The Employment Service needs one month to validate the contract [...], it needs to know the timetable of the course [...] and it must be for at least one year'* (AT2). Normally the placement starts in June, so the school does not know the timetable for the following academic year; if there is a problem with the processing of the contract it can mean that the start of the placement is delayed and the student has to finish the course in December and not in June, as is normal, which is a bureaucratic problem for the school.

Overall, academic tutors were critical with the support they receive from public administration. The main cause of dissatisfaction with the role of the educational administration is the fact that the responsibility for the identification and involvement of companies lies with the academic tutors. The three academic tutors interviewed agreed that this prospecting task entails a significant amount of work. As a consequence, teachers and tutors are forced to reduce the hours of guidance and training they devote to students.

This work put into searching companies is only partly acknowledged by the public administration. In the case of the Basque Country, the academic tutor informed us that the Department of Education provides academic tutors some working hours for carrying out company prospecting. However, it is assessed to be a low number of hours (1 hour per pupil).

In the case of Catalonia, schools and companies have received support from the regional government through an online resource, the online platform (qBID), which facilitates the management of placements, their monitoring and evaluation. This resource was developed by the Catalan Council of Chambers of Commerce.

In the case of Andalusia, the academic tutor explained how the public administration is supporting educational centres by providing them with procedures and templates to be used by teachers and coordinators as guidance in the preparation of programme materials and management. However, even this support is perceived by the academic tutor interviewed as rather weak and major problems are identified. In particular, it was highlighted that these templates do not cover all guidance needs, even more so considering that important legal and liability clauses that have to be considered in the development of the programme. As a proposal, the academic tutor thinks that a specific central guidance and counselling service for schools would be highly appreciated.

Coordination between companies and educational centres

In terms of coordination for the implementation of dual vocational training courses between companies and centres, the main problem mentioned is related to the difficulty of combining schedules. The alternation of dual VET between school and company makes it necessary to adapt the schedules of companies and schools. Generally, companies prefer to receive students in the mornings (AT1), but traditionally VET cycles are usually taken during this timetable. This creates problems for combining training in the company and in the centre on the same day. If classes are held in the afternoons, it generates unease among the teaching staff because teachers face more problems for the reconciliation between work and family or personal life. In addition, students prefer to attend classes in the morning, so these afternoon cycles may remain empty: *'If you do classes in the mornings, it is difficult to find companies to take on students in the afternoons'*

(AT2). As a result, it is often difficult to combine half a day at the centre and half a day in the companies. Therefore, in order to solve this problem, it is usually decided to arrange 2 days at the company and 3 days at the centre.

In-company training involves planning a number of hours per week for the trainee, but also for the company tutor. Accordingly, it is necessary to organise the working hours of the company tutors in order to be able to train the learner. Sometimes, this clashes with the difficulty to cover the peak workload of the company. Thus, there are companies that ask to concentrate training or to receive trainees at certain times of the year (e.g., summer time).

One aspect that generates problems in the internal coordination of schools is the combination of non-dual VET cycles and dual VET cycles. In the cases of Catalonia and the Basque Country, a VET cycle has students on alternating and dual modality (see box 1 in introduction for definition of alternating and dual modality). This means that teachers have to plan learning for both, knowing that dual VET students stop attending classes.

In the Basque Country centre, the student who opts for dual VET has to go to the company for training and then finish his or her work at the training centre. This is due to the pedagogical model they use where students work on a project basis. So, the project work that they have not been able to finish in the classroom, they have to finish outside the classroom.

In Catalonia, they have recently implemented an improvement consisting in the adaptation of the curriculum to better define the common part of both modalities (dual and non-dual) that must be carried out in the school and the part that one modality (non-dual) will carry out in the classroom while the other (dual) in the company, which facilitates the teacher's planning. In addition, this adaptation will allow students to switch from one modality to the other during their studies.

Coordination between company tutor and academic tutor

As far as coordination between company tutors and school tutors is concerned, the case studies highlight that it works well. This coordination is different in each model studied and, within the same model (i.e., in the same region), it also depends on the centre.

In the case of Andalusia, the school has an informal follow-up every fortnight, usually by email. Here, the pupil's progress and attitude are commented on. In addition, the practice notebooks must be completed for the monitoring and evaluation of the student.

In the case of the Basque Country, there is a monthly meeting between the two tutors to discuss the student's activity and behaviour. They also make two evaluations of the student: a preliminary and a final one. In addition, they usually have some informal contact by email or telephone to discuss specific matters.

In the case of Catalonia, they have an online platform (qBID) where they can monitor the student and facilitate coordination between the two tutors. The student enters the tasks carried out during the day or week. At the end of each month, the company tutor reviews the tasks and assesses them. This monthly report is sent to the school tutor who reviews it. If any anomaly or doubt is observed, the school tutor contacts the company tutor. In addition, every three months, the company tutor carries out an evaluation of the trainee's attitude and behaviour at the workplace. Both tutors also have an informal follow-up by email, telephone and periodically the school tutor can visit the company and talk to the student and the company tutor. In the centre analysed, annual meetings are also held with the tutors of the companies that have participated in order to show the results obtained in the satisfaction questionnaires, where they can discuss some of the problems detected and introduce improvements.

Support from intermediate organisations

In relation to the support that educational centres or companies receive from the chambers of commerce or sectoral employer organisations, none of the centres or companies approached in the mini-case studies has cooperated so far with any intermediate organisation with a view to implementing dual VET schemes.

Regarding the recruitment of companies, the schools commented that the commitment of companies is often achieved through direct relations and ‘cold’ calls, rather than using institutional channels. Moreover, as many of the companies participate in Dual VET programmes on a regular basis, contact has become direct, without intermediaries. In some cases, they already knew them from other collaborations (internship modules under alternating VET schemes).

Role played by trade unions/work councils

With regard to the role played by trade union representatives, in two of the companies studied there was no trade union representation. In one case (the Basque Country) they did have trade union representation, but it did not play any role. As mentioned in previous sections, the role they can play is to monitor the activity of the apprentice and to check that they perform training and non-productive tasks only. However, they do not always receive the right information, partly because few apprentices are engaged. The representatives of the centres analysed commented that they do not have any contact with trade union representatives and that many of the companies with which they collaborate do not usually have any.

Overall assessment of companies on the main benefits and costs associated with the programme

To sum up, the previous experience of the companies studied means that they are not particularly critical of the bureaucracy of dual vocational training and they have not seen an increase in the volume of work compared to the internships they have already been offering. In contrast, educational centres show a more critical stance, as they have had to increase their efforts by taking on some of the increased bureaucracy involved in dual vocational training and the greater prospective effort required to identify companies to take on students. Nevertheless, all companies and schools are satisfied with the effects on dual vocational training on companies and students/apprentices, especially when compared to the internship module. The most valued aspects are:

- The different relationships they establish with the apprentice. A closer relationship that allows everyone – especially the students – to get to know each other and the workplace better. In this sense, some companies comment that with dual vocational training you can see if this person wants to continue working in what they have studied or not (CT2). For example, they point out that they have met people who have realised during the work placement that they do not want to work in what they have studied (CT2); this could be because they had the wrong understanding of what the profession consisted of.
- The higher number of hours apprentices spend in the company. Compared to in-company training included in regular VET programmes (the FCT period, in Spain), in-company training in Dual VET programmes is perceived as more useful for companies due to its longer duration and higher flexibility. In this sense, companies point out that it allows them to adjust the participation of apprentices in their production process (CT1).
- Companies see dual vocational training as a better way to train apprentices/trainees for their eventual labour market insertion. One of the main reasons is the relevance of the training content and its adaptation to the needs of companies, together with the in-company experience of teachers and trainers. In this sense, Dual VET is perceived by the company as a good way to provide trainers with the necessary knowledge and tools to join the company’s ordinary work process, and provide students with the best training possible. The improved preparation for the world of work has been highlighted by schools as a driver for their decision to develop Dual VET schemes.

8. Conclusions

This report has presented key fieldwork outcomes based on: semi-structured interviews conducted with state/government authorities and social partners representatives at national and regional level (Andalusia, Basque Country and Catalonia); and mini case studies, understood as an action of cooperation and coordination between companies and VET schools/training centres and trade unions at company level (working committees, etc.) aiming to implement a dual VET scheme.

When analysing the main views and discourses of the social partners about dual VET systems (research objective 1), the report has showed that trade unions and employer organisation agree that the main problem identified concerns to its high degree of fragmentation between central and regional governments; and between policy institutions, at central and regional level, with competences on IVET and CVET. While both trade unions and employer organisations advocate for more harmonised regulation at national level in some key dimensions in order to reduce fragmentation, they still disagree on how the dual VET system should look like regarding several dimensions such as the legal relationship between the employer and the apprentice or the role to be played by companies in the selection process of apprentices and the evaluation of training outcomes.

Respect to the role played by social dialogue in recent dual IVET reforms (research objective 2), the report has showed that social dialogue on VET policies has been reactivated since the new coalition government (PSOE and UP) took office (January 2020). In this context, a newly social dialogue table was set up to discuss a new law on VET which aimed to reinforce dual VET system and integrate the VET of the educational system and the VET for employment, among other objectives. The law was approved in the Spanish parliament on the 16th of December of 2021. Overall, social partners positively assess the consultation process even if the new law is not the result of a tripartite agreement. At regional level, social partners' involvement in policy making varies. In Andalusian social partners have not participated in the design of the regulatory framework but are consulted/informed about parts of it, such as the dual VET projects that are implemented. In Catalonia and the Basque Country, the social partners have actively participated in the design of general VET system and the dual VET model.

The analysis of the social partners' role in the governance of dual VET (research objective 3) shows that trade unions and employer organisations are mainly involved at political-strategic and technical-strategic level and they do not play any formal role at technical-operational level. At political-strategic level, social partners are represented in the General Council of VET. However, social partners generally share a critical view on this institution which, in their view, it has become increasingly informative, less decisive and a purely procedural body. At regional level there are also tripartite bodies with the participation of the social partners mainly limited to consultative functions. However, there are also relevant differences when comparing existing tripartite bodies in the three regions analyses. Moreover, relevant changes in the governance structure have been introduced in some of the regions studied. In Andalusia, the main existing tripartite body is seen by the social partners as an institution where social partners are informed on VET policies and, to lesser extent consulted. In the Basque Country, social partners are playing a more meaningful role in policy-making through their participation in a cross-sectoral social dialogue board which was institutionalised in 2019. In Catalonia, the institutions created under the new governance structure for VET policies approved in a 2015 law give the social partners a more prominent role. On the one hand, there is a specific tripartite institution devoted to strategic planning where government and social partners can discuss long-term developments on dual VET system. On the other hand, the creation of a Steering Committee which meets regularly (on monthly basis) and is placed between the bodies in charge of political strategic functions and technical functions enable trade unions and employer organisations to participate in policy making on issue related to system's long-term developments while also supervising and discussing the technical implementation of VET policies.

At technical-strategic level, the National Institute of Vocational Qualifications (INCUAL) is the most important institution at this level. INCUAL is the technical body of the General Council on

Vocational Education and Training (CGFP), where the social partners are represented. INCUAL is in charge of defining, elaborating and updating the National Catalogue of Qualifications. It monitors qualitative and quantitative changes in the labour market by means of a Professional Observatory that publish, on a biannual basis, “sectoral reports”. In addition, the INCUAL organises and directs the working groups that design the professional qualifications. Trade unions and employer organisations are partly involved in this technical process aimed at designing the professional qualifications. They may participate directly in the assessment of a professional qualifications or indirectly, by appointing an expert to assist in the definition of qualifications. Fieldwork results show a general positive assessment on the role they play in this task. However, social partners express concern that the updating process is not quick enough to meet labour market needs. They also note the lack of resources that they have to support the INCUAL in this task. Similar technical bodies operate at the regional government level. In some regions (the Basque Country) fieldwork showed that employer organisations play a more active role than trade unions in the process of developing qualifications.

The formal role played by social partners at technical-operational level is less developed and it is not clearly defined in the regulation. Under this context, employer organisations are promoting dual VET through different events and dissemination activities, in cooperation with some private foundations. They have also worked with company tutors, providing them with some tools to help them to manage internships and offering some basic training. Trade unions have also provided training to their members (work councils) in order to improve their tasks related to the enforcement of training and working conditions of apprentices. However, trade unions highlighted the difficulties they face to receive information from the companies, partly because trainees are generally involved in dual VET schemes through grants rather than labour contracts, which do not provide collective rights.

Finally, the mini-case studies have showed that dual VET schemes are highly valued by companies and educational centres due to its positive impact on apprentices’ labour insertion and training adaptation to company needs. However, dual VET schemes entail some difficulties for educational centres. In particular, company tutors highlight the few recourses they have to search and find companies, and the challenges associated to coordinate theoretical and in-company training.

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