

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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INVOLVE Project

Social partners' involvement in dual VET training: a comparison of Greece, Spain, Poland and Portugal

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1. Introduction

The topic of dual vocational education and training (VET) – also known as apprenticeships¹ – has grown in relevance in recent years. Several European countries have implemented ‘dual system’ VET systems, broadly defined as a model that combines workplace learning in an enterprise with classroom teaching in an educational institution. This model is considered particularly pertinent in times of high youth unemployment, as it can facilitate smooth transitions to employment and/or handle the problem of skills mismatch.

However, the capacity of dual VET models to resolve social and economic challenges cannot be taken for granted. Compared to school-based VET systems, dual VET programmes are more complex because different collective actors and institutions from the education system and the labour market are involved. Dual VET systems must therefore respond to the needs and interests of different public, private and societal actors (such as state authorities, employers and trade unions) and ensure a high degree of coordination between them (Rauner et al., 2010). A lack of such coordination can disincentivise companies from offering apprenticeship places or can result in the opportunistic use of apprentices as a cheap labour workforce (Šćepanović & Martín Artiles, 2020).

These characteristics of dual VET governance have been highlighted to explain why dual VET models have been historically developed under corporatist European Industrial Relations’ (IR) models (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012). Although there are some variations in the countries implementing dual VET, social partners generally contribute to establishing VET strategic priorities and a continuous renewal of the system to meet new needs within the labour market (Cedefop, 2013; Emmenegger & Seitzl, 2020).

In a context where several European countries with comparatively less developed ‘IR governance’ are implementing dual VET systems, attention must be drawn to potential problems and opportunities for developing collective responses towards dual VET. This executive summary report, which summarises the main findings of the INVOLVE project, aims to contribute to these debates. It explores the role played by trade unions and employer organisations in the governance of dual VET and apprenticeship systems under models of IR where social partners play a less institutionalised role in policymaking – namely, Spain, Greece and Portugal (‘State-centred’ model) and Poland (‘Mixed’ or ‘Transitional’ model).

2 European policy context

The ‘Copenhagen process’ (European Commission, 2002) on enhancing European cooperation in VET was launched in 2002 within the Lisbon Strategy and in response to the Barcelona mandate in November 2002. Since the launch of the Copenhagen process, the European Commission has stressed the importance of increasing cooperation in promoting VET involving the EU Member States as well as the social partners.

In the context of the 2007-2013 economic crisis, dual VET or apprenticeship schemes became a key European policy priority for tackling increasing youth unemployment. The European Commission financially supported and promoted partnerships between the German and Austrian Ministries of Education and the other EU Member States, aimed at introducing dual VET schemes

¹ In current literature and European institutions publications, dual VET and apprenticeship are treated as synonymous. It is also becoming common to label these models as Apprenticeships/Dual VET. This is because of the importance given to the ‘*apprenticeship contract*’ for classifying a scheme as dual VET. In this report we will also use both terms as synonymous. However, we will generally use the term dual VET in order to cover also those relatively new schemes which, according to international criteria (Cedefop, 2022), fall under this category for combining and alternating theoretical and in-company training in short intervals of time, but which do not regulate the relationship between students/apprentices and employers with an apprenticeship contract.

in countries where they did not exist or were not as effective as they should be, such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, Spain, Romania, Poland, Portugal and Sweden (Šćepanović & Martín Artiles, 2020). One of the most significant initiatives was the Berlin Memorandum on Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training in Europe signed by Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain in 2012, and coordinated by the German Office for International Cooperation in VET (GOVET) within the German Federal Institute for VET (BIBB).² This agreement established, as its main goal, the modernisation and implementation of education and training systems with a focus on dual or work-based education and training, particularly in order to reduce youth unemployment and improve the transition into the job market. Finally, within the agreement, the countries committed to creating a ‘peer-learning platform’ to encourage mutual learning and strengthen dual VET initiatives.

Attention must also be drawn to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), initiated in 2013, which unites governments and key stakeholders with the aim of strengthening the quality, supply and overall image of apprenticeships across Europe. The EAfA also aims to promote the mobility of apprentices following the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)³ – ECVET was created to allow learners to accumulate, transfer and use their learnings through units based on principles established in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and Europass.

In addition, several European initiatives have been developed with the purpose of improving the quality of VET and apprenticeship systems. In 2016, the European Commission published the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), which is a tool based on the 2009 recommendation of the European Parliament and Council. The EQAVET is a European wide framework to support quality assurance in VET across Europe. It provides guidance on how to develop a quality assurance system and contains examples of different approaches used by the Member States.

In October 2017, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a Council Recommendation for a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA), which was adopted by the European Council in March 2018 (European Commission, 2018). This initiative is linked to both: the New Skills Agenda for Europe launched in 2016 (European Commission, 2016); and the right to high-quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning, as defined in the European Pillar of Social Rights. According to a European Commission working document (European Commission, 2021), the EFQEA still remains a key instrument for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of apprenticeships across the EU.

According to the European Commission, which has tended to take the German model as a reference point (Šćepanović & Martín Artiles, 2020), an apprenticeship system should enable the participation of the social partners. In this sense, the New Skills Agenda for Europe stated that the social partners ‘should be involved in designing and delivering VET at all levels, as demonstrated in the “dual system” of apprenticeships’ (European Commission, 2016, p.6). The EFQEA has also explicitly asked for the social partners to be involved at cross-sectoral and sectoral levels in the ‘design, governance and implementation of dual VET schemes, in line with national IR systems and education and training practices’ (European Commission, 2021, p.12).

3. Dual VET programmes under diverse institutional contexts

3.1 Defining dual VET

Dual VET, also so-called apprenticeship, has become a key European policy priority. Several EU initiatives are incentivising Member States to develop dual VET schemes in countries where they did not exist before. Given that a growing number of countries are implementing dual VET

² Further information available at: <https://www.bibb.de/en/37031.php>

³ Further information available at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/european-credit-system-vocational-education-and-training-ecvet>

schemes under very diverse institutional contexts and educational/training traditions, the question of terminology and definitions deserves particular attention.

According to Markowitsch and Wittig (2020), the traditional concept of an apprenticeship has been modified in two main ways. First, its key pedagogical principle (the master-apprentice relationship) has been replaced by the principle of ‘duality’, understood as the combination of classroom teaching and in-company training. Second, a shift has been observed towards a broader and more flexible interpretation of the purpose of apprenticeships. The main feature of this shift is the reduction of the defining criteria for apprenticeships to its employment status alone. From this perspective, apprenticeship programmes are those which are based on a formal contract between an employer and a learner, where the latter has a specific status as an ‘apprentice’ as defined by labour law (Markowitsch & Wittig, 2020). As the next section 3.2 shows, not all the schemes classified as dual VET in the four countries studied meet this last criterion.

In search of a common terminology or conceptual framework which can support international comparisons of apprenticeships or dual VET programmes, scholars have proposed some definitions based on the main characteristics of learning provision. In this sense, Rauner and Smith (2010), have identified two basic types of ‘duality’ of vocational learning. First, a one phase or ‘integrating’ duality, 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. This type of duality is characteristic of those schemes normally classified as dual VET or apprenticeship, as it is implemented in the German or Austrian model. Second, alternating VET where relatively long phases of full-time school-based vocational education are followed by a phase, usually shorter, of on-the-job learning. This second model has been normally developed under school-based VET systems.

Other authors have distinguished dual VET from alternating of school-based VET programmes based on different criteria such as the minimum amount of training in the company, the type of qualification provided, and the contractual relationship between the apprentice and the company. For instance, Šćepanović and Martín Artiles (2020, p. 19) use the terms dual VET and apprenticeship to cover those programmes ‘in which a large portion of training (50 per cent or more) takes place in companies, so that students are both employees of firms and working towards a formal qualification that is recognised by the country’s educational system’.

Markowitsch and Wittig (2020) have elaborated a conceptual framework which aims to define and classify the great variety of dual VET programmes existing in EU countries instead of defining ‘national VET systems’. The conceptual framework relies on the concept of training logics, defined as ‘patterns of underpinning beliefs, norms and values related to different areas and purposes of education and training’ (Markowitsch & Wittig, 2020, p. 9). Based on this, four main training logics are identified. First, professional education, focused on the occupational standard and mainly driven by social partners (they define content, assess outcomes and set apprentice pay). Second, corporate training, focused on providing employees with the specific skills needed by enterprises and mainly organised by companies with financial support by state. Third, school or university education, aiming to facilitate the personal development of young people to become responsible citizens and which can include workplace learning in the context of upper-secondary or post-secondary VET schools. Last, public training schemes (Active Labour Market policies), aiming to support unemployed people in their transition to the labour market by enhancing their skills and employability. An important idea behind this framework is that no apprenticeship programme corresponds to one training logic only. Rather, they follow particular training logics to some extent while often incorporating elements from others.

Having acknowledged the complexity of defining dual VET in the current context, the following section maps, analyses and compares the main programmes identified in the four countries studied in the project.

3.2 Dual VET programmes in Greece, Portugal, Poland and Spain

In the four countries studied in the INVOLVE project, governments are currently implementing different VET programmes which can be classified as dual VET (also so-called apprenticeship schemes) schemes based on international criteria (Cedefop, 2022) and national definitions. In recent years, the four countries have all implemented educational and VET reforms which have modified or introduced new dual VET programmes which have strengthened in-company training with a view to addressing different structural problems (such as youth unemployment, early drop-out and skills mismatch). However, as is shown in this section, existing dual VET programmes in the four countries' studies greatly differ in several respects.

In **Greece**, two main laws were approved in 2013 (Law No 4186/2013) and 2016 (Law 4386/2016), and these laws introduced two novel dual VET programmes (so-called apprenticeship schemes): EPAL (Post-secondary Apprenticeship Class) and IEK apprenticeship schemes. Both programmes differ from traditional school-based VET provisions offered at EPAL and IEK schools, and from EPAS apprenticeship programmes which fall within the CVET system.

The EPAL apprenticeship scheme lasts nine months. It combines: a so-called 'speciality laboratory course' of a total of 203 hours, which is provided by the teaching staff of EPAL schools (under the Ministry of Education); and a 'Workplace training programme' of 156 days, organised into 28 hours per week spread over four days each week. Students accepted into the EPAL apprenticeship scheme are aged at least 18 and must have completed the upper secondary education (either vocational within EPAL schools or in the mainstream school system). The programme provides a formal apprenticeship qualification corresponding to level 5 in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which is evaluated and certificated by the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP). In the academic year 2017/2018, only 3,452 students were enrolled in this programme (2% of total VET students according to Greek Ministry of Education). The programme is however growing. The number of students enrolled has almost tripled in the second year of implementation of the scheme.

The IEK apprenticeship scheme provides an optional semester-long internship or apprenticeship which become mandatory for the students in 2015. The total duration is 960 hours, divided into 192 hours of training in IEK units and 768 hours of in-company learning. Evaluation of learning outcomes (accreditation exams) is also carried out by EOPPEP. The programme upgrades the qualifications acquired through studying at IEKs from level 4 to level 5 NQF/EQF. The apprenticeship placements of public IEKs announced for the year 2020 were 378⁴. Due to this, the scheme is still considered a pilot project.

Besides those recent schemes, attention must be drawn to the *EPAS apprenticeship scheme*, which is a continuation of previous apprenticeship schemes provided by the National Employment Service (OAED) since the 1950s. It lasts for 2 school years and in-company training represents at least 50% of the total scheme duration. Differing from the two previous schemes, the EPAS apprenticeship provides a formal apprenticeship qualification corresponding to level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which should be developed by OAED based on existing occupational profiles. EPAS graduates can enrol in IEK or EPAL schemes to acquire a qualification at level 5 of NQF. Participation in this scheme has been steadily declining from the early 2000s to recent years: in the academic year 2000/2001, there were 18,445 students enrolled compared to 5,500 in the academic year 2019/2020. However, it still represents about 5% of total VET students (Hellenic Statistical Authority).

In the three apprenticeship schemes (EPAL, IEK and EPAL) there is an apprenticeship contract between the apprentice and the employer. Apprentices receive a pay set at 75% of the legal statutory minimum wage for unskilled workers. It can be pointed out that the three schemes are mainly based on a 'professional education' logic (Markowitsch & Wittig, 2020). They focus on occupational standards which are developed with the participation of the social partners under the

⁴ Further information available at: <http://www.gsae.edu.gr>

coordination of an ethical institution (EOPPEP). Moreover, in EPAL and IEK schemes, social partners are formally involved in the evaluation committees under EOPPEP.

In **Poland**, there are three different types of vocational schools (or programmes). First, there are the Sectoral Vocational Schools which are organised into two stages: stage I (3 years) which provides vocational education consisting of one qualification at level 3 of NQF/EQF; and stage II (2 years) which gives the possibility of training in occupations consisting of two qualifications at level 4 of NQF/EQF. Second, there are Technical Secondary Schools (5 years) which provide vocational education consisting of two qualifications. Upon completion, graduates can decide to pass the 'progression' examination enabling the take up of tertiary education. Third, there are the Post-Secondary Schools (1 to 2.5 years) which provide vocational education in occupations giving the qualification at level 4 or 5 of NQF/EQF. All the above schools are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science and ran by local government units. Within these three types of schools, there are three main apprenticeship programmes: juvenile workers, contracts between headmaster and employer, and student internships.

The *juvenile worker* is the main apprenticeship scheme in Poland. This programme has been functioning since the 1930s and has been modified several times in recent years. The programme originates from craft guilds and still has an important 'professional education logic' (Markowitsch & Wittig, 2020). Compared to alternating VET programmes existing in the country, apprentices are formally employees under an employment contract between the juvenile worker/apprentice and the employer, and regulated by the Labour Code. Under this contract, apprentices receive a wage (from 4–6% of the national average salary) and are entitled to Social Security rights. In addition, attention must be drawn to the crucial role played by craft chambers, which supervise the learning process, and develop standards and requirements for 'journeymen' and master-craftsperson examinations in cooperation with the Polish Craft Association (ZRP).⁵ The scheme targets people aged 15–18 with lower secondary education and combines in-company training with theoretical vocational training. The most important path for implementing this duality principle entails that theoretical training is provided by so-called sectoral programmes or sectoral schools (named 'basic vocational schools' before 2017) within the first stage of the programme. This programme lasts three years and the minimum duration of in-company training is 60%. The school and the employer agree on the division of time per week between education at school and training at the company's premises. The most common practice is to divide the time according to the scheme: two days at the school and three days at the company (Symela, 2016). The scheme provides qualifications at level 3 of the NQF/EQF. According to the Ministry of Education (MEN) data, juvenile employees in the 2017/2018 academic year accounted for 49.5% of all students of first-stage sectoral programmes and basic vocational schools which, at the same time, accounted for about 13% of all post-gymnasium students. According to the Polish Craft Association (ZRP) data, in the same school year, 74.6% of all juvenile workers were employed in craft companies covered by the ZRP. In overall, juvenile workers accounted 5,5% of all post-gymnasium students in the country (Cedefop (2022), 2016/17 course). According to a study of the Central Statistical Office in 2015, these juvenile workers were mainly employed in retail (16,4%), manufacturing of food, beverages and tobacco products (16,1%), construction industry (11,5%), trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (10,8%) and accommodation and food service activities (8,9%).

In addition, two further alternative dual VET programmes are identified in Poland. First, the *professional preparation at the employer's premises on the basis of a contract for practical training*, which is concluded between the school headmaster and the employer admitting students for apprenticeships. This variant of the dual system applies to all three types of vocational schools existing in the country from 2nd stage Sectoral Programmes to Postsecondary Schools. Thus, it provides qualifications at levels 4 and 5 of the NQF/EQF depending on the programme. Practical

⁵ In 2015, the Act of 22 March 1989 on craftspersonship was amended. A provision was introduced which stated that vocational training in craft companies will be conducted on principles of the dual VET system and supervised by the craft chamber of which the craftsperson is a member. Noting that this law sanctioned a pre-existing solution rather than introducing a new one.

training within this variant is financed by the educational part of the core funds provided by the authorities running the school (usually local government entities). Training budgets include instructors' salaries, and the costs of clothing, footwear and personal protective equipment required in the workplace. In turn, the employer provides students with the material conditions necessary for the practical training in the profession. Students are not financially remunerated. However, the best students can be awarded a scholarship if the terms of cooperation between the employer and the school provide for such a possibility.

Second, the *student internship or apprenticeship*, which is a new option introduced by the amendment to the Educational Law (approved 22 November 2018). The scheme is addressed to learners in first-stage sectoral programmes and vocational upper-secondary programmes who are not juvenile workers. Thus, it provides qualifications at levels 3 and 4 of NQF/EQF depending on the programme. The internship is based on an individual agreement between the student or parents and the employer, and may free the student from the obligation to undergo practical training in other forms. A unique feature of this type of training is that it may form part of an extension to the school curriculum. The scope of the education content and the weekly duration of the internship is determined jointly by the school headmaster, the employer and the student. A student may receive a salary no higher than the statutory minimum wage (approximately €580 per month in 2020). The costs of remuneration are tax-deductible for the employer. Another innovative solution is that the employer can transfer funds (for example, in order to provide equipment) directly to the school without the intermediation of managing bodies (such as local government entities). Legal provisions also regulate the maximum daily duration of the internship depending on the age of the student (six hours a day for students under 16, eight hours for older students) as well as other aspects of working conditions.

In **Portugal**, apprenticeships or dual VET programmes mainly exist in the CVET system. Indeed, the only programme in Portugal identified by Cedefop as an apprenticeship or dual VET scheme is the so-called 'apprenticeship system', organised by the training centres of the Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), under the Ministry of Labour. The programme was introduced in 1984 as a result of the Decree-Law 102/84 of 29 and is aimed at students who have completed lower secondary education, mainly aged 15-29. The duration of the scheme ranges between 2,800 and 3,700 hours, of which 1,100 to 1,500 hours are dedicated to in-company practical training, split into three periods. Generally, the time spent in the workplace approaches 40% or more, depending on the area of education and training. The scheme provides a double certification: an education certificate (upper secondary level/12th year of schooling) and a vocational qualification (level 4 of the QNQ/EQF) upon successful completion. It also provides access to tertiary education. Compared to the original apprenticeship programmes where apprentices have the status of employees, learners under this programme fall outside labour legislation. However, there is an apprenticeship contract which needs to be signed between the learner and the school. Any student who enters the apprenticeship programme has to sign a contract of commitment. This training contract sets the amount of 'social support' (financial allowance) to be awarded to those apprentices eligible under the School Social Action policy. It also establishes the apprentices' rights for personal accident insurance and identifies the training provider as the responsible party.

This so-called apprenticeship system enrolled 15% of all VET students in the academic year 2018/2019 mainly distributed in sectors Hotels and Restaurants (18,4% of total students in Apprenticeship), Construction & Repair of Motor Vehicles (12,4%), Metallurgy and Metalworking (12,3%), and Commerce (10,1%) (DGEEC, 2022). However, the programme has lost 14,907 students in the last 6 years because of the overall reduction of students in the country due to demographic issues and because it appears that students are choosing other paths, whether to level IV vocational courses, general education pathways or both. These apprenticeship schemes combine public training schemes with professional education logic. Although the social partners actively participate in defining and updating the professional qualifications, and delivering training through so-called protocol centres, the schemes are coordinated and mainly driven by the

Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (IEFP), which is Portugal's Public Employment Agency.

In the IVET system, programmes offered at lower secondary level (EQF 2 – Qualification II), upper secondary level (EQF 3 – Qualification III) and post-secondary level (EQF 4 – Qualification V) have been labelled as 'school-based programmes', considering the low proportion of time devoted to training in real work environments and the status of learners as students (DGERT, 2019). In this context, the Portuguese government experimented with dual IVET programmes from 2012 to 2016, incentivised by different European initiatives and recommendations. These new programmes were introduced in lower secondary education (EQF 2) in 2012 and later, in 2013, they were extended to upper secondary education (EQF 3). One of the main characteristics of dual VET in the Portuguese education system was that it obliged schools to sign agreements with local companies for skills development mainly through simulated work experience for lower secondary education students and internships in the form of work-based training for upper secondary students. Another characteristic of this programme was the required minimum 800 hours of in-work training compared to the 400 hours minimum in other VET programmes. An evaluation of this dual VET programme was conducted by the directorate of Education in 2015 through a study which concluded that the programme was a success – not only in terms of the number of students who have attended the different courses but also in terms of the number of companies that signed the protocols with VET schools and regular (public) schools with VET programmes. Nevertheless, these dual IVET programmes were cancelled in 2016.

In **Spain**, there is only one specific dual IVET programme, which mainly relies on a school education logic (Markowitsch & 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 aimed to support the active participation of the companies in the learners' training process and foster closer relationships between the companies and the training centres. This kind of apprenticeship programme requires that a minimum of 33% of the vocational training takes place in a company, which is a much lower percentage than that of traditional apprenticeship programmes. A new Organic Law (3/2022) has slightly modified this proportion. This new Organic Law defines the distinctive features of the so-called intensive dual VET. Under this scheme, the proportion of in-company training will be higher than 35%. Under pre-existing legislation, the relationship of the learners with the company can take many forms: labour contracts (employees), training and apprenticeship contracts (regulated by labour legislation), internships and unpaid voluntary relationships. However, the new Organic Law requires a training contract – with features still to be defined – to regulate the relationship between the employer and the learner under the intensive dual VET. 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 apprenticeship programmes, another difference is that the evaluation of learning outcomes is exclusively carried out by IVET schools – companies or chambers of commerce do not play any specific role in this.

The 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 is observed that Autonomous Communities have developed different models through regional regulations (Martín Artiles et al., 2020; Sanz de Miguel, 2017). Regional variations are principally observed in the regulation of the relationship between the apprentice/intern and the company (in terms of apprenticeship contracts and grants, for example); and the minimum time required for in-company training. In relation to this latter aspect, some regions (such as the Basque Country) have increased in-company training to 40% of total training time. Dual IVET provide the same diploma and qualification as alternating VET. They offer IVET diplomas equivalent to EQF 4 (Intermediate IVET cycle) and EQF 5 (higher level of IVET cycle).

Dual VET has experienced continuous growth in Spain in terms of centres, programmes and students since 2012. Nevertheless, dual VET still only account for a low proportion of IVET

studies. In the academic year 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. Attending to the sectors, as Barrientos (2022) pointed out, even the most important ones in dual VET are those with more students in total VET, like Management and Business Administration (14,4% of total IVET and 12,1% of total dual IVET) or Sociocultural and Community Services (10,7% and 9,7%), it is worth noting that dual VET has been particularly encouraged in industrial and technological sectors like Installation and maintenance (2,7% of total IVET vs 6,7% of dual IVET), Mechanical production (2,8% vs 6,2%), Transport and Motor Vehicles Maintenance (5% vs 8,6%), Electricity and Electronics (6,4% vs 7,4%), in contrast with Health (17,1% vs 5,6%) or Aesthetics and beauty (3,4% vs 2,2%). Dual VET has also been encouraged in important sectors for the Spanish labour market like Commerce and Marketing (5,7% vs 8,5%), Hotels and Tourism (5,2% vs 8,3%) (Ministry of Education and VET, 2022).

Table 1 below illustrates the main differences between the most important dual VET or apprenticeship schemes identified in the four countries studied. As shown, those schemes greatly differ in the main dimensions commonly used to define apprenticeships. First, the minimum amount of in-company training varies from 80% in some Greek programmes to 40% in Portugal. Second, the legal relationship between the employer and the learner is formalised as an employment contract in one scheme in Poland, as an apprenticeship contract in Greece, Portugal and Spain, or as an internship in some schemes in Poland and in Spain. Third, the schemes also differ in their training logic: in Greece, Poland and to some extent Portugal, the training logic has strong elements of professional education; while in Spain, it primarily has a school logic, although elements corresponding to a professional education logic are also incorporated.

Table 1. Dual VET apprenticeship programmes in Greece, Poland, Portugal and Spain

	Minimum amount of training in the company	Formal relation with employer	Qualification obtained	Training logic	Share of apprentices enrolled in this scheme in relation to all VET
<i>Greece (EPAL, IEK apprenticeship)</i>	80%	Apprenticeship contract	Formal apprenticeship qualification connected to NQF (level 5 EQF)	Professional education	2% of vocational upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education
<i>Greece (EPAS apprenticeship)</i>	50%	Apprenticeship contract	Formal apprenticeship qualification connected to NQF (level 4 EQF)	Professional education	Less than 5% of vocational upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education
<i>Poland (juvenile employee contract)</i>	60%	Employment contract	Formal VET and apprenticeship qualification connected to NQF (level 3 EQF)	Professional education	5.5% of all post-gymnasium student

<i>Poland (contract between headmaster and employer)</i>	50%	The best students can be awarded a scholarship if the terms of the cooperation provide for such a possibility	Formal VET and apprenticeship qualification connected to NQF (level 4/5 EQF)	Professional education	No data available
<i>Poland (student internship)</i>	50%	Internship (salary not higher than the statutory minimum wage)	Formal VET and apprenticeship qualification connected to NQF (level 3/4 EQF)	Professional education	No data available
<i>Portugal</i>	40%	Apprenticeship contract (no employment relationship)	Double certification: education and vocational, connected to NQF (level 4 EQF)	Professional education/ public training schemes	15% of VET programmes
<i>Spain</i>	33% (35% under new Organic Law)	Internship/apprenticeship/ employment contract	Formal qualification (VET diploma) (EQF 4/5)	School logic/ incorporating some professional education logic	3% of IVET

Source: authors' own elaboration based on national statistics and Cedefop (2022)

4. Social partner involvement in dual VET governance in Greece, Portugal, Poland and Spain

The term 'governance' refers to all mechanisms and practices that support the coordination of institutions and actors who have interdependent relationships to formulate, implement or evaluate policies (Cedefop, 2013, 2016). Governance is one of the main topics studied in European VET comparative research (Clarke et al., 2021; Markowitsch & Chan 2022). This line of research has been generally oriented towards identifying institutional and conceptual differences between countries at the cross-sectoral and sectoral levels (Clarke et al., 2021). According to Markowitsch and Chan (2022), at least four strands of research related to VET governance can be distinguished: VET related research mainly concerned with educational governance (such as mainstream schools and universities); studies on international policy transfer in VET; reviews and evaluations of VET programmes and systems; and specific research on VET systems and collective skill formation regimes. The INVOLVE project focuses on the last strand of research, which explores the role played by trade unions and employer organisations or, more broadly, 'industrial democracy governance' (Eurofound, 2018; Sanz de Miguel et al., 2020) in the design and implementation of dual VET or apprenticeship policies.

Most influential comparative studies on VET governances have relied on typologies that look to understand cross-country diversity by grouping together national VET systems that share common patterns and institutions. However, governance VET typologies differ in terms of what the key dimensions address, the governance levels studied (such as macro and meso levels), the research methods and the underpinning values (Markowitsch & Chan, 2022).

One of the most significant lines of research, inspired by political economy and the theory of varieties of capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001), has focused on so-called ‘skill formation’ regimes (Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012). The term ‘skill formation’ refers to policies and institutions that deal with the provision of training and human capital. Skill formation regimes reflect decisions about the role that different actors – such as the state, enterprises or trade unions – play in the provision and financing of training.

In terms of skill formation regimes, Greece, Spain and Portugal are generally assessed as ‘statist regimes’ (Eurofound, 2018; Martín Artiles et al., 2020). In contrast with ‘collective regimes’ such as Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, which combine high public commitment and high involvement of companies and social partners, under ‘statist regimes’ involvement of companies and social partners is scarce because VET is integrated into the general education system. However, in the case of Spain, some publications have also identified attempts to shift towards a more collective type of skill formation regime since the regulation of a new dual VET scheme in 2012 (Antonazzo et al., 2021; Tarriño Ruiz, 2019). Poland has also been classified as a statist regime, albeit with some elements of collective skill formation regimes considering that some apprenticeship schemes are more collectively organised, with the chambers of guilds playing a prominent role (Antonazzo et al., 2021).

Drawing on these debates, the INVOLVE project explores whether the four case study countries are developing more collective responses to VET in a context where national governments have given new impetus to dual VET schemes. With this aim, it analyses and compares the role played by the social partners in the governance of dual VET systems.

With a view to analysing social partners’ roles in dual VET governance, the INVOLVE project draws on Emmenegger and Seitzl’ three governance levels (2020): political-strategic, technical-strategic level and technical-operational level.

The findings are based on desk research and fieldwork. Fieldwork was conducted from January to September 2021 in the four countries studied. It included, first, a total of 99 semi-structured interviews conducted with state/government authorities and social partners involved at the three governance levels distinguished. Interviews were conducted following common interview guidelines. The analysis of the interviews has been structured as a qualitative content analysis based on common dimensions and categories which draw from the literature on dual VET governance and industrial relations.

Second, mini case studies were conducted exploring cooperation and coordination initiatives between companies, VET schools/training centres, and trade unions aiming to implement a dual VET scheme. Mini-case studies followed a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews that were conducted with companies, training centres/VET schools and workers’ representatives at company level (trade union section, work council, etc.). In total, three mini-case studies were conducted in each country.

4.1 Political-strategic level

The political-strategic level includes those institutions and bodies where stakeholders make decisions on the system’s long-term developments which need political legitimacy. These decisions may be related to law-making, national policies and strategic priorities with regard to VET. As suggested by Emmenegger and Seitzl (2020), social partners’ involvement or absence at this level can determine the type of goals pursued by the VET system. In collective skill formation regimes, Emmenegger and Seitzl (2020) have identified the Alliance for Initial and Further Education initiative (Germany, initially active for the period 2014–2018 and then extended for the period 2019–2022) and the National Summit Meeting on VET (Switzerland) as significant examples of bodies or procedures through which social partners can be involved.

No similar institutions or procedures have been found in Spain, Greece, Portugal, or Poland. Nevertheless, in the four countries studied there are tripartite bodies dealing with the regulation and the strategic priorities of the VET system. These bodies exhibit some differences in their scope, governance structures, social partners’ level of involvement, and the extent to which they

have been effective in producing tripartite agreements or agreeing on strategic priorities for VET policies.

Overall, it appears that the role played by social partners in dual VET policymaking in Spain, Greece, Portugal and Poland is erratic and mainly limited to advisory functions. This is partly because existing social dialogue tripartite institutions dealing with VET issues do not have an important role in policymaking or setting strategic priorities. For example, in Spain, Greece and Poland, social dialogue mainly works through or ad-hoc settings which ensure a less institutionalised and regular involvement. Among our case study countries, the only exception is Portugal, where a recent social pact was partly implemented through a social dialogue institution (CPCS) – although the social pact did not get the necessary support from the main trade unions.

The limited role played by tripartite bodies in policymaking can, to some extent, be attributed to the existing regulation of the bodies. Research findings show that existing tripartite institutions are not co-decision bodies and do not have a clear statutory mandate to negotiate on VET or dual VET policymaking. As a result, governments can always unilaterally develop new regulations on dual VET, as occurred in Spain with the 2012 policy reform regulating dual VET programmes, or as is usually the case in Poland. In the latter country, social partners express concern about a dominant approach to policymaking on VET which is mainly based on unilateral decisions or arbitrary approaches to taking into account the opinions of relevant social partners. This was also the case for the reforms implemented in Portugal and Greece in the context of the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) programmes in exchange for debt relief, where there were only informal consultation processes outside tripartite bodies.

Moreover, tripartite bodies have not had clear mandates or responsibilities for the development of regular publications of research and policy reports (for example, regarding national strategies on VET) to influence the policy agenda. In the case of Spain, CGFP was initially mandated to develop and evaluate the National Programme of Vocational Training for the government. However, the last plan was enacted for 1998–2002, and CGFP did not carry out further cycles of evaluation and development to refresh strategic priorities. In Poland, working groups under RDS do not have a formal institutional role in producing strategic plans for VET or dual VET systems. This also applies to Greece and Portugal. However, in the case of Greece, some positive innovations have also been identified. The recently created KSEEEK has been mandated to submit a Strategic Plan for VET and Lifelong Learning to the Minister of Education every three years. While it is still too soon to assess how social partners actually contribute to this plan and the extent of its influence on policymaking, this new mandate may contribute to increased social partner involvement in the definition of strategic priorities and policymaking.

Despite this institutional framework, some recent VET policy reforms developed in Greece, Portugal and Spain – which are expected to have an impact on the long-term developments of VET systems – have been partially agreed upon with the social partners. However, in the case of Greece and Spain, they have not been the results of genuine tripartite agreements, while in Portugal, the recent tripartite agreement was not supported by the one of the main trade union confederations (CGTP).

4.2 Technical-strategic level

The technical-strategic governance level deals with those institutions that are also involved in the VET system's long-term developments but from a technical or expert perspective (Emmenegger & Seitzl, 2020). The institutions considered at this level are those in charge of evaluating the VET system (for example, conducting research on VET), linking the education/training system with the labour market, providing technical advice to the government, and recognising and developing training regulations and curricula (Emmenegger & Seitzl, 2020). In some countries classified within collective skill formation regimes, there are significant examples of bodies/procedures through which social partners are involved at this governance level (Emmenegger & Seitzl, 2020). This is the case of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) in Germany which is in charge of updating the directory of training occupations, developing VET curricula, conducting research on VET and its relationship with the labour market, and coordinating the

regional (Länder) committees for VET. The BIBB is supervised by a tripartite round table where the social partners are represented. Another example is the Foundation for Cooperation on VET and the Labour Market (SBB) in the Netherlands, which involves employer organisations, trade unions, VET providers and vocational teachers, and is responsible for advising the Ministry of Education on VET curricula relating to labour market needs.

At the technical-strategic level of governance, the four countries analysed have procedures to create, update and systematise professional qualifications through National Qualifications Frameworks or Systems which are related to the European Qualification Framework– these processes contribute to the renewal of dual VET systems by taking into account labour market needs at different levels (sectoral, regional, local). In all the cases, there is one technical institution leading these processes which works in cooperation with regional (Spain, Poland), sectoral (Portugal) and/or national technical bodies (Greece and Poland). Moreover, in the four countries examined, this kind of technical institution manages feedback mechanisms for the whole VET system (school-based and dual VET system).

However, in the case of Poland and Greece, a highly fragmented institutional landscape exists at this level, with several bodies having technical responsibilities in different fields (including labour market diagnosis and VET research). In the case of Greece, the institutional framework is also very unstable, having been subjected to frequent changes in recent years. In contrast, Portugal and Spain have a more unified procedure where all the proposals from different sectoral, regional and local bodies are channelled and coordinated through one technical body (ANQEP in Portugal and INCUAL in Spain), which is the sole institution in charge of the national catalogues and the national systems for qualifications.

Differences are also identified in terms of the roles played by the social partners. In Greece and Portugal, social partners are involved in the board of directors of the main institutions managing the national qualifications framework and defining occupational profiles (EOPPEP and ANQEP); however, their opinions are not systematically considered. In contrast, social partners are not formally represented in those institutions mandated to manage the National Catalogue of Qualifications or the Integrated System of Qualifications in Spain (INCUAL) and Poland (IBE). However, in the case of Spain, social partners play an active role in updating or creating qualifications through their direct participation in sectoral working groups, as well as indirectly through appointing experts to externally assist in the definition of qualifications. In Spain, social partners are also involved at the regional level through similar processes.

In Portugal and Poland, social partners are also involved in sectoral (Portugal) or regional (Poland) tripartite institutions mandated to determine labour market needs and propose new qualifications. However, these are not co-decision bodies and, as social partners have critically noted, the final decision is always taken by the government.

In addition, research findings reveal that employer organisations and trade unions are not involved on an equal footing at this governance level, with trade unions in some cases being less involved. This applies, in particular, to Poland. Similarly, in Spain, regional trade unions complained that employer organisations are playing a more active role than trade unions in the process of developing qualifications at the technical-strategic level.

4.3 Technical-operational level

The technical-operational level is related to the institutions that deal with efficient policy implementation on the ground (Emmenegger & Seitzl, 2020). It refers to those bodies in charge of delivering education and training, evaluating students' training outcomes, and enforcing the training and working conditions of apprentices. Emmenegger and Seitzl (2020) examined collective skills formation regimes and, within those regimes, they identified significant examples of bodies/procedures for involving social partners in governance. This is the case of BIBB in Germany, which supervises the implementation of VET together with expert social partners; or the Convention of VET partners in Switzerland, with similar policy powers compared to BIBB and the participation of national and regional government and social partners.

The technical-operational level has the lowest social partner participation in the four countries examined, although the firms have an important role as training providers. This is because of the absence of a tripartite institution directly involved in facilitating cooperation between VET schools and training companies, and evaluating apprenticeship outcomes. However, there are considerable differences between the analysed countries, particularly between Poland and Portugal (where there is more social partner involvement), and Greece and Spain (where there is less social partner involvement).

In Poland there is a specific governance structure for apprenticeship schemes. The Polish Craft Association (ZRP) supervises the non-public sectoral vocational schools run by craft guilds and dedicated to juvenile worker programmes. The ZRP also organises and evaluates journeyman and master-craftsperson exams, and coordinates the cooperation of local businesses with VET schools. However, ZRP only involves employers and operates under the supervision of the public administration – trade unions have no role.

In the case of Portugal, the social partners are involved at this governance level because they manage their own VET private centres developing apprenticeship programmes, although they depend on the IEFP which defines protocols and training contents, and also finances them. Moreover, social partners are involved through the board of directors of IEFP which is a specific governance structure for apprenticeship schemes and is responsible for identifying and engaging the employers for in-company training.

In contrast, in Greece and Spain, there is no institution or procedure managing the governance of the apprenticeship system at this level. However, there is still the need for coordinating VET schools and in-company training providers, and for finding training companies. Thus, particularly in these countries, there are two key points. First, VET school teachers involved in apprenticeship schemes have a crucial role both in a pedagogical sense and also as managers of the implementation of apprenticeship schemes on the ground, identifying and then coordinating with companies, evaluating apprentices' training outcomes and adapting, in an informal way, training contents to company needs. Second, particularly in Spain, this lack of a coordinating institution or participation of the government at this governance level has left a lot of space for the creation of private initiatives focusing on strengthening dual VET by facilitating coordination between schools and companies, and by developing dissemination campaigns. These private initiatives, although an important boost to the dual VET scheme, ultimately led to further fragmentation of the scheme, generating greater inequality between the territories and VET schools which benefit from these private initiatives and those which do not. This result is also pointed out by Barrientos (2022), who notes the significant differences between dual VET implementation in a range of Autonomous Communities due to differing levels of political will in regional governments, and the presence of these private initiatives which mainly operate in Catalonia, Madrid and Andalusia.

At the technical-operational level, it is also important to note the very limited role played the trade unions in supervising and enforcing the apprentices' working and training conditions in the four countries. In Spain and Greece, VET schools (and teachers) are responsible for finding companies and, at the same time, for monitoring the quality of training as well as eliminating those companies where working conditions are not as they should be. In both countries, dual VET schools do not use to cooperate with trade unions. Moreover, in the case of Spain, research has showed that trade unions often do not have access to even basic information, such as whether there are apprentices in a company at all, because companies are not obliged by law to inform trade unions of their intake of apprentices. In Portugal, IEFP is charge of enforcing apprenticeship training and working conditions. However, trade unions are not involved in these processes. Moreover, fieldwork show that the institution barely has resources for these tasks and, accordingly, enforcement is generally carried out by training centres. In Poland, trade unions are only mandated to deal with health and safety issues in those companies where they have presence (mainly big companies).

5. Policy points

Policy recommendations outlined have two aims. First, reinforcing social partners' involvement within the governance of the overall dual VET systems. Second, ensuring a mutually reinforcing pursuit of economic and social goals. In terms of recommendations, there is a particular focus on the social partners' roles within existing social dialogue and technical institutions and processes.

At **political-strategic level**, we recommend reinforcing the role of social dialogue institutions through granting them the following VET policy powers:

- Providing the institutions with an effective statutory mandate to deal with VET issues that are of interest to the social partners. This statutory mandate should provide social partners with co-decision rights or, a minimum, mandatory negotiation and consultation rights on dual VET policymaking – this would also prevent government unilateral actions, including in the context of external crises. This mandate should also be extended to cover all processes linked to the Europeanisation of VET.
- Providing social partner institutions with a statutory mandate to develop regular research and policy reports to influence the policy agenda (for example, on national strategic priorities for VET). In particular, priority should be given to those trends having a more disruptive impact, such as digitalisation.
- Creating procedures to monitor and enforce the translation of tripartite institutions' opinions and recommendations into public policies on VET.
- Ensuring that trade unions and employer organisations represented in the social dialogue institutions have enough technical and personnel resources to analyse dual VET policy problems and make recommendations. This will contribute to ensuring that the institutions play an effective and constructive role in policymaking.

At **technical-strategic level**, we recommend:

- Provide formal representation for the social partners in the governing boards of the main technical bodies, to ensure that they play a role in setting the agenda and supervising its activities.
- Reinforce the role played by trade unions and employer organisations in the processes of skills forecasting at different levels (national, regional/local, sectoral). This should be done in parallel with the development of a stable forecasting methodology which would systematically analyse the impact of digitalisation on skills development and employment.
- Ensure a balanced involvement of trade unions and employer organisations in the processes of defining and updating qualifications, to avoid these processes being exclusively aligned to economic goals. This should be considered in all the bodies and processes operating at the national, sectoral or regional/local level. The involvement of social partners in the process of defining and updating qualifications should be routinised, defining clearly the different steps in which trade unions and employer organisations are engaged.
- Ensure that trade unions and employer organisations have enough capacity in terms of technical knowledge, structure and staff to support state authorities in all processes related to the definition and updating of qualifications.
- Reinforce the role to be played by collective bargaining, ensuring, in particular, that sectoral and company collective bargaining effectively regulates and recognises dual VET qualifications as they are defined in the national qualifications frameworks.
- Reinforce social partners' involvement in the evaluation process for the quality of dual VET systems, ensuring a balanced representation of trade unions and employer organisations. In particular, trade unions and employer organisations should be highly involved in the process of defining analytical dimensions and indicators to make sure that

the evaluations are addressing both the social and economic objectives which are relevant to the social partners.

- Ensure consistency and coordination among the different institutions and feedback mechanisms for the different dual VET and general VET schemes, making sure that social partners are equally involved in all the different existing processes.

At **technical operational** level, we recommend

- Developing tripartite bodies operating at sectoral/local level, mandated to identify and engage companies in dual VET. These bodies should also be mandated to support companies with the implementation and supervision of in-company training, the evaluation of in-company training results, and articulating VET schools' demands in relation to in-company training.
- Reinforcing the role played by collective bargaining in defining the dual VET positions on offer, and in regulating the working and training conditions for apprentices. In some cases, this should be supported by better regulatory approaches towards apprentices' contracts, ensuring that they are properly covered by social and labour rights applicable to general workers in standard employment relationships.
- Strengthening the role played by trade unions at the company level in the process of enforcing apprentices' training and working conditions. They should have statutory information and consultation rights in relation to these processes. Sectoral trade union federations should also be involved in enforcing the working and training conditions for apprentices, particularly in the context of SMEs lacking trade union representation. Moreover, cooperation between VET schools and trade union bodies at the company level should be explicitly visioned and outlined.

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