

D4.1 Follow-up survey

June 2023
EDDIE Consortium

During “T4.1: Identification and assessment of skill delivery and professional knowledge to address digitalization”, the EDDIE project partners conducted an online survey between November and December 2021 to gather valuable insights and identify the main challenges the Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems are facing in the area of digitalization of the energy system and the associated demand for new skills.

Concept and methodology

The target group of the survey comprised of VET providers across the EU, while the aim of the research was to map the situation across Europe and in a way to record the echoes of the VET sector.

Overall, the survey was based on targeting key-informants (VET providers and/or experts) across Europe through an online questionnaire consisting of closed questions, scaling questions, and open-ended questions.

Respondents were invited to share some basic demographic data related to their organization and background and to express their views by having the chance to use a scaling method for their answers. The survey used the snow-ball sampling procedure to create a pool of possible respondents and to ease data collection, while the data collection took place via the EU Survey online platform.

The questionnaire went through a set of questions about:

- the respondent’s organization and profile;
- the VET system organization, structure, context in their country;
- the VET participation and the public opinion perceptions
- the VET linkages with social and public and economy stakeholders;
- the labour market needs and the skills offered through education and training;
- the digitalization status in the respondent’s country and
- an open-ended section for further remarks and comments;
- a section for further communication and dissemination of the project news.

Profile of respondents

The survey had sixteen key-informants who responded, representing geographically diverse EU member states. The respondents included both big and small countries and varied in size and population. The sample was considered representative as there was a big diversity in the characteristics of the respondents.

The VET providers in the sample ranged from smaller organizations with up to 100 students to larger ones exceeding 1,000 students per year. The sample also had diversity in terms of VET training experience, ranging from organizations with over 30 years of experience to newer ones within the last decade.

The key-informants represented different roles within a VET institution, including senior members of administration, administrative staff, project managers, trainers, VET consultants, and training experts.

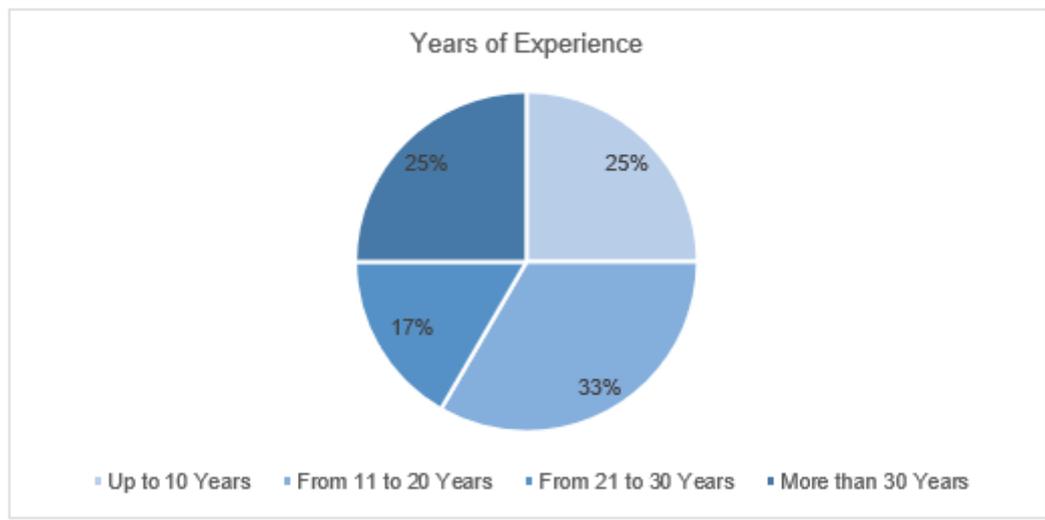


Figure 2: Training Capacity of the Respondents as VET Providers

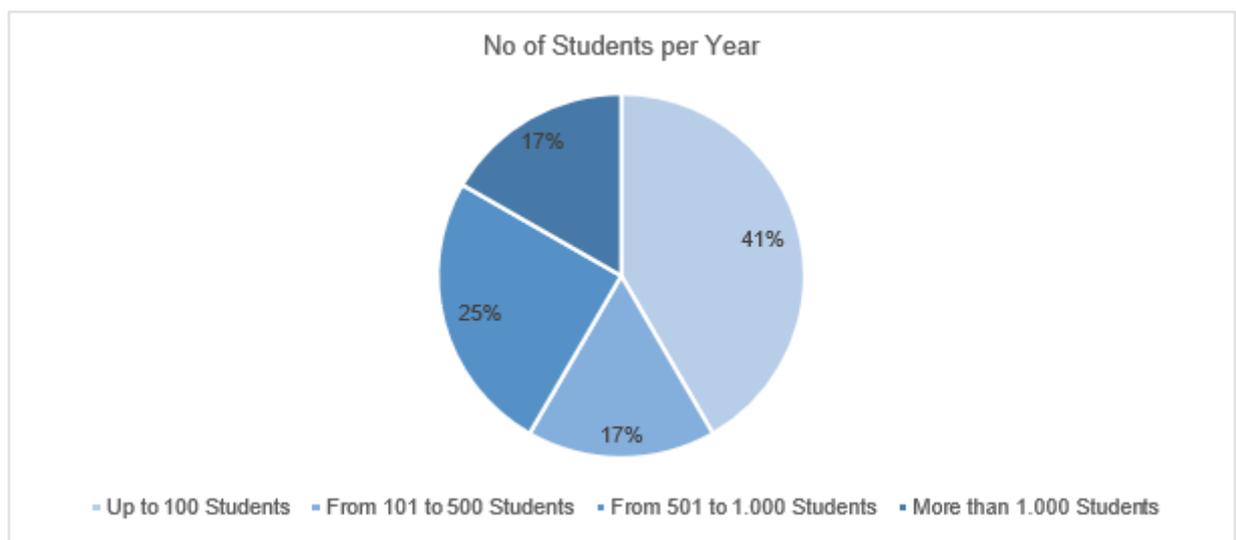


Figure 1: Training Experience of the Respondents as VET Providers

Main results and findings

The main outcomes are presented below:

- Opinions related to the VET system, funding allocation and in their country:
 - The majority of the VET providers (93.75%) use digital tools and methods for the delivery of their training;
 - 43.75% of the respondents offer specialized courses related to the energy sector in their curriculum;
 - The majority of the respondents believe that the VET system is well connected to the formal education in their country;
 - 43.75% of the respondents feel that financial resources related to the operation of VET are not sufficient;
 - Half of the respondents acknowledge the significance of validation within the VET sector;
 - VET programmes are often part of life-long learning programmes and continuous adult education schemes, where the major focus is more on the offered skills rather than the validation that follows.

- VET participation and public opinion perceptions:
 - 43.75% of respondents perceive VET student attendance as satisfactory, while 31.25% are neutral and 25% express an opposite stance;
 - 75% of VET providers agree that Higher Education is more frequently chosen than VET in their country, while 25% express a more neutral opinion;
 - 50% of VET providers feel that society is positive towards VET, but 25% are neutral and 25% disagree with this statement;
 - The choice of an educational path, including VET, is associated with general public opinion feeling.

- VET and social, public and economic stakeholders:
 - The survey found that the strength of linkages between VET providers and economic, social, and public stakeholders vary across different EU member states;
 - Half of the respondents feel that there are strong ties between VET and these stakeholders in their countries, while 31.25% disagree and 18.75% are neutral;
 - Incentives for companies to hire employees under VET training and learning schemes are perceived differently across countries, with 31.25% of respondents believing the incentives are sufficient, 31.25% disagreeing, and 37.5% expressing a neutral opinion;
 - Similarly, the survey found that the presence of barriers to participation in VET training and learning schemes is perceived differently across countries, with 37.5% of respondents agreeing that participation is easy, 31.25% disagreeing, and the remaining 31.25% expressing a neutral opinion.

Conclusions

The survey revealed that there is a gap between the skills offered through VET and the needs of the labour market, as reported by 81.25% of the respondents. Most of the VET providers stated that there is a need to align the VET curricula to the labour market requirements and improve the quality of VET programs. Furthermore, the digitalization status in the respondents' countries varies, with some countries being advanced in this area, while others are still in the early stages. The respondents reported that the integration of digital skills in VET is important, but there are challenges related to the availability of digital infrastructure, funding, and teacher training. In order to address these challenges, more support and investment are needed to ensure that VET programs can meet the digitalization needs of the labour market.

Overall, the EDDIE project survey revealed a diverse landscape of VET across Europe, with varying levels of funding and validation schemes. While most respondents described the number of students attending VET schools as satisfactory, there was a perception that Higher Education is more highly regarded. The survey highlights the importance of strengthening the ties between the VET sector and public, social, and economic stakeholders, but opinions on incentives and barriers to participation vary widely. However, most respondents agreed that the VET sector in their country meets the needs of the labour market, and it could play a crucial role in avoiding a future gap in skills offered and needed during the era of digitalization.