Employment, skills and training in Europe
Some lessons from two ETUC projects:

For a Trade Union version of the “New Skills for New Jobs” initiative

Challenges, actors and practices of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) in Europe and its validation

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Europe's ability to play an active role in the global economy is dependent on one imperative:

- creating a dynamic balance between a resolute overall upskilling and the promotion of excellence...
- ... in the context of an inclusive labour market pushing back job precariousness, which causes waste and lack of motivation

Contradictory trends

- World standardization of skills and segmentation of value chains *versus* specific and creative skills anchored in local « ecosystems »
- General upgrading employment shift (generational and gender renewal) *versus*
  Polarisation of employment (destruction of routine mid-paid jobs in industry and services, growth of high-skilled and elementary jobs)
- → possible mismatches if skills supply and demand are differently influenced by these trends (ex: skilled people in elementary jobs)
The long-proclaimed European goal of Life Long Learning contrasts sharply with the mediocrity of delivery:

- Access to CVET (Continuing Vocational Education and Training) is low overall and unequal, between countries.
- No real catching up of countries lagging behind.
- Vulnerable groups (target for public policies and social dialogue):
  - Workers in SMEs may be completely denied access to training.
  - Too high rates of NEET (young people “Not in Employment, Education or Training”).
- The balance between guidance services for individuals, financial incentives for companies, upskilling work organization, is difficult to achieve.

Institutional factors of heterogeneity

- Degree of integration (or separation) between initial and continuing training.
- Mode of regulation of CVET: centralised, decentralised, weak.
- Degree of development of NFIL validation.
- Relationship between public policies and involvement of the social actors.

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Ex: three groups in NFIL survey on 10 countries

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Broad public programmes and active involvement of social partners

Public initiatives more at the regional than at the national level

Proactive Trade Unions, but NFIL recognition is not an institutional priority

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Common challenge: the recognition of Learning Outcomes

The better recognition and validation of Learning Outcomes (results of workplace learning, prior experience and NFIL) throughout working careers and professional transitions

- ... calls for the adjustment of business models within companies, in order to have positive effects on the pay and/or employability of workers
- ... incites unions and employers to take on greater responsibility, making recognition and development of skills a key issue in collective bargaining:
  - upstream in sector councils for definition of occupational standards
  - downstream in companies, with too rare good practices to incorporate training and validation of experience into more secure career pathways

The LO approach improves the balance of flexicurity

- by improving recognized employability, it equips people better for job changes
- by extending recognized skills beyond diplomas certifying initial education, it helps employers to gain a better overview of the skills supply
- by encouraging education systems to better describe the skills associated with the diplomas, it helps young graduates to find jobs
Convenient regulation is needed:

- uniform frameworks, transparent and efficient methods, quality control, in order to select reliable certification and training bodies
- European tools (as *European Qualifications Framework* or *NFIL validation guidelines*) are useful lever to go in this direction.
- The take-up of these tools by social partners and national actors is a long process: the distance with national practices is frequently high

Practical recommendations for good practices (examples)

- Developing information and advice aimed at workers in companies
  - ...through the role of TU “learning representatives”
  - ...through the integration of NFIL validation into HR management
- Developing training and validation of prior learning as topic for bargaining
  - ...integrated into a broad field of discussion (employment, careers, transitions...)
  - ...prolonged by partnership protocols of companies with training and validation bodies and public institutions responsible for qualification
• **Common need of cumulative process of recognition and improvement of skills, at collective and individual levels, with some particular target groups**
  - NFIL validation not as “low cost qualification” but as tool of integration of people with low initial education into the process of upskilling
  - The convergence between public incentives and collective bargaining is the best way to make NFIL validation a factor of personal employability
  - Contradiction:
    - EU orientations go in this direction, by seeking to ground mobility on the qualification of vocational competences
    - ...but the current deregulation of labour markets threatens this progress, by assimilating the recognition of qualifications in collective agreements to “rigidity”
Final challenges, next agenda? (2)

- **Upwards harmonisation of national practices in vocational training**
  - To foster the European Sector Councils on Employment and Skills, as network of proactive national and regional actors
  - Promotion and dissemination of positive experiences, with focus on interaction and consistency between IVET and CVET
  - To combine the attention to current signals from labour market and the foresight to take in shifts in society, economy, technology, ...
  - To search for balance between harmonised national frameworks and decentralised initiatives (by the way of collective bargaining)

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