

# 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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# A common development of jobs and skills ?

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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)

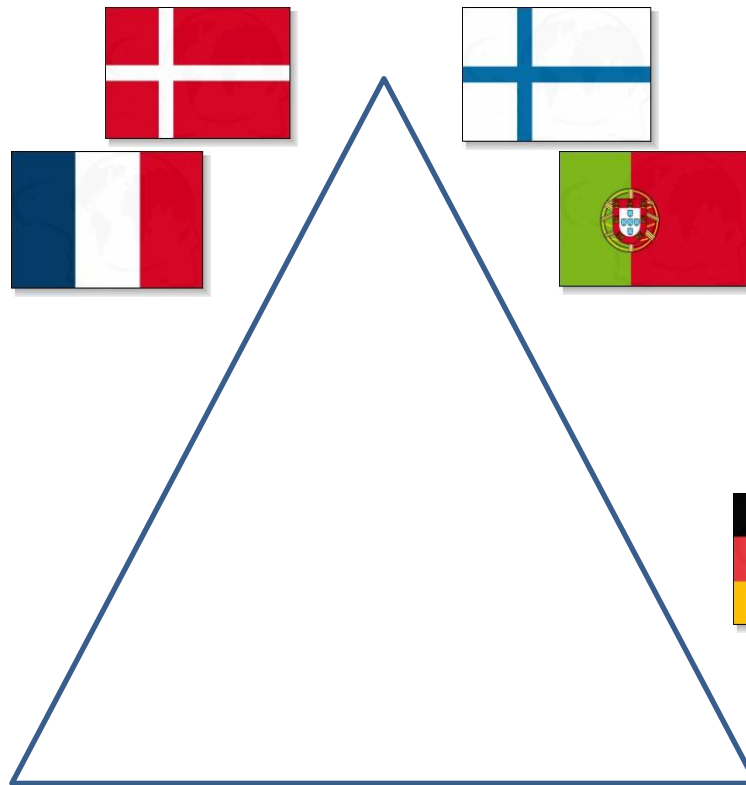
# Handicaps and Heterogeneity in Europe

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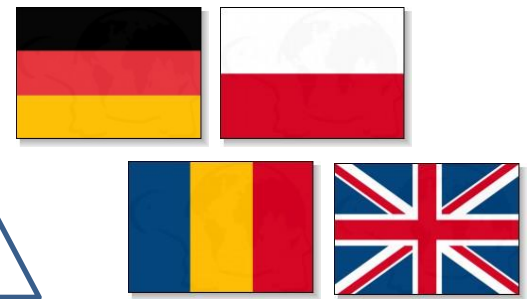
- ***The long-proclaimed European goal of Life Long Learning contrasts sharply with the mediocrity of delivery:***
  - Access to CVET (Continuing Vocational Education and Training) is low overall and unequal, between countries
  - No real catching up of countries lagging behind
  - Vulnerable groups (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

# Ex: three groups in NFIL survey on 10 countries

**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**

# Common challenge : the recognition of Learning Outcomes

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- ***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

# Political and technical challenges of implementation

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## ■ ***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

# Final challenges, next agenda ? (1)

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- ***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”

- ***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)