



Education and Training in Europe 2020

**Examples of
recent and forthcoming
policy measures
in the EU-28 in response to
the Europe 2020 priorities
in education and training**

Eurydice

*Education
and Training*

This document is a compilation of the national examples provided in Chapters 1-4 and Annex 3 of the Eurydice report 'Education and Training in Europe 2020: Responses from the EU Member States'. Further information on national reforms and policy initiatives is available in Eurypedia (The European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems), Chapter 14:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurypedia_en.php

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Chapter 1: Tackling early school leaving

1.1. REFORMS TO PREVENT EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

1.1.1. Increasing participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) and improving its quality

Increasing participation in ECEC

In **Bulgaria**, the last two years of pre-primary education will become compulsory from 2016/17.

In **Poland**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, since September 2013, a central grant for increasing the number of places and reducing the costs borne by parents has been assigned to local governments, which have the option to introduce partial or total fee waivers for parents. The legal entitlement to pre-primary education will be established for four-year-olds from September 2015, and for three-year-olds, from September 2017, whereas for five-year-olds, it has been compulsory since September 2011.

In **Slovakia**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport is working on the creation of legislative conditions for making attendance at kindergartens free-of-charge from the age of 4. In parallel, the government is cooperating with the founders of kindergartens in order to expand the capacities of existing facilities. A new legal provision will come into force in September 2013, allowing kindergarten directors to increase the maximum number of children in their institution if necessary, under certain circumstances.

In the **Czech Republic**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the range of persons qualified to care for children aged from 0 up to compulsory schooling in ECEC settings (with the exception of nursery schools) has been widened, due to the Government's approval of extended qualifications for childcare staff in 2012. Draft legislation still to be submitted to the government and Parliament will introduce a new type of childcare service (i.e. children's groups) and new tax measures to support all types of childcare services. The measures are expected to come into force in 2014. The Government has also removed some legal barriers to the establishment of ECEC settings by public and private companies in 2011, e.g. by allowing them to give preference in admissions to the children of their employees.

In **Slovenia**, in early 2013, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport drafted the amendments to the Kindergarten Act, in order to award companies the right to receive public funds for ECEC settings even if they have been established only for employees' children. However, the coordination with the stakeholders regarding this legislative change is still on-going. Some previous benefits towards the cost of kindergarten fees have been decreased due to the severe financial circumstances and the need to cut public expenditure. Following the adoption of the Fiscal Balance Act at the end of May 2012 by the National Assembly, parents of two or more children attending ECEC settings (from 1 to 6-years olds) must now cover a share (i.e. 30 %) of the charge for the second child. However, they do not need to pay for any additional child.

In **France**, at the end of 2012, the government committed itself to reversing the decreasing trend in enrolment rates of two-year old children in pre-primary schools (*école maternelle*), in order to bring it to over 30 % by 2017, against 11.6 % in 2011 (Ministère de l'éducation nationale, 2012). This objective has been further emphasised in the new guidance and programming law for restructuring schools adopted in June 2013. Children in urban and rural disadvantaged areas are specifically targeted. Some of the 1 000 newly recruited teachers at the start of the 2012/13 school year for the

whole pre-primary and primary provision have been assigned to this goal, as will be some of the 3 050 teaching posts created at the beginning of 2013/14.

In **Germany**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the legal entitlement to a place in an ECEC setting has been extended for children aged one and two from August 2013. In order to establish the basis for fulfilling this new legal right, the Federal Government, *Länder*, and local authorities have expanded the provision of day-care places for children under three years old over the last few years to meet the target of 750 000 places available (i.e. 35 per cent of children under three) as agreed in 2007. However, recent parent surveys reveal that childcare facilities are now required for 39 per cent of all infants, which means that 780 000 places have to be provided nationwide. The Federal Government is thus providing investment funds and financial aid for operating costs to the *Länder* for the additional 30 000 places needed nationwide.

In **Malta**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the Maltese Government is presently striving to increase the number of childcare centres (0-3 years) in densely populated localities and areas with high concentrations of workers. Over the last few years, the Foundation for Educational Services has increased the number of government-funded childcare centres, and the number of children attending these centres has increased by around 70 % between 2011 and 2012. As from 2014, to improve the affordability of childcare services, families who are in-work would benefit from free childcare. This initiative will be financed by the government through a public private partnership and will complement existing government childcare services.

In **Croatia**, the last year of pre-primary education will become compulsory from 2014/15.

In **Hungary**, compulsory attendance of pre-primary education will be lowered from 5 to 3 as of 2014.

In **Austria**, the Federal government has initiated and supported the extension of early childhood education and care (ECEC) places during the last years. Between 2011 and 2014, it will make a total of EUR 55 million in subsidies available for child care, and the provincial governments will co-fund these efforts with matching contributions. The focus of these expansion efforts is on child care offerings for children under 3 years of age, promoting qualified child-minder offerings, and extending opening times during the year.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, the government is legislating, through the Children and Young People Bill, to increase the current legal entitlement to 475 hours per year of pre-school education for 3- and 4-year-olds to a minimum of 600 hours per year of early learning and childcare, as well as for 2-year-olds who are looked after by the State or by a family other than their natural parents, from 2014.

In **Lithuania**, the National Programme for the Development of Pre-School and Pre-Primary Education for 2011-2013, adopted in 2011, provides for a set of measures to increase the supply of early childhood education and care (ECEC). Hence, the 'pre-school' basket, a public subsidy for pre-school institutions meant to cover the cost of 20 hours of ECEC per week, was introduced in 2011. Furthermore, procedures to establish ECEC settings, specifically in private companies, have been made less onerous since 2011. Finally, one further measure to improve accessibility is the establishment and development of universal, multi-functional early childhood education and care centres in rural areas.

In **Poland**, amendments to the Act of 4 February 2011 on care for children below 3 years of age adopted in May 2013 aim to facilitate the creation of childcare institutions. The amendments include: lowering the level of the local government's financial contribution in the application process for central

budget funds aimed at the establishment and functioning of care institutions; extending the catalogue of entities entitled to employ day carers; enabling the organisation of joint services between childcare institutions and pre-primary institutions or schools.

The National Development Plan of **Latvia** for 2014-2020 defines measure to promote access to age-appropriate, guaranteed and high-quality pre-school education for every child from the age of a year-and-a-half. In addition, under the European Structural Fund programme 2008-2013, the ECEC infrastructure is being developed through the construction of new institutions and the extension of existing centres, in order to increase the number of publicly funded and modern ECEC places available for children.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, following the Local Authority (Duty to Secure Early Years Provision Free of Charge) Regulations 2012, which came into effect in September 2013, the criteria for benefiting from the entitlement to 15 hours of free early education per week have been extended. The entitlement now applies to two-year-olds living in households which meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals, along with children who are looked after by the state.

Improving the quality of ECEC

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, regulations adopted in 2012 provide for an increase in the number of counselling and support staff for children in pre-primary education, which is now the same as for primary education. This measure, which entails an additional investment of EUR 52.7 million, brought an 8.8 % increase in pre-primary counselling and support staff, and enables schools to form smaller classes.

In **Germany**, from 2011 to 2014, the Federal level of government is devoting a EUR 400 million budget to allow 4 000 day-care centres, which increasingly offer facilities for children under the age of three, to focus on integration and the acquisition of German language. A federal budget of EUR 25 000 has been dedicated to enable each day-care centre involved to appoint additional and suitably qualified educational staff, tasked with the promotion of early German language skills for children below the age of three who come from a migrant or disadvantaged background.

In **Portugal**, in 2014, revised curriculum guidelines and a quality assurance system for pre-primary education for children aged three to six should be implemented.

In 2013 in **Finland**, the drafting of legislation, administrative guidelines and governance of day-care services and early childhood education for which the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health was responsible have now been transferred to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The purpose of this reform is to develop early childhood education and care as one operational whole, (instead of being divided between two administrative sectors in the central government) and support a better educational continuum from the early age to the end of school education.

In **Belgium (French Community)**, according to a May 2012 decree, an additional EUR 1.3 million budget has been dedicated to enable all pre-primary schools (children aged 2.5 to 6) to benefit from the expertise of physical education specialists. Furthermore, in order to facilitate the integration of young children into pre-primary schools, the same decree also provides for fewer pupils per teacher for a limited period of time at the beginning of the school year.

In the **Czech Republic**, a review of the Framework Educational Programme of Pre-Primary Education began in 2012 and is continuing in 2013.

In **Spain**, the National Strategic Plan for Children and Adolescents, approved in April 2013, is intended to consolidate the provision of free education in the second cycle of pre-primary education, as well as ensuring early intervention for children with disabilities, allowing them maximum opportunity to reach their full potential.

In **France**, the national policy for restructuring schools initiated in April 2013 includes the redefinition of pre-primary education's objectives, through the implementation of a more coherent approach across pre-primary years as of September 2014 and the strengthening of relationships with parents.

In **Latvia**, in 2012, the Government approved new national guidelines for pre-school education (children aged 3 to 7), which increase the number of Latvian language lessons per week for children from ethnic minorities to between two and five, depending on their age.

In **Hungary**, kindergarten care improvement programmes will be implemented in the 2013-2014 period with EU financing through the regional operational programmes.

In **Romania**, within the framework of two on-going projects co-financed by European social funds, the National Curricula for pupils aged 3-6/7 were reviewed and the Methodological Guidelines for the Implementation of Reviewed Curriculum were adopted during 2012. Moreover, training and VET programmes focused on developing new skills for teaching staff (including auxiliary staff) to implement the newly revised curricula, were developed.

In **Sweden**, a new curriculum for pre-school came into force in 2011. In this context, in 2012, the Swedish National Agency published general guidelines and advice on systematic quality procedures and increasing the effectiveness of the school system.

In **Estonia**, the modifications to the pre-school child care Act to improve access to ECEC planned for adoption in 2013 highlight the need to provide support for children with special needs or any other educational difficulties during pre-primary education (for children aged 1.5-7). Accordingly, guidance materials and a counselling system to support these children were developed in 2012.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, a revised and slimmed down statutory framework for the development, learning and care of children from birth to five was introduced in September 2012. The new framework aims to reduce the regulatory burden on practitioners so they can focus more on supporting children's development. In **Northern Ireland**, the foundation stage (currently the first two years of compulsory primary education) will be extended to include a non-compulsory pre-school year with a single foundation stage curriculum covering all three years. The change is designed to improve transition from pre-primary to primary. Full implementation is scheduled for 2014/15. In **Wales**, the Early Years and Childcare Plan published in 2013 sets out measures to improve quality, based around the experience of the child, the environment, leadership and the workforce.

1.1.2. Avoiding 'early tracking' and limiting grade retention

Austria, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, is currently attempting to address the negative effects of early tracking on the educational outcomes of disadvantaged young people. However, so far, a national consensus on this issue has not yet been reached, despite a 2012 parliamentary decision providing the legal basis for a comprehensive school at lower secondary level. Traditionally, pupils aged ten have had to choose between two types of general secondary school, one (*Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schulen – AHS*) being more academically oriented than the other (*Hauptschulen*). By 2018/19, general secondary schools (*Hauptschulen*) will become New Secondary Schools (*Neue Mittelschule*), which build on individualised learning, support measures and a

competence-based approach, whereas the lower stages of maximum 10 % of the academic secondary schools (AHS) have the option of joining on a pilot basis.

Malta, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, is continuing with the phasing out of its dual secondary education system. Up to 2010/11, pupils who started secondary education were distributed between Junior Lyceums and Area Secondary Schools, according to their ability as shown in the standardised examinations which took place at the end of primary education. As from September 2011, secondary school-age pupils started attending comprehensive College Secondary Schools. This reform is being phased in year by year until 2015, when eventually all secondary school-age pupils should attend College Secondary Schools.

In March 2012, **Belgium (French Community)** launched a pilot project *Décolâge!* (Take-off), aimed at reducing grade retention rates for pupils aged from two and a half to eight. Schools voluntarily decide to participate in the project, which involves drafting an action plan on the main areas for improvement. Various activities are available for teachers, head teachers and other staff members involved in the project, including continuous professional development sessions, support from colleagues, and use of interactive platforms. The aim is to promote exchanges of information and expertise on alternative practices to grade retention, such as enhanced use of diagnostic evaluation followed by an individualised remedial plan.

In **France**, the new guidance and programming law for restructuring schools adopted in June 2013 requires that the use of grade retention should become very rare.

In **Latvia**, since 2012, following an amendment to education legislation, the option to repeat a year has been further restricted. Schools are obliged to provide special support measures for pupils with learning difficulties in order to avoid repetition of a school year.

In **Portugal**, in 2012, the introduction of external examinations in the 4th and 6th year of compulsory education was accompanied by a specific initiative targeting pupils at risk of retention in the 4th year because of insufficient marks. After the end of the school year, these pupils are expected to attend extra support classes and retake the national examination. In 2013/14, this measure will be extended to pupils in the 6th year of compulsory education.

1.1.3. Supporting children at risk

In **Belgium (French Community)**, a new decree on the reception, integration and schooling of newly arrived migrant pupils between two-and-a-half and eighteen years was issued in 2012. The main improvements brought include an extension of the number of pupils who may benefit from reception classes, the development of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes for teachers providing these classes, or an increase in the number of these classes.

In **Finland**, measures to further promote the education of immigrant children, including strengthening reception classes and increasing language training, appear in the 2011-2016 Development Plan for Education and Research ⁽¹⁾.

In the **Czech Republic**, in line with the Long-term Plan for Education and the Development of the Education System 2011-2015, a development programme for schools where at least 15 % of pupils are socially disadvantaged or 5 children (ISCED 0) or 10 pupils (ISCED 1, 2 and 3) have health disadvantages was introduced in 2012. Schools which fulfil the mentioned criteria must submit an application to the region or directly to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (depending on their

⁽¹⁾ <http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2012/liitteet/okm03.pdf>

status), in order to receive financial assistance to offer incentives (additional salary payments) to teachers educating the targeted children.

In **France**, 1 000 pre-primary and primary school teaching jobs created in September 2012 were assigned as a matter of priority to the most problematic areas (those with high children/teacher ratios, a large proportion of schools enrolling children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and rural areas where classes had previously been cancelled). An additional 2 500 staff (head supervisors, teaching and other assistants) have been assigned to the most at-risk schools. During the 2012-2017 period, more of the approximately 14 000 teaching posts created for pre-primary and primary schools will be assigned to those in the most problematic areas.

New additional funding allocations to schools to tackle educational inequality were introduced in the **United Kingdom (England and Wales)** in 2011 and 2012 respectively. Schools receive the Pupil Premium (England) and the Pupil Deprivation Grant (Wales) for each disadvantaged pupil aged 5-16. Schools decide how to use this additional funding for the additional provision deprived pupils need. In **Northern Ireland**, changes to the common funding scheme for schools from April 2014 will include additional support for pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. In **England**, the 16-19 Bursary fund was introduced in the 2011/12 school year. It is made up of two parts: the vulnerable student bursary for defined vulnerable groups such as young people in public care and a discretionary bursary fund which schools and colleges can allocate for students facing genuine financial barriers to education and training. It was introduced following the withdrawal of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) in 2011, a means-tested benefit based on household income paid directly to the student.

In **Bulgaria**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, a draft national strategy for Roma integration was developed in 2012.

In **Hungary**, which has received related CSRs in 2012 and 2013, the National Social (Roma) Inclusion Strategy was adopted in December 2011. The government also set a related action plan for 2012-2014, which includes measures in the fields of child welfare, education, employment, healthcare, housing, stakeholder involvement and anti-discrimination. In addition, two programmes that target the inclusion of Roma children in the education system, i.e. Preventing Multiple Disadvantaged Children from Early School-leaving through Mentoring Facilities and 'Equity-based Development of Schools', were launched in 2012.

In **Slovakia**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, a national project to improve provision in all-day primary schools attended by marginalised communities (including Roma) was launched at the beginning of 2013.

In **Bulgaria**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, an on-going pilot project co-funded by European structural funds deals with the prevention and early diagnosis of children aged three to seven with special educational needs, as well as more generally promoting the idea of inclusive education among parents and the whole population.

In **Spain**, the Draft Bill on the Improvement of the Quality of Education, which will modify the 2006 Education Act when approved, establishes new programmes to improve the performance of students with particular learning difficulties in the first three years of secondary education. A specific methodology is used in this programme: content organisation, practical activities and, if appropriate, subjects may differ from the normal curriculum. At the end of each school year, the teaching team offers guidance for choosing the most suitable education pathway: i.e. either remaining in general lower secondary or entering the basic vocational training pathway (see 1.1.4).

In **Romania**, in 2012/13, the Ministry of National Education has asked schools to test students at the beginning of the school year and implement remedial measures as necessary. Furthermore, the Ministry of National Education asked the school inspectorates to monitor the application, at local level, of a set of measures aimed at improving results in national examinations. Finally, the Ministry of National Education has also developed and approved the methodologies for the implementation of the School after School programmes which provide remedial education activities outside normal classes.

In 2012 and 2013, **Belgium (Flemish Community)** adapted its legal framework for the integration of newcomers into the education system. The adopted measures include: a change in the rules defining the study offer by each institution; the introduction of different financing conditions; the option for schools in primary education to determine a separate capacity for non-Dutch speaking new pupils.

In **Belgium (German-speaking Community)**, an amendment to the decree for the schooling of newly arrived pupils is planned for the first half of 2014.

In **Denmark**, a comprehensive reform of the primary and lower secondary schools to be implemented in 2014/15 intends to increase completion rates by reducing the significance of pupils' social background on their academic results.

In **Greece**, within the framework of the Operational Programme 'Education and Lifelong Learning' (National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013), two different projects aimed to promote the education of children with migrant backgrounds started to be implemented at the end of 2010. The first project 'Education of Foreigners and Repatriates' targets primary and secondary public institutions with more than 10 % of immigrants and repatriates in their student population. Its main objective is to improve school performance among the targeted pupils through, for example, providing special reception classes or fostering intercultural communication at school level. The second programme aims to support the integration of children from the Muslim minority into the educational process, whether in public schools or in private ethnic minority schools.

Since October 2012, **Slovenia** has implemented the renewed Guidelines for the Inclusion of Migrant Children in Education, from pre-school to upper secondary school. The guidelines define principles and suggest strategies, as well as teaching-related modifications and methods for cooperating with and integrating of migrant children and their parents.

In **Portugal**, in 2012, following a new education law, the autonomy of schools has increased and they are now able to take immediate measures (e.g. co-teaching; temporary homogeneous classes; weekly study support on math and Portuguese) as soon as learning difficulties are detected. Furthermore, the government is currently assessing the results of a set of existing measures to combat school failure and social exclusion and intends to further the educational projects developed in Priority Intervention Educational Territories. The Portuguese government also intends to identify best practices and integrate them into a coherent and flexible programme.

In **Greece**, within the framework of the above-mentioned Operational Programme 'Education and Lifelong Learning', an initiative aiming to the promote education of Roma children began at the end of 2010. It includes, for instance, the following actions: improving access and attendance in pre-school education, school interventions to support the integration of and regular attendance by Roma pupils, further training of teachers, or linking schools, families and the local community.

In **France**, the Minister of Education issued new guidelines for regional education authorities on better inclusion of travelling children and newcomers into the education system, in October 2012. A network

of regional centres has been set up, dedicated to support teachers regarding the schooling of newcomers and travelling children.

In **Latvia**, a European Social Fund programme on the development of inclusive education for young people with functional disabilities and from socially disadvantaged families has been carried out since 2009 through various projects. By the end of 2013, it is expected that the support system for young people at risk of social exclusion will be nationally implemented, providing the necessary teachers and support staff with improved skills, as well as increased capacity in institutions.

In **Cyprus**, the Ministry of education has launched a programme for developing early diagnosis of literacy problems during the first three years of primary education over the period 2010-2012, with a special focus on migrant students. It includes a continuing professional development component for pre-primary and primary teachers.

In **Hungary**, the new Public Education Act effective from 1st September 2012 emphasises the inclusion of remedial activities, such as small group activities in curricula, in order to support poorly performing pupils.

1.1.4. Reforming vocational education and training

In **Lithuania**, project activities aimed at strengthening the methodology underpinning vocational guidance services, the training of career specialists, and the improvement of counselling infrastructure were implemented in 2012.

In **Finland**, the flexibility of vocational qualifications at upper secondary level will be increased through a four-year programme (2013-2016) which aims, for example, to diversify opportunities by allowing students to take modules from other vocational qualifications (including further vocational qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications) or to undertake polytechnic degrees in existing subject areas. The programme will also enhance the development of guidance counselling and pedagogical solutions to help students complete their studies. The goal of the programme is to allow students to create individual learning paths and increase their motivation for graduating as well give education providers more opportunities to meet the demands of the regional and local economy.

In the **Netherlands**, the government has launched a programme intended to encourage young people in secondary VET to continue to study longer and to choose a course with greater relevance for the labour market. Central exams for Dutch (2014/15) and mathematics (2015/16) that will give access to higher professional education are being introduced for students in secondary VET level 4. The central exams for students in secondary VET level 2 and 3 will start a year later. Most level-4 VET courses (Middle-Management VET '*Middenkaderopleiding*') will be shortened from 4 to 3 years, while the number of supervised teaching hours will be increased.

In **Belgium (German-speaking Community)**, a project aiming to increase permeability between general education and vocational training at upper secondary level started in 2011. The project focuses on the introduction of the recognition and validation of learning outcomes acquired in each pathway when moving from one to another.

In **Malta**, as from September 2011, vocational-related subject-areas were introduced as an option for students starting their third year of secondary education. This project is being piloted in a number of state and non-state secondary schools. The project is piloting four vocational subject areas – engineering, hospitality and tourism studies, IT practitioner, and health and social care.

In **Poland**, since September 2012, a new common core curriculum has been taught in all types of schools at the first grade of ISCED level 3 (upper secondary education), with the intention of creating a better educational continuum across ISCED levels 2 and 3. For schools providing vocational education, this new curriculum applies to the general element of their provision.

In **Denmark**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the government entered an agreement on improved VET programmes as part of the Finance Act Agreement in 2013. Among other things, the agreement is expected to contribute to reducing drop-out from VET by increasing the number of available places for students to enter in-company practical work experience and enhancing schools' responsibility in finding apprenticeship places. In addition, the most recent measures require all VET schools to prepare an action plan for improving completion rates.

In **Sweden**, in 2011, at upper secondary level, general education and vocational pathways have been further differentiated. To reduce the number of students who fail to complete upper secondary school and improve transition from school to work, since 2011 more time has been devoted to vocational subjects in the vocational pathway (for information, see also 3.2.1 in Annex 3).

In **Spain**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the above-mentioned Draft Bill on the Improvement of the Quality of Education will bring forward the possibility of entering vocational training, without having completed general lower secondary education.

Since September 2012, the Ministry of Education and Science in **Portugal** has been implementing a pilot project introducing vocational education for students over 13 years old, specifically those who have repeated grades. Twelve schools have been involved so far. During 2013/14, the pilot project will be enlarged, to involve 500 schools and around 9 000 students.

In **France**, one of the measures in the new guidance and programming law for restructuring schools and the new law on higher education and research, both promulgated in July 2013, aims to encourage and facilitate access to short cycles of higher education for VET students who graduate with honours.

In **Greece**, according to a new law on general and vocational upper secondary education adopted in September 2013, practical training has been strengthened. An optional additional (fourth) year, entitled the 'apprenticeship class', has been offered to graduates of vocational upper secondary schools. In addition, specific vocational education and training certificates have been introduced and professional rights established.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, VET is being reformed, following the Wolf Review (accepted by the Government in 2011). The remit of the Wolf Review was to improve VET for 14-19 year olds in order to promote successful progression into the labour market and into higher level education and training routes. The key was to introduce a more structured and rigorous framework in which students have the opportunity to study coherent, well thought out programmes which offer them breadth and depth, are rigorously assessed, and which do not limit their options for future study and work.

1.2. INTERVENTION MEASURE TO AVERT EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

Equipping teachers to address early warning signs

In the **United Kingdom (Wales)**, the 'Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011-2015' launched in January 2011 seeks to improve CPD to help teachers identify and support pupils at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

Networking with parents

In **Bulgaria**, a national support programme for the schools implementing a strategy to address pupil truancy and reducing early school leaving envisages a compulsory component 'working with parents'.

In **Germany**, the 'Opportunities for Parents are Opportunities for Children' federal programme, launched in 2011, trains up to 4 000 'parental advisors' to advise and support parents in child-parent-centres, parental support services and day-care centres which are part of the Language and Integration priority area. From 2012, 100 parental support projects (*Elternbegleitung Plus*) are intended to demonstrate how a network of parental advisors based in parenting support facilities, day-care and education centres can offer accessible ECEC services to parents.

In **Slovenia**, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is co-financing (with the support of the European Social Fund) the project 'Raising the social and cultural capital in local communities for the development of equal opportunities and promoting social inclusion' (1.2.2013-31.8.2014), which tackles early school leaving and improves the quality of pre-primary and compulsory education by networking with parents and other stakeholders.

Cross-sector cooperation

In **Belgium (French Community)**, a draft decree aiming to set up cross-sector mechanisms for policies implemented at school, local and Community level in favour of school retention, violence prevention, as well as education and guidance, is being prepared. The aim is to join up the various relevant areas (school, family, culture), and to target young people of school age regardless of whether they are attending school or not.

In **France**, since March 2013, new networks labelled *Formation Qualification Emploi* (FoQualE) (training-qualifications-employment) have succeeded the 'network nouvelle chance' initiated in December 2012. These training-qualifications-employment networks aim to coordinate all the local services likely to intervene when young people show warning signs of leaving school early (information and guidance centres within schools – *les missions de lutte contre le décrochage scolaire; les groupes de prévention du décrochage scolaire*; etc.). Furthermore, in each school with high rates of early school leaving, a named person will be charged, under the supervision of the school head, with coordinating preventive actions, liaising with the parents of pupils concerned, and helping with the reintegration of early leavers.

In **Luxembourg**, in order to support cooperation between national institutions and services dedicated to guidance and counselling, as well as facilitating access to them, five services from three different ministries have been reorganised under one 'House of Guidance', which opened in 2012.

In **Malta**, the National Referral System for cases of absenteeism, which seeks to improve the referral process and enables the multi-disciplinary teams to work together on a case when required, began to be piloted in three schools in 2012/13. It is envisaged that the National Referral System will be implemented in all primary and secondary schools as from the beginning of school year 2013/14.

Educational and career guidance

In **Belgium (German-speaking Community)**, when teaching careers skills to students, all primary and secondary staff must use the guide to Career Choice Preparation and Career Guidance adopted by the Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium in early 2011. This guide determines which sub-skills students need to acquire at the various levels of education.

In the **Czech Republic**, an ESF 2012 project aims at improving the quality of services provided in schools and school counselling institutions by school psychologists, special educational needs teachers and methodologists.

In **Luxembourg**, new guidance procedures for the transition between primary and lower secondary education have been applied since September 2012. These new procedures strengthen parental involvement and increase transparency in decision-making.

In **Latvia**, the school guidance counsellor was added to the Government's approved list of professions and posts for pedagogues in 2012. Furthermore, since 2013, municipalities and schools have been requested to provide career guidance support for children and youth following an amendment to the Education Law.

In **Italy**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, a national plan on guidance and dropout was published in 2011 following guidelines on guidance for lifelong learning issued in 2009. The plan, which has been further defined at regional level for full implementation, aims to shift current guidance services from an informative role into a proper career and guidance counselling function. It also provides for the activation of 'local integrated services', ensuring the appropriate reception, needs analysis and response to each individual case.

In recent years in **Austria**, in the third and fourth years of the 'new secondary school', the subject 'career guidance' was introduced in 2012 as a compulsory subject with at least one lesson a week. Furthermore, the youth coaching initiative launched in 2012 has been addressing the needs of young people from a disadvantaged background as they reach the age limit of compulsory education, by providing intensive counselling on further educational or vocational pathways.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, there is a new duty on schools to secure access to independent and impartial careers advice for pupils in years 9 to 11 (ages 13 to 16 years). This duty was extended in September 2013 to cover year 8 (ages 12/13) and students aged 16 to 18 in schools and colleges.

In **Malta**, career guidance for students in the last two years of compulsory education who show a lack of interest in continuing further education has been developed since 2011. As from the 2011/12 school year, students in the penultimate year of compulsory school with a high rate of absenteeism, or with low achievement levels, must be contacted and provided with career guidance sessions. As from the 2012/13 school year, the college and trainee career advisors started to identify those students in the last year of compulsory education who were not interested in sitting for the Secondary Education Certificate examinations. This process involves having professionals meeting each individual student identified as 'at risk' and helping them formulate an individual career plan focusing on their interests and capabilities.

In **Austria**, the youth coaching initiative launched in 2012 aims to provide intensive counselling on further educational or vocational pathways to young people who suffer from individual impairments, social disadvantages or who are at risk of not attaining any qualification at lower or upper secondary level. This initiative starts from school year nine, as young people reach the age limit of compulsory education.

In **Sweden**, the Government is investing in strengthening guidance and careers counselling. The Government has set aside SEK 10 million for 2013, primarily for further training guidance and careers counsellors and calculates SEK 26 million for the same purpose for 2014-2016. In addition, the Government intends to develop further training measures for guidance and career counsellors at upper secondary schools, focusing in particular on how to help young people with disabilities gain a

foothold in the labour market, and focusing on the various kinds of support young people can obtain from different authorities.

In **Germany**, the initiative 'Educational chains leading to vocational qualifications' (*Anschluss und Abschluss – Bildungsketten bis zum Ausbildungsabschluss*), which was launched in 2010, aims at avoiding school dropouts and achieving efficient transitions to dual training as well as its completion, especially for young people in need of particular support. Guidance and support start two years prior to the end of full-time compulsory schooling and last for up to two years after leaving school, or until the end of the first year of vocational training.

In **Romania**, the 'Jobs' project aims to guide students in the final years of compulsory schooling, helping them make the right choices regarding further education and training or career options. The project involves the introduction of a new project-based learning area timetabled for three hours per week throughout the school year. Students will have the opportunity to get in touch with the businesses, public institutions or companies offering jobs in their region, investigate employment opportunities, and study economic conditions. Students will also prepare data for presentations and portfolios, focusing on particular projects. The 'Jobs' project started in two schools in 2011 and 2012 and is being extended to all schools in Brasov region up to 2015.

In **Portugal**, following an ordinance adopted in March 2013, new Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education (CQEP) are being set up: these have the dual mission of providing counselling and guidance both for young people and adults. In 2013/2014 there will be more than 100 new CQEPs.

In the **United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)**, the 'Pathways to Success' strategy includes the development of a tracking system to identify young people who are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) by 2014.

1.3. COMPENSATORY MEASURES FOR EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

1.3.1. Second-chance education opportunities

In **Estonia**, as part of the new Vocational Education Act, vocational upper secondary programmes will be opening gradually from 2013 to 2015 for those without basic education and aged at least 22 years.

Luxembourg has launched two types of second-chance education programme: the vocational course for young people aged under 18 (*Cours d'orientation et d'initiation professionnelle*) and the second-chance school (E2C – *école de la deuxième chance*) in general education for those aged 16 to 24 years old.

Although second-chance education programmes for early leavers already existed in **Hungary**, such as the DOBBANTO programme created in 2008, new types have been created by the Public Education Act in December 2011. There is, for instance, the school-based programme called the Bridge programme (*Híd program*) that will start from September 2013. It is open to poor performers in basic education as well as to those who have not completed lower secondary level.

In **Malta**, second-chance education programmes are offered through new openings into the vocational education sector by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology.

In **Romania**, 'a Second Chance' programme created for persons who have not completed either primary or lower secondary education was created in 2012. The programme is therefore developed for each educational level. For primary education, there can be full-time education, evening classes,

merged and intensive education. The administration council of each school makes the decision after having consulted the students enrolled in the programme. For lower secondary education, the programme has a standard duration of four years with weekly courses alternating classroom learning with practical training for a professional qualification.

In **France**, the last annual report on performance launched in 2013 by the Ministry of Economy and Finance states that the Government aims to achieve a more complete and balanced network of second chance education schools. It therefore intends to expand the network under the existing cooperation framework with the regions and local partners.

In **Malta**, a pre-employment training scheme for early school leavers from secondary education has been offered since 2010 by the Institution of Tourism Studies with the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association and four Colleges (St Theresa, St Claire, St Ignatius and St Nicholas). At the end of the training, learners obtain a certificate in food and housekeeping operations. The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology also offers a second-chance education programme through the provision of new openings into the vocational education sector.

In **Poland**, the Voluntary Labour Corps (VLC) provide education and training opportunities, notably for young people who have dropped out of school and are socially deprived. Since 2012, the VLC's activities targeting NEETs have been intensified.

1.3.2. Targeted individual support

In line with the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, regional education authorities in **Spain** have been setting up, since January 2013, guidance units specifically for monitoring and supporting young people aged between 16 and 24 who have dropped to re-enter the system. This is being carried out through adult education institutions and local corporations. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport will finance these units, at the proposal of the Autonomous Communities, through the Plan to Reduce Early Drop-Out.

Intensive counselling is also provided under the youth coaching initiative in **Austria** (see Section 1.2) which addresses *inter alia* the needs of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs)

In the **United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)**, the 'Pathways to Success' strategy for those who are NEET, includes the Careers Service which manages young people who drop out of provision or do not have a positive destination on leaving school. Similarly in **Wales**, 'the Traineeship programme' for 16-to-18 year-olds is a flexible programme providing the support young people need to progress to further education, an apprenticeship or a job. The 16-17 year-olds strand of the Youth Contract in **England** is built around tailored support to the individual. In **Scotland**, after the pilot phase in ten local authority areas, the Government has decided on the implementation of Activity Agreements across Scotland as from March 2011. An Activity Agreement is a signed agreement between a young person and an adviser that the young person will take part in a programme of learning and activity which helps them to become ready for formal learning or employment. Activity Agreements provide 'stepping stone' provision, in a community or third-sector setting for those young people who are not ready or able to access formal learning post-16, and those at greatest risk of disengagement.

In **France**, the above-mentioned network (FoQualE) *Formation – Qualification Emploi* (Training – Qualification – Employment) offers a personalised return pathway to education and training to every school leaver.

In **Sweden**, a special initiative on affordable student economic aid for 20 to 24 year-olds has been in place since 2011. This special initiative targets unemployed young people without lower or upper secondary education and aims to help them complete their interrupted education.

1.4. DEVELOPING MONITORING POLICIES

In **France**, there have been five campaigns since 2011 by the organisation for the inter-departmental exchange of information (SIEI) which has allowed the identification of young people who have left the education system without qualifications. SIEI is now able to identify these young people by cross-checking databases at different levels of government including the ministries of education and agriculture, and the Centre for Apprenticeship Training. The resulting information is now being passed on twice a year to the bodies responsible for monitoring and supporting disengaged young people.

In **Latvia**, in February 2011, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a regulation introducing a standardised procedure stipulating how an education institution should inform parents, municipal or public institutions when a pupil is absent without a justified reason. Furthermore, a systematic reporting system for pupils aged 3 to 16 has been implemented at local authority level since the end of 2012. The local authority also sends reports to the Ministry of Education.

In the **United Kingdom (Wales)**, on 1st October 2013, the Welsh Government launched the 'Youth Engagement and Progression Framework Implementation Plan' which strengthens measures to tackle early school leaving. Key elements of the plan include improved tracking of young people through the education system and the setting of core standards for early identification of young people most at risk of disengagement by local authorities.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, since September 2013, all schools and institutions providing secondary part-time education have to systematically report data on pupil attendance, enrolments, deregistrations and pupil characteristics in a centralised system 'Discimus', managed by the Ministry of Education and Training. In this context, an ICT project for processing the data in order to assess current policies and suggest improvements to the system is being developed.

In **Bulgaria**, a draft national strategy for reducing the number of early school leavers by 2020 was prepared in 2012. This strategy envisages monitoring the problem through detailed data analysis. However, its adoption is subject to the priorities of the new government formed following the May 2013 elections.

In **Italy**, the national plan for guidance and fighting early school leaving, which has been further defined at regional level, envisages the systematic collection of useful information, including non-completion date. However, it has not yet been fully implemented.

In **Malta**, in April 2013, a Strategy to Reduce Early School Leaving was launched by the Minister for Education and Employment. Following a period of public consultation, the ministry will propose a new ESL target for Malta within the context of the EU 2020 targets.

In **Hungary**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, work is being carried out to list the problems and signs associated with early school leaving, and to identify the relationships between specific symptoms and their potential consequences. Evidence drawn from this process will guide the forthcoming national strategy on early school leaving, which will be supported by measures such as widening the access of young children to education, strengthening basic competences, reforming education to promote success in school (e.g. providing support measures for student groups who

require special attention, updating teaching methods), and introducing compensatory (Bridge (*Híd*)) and second chance (*Második Esély*) programmes.

Finally, in **Poland**, since mid-2012, legislation is being gradually implemented for the development of a national education electronic database (Educational Information System), which should help identify reasons for absences in compulsory pre-school and full-time school education (up to lower secondary completion), as well as the reasons for leaving compulsory part-time education (up to the age of 18).

Chapter 2: Improving Attainment, Quality and Relevance of Higher Education

2.1. REFORMS TO INCREASE HIGHER EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

2.1.1. Widening participation in higher education

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, since 2013, higher education institutions have been required to draw up a strategic plan for student support with concrete targets and performance indicators. The special funds allocated to attract and retain students from socially disadvantaged groups are being maintained, but will be reformed. Procedures will be adjusted and concrete targets on the participation of underrepresented groups will be put in place.

In **Ireland** (which in 2012 had the highest tertiary attainment rate in the EU at 51.1 %), the monitoring of progress towards the 2020 national target includes performance indicators for access and participation by under-represented and disadvantaged groups. These include the number of adults participating in higher education, the number of students in part-time education, and the number of courses available through flexible provision.

In 2012, in the **United Kingdom**, the **Northern Ireland** Executive published 'Access to Success', a new integrated regional strategy for widening participation in higher education, which includes measures to target disadvantaged groups; a single co-ordinated approach to raising aspirations to progress into higher education; the development of non-traditional routes into higher education through Adult Access Courses and increased part-time opportunities; and enhanced application procedures for intractable pockets of under-representation.

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs made to **Hungary**, access by disadvantaged groups is supported by the scholarship programme Road to Higher Education and the award of extra points in the admission procedure. Measures being planned include extending the programme and making the specialist Roma colleges more secure, and extending mentoring and counselling services in higher education institutions. A new student loan scheme has been introduced, in addition to the existing one, to cover tuition fees.

In **Malta**, 'Broadening Access in Education: An Initiative by the University of Malta' is targeting regions with low levels of participation in post-secondary and tertiary education with the aim of increasing the number of students who continue with their studies. This initiative includes activities such as a mentoring programme, family and community support programmes, career guidance and personal counselling at school level and the opening of a Resource Centre to further assist youths coming from a disadvantaged background.

A priority in the **United Kingdom (Scotland)** is to encourage higher education participation among individuals from the 20 % most deprived areas in the country. The Scottish Government has funded specific initiatives, providing additional student support.

Tuition fees and financial support for students

In **Belgium (French Community)**, since 2011, disadvantaged students or those who receive a study grant have paid lower admission fees or no fee at all for enrolling into higher education or its exams. In addition, the financial contribution paid by all other students will not increase until 2015.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, since 2012, universities have been able to charge up to £9 000 a year for tuition, subject to committing to adopting more ambitious measures to widen access. These tuition costs will not be paid up front. A support package of loans for living costs and non-repayable grants is available, based on household income.

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, from 2013, students will be guaranteed a minimum annual income of £7 250 through a combination of bursaries and loans.

In **Ireland**, to deliver a significant service enhancement, a single unified grant scheme was created in 2011. Special grants are provided for eligible disadvantaged students who receive almost twice the level of an ordinary grant payment. A Student Grants Appeals Board was established in 2011.

In **Italy**, the National Observatory on the right to study at university, established in 2013, will create an information system on grant distribution and beneficiaries and will evaluate the costs of study. It will also propose improvements to the minimum levels of performance (LEPs) for student services for those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These services include accommodation, canteen facilities, guidance and tutoring, part-time programmes, and transport. Another body, the Foundation for Merit, will provide student loans and awards for excellence, through public and private funds.

In **Cyprus**, in 2012, the main scheme for granting education subsidies for higher education has been changed to include income criteria, aiming to address the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

In **France**, the government has announced that from 2013 academic year 55 000 new scholarships of EUR 1 000 per year will be made available to low-income students, who were not previously eligible for such support.

In **Lithuania**, from 2012, students who complete a secondary education programme with the best results and pay tuition fees are eligible for a scholarship amount to the normative cost of studies. All students are able to take state-sponsored study loans.

In **Luxembourg**, since 2011, changes in the rules for providing financial assistance have led to the steady increase in the number of students receiving financial support.

In **Portugal**, from 2014, in order to extend the range of options in higher education, the Ministry of Education and Science will establish the New Technology-focused Higher Education courses at polytechnics. These short courses will be level-five higher education courses with a strong link to the world of work, and closely-tied to the development of the local and regional economy. They will aim to attract graduates from upper-secondary vocational education as well as adults.

2.1.2. Improving completion rates

The **Netherlands** already has a tertiary attainment rate above the level of the EU headline target (42.3 % in 2012). However, the non-completion rate is still very high: the likelihood of success in both higher professional and university education is below 70 %. The government has concluded multi-year agreements with institutions to improve completion rates. Targeted funding is available for improving

course information for prospective students, strengthening career advice and coaching, especially for immigrant students, and interviewing prospective students before they choose their course of study.

In **France**, the Multi-annual Plan for Success in Bachelor Programmes (*Plan pluriannuel pour la réussite en licence*) has led to specific measures for tackling drop out in the first cycle, e.g. induction periods, increased educational supervision and support for struggling students. Diversified pathways, progressive specialisation and bridges for redirecting students to different fields are also being introduced. The 2013 Law on Higher Education and Research aims to build up on existing initiatives and further intensify efforts in this respect.

Initiatives that have been undertaken in relation to one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs made to **Austria** include educational counselling and career guidance with a catalogue of measures that are offered in the final years of secondary school. Other initiatives include the increase of targeted funding for the 'mathematics, informatics, science and technology initiative' (*MINT-Offensive*) at universities and the expansion of the Universities of Applied Sciences (*Fachhochschule*) and others.

In **Finland**, in 2013, the university funding model was revised to further take into account the number of completed qualifications and study progress. The reform aims, amongst other things, to improve completion rates and accelerate the transition to working life. In 2014, the funding model of the universities of applied sciences ('polytechnics') will be revised along the same lines.

In **Denmark**, the 2013 reform of the educational support system limits the availability of the student grant to the standard time limit if the student embarks on a course of study more than two years after gaining the entry qualification. It also increases the demands on students regarding progress in their studies, actively supports the completion of courses and reviews the grants available to students living with their parents.

In **Hungary**, students in state-funded places who do not obtain a diploma within one and a half times the prescribed study time are required to repay 50 % of the state support they have received.

In **Greece**, one of the objectives of the 2011 legislative changes (Law 4009/2011) is to lower the number of non-active students by introducing a mandatory enrolment of students in each semester, putting a time limit on the duration of studies, making the publication of teaching material on the Internet mandatory and other measures.

In the **Czech Republic**, according to the Higher Education Act, students who exceed the normal time for completing their studies by more than a year have to pay fees. With the amendment No 48/ 2013, students who are parents have been exempted from this obligation.

In **Finland**, from August 2014, student social aid will be index-linked. The student financial aid system will be reformed in accordance with the Government programme and the Government statement on structural policy to support full-time studies and faster graduation. Commencement of tertiary studies will be accelerated through a reform of the selection process for entry into higher education.

2.2. REFORMS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In **Belgium (French Community)**, a 2013 reform proposed for the higher education sector aims to optimise resources and improve performance through research excellence, consistent services, the quality of education and the promotion of academic achievement. The aim is to develop synergy and collaboration between institutions, to standardise the status of students, to clarify the paths through a modular structure and to organise regular institutional audits.

2.2.1. Development of quality assurance systems

In **Austria**, the 2012 Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education regulates, among other things: the establishment of a single agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation, the integration of the existing agencies; the central framework for quality assurance procedures across sectors, the mandatory publication of review results; and the establishment of a Students' Ombudsman.

In **Ireland**, in 2012, three qualifications awarding authorities were formally merged into one organisation – the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland. This new structure will provide a more integrated efficient service to learners across further and higher education.

In **Denmark**, the new accreditation system for higher education, which was adopted by law in June 2013, moves from programme to institutional accreditation, includes an examination of programmes with particular challenges, and places a focus on the social relevance of new programmes.

In line with one of the **Czech Republic's** 2012 and 2013 CSRs, a number of individual projects funded through the European Structural Fund aim to improve the quality of higher education. The adoption of amendments to the Act on Higher Education is planned for 2014 and should include, amongst other measures, changes in the accreditation system.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, a new system of quality assurance was adopted in 2012. All existing programmes are being redesigned, and will be accredited from the academic year 2014 onwards.

In **Estonia**, the new system of external quality assessment (starting from 2009 and implemented on the ground since 2011) focuses on two main elements: compulsory institutional accreditation that takes place every 7 years (instead of the previous study programme accreditation) and quality assessment of 28 groups of study programme which are based on the ISCED 97 classification.

In **Italy**, following Law 240/2010 and the creation of the National evaluation Agency (Anvur), the Ministry of Education, University and Research has issued decree No. 47/2013 which defines the procedures and indicators for the accreditation and evaluation of study programmes and universities.

In **Lithuania**, in the period 2012-2014, all higher education institutions will undergo external evaluation by the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre (MOSTA) and the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC). Upon positive assessment, institutions will be accredited for 6 years.

In **Poland**, a 2011 amendment to the Law on Higher Education has introduced new rules for the functioning of the Polish Accreditation Committee in relation to the evaluation of study programmes and higher education Institutions. The amendment concerns the evaluation of learning outcomes which has been introduced in parallel with the implementation of the Polish Qualification Framework.

In **Finland**, from 2014, the Education Evaluation Centre, a single body created by the merger of three institutions, will aim to deliver more efficient, effective and consistent evaluation.

In **Slovakia**, the amended Act on Tertiary Schools, which has been in force since 1 January 2013, has introduced changes to the internal quality assurance system and the arrangements for part-time studies and has introduced measures for improving the quality of tertiary teachers and increasing international cooperation.

2.2.2. Expanding performance-based funding

In **Austria**, performance agreements between higher education institutions and the Government are concluded every three years. Moreover, part of the EUR 1 billion additional funding to universities in the period 2013-2015 will be allocated on the basis of efficiency criteria. The University Structural Funds Ordinance, which has been in force since 1 January 2013, provides for an indicator- and project-based allocation of funds for this period. The highest proportion of funding will be allocated on the basis of the number of active students.

In the **Netherlands**, the achievement of performance goals in the individual agreements between the state and higher education institutions will determine around 7 % of funding.

In the **Czech Republic**, in 2013, 22.5 % of public funding for universities has been allocated according to quality indicators.

In line with one the 2012 and 2013 CSRs made to **Latvia**, changes in the accreditation system and definition of study outcomes by all HEIs have been introduced. A new funding model is in preparation.

In **Bulgaria**, on the basis of the university rating system, the best faculties were granted up to 25 % additional funds in 2012.

In **Italy**, the university reform, which was launched under the Law 240/2010 and been gradually implemented since 2011, has led to an increase of the share of public funding allocated on the basis of teaching and research performance. The Legislative Decree n° 19/2012 details the principles and procedures for implementing performance-based funding. The share of public funding allocated according to these principles amounted to 13 % in 2012.

In **Hungary**, the 2011 Higher Education Act introduced three types of certification procedures which may grant 'priority' or 'research' status and entitle institutions to extra funding for specific tasks. Some of the funding depends on the assessment of institutions' Development Plans and the evaluation of their strategic objectives.

In **Poland**, in 2012 a quality-oriented subsidy based on three types of calls for proposals was systematically introduced to the funding of the higher education system. It includes the support to the Leading National Research Centres (KNOWs), co-financing of university units evaluated as exceptional by the Polish Accreditation Committee, and of university units which have embarked on the implementation of quality improvement system and NQF. Allocation of the quality-oriented subsidy continues in 2013 and 2014.

In **Sweden**, since 2013, additional resources (1.5 % of the total funding) are allocated to study programmes, based on evaluations carried out by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (*Universitetskanslersämbetet*).

2.2.3. Closer links between universities and business

In **Ireland**, a detailed framework to respond to the needs of business is currently being implemented. It includes structured employer surveys and interaction, increased work placement opportunities, staff mobility to enterprise and a renewed focus on generic skills. The HEA has also published guidelines for the establishment of higher education institutional clusters to support enterprise development and employment needs.

In **France**, the 2013 Law on Higher Education and Research provides for the simplification of research management and more efficient use of existing investment schemes. Special support will be provided for technological research, with a view to revitalising the innovation capacities of France's industrial base and contributing to the development of new branches creating employment.

In **Sweden**, higher education institutions and their holding companies are receiving special funds (SEK 19 million in 2012, then SEK 12 million per year) to build up 'idea banks' of research results.

In **Germany**, the federal Ministry of Education and Research has recently launched the funding initiatives *Spitzencluster-Wettbewerb* (Leading-Edge Cluster Competition) and *Forschungscampus* (Public-Private Partnership to Foster Innovation) to support long-term strategic partnerships between science and business. Besides cooperative research and development, the development of innovative, advanced academic training and novel degree programmes in close cooperation with industry are important elements.

In **Portugal**, since 2013, the '*Programme for applied research and technology transfer to enterprises*' supports doctoral programs by promoting 'hybrid' doctoral training and the creation of national and international consortia of universities, businesses and research units; it also allocates new PhD scholarships in priority fields, provides tax incentives to private companies that hire PhD holders in science and technology and creates Masters' courses in areas such as Science Administration and Management, Technology and Entrepreneurship.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, the 2012 review of business-university collaboration (Wilson, 2012) has recommended increasing opportunities for students to acquire relevant work experience, such as sandwich degree programmes, internships and work-based programmes. It also called for the establishment of a 'skills supply chain' between universities and local businesses integrating placements, internships and employment services.

2.2.4. Enhancing the employability of higher education graduates

In the **United Kingdom (Scotland)**, the Higher Education Employability Forum (SHEEF) initiates, develops and supports a wide range of employability-related activities. These include work placements, internships and developing opportunities to undertake work based projects as an optional alternative to the traditional master's dissertation.

In **Bulgaria**, measures to address one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs include the establishment of a register of Bachelor's and Master's degrees and individual projects for updating curricula and strengthening entrepreneurial skills in 2012.

In **Malta**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) has, since 2011, offered a specialised programme which has been designed in collaboration with the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry and the Employment and Training Corporation. In the same institution, the scheme 'Increasing ICT Student Capacity' helps

students pursue further education and training in programmes related to the digital media sector and emerging ICT sub-sectors which suffer from skills shortages.

In the **United Kingdom (Wales)**, GO Wales, the Graduate Opportunities Wales Programme (January 2009-December 2014), matches students and graduates with paid and unpaid work experience opportunities and provides support for their training and development.

The **Czech Republic** concentrates on enhancing the status of undergraduate education and supports on-the-job oriented Bachelor's degree programmes. Shorter, more practically-oriented training that rapidly transfers sufficient basic skills in particular areas will be piloted.

In **Italy**, the new higher technical institutes have been set up, together with the regions to respond to the skills demands of local economies, in particular in technological areas that correspond to the projects for industrial innovation in the plan 'Industry 2015'.

In **Belgium (French Community)**, since 2011, the 'Brevet d'enseignement supérieur' can be obtained after two years of training in fields of high demand in the labour market. With an additional course of at least 60 credits and under different admission conditions, the student is able to get a Bachelor's degree.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)**, a parliamentary act on the creation of a short-cycle higher professional education (HBO5) was adopted in 2013. This act introduces a range of measures to guarantee and reinforce the quality of associate degree programmes.

In **Hungary**, the short-cycle vocational higher education programmes have been reformed to include one semester of traineeship. These programmes can only be launched by higher education institutions if they have entered into long-term cooperation with businesses providing traineeship places.

Some measures that have been taken in relation to one of **Slovenia's** 2012 and 2013 CSRs include the development of short-cycle higher vocational programmes and university career centres.

In 2012, **Cyprus** created a new type of institution and education programme: the post-secondary institutes for technical and vocational education and training.

In **Ireland**, one of the measures in the ICT action plan launched in 2012 is the roll-out of intensive conversion courses in higher education institutions designed and delivered in partnership with industry.

In **Luxembourg**, the newly established short cycle programmes lead to an Advanced Technicians' Diploma (BTS – *Brevet de technicien supérieur*).

In **Poland**, the Graduate Rights Ombudsman function at the Main Council of Science and Higher Education was established in 2011. The tasks of the Ombudsman include analysing the situation of graduates on the labour market and their access to specific professions, as well as monitoring to what extent university curricula match economy needs.

In **Portugal**, from 2013, the government has increased the number of places on higher education nursing programmes and has maintained the number of places in medicine, but it has decided that initial teacher training institutions should reduce the number of places offered by at least in 20 %.

In **Sweden**, the government is proposing the creation of additional tertiary education places in engineering and nursing programmes in 2013 and 2014.

Chapter 3: Improving Skills and VET for Youth Employment

3.1. YOUTH GUARANTEE SCHEMES AND COMPREHENSIVE POLICY INITIATIVES

In **Finland**, the new Youth Guarantee was implemented at the beginning of 2013 and is in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs. The new Youth Guarantee is open to all persons under 25 years of age and recent graduates under 30 years of age. An employment plan must be drawn up for each unemployed young person within two weeks of registration as a job seeker. It also includes an educational guarantee that secures every basic school graduate a place in a general upper secondary education, vocational education, an apprenticeship or some other education and training programme. The aim is to provide all young people with opportunities to acquire a post-basic education qualification and find a job.

France has adopted the scheme '*garantie jeunes*' whose objective is to enable young people (aged 18-25) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and are at risk of falling into poverty to find a job. The pilot phase of the scheme was launched in September 2013. The objective is that 100 000 young people per year will benefit from this scheme as from 2016.

In **Portugal**, a Youth Guarantee scheme (*Garantia Jovem*) will be implemented in 2014 and will include, for instance, grants for young people who had previously dropped out of higher education to resume their studies.

In **Latvia**, the 2009-2014 operational programme 'Human Resources and Employment' addresses challenges identified under the 2012 and 2013 CSRs. Promotion of social inclusion is one of the priorities of this programme and one of the objectives is therefore to increase employment opportunities for young unemployed as one of the groups-at-risk.

In **Malta**, the recently launched National Youth Employment Strategy 2015 targets young jobseekers as well as those who, although integrated in the labour market, are considered as early school leavers. One of this strategy's aims is facilitating the transition between education, training and employment. One of the strategy's activities is providing young people with second-chance opportunities. Young people are supported on returning to education and training, to complete their qualifications and achieve a higher attainment level. Formal validation of training achieved is also foreseen. Other activities planned include the offer of traineeships and apprenticeships.

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, **Slovakia** adopted a Youth Action Plan this year. Priority activities include vocational education and training, the identification of sector-specific demands for particular skills in the labour market, and the incorporation of these skills into the vocational education and training curriculum. Entrepreneurship education and the promotion of youth entrepreneurship are also activities supported by the action plan.

In the **United Kingdom**, recent policy developments are in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs. In the United Kingdom, England and the devolved administrations of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, strategies are in place to increase the participation of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). In **England**, the Building Engagement, Building Futures strategy launched in December 2011 aims at maximising the participation of 16-24 year-olds. The Youth Contract is one of the policies being implemented under the strategy, offering a range of opportunities to 18-24 year-olds to alleviate unemployment and additional support for disengaged and vulnerable 16 and 17 year-olds. In **Wales**, the 'Youth Engagement and Progression Framework Implementation Plan' launched in October 2013 (see Section 1.4 for more details) builds on the Youth Engagement and Employment Plan 2011-2015. It includes the development of a new 'youth guarantee' to ensure

young people have access to a suitable place in learning post-16. This means either a full or part-time course in school, college, with an independent provider or a traineeship, an apprenticeship place or a training course during employment equivalent to Level 2 of the National Qualifications Framework. In **Northern Ireland**, the Pathways to Success strategy, introduced in May 2012, is supporting the re-engagement of young people who are NEET. In **Scotland**, Opportunities for All forms part of the Scottish Government strategy and is a commitment to offer all those NEET aged between 16 and 19 a place in learning or training.

In **Greece**, the National Action Plan for Youth Employment announced early in 2013 will integrate all the actions and programmes of the National Strategic Reference Framework (2007-2013) directed at young people. It is funded by the European Social Fund as well as by the European Regional Development Fund. This new Action Plan aims to implement targeted policies and measures to develop employment and entrepreneurship for two age groups – 15-24 year olds and 25-35 year-olds – placing particular emphasis on those less qualified. Three ministries cooperate together: the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare; the Ministry of Development and Competitiveness; as well the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The total budget of the Action Plan is EUR 600 million and approximately 350 000 people are expected to benefit.

Spain has launched the 2013-2016 Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment Strategy. It supports various fields of action such as: supporting young people who are unemployed to return to the education system to obtain new qualifications and thus improve their employability; the development of university programmes and curricula, which must be guaranteed to meet the needs of business and social sectors; the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation among university students; the adaptation of training to the needs of the private sector; and the inclusion from the private sector of young people since they start their university or vocational training studies through work placements.

Italy has adopted the Action Plan for the Employability of Young people through the Integration of Learning and Work – Italy 2020. This is a policy document adopted jointly by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education in September 2009. The Action Plan is part of a framework of interventions that aim to support the transition from school to work by promoting apprenticeships, traineeships and on-the-job training activities.

In **Lithuania**, a strategy for increased employment is planned for 2014-2020. Youth would be the particular focus. Cooperation between employers, providers of educational services and municipalities is planned in order to shape and implement employment policy.

In **Luxembourg**, a guarantee for job seekers is being prepared under the Youth Employment Action Plan launched in March 2012.

In **Hungary**, the Government adopted at the end of 2011 the 'New Generation Programme' which is a comprehensive framework programme with several youth-related topics including youth employment and school-to-work transition. This is strongly related to the National Youth Strategy adopted in 2009, currently implemented through the 2012/2013 action plan which also supports youth employment.

In **Portugal**, under the agreements on the consolidation of vocational training in the Commitment for Growth, Competitiveness and Employment, the government has defined an action plan for 2012-2014 to address the issue of the young unemployed or NEETs through vocational education and training. This action plan focuses on increasing the number of young people following upper-secondary vocational pathways; encouraging better coordination of the different private providers to rationalise provision and costs; creating an integrated academic and vocational guidance system; ensuring better

coordination between schools and businesses to facilitate the dissemination of job offers and student/trainee capacities.

In **Romania**, the 2013 National Plan for Youth Employment supports the integration of young people into the labour market. A National Plan Jobs is currently under preparation for the 2013/20 period. This plan entails specific measures targeted at young people.

In **Sweden**, the Government has given a task to a special investigator to propose measures how to decrease the number of young people aged between 16 and 25 who are not in employment, education and training (NEET). The final report was submitted in October 2013.

3.2. INCREASING WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

3.2.1. Dual system, apprenticeships and work-based learning in VET

In **Spain**, the Government laid the foundations for a dual system of training in November 2012.

In **Hungary**, in 2012, the Vocational Training Act introduced the 3-year dual vocational training system, which provides practical training from the first year of vocational school. The practical training will be mainly provided in company instead of at school and will be regulated by apprenticeship contracts.

In **Austria's** case, the 2011 amendment to the vocational Training Act aims to improve the quality of apprenticeship and training as well as counselling and guidance services for apprentices and their employers. For example, in order to improve quality assurance, training guidelines for the company-based part of the apprenticeship will be developed with the aim of improving the design and planning of training.

A Memorandum of Understanding between **Portugal** and Germany (5 November 2012) includes the creation of a dual system of training. Among the initiatives, that will be undertaken, are a pilot project of technicians training courses and a mobility programme for apprenticeships abroad.

In **France**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, a bill for developing apprenticeship and careers education will be presented to the Council of Ministers by the end of 2013.

Italy, which received CSRs in 2012 and 2013 in this area, is currently taking measures to introduce a dual model of VET by increasing 'alternance' training, which envisages periods of on-the-job training without an individual work contract.

In **Lithuania**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the amendment to the 'Practical VET Resources Development Programme' was approved in 2012. On the basis of this, Lithuania will launch a project aimed at developing vocational training in real working conditions during 2013.

The 2012 reform of VET in **Poland** is in line with the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, as exemplified by the implementation of the 'Business for Education' project. The key activity of this project will be the implementation of 11 educational programmes by the end of 2014. The objective of the Programmes will be to develop forms of cooperation between a given enterprise and an educational institution that will increase the knowledge, skills and competences of pupils and students, and help them to adapt to the needs of the labour market.

In **Slovakia**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the above-mentioned Youth Action Plan includes as part of its priority activities, the involvement of companies in vocational education and training programmes.

In the **United Kingdom**, in line with one of the CSRs, there is a commitment to increasing the quality and availability of apprenticeships in England and the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For example, in England, the Government has accepted recommendations which aim to give employers more control over apprenticeships and ensure that all apprenticeships are rigorous and responsive to employers' needs.

In the **German-speaking Community of Belgium**, the Regional Development Project 'Ostbelgien Leben 2025' includes a project which began in 2011 and focuses on 'harmonisation and systematisation of vocational-technical education and *Mittelständischen Ausbildung* (the dual system of training). The objective is to promote collaboration between these two types of VET, with respect to infrastructure, teaching materials, teachers and companies. In addition, the institutions providing dual system of training programmes (IAWM and ZAWM) and the public employment service have reinforced their collaboration in order to encourage the transition from unemployment to work experience opportunities, especially in occupations with identified skills shortage.

In **Germany**, the National Pact for Career Training and Skilled Manpower Development in Germany, the Federal Government and *Länder* work with business and social partners to take measures needed to further strengthen and consolidate the training culture in the dual system. In addition, some regional training pacts have also been adopted in the *Länder*. For instance, in Nordrhein-Westfalen, the Land government, industry associations, trade unions, employment agencies and local authorities cooperate within the framework of the *Ausbildungskonsens* (Vocational Education and Training Consensus). Their joint objective is to provide training places for all the young people in Nordrhein-Westfalen who are willing and able to undergo vocational education and training.

In **Spain**, the reform of vocational education and training envisages the promotion of student mobility leading to an annual increase of 3 % in the number of students who complete their work placement module which is designed to round off the skills acquired in the training institutions.

In **Greece**, the Manpower Organisation in its effort to support the institution of apprenticeship cooperates with social partners as well as local and regional authorities. Within this framework, in all the Organisation's vocational schools, a consultation takes place on an annual basis with the social partners in order to create regional specialisation charters that are effectively linked with the labour market.

Furthermore, as part of the National Action Plan for Youth Employment, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs supports, *inter alia*, the provision of internships and traineeships in universities and technological education institutions, as well as apprenticeship programmes for graduates of technical education.

Cyprus implemented the 2012-2015 New Modern Apprenticeship (NMA) system which is an alternative form of training for young people aged between 14 and 25 years old. The NMA system also aims at responding to the needs of the labour market. Financial support is given to companies providing on-the-job training.

In **Malta**, a reform of the existing apprenticeships schemes is under preparation. The aim is to create a single national apprenticeships scheme covering more qualification levels. It is envisaged that once the new legal notice of this reform comes into force, the number of apprentices will increase significantly.

In **Sweden**, since 2011, there has been a further differentiation of pathways between general and vocational education at upper secondary. Apprenticeships were introduced as an alternative route for students to attain the vocational diploma. In addition, since August 2011 the Government has provided

special incentive funds for school heads to further develop workplace-based learning. The organisers receive a subsidy to provide upper secondary apprenticeship programmes. In January 2013, the portion directed at the employers has been raised by SEK 15 000 to a total of SEK 30 000 per student per year to encourage additional workplaces to offer apprenticeships.

3.2.2. Work placements, traineeships and internships

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, in **Belgium** (Brussels-Capital Region), unemployed young graduates from upper secondary education or below, aged between 18 and 24 years old, form the target group of the newly created initiative '*stages de transition en entreprise*' (transition work placement). In addition, the institute that coordinates traineeships (IFAPME – *Institut wallon de Formation en Alternance et des Indépendants et des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises*) has been reformed, and a single contract for traineeships that form part of compulsory education will be presented to the government in 2013. In the future, these traineeships will lead to a certificate equivalent to upper secondary schooling. A new system combining training and employment for young job seekers is being put in place. Moreover, a more general use of traineeship within secondary schooling is under discussion.

In **Greece**, a special voucher system has been introduced for unemployed people aged up to 29 years. The system was launched in 2013 under the 'Human Resources Development programme' of the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare. Depending on their qualification, the voucher entitles young people to a period of internship or work experience of five months, corresponding to 500 hours of training, with an allowance included. Trainees also receive mentoring from the provider, before and during the internship.

In line with one of the 2012 CSRs for **Cyprus**, the initiative 'job placement and training of tertiary education graduates' was launched under the authority of the Human Resource Development Authority. It targets young tertiary education graduates with less than 12 months of relevant work experience. This entails in-company practical training and work experience of six months duration.

Under the *Impulso Jovem* programme launched in **Portugal** in June 2012, the Employment Passport (*Passaporte Emprego*) offers traineeship opportunities covered by a monthly allowance to young people registered as jobseekers with the national employment centres.

In **Belgium** (Wallonia-Region), since 2012, a grant has been available for young unemployed graduates or young early school leavers to join a scheme involving internships/language courses abroad in selected countries.

In **Bulgaria**, the 2011-2015 National Programme for Youth features paid internships in the private sector and in public administration for young unemployed people under the age of 29.

In the **Czech Republic**, since 2012, the Fund for Further Education has launched two nation-wide programmes: the 'Internships for Youth' aimed at students from upper secondary and tertiary education and the 'Internships in Companies – Education through Practice' also opened to graduates and unemployed people under the age of 30.

In **Spain**, a programme still in the preparation stages will provide placements in companies for young people aged 18-25 who are professionally qualified but do not have work experience; this will include a grant which will cover 80 % of the monthly wage. The Royal Decree-Law 4/2013 of February 2013 has translated the 2013-2016 Entrepreneurship and Youth employment strategy into national legislation. This Act has made possible that young people under 30 are eligible for the work

experience contract for the first job although five years or more have passed after graduation. This entails a reduction of 50 % in social security contributions as an incentive and support.

In **France**, the portal '*Mon stage en ligne*' (my traineeship online) launched in 2011 for both companies and students from upper secondary to university level, provides access to offers of and requests for work placements.

In **Italy**, the 2011 Action Plan on Cohesion, coming from the agreement between the Government and some southern regions, includes actions for the employability of young people. For instance, in Sicily there is a special programme devoted to training and guidance for youngsters that includes financial incentives for paid traineeships and training in foreign languages.

In **Slovakia**, the loan fund for university students studying or having work experience abroad has been expanded since the beginning of 2013, both in terms of places and amount of funds

3.3. ADDRESSING SKILLS MISMATCHES

3.3.1. Skills monitoring and forecasting systems

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs for **Estonia**, special task forces work on two fields: skills and competences and lifelong learning strategy.

In **Latvia**, higher education institutions have been gathering information and tracking students under the 2010-2012 Action Plan on Necessary Reforms in Higher Education and Science.

For **Luxembourg**, in line with the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the training observatory (*observatoire de la formation*) started a seven-year longitudinal study in 2011, analysing transitions from education to the labour market as well as trends in the career destinations of students. One of the long-term objectives of the training observatory's activities is to provide analyses on changes in occupational sectors.

In **Portugal**, since 2013 a regular report on the numbers of higher education graduates registered with the government employment agency is being compiled each semester. This monitoring is carried out in collaboration with the Portuguese Institute for Employment and Professional Training (*Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional – IEFP*) and is being shared with higher education institutions.

In the **Czech Republic**, an analysis and projection study was published on labour market skills needs by the National Institute for Education within the project VIP Kariéra II. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has also supported the 2013 Research Project Reflex by the Education Policy Centre at Charles university in Prague which seeks to monitor the transition of higher education graduates to the labour market and evaluate the qualifications gained by graduates.

In **Ireland**, FÁS offers a diverse range of training programmes that provide industry/occupational specific training for unemployed individuals. The alignment of many FÁS training programmes in 2012 and 2013 with evolving labour market needs has been evidence-based. This is facilitated by a FÁS' internal resource, the Skills and Labour Market research Unit and its National Skills Database (NSD), as well as research by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN). SOLAS, a new further education and training will assume this role in the future.

In **Latvia**, the Ministry of Economics implemented a project 'Development of the medium-term and long-term labour-market demands forecast system' in August 2010 and will be finalised in December 2013.

In **Austria**, the Standing Committee on New Skills, established in 2009, carried out a research project in autumn 2011, which identified the future qualifications needed by collecting the views of employees.

In **Poland**, a 2011 amendment to the Law on Higher Education requires higher education institutions to follow the professional careers of graduates. The results of such follow up are to be used to adjust study programmes to the labour market needs. The monitoring concerns the professional situation of graduates three and five years after their graduation.

In **Romania**, a project to develop monitoring tools was developed between December 2009 and November 2012 for tracking Bachelor-level graduates from the 2005-2009 and 2006-2010 cohorts.

In **Finland**, the National Board of Education published a report in 2012 that attempts to predict the demand for labour by industry in 2025. It also carried out a project (VOSE) on predicting future competences and skills between 2008 and 2012.

3.3.2. Labour market relevance of vocational education and training

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, all communities in **Belgium** have started the discussion about ways to achieve coherence between labour market needs, education and training. In cooperation with the social partners, the **Flemish Community** has increased its training offer for 'bottleneck' and future-oriented occupations. The industries have been encouraged to develop a shared vision of their competence and training needs, and the creation of a database with professional competence profiles will help to take better account of the competence needs of the labour market through a reinforced automatic matching process. A new career policy is under development, and a career voucher will allow all workers to buy eight hours' worth of career guidance with a registered provider every six years. Moreover, a growth pathway has been put in place for individual professional training within companies. **Wallonia** is opting for a strong local partnership between the worlds of education and training on the one hand, and the social partners on the other, aiming to improve the balance between training supply and demand and an improvement in its quality.

In **Estonia**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the main purpose of the new Vocational Education Act in force since 1 September 2013 is to modernise VET programmes to make them more suited to labour market needs.

In **Ireland**, decisions by Solas, the new further education and training authority, on a training course mix to be provided in centres at local level will be based on a variety of local data including the expected recruitment demand from new or expanding companies and intelligence gathered from employers making direct contact with the authority when seeking training programmes to supply them with entry-level skilled workers. National level data from the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs will also be used.

In **Latvia**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, there is a three-year European Social Fund project for the 'development of a system of sector qualifications and restructuring of the vocational training system' that has started in late 2010. The project sets on a partnership between the State Education Development Agency, Employers Confederation, Free Trade Union Confederation, the National Centre for Education and the State Service of Education Quality. The objective of this project is to adjust VET curricula with labour market by developing skills system by sector, reviewing VET standards and developing a system of accreditation of vocational training.

In the **Czech Republic**, the 2012-2015 project *Podpora spolupráce škol a firem se zaměřením na odborné vzdělávání v praxi – Pospolu* (Supporting Cooperation between Schools and Companies – Project Aimed at Vocational Education in Practice) aims to increase the collaboration between

vocational schools and companies and thus enhance the quality of vocational education. This project is being carried out by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in cooperation with the National Institute for Education.

In **Lithuania**, VET teachers have been given the opportunity for professional competence development in companies. These training periods allow teachers to get a better view of the industry, technical innovations and the labour market situation.

In the **Netherlands**, the government wants educational institutions to focus on providing effective vocational training at regional level. At present, competition between them is causing fragmentation, with an adverse effect on quality. Educational institutions need to work better with regional businesses to develop a portfolio of training courses. A pilot project is being set up to assist them, and arbitration by the Education-Business Alliance is being introduced.

In **Romania**, the project 'Matching vocational education and training provision with the demands of the labour market' was conducted in 2010-2012. Its main objective was increasing the relevance of initial vocational training provision in schools with the needs of the labour market and the requirements of social and economic development. In order to achieve this objective, as part of the strategic planning process for initial vocational education and training provision, the project worked with the consultative partner organisations at county level: the Local Committees for the Development of Social Partnership in Vocational Training.

In **Slovakia**, a 2012 amendment to the Act on Vocational Schools has reinforced the coordination of vocational education and training to better match the needs of the labour market.

3.3.3. Career guidance and employment services

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs for **Luxembourg**, information and guidance services are being provided by the newly created counselling organisation (*maison de l'orientation*) already mentioned in the chapter on early school leaving. It plays a major role in advising young people in their transition from school to work.

Until the end of 2013, several labour offices in **Poland** will be implementing the project 'Your Career Your Choice'. The aim of the project is to design and test new measures for unemployed persons under 30 years of age. A young person will receive support for on-the-job training, a vocational course, training in a vocational school or a post-graduate study. Labour offices finance the training while the young person chooses the type of training and the institution providing it. Once the measures have been tested in the pilot phase, they will be included in the regulations.

In **Greece**, the EOPPEP (national organisation for the accreditation of qualifications and vocational guidance) is developing awareness-raising material for career management skills in order to be distributed both to career guidance professionals and young people.

In **Cyprus**, a guidance and/or work placement scheme for young unemployed was launched in June 2013.

In **Lithuania**, 10 additional youth labour centres will be established in 2013 to help young people to be better guided in labour market.

In **Poland**, in 2012 and 2013 the abovementioned Voluntary Labour Corps (VLC) intensified its activities as a provider of labour market services for tackling youth unemployment. As a result, the VLC has created 100 establishments providing services on occupational consultancy, job placement and training. Seventy already exist in the whole country.

In **Portugal**, the newly created Centres for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training offer information and guidance services for young people seeking a job or gaining new skills and qualifications.

In **Slovenia**, lifelong career guidance has been reinforced with the entry into force of the Labour Market Regulation Act in 2012. One of the priority target groups are young people, namely the young unemployed, first-time job-seekers, students from basic and upper secondary schools and higher education.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, the new National Careers Service provides extra support to 18-24 year-olds as part of the Youth Contract. In Scotland, there is the online service 'My World of Work' launched in 2011 that aims to help people to plan, build and direct their career throughout their working lives. Young people are a specific target group in this career guidance and employment service.

3.4. UPGRADING SKILLS

3.4.1. Re-skilling and up-skilling training

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs for **Belgium**, the Brussels training centre '*Tremplin Jeunes*' (in the Brussels-Capital Region) offers training modules for the young unemployed (18-24). It aims at achieving one of the high priorities of the regional government which is to tackle the high level of unemployment among low-qualified people aged below 25 years in the Brussels-Capital Region. The training ranges from deep learning diagnosis to qualifying training, including basic skills training and work placements. Since its creation in mid-2011, 3 144 young people have used the services of '*Tremplin Jeunes*'. 1 481 of them undertook training. It is estimated that nearly 20 % of the young unemployed in the Brussels-Capital Region have benefited from these services over a time period of 24 months.

In **Ireland**, the Momentum Training Fund, launched in late 2012 as part of the Action Plan for Jobs Programme, focuses on the long-term unemployed. It targets interventions to tackle skills shortages by providing training places in particular sectors of the Irish economy where vacancies are identified. Young unemployed people are once again a specific target group. It will provide up to 6 500 training places for the long-term unemployed. Some of the places have been targeted specifically at young unemployed people.

In **France**, there is also the initiative 'Contract Future Jobs' (*contrats emplois d'avenir*) created in October 2012 for young unemployed people aged 16 to 25 years old who have few or no qualifications and face difficulties in finding a job. This contract aims at supporting their integration into the labour market in sectors with a social purpose or with a strong potential of creating jobs. The competences that the young individual will acquire on the job will be recognised and certified, increasing his/her level of qualifications.

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs for **Finland**, a skills programme for young adults (as part of the Youth Guarantee) has been adopted for the 2013-2016 period. This programme is intended for young people aged 20-29 who lack post-basic education qualification. It provides such young people with the opportunity to acquire a vocational qualification.

In **Ireland**, the Labour Market Education and Training Fund (LMETF) is responsible for meeting the needs of unemployed people under 25 years of age by supporting three different occupational clusters where there are vacancies in the labour market. The aim is to enhance collaboration and engagement

between businesses and education and training providers in the design and delivery of relevant and responsive projects for the unemployed in support of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs and the National Skills Strategy.

In **Greece**, under the voucher system launched in 2013, young people are also entitled to 80 skills training hours together with guidance and counselling and an allowance.

In **Malta**, the Employment Aid programme provides financial assistance as well as upgrading skills training for unemployed people, and in particular, young job seekers under the age of 25 who have completed full-time education in the last two years and have not yet obtained a first regular paid job.

In **Slovenia**, the new programme 'Youth Mentorship Schemes in Business Enterprises' aims at providing young people with the skills needed in the real work environment.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, the Traineeships programme was introduced from August 2013 for 16- to 19-year-olds and will be extended to up to 24-year-olds in due course. Traineeships are designed for young people not yet ready for apprenticeships or employment and include support to improve English and maths alongside work skills and workplace experience.

3.4.2. Entrepreneurial skills training

In **Bulgaria**, the National Program for Youth (2011-2015) includes a three-year project (2010-2012) on the 'Building and development of centres for the promotion of entrepreneurship in higher education'.

In **Estonia**, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs, the government's 2011-2015 action programme stipulates that by 2013 all higher education students of non-economic specialities will be able to study entrepreneurship within the scope of their curricula.

In **Romania**, the Young Successful Entrepreneur programme initiated by the Ministry of National Education for the 2010-2013 period aims at increasing the entrepreneurial potential of students and graduates in higher education.

In **Spain**, the University Entrepreneur Programme in Spanish universities was launched in February 2013 by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism. This programme aims to encourage the creation of new businesses and to foster entrepreneurial mind sets, providing students with the necessary tools to develop a business plan for a business project. This project has been implemented in 47 universities.

In **Lithuania**, since 2012, first-year 'business baskets' are offered to newly-established companies specifically targeting young people. This entails training for start-ups in strategic management, accounting, business processes, fund raising as well as management consulting services and virtual office services.

In **Hungary**, a scheme supporting young people in becoming entrepreneurs was launched within the framework of the Social Renewal Operational Programme at the beginning of 2013.

In **Portugal**, one of the 2013 national priorities for youth employability under the Youth in Action Programme envisages actions for promoting non-formal education related to the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills.

In **Slovenia**, a two-year project supported by the ESF started in 2013; to support 'innovative teaching through the implementation of programmes for introducing practical and flexible forms of employment

and economic cooperation'. This project is geared to upper secondary and short-cycle higher education students. The objective is to improve their integration into the labour market.

In the **United Kingdom (Wales)**, the 2010-2015 action plan of the Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy (YES) (originally launched in 2004) includes, for example, the development and accreditation of entrepreneurial learning opportunities. The Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan 2011-2015 (see Section 3.1) includes delivering targeted activities aimed at stimulating interest in entrepreneurship amongst unemployed young people.

Chapter 4: Increasing Adult Participation in Lifelong Learning

4.1. REFORMS TO INCREASE ADULT PARTICIPATION IN LIFELONG LEARNING

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs for **France**, a personal training account (*compte personnel de formation*) is being created which lasts for the entire duration of an individual's working life (Law No°2013-504 of 14 June 2013) independently of its work status. This move is intended to facilitate employees' access to LLL even when they are between jobs.

The state, the regions and the unions of both employers and workers at national and inter-professional level initiated a dialogue before 1 July 2013 on the implementation of the personal training account. Before 1 January 2014, the partners will carry out the necessary changes to the existing inter-professional regulations in force, with the Government reporting to the Parliament about how the former 'individual right to training' (DIF – *droit individuel à la formation*) will be replaced by the new system, and how the training hours gained under the DIF will be transferred to the new personal training account.

In accordance with one of the 2012 and 13 CSRs made to **Poland**, the Lifelong Learning Perspective strategy which specifies the government's related policy directions was adopted in September 2013. The policy intends to provide easier access for everybody to good quality learning in various forms, places and at every stage of life, as well as to create coherent and transparent systems of assessing learning outcomes. It covers the whole process of learning, in all its aspects (formal, non-formal and informal), at all life stages and at all levels of competences and qualifications.

4.1.1. Improving career guidance and awareness raising activities for adults

Improving career guidance

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, in April 2012, the National Careers Service was launched building on the former 'Next Step' service. It provides information, advice and guidance on careers, skills and the labour market, covering further education, apprenticeships and other types of training and higher education.

In **Finland**, as a part of the Action Programme on eServices and eDemocracy (SADe), the Ministry of Education and Culture is setting up an electronic education centre, which will list all adult education and training programmes; individuals will be able to apply for these through the internet service. The service is being developed between 2011 and 2014.

In the context of the 2011 reforms to improve the integration into society of disadvantaged groups and new citizens, **Belgium (Flemish Community)** has set up career guidance centres in adult education.

In **Estonia**, in vocational and adult education, a public round of applications was carried out to support the 2010 projects: Development of Student-Centred and Innovative Vocational Education and

Expansion of Lifelong Learning Opportunities. The purpose of the open application round was to support development activities originating from the applicants and based on their initiatives in the field of vocational and adult education. The activities supported included, among other things, increasing the provision of counselling and support services for students in order to reduce the number of those dropping out and supporting the employment of graduates in the labour market.

In **Cyprus**, in March 2012, a proposal for the establishment of a National Board of Lifelong Guidance was forwarded to the Council of Ministers for approval.

In **Luxembourg**, in November 2012, the government approved the white paper on a lifelong learning strategy. An action plan will be set up for the implementation of the eight measures proposed where the professionalising of the staff for lifelong guidance is one of the measures.

In **Portugal**, the restructuring and strengthening of educational and vocational guidance services in 2013/2014 will contribute to allowing students to make a more independent, informed and realistic choice between education and training offers. The Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education (*Centros de Qualificação e Ensino Profissional* – CQEP) have a dual mission to provide counselling and vocational guidance to both young people and adults.

In **Romania**, the Law of National Education (1/2011) pays particular attention to career guidance. A provision of the legislation is an obligation on local authorities to establish Community Lifelong Learning Centres in partnership with education and training providers. The responsibilities of these centres include career guidance and preparation for finding a job.

Awareness raising activities

Estonia has launched different initiatives to raise the awareness and increase the motivation of adults to participate in lifelong learning; these include TV and radio shows, newsletters, and an 'adult education week' supported by the ESF (European Social Fund, 2007-2013).

In **Bulgaria**, the government is implementing a national project aiming to establish a National Council for Lifelong Learning and a National Information System for Lifelong Learning. The short term aim of the project is to raise awareness about adult education provision. In the long term, the aim is to develop national standards in the provision of adult learning.

In **Slovenia**, in order to develop human resource management and career guidance in companies, the new programme for Career Guidance for Employers and Employees has been in force since 2011. The programme aims to give support to employers in the area of human resource management. It also provides in-company training for managers and/or human resource departments (where they exist) in the area of career guidance/career development with the intention of providing/developing effective career guidance for their employees and to improve their access to lifelong learning.

In **Luxembourg**, a survey of adult education has been carried out for the first time. It was led by STATEC and involved more than 3 300 residents aged between 25 and 64. Respondents were asked which types of education/learning they had taken part in over previous 12 months – formal, non-formal or informal.

In **Finland**, measures will be taken in cooperation with business and industry to fund and motivate adults to participate in training.

4.1.2. More flexible study opportunities and pathways in lifelong learning

In **Latvia**, in order to support evening schools, *Amendments to the General Education Law* were adopted in 2011 which define the role and tasks of these institutions in relation to adult education. In addition, evening schools were allowed to implement non-formal adult education programmes, for instance, courses in languages, computing and management. In this way, adult education programme options and their availability are being expanded. In addition, evening schools cooperate with the State Employment Agency providing programmes for both job seekers and employed persons.

In **Sweden**, the new Education Act of 2011, which applied to adult municipal education as from 1 July 2012, encourages the provision of education tailored to the needs and circumstances of the individual. The Act strengthens the use of individual study plans and gives the validation of prior learning a more prominent role as a normal part of the educational process.

Finland is working on establishing a lifelong learning system based on individual needs. According to the development plan, adult education and training is currently supply-based and provision does not necessarily respond to individual needs. To develop a more demand-driven system, the Ministry of Education and Culture appointed reviewers to prepare proposals for the adoption of personal training accounts at the end of 2012.

In 2011, **Malta** launched an initiative facilitating the entry of adult learners into higher education by offering more evening courses in addition to the traditional daytime courses.

In **Greece**, the Law 4009/2011 on the organisation of higher education has introduced the operation of lifelong learning programmes, in Lifelong Learning Schools established in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In particular, HEIs have been given the opportunity to offer programmes of lifelong learning through distance learning.

In **Belgium (Flemish Community)** all linear programs in adult education have been replaced by modular learning in 2013.

In **Germany**, within the framework of the lifelong learning concept, the Federation and *Länder* are implementing measures in the following areas related to adults:

- facilitating transition from school to higher education and access to higher education without the *Abitur* for vocationally qualified applicants;
- making learning paths more flexible;
- admitting up to 327 000 extra first-year students until 2015 within the framework of the Higher Education Pact 2020 (*Hochschulpakt 2020*);
- increasing interest in mathematics and the natural sciences;
- improving opportunities for women;
- improving opportunities for people with a migrant background;
- taking account of the interests of people with disabilities in participating in lifelong learning;
- structural improvements in education provision for all stages of life at local level.

In **Estonia**, flexible study opportunities have been created for adult learners both in vocational education and training and in higher education: e-learning tools, distance learning and evening courses and part-time studies.

In the **United Kingdom (Wales)** a new policy statement for higher education published in June 2013 encourages higher education providers to provide an appropriate offer to people at all stages of life through a variety of programmes, and through a flexible and dynamic delivery system that meets students' expectations and needs. The aim should be to widen access to all, including those living in rural areas of Wales, rather than opening up access only to a few.

4.1.3. Adults with low-level skills

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs made to **Estonia**, the vocational education program Kutse was extended in 2011 to include not only individuals who had not completed vocational school but also adults without any vocational or other qualification.

Similarly, in line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs made to **Slovenia**, in accordance with the Guidelines for the Implementation of Active Employment Policy Measures for 2012-2015 adopted in November 2011, special attention will be given to younger and older job-seekers. Among the activities implemented are: training programmes (national vocational qualifications – preparation and assessment of NVQ and BVQ); further training programmes (institutional training, Project Learning for Young Adults; inclusion of unemployed persons in support and development programmes; the Pokolpje regional programme – active and functional; Training for Success in Life; adult training and education); on-the-job training and education programmes.

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs to **Spain**, a contribution system for companies including workers aged over 50 in collective redundancies has become operational. At least 50 % of the contributions from companies will be used for the reintegration of workers aged over 50 into employment. In addition, recognising professional competences acquired through work experience, and non-formal training, is one of the instruments to encourage adults, especially those who left school without qualifications, to reintegrate into the education system.

In **Finland**, the threshold to participate in adult education and training has recently been lowered by exempting adults with no vocational qualifications from the fees charged for education and training leading to competence-based qualifications. In addition, measures will be taken to develop outreach actions (i.e. to find, reach and motivate adults to participate in training) in cooperation with business and industry.

In the **United Kingdom (England)**, in 2012/13 locally-based 'community learning trust models' have been piloted to channel 'Community Learning' funding and lead the planning of local provision in cities, towns and rural settings. The trusts are expected to take account of the views of local government, local communities and local business leaders to ensure that the funding is deployed to meet local needs.

4.1.4. Financial support for participating in lifelong learning

In the context of prioritising further education funding for young adults (19-24), those who need to improve their English and maths and those seeking work, the **United Kingdom (England)** has introduced the '24+ advanced learning loans' scheme from the 2013/14 academic year. The scheme supports individuals aged 24 and over wishing to undertake education or training at level 3 (two A levels or the vocational equivalent), level 4 (higher vocational education, equivalent to ISCED 5B) or advanced and higher apprenticeships.

In **Austria**, there is an opportunity for educational leave. In 2011, the circle of beneficiaries was expanded and, since 2012, access to educational leave for all employees has been facilitated.

In recent years, **Luxembourg** has introduced a series of measures aimed at allowing adults to continue education and training or to allow them to obtain initial education and training qualifications. These include, for example, paid training leave for employees, self-employed persons and those exercising accredited liberal professions.

In **Hungary**, a project has been launched for developing foreign language and IT competences among the adult population in order to improve their employability. The aim is to involve 100 000 persons in language and IT training courses offered by accredited training institutions between December 2012 and August 2014. Participants have to be over 18 and cannot participate in another state-funded education programme (at school or university) at the same time. 95 to 98 % of the tuition fee is covered by the state, depending on participants' place of residence (disadvantaged areas receiving a higher proportion of funding). A network of 800 mentors has been set up to carry out needs assessment, communicate with learners, recruit and motivate participants and provide information on how to register. This is in line with the Act on Adult Education, in force since July 2013, which primarily focuses on vocational training, language teaching and the regulation of training programmes supported by the state or the EU. The Act prioritises training programmes that are capable of meeting labour market needs.

In **Estonia**, exemption from the fringe benefit tax on work related studies was introduced in 2012. As a result of this change, expenses on degree-level education related to employees' work will no longer be viewed as a fringe benefit. The reform will promote investment by companies in improving employees' qualifications and thereby support an increase in productivity and general competitiveness.

In **Lithuania**, the EU Structural Funds remain one of the major sources of investment in the provision of lifelong learning. One of the key priorities for the allocation of the EU Structural Funds assistance has been the improvement of the availability and quality of education and studies. Funds have been allocated to projects aimed at upgrading the infrastructure of education, vocational training and higher education and research institutions, and also the development of lifelong learning. These funds have been used to create the National Qualifications Framework in compliance with the needs of the labour market, develop vocational training standards, encourage young people to stay in education and obtain professional qualifications, and also to organise a variety of training courses for adult learners.

In **Austria**, since 2011, the initiative for Adult Education enables adults who lack basic skills or never graduated from lower secondary school to continue and finish their education free of charge.

In **Slovenia**, training and education which include informal and formal education programmes are among the first measures of the Active Employment Policy (AEP) 2012-2015. Persons participating in the AEP measures are entitled to certain allowances (activity allowance, allowance for transport and training costs and others).

In **Spain**, in accordance with the Statute of Workers' Rights, workers have the right to amongst other things: paid leave to sit examinations, an adaptation to the working day to allow workers to attend professional training courses; job-secured training or leave for professional development. The time devoted to training is regarded as working time. Workers with at least one year of seniority are entitled to 20 hours' paid leave each year to participate in vocational training for employment, linked to company activities, which may be accumulated for a period of up to 5 years.

4.2. REFORMS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND TRANSPARENCY OF ADULT EDUCATION

4.2.1. Development of qualifications frameworks and validation of non-formal and informal learning

In **Italy**, to facilitate connections between labour supply and demand and to increase transparency in learning and the recognition of certifications, a legislative decree has established a national system for the certification of skills, including the identification and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

In line with one of the 2012 and 2013 CSRs made to **Belgium**, transparency and recognition tools are being further developed. In the **Flemish Community**, the preparation of a regulatory framework in which high-quality information centres and assessment centres for earlier acquired competencies has started. A draft parliamentary act on the validation of non-formal and informal learning is being prepared and will be presented to the Flemish Government. A **French-speaking** framework of certifications should be finalised during the year 2013 to connect with the European certification framework (EQF). The French-speaking framework with 8 levels will be based on tools developed in the other Communities of the country. In the **German-speaking Community**, the NQF is foreseen to be adopted by the end of 2013.

In **Luxembourg**, a procedure for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VAE – *validation des acquis de l'expérience*) has been introduced. Since its entry into force in spring 2010, 518 eligible areas of experience have been introduced and 97 persons have received a full or a partial qualification through validation of their non-formal and informal learning.

In **Malta**, following the enactment of legislation in 2012, the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) has been designated as the competent authority for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and for classifying the courses validated at a level of Malta's National Qualifications Framework. The NCFHE is currently developing a system of assessment, recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning. It is setting the standards and principles to be followed; regulating the bodies responsible for validating learning outcomes and occupational standards; ensuring that quality assurance systems are put in place; and is monitoring the validation process.

In **Poland**, the lifelong learning strategy which was adopted in September 2013 is (among many other things) introducing a process and creation of a system of validation/ confirmation of qualifications acquired outside the formal education system.

In **Slovakia**, the 2012-2014 Action Plan for the implementation of the lifelong strategy includes specific measures to facilitate progress in the area of adult learning, including launching a process for the validation of non-formal education. Moreover, an amendment to the Act on Lifelong Learning, approved in September 2012, should facilitate access of adults to new qualifications based on their previous professional experience or participation in continuing education and training programmes. In order to ensure higher expertise of programme guarantors and lecturers, conditions and procedures of their selection have been adjusted. Another important step was to expand the scope of eligible institutions to include professional organisations and associations that will be entitled to organise tests and examinations for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

4.2.2. Development of qualifications standards and quality assurance in VET

In **Estonia**, the renewal process of professional standards has been initiated. To date, more than 700 valid vocational standards have been developed for about 100 professions; about 75 000 certificates have been issued. In parallel, actions have also been taken to ensure that the quality of vocational education and awareness of labour market needs are kept when planning curriculum development and the in-service training of vocational teachers, as well as e-learning development which takes place within the framework of two European Social Fund programmes – Substantial Development of Vocational Education and Development of E-learning in Vocational Education. In addition, the modernisation of the infrastructure of vocational education institutions is another important method for guaranteeing conformity to contemporary demands. This takes place with the support of the European Regional Development Fund measure 'Modernisation of the Learning Environment in Vocational Education Institutions' over the years 2008-2015.

In line with one of the 2012 CSRs made to **Poland** the reform of its vocational education system was launched in 2012. This includes changes to the classification of professions and a new flexible approach to obtaining vocational qualifications, changes of the structure of VET and its examination system, including opening it up to the validation of learning outcomes acquired within the non-formal learning process. The modernisation of the core curriculum is aimed at ensuring it is better adapted to labour market needs.

In line with one of the 2012 CSRs to **Slovenia**, some new and updated upper secondary vocational, upper secondary technical and short-cycle higher vocational programmes are being introduced.

In **Austria**, the VET Quality Initiative (*QualitätsInitiative Berufsbildung*) aims to implement systematic quality management in VET schools and colleges. The quality management system not only extends down to the level of individual schools, but also includes all system levels, including management of the education system at federal level and school supervision at regional level. In terms of its objectives, guiding principles and structure, the VET Quality Initiative is in line with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET. In the 2012/13 school year, adaptations to the peer-review procedure (Peer Review in QIBB) used for quality development in schools will be pilot-tested. In autumn 2013, two pilot training courses for quality process managers and executive managers (QUALI-QIBB) will start.

In **Romania**, in order to improve the quality of VET, from 2012-2013, a methodology and instruments are being developed in a project for the implementation of the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework. These include the creation of 16 cooperation networks for quality assurance in VET schools.

In **Greece**, Law 4115/2013 concluded the process of establishing the National Organisation for the Accreditation of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) which is responsible for the accreditation of inputs and outputs in the field of non-formal education and informal learning; it also operates as the national organisation of the European networks managing qualifications issues and tools for transparency and mobility.

In **Poland**, the reference report relating the levels identified in the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF) to the European Qualifications Framework has been finalised. In May 2013 the report was presented to the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group. Also the work on the National Register of Qualifications is in progress. These measures will lead to the development of the final content-related and institutional framework which is necessary to implement the PQF.

In **Portugal**, in order to provide the necessary preconditions for the active population to boost their qualifications and have them recognised, and to achieve a better use of public resources, within the framework of the on-going modernisation and optimisation of the Public Sector, there has been public discussion of a ministerial directive to establish Centres for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training (*Centros para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional* – CQEP). It is envisaged that the CQEP will operate in an integrated and coordinated manner across the country, and form an interface with other initiatives currently available under the National Qualifications System, to respond to the real qualification needs of young people and adults.

