

IO1 – Impact Study Students



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Introduction

Unemployment is a major concern in Europe today. Improving labour market integration and fight social exclusion is a priority. VET programmes can be a more flexible ways of learning better adapted to the labour market needs, providing a better match between education and employers necessities. So, high quality vocational education and training (VET) can contribute to decrease unemployment.

In 2011, the European Commission Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2011) delivered a study 'Attitudes towards vocational education and training' which made possible to understand the opinion and perceptions of European citizens regarding VET programmes, as well as the benefits, impacts and conditioning factors that influence them. It failed in making a comparison with general education, because it was focused only in VET.

Some countries made independent studies trying to understand individuals' perceptions about VET.

In 2016, Cedefop initiated the 'European public opinion survey on vocational education and training' (Cedefop, 2017a). It purposed to analyse and understanding the attitudes towards vocational education in Europe, and to have more detailed comparison between countries. With a total of 35,646 respondents across the European Union (EU) aged 15 and over from different economic and social groups, the survey covers EU28. Due to the particularities of each national education offer, it was defined that VET would be perceived as programmes designed to give participants the practical and technical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade, which takes place at upper secondary education at 16-18 years old (Cedefop, 2017a).

The following chapters are organised by providing a general background of VET in the six countries that participate in this project, how the offer is structured, followed by an analysis of the awareness and knowledge, attractiveness and

access, experience and satisfaction, outcomes and effectiveness and main conclusions, about the WBL (Work Based Learning) when VET students participate in Erasmus + transnational mobility, since One of the objectives of the 'Erasmus+' Programme is to increase quality mobility within vocational education and training (VET) and support the European internationalisation of VET organisations in the Erasmus+ Programme countries.

General Background of VET

Spain

In Spain VET (formación profesional – FP) is considered as a whole. Policy makers, education experts, teachers, etc. differentiate between:

- basic level at the lower secondary stage
- upper secondary level – what is called Intermediate VET in Spain
- higher level VET – which is tertiary education

but public in general is usually not aware of these different levels in VET.

VET is a very well-known education option in Spain, Cedefop's survey confirms that VET is a widely known option in Spain with 84% (versus EU 71%) stating that yes, they had heard of it and knew what it was about.

Families traditionally considered it as a less prestigious path than the academic baccalaureate and preferred their children to choose the general education route, leading straight to university, as a mean of social progression, whereas VET was regarded partly as the choice for less talented students in some periods.

Policy makers have made efforts to promote the quality of VET qualifications and communication campaigns were launched to refute misconceptions; so this image has fortunately been changing for the last 20 years. The good results VET students present, (better employment prospects, more connected to companies' needs and more practical) are proving it is a valuable option for future professional life.

The number of students enrolled in VET is growing as the table shows.

Table1. Variation of enrolment in upper secondary education and higher level VET in Spain, 2002-16

School year	2002/03	2007/08	2016/17*	% Var. 2002-16*	% Var. 2007-16*
Education level					
High School	679 773	622 133	687 692	1.16%	10.54%
Intermediate level VET	225 479	239 559	348 512	54.57%	45.48%
Higher level VET	232 193	222 933	380 575	63.90%	70.71%

* Advancing data.

Source: (MECD). Estadísticas de las enseñanzas no universitarias [Statistics of non-university education].

Portugal

Vocational education in Portugal was established in the mid-1940s.

The first reform was in 1948 with the drive of adjusting the school programmes to the needs of economic development and to promote the qualification of Portuguese labour force.

Another reform was made in 1970-1973 to face the rapid demographic, economic and social transformations that led to an increasing search for education. The main objective was to, by increasing access possibilities, guarantee the democratisation of education and promote economic and social development (Cardim, 2000).

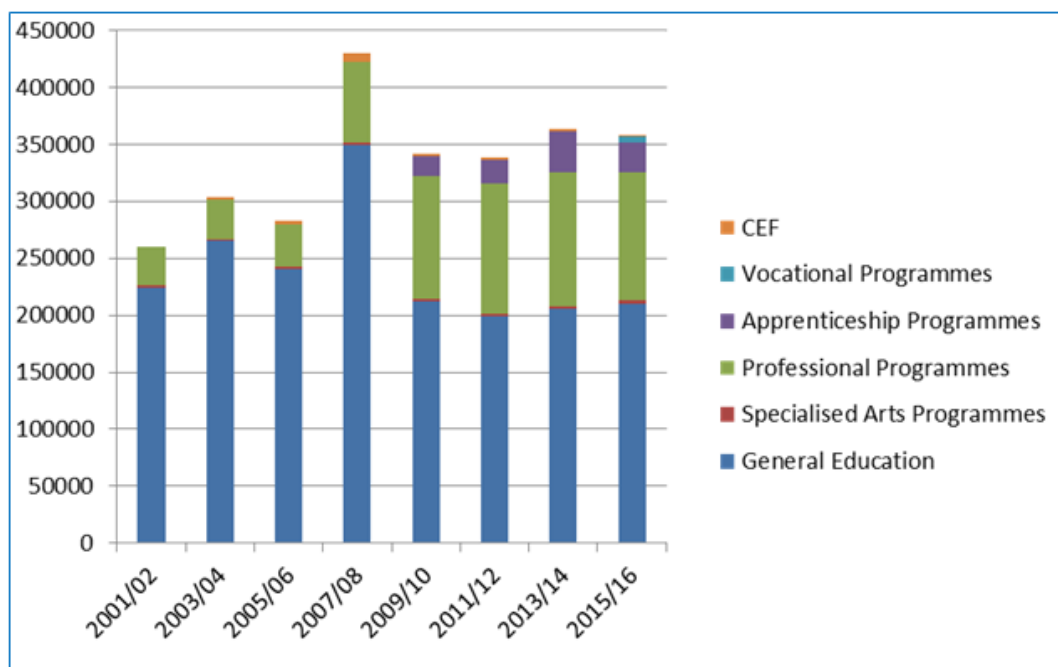
In 1974, the post-revolutionary period, the vocational education was discontinued.

Only in the end of the 1980s, emerged the apprenticeship system (work-linked training), after the settlement of Institute for Employment and Professional Training (Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional – IEFP), that the Portuguese government begun to incorporate the practical component of professional training into the mainstream education.

In 1998, another programme with practical training started to be provided by setting up professional schools (1), based on public-private partnerships and co- financed by the ESF. This process was essential for the affirmation of professional programmes as an alternative school path. These schools were private but state dependent, so the government was still committed to create public professional schools to address local needs.

In the 21st century, the structure of vocational learning changed, starting with the openness of the professional programmes to public upper secondary schools, becoming more accessible a wider public. In 2007, reform the National Qualifications System (Sistema Nacional de Qualificações), had a fundamental role at establishing a balanced relationship between VET within the educational system and VET in the labour market. Currently, students can either choose the general education, which would give them access to higher education, or the vocational education.

Graphic1. Distribution of students and their choices of educational path at secondary level



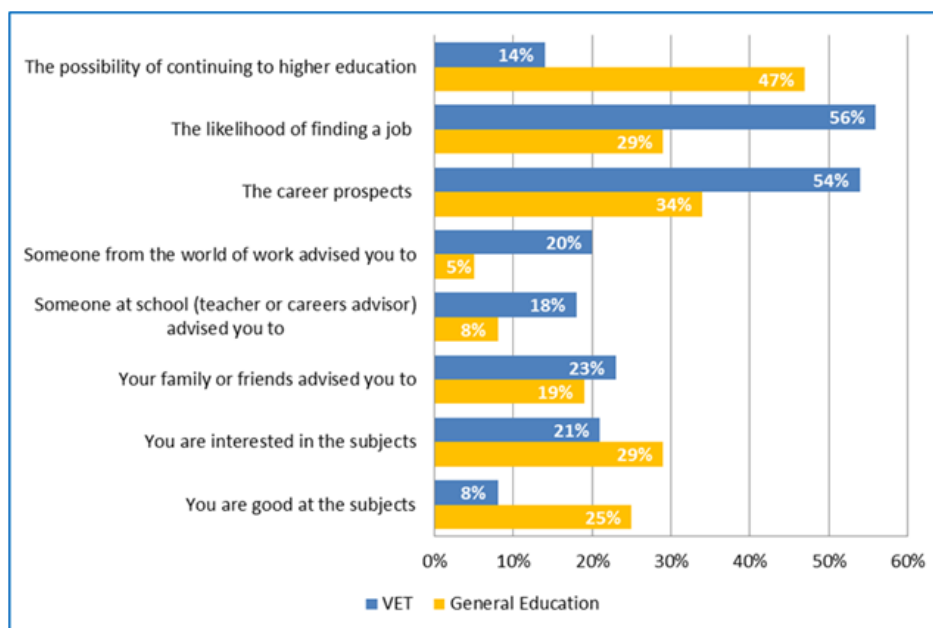
Source: Compilation of data based on information collected from DGEEC and ANQEP.

While general education is still a more common student's educational path, a new pattern began to emerge in which professional programmes began to be provided by the secondary school. Consequently, the number of learners choosing VET has increased since 2007. The

most attractive programmes are the ones that provide a greater practical component – professional and apprenticeship programmes, as shown by the most recent statistics (DGEEC; DSEE, 2016).

VET is a well-known educational path as 71% of the individuals' state that they have heard of VET

Graphic2. Factors that influenced decision on education path



Source: Cedefop 2017

Social groups in which students are included play a large role in the choices they make for secondary education. Most students consider that VET is aimed for students who have more difficulties in their educational path since 75% consider it to be easier to finish than general education and 73% agree that students with lower school performance are led towards VET.

The role of VET is changing and more and more this educational path is seen as a valid pathway that allows students to obtain an appropriate and valuable education, with 23% of students who chose VET programmes being encouraged by their families, against .15% of students enrolled in general education that were advised against taking vocational education and training by their families and friends.

Belgium

Technical, artistic and vocational education has changed a great deal since the creation of the first training programmes, such as the apprenticeship workshops (1842), the industrial schools (1853), The School of Arts and Trades (1899), the vocational school (1860-90).

Up until the end of World War II, IVET was generally intended for young boys and girls stemming from working class backgrounds. The aim was to train young people to meet the pressing needs of industry. It was also a matter of integrating in society a part of the population for whom general education and the academic path – reserved for the higher social classes – was difficult to access.

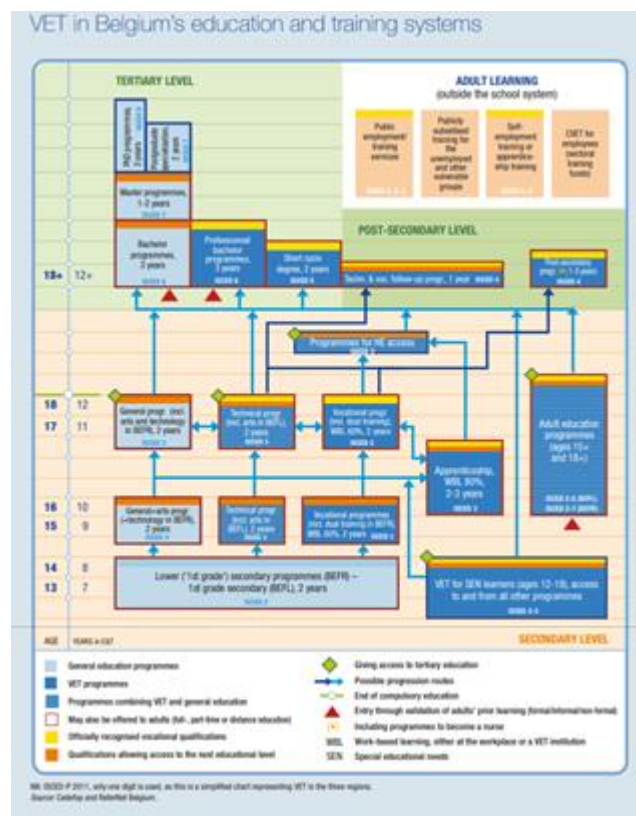
Up until the first half of the 20th century, there were substantial differences between education for young girls and young boys: the purpose of IVET for boys was to train highly skilled workers, while girls were generally prepared to become 'homemakers'.

In 1983, compulsory education was raised from 14 to 18 years, in the wake particularly of the major economic crisis the country went through and the emergence of mass unemployment.

Nowadays, Secondary school in Belgium comprises six years. The differentiation between forms is made as of the third year (age of 14).

The general education is preferred to the VET, because the general idea is that Vet courses are for less gifted students.

Aware of these phenomena, the different Belgian levels of power take initiatives on a regular basis to reform vocational education and training. The matter for upgrading IVET programmes takes centre stage.

Figure1.

Italy

Italian system, all young people have the right/duty (diritto/dovere) (Law 53/2003) to pursue their education and training for at least 12 years before reaching age 18 and should not leave education and training without a qualification. In the Italian education system, vocational education and training includes two different pathways: vocational education provided by public and private schools and vocational training as training provided at regional level. Compulsory education lasts 10 years, up to 16, and includes the first two years of upper secondary general education or VET.

Young people complete lower secondary education at age 14. At this stage, learners sit a state exam to acquire a certificate (EQF level 1) which grants admission to the upper secondary level where young people have the opportunity to choose between general education and VET.

At upper secondary level, young people may opt for:

(a) five-year programmes which include the two last years of compulsory education and three years (under the right/duty of education and training) in:

- (i) high schools (licei). These provide general education programmes at upper secondary level;
- (ii) technical schools;
- (iii) vocational schools.

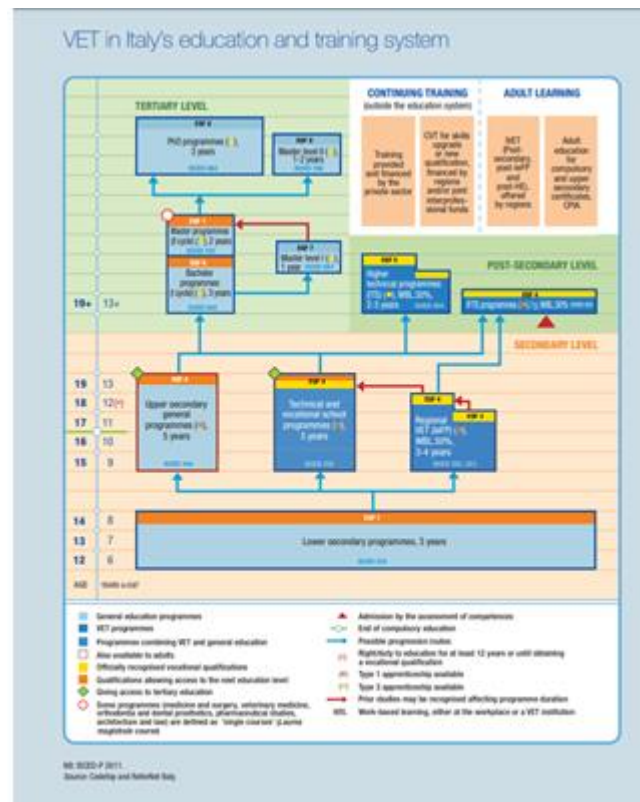
High schools (licei) offer artistic, classical, linguistic, scientific, human sciences, music and dance strands. Within the artistic strand, learners can specialise in figurative arts, architecture and environment, design, audiovisual and multimedia, graphics or stage design in the second period.

The qualifications awarded after successful completion of high school, technical and vocational school are at EQF level 4 and a state leaving exam at the end of them gives access to higher education;

(b) regional education and vocational training courses (IeFP) (three or four years – EQF 3 or 4 respectively).

Compared to the European data, VET seems to be less popular in Italy with respect to other EU countries. Only the 51% of respondents say that they had heard of vocational education and training (VET).

80% of Italian thinks that in Italy general education has a more positive image than vocational education, although 80% of Italian thinks that vocational education at the upper secondary stage has a positive image in their country. Italy is among those countries where people are most likely to say that vocational training has a positive image.

Figure2.

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic traditionally belongs to highly industrialised countries with a long VET tradition. Compared to other countries, the Czech Republic records a low proportion of students' in general upper secondary education (Gymnázia – academically oriented secondary schools).

In principle, the Czech education system makes a distinction between:

(a) basic education (it comprises primary and lower secondary levels according to ISCED) – it is generally oriented;

(b) secondary education:

(i) practical school (lower secondary level, proportion of students is very low, they are usually students with learning difficulties);

(ii) secondary education with VET certificate (upper secondary level);

(iii) secondary education with Maturita (upper secondary level);

- full upper secondary vocational education with Maturita (without VET certificate)
- full upper secondary vocational education with VET certificate and Maturita (recently introduced, percentage of students is low)
- full upper secondary general education (provided by Gymnázia), concluded by Maturita

After completion of upper secondary education, graduates can get higher (or another) vocational qualification through two types of programmes (corresponding to post-secondary level according to ISCED):

(iv) follow-up courses concluded with Maturita;

(v) shortened courses after Maturita or VET certificate;

- shortened courses to acquire upper secondary education with VET certificate (this type of studies allows graduates with Maturita to obtain also VET certificate in a shorter scope of time)
- shortened courses to acquire upper secondary education with Maturita (this type of studies allows graduates with Maturita to acquire Maturita in another field of study in a shorter scope of time)

(c) tertiary professional education (corresponding to tertiary VET according to ISCED) (2);

(d) higher education

VET at upper secondary level is designed with an emphasis on preparation of graduates for the labour market, while general education (provided by Gymnázia) is primarily designed as a preparation for the studies at higher education institutions.

VET has always had a very positive image in the Czech Republic and vocational study programmes still make for the dominant part of upper secondary education in the country

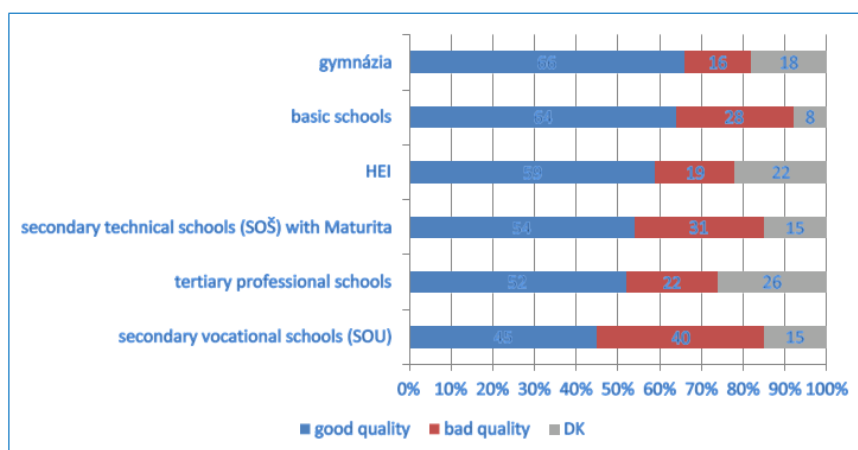
But in the 90's there was a prevalent view among the parents and their children that general education followed by a higher education institution ensures better future prospects. The VET courses absorbed pupils who were underachieving at primary schools and have no actual interest in the relevant field of study, so they often represent an educational path of second choice

Lately, there has been a slowdown in the tendency of deviating from vocational education. The economic crisis, during which specific professional qualifications started to be perceived as a secure employment, had an important part.

In the Czech Republic, over 93% of the population reached at least upper secondary education. The majority of these people studied in VET programmes. For example, according to 2011 Census, 65% of population aged 25-64 attained vocational education at upper secondary level.

Nowadays, approximately 73% of students in upper secondary education are in VET programmes

Graphic3. Public opinion on quality of education provided by different types of schools in the Czech Republic, research outcomes, CVVM, 2017, (in %)



Legend: good quality = sum of responses 'very good' and 'rather good';
bad quality = sum of responses 'very bad' and 'rather bad';
DK = don't know.

Source: Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (SOU AV), Public Opinion Research Centre (CVVM): *Hodnocení kvality různých typů škol [public opinion survey on quality of education provided by different types of schools]*. Press release, September 2017. Available online: https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/media/com_form2content/documents/c2/a4433/f9/or171023.pdf. NVE calculations.

Romania

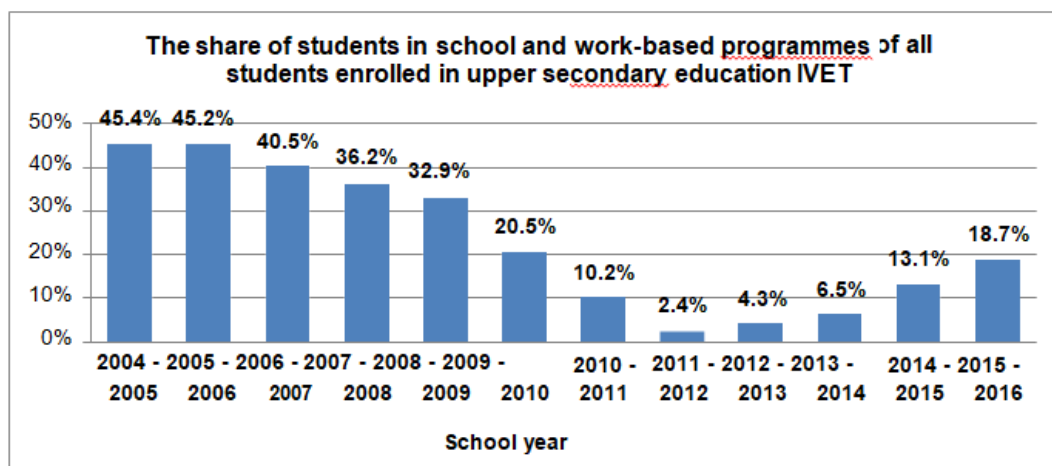
The main vocational education and training (VET) opportunities leading to formally recognised qualifications in Romania are:

- (a) initial VET (IVET), including upper secondary technological programmes, 'school- and work-based VET' programmes and post-secondary programmes
- (b) continuing VET (CVET), as part of adult education

The VET Strategy for 2016-20 (adopted by Government decision no. 317/27 April 2016), includes four main objectives:

- (a) increasing VET relevance to labour market needs;
- (b) increasing participation and facilitating access to VET programmes;
- (c) improving VET quality;
- (d) developing innovation and national and international cooperation in VET.

Graphic4. Share of students in 'school- and work-based VET' programmes of all students enrolled in upper secondary VET

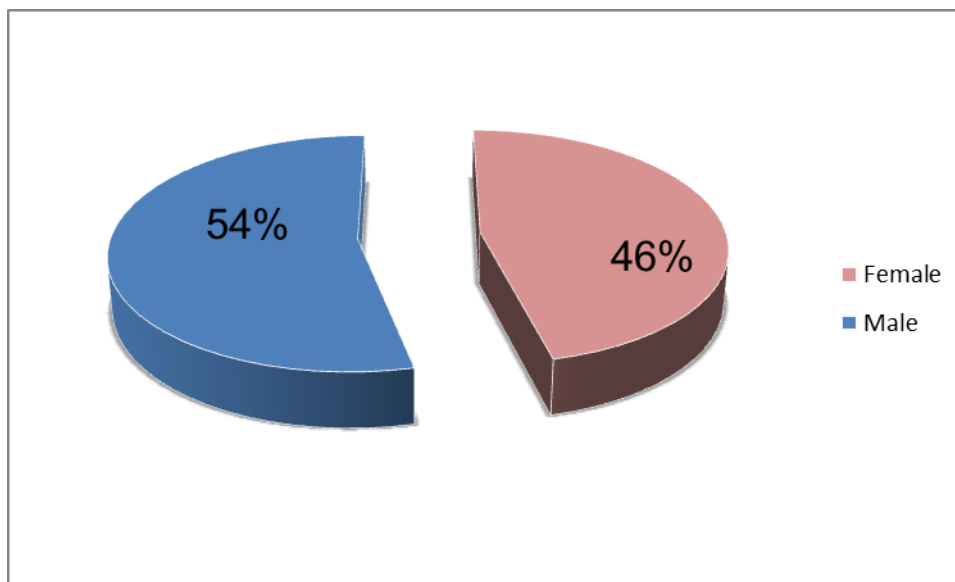


Source: National Institute of Statistics

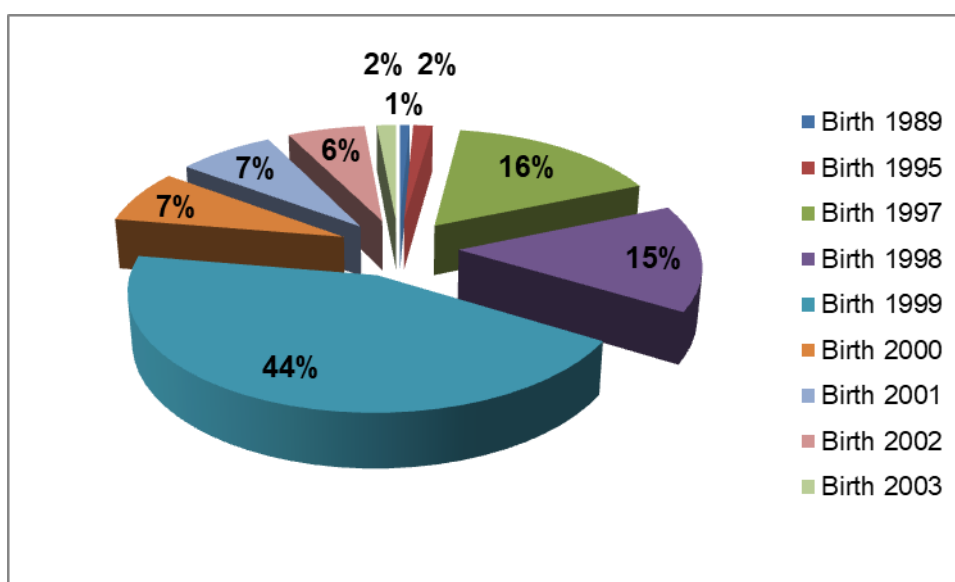
Target group

The target group consisted of 300 students enrolled in Vet programmes, 50 from each country.

Distribution by gender

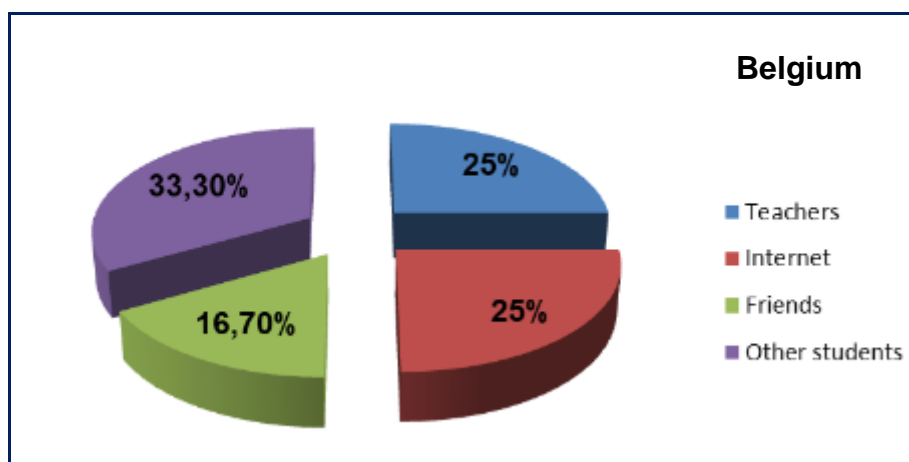
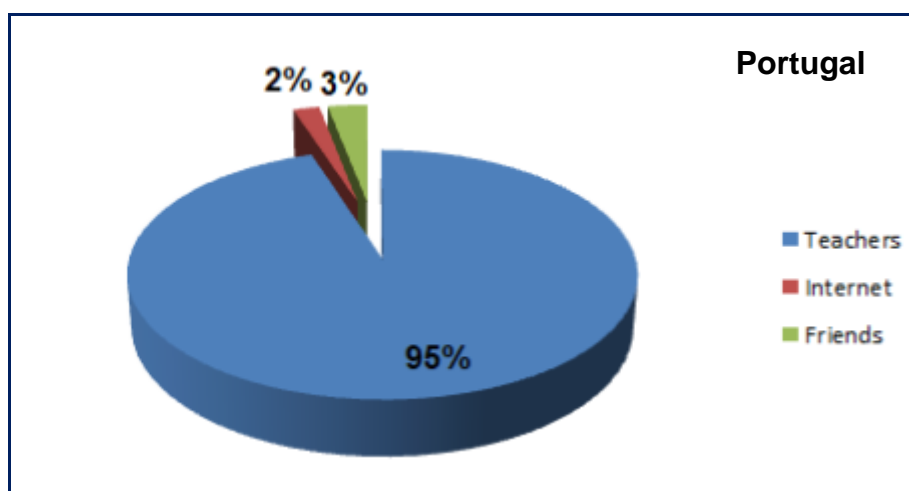
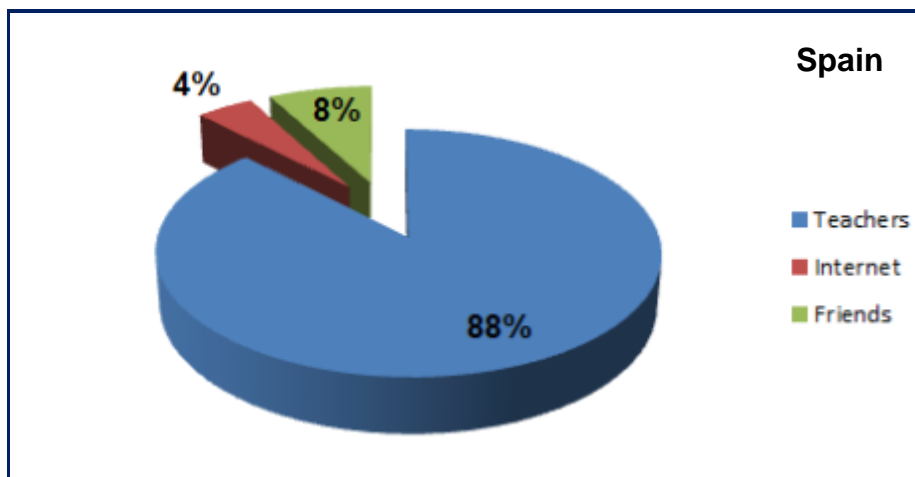


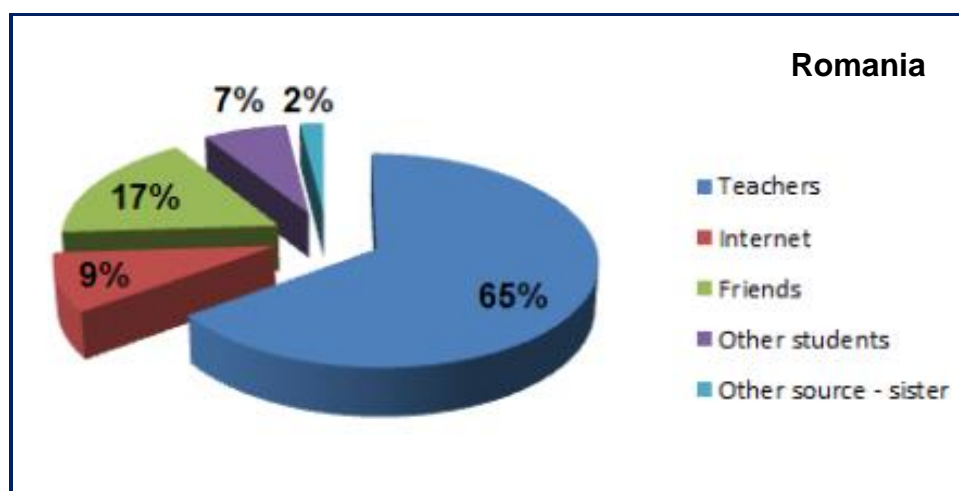
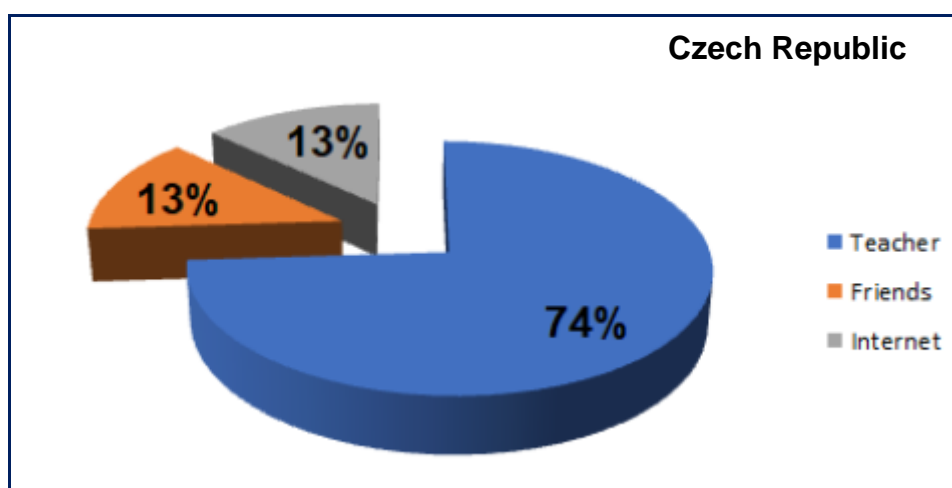
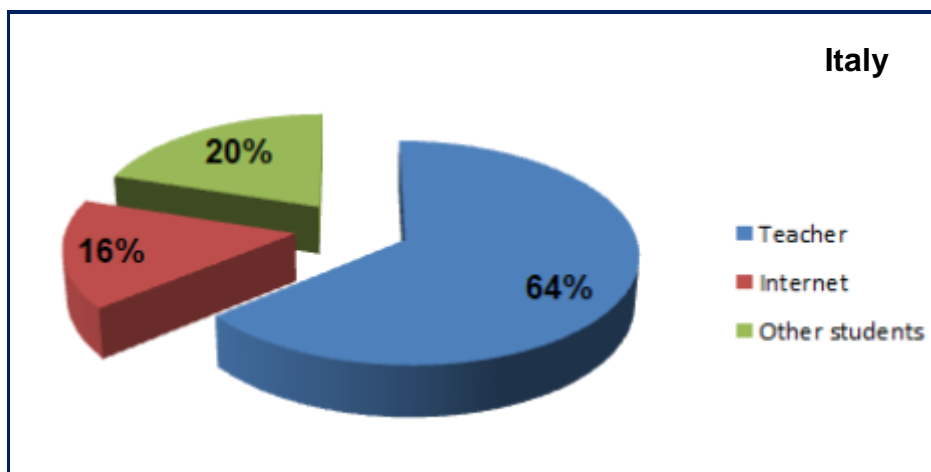
Distribution by age



Awareness and Knowledge

- When did you hear first about European VET practice programmes?

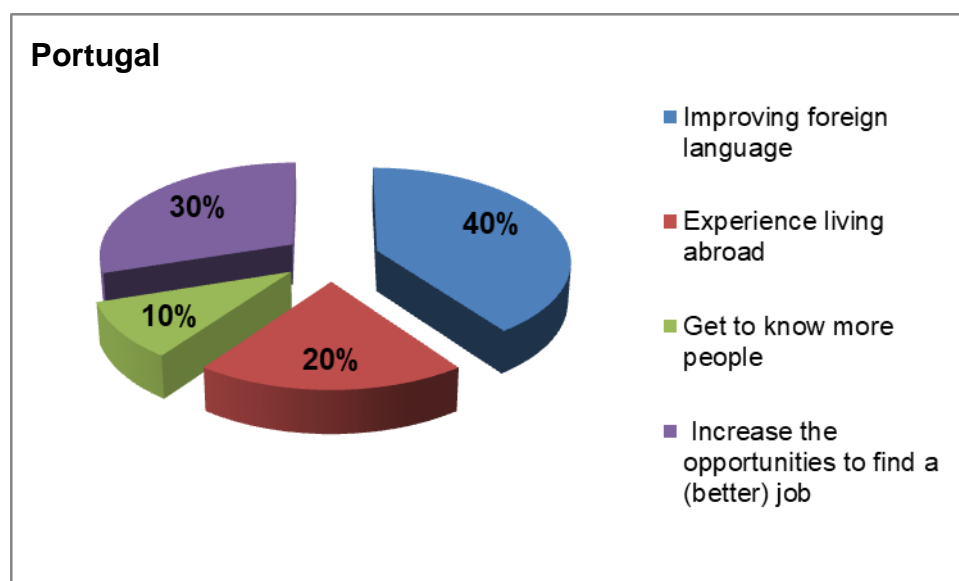
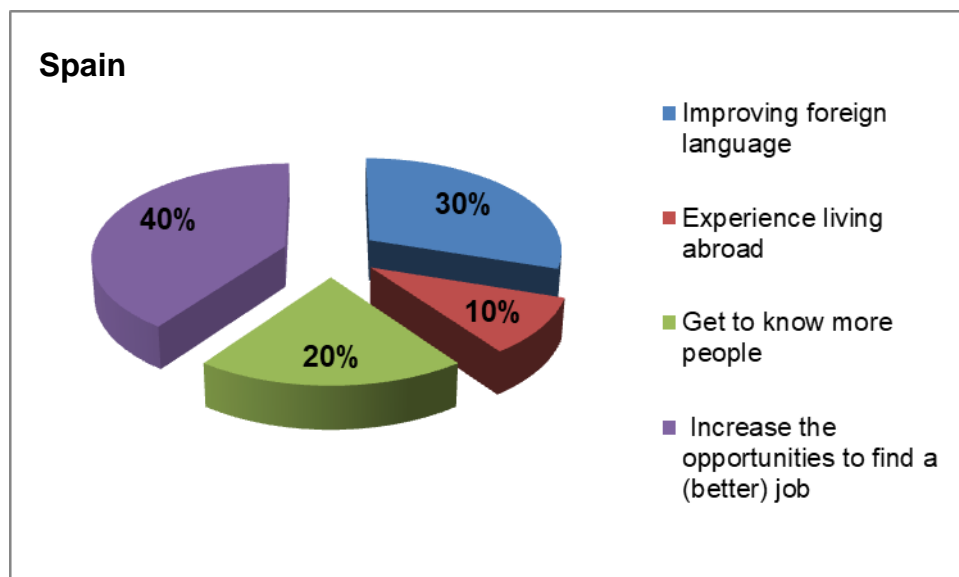




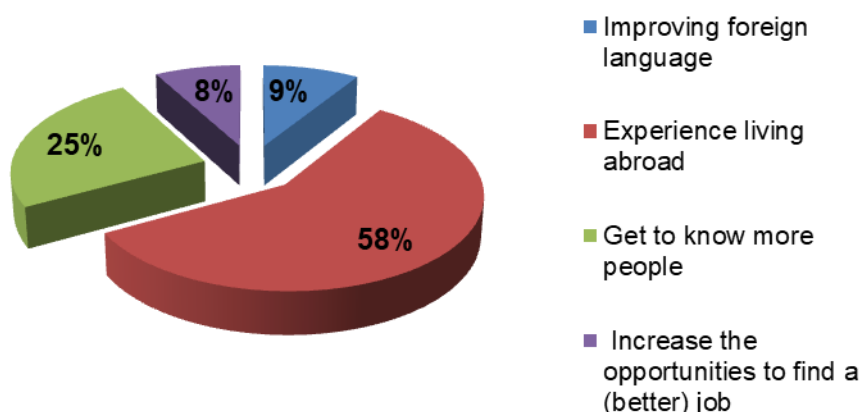
In five of the six countries the main source of information about VET practice programmes are the teachers. Only, in Belgium the main source of information are other students.

Attractiveness and access

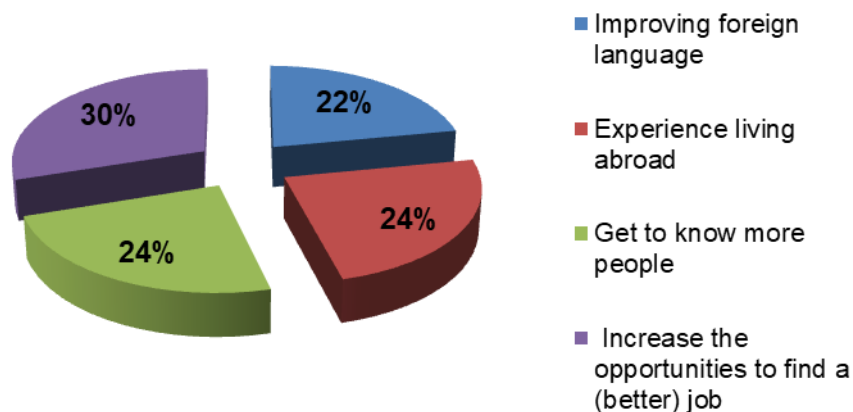
- What factors influenced decision to participate in a European VET practice programme?



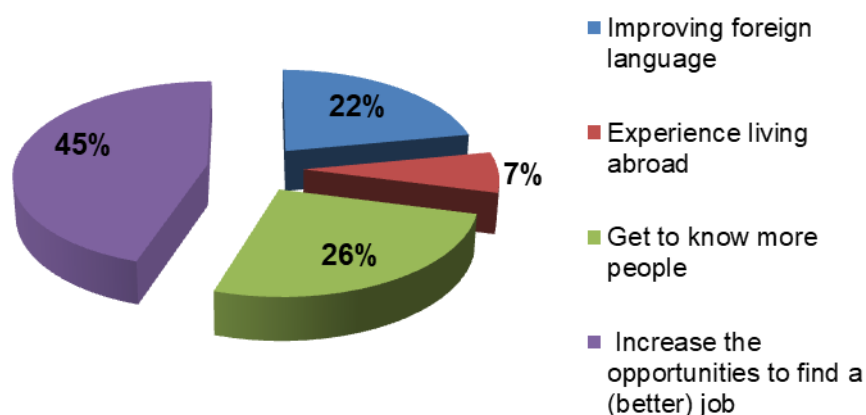
Belgium

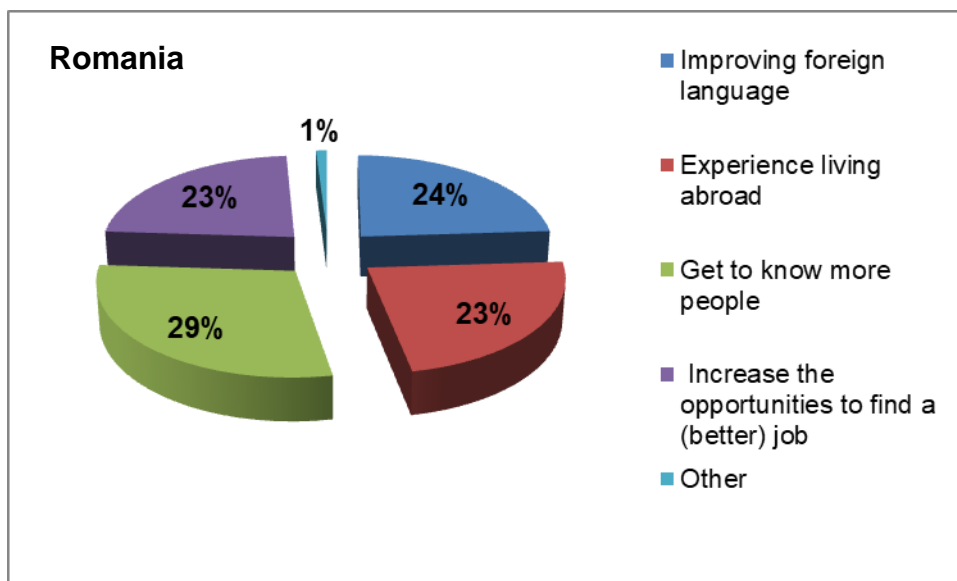


Italy



Czech Republic

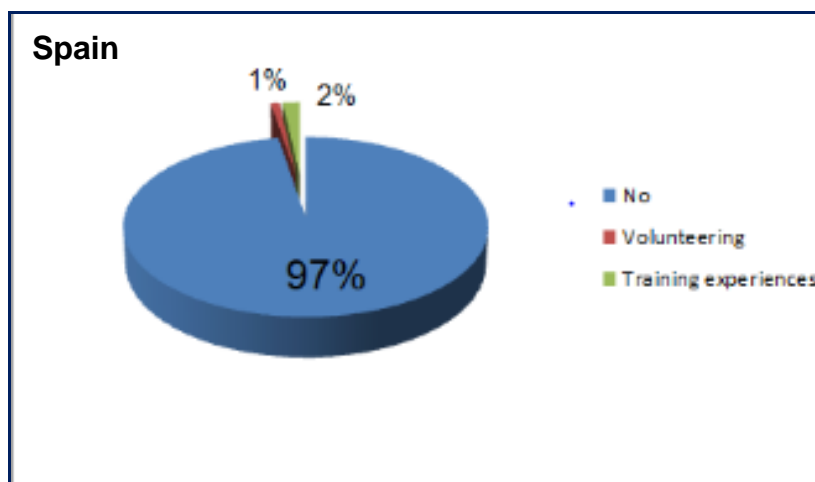




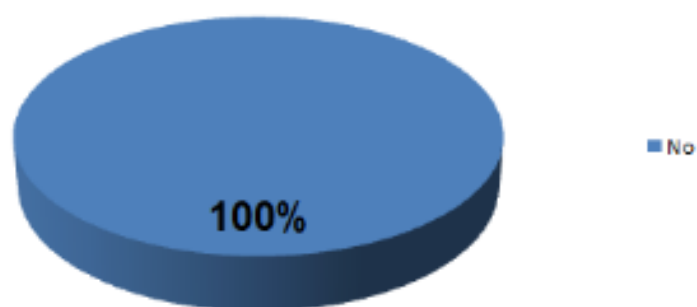
Spain, Portugal, Italy and Czech Republic are the most influenced with the job factor, otherwise Belgium is the least concerned. Belgium unlike the other countries is the least concerned with the improvement of foreign language.

The experience of living abroad is more important for Belgium students and less important Czech Republic and Spanish students.

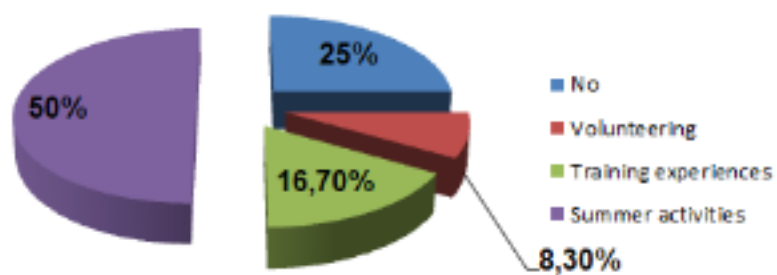
• **Did you have any previous experience on European VET study/ practice programmes?**



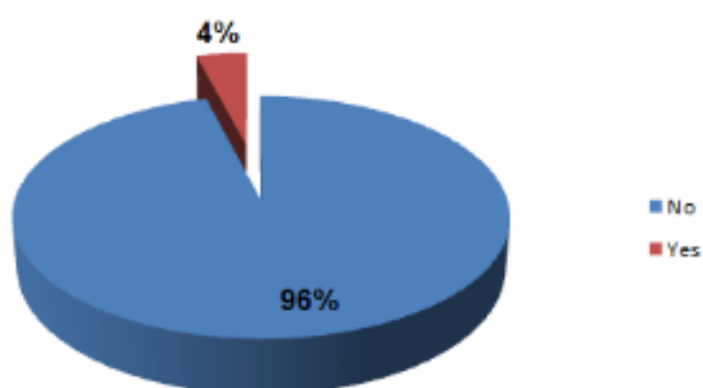
Portugal

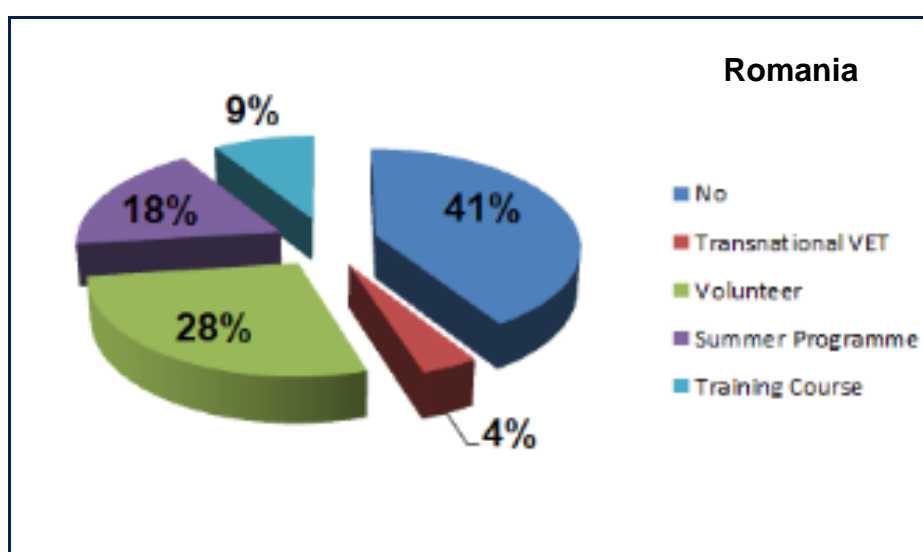
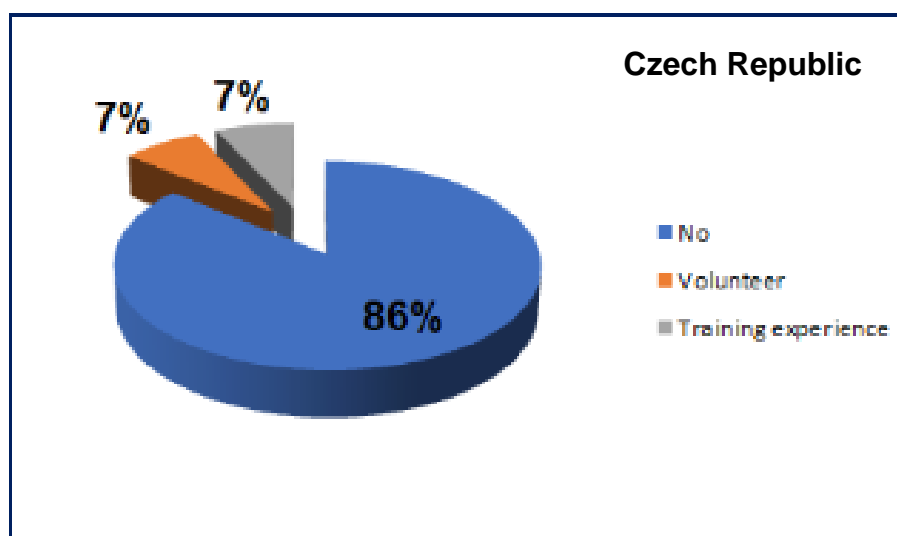


Belgium



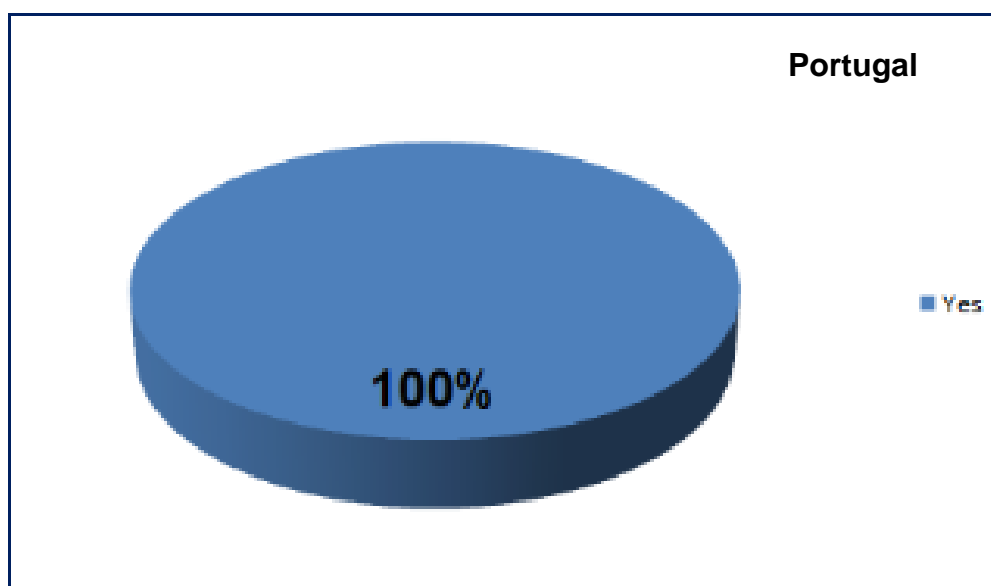
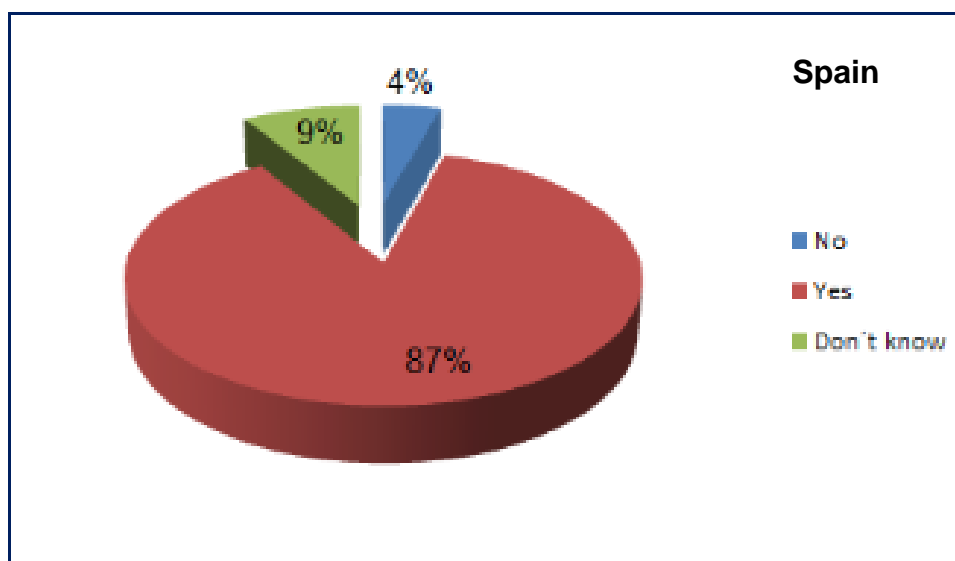
Italy

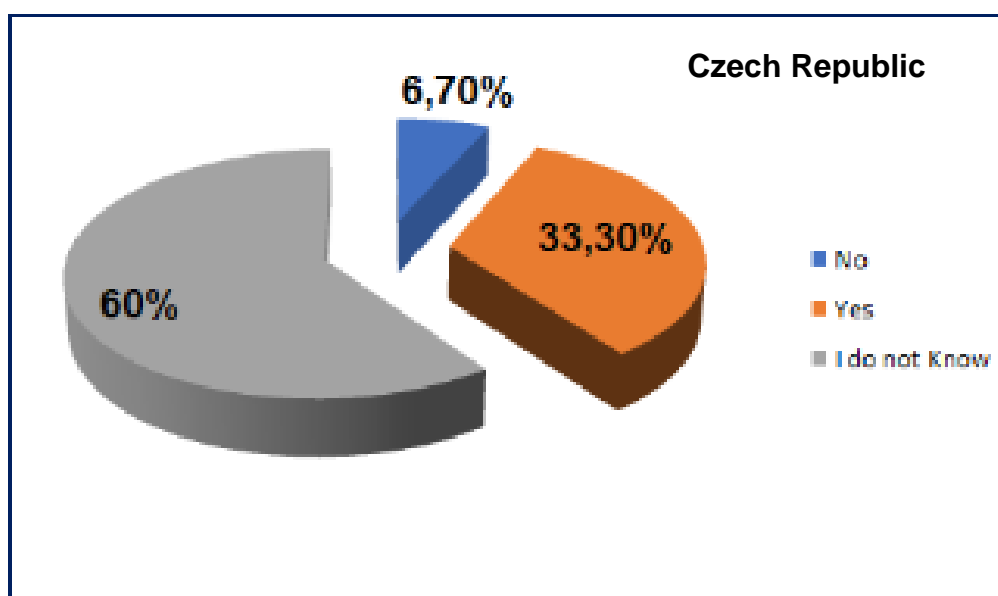
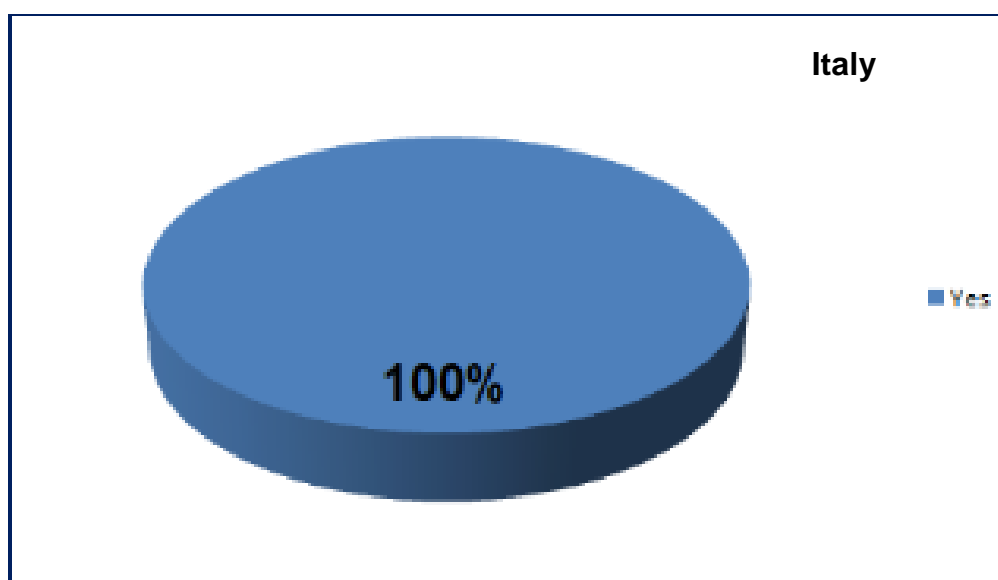
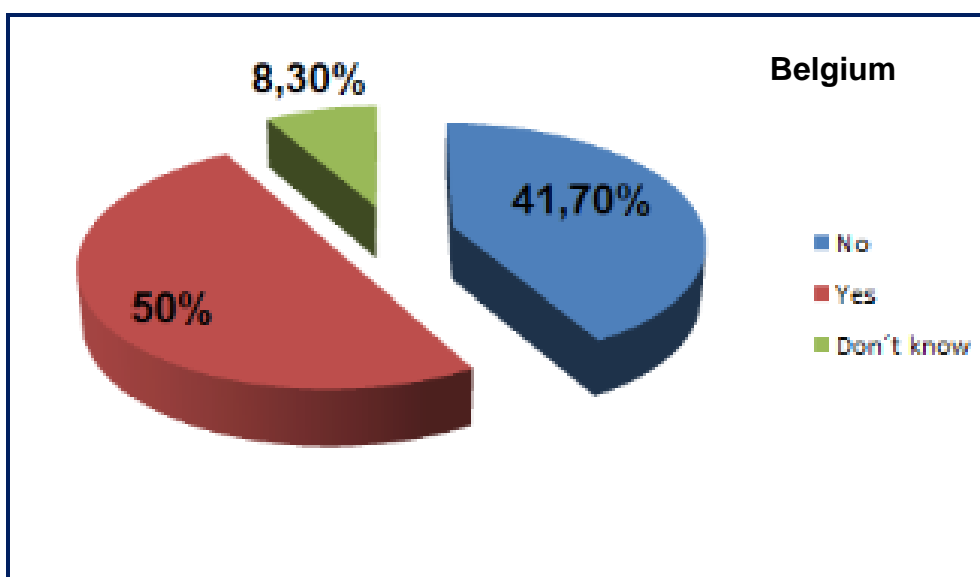


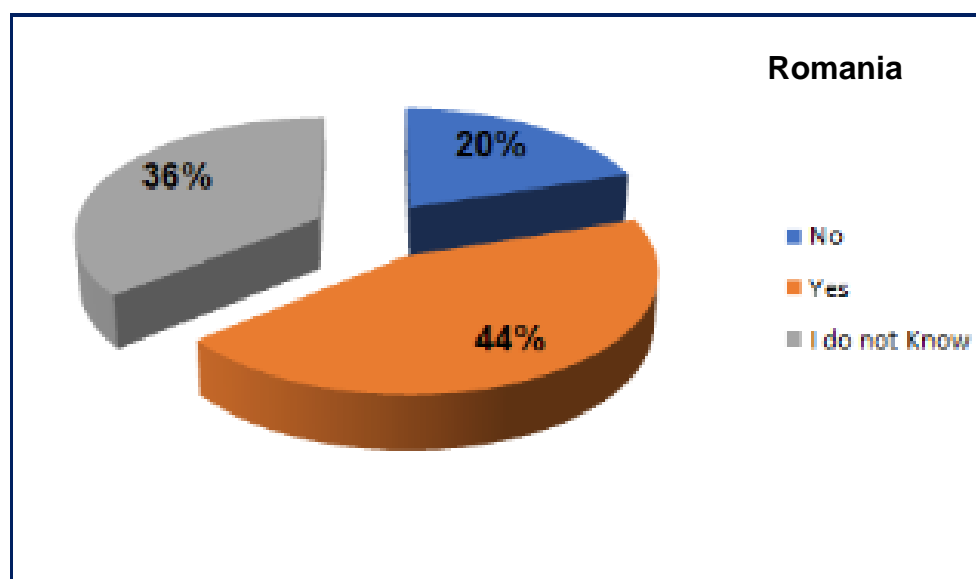


In four of the six countries the majority of the students didn't have any previous experience on European VET study/practice programmes. Only in Belgium, with 50% of the students engaged in summer activities, 16, 7% in training experiences and 8,3% in volunteer, the majority of the students already had been involved, and in Romania with only 41% of the students haven't been involved also.

- Did you have a designated support person (or office) at your education Institution for students with specific information about the activity?



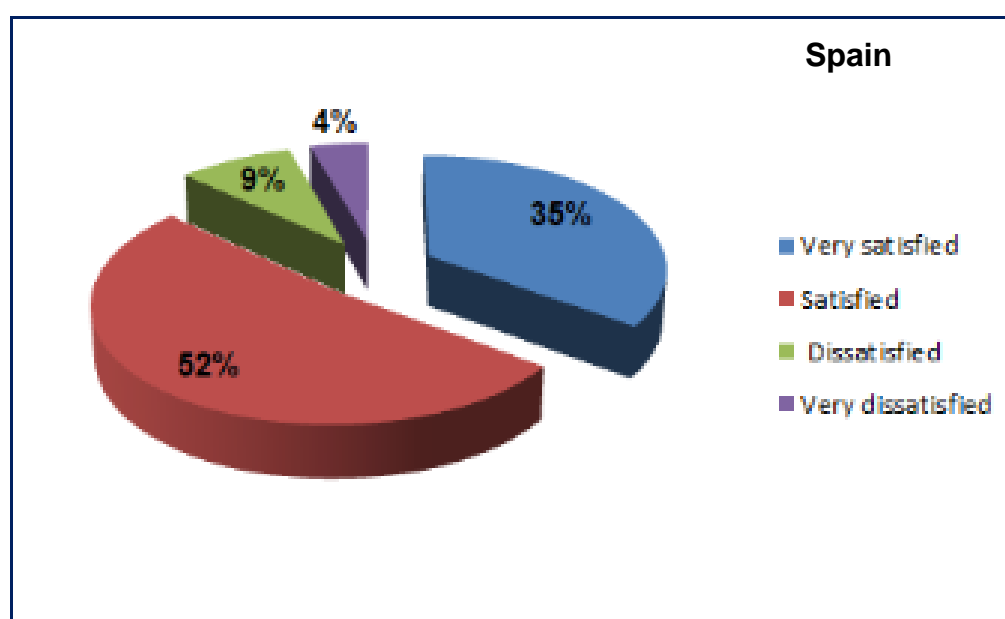


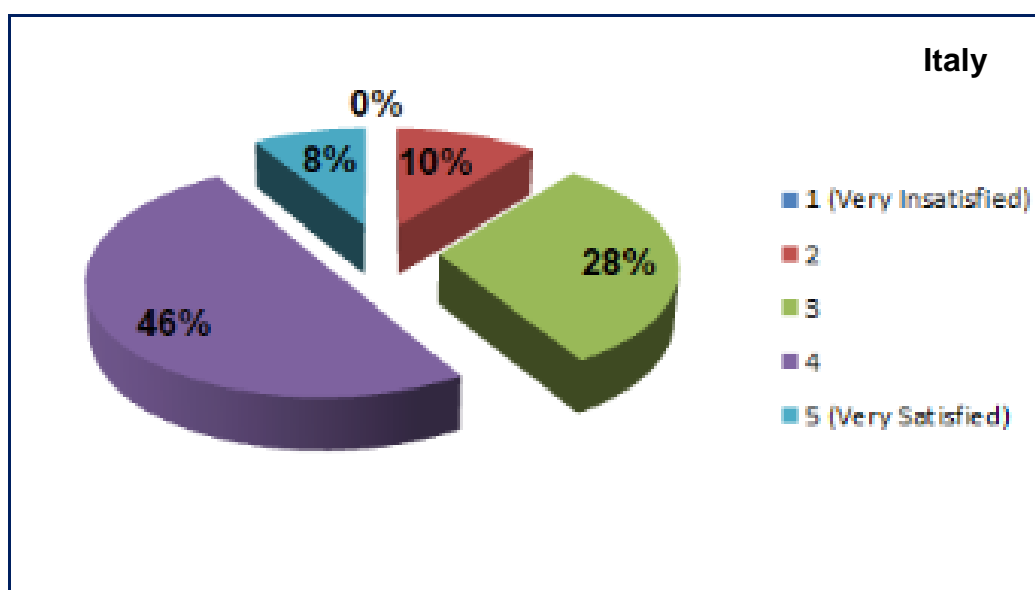
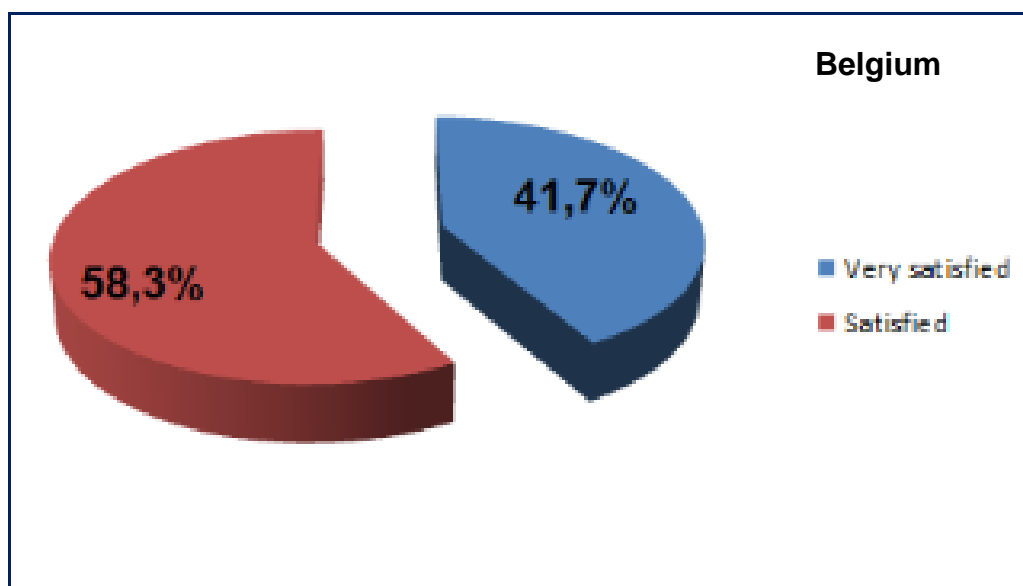
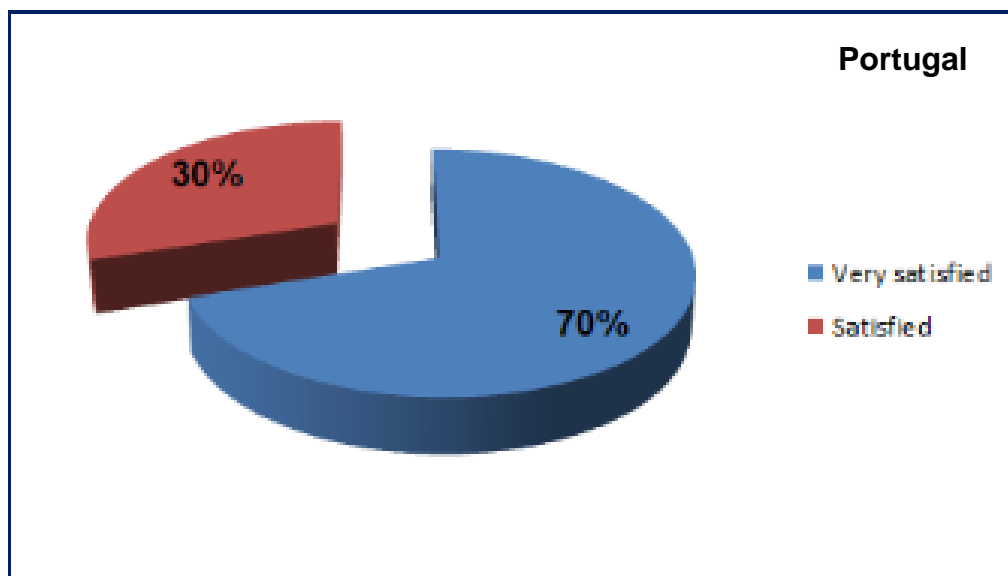


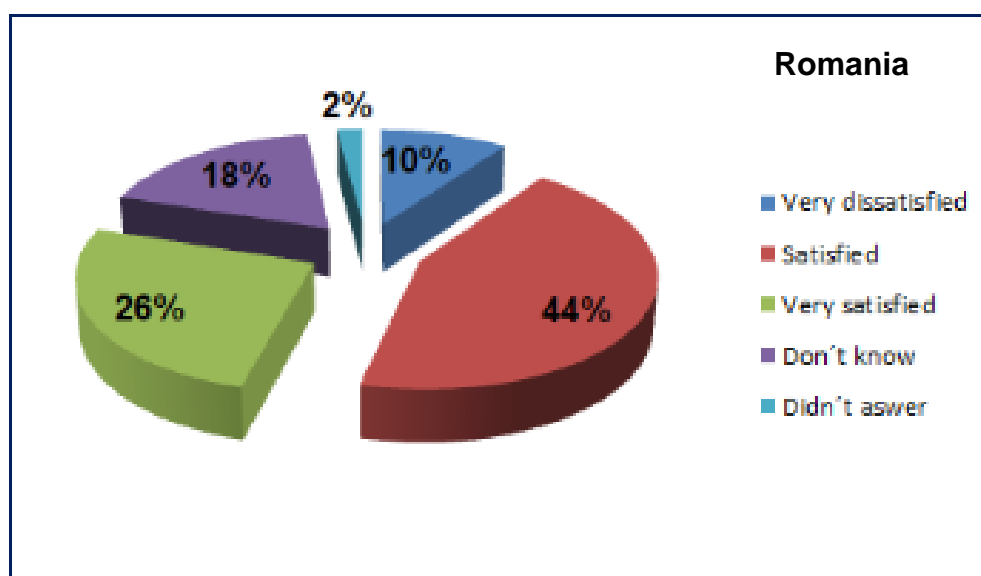
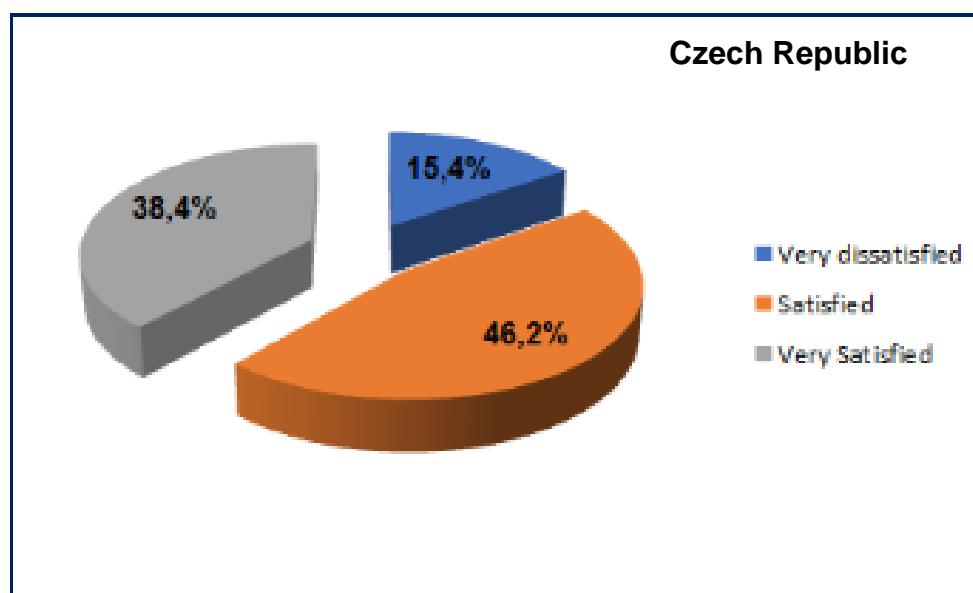
In four of the six countries the majority of the students had a designated support person (or office) at the education Institution with specific information about the activity. Only in Czech Republic and Romania the majority didn't had or don't know if they had a designated support person.

Experience and satisfaction

- Satisfied with your VET mobility?



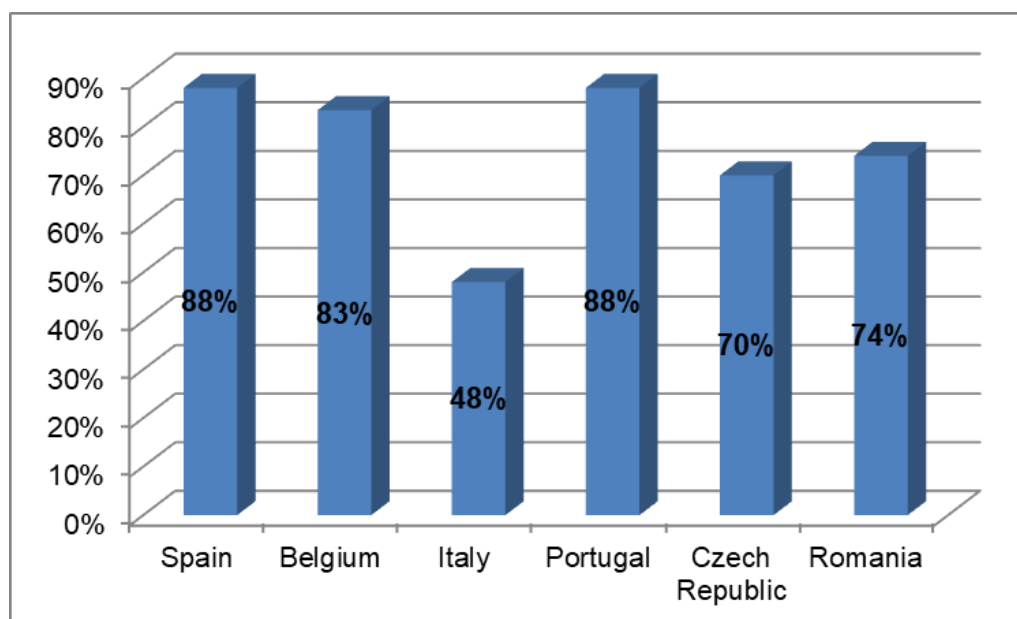




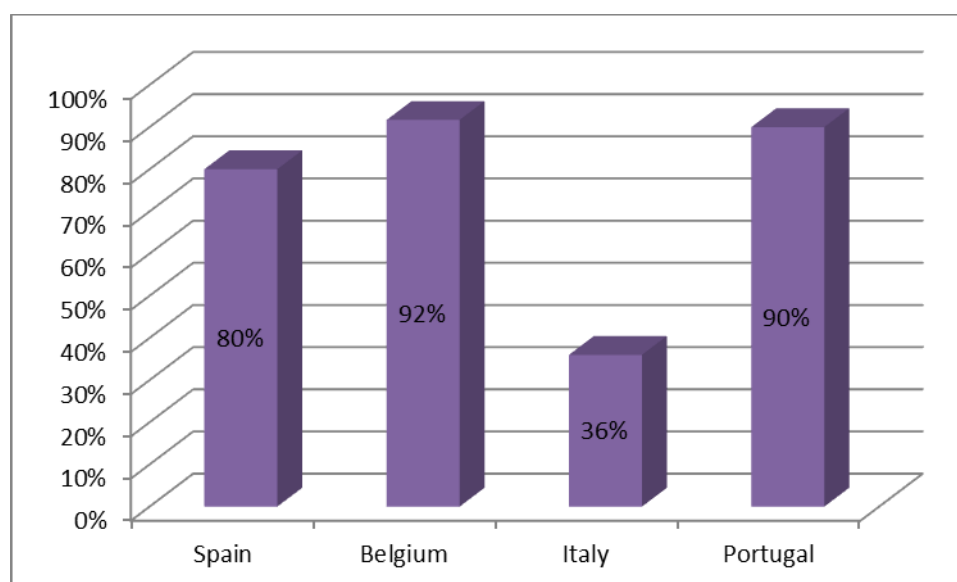
In all countries the level of satisfaction is above 50%, the less satisfied students were the Italian with only 54% grading the experience with 4 or 5 (very satisfied)

• What did you gain?

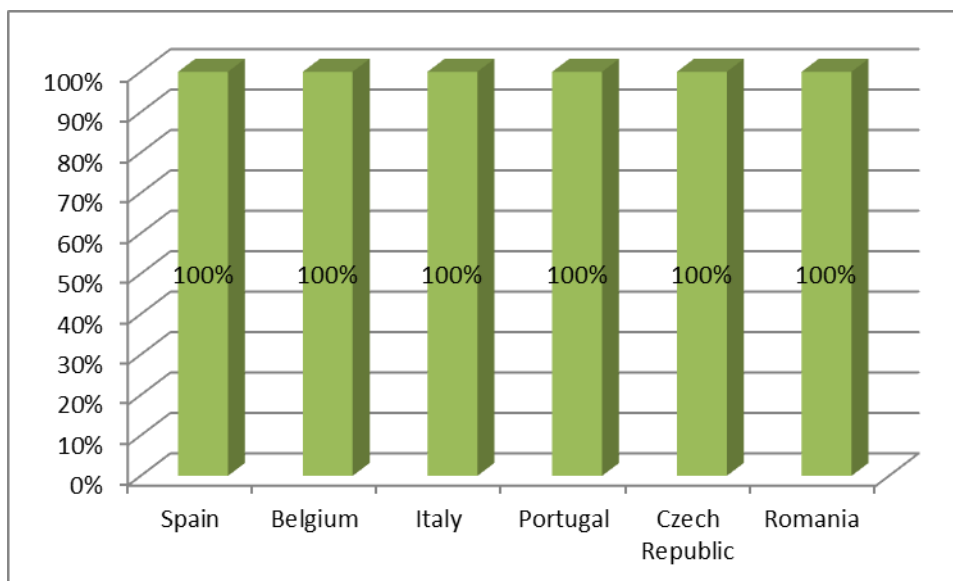
- I improved my foreign language (English)



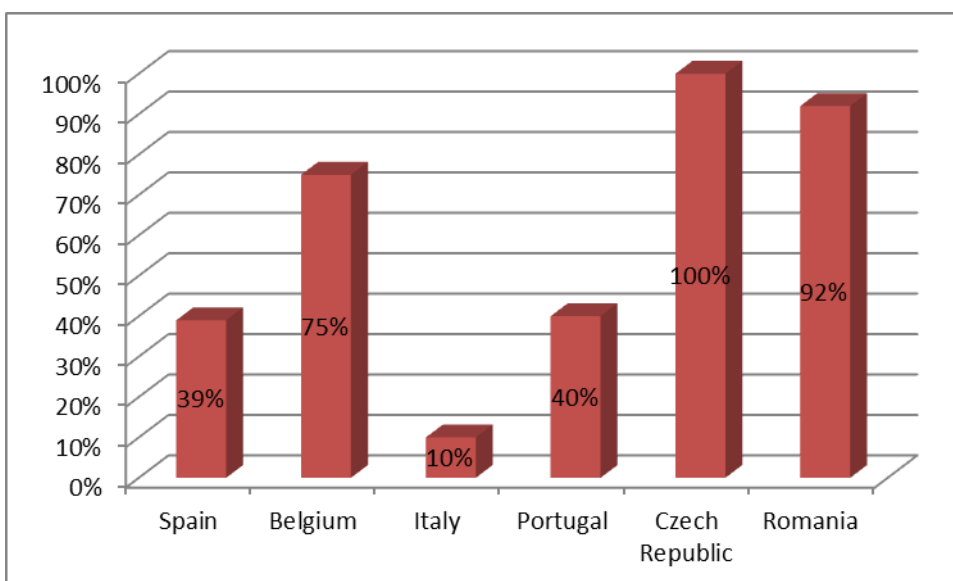
- I feel more European Citizen



- I improved my CV

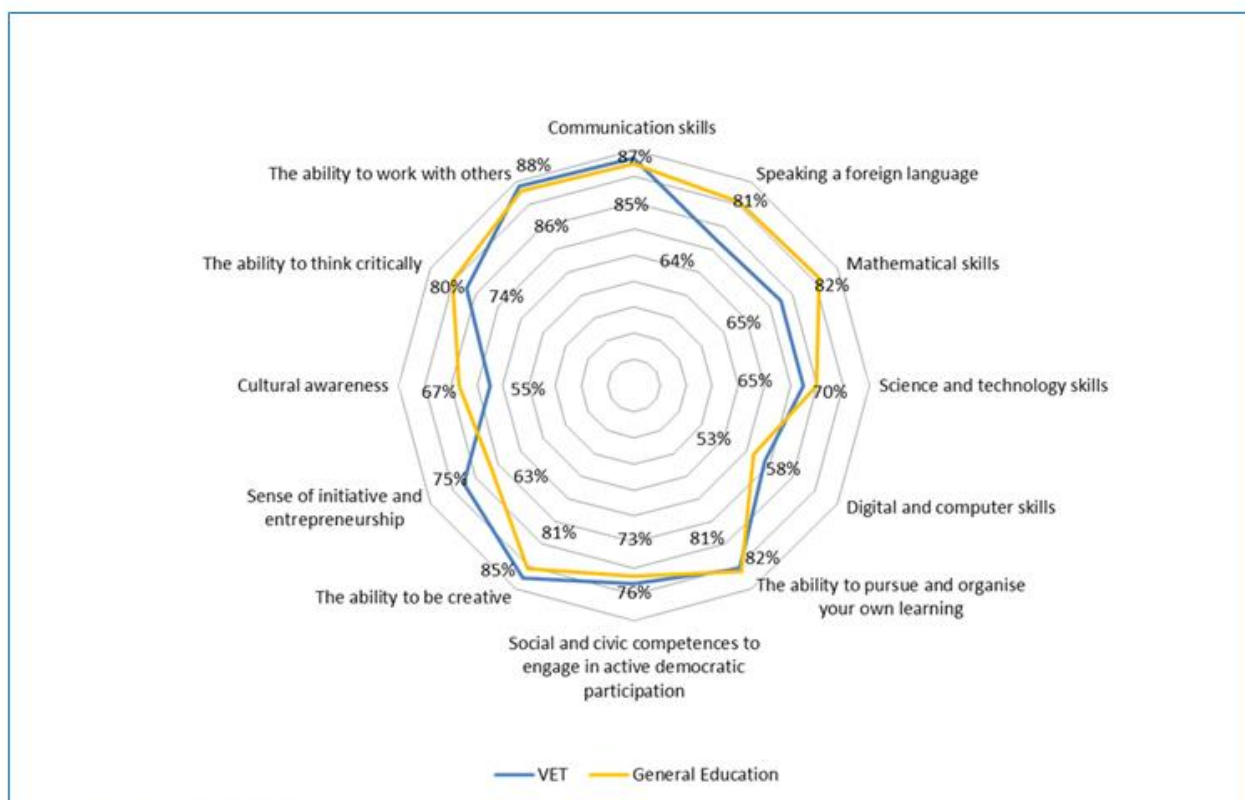


- I think that the changes of getting a job are better now



Concerning foreign language, only the Italian students didn't grade the improvement above 50%. Regarding the feeling of belonging to Europe, there are no data from Czech Republic and Romania, because there were no answers, and the Italian students graded below 50%. All students from the six countries are unanimous about the improvement of the CV with a grading of 100%. At last, about the expectations that the transnational mobility could help them to find a job, Belgium, Czech Republic and Romanian students are the more optimists.

Graphic5. Skills developed when students were at secondary education



Source: Cedefop 2017

Outcomes and effectiveness

VET is an important instrument in reducing unemployment, social exclusion and strengthening the European economy.

One of the objectives of the 'Erasmus+' Programme is to increase quality mobility within vocational education and training (VET) and support the European internationalisation of VET organisations in the Erasmus+ Programme countries.

The Copenhagen Process has, since 2002, strived to modernise vocational education and training, make it more attractive and develop Europe-wide approaches such as increased transnational mobility, better transparency and recognition of qualifications and general internationalisation in the sector, thus contributing to the creation of a genuine European labour market.

The Erasmus+ VET Mobility Charter is intended to encourage organisations that have track records of proven quality in organising VET mobility for learners and staff to further develop their European internationalisation strategies. European internationalisation means supporting learning in another Erasmus+ Programme country by embedding high quality mobility activities into curricula, as well as developing international approaches throughout the sending organisation, for example by networking with bodies in other countries, promoting the learning of foreign languages and looking beyond national VET approaches.

VET mobility has a clear value in helping young people open up their minds, widen their social, professional and transversal skills, and develop a taste for innovation, initiative and a sense of European citizenship.

It is a means to improve the overall performance of the organisations (both VET providers and companies) involved in such practices, by developing sustained internationalisation strategies, while also helping business find the right skills they need to increase their competitiveness.

Main Conclusions

Vocational education and training is widely recognized as vital to the economic future of Europe: it facilitates the school-to-work transition and is crucial for social cohesion and employability, key to economic competitiveness in the context of globalization.

Clear and revealing information on Vocational Training is needed to increase the number of young people who use vocational training as a career path.

Its attractiveness is improving, but it is still low. Its status depends on internal quality elements, but also on external features which may pass by the increasing of transnational mobility's.

Mobility and VET are important subjects to improve skills competences and, of course, mobility.

It's important to innovate curricula, to introduce new methodologies and to introduce the mobility like a part of the curriculum, part of the ordinary activity of the VET students.

At European level, targets and priorities for WBL (Work Based Learning) are confirmed (directly and indirectly) within a number of core strategies and initiatives, namely:

- Europe 2020 Growth Strategy: aims to enhance the quality and relevance of education and training systems, to improve competitiveness and to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth;
- ET 2020 Strategic Framework: supports policy development in EU Member States, notably including targets for the implementation of national VET reforms with a view to strengthening work-based learning and apprenticeship-type schemes;
- Agenda for New Skills and Jobs: aims to support the EU employment target of 75% of the working-age population (20-64 years) by 2020, also by involving employers in the co-investment, development and delivery of education;

- European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA): established in 2013, and targeting the promotion of youth employment, the alliance works on a broad variety of initiatives and targets improvement in the quality, supply and perception of European apprenticeships.

There is broad consensus in Europe that apprenticeships can be an efficient way of addressing labour market imbalances.

Expanding and improving apprenticeships could empower young people. Apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning help young people make smoother transitions from school to employment.

The creation of transnational networks that allow the existence of high quality internships is extremely important.

The exchange of experiences between European partners linked to the VET courses is essential, as well as the audit to the degree of satisfaction of each of the involved.

It is essential to carry out this type of project, in order to generate meeting spaces within the European framework. Finding spaces for exchange (training, experiences and materials), which allow the creation of models that endure over time, beyond the experience or people who put it in motion.

In times when European values seem to be in crisis and the media can distort and amplify everyday events, first-hand human interactions teach much more about other cultures than any speech or lecture in school could. So, the participations in youth exchanges, training courses, volunteer, VET mobility, ... helps students to a better understanding of what “feeling European” means.

Every euro invested in these mobility programmes has a higher return-on-investment ratio in terms of cultural and social inclusion and the integration of young Europeans.

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