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Training Practitioners in Europe: Perspectives on their work, qualification and continuing learning

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Simone Kirpal, Wolfgang Wittig

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qualification and continuing learning**

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Zusammenfassung:

Im Rahmen europäischer Politik zur Unterstützung des lebenslangen Lernens avanciert das berufliche Bildungspersonal zu einem Schlüsselakteur. Eine hohe Qualität der Aus- und Weiterbildung wird als ein unmittelbarer Beitrag für die erfolgreiche Umsetzung des lebenslangen Lernens angesehen. Insgesamt wissen wir über die Arbeit, Qualifikation und beruflichen Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten des Bildungspersonals in Europa jedoch relativ wenig. Von europäischer Seite werden deshalb Forschung und Entwicklungsinitiativen, die das berufliche Bildungspersonal als Zielgruppe haben, zunehmend unterstützt. Das Netzwerk für Aus- und Weiterbildner in Europa ist eine dieser Initiativen. Als Teil seiner Aktivitäten führt dieses Netzwerk eine Erhebung mit Aus- und Weiterbildungspersonal durch, deren Zwischenergebnisse in diesem Arbeitspapier vorgestellt werden. Grundlage für die Auswertung sind 738 Fragebögen aus 28 europäischen Ländern, die zwischen Juni und Oktober 2008 erhoben wurden. Die Ergebnisse werden insbesondere vor dem Hintergrund der ähnlich angelegten EUROTRAINER Studie reflektiert, die 2007 mit Multiplikatoren durchgeführt wurde. Wie verändern sich die Arbeitsanforderungen an das Aus- und Weiterbildungspersonal? Inwieweit wirken sich Veränderungen auf die Kompetenzanforderungen aus? Wird die Aus- und Weiterbildung in den entsprechenden Einrichtungen und Betrieben evaluiert? Wie schätzen Aus- und Weiterbildner ihre beruflichen Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten ein? Dies sind einige Fragen, die durch die Erhebung genauer beleuchtet werden sollen.

Abstract:

In the framework of European policies of lifelong learning VET teachers and trainers have become a key target group. Good quality of the services provided by teachers and trainers is regarded as an immediate contribution to fostering the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of opportunities for lifelong learning. However, little is known about the work, qualification and professional development of VET trainers, particularly at the European level. As a response, European bodies increasingly support studies and activities targeted at VET practitioners. The Network to Support Trainers in Europe constitutes one such initiative. One of the network's activities consists of implementing a European survey with VET practitioners to get a better understanding of their work practice, competence requirements, professional development and attitudes towards work. This research paper presents the first preliminary findings of this survey. It considers over 700 responses from 28 European countries that were collected between June and October 2008. The results are discussed against outcomes of a survey with multipliers and experts that was conducted in 2007 as part of the EUROTRAINER study. Are the work tasks of VET practitioners and the role they assume in the training process actually changing? And if so, what implications does this have for their skills and competence development? Is the training that trainers provide being evaluated? How do trainers see their opportunities for continuing professional development? These are some of the questions the survey addresses.

1. Introduction

This paper presents main results of a European survey on the situation and professional development of training practitioners in Europe. The survey was conducted over a five months period in 2008. It was supported by the partners of the »Network of Trainers in Europe« (www.trainersineurope.org).

The main aim of the network is to support research and practice in vocational training throughout Europe by providing access to people and ideas about research and training practice, and by providing practical materials and tools to support the professional development of trainers. Coordinated by the Institute Technology and Education (ITB) of the University of Bremen, Germany, the network was set up in November 2007 with support from the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union for a duration of three years. During this period the network's activities are mainly being organised by 12 core European partners and a growing number of members.

As the first joint network activity, the survey was undertaken with the objective to generate data and information on the work, situation and professional development of VET trainers in almost 30 European countries, involving the EU Member States, candidate countries and countries belonging to the European Economic Area. It was designed as a follow-up activity to the formerly completed EUROTRAINER study, which investigated the work, qualification and status of trainers working in companies (cf. Kirpal/Tutschner 2008a, 2008b). In the framework of the EUROSTRAINER study a survey among 280 national experts was implemented and complemented by qualitative interviews. Unlike this first survey with experts and multipliers, the network survey was implemented at a larger scale and particularly targeted towards training practitioners down to the level of companies and training institutions, thereby contributing to acquire a deeper understanding of their actual work practice and continuing learning. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying their job profile; the didactical methods they apply; their skills and continuing professional development; and their work attitudes. Furthermore, the network survey not only included trainers in companies but also trainers working in a wide variety of contexts.

In what follows we first outline the background and epistemic interest of the study and discuss some key problems and European research approaches on the situation and professional development of training practitioners in section 2. In section 3 we describe the methodology of the study, especially the structure of the questionnaire. The results of the survey are presented in section 4. In the conclusions (section 5) we discuss some implications of the outcomes with regard to the future role, competence requirements and professional development of trainers and what could be identified as major issues.

2. Background

In the year 2000 the European Council adopted the Lisbon strategy, which aims to make the European Union the most competitive economic area in the world by 2010 and which was modified in 2005 to make the creation of additional and more qualified employment the paramount goal. This strategy designates education and training as the crucial factors for attaining this goal: education and training are essential for enhancing competitiveness and are considered key drivers for attaining social integration and economic growth for all European countries.

Realising the Lisbon strategy not only requires major reforms of the European economy but also an equally ambitious modernisation programme for the social welfare and education systems. Key initiatives in this process are formulated in the work programme »Education and training in Europe: Diverse systems, shared goals for 2010« which directs the implementation of guidelines set by the European Council of Lisbon (Commission of the European Union 2002). Enhancing opportunities for lifelong learning is one key priority of this programme. In this context, increasing the quality of services provided by teachers and trainers is regarded as an immediate contribution to fostering the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of opportunities for lifelong learning. This perspective underlines that VET teachers and trainers in initial vocational and further continuing training are key target groups when it comes to strengthening the quality of education and training systems in Europe.

Whilst VET teachers and trainers were identified as key actors in achieving the set targets of the Lisbon goals and promoting a knowledge-based economy, so far predominantly teachers in the general and vocational education system have received major attention (cf. for example Commission of the European Communities 2001, 2003). Among other initiatives, in 2005 the European Commission developed a set of »Common Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications« in cooperation with experts appointed by the Member States. These principles concern teachers in general education and thus include teachers in basic and further vocational education as well. However, a teacher is defined therein as »a person who is acknowledged as having the status of a teacher (or equivalent) according to the legislation and the regulations of a given country«. This definition excludes trainers in many contexts, who particularly in company-based training usually assume teaching and training responsibilities on a more informal basis without being designated as a particular occupational or status group (cf. Kirpal/Tutschner 2008b; EUROTRAINER Consortium 2008).

In response to the particular situation of trainers and gaps of research and information on this target group, the European Commission and Cedefop recently launched a series of studies and activities to particularly address the situation and professional development of trainers. Among others, these included two studies on trainers, one on trainers in companies and one on trainers in private and public institutions (EAC/09/06 »Studies on Trainers in VET« – Lot 1 and Lot 2); the project »TTPlus – A Framework for the Continuing Professional Development of Trainers« funded under the EU's *Leonardo da Vinci* programme; and various activities of the Training of Trainers Network (TTNet), which under the guidance of Cedefop conducted several studies on profiling VET professions.

These different initiatives are partly being further developed, seeking to inform EU policies and create new supporting measures that take into account the particular needs and interests of VET trainers. Also the Network of Trainers in Europe can be considered a follow-up project to these activities.

As a three-years project the Network supports research and practice in training throughout Europe. Its objective is to provide access to people and information about research, policies and training practice, practical materials and a website and communication platform for the exchange of ideas and community building. The main function of the web-based platform is to link the existing initiatives, projects and research in the field and facilitate a structured exchange of experience and information. The platform (www.trainersineurope.org) provides access to topic-related resources in different languages, which include current research findings as well as practical tools for trainers and the professional development of VET practitioners. In addition, the platform is meant to serve as a medium for communication and information exchange between practitioners, experts and multipliers.

Apart from community building purposes, the Network operates along a joint work programme including

- continuous secondary analysis and edition of existing material on training practitioners;
- a Europe-wide survey on training practitioners for a situational analysis concerning the qualifications, responsibilities, professional profile and continuing learning of trainers (core topic of the network in 2008);
- a report on »Programming and Policies in a European Perspective« in the field of training practitioners (core topic of the network in 2009);
- two on-line conferences in the autumn of 2008 and 2009. The first conference, which addressed the topic »The training of trainers«, took place from 5-6 November 2008.

Embedded in this activities programme, the aim of the European survey is in the first place to generate some up-to-date data and information on the work, qualification and continuing learning of VET trainers in about 20 European countries. Concerning the job profile of trainers we asked about the typical work tasks of a trainer, while skills and competences of training practitioners were addressed by the question »What kinds of knowledge, skills and competences are required of trainers?« Another aspect that was addressed was the evaluation of training – »Is the training that trainers provide being evaluated and if so by whom?« Some other questions sought to assess trainers' employment situation and what opportunities for continuing professional development they have. Finally, the epistemic interest is more generally directed towards identifying possible trends and issues concerning training practitioners in Europe. For this purpose, the first outcomes of the survey, which are presented in this paper, require further analysis and contextualisation taking into account the results from other studies and the on-going activities of the Network of Trainers in Europe.

3. Methodology

The survey was undertaken applying a standardized questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by ITB in collaboration with the Network's core partners, reverting to experiences that derived from the survey conducted in the framework of the EUROTRAINER study in 2007. Based on this first survey with national experts and multipliers the questionnaire was adjusted, shortened and new questions were added. Overall, the questionnaire for practitioners consisted of preliminary questions on the respondent's position and background; 20 numbered questions on the work environment, job tasks, respondent's competences and their engagement in continuing learning; and an extra sheet on which contact details could be provided on a voluntary basis if participants wished to receive further information on the survey results and network activities. These contact details were separated from the other sections before starting the data analysis.

Apart from some exceptions all questions offered the opportunity for multiple answers. In most cases respondents were asked to choose from a range of answer categories that could not be ranked in any possible way. This means that the data generated consists of dichotomised variables with a nominal measurement level. In some cases, e.g. for certain evaluative questions, an ordinal level could be achieved. For the presentation of results multiple answers imply that the percentages of cases tend to add up to more than 100 per cent. For the sake of clarity the presentation of results will concentrate on the percentages of *responses* instead of cases, except for those cases where multiple answers were not possible. In addition to the 20 numbered questions, the questionnaire also included some open text questions, which, however, were left unanswered by the majority of respondents.

The questionnaire, which was first available in English and German, was pretested in Germany in March and April 2008. During the pretest 17 filled questionnaires were collected. Subsequent to some further adjustments and refinements the questionnaire was translated by the network partners into Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, French, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Russian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish. The translation into national languages was a key means to actually reach the target group of training practitioners. In these 18 different language versions the questionnaire was then distributed by the network partners within their local networks. It was disseminated in paper version and was made available online via the SurveyMonkey tool (www.surveymonkey.com) in June 2008. Ultimately it was this online version that attracted the majority of respondents. Only about 10 per cent of 738 filled questionnaires were returned as paper versions and entered into the data set by ITB. In addition, some more paper questionnaires were collected by the project partners who entered the responses into the corresponding SurveyMonkey tool.

For producing the first evaluation data collection was closed on 27 October 2008. The responses were downloaded as separate Excel files for each language version from the SurveyMonkey site, merged into one table and recoded. After separating the contact data of the respondents the completed Excel file was imported into SPSS in order to carry out the statistical analysis.

While Spain generated over 100 responses most countries secured between 20 and 60 responses. Since in some countries the number of respondents was even lower than twenty, most of the analysis was being conducted at the European level, i.e. not differentiating between results obtained for the different countries. Also, the nature of the data suggests restricting the analysis to calculation of frequencies and descriptive statistics rather than undertaking a complex statistical analysis. For a selective international comparative presentation of results for some topics we have chosen five countries, which, on the one hand, represent different VET traditions and, on the other hand, secured a relatively high number of responses. Concretely, national level results are being presented and discussed for Austria, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands and Spain.

The implementation of the network survey followed a coordinated but decentralised approach by which the distribution of the questionnaire at the regional level was within the responsibility of the project partners. Accordingly, the prospective respondents were selected and contacted by the national partners through their regional networks and were either presented the paper questionnaire or asked to fill in the online version. Respondents were also encouraged to draw the attention of their colleagues to the survey to encourage wider participation. The resulting selective sampling strongly limits how wider conclusions and implications can be drawn from the survey results. As the methodology did not follow random sampling (i.e. a sampling strategy by which the probability to be included in the sample is the same for all individuals) the sample is not representative. Especially the approach of an online survey where the opportunity to fill in a questionnaire was merely announced to the target group is inherently in favour of respondents with a more active response attitude.

Since the survey is not representative, it does not allow for the application of inferential procedures, but must rather be considered explorative in nature. The results can only tentatively indicate certain trends. However, despite these limitations we think that the survey produced some interesting findings that can feed into further considerations, debates and policy developments that may support VET trainers in the future. The network also decided to keep the survey open as an on-going activity so that more responses are being collected to facilitate a second evaluation towards the end of 2010.

4. Presentation of Survey Results

4.1 Structure of the Sample

By 27 October 2008, the survey had generated 738 filled questionnaires which were considered for further analysis. The respondents came from 28 different European countries. As regards the distribution of respondents by country, the largest proportion came from Spain (107 respondents), followed by Greece (65) and Austria (56).

Looking at respondents' employment situation and working environment the biggest proportion (37.6 per cent) worked in public institutions such as vocational schools or colleges. A slightly smaller proportion (32.5 per cent) was employed by a company, while 13.6 per cent worked for private training providers. 8.2 per cent of all participants were self-employed. This question allowed for multiple answers, and the fact that the number of responses ($N = 765$) was a little higher than the number of completed questionnaires suggests that a very small minority pertained to more than one trainer category. Those overlapping cases were represented by less than 4.0 per cent of all respondents, and no particular pattern of combinations could be identified. The most frequent cases of respondents belonging to more than one category were employees of private training providers who were also self-employed ($N = 13$), and in-company trainers who were also self-employed ($N = 12$). Those very limited cases of mixed incidents suggest that trainer types defined according to the criteria of employer background may be a good approach towards differentiating different trainer profiles, particularly at the European level.

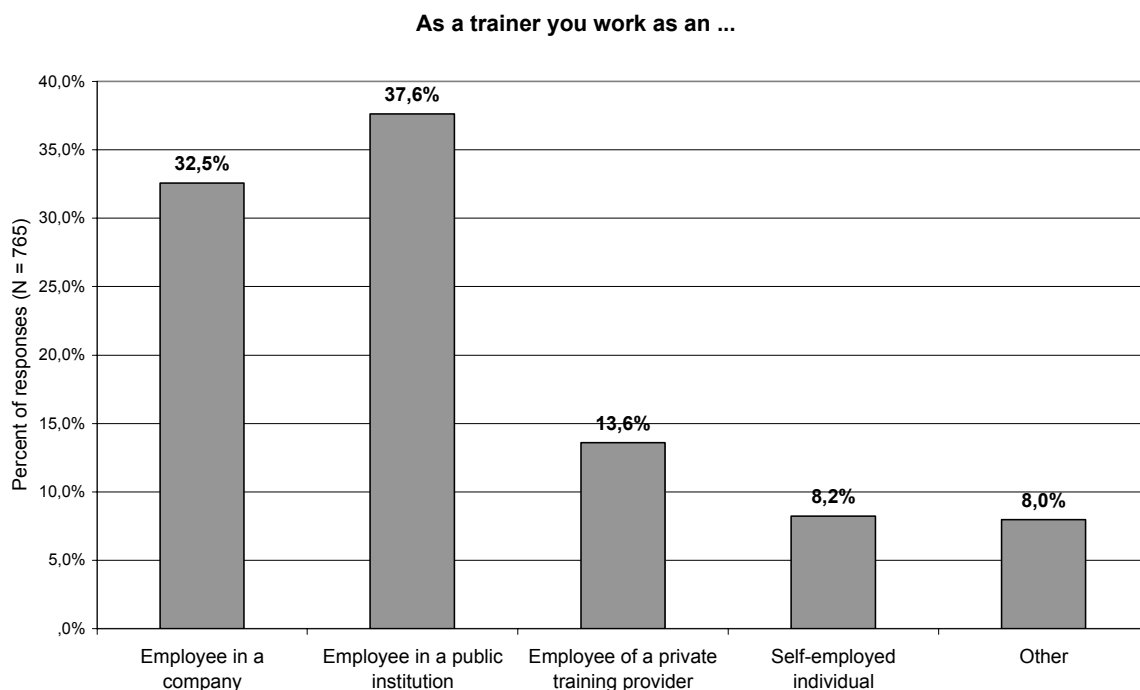


Fig. 1: Types of training practitioners (entire sample)

While this distribution accounts for a good representation of the most important trainer types across Europe, participants' institutional background varied considerably between the

different countries. Whereas in Austria or Estonia the largest group of respondents were trainers in companies (94.7 and 52.2 per cent respectively), the Danish and Greek respondents predominantly came from public institutions (89.5 and 50.0 per cent). Italy stood out as the only country in the survey where the largest number of participants worked for private training providers (63.0 per cent). For some countries such as Greece we know that the high rate of participants working for public institutions is due to the involvement of VET teachers in the sample. The high number of participants working for private training providers in Italy, on the other hand, reflects the finding from the EUROTRAINER study that contracting external trainers is a common feature of Southern European countries, particularly in the case of companies which offer training. By contrast, in the Nordic countries and countries with a developed apprenticeship or work-based training system (such as Germany or Austria) companies commonly employ their own full-time professional trainers rather than cooperating with external training providers (cf. Kirpal/Tutschner 2008a, 74).

In terms of trainers' area of work and type of training they provide, the represented groups fairly equally spread over initial vocational training (22.5 per cent of responses), continuing vocational training (23.2 per cent) and adult education (19.9 per cent). The figures for those occupied with the training of trainers and counselling and providing guidance were considerably lower. Finally, 18.9 per cent were involved in other training-related domains not specifically defined (cf. Figure 2). Looking at this distribution in a national comparative perspective, those figures were fairly similar across all countries. This means that there was no significant variation between the countries regarding respondents' professional domain.

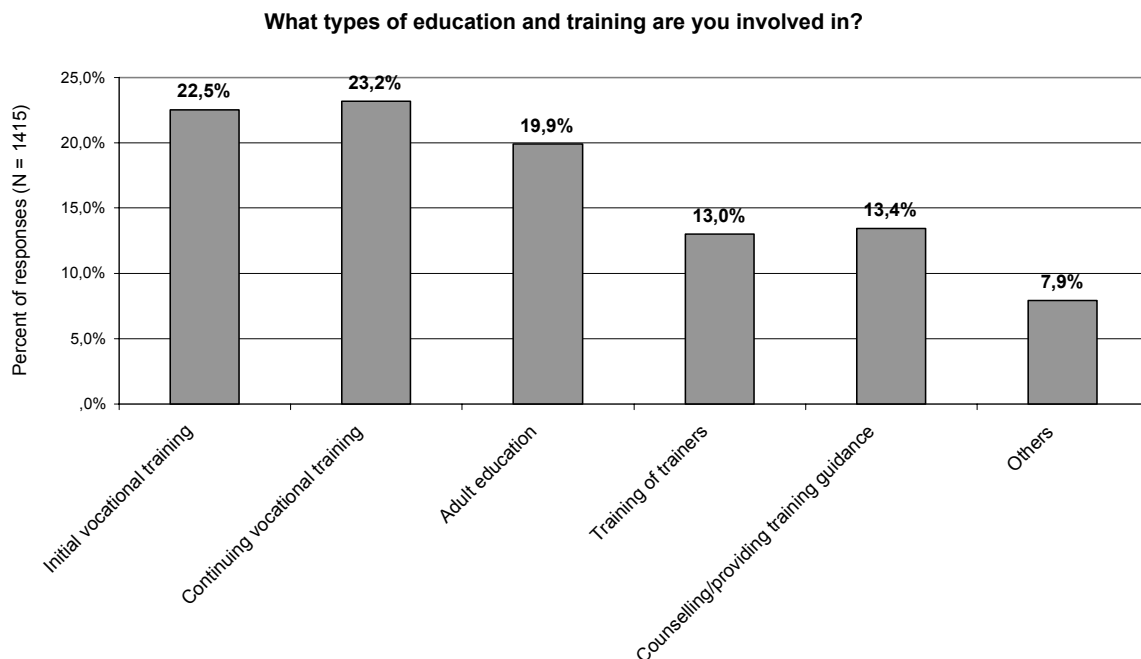


Fig. 2: Professional domains of training practitioners (entire sample)

It has to be observed that this question also offered the opportunity to provide multiple answers. With the total number of responses (1415) being almost twice as high as the num-

ber of questionnaires one conclusion that can be drawn is that in contrast to the clear categorisation according to trainers' employment background, most training practitioners tended to provide training in more than one domain. While it was not possible to identify specific patterns or combinations that could be used for a taxonomy of training practitioners, adult education was the domain most frequently combined with other areas of education and training. More specifically, training practitioners working in adult education often also worked in continuing vocational training (N = 177), initial vocational training (N = 160), training of trainers (N = 124) or counselling (N = 123). This high number of overlapping cases reflects that adult education is a cross-cutting category, which combines with the other specified domains in various ways. Second, it indicates that VET practitioners working in adult education are less specialised than, for example, trainers who provide training in basic (initial) education and training in the first place. The lesser degree of specialisation would mean that those who provide training in the area of adult education are required to develop diversified skills in order to provide training in a range of different areas. Overall, more differentiation is needed in order to get a clear picture about the specific requirements for VET trainers working in adult education. This category was mainly included because continuing vocational training in many countries is understood as a form of adult education.

	Employee in a company (N = 211)	Employee in a public institution (N = 225)	Employee of a private training provider (N = 97)	Self-employed individual (N = 56)	Other (N = 53)
Initial vocational training	95 19.6%	140 26.2%	60 24.4%	23 14.6%	30 21.1%
Continuing vocational training	129 26.6%	112 21.0%	52 21.1%	41 26.1%	26 18.3%
Adult education	84 17.3%	110 20.6%	50 20.3%	33 21.0%	31 21.8%
Training of trainers	57 11.8%	77 14.4%	31 12.6%	21 13.4%	18 12.7%
Counselling/providing training guidance	80 16.5%	61 11.4%	31 12.6%	26 16.6%	20 14.1%
Others	40 8.2%	34 6.4%	22 8.9%	13 8.3%	17 12.0%

Table 1: Professional domains by type of training practitioner (frequencies and per cent of responses per column, multiple answers possible)

It was further investigated whether a specific relationship between the employment background and professional domains might allow for the identification of more comprehensive profiles of training practitioners. However, the cross-table analysis of trainer types and professional domains indicates only weak relationships as all types of training practitioners tended to be involved in all areas of training. Except for self-employed trainers the distribution across the different areas of training was quite similar for all trainer groups and reflected the figures for the overall sample. This means that all trainer groups were mostly involved in initial vocational training, continuing vocational training and adult education with the first two being the most important domains. Only the self-employed trainers en-

engage relatively little in basic education and training and are more specialised in continuing training, adult education and the provision of training guidance.

Regardless of the domain in which the respondents provided training, on average they stated to dedicate about 60 per cent of their overall working time to training and training-related activities (mean = 59.3, N = 578). At the country level this amount was highest among the Spanish participants (78.7 per cent) and lowest in Finland (19.2 per cent). In turn, only little variation appeared between the different types of training practitioners with the highest figure being 67.1 per cent for employees of private training providers and the lowest being 57.6 per cent for those working in public institutions.

This question was particularly targeted at getting a better picture of the distribution between full-time trainers and the so-called ‘part-time trainers’, who assume training functions in addition to other, not training related tasks in their job. Looking at these figures more closely in an international comparative perspective for Austria, Finland, Greece, the Netherlands and Spain we compared the working time spent on training and training-related activities with the types of employment and the professional domains described above. For the investigated countries the full-time trainer seems to predominate in Spain and to some extent also in the Netherlands, whereas for the other three countries the part-time trainer model applies to all training domains alike. Nonetheless it is interesting that in some of the countries a ‘specialisation’ as a trainer in the training of trainers (like in Greece), whose working time is almost exclusively dedicated to training-related activities, is remarkably higher than in the other domains. What is also interesting is the observation that in Austria and Greece, despite the differences of their national VET systems, trainers show similar task allocation patterns in initial and continuing vocational training and adult education. An overview of the comparative results is given in the tables below.

	Austria	Finland	Greece	Netherlands	Spain
Employee in a company	40.2%	12.6%	50.0%	65.9%	83.9%
Employee in a public institution	20.2%	25.7%	41.1%	70.7%	84.5%
Employee of a private training provider	—	—	53.3%	65.0%	71.8%
Self-employed individual	—	—	54.3%	75.0%	72.2%
Other	—	—	48.3%	44.2%	67.5%

Table 2: Average per cent of working time spent on training and training related activities by country and type of training practitioner – comparison of five countries

	Austria	Finland	Greece	Netherlands	Spain
Initial vocational training	52.8%	22.3%	43.6%	72.9%	90.6%
Continuing vocational training	44.7%	21.6%	53.4%	73.1%	77.3%
Adult education	66.3%	24.5%	57.9%	65.2%	76.1%
Training of trainers	55.0%	7.2%	85.0%	67.5%	88.3%
Counselling/providing training guidance	35.7%	—	68.8%	64.9%	76.9%
Others	24.5%	17.5%	42.5%	55.0%	83.4%

Table 3: *Average per cent of working time spent on training and training related activities by country and professional domain – comparison of five countries*

4.2 Trainers' Tasks and Working Environment

Connecting to the EUROTRAINER study the survey also tackled the question of practitioners' job profiles. When asked about the most typical training-related tasks trainers perform the respondents were given ten answer categories among which the delivery of training (16.9 per cent), organisation and design of training activities (14.0 per cent) and the assessment of training outcomes and skill development were most frequently mentioned. Taken altogether, these four categories accounted for 56 per cent of all responses. This combination of tasks indicates that the training practitioners taking part in the survey for the major part had a fairly 'classical' job profile. On the other hand, it is also interesting to look at the other 46 per cent. Here we find that trainers also assume a variety of tasks to do with quality and cost monitoring of training; introducing innovations in training practice; counselling and mentoring; and the development of cooperation with other institutions. With 6.8 per cent, the recruitment and selection of staff or trainees is the least important area of trainers' work (see Figure 3). These figures demonstrate that the dominant job profile and tasks of trainers are still very much centred around the assessment of learning outcomes and the core delivery of training, but also that trainers assume a variety of broader tasks.

The international comparative analysis resulted in only very little variation so that this distribution tended to be similar across all countries. Also when relating the distribution of tasks to the different types of trainers in terms of their employment background (i.e. employee in a company, employee in a public institution, etc.) we found that the variation of the frequencies of training-related tasks among the different groups was also very low.

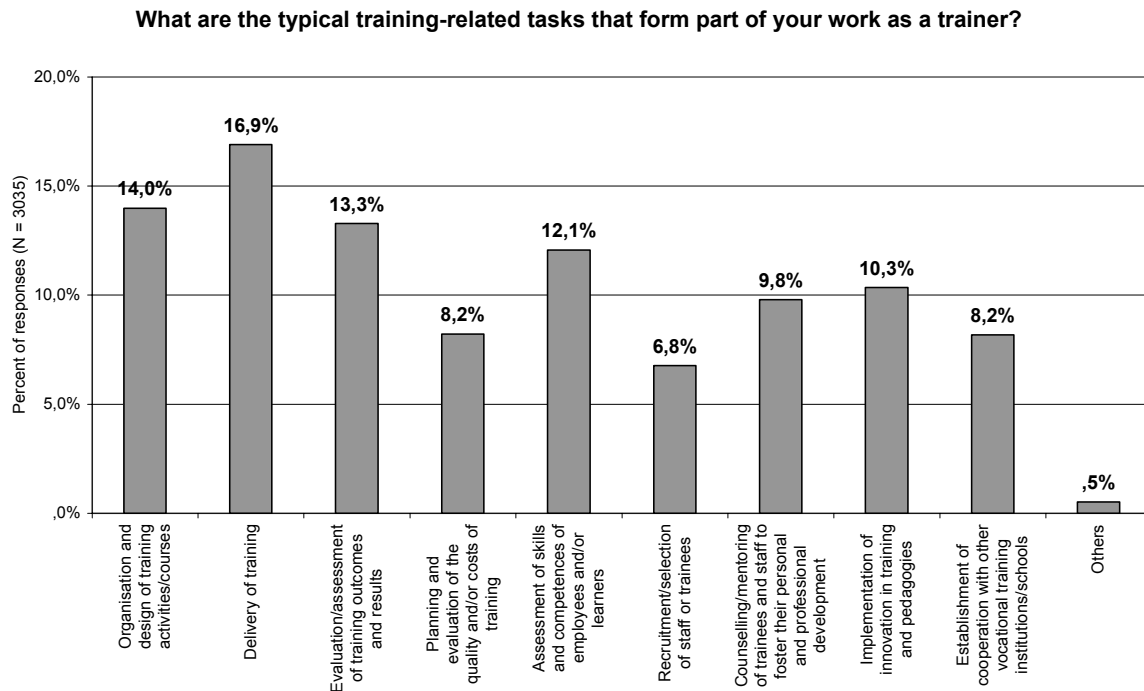


Fig. 3: Training-related tasks (entire sample)

The outcomes on the applied training methods equally conveyed the picture of a fairly traditional job profile. The methods trainers most frequently used were classroom-based teaching (17.8 per cent of responses) followed by work-based learning (16.0 per cent), demonstration and imitation (13.3 per cent) and textbooks and working sheets (12.4 per cent). This confirms the results of the EUROTRAINER study where similarly defined conventional-traditional modes of teaching and training were found to be most commonly applied among in-company trainers (cf. Kirpal/Tutschner 2008a, 43). In light of the present survey it can be added that the frequencies of the various training methods did not differ significantly between the groups of training practitioners specified in the survey. Only trainers working for a company were an exception to the other groups. Due to the strong practice component of their work, trainers in companies more frequently apply work-based learning (by 19.9 per cent) and demonstration and imitation (15.0 per cent).

On the other hand, some remarkable differences were found between the five countries selected for comparison. The results (see Table 4 below) reflect the characteristics of the systems of vocational education and training exemplified by the different countries. While the use of predominantly theoretical methods like classroom-based teaching or textbooks plays an important role in countries with a school-based VET system like Greece or Spain, such methods are less relevant in countries with a system of (dual) apprenticeship training like Austria, where work-based learning is the most common training method. Interestingly the figure for work-based learning is highest in Finland (31.7 per cent of responses) even though the model of apprenticeship training is not as strongly developed in this country. Here, recent reforms of the VET system have considerably strengthened the practice-based component in vocational education and training, which apparently has already triggered significant changes in the applied didactics of teaching and training. It can also be noticed

that a strong practice component fosters work-based learning as well as demonstration and imitation methods (reaching almost 20.0 per cent in both Austria and Finland) as well as self-organised learning. While classroom-based teaching seems to be abandoned in the Netherlands, here we find the highest rating for project-based learning and e-learning from among the five countries of comparison.

	Austria (N = 43)	Finland (N = 28)	Greece (N = 60)	Netherlands (N = 35)	Spain (N = 102)
Classroom-based teaching	15 (9.7%)	6 (7.3%)	59 (28.0%)	—	72 (17.9%)
Textbooks and/or working sheets	14 (9.0%)	5 (6.1%)	38 (18.0%)	11 (9.2%)	74 (18.4%)
Demonstration/imitation	30 (19.4%)	16 (19.5%)	21 (10.0%)	12 (10.1%)	50 (12.4%)
Project-based learning	13 (8.4%)	3 (3.7%)	10 (4.7%)	14 (11.8%)	31 (7.7%)
Work-based learning	34 (21.9%)	26 (31.7%)	32 (15.2%)	16 (13.4%)	61 (15.1%)
Self-organised learning	23 (14.8%)	12 (14.6%)	14 (6.6%)	9 (7.6%)	31 (7.7%)
Experimenting/ exploration	7 (4.5%)	6 (7.3%)	16 (7.6%)	8 (6.7%)	30 (7.4%)
E-learning	15 (9.7%)	6 (7.3%)	17 (8.1%)	15 (12.6%)	45 (11.2%)
Others	4 (8.4%)	2 (3.7%)	4 (1.9%)	5 (4.2%)	9 (2.2%)

Table 4: *Most common training methods (frequencies and percent of responses per column, multiple answers possible) – comparison of five countries*

The respondents were further asked several questions about how they relate to their working environment. Corresponding to the former EUROTRAINER study, we found that across all trainer types and countries the respondents showed a strong orientation towards their employing institution and that they most commonly cooperate with colleagues from within their own institutions (39.7 per cent of responses).¹ To some degree trainers also cooperate with teachers in general or vocational schools (21.0 per cent) and people from other external institutions. The cooperation between trainers and VET teachers was particularly high in the Czech Republic (31.6 per cent of responses), Denmark (42.1 per cent) and Finland (31.4 per cent).

The vast majority of the respondents declared that the training they provide and their performance as a trainer are subject to evaluation. The proportion of those who stated that their work was being evaluated on a regular basis was 54.1 per cent, while another 30.0 per cent said that their work was being evaluated, but not regularly. Considerable variation could be observed between the different groups of training practitioners with employees of private training providers scoring highest on the evaluation question. Here the proportion of those who stated to be evaluated on a regular basis was 66.7 per cent. For the training practitioners in public institutions, by contrast, the corresponding figure was only 48.8 per cent. Conversely, the share of those who said that the training they provided and their performance as a trainer were *not* evaluated was highest among the in-company trainers (16.0 per cent) and employees of public institutions (19.6 per cent). While we are not able to say

¹ The only exception were the self-employed trainers, who typically do not operate in or belong to an institutional context.

anything about how evaluation is being done and against which criteria it was stated that evaluation most frequently was carried out by the learners (40.5 per cent of responses) and employers (37.3 per cent).

4.3 Qualification and Continuing Learning

The next section of the survey sought to address training practitioners' qualification and continuing professional development. The participants were asked whether they had a formal qualification or certificate as a trainer, and whether they had completed an initial vocational training programme to acquire skilled worker status. Both questions were identically taken from the EUROTRAINER survey.

The results indicate that about 3/4 of the respondents had a formal qualification as a trainer (74.8 per cent). This was a much higher score than in the EUROTRAINER study according to which the proportion of in-company trainers with a formal trainer qualification was estimated to be only around 50 per cent (cf. Kirpal/Tutschner 2008a, 46). This deviation may be due to the fact that the present survey was not only confined to in-company trainers, but also included different kinds of training practitioners. Among those with 65.6 per cent employees of private training providers had the lowest proportion of respondents with a formal qualification, whereas the figure was highest among self-employed individuals (78.2 per cent) and others (79.2 per cent). However, within the group of in-company trainers, the proportion of those who had a formal qualification or certificate as a trainer was still 75.9 per cent. Here we may conclude that the experts and multipliers probably underestimated the level of formal qualification in-company trainers have.

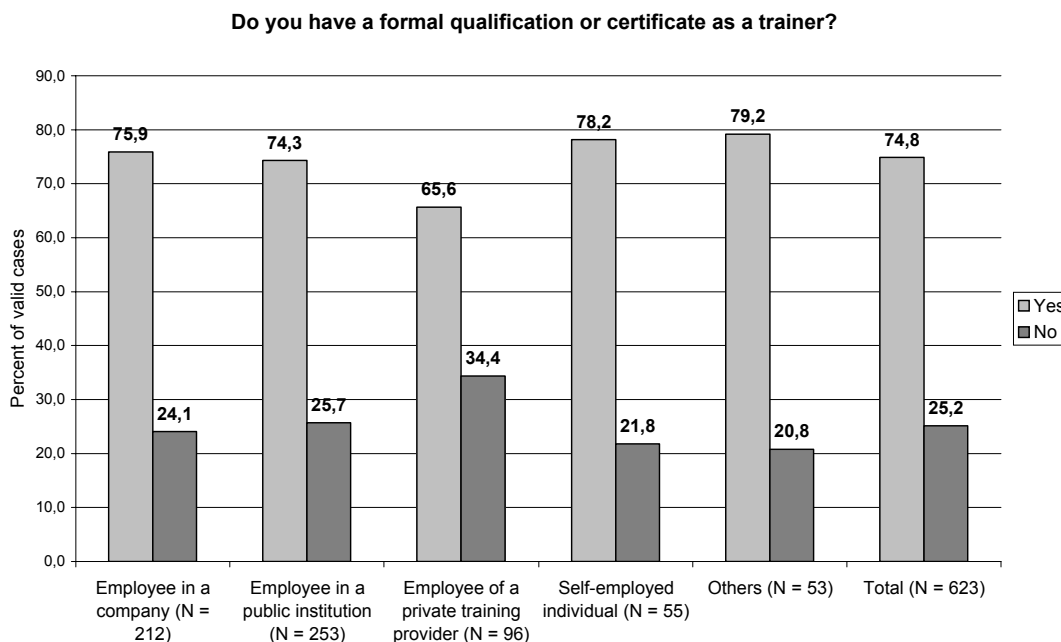


Fig. 4: Formal qualification of training practitioners² (entire sample)

² NB: As multiple answers were possible in the question on the professional status, the sum of the figures for the different categories is not equal to the total number of respondents.

Some degree of variation also appeared between the five sample countries. While in Finland 92.9 per cent of the training practitioners (across all groups) had a formal qualification, which was the highest proportion of all countries, the proportion of training practitioners with a formal qualification was lowest in the Netherlands with 55.9 per cent. The figures for the selected countries are presented below.

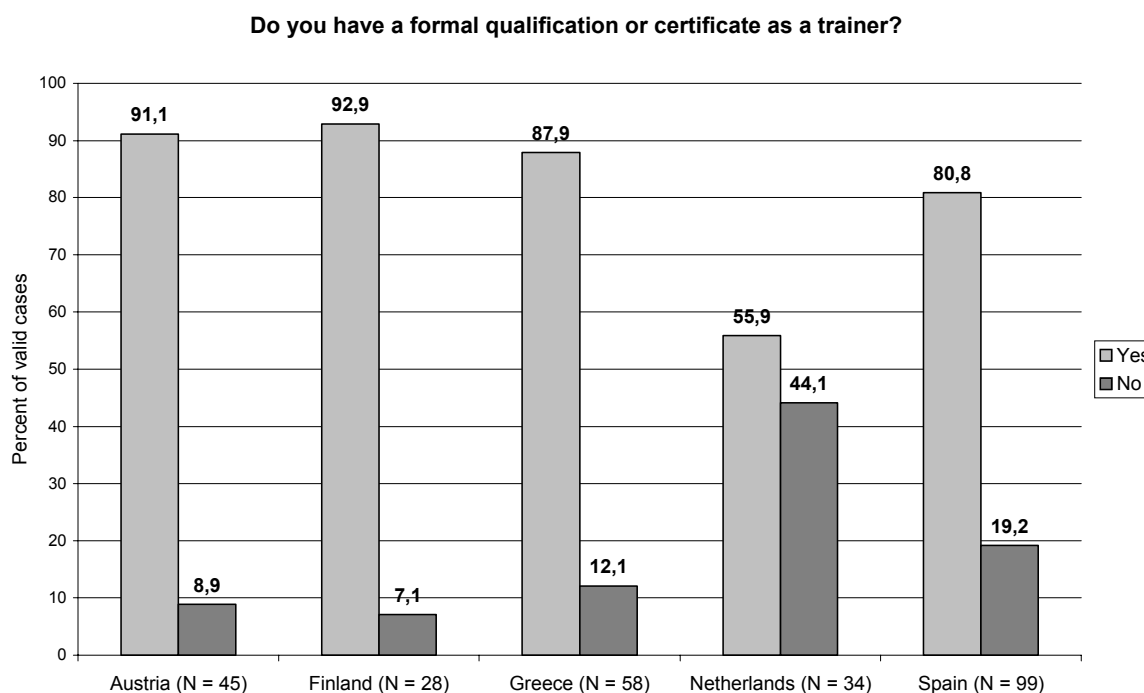


Fig. 5: Formal qualification of training practitioners in selected countries

Similarly to the question on trainer qualification also 3/4 of the respondents had completed an initial vocational training programme to acquire skilled worker status (74.9 per cent). As regards the different groups of practitioners, the proportion of respondents who were skilled workers was, as anticipated, with 80.3 per cent highest among those working in a company and lowest among trainers working for private training providers (67.7 per cent). The figure for self-employed trainers was equally high (80.0 per cent) as for those working in a company. The percentage for employees of public institutions was quite close to the average of the entire sample (73.3 per cent). These figures suggest that trainers working for private training providers and public institutions may not necessarily have followed a practice-based career pathway but are more likely to have an academic background or qualification. For trainers in companies, by contrast, the practical skills in a particular vocational domain continue to be very important. This was also a key finding of the first EURO-TRAINER survey.

The majority of respondents confirmed that their skills and competences were corresponding to their training tasks: On a scale of 1 to 4, 67.2 per cent of all respondents stated that their skills and competences were 'well matched' (corresponding to item '4') to their tasks. This result is further supported by the training practitioners' positive attitude towards engaging in continuing learning which implies that they adapt their professional skills continuously to the requirements of their jobs. Overall, 87.4 per cent of all respondents replied

that they regularly update their knowledge and skills related to their work as a trainer. Comparing the different groups of training practitioners, employees of private training providers and self-employed individuals engage more in continuing learning than trainers employed by companies and public institutions (see Figure 6). However, 87.3 per cent positive answers for in-company trainers is still remarkably high and contrasts the corresponding result of the preceding EUROTRAINER study, where the proportion of in-company trainers engaging in continuing training was only postulated to be around 63.0 per cent (cf. Kirpal/Tutschner 2008a, 55). The largest group of respondents across the whole sample (41.6 per cent) spends on average more than 8 hours per months on continuing learning, the highest possible answer category for this question. As regards the different types of training practitioners, the proportion of those spending more than 8 hours per month on continuing learning was highest among trainers employed by a private training provider (53.1 per cent) and lowest among employees in companies (37.6 per cent).

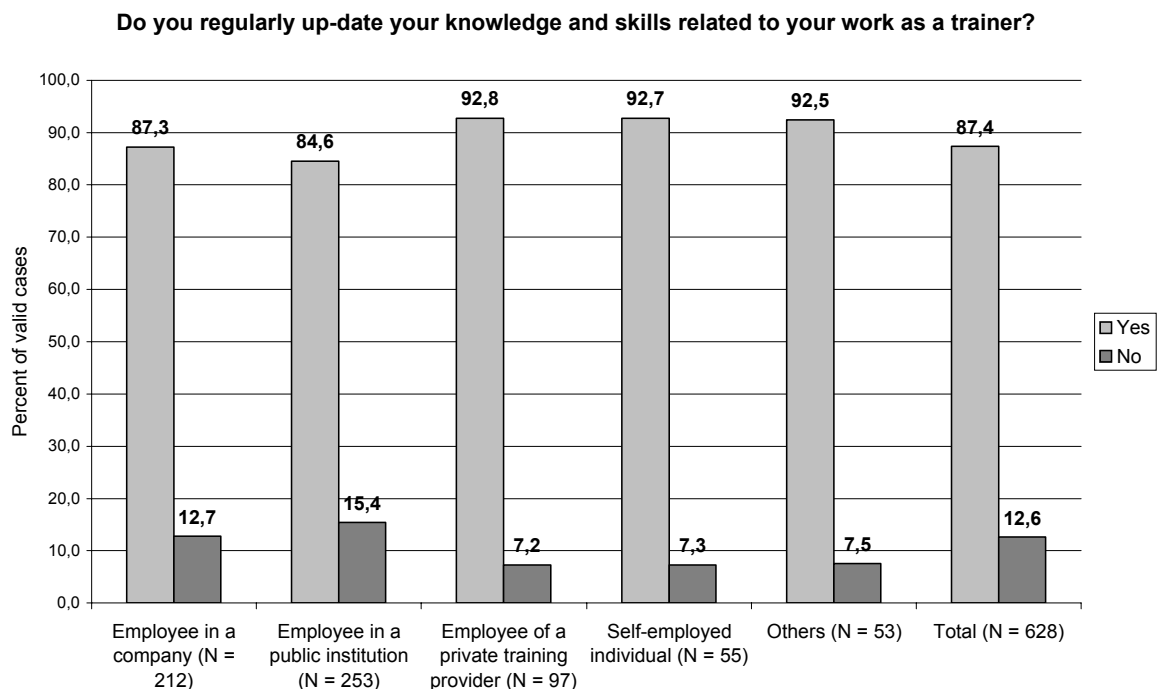


Fig. 6: Continuing learning of training practitioners³ (entire sample)

Above all, trainers revert to individual self-study as a source of learning (20.2 per cent of responses), but participation in conferences, seminars and similar events (18.5 per cent) and learning through work experience (16.9 per cent) are also quite important. With formal training courses ranking on place four (15.8 per cent) most of the learning trainers engage in is non-formal and self-organised. This requires from trainers a considerable degree of self-initiative. By almost 60 per cent trainers' participation in continuing learning was self-initiated rather than employer-directed or due to statutory requirements. The proportion of

³ NB: As multiple answers were possible in the question on the professional status, the sum of the figures for the different categories is not equal to the total number of respondents.

those whose participation is self-initiated was highest among self-employed individuals (63.3 per cent) and others (68.8 per cent), and lowest among employees in public institutions (55.1 per cent).

In terms of the direction and focus of the continuing learning technical or subject-specific competences (21.0 per cent of responses) was the most important category. This was followed by pedagogical competences (17.1 per cent) and, almost equally important, skills related to communication, interaction and leadership which we herein referred to as social competences (16.8 per cent). While social and pedagogical competences were the most important categories in the EUROTRAINER study, technical competences were less relevant for continuing learning. This may be because in-company trainers tend to have well developed technical skills, but often lack some background in pedagogical and social skills and how to effectively transfer their technical knowledge to the learner. In turn, trainers with an academic qualification tend to lack necessary practical skills. However, there were no significant differences in the responses between the different groups of training practitioners in the sample. Skills related to the management, planning and organisation of training were with 14.1 per cent less relevant than the skills formerly mentioned.

4.4 Motivation and Professional Identity

Finally, the survey explored the attitudes of training practitioners towards their own professional development and the training profession in general. Respondents were asked why they engaged in continuing learning or not and what they saw as the benefits of being a professional trainer or assuming training functions within a company.

Those who stated to not update their skills and competences (only 12.6 per cent in total) considered the lack of incentives in terms of remuneration, status and career progression (22.5 per cent of responses) and the absence of adequate training opportunities (22.1 per cent) as the main obstacles. At the other end, training practitioners who engaged in continuing learning mainly mentioned intrinsic motivation such as becoming a better trainer or personal development (31.1 per cent and 30.7 respectively) as the major benefits, whereas better career prospects or salary did not play an important role. Based on these results one could argue that trainers who rely on formal training opportunities rather than self-organised or self-initiated forms of learning and who are motivated predominantly by economic or measurable benefits are less active in continuing learning. The professional development of training practitioners is much more driven by personal interest and intrinsic motivation rather than economic incentives or career benefits.

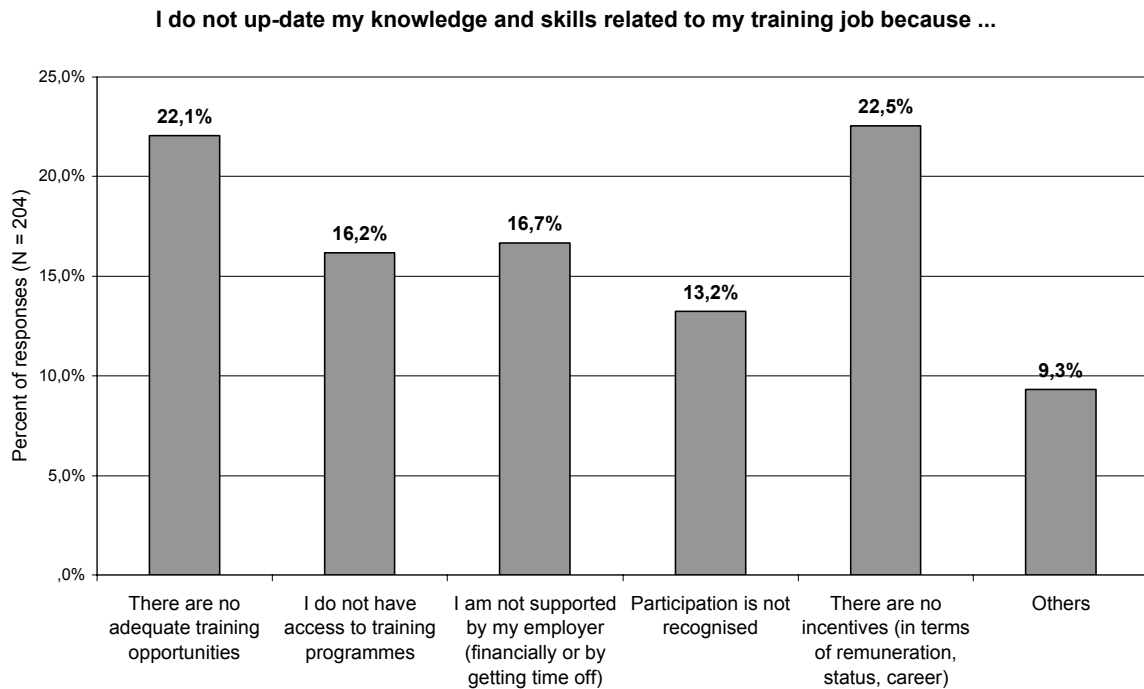


Fig. 7: Barriers against the participation in continuing learning (entire sample)

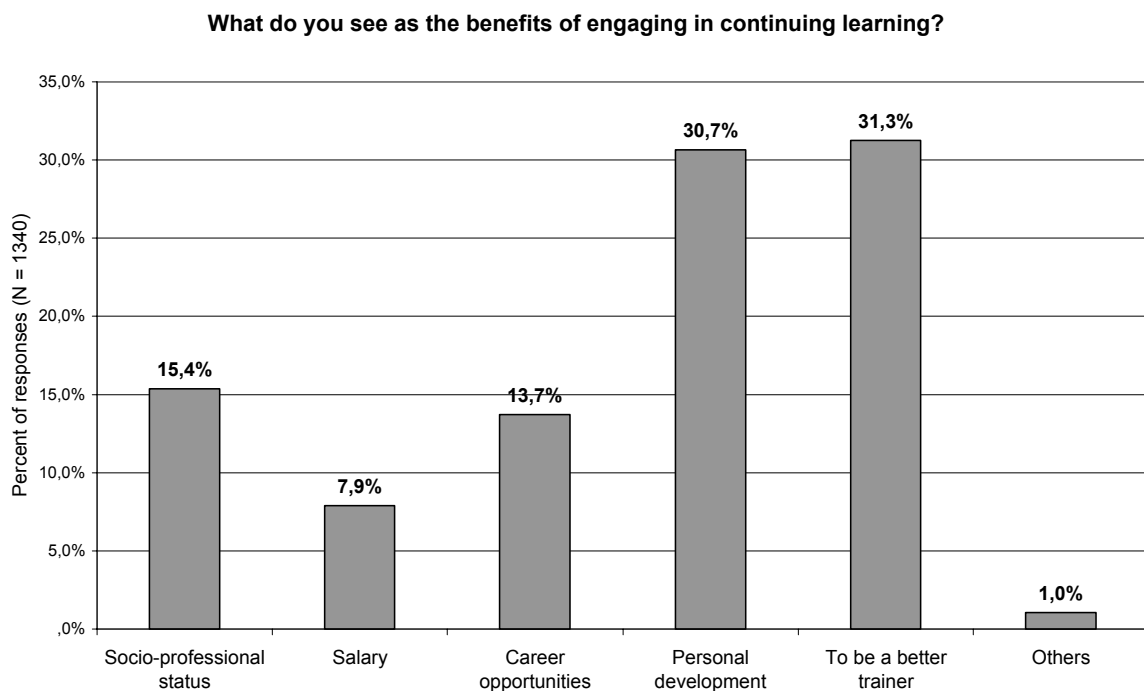


Fig. 8: Motivation to engage in continuing learning (entire sample)

The key role that intrinsic motivation plays to foster the continuing learning of trainers is also reflected in the positive attitude trainers exhibited towards their profession. The vast majority of respondents affirmed that working as a trainer is ‘very attractive’ (40.6 per cent) or ‘attractive’ (44.8 per cent). Here again personal interest and development are decisive to

becoming a trainers rather than incentives such as higher professional status or better pay. The skilling aspect of taking up new roles and training responsibilities also plays an important role in this context.

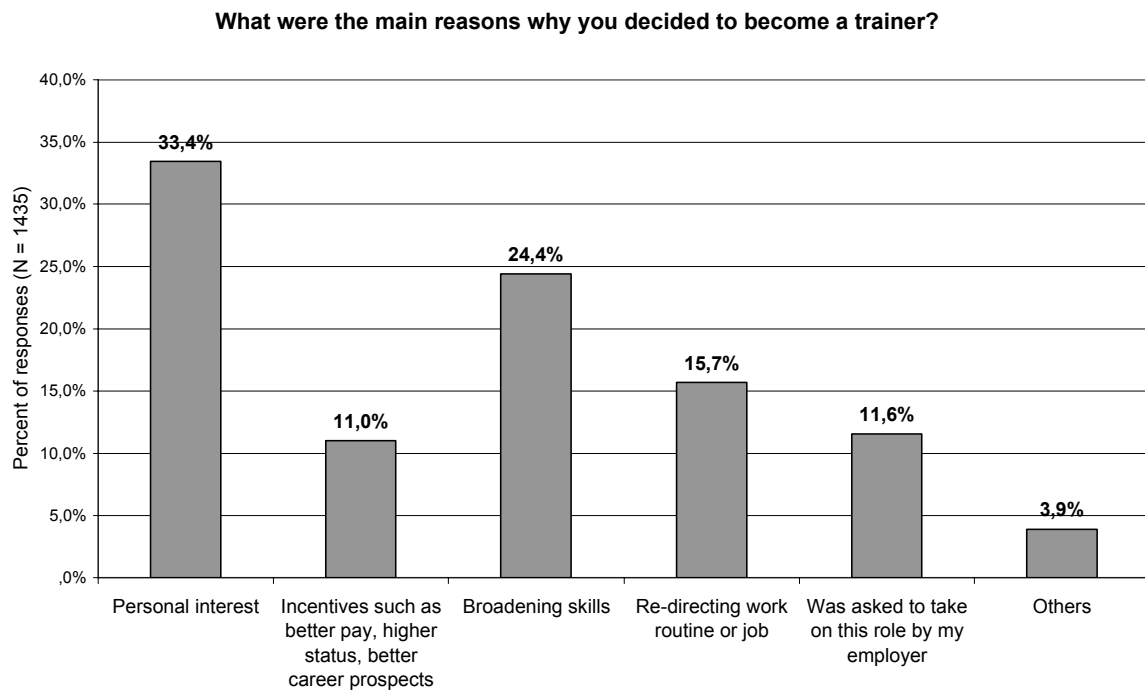


Fig. 9: Motivation to becoming a training practitioner (entire sample)

When the different groups of training practitioners are compared, their motivational attitudes seem to be quite similar for the most part. The only group that tended to differ from the total of the sample in certain aspects were trainers working for a public institution. In this group the proportion of those who were motivated by personal interest was lowest (30.0 per cent) and the proportion of those who were motivated by better pay, higher professional status or better career prospects was with 15.2 per cent higher than in any of the other groups. Trainers working for public institutions also had a less positive attitude towards their profession: the number of those who thought of their training job as being ‘very attractive’ was only 29.3 per cent (see Figure 10). In accordance with the findings discussed above concerning the relationship of motivational attitudes and continuing learning the training practitioners in public institutions also showed a somewhat different attitude to the updating of their knowledge and skills. The proportion of those who indicated that their participation in continuing learning was mainly self-initiated was 55.1 per cent and was thus considerably lower than among the other groups, whereas statutory requirements played a more important role. This result can be attributed to the particular work environment of public bodies, which more strongly depend on legal regulations than private institutions. Another interesting finding is that those who had the most positive attitude towards their profession were the self-employed trainers.

An indicator of the professional identity of training practitioners in terms of their self-perception as a distinct professional group might be the membership in a professional association. The participants were asked whether they were members of a professional body repre-

senting the interests of trainers. This turned out to be the case for less than a quarter for only 23.9 per cent of the respondents answered this question in the affirmative. As regards the different categories of training practitioners, the membership rate was highest among self-employed individuals (29.1 per cent of valid cases) and lowest among employees of private training providers (17.7 per cent) and others (17.6 per cent). The membership rate of in-company trainers was slightly above the average (25.7 per cent).

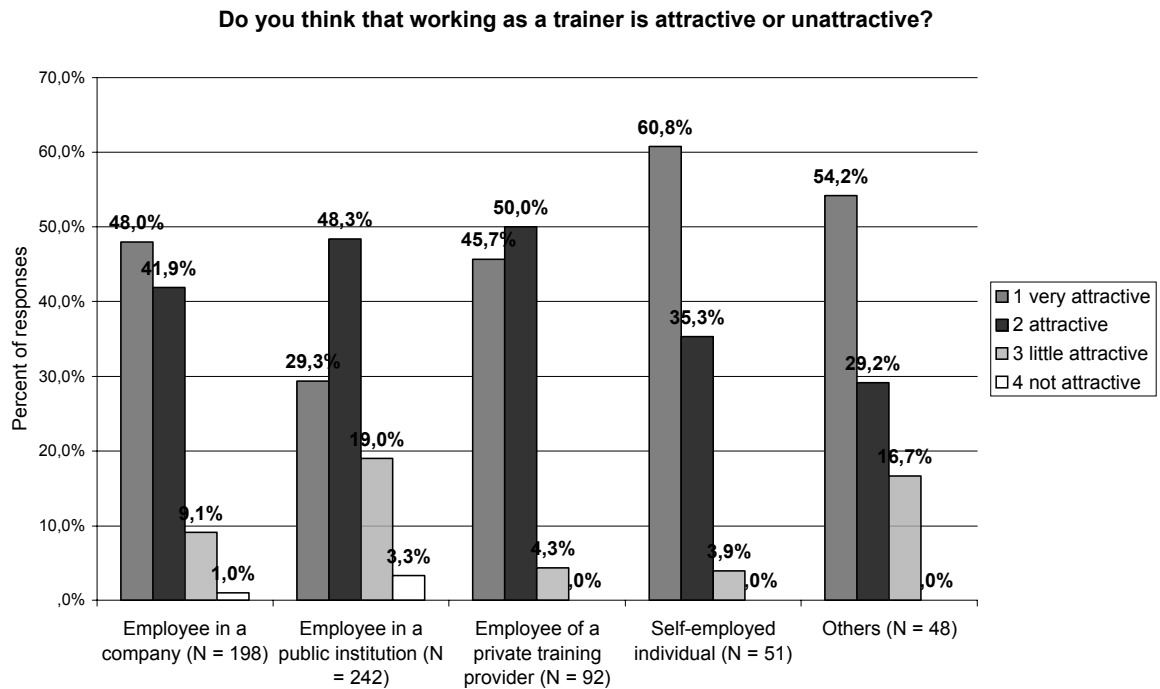


Fig. 10: Attitudes of the different trainer groups towards their profession (entire sample)

5. Conclusion

The presented results of the survey conducted with 738 VET practitioners from 28 European countries have some limitations, particularly due to the selective sampling approach. Since the survey is not representative, it is explorative in nature and the results can only tentatively indicate certain trends. However, since research about the situation and professional development of trainers finds itself at its very initial stages, and hardly any quantitative or qualitative data on trainers is available at the European level, we think that the survey produced some interesting findings that deserve further exploration and discussion.

While the obtained results give room for interpretation and debate at various levels, an evaluation seems to be particularly interesting against the findings from the first EURO-TRAINER study that was conducted with VET experts and multipliers in 2007. When presenting the results of this first study it was critically objected that multipliers and experts may not have a full understanding of the actual work practice of trainers since they operate at a higher organisational or more abstract research and policy level. Despite the fact that most of those respondents had been or from their current job profile could still be considered practitioners, we in fact encountered that they were not able to answer some of the questions such as how many hours per month practitioners dedicate to continuing learning. As a consequence the network survey was particularly targeted at training practitioners instead of multipliers whereby translating the questionnaire into the national languages was an important step to ensure that trainers could be reached at all levels (the questionnaire of the EUROTRAINER study was only translated into some national languages such as French, German and Italian). Given those methodological concerns and adjustments it is interesting that in terms of the results we can, on the one hand, identify considerable overlap of outcomes of the two studies, but also some interesting deviations.

We find matching results in terms of trainers' tasks and job profiles and the training methods they apply. Here it seems that despite the rhetoric about lifelong learning and innovations in training and teaching the dominant job profile and tasks of trainers are still very much centred around the assessment of learning outcomes and the core delivery of training, which is mainly supported by classroom-based teaching, textbooks and didactics of demonstration and imitation. In both studies – and across all trainer types – it was found that those 'classical' tasks and didactical methods dominate trainers' every day training practice by about 60 per cent. Only for in-company trainers work-based learning also plays an important role. Interestingly, those findings were similar for all trainer types whereas considerable differences appeared between the different countries, taking account of the respective VET system. Accordingly, the use of theoretical methods like classroom-based teaching predominate in countries with a school-based VET system like Greece or Spain, while in countries with an established (dual) apprenticeship training system like Austria or countries with a strong practice component in VET like Finland work-based learning is the most commonly applied training method.

The notion that trainers' tasks and job profiles seem to remain fairly in line with the classical functional trainer role certainly needs further specification and differentiation. To a considerable degree trainers also assume tasks to do with quality and cost monitoring; introducing innovations in training practice; counselling and mentoring; and the development of

cooperation with other institutions. However, we still think that the figures are insofar interesting as they challenge the rhetoric about changing learning environments that has emerged in the context of lifelong learning policies and the vanguard of the knowledge-based economy. This rhetoric anticipates that in a knowledge society, and against the European agenda for lifelong learning, the role of trainers is being reshaped due to developments on the labour market; newly emerging occupations and occupational requirements; and shifts in teaching and learning paradigms. Those developments are assumed to fundamentally change the roles, functions, responsibilities and competence requirements of VET practitioners. Against this background it is assumed that standard forms of training and classical teaching are losing significance while new open learning methods that underline the facilitator and counselling role of the trainer are (re)directing trainers' work practice. Whether this is actually the case and, if so, how it affects trainers' daily practice, still needs further investigation. So far some more recent qualitative research indicates that other factors may be much more influential than shifting learning paradigms, in particular the introduction of new technologies in training practice, pressures on the training market and demographic shifts.

Some of the other survey sections reveal fairly divergent results. While we could confirm that trainers across all trainer types and countries mostly cooperate with colleagues from within their own institutions (with the exception of self-employed trainers who typically do not have an institutional affiliation), cooperation between trainers and VET teachers was with 21.0 per cent of responses higher than in the first study. In some countries such as Denmark this figure even reached over 40.0 per cent. This lets us presume that the cooperation between trainers and VET teachers is more strongly developed among trainers working in public institutions than among in-company trainers. Also the ratings on the evaluation and assessment of training performance were much higher than in the first study, indicating that the training provided by trainers working for public institution and private training providers is more often and more intensively evaluated and assessed than the training that is provided in companies.

Remarkably high were the results for trainers' engagement in continuing learning with 87.0 per cent of respondents confirming that they regularly engage in continuing learning compared to 63.0 per cent that were obtained in the EUROTRAINER study (cf. Kirpal/Tutschner 2008a, 55). On the one hand, this high rating may indicate that the role and competence requirements of VET practitioners are indeed changing, requiring from all kinds of trainer types to continuously up-date their knowledge and skills. On the other hand we know that for trainers working for private training providers and self-employed trainers continuing learning is a must: for these groups the figures even reached up to 93.0 per cent. However, this question may also have been almost exclusively answered positively against the background of social desirability, which means that most people would tend to respond to this question with 'yes'. What further indicates that engagement in continuing learning is high is that the largest group of respondents (41.6 per cent) confirmed to spend on average more than 8 hours per month on continuing learning, also an unexpected high rating.

While the data showed divergence in the intensity of continuing learning, very similar results between both studies were obtained in terms of the motivation for engaging in con-

tinuing learning: Lack of incentives and benefits as well as non-adequate training opportunities are the main obstacles to trainers' engagement in continuing learning while intrinsic motivation such as becoming a better trainer or personal development objectives are the most important drivers. That the continuing professional development of training practitioners is predominantly driven by personal interest and intrinsic motivation and largely relies on self-initiative is one key finding of the survey.

Similar to the reasons why trainers engage in continuing learning the decision or move to becoming a trainer in the first place is almost exclusively based on personal interest. Also the skilling aspect inherent of taking up new roles and training responsibilities plays an important role in this context. Only for trainers working for a public institution better pay, higher professional status or better career prospects are other influencing factors. In turn, this group seems to have a less positive attitude towards their profession, engages least in continuing learning and demonstrates a considerably lower level of self-initiative in this process. Self-employed trainers, by contrast, have the highest rating on self-initiative and engagement in continuing learning and demonstrate the most positive attitude towards their profession.

Overall, the practitioners themselves tend to have a much more positive attitude towards their profession than it was expected by multipliers and experts in the field. The vast majority of respondents affirmed that working as a trainer is very attractive, surpassing by far the results obtained for this question in the EUROTRAINER study. The throughout positive assessment may be due to the fact that the network sample comprised a larger number of professional full-time trainers than the first survey. Notably, the largest proportion among the in-company trainers assumes training functions and responsibilities as an 'add-on' to their regular work as a skilled worker. Most of those 'part-time' trainers in companies perceive that their work is not being valued and adequately compensated. For them assuming training functions helps them to broaden their skills and to get higher recognition among their peers and colleagues. However, it often means additional work, lack of support and not enough opportunities to further develop the skills necessary to improve in their training job. Full-time professional trainers, by contrast, typically have developed a professional identity as a trainer and are more purposeful in performing their training tasks, seeking actively to make a career and develop as a trainer. They are more likely to consider the training profession as attractive.

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