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EVALUATION

of the

EU Commission Agencies working in the employment and social affairs policy field:

EUROFOUND, CEDEFOP, ETF and EU-OSHA

{SWD(2019) 160 final}

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

There are four EU decentralised agencies working in the employment and social affairs policy field¹:

- the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound);
- the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop);
- the European Training Foundation (ETF);
- the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA).

This document assesses the four agencies' relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value, both individually and compared with each other². The evaluation aims to identify potential synergies and overlaps in agencies' activities, and opportunities for deeper cooperation among the four agencies, between the agencies and the Commission and with other relevant EU bodies and networks³. The evaluation also assesses how the agencies have implemented the *Common approach on EU decentralised agencies*⁴, published in 2012.

As EU decentralised agencies, the four agencies are permanent autonomous bodies⁵ set up outside the EU institutions and located across the EU to provide technical, scientific and managerial support for EU policy-making and implementation. EU decentralised agencies⁶ contribute to the implementation of EU policies and some of them have regulatory powers. They also support cooperation between the EU and national governments by pooling technical and specialist expertise from both the EU institutions and national authorities. An overall evaluation of all EU decentralised agencies was carried out in 2009⁷.

Three of the agencies, Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA, are 'tripartite' agencies. This means that national authorities, trade unions and employer representatives (one per Member State and category)

¹ All four agencies are under the management of DG EGMPL. With the Juncker Commission taking office on 1 November 2014, supervision of ETF and Cedefop was transferred from DG EAC to DG EMPL on 1 January 2015.

² The individual assessment of the ETF was done through its own external evaluation in July 2016, the results of which are incorporated in this document.

³ The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the European Education Network of the European Community (Eurydice).

⁴ The Common Approach on EU decentralised agencies, published in 2012, aims to improve the coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and transparency of the EU decentralised agencies. In line with the common approach, on 23 August 2016, the European Commission published three proposals to revise the founding regulations of Eurofound, Cedefop (from 1975) and EU-OSHA (from 194). http://europa.eu/about-eu/agencies/overhaul/index_en.htm.

⁵ This distinguishes them from executive agencies, which are established for a limited period through a single legal basis to undertake clearly defined tasks in EU programme management (e.g. the European Research Council or Research Executive Agency).

⁶ There are currently 34 decentralised agencies.

⁷ *Meta-study on decentralised agencies: cross-cutting analysis of evaluation findings*, Ramboll Management-Euréval-Matrix, December 2009. https://europa.eu/european-Union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/synthesis_and_prospects_en.pdf.

participate in their governing boards and bureaux⁸ (this applies to all three) and in the agencies' dedicated advisory committees (this applies to Eurofound and EU-OSHA only). The ETF is not a tripartite agency. Its governing board is composed of one representative per EU Member State, three from the Commission, three non-voting experts from the European Parliament and three observers from partner countries⁹.

This evaluation responds to the Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines and the Financial Regulation, which require periodic evaluation of EU activities costing over EUR 5 million. All four agencies meet this criterion, as their annual core budget is above that threshold. Most importantly, under the Common Approach on EU decentralised agencies, each agency's founding act should provide for a periodic overall evaluation commissioned by the Commission every 5 years. In the case of the ETF, Article 24(2) of its Founding Regulation requires the Commission to evaluate every 4 years, in consultation with the governing board, the implementation of the Regulation, the results obtained by the ETF and its working methods in light of the objectives, mandate and functions defined in the Regulation. There is no explicit requirement in the founding regulations of the other three agencies to conduct an evaluation.

1.2. CONTEXT: THE 2016 PROPOSAL TO REVISE THE THREE TRIPARTITE AGENCIES' FOUNDING REGULATIONS

In addition to the legal requirements, there are two other important reasons for the launch in 2016 of this evaluation.

Firstly, the four agencies have all been under the responsibility of DG EMPL since 2015¹⁰. This created the opportunity for a first cross-cutting evaluation of agencies within the employment and social affairs policy area.

Secondly, the founding regulations of the tripartite agencies have been revised¹¹ to align them with the Common Approach on decentralised agencies, endorsed by the Commission, the Council and the Parliament in 2012¹². In August 2016, the Commission published three proposals to revise the founding regulations of **Eurofound**, **Cedefop** and **EU-OSHA**. The negotiations are closed and the three founding regulations were published in the OJ on 31 January 2019, entering into force on 20 February. The current overall evaluation of the agencies complements this revision in identifying future synergies and efficiency gains. The evaluation is also relevant for ongoing legislative negotiations on the agencies' budget for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

⁸ The Bureaux are the executive boards of each agency, responsible for operational supervision and preparation for governing board meetings.

⁹ The current ETF Regulation (1339/2008) does not provide for an advisory forum. There was one under the previous Regulation, which brought together around 120 experts from partner countries and EU Member States, social partners and international organisations (its last meeting was in 2006).

¹⁰ Prior to that, ETF and Cedefop were under the responsibility of DG EAC.

¹¹ The three proposals were: for Eurofound, COM/2016/0531 final — 2016/0256 (COD), for Cedefop, COM (2016) 532 final — 2016/257 (COD), and for EU-OSHA, COM (2016) 528 final — 2016/254 (COD).

¹² As the ETF founding regulations had been amended in 2008 there was no need to amend them again.

The founding regulations' revision aims to harmonise the provisions on programming and reporting with the requirements in the revised Framework Financial Regulation¹³. The revision changes the appointment procedure of the director and aligns it with the procedure in the Common Approach (for Eurofound and Cedefop). The agencies' management boards are given the role of appointing authority. The terminology for the management structure, anti-fraud measures, conflict of interest policy and evaluation provisions is also brought in line with the common approach.

The revision of Cedefop's founding regulation updates its objectives and tasks in the legal basis¹⁴. Since Cedefop was founded in 1975, its activities have expanded beyond vocational education and training and now also cover qualifications and the forecasting of skills needs. The founding regulation thus aligns Cedefop's objectives with its activities as laid down in its recent multiannual programming documents and current intervention logic, without triggering additional tasks for the agency.

After the Commission consulted social partners on the possible governance consequences of the revision¹⁵ it decided to preserve the composition of the current governing board¹⁶ of the three agencies¹⁷. The tripartite structure received broad political support in the legislative negotiations of the founding regulations. The positions of co-legislators were expressed in the General Approach of the Council adopted on 8 December 2016 (EPSCO)¹⁸ and in the three European Parliament reports¹⁹. Both co-legislators support maintaining the tripartite governance structure. The European Economic and Social Committee issued a joint opinion on 30 March 2017²⁰. Social partners welcomed the Commission proposals, notably on the tripartite governance structure. The European Economic and Social Committee considers tripartism 'the expression of an inclusive approach, which respects the importance of the role of the social partners in seeking joint solutions'.

While the evaluation does not assess the legal changes proposed in the revision, it takes stock of all the measures the agencies have taken since 2011 to align with the Common Approach. The evaluation concludes that the tripartite structure has both advantages and disadvantages, without finding sufficient evidence to justify a change in the current system.

1.3. EVALUATION SCOPE

Thematic, geographical and time scope: The evaluation covers the whole thematic and geographical remit of the four agencies, in the context of relevant activities of the Commission, other EU decentralised agencies, instruments and networks. It assesses the changes that occurred in 2011-2016

¹³ COM (2016) 605 final.

¹⁴ No adaptation of mandates were proposed for EU-OSHA and Eurofound.

¹⁵ Social partners were consulted in line with Article 154 TFEU and highlighted the importance of maintaining the agencies' tripartite nature.

¹⁶ With 28 government representatives, 28 representatives of employers and 28 of workers' organisations, plus three Commission representatives.

¹⁷ ETF's governing board composition is in line with the common approach as it does not have a tripartite structure.

¹⁸ [Document ST_15024_2016_INIT](#)

¹⁹ Published on 28 July 2017, of the [Rapporteurs Ms Anne SANDER \(Cedefop\)](#), Mr Enrique [CALVET CHAMBON \(Eurofound\)](#) and [Mr Czeslaw HOC \(EU-OSHA\)](#).

²⁰ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/eurofound-edefop-eu-osharegulations>

compared with the baseline situation in 2011. For some evaluation criteria, such as efficiency, the performance of other similar agencies and/or institutions was used as benchmark.

What is not within the scope of this evaluation? The evaluation comprises a retrospective assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, added value and coherence of each of the four agencies and a cross-cutting analysis to identify potential for improvement. The assessment was based exclusively on the agencies' current mandates and objectives as stated in their founding regulations and in the programming documents approved by their governing boards. As the aim is to identify room for improvement within the current institutional framework, the evaluation does not cover potential future scenarios implying changes in the agencies' architecture (e.g. mergers) or changes in their mandates.

The European Labour Authority proposed by the Commission in March 2018²¹ is outside the scope of this evaluation. Under the proposal, the Authority's mandate is to contribute to ensuring fair labour mobility in the internal market, by: (a) facilitating access for individuals and employers to information on their rights and obligations; (b) supporting cooperation between Member States in the cross-border enforcement of relevant EU law; and (c) mediating and facilitating a solution in cases of cross-border disputes²².

The four already established agencies could potentially usefully support and contribute to this new EU body's work. Therefore, the proposal to establish the new authority provides a rationale for assessing the potential for coordination and cooperation between the four already existing agencies and the new authority so as to exploit possible synergies²³. The coherence analysis between the agencies and the proposed authority is only preliminary at this stage (see Section 5.5.5). Once the authority is in place, the Commission will include it in future inter-organisational cooperation among all agencies in employment and social affairs, so as to maximise synergies.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE AGENCIES: MANDATES AND INTERVENTION LOGICS

The key objectives, priorities and tasks of each agency are set in their founding regulations and guiding programming documents for the relevant period (mid-term perspectives and work programmes). The detailed intervention logics per agency are presented and explained in Annex 4 along with the full references to the agencies' key strategic documents²⁴.

²¹ Proposal on establishing a European Labour Authority, COM (2018) 131 final.

²² As the Authority will have a fundamentally different nature to the four existing agencies under DG EMPL's remit, there is no overlap with the existing agencies' mandates.

²³ See impact assessment for the proposal for a regulation establishing a European Labour Authority SWD (2018) 68 final.

²⁴ It is not feasible to build a common intervention logic covering the four agencies. Although some of them partially overlap at different levels (e.g. thematic scopes of ETF and Cedefop on vocational training), they differ in most parts of their intervention logics (e.g. ETF and Cedefop have different specific and operational objectives and activities). Therefore there is not enough common ground to build a meaningful consolidated intervention logic.

2.1. AGENCIES' MANDATES AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES

a) Eurofound: Located in Dublin, Ireland, Eurofound was established in 1975 by Regulation (EEC) No 1365/75 and, together with Cedefop, was one of the first two EU agencies created²⁵. Its main mission is to carry out research in the areas of employment, industrial relations, living conditions and working conditions. It operates two observatories, one on industrial relations and working conditions, and one on management of change/restructuring. It conducts regular surveys on developments in companies, on working conditions and on quality of life. The agency also carries out individual research projects. In its field of competence it contributes to the analytical and policy work of the Commission, Member States and employers' and employees' organisations, and of the EU as a whole. In 2018, Eurofound had around 110 staff members and an annual budget of EUR 21 million, including an operational budget of around EUR 5.5 million (programming document 2018-2020).

b) Cedefop: Located in Thessaloniki, Greece, Cedefop was established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/1975²⁶. Its main mission is to assist the Commission in encouraging, at EU level, the promotion and development of vocational training and in-service training and to help implement a common vocational training policy. The Centre monitors and analyses developments in vocational education and training (VET). It is therefore a key resource and instrument for developing and implementing EU VET policy. It also contributes to European tools in the field of education and training, such as the European Qualification Framework and Europass. The Centre also provides skills analysis and forecasting and tools for validating non-formal and informal learning. In 2018, Cedefop has around 120 staff and an annual budget of EUR 18 million, including an operational budget of EUR 5.5 million (programming document 2018-2020).

c) ETF: Located in Torino, Italy, the ETF was established under Council Regulation (EC) No 1360/90, replaced in 2008 by Regulation (EC) No 1339/2008²⁷. It operates in the framework of the EU policy and cooperation instruments for external relations, specifically IPA2, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. It contributes, in the context of the external relations policies, to improving human capital development by improving VET systems in partner countries in: (i) the South and East European Neighbourhood²⁸; (ii) enlargement countries covered by the IPA²⁹; and (iii) a number of central Asian countries³⁰. In 2018 it had around 129 staff and an annual budget of EUR 20.1 million, including an operational budget of EUR 4.6 million (ETF annual work programme 2018).

²⁵ The founding regulation has been amended three times so far: in 1993, 2003, and 2005, mainly to take account of enlargement or treaty changes.

²⁶ Cedefop's founding regulation has been amended five times, in 1993, 1994, 1995, 2003 and 2004, mainly to take account of enlargement or treaty changes.

²⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008R1339&from=EN>

²⁸ Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Russia, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine.

²⁹ Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland (until 2015), Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

³⁰ Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

d) EU-OSHA: Located in Bilbao, Spain, EU-OSHA was established in 1994 by Council Regulation (EC) No 2062/94³¹. Its main mission is to develop, gather and provide reliable and relevant information, analysis and tools to advance knowledge, raise awareness and exchange occupational safety and health (OSH) information and good practice. The agency collects and disseminates information and tools on health and safety at work relevant for stakeholders and policymakers involved in OSH at EU and national level, and carries out awareness raising and networking in the OSH field. It also anticipates change and new and emerging risks and develops tools for good OSH management. In 2018 it had around 66 staff and an annual budget of EUR 15.5 million, including an operational budget of EUR 8.1 million (programming document 2018-2020).

2.2. SPECIFIC AND OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

In addition to the four agencies' general objectives, they also have specific and operational ones. Table 1 in Annex 5 lists the agencies' **specific objectives**. On **operational objectives**, generating and disseminating knowledge and expertise are key services that Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA provide to policymakers and other stakeholders at EU and national levels. The ETF covers a broader range of services, including policy analysis and policy and reform assistance outside the EU (see Table 2 in Annex 5).

To implement their **specific and operational objectives**, the agencies undertake **two broad types of activities**: (i) *research and monitoring*; and (ii) *communication, dissemination, raising awareness and capacity building*. The four agencies have developed their own *modes of operation*:

- **Eurofound** has primarily become a research and research management/coordination body, providing evidence to EU policymakers, addressing the sometimes divergent needs of its stakeholders, managing the network of national correspondents, and liaising with the academic and expert community.
- In many ways, **Cedefop** has followed a similar path — although, in addition to its EU-level role as a centre of expertise in vocational education and training, it also provides direct support to Member States.
- **EU-OSHA** works to acquire, collect and systematise information on occupational health and safety at work and facilitates dialogue between stakeholders at EU and national levels. This information is passed on as a contribution to EU policy-making, or drawn upon to raise awareness in Member States.
- **ETF** conducts knowledge creation and sharing activities on human capital development, and provides advice to the EU partner countries under its remit to support capacity building.

3. OPERATION OF THE AGENCIES

3.1. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

³¹ Its founding regulation has been amended three times, in 1995, 2003, and 2005³¹, mainly to take account of enlargement or treaty changes.

The budgets of Eurofound and ETF were stable in nominal terms throughout the evaluation period. Cedefop's and EU-OSHA's budgets varied somewhat from year to year, with a slightly decreasing trend. As the four agencies have faced a budget freeze for 4 consecutive years, amounting to a decrease in real terms due to inflation, they have had to adapt in several ways (see Section 5.2). For instance:

- **Eurofound** faced not only a budget freeze but also the growing cost of the surveys which are a main part of its activities. It therefore had to reduce the sample size of the latest wave of European Quality of Life Survey in 2016, which *led to a decrease in the quality of the statistical analysis*³².
- **EU-OSHA** scaled down or reduced the frequency of some activities (e.g. awareness-raising campaigns became biannual instead of annual).
- **Cedefop** transferred a significant proportion of its staff budget to operational and administrative expenditure due to a downward adjustment in the salary weighting factor.
- **ETF** increasingly used digital technologies for its online collaboration with relevant partners and beneficiaries to ensure a presence in all partner countries despite limited resources.

During the evaluation period, the four agencies implemented nearly 100 % of their annual budget (see Table 1), an indicator of high operational efficiency (see Section 5.2 on efficiency). This should nevertheless be interpreted cautiously given the relative small scale of the operational budget relative to total budget.

Table 1: Annual budget implementation (%)

Agency	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Eurofound	99	98	100	100	100	99.9
Cedefop	97.1	99.76	99.77	98.93	99.64	99.99
EU-OSHA	91	95	98	98	99	96.3
ETF	99.3	99.8	98.8	99.9	99.89	99.99

Source: Annual activity reports.

Moreover, the agencies introduced a *10 % staff cut* in the evaluation period, in line with the target applied to decentralised agencies in the 'cruising speed' category³³. The four agencies were on track to successfully introduce the cut (see Figure 1, Annex 5): in 2017 **EU-OSHA** had already applied the 10 % staff cut, while the others achieved the target in 2018.

³² In late 2017 Eurofound started an in-depth option appraisal on the future of surveys, as high-level decisions are needed to ensure their sustainability.

³³ European Commission (2013) Programming of Human and Financial Resources for Decentralised Agencies 2014-2020. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Brussels, 10.7.2013 COM (2013) 519 final.

3.2. DELIVERY AND USE OF AGENCIES' OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

3.2.1. MEETING OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The four agencies delivered the outputs planned in their annual programming documents under each specific objective to a varying degree compared to targets. **Eurofound**'s rate was below its target of 80 % in 2014 and 2015 due to: (i) delays by contractors; (ii) more ad hoc requests; (iii) resource limitations; and (iv) unrealistic planning. The situation improved significantly in 2016, as the agency adapted its workload in consideration of these circumstances. **EU-OSHA**'s programme delivery rate was steady at 80 % in 2014-2016, but consistently below its target of 90 % (Figure 2, Annex 5³⁴). **ETF** also had a proportion of its outputs cancelled or delayed each year (12-21 %), mainly due to developments in partner countries or ad hoc requests from the Commission. **Cedefop** does not collect data on the programme delivery indicator.

a) Cedefop

On *monitoring, research and support*, in 2011-2016 Cedefop provided evidence and analysis on VET and adult learning, developed and maintained databases and assisted the Commission and Member States in devising policies. Cedefop shifted more activities towards direct support to Member States via a new approach of thematic country reviews, allowing for detailed bottom-up gathering of comparative evidence.

Since 2014 Cedefop has implemented a new *communication strategy*, which intensified outreach to key stakeholders at EU level. The agency's Brussels liaison office, which was reinforced in 2015, has been an important tool in this process. The agency's website was revamped to make it more citizen-oriented and to provide data visualisation and social media links. Cedefop also explored the possibility of collaborating more with the other agencies on communication, e.g. creating an open access repository together with Eurofound and EU-OSHA. It also collaborated more systematically with DG EMPL on communication, most notably by taking over the Skills Panorama³⁵ in 2013 and by contributing to the European Vocational Skills Week³⁶.

b) Eurofound

Given budgetary constraints, Eurofound increasingly carried out *research* in-house rather than subcontracting it. These activities are supported by the network of national correspondents, who collect data and perform national analysis. The quality of some of the network outputs was an issue in the evaluation period (see Section 5.1.1, Point b.2³⁷).

Eurofound's *communication and dissemination activities* were limited by budgetary constraints. For instance, it reduced the number of events and the scope of translation requests. Although it still has all executive summaries translated into all EU languages, it has fewer reports and other publications translated into all languages. Eurofound has also concentrated communication resources on the core

³⁴ It is hard to compare the two agencies, as EU-OSHA has a smaller number of planned deliverables and this indicator is calculated differently (at a higher level of output aggregation).

³⁵ <https://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en>

³⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/vocational-skills-week>

³⁷ Following an internal mid-term evaluation of the current network of correspondents in 2016, Eurofound put in place a number of quality control measures.

target groups to achieve better EU-level impact³⁸. This had a negative impact on stakeholders outside the core target group. Eurofound's communication budget is still bigger than that of the other agencies, apart from that of EU-OSHA.

c) EU-OSHA

EU-OSHA's *research and forecasting* activities were expanded with the establishment of a European Risks Observatory (ERO³⁹). This initiative received an increasing number of page views in 2013-2015 (from 10 177 to 41 398⁴⁰). There was also an increased use of the information provided on working environment (e.g. the number of downloads of tools for OSH management grew from 593 in 2013 to 1 248 in 2015⁴¹).

On *promoting networking and coordination*, EU-OSHA coordinates a network of national focal points which monitors the national implementation of EU legislation, spreads information and engages national social partners on OSH topics. Some problems were identified in the evaluation (for example, in some focal points the information was not spread optimally to all social partners and the network was not embedded in a policy framework which reduced its impact). Moreover, the visibility of EU-OSHA is still limited in Member States outside the OSH community. Besides networking with focal points, EU-OSHA expanded the networks with research institutes, notably by setting up the collaborative exercise called OSHwiki, which gathered input from participating research organisations.

Finally, *communicating and raising awareness* across Europe on the importance of OSH is also a key activity. EU-OSHA made a considerable effort to use different languages, platforms and initiatives to spread its campaign messages and raise awareness among national administrations and intermediaries. However, dissemination in the workplace was less strongly developed. EU-OSHA encountered challenges in reaching employers in their workplaces, especially in micro and small companies.

d) ETF

The ETF's activities are different from those of the other three agencies as it is oriented towards specific support to partner countries. In the evaluation period, the ETF worked on requests from the Commission and EU delegations in four fields of activity: (i) information, policy analysis and advice; (ii) support in capacity building; (iii) knowledge dissemination and networking; and (iv) expertise in the EU project and programming cycle. The 2016 ETF agency-specific evaluation⁴² found that capacity building was widely valued by all stakeholders, as were the provision of information, policy analysis and advice. Knowledge dissemination and networking were similarly highly valued, although the ETF could have ensured more widespread development of networks to help sustainability.

In the evaluation period, the introduction of the Torino process⁴³ and the focus on governance, systems and policy-making increased the ETF's capacity to support countries and helped it to identify the most

³⁸ Eurofound considers this strategy as one of the key reasons behind its increased contribution to EU policymaking.

³⁹ <https://osha.europa.eu/en/about-eu-osha/what-we-do/european-risk-observatory>.

⁴⁰ EU-OSHA Annual Report 2015.

⁴¹ EU-OSHA Annual Report 2015.

⁴² McCoshan, A., Ruitinga, C., Curtarelli, M. (2016), External Evaluation of the European Training Foundation (ETF). Final Report by the EFECTIV Consortium.

⁴³ The Torino Process, launched in 2010, is a biannual participatory analytical review of the status and progress of vocational education and training (VET) in the ETF partner countries, involving multiple stakeholders at different

appropriate mix of national activities and maximise their impact. Similarly, the introduction of strategic projects can enable all partner countries to benefit from common approaches based on ETF's expertise.

Nonetheless, the efficiency and effectiveness of ETF's activities was hindered by the fact that effective working relationships with EU delegations, which are crucial for ETF work with partner countries, have often been too informal and have not always ensured systematic input to the EU project and programming cycle. Moreover, there is room for improvement in ETF's communication efforts to ensure that stakeholders, particularly from partner countries, fully understand its role, work and objectives.

3.2.2. MAIN USERS OF AGENCIES' OUTPUTS

The main user types were fairly similar across Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. The agencies' outputs were used by EU institutions (especially the Commission, the Parliament, the Court of Auditors and various Council configurations), national governments, employers' organisations, trade unions, researchers and international organisations like the ILO and OECD, particularly in the case of Eurofound and Cedefop.

The main users of **Eurofound** and **Cedefop's** outputs were the EU institutions, with the Commission as the main user of the evidence base made available by the agencies⁴⁴. For Eurofound, the Parliament and the Council were the second and the third largest users respectively⁴⁵. For Cedefop, these were the Parliament and other EU agencies⁴⁶. The agencies' outputs, in particular those of Eurofound and Cedefop, were also used for academic research and by social partners and contributed to the work of international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the OECD.

The most intensive users of **EU-OSHA's** services were the *national focal points*, followed by the Commission and a wide group of stakeholders including private companies and various sectoral or industry-level organisations.

The main users of **ETF's** outputs and services were the EU delegations and the Commission. The EU delegations were the main users, with a proportion of requests in overall requests for ETF varying between 36 % and 63 % in 2011-2015.

The use of agencies' outputs can be partially tracked through the number of quotations and references⁴⁷. *The overall number of EU policy documents⁴⁸ referring to Eurofound and Cedefop*

governance levels and functions. It has two objectives: (i) to acquire up-to-date knowledge about the policies and their results in a country; and (ii) to strengthen the ownership, participation and evidence-base of VET policymaking.

⁴⁴ In 2011-2016 the Commission quoted Eurofound in 586 documents, while Cedefop was quoted 474 times.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Cedefop (2017), Annual report 2016. Luxembourg: Publications Office.

⁴⁷ There are some limitations to the quotation/reference data. First, EU-OSHA and ETF collect such data much less than Eurofound and Cedefop. Second, the methodology differed between agencies (e.g. what they count as an EU policy document). Third, interviews and case studies revealed situations in which agency materials were used (e.g. for European Semester country fiches) but not directly referred to. Finally, no systematic monitoring exists of the use of the agencies' outputs at national level. Some sources (case studies, surveys and interviews) indicate that this use may be quite extensive.

⁴⁸ Including documents produced by EU institutions, EU-level social partners, NGOs and think tanks.

increased in the evaluation period (see Section 5.1). The ETF does not measure comparable quantitative indicators of the use of its outputs, as its outputs are aimed at policy development and implementation in third countries. There is evidence, however, of ETF outputs also being used by international organisations such as UNESCO, the ILO, the World Bank and the OECD.

3.3. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The agencies have applied mechanisms to ensure accountability and appropriate assessment of their overall performance, in line with the Common Approach, which requires publicly available annual and multiannual work programmes, monitoring key performance indicators, publicly available annual reports and annual activity reports, internal and external audits and evaluations of the agencies' performance.

A comparative analysis of performance measurement systems showed that the four agencies report a set of similar performance indicators. However, there were significant differences in monitoring and reporting outcomes (see Figure 8, Annex 5), which generated some data limitations for the evaluation (see Section 4.2).

Cedefop and **Eurofound** had similar indicators to monitor *contribution to policy development* (citations in policy documents and participation in stakeholder events), while **EU-OSHA** and **ETF** did not monitor this information. Moreover, there were some inconsistencies in policy contribution indicators within the agencies. For instance, they tended to present aggregate indicator values in their annual reports, combining events of various political importance or citations in policy documents of different legal status.

The four agencies had similar indicators for monitoring *dissemination and uptake of their outputs*, such as publication downloads, website traffic and event participants. ETF, however, presented this information under 'achievements by function', but not as key performance indicators. Moreover, the monitoring of *outputs' quality* was only partially present in the performance measurement systems: Cedefop had an indicator measuring the quality of its events, while Eurofound, EU-OSHA and ETF organised separate stakeholder satisfaction surveys to collect and report data on the quality of their outputs.

Finally, Eurofound, EU-OSHA and ETF also had quantitative indicators on the work programme delivery rate. Cedefop tended to report delivery of planned outputs per project, providing a high level of detail but omitting the overall number of delivered/cancelled/postponed outputs.

4. METHOD

4.1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY⁴⁹

This evaluation is based on the supporting study carried out by PPMI/Ecorys in 2017 and finalised in March 2018. In addition, for ETF specifically, a separate 2016 evaluation study was taken into

⁴⁹ See Annex 3.

account⁵⁰. The evaluation methodology combined several data collection and analysis tools. It consisted of extensive desk research, several surveys and a wide-ranging interview programme, addressed both to agency members and to key stakeholders (the Commission and other EU institutions, policy-makers in national governments, trade unions and employers' organisations). The methodology included agency-specific and cross-cutting in-depth case studies and the use of the public consultation results.

Where the evidence was insufficient or inconclusive, the evaluation combined different sources and distinct approaches (triangulation). It combined data-based, documentary and perception-based sources as well as quantitative and qualitative techniques. Case studies played a major role in the triangulation method as they allowed to examine causal relationships between an agency's actions and the outcome of policy-making. By drawing on diverse data sources, it was possible to determine how far agencies contributed to particular policy initiatives.

The *open public consultation* ran from 5 April 2017 to 5 July 2017. In total it received 159 responses from participants in 24 Member States; 59 % of respondents answered in their professional capacity or on behalf of an organisation and 41 % responded in their personal capacity. The open public consultation questions mirrored the evaluation questions and provided important evidence, both in structured responses and open comments. As expected, respondents' knowledge of and involvement with the agencies varied significantly. The analysis of responses was informed by this distinction and combined with other sources of evidence, including a validation seminar. Its results fed into the external study supporting this evaluation. They are presented throughout this document and in more detail in its Annex 2 and in the supporting study Annex 16 (open public consultation report).

4.2. LIMITATIONS AND ROBUSTNESS OF FINDINGS

The supporting study used extensive *documentary evidence* which provided a good understanding of the agencies' internal operation and their performance. Nevertheless, due to *some performance information not being collected by all the agencies* and to methodological differences, comparing indicators between agencies was difficult. For example, the structure and content of the agencies' annual reports evolved over the years, while differences exist between the various agencies' reports, and some monitoring information does not cover the whole evaluation period. The figures concerning information downloads and website traffic are also not directly comparable between agencies and across time, as the data collection methodologies differed and changed over time.

Given that knowledge generation and dissemination is an important part of the agencies' work, the *number of references and quotations* that appear in policy documents and academic literature is an important indicator of performance (effectiveness, impact). Some data limitations exist in this respect:

- i. EU-OSHA does not monitor references/quotations in EU policy documents.

⁵⁰ Ecorys (2016) External Evaluation of the European Training Foundation (ETF). *Final Report by the EFECTIV Consortium*, October.

- ii. *The use of agencies' outputs at national level is not extensively or systematically monitored* (see Section 3.3). The supporting study addressed this issue by using country-level interviews, case studies and other sources that showed that the agencies' services were used to some extent at national level.
- iii. Data on quotations and references tend to underestimate the agencies' effectiveness/impact as some stakeholders use evidence presented by the agencies without directly referencing them (as demonstrated by the case studies).

The evaluation made extensive use of stakeholders' views, *which can create bias (e.g. tendency to support the status quo) when some of the agencies' stakeholders have vested interests*. This issue has been mitigated by the extensive use of triangulation methods, using varied data sources and qualitative and quantitative methods to avoid excessive reliance on insiders' views. Additionally, the surveys' design included a wide spectrum of stakeholders (governing board members, social partners and Member State and agency staff, and other stakeholders such as the European Parliament and national parliaments, international organisations, research institutes, universities, think tanks and NGOs). The replies differentiate between governing board members, other stakeholders and staff. In the public consultation analysis, the replies were systematically split between respondents with some role or involvement with the agencies and those with no such role or involvement (see the PPMI/Ecorys supporting study, Annex 16: open consultation report).

The evaluation also factored in certain complexities pertaining to *specific evaluation criteria*. On **effectiveness**, particular caution is needed when assessing whether general objectives or impacts have been met, as they are usually broad, have a long causal chain, and since many other causal factors interfere with the process. The assessment of impacts was therefore informed by case studies, intended to carefully trace the processes behind specific policy initiatives. The agencies do not always consistently monitor some key aspects of **efficiency**, and when they do, the monitoring methodologies used are not always comparable over time or between agencies. Therefore it was difficult to assess efficiency.

While acknowledging some data gaps and methodological limitations as explained above, the evaluation presents, to the fullest extent possible, well-informed evidence-based and reliable answers to the questions. The cross-cutting element means that agencies can be assessed individually and compared with each other, highlighting common trends, differences and potential directions for cross-agency learning and maximising synergies.

5. ANALYSIS AND ANSWERS TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

5.1. EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT

Effectiveness analysis considers how successful EU action has been in achieving its objectives. The agencies' objectives can be categorised as general, specific and operational. The agencies' effectiveness was assessed against the objectives in their founding regulations and programming documents. The agencies' relevance to EU policy objectives and stakeholder needs is assessed in Section 5.3.

5.1.1. ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The evaluation assessed whether **specific objectives** had been met in terms of producing outputs⁵¹ and results.

a) OUTPUTS: Overall, the four agencies *delivered the outputs they had planned in their annual programming documents*, as shown in Section 3.2. However, *timely delivery of certain outputs* was a potential area for improvement, in particular for Cedefop and Eurofound. Indeed, during some years of the evaluation period, 15-20 % of outputs were delivered later than planned, while in some cases the gap between data collection and publication of results was rather wide. The reasons for the delays ranged from delays by contractors to internal human resource limitations, unexpected policy changes and urgent requests by stakeholders. At ETF, delays or cancellations occurred due to developments in partner countries or because of ad hoc requests from the Commission. In some cases, delays made the agencies' contributions less useful to policy-makers. In other cases, the delays occurred precisely because resources were reallocated to respond to more urgent Commission⁵² needs.

Interviewees and participants in the stakeholders' surveys agreed that the four agencies achieved their *specific objectives* in the evaluation period (see Annex 2 for details). Such findings were corroborated by the public consultation. Most participants stated that the agencies achieved their objectives to provide EU institutions, Member States and social partners with high-quality, timely and policy-relevant knowledge (over 50 % in all areas for Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA). However, a large proportion of participants (around 30-35 % for all agencies) did not provide an opinion.

Stakeholders' views were in general positive on whether the agencies met their *operational objectives*⁵³ such as on communication, but some mixed views were reported. On **Eurofound**, most core stakeholder groups (the Commission and the governing board) argued that the agency's communication was effective, whereas those outside this core target group gave more reserved views. Both public consultation and survey participants argued that more significant outreach was needed at national level. On **Cedefop**, a large majority (over 80 %) of stakeholder survey respondents considered that the Agency successfully met its operational objectives of communication to some or to a large extent⁵⁴. However, some interviewees noted that the Agency's connections to EU institutions and, most importantly, to the European Parliament could be strengthened.

Over 80 % of survey respondents considered that **EU-OSHA** successfully predicted OSH risks and generated information on the working environment to a large or to some extent. The public consultation had similar findings. An absolute majority of stakeholders (survey respondents and

⁵¹ Such as studies, reports, tools and events.

⁵² For more details on the implementation of agencies' specific objectives, see Section 1.1.1 of the supporting study - PPMI/Ecorys (2018) Final Report-.

⁵³ See Section 3.2.2 for the agencies' operational objectives and activities.

⁵⁴ Also, among respondents who gave an informed opinion to the OPC, 75 % agreed or strongly agreed that Cedefop achieved its operational objective in this area.

interviewees, and public consultation respondents) agreed that EU-OSHA met its communication objectives to a large or to some extent.

As for **ETF**, it mostly achieved its operational objectives. The survey of ETF's partner country representatives indicated that the Agency's activities were useful or very useful in the following areas:

- collection and provision of information, policy analysis and advice;
- capacity building for development of better governance structures;
- networks to exchange information and practices of VET development;
- capacity building and support in human capital development.

However, the synergies between interventions could be improved, and there is a lack of a structured working framework with EU delegations, which hinders the systematic provision of inputs to EU projects and programming in EU external relations.

b) RESULTS: These were assessed based on: (i) use of agencies' outputs and services; and (ii) their quality.

b.1) Use of agencies' outputs: use was determined by the *number of references and quotations* that appear in policy documents and academic literature, complemented by stakeholder reporting and performance monitoring data.

The use of **Eurofound's** and **Cedefop's** knowledge for **EU-level policymaking** increased in the overall evaluation period, while for Cedefop this varied in some years. The number of EU policy documents (issued by EU institutions, EU-level social partners, NGOs and think tanks) quoting Eurofound outputs increased steadily in 2011-2014 and stabilised at around 320 per year in 2014-2016, reaching 1 605 overall for 2011-2016 (see Table 2). In the same period, 813 EU policy documents cited Cedefop, with a strong decrease in 2014-2015⁵⁵. EU-OSHA's performance monitoring system does not gather data on this indicator, so evaluating this relies more on stakeholder reporting⁵⁶.

Table 2: Quotations of agencies' outputs in EU-level policy documents

Agency	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Cedefop	100	169	173	97	107	167
Eurofound	193	217	231	329	320	315

Source: Annual reports. Figures not fully comparable between agencies as estimation methodologies differ.

⁵⁵ Cedefop's performance measurement system data.

⁵⁶ The quotations data must be treated with caution. First, annual fluctuations may happen due to the periodicity of important publications (e.g. the agencies' surveys are run and published once every several years). Second, the figures cannot be used for cross-agency comparisons because of different methodologies used to count the references. Finally, the case study on *supporting the Commission's work on the European Semester* showed that stakeholders (in particular the Commission) may use the evidence presented by the agencies without directly referring to them.

Agencies' services were also used at **national level** to some extent. This was especially true for **EU-OSHA**, which works closely with the national focal points, who are the main users of its outputs (see Section 3.2.2⁵⁷). EU-OSHA's products and services were meant for practical use and further dissemination at national level. The supporting study presents specific evidence of the national use of OSHA outputs by stakeholder category⁵⁸. For instance:

- *labour inspectorates in Member States* used information from EU-OSHA;
- *government officers* used the campaigns and the OiRA⁵⁹ tools to inform social partners on OSH and used the agency's Foresight studies to help national policymakers determine relevant topics for the future;
- *employers'* most appreciated activities were campaigns, the OiRA tools and the ESENER⁶⁰ analysis, whereas *employees* considered the ESENER survey especially useful for providing information on the implementation of national legislation (for more on the other agencies see Section 5.3.1(c) on national relevance).

The agencies' output was also used by **international organisations** (OECD, ILO). Eurofound was referenced in 198 documents and Cedefop in 291 documents issued by international organisations in 2011-2016⁶¹ (Figure 1). No such performance data is collected for EU-OSHA, but its work is of interest to some international organisations, especially the ILO, according to the stakeholder's survey.

Finally, Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA outputs were also used in **scientific research** (Figure 1). Data generated by Eurofound was used by other researchers and organisations at all stages, from formulating the research question to contextualising conclusions, in both EU and national-level studies. In total, Eurofound was referenced in academic journals 4 025 times in 2011-2016⁶². Cedefop's publications were quoted 1 874 times in academic literature in 2012-2015⁶³.

⁵⁷ The extent to which agency outputs were used at national level was not systematically monitored, but country-level interviews, case studies and other sources provided evidence about use and relevance for national stakeholders, and showed that agencies' services were used at national level to some extent, particularly those of ETF, EU-OSHA and Cedefop.

⁵⁸ See PPMI/Ecorys (2018) Annex4: 'EU-OSHA evaluation report', p. 31.

⁵⁹ Online interactive Risk Assessment (<https://oiraproject.eu/en>).

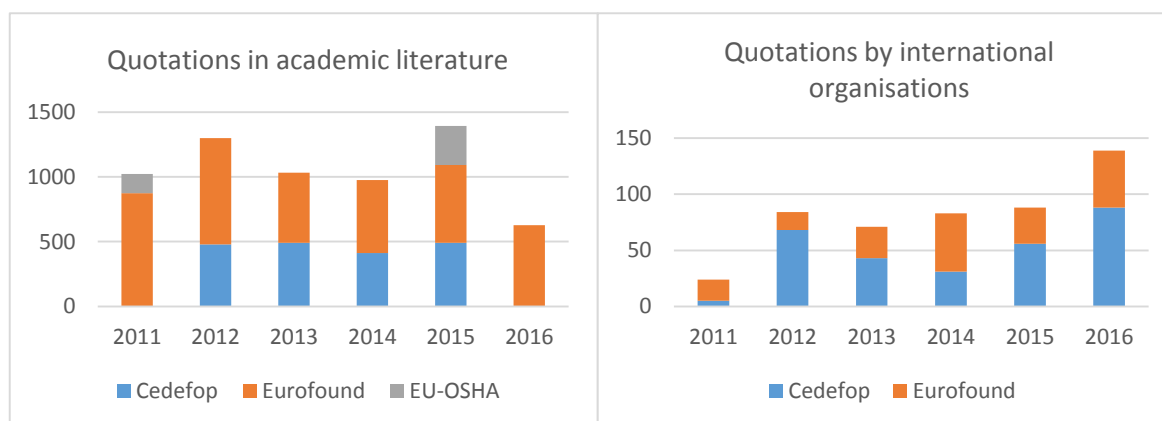
⁶⁰ EU-OSHA's European survey of enterprises on new and emerging risks (ESENER) is an extensive survey that looks at how European workplaces manage safety and health risks in practice.

⁶¹ Cedefop performance measurement system data.

⁶² Eurofound (2016), Consolidated annual activity report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2015; Eurofound (2013), Annual activity report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2012.

⁶³ Cedefop performance measurement system data.

Figure 1: Quotations of agencies' outputs in academic literature and by international organisations



Source: Annual reports. Figures not fully comparable between agencies as estimation methodologies differ.

The second indicator to measure the use of agencies' outputs is the reporting by stakeholders themselves, from interviews, surveys and the agencies' *performance monitoring data*. For **Eurofound**, the *scope and frequency of use* differed by publication type and respondent affiliation, but generally varied from several times a year to daily. The outputs which were most widely used and valued by all stakeholder groups were Eurofound's European surveys: the *European Company Survey*, the *European Quality of Life Survey* and the *European Working Conditions Survey*. The last of the three was the most used Eurofound survey throughout the evaluation period, with over 60 % of stakeholders using publications based on this survey for most of the period⁶⁴. Most interviewees also highlighted it as the Agency's most unique and useful output. Meanwhile, a significant number of Eurofound users regularly consulted other Eurofound publications, such as *Eurofound News* (62 % of users) and, to a lesser extent, the *Living and working in Europe* Eurofound yearbook (35 %) and the comparative analytical reports of Eurofound observatories (30 %).

The **Cedefop** stakeholder survey indicated that most of the agency's outputs were used by its stakeholders at least every few months. They most often used briefing notes and statistics, indicators and data visualisations, with around 35 % of stakeholders using these outputs at least once a month or weekly in the evaluation period. Meanwhile, peer learning activities, thematic snapshots on VET for EU presidencies and the Mobility Scoreboard were among the less used outputs.

⁶⁴ Eurofound Annual User Satisfaction Survey 2016, Final report (January 2017); Eurofound Annual User Satisfaction Survey 2013, Final report (January 2014). Base sizes — all respondents: N=411 (2016), N=327 (2015), N=306 (2014), N=383 (2013). No comparable data for previous years.

The **EU-OSHA** outputs most frequently used by stakeholders were the online risk assessment tools, checklists, guidelines, good practice inventories, and the information on OSH risks and prevention for different stakeholders. Around 25-30 % of stakeholder survey respondents said that they used these at least once a month. Other outputs were used less frequently, such as those related to programmes outside the EU, to EU cooperation projects and Foresight studies. In the case of the ESENER survey and opinion polls, the intensity of use coincides with the timing of publication.

b.2) Quality of the outputs. Quality was measured in terms of *responsiveness of agencies' outputs to the needs of users and user satisfaction*.

The stakeholder surveys showed that more than 50 % of respondents thought that, in general, the agencies' outputs *met their needs* to a large or to some extent (see Figure 4 in Annex 5), a finding confirmed by the public consultation. *User satisfaction* was also generally high and 60-90 % of respondents felt that the outputs of an agency were of very good or good quality. This finding was corroborated in interviews, surveys, the public consultation and the agencies' own user satisfaction surveys.

There were some differences across different fields in each agency. For example, **Eurofound's** performance on living conditions and industrial relations was evaluated somewhat reservedly, whereas open public consultation respondents and most interviewees cited *working conditions and sustainable work* as its most important and useful area, which was corroborated by stakeholder surveys (Figure 3, Annex 5). Most of the surveyed stakeholders from the Commission, national governments, social partners and international organisations noted high scientific and methodological quality as the most valued characteristics of the agency's outputs. This is supported by Eurofound's user satisfaction survey, which rated Eurofound's scientific rigorousness, neutrality and uniqueness⁶⁵ highly. Stakeholder satisfaction data over time also shows that the quality and usability of outputs have improved since 2011.

However, *there is room to improve several quality aspects*, particularly the *readability and focus* of the agency's reports, mainly for users with a non-academic background and for non-native English speakers. Improvements to *quality/reliability* of some of the outputs produced by the *network of national correspondents*⁶⁶ are also needed. The persistent problems mostly concerned geographic coverage of some Member States and reliability: the specific information the network produces did not cover all Member States evenly or was not always sufficiently reliable e.g. due to a lack of references. Dissatisfaction was voiced by stakeholders over cases where some Member States were covered by experts located in other countries (e.g. a Swedish organisation covered Finland and a Luxemburg-based company covered Bulgaria). Finally, Eurofound has decreased the number of *translations*, which was perceived negatively by some national stakeholders.

⁶⁵ Eurofound Annual User Satisfaction Survey 2016, Final Report (January 2017); N=411.

⁶⁶ Which is an important quality issue as the network's outputs are used in all areas of Eurofound's research. Following the mid-term evaluation of current Network of Correspondents in 2016, the agency put in place a number of quality control measures. However, their effectiveness cannot yet be assessed in this evaluation.

Cedefop's stakeholders also valued the quality of the agency's outputs highly. Around 70-90 % of stakeholder survey respondents (depending on a specific output) perceived its outputs as being of very good or good quality. Cedefop's services met the needs of its stakeholders in terms of their usefulness, relevance and quality. This was corroborated by interviewees. As for Eurofound, there is still room to improve the readability of the agency's reports, particularly for users with a non-academic background and for non-native English speakers, and to improve the focus on policy support. Cedefop's country reports were rated highly, but a sizeable minority of stakeholders were concerned about the quality of some of the outputs such as the Mobility Scoreboard and the opinion survey on VET in Europe (projects that were still at a development stage during the evaluation period). Another issue highlighted by Eurofound and Cedefop stakeholders alike was the timing — or delays — concerning publications of some outputs (e.g. research projects with a long multiannual timeline). This created a risk that the evidence gathered had insufficient policy relevance when finally presented.

Around 80 % of stakeholder survey respondents evaluated the quality of the main **EU-OSHA** outputs as good or very good. Users were most satisfied with the online risk assessment tools, checklists and guides. EU-OSHA's Foresight studies, and outputs promoting cooperation among Member States and stakeholders and stimulating dialogue on OSH were less appreciated. Stakeholders generally considered that their needs were addressed adequately, but some cited several areas for improvement. Data and reports were useful to scientific/technical users but *less useful to social partner organisations* because of language barriers and lack of translations. Meanwhile, some focal points expected more services from the agency. In particular, Member States with less developed tripartite structures called for more guidance in setting standards.

Most of **ETF**'s outputs were very positively assessed in the 2016 specific ETF evaluation, where evidence for ETF was collected following its own methodology. Stakeholders (governing board, partner countries, EU institutions and staff) were positive overall about the useful contribution of the agency's outputs to governance, systems and policymaking, the development of VET and quality assurance, and in qualifications and qualifications systems. However, ETF outputs made a more limited contribution to developments in partner countries in labour market systems/skills for employability and entrepreneurial learning/business skills, as in those areas ETF focused on monitoring and less on concrete visible direct measures at country level. In particular, country stakeholders found that the Small Business Act assessment was insufficient to drive policy development in entrepreneurial skills and that additional action is needed.

As a conclusion, Table 3 below highlights the agencies' outputs *based on a combination of two criteria: frequency of use and output quality*⁶⁷.

⁶⁷ There are always outputs that are used more widely and/ or assessed better than others. However, the evidence is not sufficient to argue that lower ranked outputs do not add value. Some outputs may be used less because their target group is simply smaller. Also, the overall quality scores of the agencies' outputs are in general terms high, even for the lower ranked.

Table 3: Use and quality of the agencies' outputs

	Top ranked outputs	Least ranked outputs
Cedefop	Country reports, EU-wide study reports, thematic research reports	Opinion survey on VET in Europe, online VET bibliographies, Mobility Scoreboard
Eurofound	European Working Conditions Survey, European Quality of Life Survey, European Company Survey, Eurofound News	EurWork topical updates, foundation Focus
EU-OSHA	Risk assessment tools, networking knowledge tools, information on OSH risks and prevention	Outputs of programmes outside the EU, outputs of EU cooperation projects, Foresight studies
ETF	Outputs in: (i) governance, systems and policy-making; (ii) vocational education, training provision and quality assurance; and (iii) qualifications and qualifications systems	Outputs in: (i) labour market systems/skills for employability; and (ii) entrepreneurial learning/enterprise skills

Sources: PPMI/ECORYS supporting study: contractors' own analysis based on stakeholder surveys, questions on frequency of use and quality; Eurofound's performance monitoring system.

5.1.2. GENERATING IMPACTS

The agencies' achievement of their general objectives and impacts has been assessed in terms of their *contribution to the design of EU policies* in their areas of activity. The ETF's impacts are understood as its contribution to the development and increased effectiveness of VET systems in the partner countries. Although several sources and methods helped to measure such impacts, the most prominent was detailed process tracing carried out in agency-specific case studies. In the evaluation period, the agencies had policy impact at European level and, *in the cases of Cedefop and the ETF, also at national level* (in non-EU countries in the case of the ETF). Relevant cases have been identified in which the agencies' contribution was especially valuable to, and used by, policy-makers.

- a) Eurofound** served as an important provider of timely and unique knowledge to inform EU policy. For example, it provided evidence that fed into the development of the Council Recommendation establishing a *Youth Guarantee* (see Box 1) and the *Work-life balance* initiative⁶⁸. Its findings fed into several European Parliament (EP) resolutions⁶⁹ and Commission staff working documents⁷⁰ on

⁶⁸ See detailed Eurofound case studies in Annex 13 to the PPMI/ECORYS study.

⁶⁹ European Parliament resolution of 11 September 2013 on implementation of the EU Youth Strategy 2010-2012 (2013/2073(INI)); European Parliament report on how best to harness the job creation potential of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (2015/2320(INI)); European Parliament report on refugees: social inclusion and integration into the labour market (2015/2321(INI)).

⁷⁰ European Commission (2012), Commission staff working document accompanying the proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee.

labour market participation. In the area of *working conditions*, examples of policy documents referring to Eurofound include:

- the EP Resolution on creating labour market conditions favourable to work-life balance⁷¹;
- the EP study on differences in men's and women's work, care and leisure time⁷²; and
- a Commission staff working document on work-life balance⁷³.

The Agency's data on *industrial relations* were used as evidence in the EP report on how best to harness the job creation potential of SMEs⁷⁴, and data on *living conditions* fed into the EP study on differences in men's and women's work, care and leisure time.

Box 1. Example of evidence of Eurofound's contribution to EU policies from case studies⁷⁵

Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee was one of the major initiatives in Eurofound's area of expertise in the evaluation period. The case study confirmed that Eurofound contributed to the development of the Youth Guarantee by *providing very timely and unique information on young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs)* when the Commission and the European Parliament were considering the initiative. Eurofound's research on NEETs received wide media attention in Europe and elsewhere. Ultimately, its contribution was continuous and fed into all stages of the policy cycle: identification of an issue, choice of policy solution, evaluation and (to a lesser degree) implementation. This was confirmed not only by policy officials from the Commission, European Parliament and Council, but also by significant quotation of Eurofound in the policy documents.

- b) **Cedefop** generated impact by informing EU policies in the area of VET and adult learning, to contribute to labour market integration and social inclusion (e.g. the Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning, a Skills Agenda for Europe and Upskilling Pathways: new opportunities for adults) and case studies explored **Cedefop's** contribution to the European Semester (policy reporting on VET). Cedefop supported the Commission, Member States and its stakeholders through various activities and research projects, and by participating in high-level meetings and events. *It had policy impact at both European and national level*. Its move towards *increasing support to Member States* was evident during the evaluation period — the case study on the *apprenticeship review project* showed that recommendations in the review informed reforms in

⁷¹<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A8-2016-0253+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

⁷² European Parliament (2016), *Differences in men's and women's work, care and leisure time*. Study for European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and commissioned, supervised and published by the Policy Department for Citizen's Rights and Constitutional Affairs.

⁷³ European Commission (2016), *Second-stage consultation of the social partners at European level under Article 154 TFEU on possible action addressing the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and caregivers*. (SWD (2016) 145 final, 12.7.2016).

⁷⁴<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A8-2016-0248+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

⁷⁵ See complete Eurofound case studies in Annex 13 to the PPMI/ECORYS supporting study.

two Member States (Lithuania and Malta) and that the results of this work by Cedefop at national level could be more visible at European level⁷⁶.

Box 2. Evidence of Cedefop's impact from case studies

Forecasting skill demand and supply

A 2013 study found that Cedefop's work on skills supply and demand forecasts for Europe was recognised by different EU institutions and EU-level stakeholders and its results were cited in several EU strategic documents⁷⁷. The work constituted a primary source of evidence for developing and supporting a number of EU policies on education and training, employment, industry, immigration and qualification recognition⁷⁸. Another indication of Cedefop's performance in making forecasting data available to the public is the success of the *Skills Panorama portal*⁷⁹, initially developed by the Commission (and taken over by Cedefop) for policy-makers, policy experts and intermediaries advising citizens on labour market policy. Such portals provide an attractive user interface that enables Cedefop's skills and labour market department to disseminate its research results better. The Cedefop stakeholders who were interviewed pointed out that interactive data presentation and visualisation, as featured in the Skills Panorama, are a highly effective way of making skills intelligence data more accessible. *The Skills Panorama exemplified how research results can be used to inform policy-makers' decisions and advice on education and training policy.*

c) **EU-OSHA** contributed to the Communication on *Safer and healthier work for all — modernisation of the EU occupational safety and health legislation and policy* (see Box 3), the Green Employment Initiative and the pilot project on 'Safer and healthier work at any age — occupational safety and health (OSH) in the context of an ageing workforce'. The Commission's representatives acknowledged these contributions. The 'Green Jobs' case study revealed some examples of research findings that fed into national policy debates. Nevertheless, although the Agency's impact on EU policy-making is not negligible, it is different from that of Eurofound and Cedefop in the sense that *EU-OSHA's prime role is in policy implementation*. The use of its outputs is mostly restricted to the OSH community, and rarely reaches other audiences⁸⁰.

Box 3. Evidence of EU-OSHA's impact from case studies

Safer and healthier work for all — modernisation of EU OSH legislation and policy

In 2011, the Commission initiated an *ex post* evaluation of EU OSH legislation. Throughout the process, both during the evaluation and during the subsequent drafting of the above Communication, EU-OSHA's input was extensively used and quoted. The *European survey of enterprises on new and emerging risks (ESENER)* was an important data source.

EU-OSHA is the designated organisation for implementing several activities envisaged in the

⁷⁶ See detailed Cedefop case studies in Annex 12 to the PPMI/ECORYS supporting study.

⁷⁷ Cedefop (2013), *Mid-term skills supply and demand forecast — policy implications of the skills forecasts*.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ <http://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en>. Skills Panorama aims to improve Europe's capacity to assess and anticipate skill needs and to match skill supply and demand better across Europe.

⁸⁰ See detailed EU OSHA case studies in Annex 14 to the PPMI/ECORYS supporting study.

Communication, because of its key role in disseminating knowledge, information and practical tools. In 2017, it contributed to the Commission's *practical guidance* document for employers, which seeks to help companies get the most out of obligatory risk assessments, preventive measures and training.

d) The 2016 ETF evaluation highlights some of the agency's outstanding examples of impacts in partner countries (e.g. ETF's design of a retraining programme for the unemployed in Georgia, its school development project in central Asia and the Medenine pilot project in Tunisia). These projects all contributed very positively to building capacity. These findings have been corroborated by the partner country stakeholders surveyed — 67 % thought that ETF was the main driver of change or provided important support in governance, systems and policy-making developments and 55 % thought the same about VET provision and quality assurance, and qualifications and qualification systems. However, smaller partner countries evaluated the impacts more positively than large ones and *there is a gap between the high quality of ETF activities and the lack of sustainability* of subsequent policy reforms. The 2016 evaluation found that weak levels of policy implementation and a lack of sustainability are due to partner countries' capacity to absorb ETF interventions, but the Agency could do more to identify and mitigate these obstacles to improve the impact and sustainability.

Box 4. Evidence of ETF's impact from case studies

In Georgia, the ETF helped to shape the retraining programme for the unemployed on the basis of the country's needs and made recommendations for policy development to improve and extend training for the unemployed. It conducted a feasibility study to assess the capacity of particular VET institutions to carry out the training and provided recommendations. The government trained the first 400 people in 2015.

The ETF's school development project in central Asia involved the creation of teacher training modules that resulted in more internship opportunities, more partnerships between schools and the private sector, better internal governance of schools, higher rates of student and community satisfaction with the programmes, and increased enrolment rates.

A specific case study of the pilot project in the Medenine region of Tunisia showed that the ETF was instrumental in building capacity among VET stakeholders there. It played an important role in changing the way Tunisian stakeholders think, act and envision the VET system, ensuring that the worlds of work and education talk to each other. However, despite these positive effects, Tunisia has not benefited fully from the outcomes of the project or sustained them in the medium and long term, as there has been no upscaling (even locally/marginally).

For the four agencies, the *key preconditions for achieving impacts* were:

- timely provision of evidence that is not available elsewhere;
- a proactive approach, which includes anticipating the needs of the Commission and other clients;
- working together with policy-makers; and
- having a receptive context, which is often beyond the agencies' control.

EU-OSHA's impact was constrained by its limited visibility in Member States beyond the organisations directly concerned, limited dissemination of information by some focal points, limited effectiveness of networking between Member States and stakeholders, and challenges in reaching employers at workplace level, especially micro and small enterprises.

The ability to adjust the annual work programme was crucial in allowing **Cedefop** to have an impact in the EU-level policy process. Its contribution to the 2016 Skills Agenda for Europe resulted in additional workload and reprioritisation of some of its operational activities, but also increased its policy relevance.

The key issues limiting **ETF's** impact were the mixed capacity of partner countries to absorb ETF's interventions and the sustainability of subsequent policy reforms⁸¹.

5.1.3. AGENCIES' ADAPTATION TO CHANGES.

The evaluation period (2011-2016) was marked by the economic crisis and subsequent recovery, the migration crisis, long-term ageing of the workforce, changing working patterns, new forms of employment, and technological change. The agencies had to adapt, in some cases very rapidly, to changes in EU policy and the political/socioeconomic situation in order to generate evidence that could feed into policy-making. The assessment found⁸² evidence of cases of fast adaptation/response by the agencies, where new issues were reflected in their outputs and activities (see Table 4). It also found evidence of constraints that prevented or slowed down adaptation (e.g. the agencies approached the migration crisis, a strategic challenge to the EU, differently and in a fragmented way).

Table 4: Examples of the agencies' responses to new needs in the evaluation period

Agency	Example of a response
Cedefop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One example of an <i>ad hoc</i> request being fulfilled is Cedefop's work on the Skills Agenda for Europe. Here, Cedefop contributed substantially to the Commission's proposals, particularly: (i) the staff working document supporting the revision of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF); (ii) the proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a skills guarantee (adopted as a Council Recommendation on 'Upskilling Pathways'); and (iii) the Blueprint for Sectoral Collaboration on Skills. The agency also, commented on the draft Europass Decision and the related staff working document. Due to its work in 2015-2016 on EU-level policy initiatives such as the New Skills Agenda, the Skills Panorama, the European Alliance for Apprenticeships and the Council Recommendation on 'Upskilling Pathways', Cedefop postponed other projects (of lower priority) in its work programme. Cedefop initiated a peer-learning activity in April 2016 on 'How to make visible and value the skills and competences of refugees' under the Dutch presidency of the Council, in the

⁸¹ More detailed evidence on the agencies' impacts is provided in section 1.1.1 of the PPMI/ECORYS final report and in its annexes on case studies.

⁸² Based on desk research, survey and interview data.

	<p>context of the refugee crisis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cedefop provided input and support to Malta in the context of an apprenticeship review (2015)⁸³. This helped the country to reform its apprenticeship system and was used as a basis for new national legislation⁸⁴.
Eurofound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eurofound's work programme changed in the 2009-2012 programming period in response to the shift in policy priorities due to the financial and economic crisis. The Agency identified four priority themes, under which a limited number of new projects for 2012 were clustered. • Eurofound organised several events and produced a number of relevant policy reports on the integration of migrants in the labour markets and other related topics. • In reaction to inquiries from stakeholders, Eurofound broadened the scope of the study on new forms of employment. • Eurofound introduced a new research project on Europe's refugee crisis⁸⁵ into its 2016 annual work programme. • The Brussels liaison office was involved in networking with policy-makers to gain a better understanding of their evidence needs.
EU-OSHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU-OSHA organised activities around the topic of active ageing in line with EU policy in this area, following a specific request by the European Parliament. • In the course of 2014, the allocation of resources in the work programme was adapted to respond to emerging needs, in particular to address the Commission's requests to collaborate actively in the preparation of the new EU OSH policy framework and the post-evaluation of EU legislation on health and safety at work. • EU-OSHA developed a specific section on OSH and young people on its website in the context of youth unemployment. • It paid more attention to the costs and benefits of OSH and prepared specific studies and publications, in the context of the economic and financial crisis.
ETF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite the political tensions that erupted in Egypt in January 2011, the ETF was able to adjust its priorities and activities on VET development, adapting its projects to the level of commitment of the representatives of the Egyptian government and stakeholders (with an emphasis on activities to improve employability). • A large number of requests are received each year from a broad range of DGs and EU Delegations. Typically, around 10 % of requests are unplanned, which requires the ETF to be very flexible.

Source: Agencies' annual activity reports

⁸³ Cedefop (2015), *Apprenticeship review: Malta — in pursuit of quality and relevance: revitalising apprenticeship*. Thematic country reviews.

⁸⁴ The case study on this issue (PPMI/ECORYS supporting evaluation study) showed that evidence-based recommendations from the review were highly significant in introducing changes. The review process led by Cedefop usefully revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the Maltese system, identified possible actions and facilitated stakeholder dialogue and awareness.

⁸⁵ 'Europe's refugee crisis: Evidence on approaches to labour market integration of refugees' project.

The agencies used a number of tools for *reacting to EU policy needs*. These include *ad hoc* request procedures, changing the scope of specific projects or even multiannual work programmes and, for Eurofound and Cedefop, ‘negative priorities’ and use of the Brussels liaison offices⁸⁶. Nevertheless, *the agencies’ ability to adapt was constrained by several factors*, mostly relevant to **Cedefop**, **Eurofound** and **EU-OSHA**. These were:

- rigidities of early programming and the multiannual programming cycle, with limited resources planned well in advance;
- the long-term nature of research projects (surveys, forecasts);
- the decision-making process within the tripartite governing structures, which is intrinsically slower, as the agencies face a ‘multiple principal’ situation, where views on what projects should gain immediate priority tend to differ between the Member States, social partners and the Commission; and
- continuing budgetary limitations, which prevent agencies from engaging easily with new research topics⁸⁷.

The biggest challenge for the **ETF** is that it operates in the extremely heterogeneous and variable geo-political environment of the partner countries. It also faces budgetary and resources constraints⁸⁸.

5.1.4. ALIGNMENT TO THE COMMON APPROACH

In 2011-2016, the agencies also had to adapt to another major change: the *Common Approach* to the decentralised agencies, which was adopted in 2012 as a more coherent and efficient framework for their functioning and was aimed at making them more coherent, effective, efficient, accountable and transparent. The agencies introduced a number of measures in line with the Common Approach, such as:

- *ex ante* evaluations;
- multiannual programming;
- guidelines on performance monitoring, including a set of key performance indicators (KPIs), an anti-fraud strategy and guidelines on the management of conflicts of interest;
- activity-based budgeting;
- reviews of communication activities;
- collaboration agreements;
- joint procurement; and

⁸⁶ Eurofound and Cedefop increased their presence in Brussels through the liaison offices, although the Cedefop liaison office is rather small (0.6 FTE, as compared with 2 FTE for Eurofound, for example).

⁸⁷ European Parliament (2017), *Discharge 2015: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)*; <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0182+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

⁸⁸ More detailed evidence on the adaptation to changes is provided in Section 1.1.4 of the PPMI/ECORYS final report.

- sharing services with other agencies (see more details in Table 5).

As a result, the agencies' internal structures and activities in 2017 were mostly in line with the objectives of the Common Approach *on coherence, effectiveness, accountability and transparency*. Nonetheless, there were some issues to be addressed, such as the need to improve communication between **EU-OSHA**'s focal points and its governing board and some ambiguities on the formal position, roles and responsibilities of the deputy directors of **Eurofound** and **Cedefop**. The size and composition of the agencies' governing boards do not follow the model suggested by the Common Approach. Their current structure reflects the tripartite nature of the agencies and was kept unchanged in the Commission's proposal to amend their founding regulations (see Section 5.2.4. on governance).

Table 5: Examples of action that the agencies took to comply with the Common Approach

Agency	Example
Cedefop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributed to the work of the EU agencies' performance development network (PDN), which develops templates, guidelines and toolkits as a follow-up to the Commission's roadmap on the Common Approach. • Implemented an internal review of its performance measurement system in 2014. • Adopted an anti-fraud strategy, following the workshops and agency-specific assistance organised by OLAF in 2014. • The first multiannual work programme in the new, activity-based format was adopted for 2017-2020.
Eurofound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had already been implementing <i>ex ante</i> evaluations of its multiannual work programmes. • Had already implemented provisions on follow-up evaluations and audits (before the adoption of the Common Approach). • Endorsed guidelines on performance monitoring, including KPIs for measuring directors' performance. • Negotiated and concluded a comprehensive headquarters agreement with the Irish government.
EU-OSHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became compliant with Common Approach provisions with the introduction of activity-based management in 2012. • All programming documents became activity-based. • The Agency's performance is measured by internal and external indicators, which are published. • Started activity-based budgeting in 2013.
ETF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has been reporting on its activities under the priority areas. • Reported collaborative activities with other agencies in the annual reports and the 2014-2017 mid-term perspective. • Concluded collaboration agreements with Eurofound and Cedefop.

Source: Agencies' annual reports; interviews.

5.2. EFFICIENCY

The evaluation analysed the efficiency of the agencies in terms of:

- 1) budgetary resources;
- 2) staff resources;
- 3) internal processes and organisational structures;
- 4) the operation of the governing board; and
- 5) Member States' compliance with the headquarters agreements.

5.2.1. COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BALANCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL BUDGETS

Cost-effectiveness: During the evaluation period, the agencies demonstrated a high level of efficiency overall. Despite the budget-saving imperatives and decreasing staff numbers, the use of their outputs increased throughout the period and user satisfaction remained high (see previous sections). In a context of limited budgetary resources, the agencies adopted several measures to increase efficiency. They adapted by *finding internal efficiencies and streamlining where possible*. For example, they put in place cost-saving measures such as joint procurement with other EU decentralised agencies, fewer translations (to save on publishing costs), fewer events, a paperless policy (e.g. EU-OSHA replaced paper workflows with online administrative procedures), reallocating staff from administrative to operational roles (e.g. Cedefop made some savings in staff and administrative costs and directed them to operational expenditure) and shared costs at output level (e.g. Eurofound signed an agreement to launch the European Company Survey in cooperation with Cedefop, sharing the costs equally). Nevertheless, *there is still potential for further cross-agency learning, simplification, electronic workflows and sharing services with other agencies or with the Commission* to improve the agencies' efficiency (see section on coherence).

Balance of operational and administrative expenditure: One indication of the cost-effectiveness of decentralised agencies is the extent to which expenditure is directed to 'front-line' operational activities rather than to administration. The balance of operational, administrative and staff budgets differs between agencies⁸⁹ (see Figure 2). In particular, EU-OSHA devotes more resources than the other agencies to Title 3 (operational expenditure), e.g. in 2016, Title 3 accounted for 68 % of EU-OSHA's budget, while for Cedefop, Eurofound and the ETF it ranged from 26 % to 35 %. This can be explained by the agencies' differing remits and modes of operation and staffing levels. EU-OSHA relied more on contracting-out to gather and disseminate information and develop tools to promote good practice in the management of occupational safety and health. Meanwhile, the ETF used a higher proportion of its budget for internal staff costs, as it provides its expertise to the partner countries through inputs from its own staff.

⁸⁹ The agencies' budget has been divided into three categories:

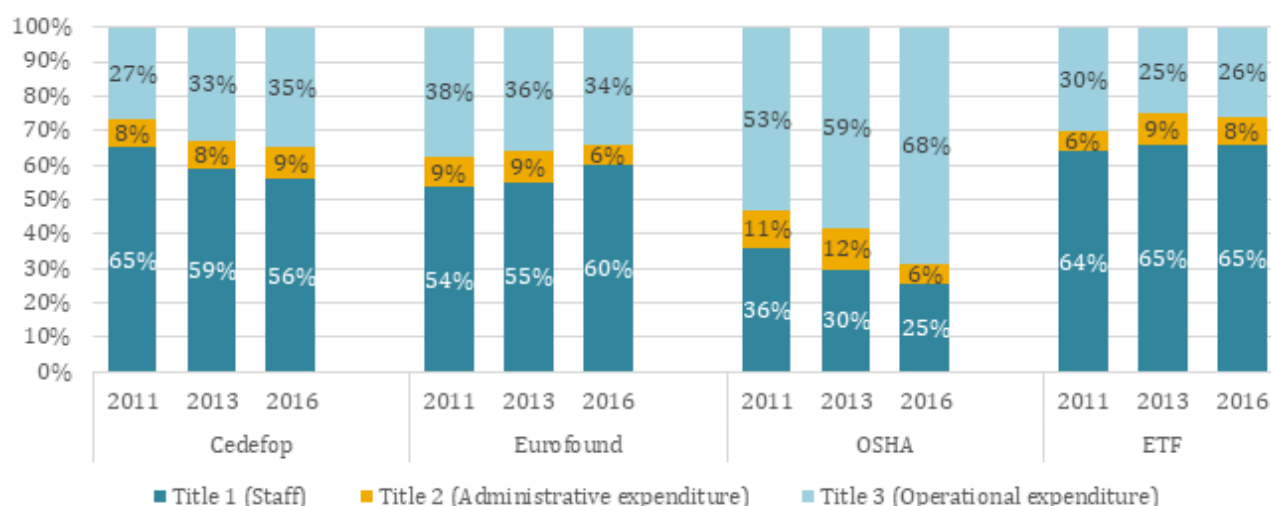
Title 1: Staff;

Title 2: Administrative (infrastructure, maintenance of buildings, equipment, furniture, software); and

Title 3: Operational expenditure (key activities, including business travel, meetings and interpretation, pilot, studies and projects, and communication).

The benchmarking of administrative costs (Title 2) with similar agencies such as the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (13 % of administrative costs in 2016), the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (10 %) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (14 %) shows that the four DG EMPL agencies spend relatively less on administration. However, EU-OSHA's administrative expenditure per staff member is relatively high, not least because it is smaller and administrative responsibilities do not decrease in proportion to staffing levels⁹⁰

Figure 2: Staff, administrative and operational expenditure (% of agency budget)



Source: Annual activity reports.

5.2.2. STAFF RESOURCES AND WORKLOAD

This section assesses the extent to which staff resources and workload were appropriate to deliver the agencies' objectives and activities efficiently and effectively.

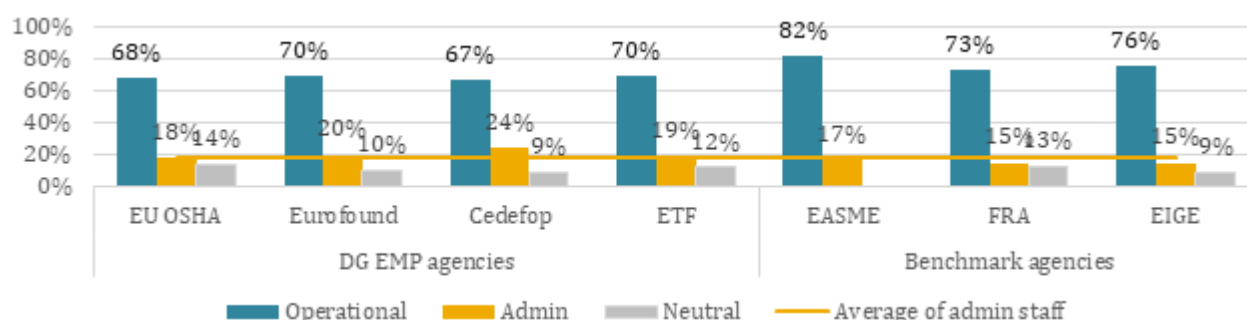
Balance between operational and administrative staff: While administrative staff are in roles that are essential to an agency's performance, such as human resource management, finance, ICT, legal matters and evaluation, it is expected that such roles will be streamlined to maximise the proportion of staff employed in operational roles. Overall, the agencies possessed a balanced mix of human resources, with approximately a 70:30 ratio of operational to administrative and neutral staff. This balance remained relatively stable throughout the evaluation period and was reasonable given the agencies' small size⁹¹.

Figure 3: Operational, administrative and neutral⁹² staff ratio in 2016

⁹⁰ More detailed evidence on the agencies' budgets is provided in Section 1.2.1 of the final report.

⁹¹ Being small agencies, they had to comply with the minimum administrative requirements applicable to all agencies, so in relative terms they tend to have a higher ratio of administrative staff.

⁹² According to the methodology for agencies' job screening, *neutral staff* handle accounting, finance, contract and quality management, internal audit and linguistic activities. The agencies used this methodology in their annual activity reports.



Source: Annual activity reports 2016.

Cedefop has a higher than average proportion of staff working on administrative matters (24 % against an average of 18 %). Comparing this with the three agencies operating in related policy areas⁹³, there appears to be some scope for cutting back on administrative staff.

The staff's workload has been increasing due to the above-mentioned 10 % reduction in staff numbers (which was accompanied by an increase in weekly working hours from 37.5 to 40 hours across EU institutions). The supporting study, staff surveys and interview data show that around a third of staff in **Cedefop** and **Eurofound** felt that their workload was too high, human resources within their department or unit too low and/or the workload was unbalanced over the course of a year. Interviews demonstrated that staff reductions and increased use of fixed-term contracts created concern and a feeling of insecurity among agency staff.

Overall, in the governing board survey, members expressed mixed views on whether the agencies' current staff and financial resources were *sufficient* to achieve the agencies' objectives. While over 50 % of the respondents believed that physical resources were sufficient, they had a rather mixed view on financial and human resources. Less than half of the **EU-OSHA** and **Eurofound** members believed that human and financial resources were sufficient, as compared with 55 % and 50 % in **Cedefop**. The 2016 **ETF** evaluation concluded that ETF's resources were sufficient to finance current activities, but insufficient to extend the current forms of support to all partner countries.

However, despite budgetary constraints and decreasing staff numbers, the use of agencies' outputs increased over the evaluation period and user satisfaction remained high, which is an indicator of *increased efficiency*. Staff reductions were implemented mainly through retirement and the agencies aimed to manage changes in such a way that reductions affected administrative staff much more than staff involved in research/core functions. Nevertheless, the budgetary and staff constraints sometimes required compromises on quality and outreach (e.g. in 2016, Eurofound reduced spending for the network of correspondents).

The public consultation results corroborate the overall positive assessment on efficiency. An average of 45 % of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the agencies were efficient and that their current governance arrangements were suitable to fulfil their objectives effectively and efficiently, as compared with less than 9 % who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents who declared a role

⁹³ EASME, FRA and EIGE.

or involvement with the agencies were more likely to consider that they were efficient and less likely to respond ‘do not know/cannot answer’⁹⁴. Most respondents who provided open replies emphasised that the agencies were efficient considering their resources. The governance arrangements, including the tripartite nature of the agencies’ governing boards and their mandate, mission and thematic remits, were also considered important and assessed positively by most respondents providing open replies, although they also mentioned points for improvement (see Section 5.2.4).

5.2.3. INTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES AND MECHANISMS

In 2011-2016, Eurofound, Cedefop and ETF underwent *internal structural changes* to streamline their internal structure, reduce internal overlaps, improve planning and horizontal cooperation, and encourage a more cost-effective use of resources. No changes took place in EU-OSHA. **Eurofound** introduced a new role of research coordinator and industrial relations adviser, and cut the number of research units (from five to three). **Cedefop** increased the number of departments (from two to three), structuring them around strategic clusters of its operational activities. The **ETF** was restructured around priority themes/strategic projects, instead of geographical departments. Eurofound and Cedefop strengthened their Brussels liaison offices in order to monitor policy changes, sensitise stakeholders to potential contributions from the agencies and better monitor the impact of their services.

These changes contributed somewhat to increasing the agencies’ efficiency and effectiveness, due to better internal coordination and cooperation. Nevertheless, in the case of Eurofound, the internal structure still appears complex and the units’ clustering is not well adapted to current research needs⁹⁵. The management committee is too large to act as an efficient forum for decision-making. Also, Eurofound and Cedefop⁹⁶ have a dual management structure (director and deputy director) that is not in line with the common approach, given their nature and relatively small size⁹⁷. The evaluation also points out that the deputy director’s role and responsibilities are not well defined, creating ambiguities that may affect the agencies’ effectiveness and efficiency. The revised founding regulation for

⁹⁴ More than 52 % of all respondents did not answer the questions on the efficiency of Eurofound or Cedefop, while the proportion for EU-OSHA was 41 %.

⁹⁵ The supporting study concludes that Eurofound’s research is becoming more and more thematic and project-based. Therefore, there is no obvious functional reason to keep it under specific units, e.g. ‘employment and change’, ‘working conditions and industrial relations’ and ‘living conditions and quality of life’. The dividing lines between such units and themes covered by them are becoming a formality. Thematic and project-based teams are clearly more functional.

⁹⁶ The Cedefop founding regulation did not provide for the post of deputy director. In practice, however, the governing board has always considered it necessary to appoint a deputy director, even if the function is not formally recognised as a senior management position from a statutory point of view.

⁹⁷ For a more detailed assessment of the agencies’ internal structures, see Section 1.2.4 of the supporting study final report.

Eurofound maintains the function of deputy director, while making the director responsible for his/her appointment⁹⁸.

The agencies took a number of internal measures to *streamline internal processes/procedures* and *improve programming, monitoring, reporting and evaluation*. There is evidence of revision of internal procedures through internal working groups (e.g. Cedefop), process improvement on the financial circuit (e.g. Eurofound), review of procurement processes to make them more efficient (Eurofound) and paperless policy (Cedefop and EU-OSHA). Nevertheless, internal streamlining should be an ongoing rather than one-off process and interviews with staff revealed remaining internal process inefficiencies (e.g. staff using several ICT platforms to input or report their information, rather than just one).

The agencies possess *adequate mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency* vis-à-vis stakeholders and the general public. Their performance mechanisms were improved during the evaluation period in line with the Common Approach (see Section 5.1.4), e.g. the preparation of annual and multiannual work programmes, publicly available annual activity reports, the monitoring of a set of KPIs and multilingual websites. However, there is still room for improvement:

- a comparison of the agencies' *performance measurement systems* showed that they have been reporting similar performance indicators, but there is room to better align process-related indicators between agencies. The most notable inconsistencies concern monitoring and reporting on the delivery of the work programme (e.g. the annual Cedefop reports presented some highly aggregated indicators)⁹⁹; and
- further analysis of the mechanisms indicated a high degree of complexity, requiring significant effort from the agencies' staff. The results of the staff survey indicated that 57 % of Cedefop staff, 44 % of Eurofound staff and 25 % of EU-OSHA staff found that tasks related to programming, monitoring, reporting and evaluation tend to interfere with their primary tasks¹⁰⁰. Staff do not feel sufficiently informed about the results of internal monitoring and how data on their performance is used in decision-making and management. In the case of EU-OSHA, there is a need to improve further the information flow between governing board members and focal points in Member States in order to reduce communication gaps.

5.2.4. SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNING BOARDS

The tripartite structure and composition of the *governing boards* of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA is not in line with the Common Approach. Each governing board has 87 members, including social partners and government representatives from all Member States and Commission representatives. The Common Approach suggests that the management board should be limited in

⁹⁸ The revision of the founding regulations maintains the post in Eurofound, but the deputy will now be appointed by and be accountable to the Executive Director. The legislators confirmed the absence of such a formal post in Cedefop, while stipulating that the Executive Director decides on the 'deputising functions' in the agency.

⁹⁹ In particular, the indicators 'policy documents citing Cedefop work' and 'participation in Presidency events and meetings of senior stakeholders or which support policy'.

¹⁰⁰ Performance monitoring depends on staff logging their hours for specific projects, which puts a certain administrative burden on them.

size¹⁰¹, so that it can function as a true supervisory body, rather than a consultative assembly. The supporting study showed that *the current system has both advantages and disadvantages*.

- ✓ On the positive side, the supporting study found that tripartism in the agencies' governance has benefits in terms of acceptance of their work and its usage and dissemination. Stakeholders (especially social partners) are used to operating under the present arrangements, so interviewees, survey respondents and participants in the validation seminar evaluated positively the tripartite composition of the board, arguing that it adds credibility to the agencies' research in the eyes of both employers and employees. The social partners also act as a vehicle to promote agencies' work at national level and use it in national policy debates, although *this did not translate sufficiently into greater use of the various outputs of the agencies at national level*.
- ✗ On the negative side, attendance rates, overall engagement and levels of understanding of the role of the governing board and the specific matters on its agenda vary among the members. There is also a 'multiple principals' situation, as the social partners, the Member States and the Commission tend to have different views on the agencies' objectives and priorities. However, the bureaux (the executive boards of each agency, responsible for operational supervision and preparing the governing board meetings) have played an important positive role, contributing to the effectiveness and timeliness of decision-making within the boards¹⁰².

5.2.5. HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE AGENCY AND THE HOST MEMBER STATE

EU-OSHA staff demonstrated the highest rate of satisfaction with regard to the fulfilment of obligations by the *host state, in their case Spain*. **ETF** staff were also satisfied or very satisfied (Italy). **Eurofound**'s representatives were mostly satisfied, but expressed mixed views on the transport connections available (Ireland). **Cedefop**'s staff identified issues such as the availability of multi-lingual and European-oriented schooling and transport connections, and even the condition of the Agency's building, although the Greek government has made progress on the latter¹⁰³.

5.3. RELEVANCE

5.3.1. AGENCIES' RESPONSE TO NEEDS

The relevance criterion assesses whether the agencies' mandates and objectives corresponded to needs, from both a top-down and bottom-up perspective. This criterion was always assessed *within the boundaries of the current agencies' mandates*. The *top-down* perspective assesses whether the agencies responded to the policy needs set out in strategic EU documents. The *bottom-up* perspective assesses the extent to which their activities were informed by the needs of their stakeholders.

¹⁰¹ According to the common approach, the managing board of an agency should consist of one representative from each Member State, two representatives from the Commission, one member designated by the European Parliament (where appropriate) and a 'fairly limited' number of stakeholder's representatives (where appropriate).

¹⁰² The role of this body has been evaluated very positively by the agencies' stakeholders and recognised as the driving force for more effective decision-making. Over 70 % of the surveyed board members agreed that the bureau ensured quicker strategic decision-making.

¹⁰³ For further details on the fulfilment of obligations by the host state, see Section 1.2.6 of the supporting study final report.

The conclusion is that the mandates and objectives of the four agencies *were relevant in 2011-2016 from both perspectives.*

From the top-down perspective, the agencies' mandates and objectives corresponded to the political priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy and President Juncker's political guidelines, which reflect the most pressing socioeconomic needs within the EU. The agencies responded to new emerging policy needs by designing their multiannual work programmes to reflect key policy documents. Therefore, *from the top-down perspective, their objectives were commensurate with the EU's policy needs in 2011-2016.*

Table 6 shows that **Cedefop** and **Eurofound** each responded to eight EU policy priorities. **EU-OSHA** came next, with two areas of action from the Europe 2020 strategy and two priorities from President Juncker's political guidelines, in line with the narrower thematic scope of its work.

The **ETF** is a special case, as it focuses on the external dimension of EU policies and its Global Agenda, where human capital is more of a priority, including *addressing the root causes of migration in non-EU countries*. ETF support to neighbourhood countries for better skilled workforces helps provide people with opportunities to build a future at home and thus helps to reduce uncontrolled migration. In this regard, the ETF played an important role in the *EU's mobility partnerships*, where it was mentioned in the declarations and involved in implementation, especially with North African countries (e.g. Morocco)¹⁰⁴.

Aligning with Commission's priority area of EU as 'a stronger global actor', the ETF's work was highly relevant for:

- *EU enlargement preparations* — the ETF supported the 2015 *EU enlargement strategy*, where youth and education are a key priority, through two main channels:
 - support for accession countries in upgrading their education and training systems¹⁰⁵ (e.g. Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training); and
 - support for Commission services in formulating and monitoring recommendations to enlargement countries in their areas of competence (e.g. assessment of economic reform programmes and employment and social reform programmes in the enlargement countries); and
- the revised *neighbourhood policy* — the *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*¹⁰⁶ mentions the ETF as being active in specific thematic areas such as 'employment and employability: focus on youth', as in both the south and the east the policy has a stronger focus on youth employment and employability. The ETF is one of the main players that

¹⁰⁴ Mobility partnerships include a chapter on skills where ETF provides support through its bilateral country programmes and assessments. ETF has analysed migratory pressures in a majority of EU neighbourhood countries (e.g. Georgia), identifying and assessing support measures and return and circular migration. Also relevant has been ETF's work on *Migrant support measures from an employment and skills perspective (MISMES)*;

http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/publications_by_topic

¹⁰⁵ Including recognition of qualifications, access to mobility programmes and information exchanges.

¹⁰⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/neighbourhood/pdf/key-documents/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf.

supports the achievement of the *Eastern Partnership* deliverables by 2020, focusing on the quality and attractiveness of VET and its responsiveness to labour market needs.

Table 6: Correspondence between EU policy priorities and agencies' objectives

EU policy priorities			Eurofound	Cedefop	EU-OSHA	ETF
Europe 2020 strategy	Pillars	Areas of action				
	Smart growth	Innovation		✓		
		Education, training and life-long learning	✓	✓		
		Digital society				
	Sustainable growth	Competitiveness	✓	✓	✓	
		Climate change and clean, efficient energy				
	Inclusive growth	Employment and skills	✓	✓	✓	
		Fighting poverty	✓	✓		
Juncker Commission political guidelines	Priorities					
	Jobs, growth and investment		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Digital single market					
	Energy union and climate change					
	Internal market		✓	✓	✓	
	Economic and monetary union					
	Free-trade agreement with the USA					
	Justice and fundamental rights		✓			
	New policy on migration		✓	✓		✓
	A stronger global actor					✓
	Union of democratic change					

Source: Compiled by PPMI, based on desk research (complementary source: Deloitte (2016), How do EU agencies and other bodies contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy and to the Juncker Commission agenda?).

The majority of respondents to the public consultation agreed that the agencies played a role in addressing pressing needs in Europe in their areas of activity. They agreed that Eurofound had a role to play in addressing such needs as better working conditions and sustainable work, enhancing living conditions and strengthened social cohesion. A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Cedefop had a role to play in strengthening EU cooperation in VET and linking the worlds of education and training, and the labour market. About two thirds of respondents agreed that EU-OSHA has a role to play in addressing demographic change and in preventing disease by tackling new and emerging occupational risks¹⁰⁷.

From the bottom-up perspective (agencies' relevance to the needs of their stakeholder groups), *the agencies were relevant for their stakeholders in 2011-2016.*

- a) **EU institutions and agencies** — overall, agencies' outputs usually fed into the relevant policy processes and were used for a variety of policy purposes. For instance, the Commission used **Cedefop's** and **Eurofound's** outputs to underpin various proposals in the

¹⁰⁷ More detailed top-down assessment of the extent to which the original objectives still correspond to the needs within the EU is provided in Section 1.3.1., PPMI/Ecorys final report.

relevant policy fields and to prepare country reports for the European Semester. **Cedefop** and the **ETF** also supported the Commission by providing expert contributions to the EQF and the inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning¹⁰⁸. The **ETF** provided Commission services with country-specific knowledge (e.g. the Commission services involved the ETF in thematic meetings with ministries in partner countries). **EU-OSHA** took part in the Commission's comprehensive evaluation of EU OSH legislation (the Framework Directive¹⁰⁹ and 23 related Directives).

Nevertheless, *there is scope for improving the planning and delivery of outputs in relation to the relevant EU policy initiatives*, especially when agencies have to react quickly to support the EU policy-making process and provide input during the preparatory phase of new initiatives. While the agility of the agencies' contribution tends to be restricted by the nature of their *modus operandi* (early planning of work programmes, long-term nature of scientific research and a procedure for accepting *ad hoc* requests), there is a need, particularly for Eurofound and Cedefop, to take further measures to adapt better to be able to feed into the EU policy process.

- b) The agencies' governing boards** include representatives of EU institutions and, in the case of the tripartite agencies, the social partners from all Member States. The governing boards must discuss and approve the agencies' programming documents and stakeholders' needs are well reflected in these documents and in the agencies' activities. Data from surveys confirmed that most governing board members of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA agreed that the agencies' outputs were relevant or very relevant to their work (see Figure 4, Annex 5).

Some representatives of the *social partners* on the governing boards expressed concerns about relevance, signalling that they perceived a growing influence of the Commission on the agencies' (in particular, Cedefop's and Eurofound's) agendas. However, the Commission services do not share this analysis, as the Commission has only a limited weight in the overall composition of the boards and it is in the agencies' interest to deliver work that is relevant to EU policy priorities. In a context of limited resources, the agencies aimed to focus even more on their mission as defined in the founding regulations, i.e. assisting the Commission in developing and implementing EU-level policies. The ETF lacks clarity on how the priorities of different DGs should be balanced in the process of preparing the work programmes.

- c) National stakeholders (Member States/partner countries)**¹¹⁰ — the agencies engage to varying degrees in activities and policy debates at national level and have been relevant overall for national stakeholders. **Cedefop** and **Eurofound** work closely with the Member State holding the Council presidency, to help them to prepare presidency events. The agencies provided support by producing background documents and information on the presidency country, co-organising events with presidency countries to increase the visibility of their

¹⁰⁸ e.g. by participating in several ET 2020 working groups during the evaluation period, such as those on adult learning (2011-2016), on early school leaving (2011-2013) and on schools (2014-2016).

¹⁰⁹ Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work.

¹¹⁰ Partner countries in the case of ETF.

products and participating in international conferences¹¹¹. More importantly, over the evaluation period, **Cedefop** increased its relevance and policy impact at national level by providing relevant contributions (see Box 5). It supported several Member States with thematic country reviews on apprenticeships, which involved close cooperation with national stakeholders and provided evidence-based, tailored recommendations. In 2011-2016, such reviews were completed in Lithuania and Malta. *In Malta, the review was used as a basis for new legislation that reformed the national apprenticeship system*¹¹². The reviews in Greece, Italy and Slovenia were finalised afterwards and the reports published in 2017 (Italy and Slovenia) and 2018 (Greece). **EU-OSHA** differs from other agencies because of its *network of focal points*, through which it aims to establish and increase cooperation among Member States on OSH matters, mainly to raise awareness of OSH risks and promote their prevention, as required under the current legal framework. The agency provided expertise, produced content and communicated at national level through focal points.

The limited number of translations somewhat decreased the usability of the agencies' expertise and some non-English speaking groups and *national stakeholders* would like to have more outputs translated. In view of the cost implications, in the recommendations section it is suggested a demand-driven approach and cost-sharing.

Box 5: Cedefop's contribution to national-level policy developments (evidence from case studies)

Case study on apprenticeship reviews

The supporting evaluation study¹¹³ found that Cedefop's apprenticeship review project *helped to improve the apprenticeship systems in Malta and Lithuania*, particularly as regards reforms of the legal environment. Recommendations from the review inspired changes at system and provider levels. In Lithuania, the stakeholders included in the apprenticeship review continued to engage in systemic policy dialogue during discussions on the new Labour Code and on a new law on vocational education, which will include provisions on apprenticeships. The results of the review itself helped to inform the policy dialogue, as did the *peer learning activities and exchange of good practices among the countries* within the apprenticeship review project.

Case study on skills forecasting

Cedefop's 'Governance of skills anticipation and matching' sub-project has created an international platform for discussing and exchanging good practices in skills forecasting. The main objective was to improve methodological tools and to reinforce effective dissemination and use of forecasting results *in collaboration with key national stakeholders*. The interviewees confirmed that the workshop discussions led to setting up *national skills forecasting mechanisms* (in Malta and Iceland). This set the scene for necessary data collection activities, building inter-institutional collaboration structures between the national authorities and tailoring available information better to forecasting purposes. It reinforced ongoing national discussions and produced a plethora of tools with which to work.

¹¹¹ E.g. Eurofound took part in a conference on 'Trade Unions' role in the promotion of sustainable growth and job creation'.

¹¹² Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Act:

<http://justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lp&itemid=28680&l=1>

¹¹³ See supporting evidence in PPMI/Ecorys (2018) evaluation study, Annex 12: *Cedefop case studies*.

Case study on common transparency tools (EQF)

Cedefop's input was particularly valuable to national stakeholders for developing their national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and referencing them to the EQF¹¹⁴. The national policy-makers developing the NQFs relied heavily on Cedefop's technical and conceptual understanding of qualification frameworks and the Agency provided written comments on the national referencing reports prior to their approval. By maintaining an inventory of NQFs, it also provided valuable comparative information to policy-makers involved in their development.

There is still potential to improve the relevance of the tripartite agencies for national stakeholders, particularly in the case of **Eurofound**, by considering examples from other agencies, such as Cedefop. For example, Eurofound could consider providing similar thematic country reviews in its thematic research fields if the need arises in certain Member States¹¹⁵. However, Eurofound has also been somewhat relevant for national stakeholders, through its *stakeholder enquiry service*, whereby stakeholders can make *ad hoc* requests for research projects. For example, at the request of chemical social partners from Germany, it carried out a study on information and consultation procedures at local and European level¹¹⁶.

Through the Torino process, the **ETF** helps partner countries review the status and progress of their VET. Most ETF-surveyed stakeholders acknowledged the effectiveness of the Torino process, with the degree of acknowledgement varying according to the type of stakeholder (ETF governing board member, ETF staff, EU representative and partner countries)¹¹⁷. Evidence from the 2016 ETF evaluation¹¹⁸ confirms that *ETF activities have met the partner countries' needs*. Survey respondents in partner countries and national stakeholder interviewees overwhelmingly found ETF's activities to be useful/relevant (43 % of survey respondents) or very useful/relevant (56 %) in each partner country (see details per ETF activity in Figure 7, Annex 5). They also agreed that the Torino process is useful in guaranteeing the relevance of ETF action for each partner country, as each one has its own specific context characterised by huge governance, cultural and societal differences. In many countries, the systematic analysis of weaknesses in VET systems was a very important basis for action. For instance, in Serbia, the ETF (though the Torino process) made a pivotal contribution to the formulation of national VET policies.

The case studies confirmed that ETF activities continue to be relevant and useful for partner countries. National stakeholders regard the ETF as a flexible organisation that is able to

¹¹⁴ See evidence from supporting study (Annex 12. *Cedefop case studies*). The *ad hoc* case study included interviews with Commission representatives, Cedefop staff and national stakeholders, mainly representing the governmental bodies implementing the tools at national level.

¹¹⁵ Among Member States, there might be a need for specialised expert support to tackle socioeconomic challenges (e.g. demographic changes, migration, changing working conditions and youth unemployment).

¹¹⁶ Eurofound (2015), *Linking information and consultation procedures at local and European level*.

¹¹⁷ See Figure 6 in Annex 5.

¹¹⁸ Ecorys (2016), *ETF evaluation*.

respond to individual partner countries' needs¹¹⁹. The Tunisian case study (see Box 4) showed the Medenine pilot project to be a good example of the relevance of ETF actions, as it matched Tunisian government objectives. The European Committee of the Regions also highlighted the ETF's longstanding cooperation with local and regional authorities in the Eastern Partnership region to support vocational training and skills management.

- d) **Other stakeholders** who have a direct interest in the agencies' research form a diverse group, including national parliaments, international organisations, research institutes, universities, think-tanks and NGOs. These stakeholders are not involved in developing the agencies' work programmes, but **Eurofound**, **Cedefop** and **EU-OSHA** collect feedback from them on the relevance of their outputs¹²⁰. This feedback, together with the evaluation surveys (Figures 3 and 4, Annex 5) showed that a majority found the agencies' output to be relevant or very relevant for their work.

5.3.2. AGENCIES' RELEVANCE TO EU CITIZENS

The agencies' founding regulations *do not define the general public as a primary target group* (given that the agencies are specialised bodies). Nevertheless, **Cedefop** has one activity targeted at the general public (Europass¹²¹) and some of **EU-OSHA**'s activities are directed at workers/the general public (e.g. practical tools on OSH, communication and awareness-raising campaigns).

In those cases, there is scope for increasing relevance for the general public. For instance, in its strategic planning documents, EU-OSHA has increasingly emphasised the need to address the risks arising from new working patterns (e.g. the prevalence of self-employment). However, citizens who are not directly represented by social partner organisations do not have a say in the work of the Agency (e.g. non-unionised workers, but also minorities who suffer from OSH problems relating to discrimination at work, the young, the old and people with disabilities). The Agency could further explore these groups' needs by conducting research into how they are affected by those occupational and health problems, their coping mechanisms, opportunities and threats, and by feeding these insights into its activities.

Cedefop considered activities to revise Europass that could increase the Agency's relevance to citizens.

¹¹⁹ E.g. one Jordanian stakeholder stated that '*the ETF was responsive to Jordan's needs*', while stakeholders from central Asia noted the relevance of the ETF as one of the few remaining organisations in operation, as recently most large donors have pulled out of the region.

¹²⁰ E.g. Eurofound carries out annual 'user satisfaction surveys' and EU-OSHA conducted stakeholder surveys in 2014.

¹²¹ Europass is a tool to help Europeans make their skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe: <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>

5.4. AGENCIES' ADDED VALUE

To determine the agencies' added value, an assessment was made of the extent to which their contributions are unique¹²² when compared with those of other agencies and organisations, and the extent to which their activities could be substituted by other EU, international or national organisations. *It was found that the agencies added substantial value* in terms of scope, process and role effects.

Scope and process effects (broadening existing actions)

According to the data collected, the *three surveys (European Company Survey, European Quality of Life Survey and European Working Conditions Survey)* and *follow-up research* are the *most unique* outputs of **Eurofound**. They are repeated regularly, provide comparative data across the EU and are easily accessible. No other organisation produces surveys that offer such a combination of geographical scope, thematic coverage and longitudinal data (including the representativeness studies).

Cedefop uses a unique methodology for building EU-wide *skills forecasting models*. In this field, it is considered to be among the pioneers at European and international level, providing detailed data on both national and EU-level skills needs. It has in-depth expertise in the field of skills needs anticipation that would be difficult to substitute. Its monitoring and comparative analysis of VET systems across the EU is also a unique source of expertise highly valued by stakeholders and relied on by policy-makers at both EU and national levels.

EU-OSHA's network of national focal points is unique both in terms of its thematic coverage and its mode of operation.

ETF's most unique feature is the expertise it provides to support human resources development and capacity building in partner countries and thus *the contribution it makes to EU external policy objectives*. Unlike any other donor/aid agency providing time-limited, project-based interventions, it provides a long-term presence in the partner country focused on building capacity on the ground¹²³.

The agencies *create added value through specific thematic knowledge, the quality of data and tools, processes and methodologies, and the European coverage* that they apply in their respective fields. Also, the *tripartite governance* of Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA contributes to their acceptance as objective research institutions among both employees and employers.

Role effects (innovative actions/methods, mainstreaming)

The agencies' outputs are *specifically designed to feed into the EU institutional legislative process*. Universities and *research institutes at national level tend to be further away from the policy process*

¹²² 'Unique' activities in the sense that other organisations or institutions are not concurrently engaged in activities with the same objectives, methodology, target groups and geographical scope.

¹²³ See Ecorys (2016), ETF evaluation, p. 94.

and *their outputs lack EU-wide comparability*. International organisations such as the OECD and the ILO have both the policy focus and comparative perspective, but they are less attuned to EU policy needs, as they have their own stakeholders, objectives and *modus operandi*. In addition, not all EU countries are OECD members¹²⁴.

The *agencies' support for Member States/partner countries* and the methods they use to deliver it were raised in the interviews. Both Cedefop and the ETF provide national authorities on demand with support for building quality VET policy and systems where administrative capacity is weaker.

Cedefop's specific added value lies in its support for *national-level capacity building*. Its apprenticeship reviews were seen as a tool for sharing best practices and developing this field in close cooperation with national-level stakeholders and policy-makers. Stakeholders particularly appreciated this '*knowledge brokerage*' at national level¹²⁵.

Similarly, **EU-OSHA** contributes to and sometimes provides the main source of *high-quality OSH analysis at national level*. National stakeholder interviewees highlighted the OSH assessment tools and the awareness-raising campaigns, in particular the role of EU-OSHA networking activities involving focal points in all Member States, bridging different levels of experience, expertise and resources. EU-OSHA's canvassing of other countries' experience can lead to significant gains. Its actions complement EU policy-making and legislative interventions through support for *awareness-raising and implementation*, making knowledge and good practices accessible to various stakeholders, e.g. by providing practical *tools for risk assessment*¹²⁶.

The **ETF** makes its mark in the context of the EU's enlargement and neighbourhood policies, addressing the needs of different Commission services and partner countries (see Section 5.3.1). It acts as a bridge to translate experience and expertise from Member States and institutions towards partner countries, helping to strengthen the capacity of administrations, VET providers and employers in partner countries. Another key asset of the ETF is its ability to respond to changing development contexts in the partner countries in a flexible, tailored manner by building a VET quality policy. Partner countries' stakeholders consulted in case studies¹²⁷ also highlighted the *complementarity between the ETF and other international organisations*, and the ETF's comparative added value. The intervention logic of other donors is project-based, time-limited and top-down, whereas the ETF is seen as a consistent knowledgeable partner that provides *long-term support and is more systemic and demand-oriented*. Other elements of the ETF's added value are the *geographical and thematic synergies* that are generated between projects and across countries, thanks to the combination of its thematic and country knowledge, and its *participatory approach* with partner countries' stakeholders.

¹²⁴ Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Lithuania, Malta and Romania are not OECD members.

¹²⁵ Another example of capacity-building was Cedefop's support for Member States that did not have a skills forecasting mechanism. Cedefop also provided significant technical assistance to countries referencing their national qualifications frameworks with the EQF (see case studies in Section 5.3.1, Box 5).

¹²⁶ For a more detailed assessment of the contribution of the agencies' activities, see Section 1.4.1 of the PPMI/Ecorys (2018) final report.

¹²⁷ E.g. case studies in central Asia, Tunisia.

This helps partner countries build ownership of reforms. Lastly, stakeholders in the partner countries appreciate the independence of the ETF's work relative to other institutions and the trust and relationships that are built up¹²⁸.

The evaluation also assessed the most likely **consequences if the agencies were to cease their activities**. This would result in EU institutions, researchers and all other stakeholders losing an important source of comparable, cross-European data in the agencies' respective fields. The evaluation survey showed that stakeholders and governing board members do not support the termination of the agencies. Around 75 % of stakeholders said that this would have a negative or very negative effect. Respondents to the public consultation expressed similar views.

5.5. CROSS-CUTTING ASSESSMENT: AGENCIES' COHERENCE

The evaluation assessed the agencies' coherence among themselves and with other bodies with similar objectives. In particular, it examined the extent of any duplications or complementarities/synergies: *1) among themselves, 2) with the work of the Commission, 3) with other EU decentralised agencies, and 4) with other similar institutions.*

5.5.1. COHERENCE BETWEEN DG EMPL AGENCIES

The evaluation assessed coherence in terms of mandates and objectives, stakeholders and *modus operandi*, and identified the mechanisms in place to ensure inter-agency coherence.

a) Identification of overlaps

In terms of ***mandates and objectives***, some partial thematic overlaps were identified, firstly between Cedefop and the ETF and secondly between Eurofound and EU-OSHA:

- As regards **Cedefop/ETF**, there are overlaps in the agencies' involvement in qualification frameworks, quality assurance and teacher training. Although the ETF has a wider mandate (covering human capital), in recent years it has focused on VET as the chief means by which it seeks to achieve its objectives. However, in terms of territorial scope and *modus operandi* (the concrete operations to implement an agency's mandate), there are significant differences between the two agencies. The **ETF** works in the context of EU external relations policy and delivers 'hands-on' advice in neighbourhood partner countries, in addition to knowledge creation and sharing. **Cedefop**, on the other hand, provides support to the Commission, Member States and social partners through knowledge creation and sharing.
- The overlap between **Eurofound** and **EU-OSHA** stems from OSHA's origins as a spin-off of Eurofound and concerns the dividing line between OSH and 'working conditions'. **Eurofound**'s activities include work partially connected with health and safety matters (e.g. the European Working Conditions Survey). However, EU-OSHA's founding regulation sets out a very specific focus. While both agencies are involved in knowledge creation and sharing, **EU-OSHA** works in different ways linked to the unique network of national focal

¹²⁸ Some stakeholders consider that, as ETF does not bring funds, it acts '*as a trusted broker instead of having to apply the conditionalities which come with international assistance*'.

points that exists in the policy field. Its focus is on delivering practical knowledge and tools to support the implementation of OSH rules and on communication campaigns to raise awareness about OSH among workers/the general public. These two objectives set it apart from Eurofound, whose focus is on research and policy-making. In addition, the two agencies service two very distinct research communities as the nature of scientific expertise on health and safety is quite different from that of Eurofound, which is more focused on industrial relations, labour economics and sociology of work.

In terms of *audiences and stakeholder groups*, the agencies work with governments, social partners and researchers, although in different ways and to different degrees. In the case of the **ETF**, the capacity of social partners and the strength of the research community are much less well developed in neighbourhood countries than in Europe. The agencies' founding regulations define their target groups differently. While **Cedefop**'s stated aim is to 'assist the Commission in encouraging, at Community level, the promotion and development of vocational training and of in-service training', **Eurofound**'s refers to advice to the 'Community institutions'. **EU-OSHA** serves 'the Community bodies, the Member States, the social partners and those involved in the field of safety and health at work'. The **ETF** caters to partner countries 'in the context of EU external relations policies'.

As regards *modus operandi*, the agencies differ in terms of their balance of research, knowledge creation and sharing activities, and in the practical tools they develop and the advice they provide to businesses or administrations. Cedefop and Eurofound conduct similar research and dissemination activities for use principally by governments and social partners. Nevertheless, the mix between creation and sharing varies. For example, Cedefop is also strongly identified with the development and 'maintenance' of practical tools such as the EQF, Europass and the Skills Panorama. Eurofound is geared towards surveys of employers and employees, follow-up research and other policy-oriented studies. EU-OSHA specialises in awareness-raising campaigns and has a strong focus on delivering practical knowledge and tools to companies and promoting the exchange of existing knowledge. Nevertheless, dissemination and communication are also an important part of the work of the other agencies. The **ETF** stands out by virtue of its 'on the ground' work in partner countries and is less focused than the other agencies on trans-national research. Therefore, the agencies' remits are quite well defined, with limited overlaps and some specialisation.

Three agencies (i.e. not the ETF) have their own *network of national experts* or similar (correspondents, focal points, experts, ReferNet). The *network of correspondents* managed by **Eurofound** monitors the labour market, employment policies, industrial relations and other social policy topics. It has unique expertise in industrial relations. ReferNet is **Cedefop**'s own network of national institutions, which provides information on national VET systems and VET policy developments. While each network is geared to different profiles and areas of expertise, it would be worthwhile to examine whether *joint procurement* arrangements could make the administrative management more efficient while avoiding the full integration of the networks, given the limited thematic overlaps.

b) Cooperation: current limits and potential for improvement

During the evaluation period, the EU institutions put a certain amount of pressure on the agencies to avoid duplication and to *exploit potential complementarities and synergies* in a context of budget reductions. Similarities in their general mandates and objectives have provided opportunities for

cooperation between **Cedefop** and **ETF**, **Eurofound** and **EU-OSHA** and, to a lesser extent, between **Cedefop** and **Eurofound**. The agencies *have developed a number of formal and informal mechanisms*, consisting of bilateral frameworks of cooperation and annual joint action plans implementing those frameworks. *Joint outputs* include the Cedefop/Eurofound *European Company Survey*, the Cedefop/ETF/ILO *Methodological guide on skills anticipation and skills matching*, Cedefop's cooperation with the ETF on *monitoring VET developments* in the EU, partner and candidate countries and the Eurofound/EU-OSHA joint report on *psychosocial risks at work*¹²⁹.

However, **current cooperation arrangements** have significant limitations and untapped potential for synergies, as identified by the evaluation supporting study's cross-cutting case studies:

- Most cooperation activities have been *one-off*, consisting of knowledge-exchange and joint participation in different types of event, and *do not lead to synergistic joint outputs* (with the above-mentioned exceptions).
- Cooperation remains largely *bilateral*, so existing cooperation mechanisms have *not enabled a coherent and systematic response from the agencies to some newly emerging issues (such as legal and illegal migration)*. There is scope for aligning joint products more closely with EU priorities.
- While there has been an effort to share programming documents before their adoption in the framework of cooperation agreements, this occurs at a comparatively *late stage in the planning process*.
- An 'exhortation' approach is unlikely to be effective in the absence of incentives to encourage closer collaboration. This was confirmed in the validation seminar on 8 December 2017 and follow-up discussions with stakeholders, which highlighted that coordination also incurs costs (e.g. dividing roles between agencies or delineating respective fields of interest).

There is therefore room for more multilateral cooperation, possibly under a framework for inter-agency cooperation. The Commission services fully support the setting-up of a 'reinforced cooperation' framework at a time when the agencies face a need to reduce costs without compromising quality.

Reinforced cooperation involves multilateral rather than bilateral cooperation, and engaging in joint value creation. Such an approach offers the potential for innovation, fostering cross-agency learning, and setting up an 'innovation space' between the agencies.

There is potential for *joint delivery of front office services*¹³⁰, with common tools and approaches, such as in the *shared management of expert networks* and the joint carrying-out of surveys. *Corporate/back-office functions* such as legal advice could also be shared. In performance management, *monitoring and evaluation*, common systems should be put in place to improve

¹²⁹ See detailed analysis of all the cross-cutting case studies in PPMI/Ecorys supporting study.

¹³⁰ This does not include the EU-OSHA network in EU Member States.

inter-agency comparability and realise cost savings. (In terms of costs, the sharing of strategic and corporate functions could save between EUR 3 million and EUR 5 million a year¹³¹).

Such reinforced cooperation arrangements could be applied across all four agencies or among those with the greatest potential to realise synergies (Cedefop/ETF, Eurofound/EU–OSHA and Eurofound/Cedefop). This is endorsed by the public consultation, in which most respondents support reinforced cooperation. In particular, it could be applied to:

- developing mechanisms of *joint delivery* between the four agencies (60 % agreed or strongly agreed, against 23 % who disagreed or strongly disagreed); and
- *sharing support services* (48 % agreed or strongly agreed, against 27 % who disagreed or strongly disagreed) — see Annex 2.

Most of the stakeholders attending the evaluation validation seminar also supported reinforced cooperation, particularly on joint delivery, whereas their views were more mitigated for back-office functions (e.g. on human resources services).

While the Commission services fully endorse the main features of reinforced cooperation, the support study also proposes some specific variants of such cooperation that do not offer clear net benefits compared with the current situation and are therefore not retained at this stage by the Commission. In particular:

- 1) A *single governing board* would have drawbacks — the merged board would be less specialised and it may therefore be necessary to establish additional mechanisms such as advisory bodies. The potential merging of governing boards was strongly opposed by the stakeholders who took part in the validation seminar. In particular, the loss of the EU-OSHA board’s narrow specialisation was highlighted. Cedefop stakeholders were also concerned that merging Cedefop and Eurofound boards could water down VET activities.
- 2) *Full joint planning* would have significant implementation costs and is considered unrealistic and inefficient in the light of the agencies’ different objectives, tasks and operating contexts. Moreover, the boards meet only once a year, which would lead to undue delays in adoption, as stakeholders from the boards have highlighted. Instead it is recommended, as in the proposal for the revision of the founding regulations, that the agencies ensure a sufficient level of cooperation, e.g. by concluding cooperation agreements.
- 3) *Centralising and co-locating corporate strategic functions and support services such as IT* (as already occurs at the EU’s Joint Research Centre¹³²) is a proposal that would need further

¹³¹ Administrative expenditure has been used as a proxy for current expenditure on back-office and strategic functions. Potential savings are assumed to be equivalent to 30 % of overall administrative expenditure. This estimate is based on PPMI/Ecorys’ expert judgement and the available evidence on the actual cost savings associated with mergers of public bodies, e.g. Audit Scotland (2012), *Learning the lessons of public body mergers: review of recent mergers*, and Fairhurst, P. and Reilly, P. (2010), *Back-office efficiency: shared services case studies*, Institute for Employment Studies. See Annex 17 to the supporting study.

assessment and it is still too early to consider it. The potential negative implications of remote service provision should be taken into account. Stakeholders highlighted potential drawbacks in the 8 December validation seminar, arguing that in-depth impact assessments would be required before engaging in those variants of reinforced cooperation (see detailed stakeholder views in the support study synthesis report, Appendix 1).

5.5.2. COHERENCE WITH COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

The agencies interact with the Commission and other EU institutions in a *variety of ways*. In all cases, the Commission oversees their work and is also one of their main clients. Agencies may be invited to provide *thematic expertise* as an input into Commission work or, in the case of the ETF and Cedefop, country expertise as well. They may also be invited to participate in *working groups*. They can contribute to the development of important *European tools* (e.g. Cedefop's important contribution to Europass and the EQF). Through its *network of focal points*, EU-OSHA provides a well-functioning two-way communication channel between the Commission and Member States. The ETF fulfils requests both from Commission services and from *EU Delegations* in partner countries. A large number of requests are received each year *from a broad range of Commission services* (DG DEVCO, DG NEAR and DG EMPL) and the EEAS. Typically, around 10 % of requests are unplanned and a slightly higher percentage is cancelled, requiring great flexibility on the part of the ETF. The most direct ways in which the Commission is involved in the agencies is via its representatives, who play a role in governing boards and bureaux, and in providing inputs into programming cycles. On the other hand, the agencies have established liaison offices in Brussels to maintain contacts with the EU institutions:

- a) **Cedefop** has strengthened its *Brussels liaison office* to further its cooperation with the EU institutions, including the European Parliament and the Council. As parent DG, DG EMPL is represented in the Cedefop bureau and governing board and ensures coordination of the Commission's position on programming. DG EMPL also supported Cedefop's cooperation with the *Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)*, notably with Eurydice, on the Learning Mobility Scoreboard. Following the take-over from DG EMPL of the Skills Panorama, Cedefop worked *with Eurostat* to integrate its data into the platform¹³³.
- b) **Eurofound** has a Brussels liaison office with three members of staff whose role is to feed Eurofound's research into the policy-making process and to monitor EU tenders to avoid duplication with new and emerging lines of work by all parts of the Commission. Eurofound is sometimes invited by the Commission to participate in tender evaluation committees, where there is a thematic overlap with its activities.

¹³² This variant draws on the JRC's experience. The JRC locates corporate strategy and coordination, and IT in Brussels, but less costly options would be available in this case given the locations of the four DG EMPL agencies.

¹³³ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/eu-skills-panorama>

There is some overlap between *Eurofound's network of correspondents* and DG EMPL's *European social policy network*, as both networks include the same expert organisations in five EU countries, but their thematic areas of work are different. However, there may be scope for economies of scale between the two networks. Eurofound also collaborated on the work-life balance initiative, including the impact assessment and the 'Future of manufacturing'¹³⁴ project, which started as a proposal from the European Parliament and was entrusted to Eurofound through a delegation agreement in 2015, with a view to running the pilot project for 4 years, with a transferred budget of EUR 1.6 million.

- c) **EU-OSHA** provides expertise, produces content and channels communication between national focal points and the Commission. It provides expertise in response to *ad hoc* requests. Its mandate and activities are strongly related to those of the *Advisory Committee on safety and health at work (ACSH)*, a tripartite body set up in 2003 by a Council Decision to streamline the consultation process in the field of OSH and rationalise the bodies created in this area by previous Council Decisions. The Committee's remit is to assist the Commission in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of activities in the fields of safety and health at work. While EU-OSHA focuses on technical expertise, tools to facilitate implementation, awareness and communication, the Advisory Committee is more closely involved in decision-making. EU-OSHA board members have to be members or alternates of ACSH and the Agency provides inputs on specific issues in the framework of the Committee's work programme activities. EU-OSHA is also invited to *sectoral social dialogue committees*, integrated by social partners from different countries and sectors, to provide analysis and support sectoral campaigns agreed by them.
- d) The **ETF** works with numerous DGs and EU Delegations in partner countries. The 2016 ETF study found that 'the complexities of the relationships with the EC services and Delegations continue to reduce efficiency and effectiveness' and recommended that further steps be taken to 'improve communication and coordination between the ETF and the Commission so that the ETF is clear as to how the priorities of different DGs are to be balanced'¹³⁵. As a follow-up, progress is being made through two-yearly structured meetings between the ETF and Commission services, and through the Commission's encouraging Delegations to make use of the ETF's services. However, the quality of the response is still variable, with some Delegations having a tradition of using the ETF's services and others being less aware of such possibilities.

The evaluation assessment on coherence is positive overall, also confirmed by survey respondents' views. There is nevertheless scope for improved coordination in some specific cases. Occasionally, there have been instances where the Commission could have called upon agencies more systematically to contribute to the policy development process (e.g. in preparing and steering the work of external

¹³⁴ See project description at:

<https://reshoring.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/FOME%20-%20project%20description%20-%20flyer.PDF>

¹³⁵ Ecorys (2016), *External evaluation of the ETF*, pp. 139-140.

http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Evaluation_of_the ETF_EN

contractors in areas where agencies have specific expertise). Therefore, the evaluation concludes that the Commission should ensure that the agencies are systematically consulted on and engaged in strategic activities, while also taking into account their resource limitations in taking on board new tasks. On the Commission side, the view was expressed that the agencies could also anticipate forthcoming policy priorities better and further in advance (see agencies' response to needs, Section 5.3.1).

There is an issue (particularly relevant for **Eurofound** and **Cedefop**) as to *whether research contracted directly by the Commission could have been delivered by the agencies*. The agencies have capacity constraints and cannot meet all of the Commission's research needs. In addition, the Commission has a limited influence on the approval of the agencies' programming documents (it has three votes on a governing board of 87) and the programming cycle does not allow for flexible adaptation in the event of policy/political urgency. Therefore, direct contracting by the Commission fills two gaps:

- a) meeting its short-term research needs; and
- b) providing certain information that might not be taken up in the agency's work programme, since it is not sufficiently supported by other board members.

In the case of **EU-OSHA**, the Commission has to consult networks/experts on certain policy development initiatives. Such consultations do not serve the same purpose as, nor do they replace, information/expertise from the agency.

5.5.3. AGENCIES' COHERENCE WITH OTHER EU DECENTRALISED AGENCIES

The agencies' respective mandates mean that there is no direct duplication. Formal mechanisms for cooperating with other EU agencies exist only for Eurofound and EU-OSHA, and include cooperation agreements, joint action plans, cooperation frameworks and a memorandum of understanding. In particular, cooperation is formalised between **Eurofound** and the *European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE)* through a 2010 cooperation agreement and joint action plans. The EIGE uses Eurofound's data on the quality of work, especially for the gender equality index. Eurofound also has a memorandum of understanding with the *EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)*. **EU-OSHA** and the *EIGE* adopted a cooperation framework in 2010, on the back of increasing recognition of the OSH significance of the gender dimension. Under the framework, the two agencies exchange information, dissemination and publications related to each other's activities, share expertise and experience, and exchange and review each other's work programmes to identify additional opportunities for collaboration. EU-OSHA also signed a memorandum of understanding with the *European Chemicals Agency* in 2010, 'in order to develop synergies, share knowledge and active information exchange', to implement joint communication activities, including risk communication. This technical collaboration is important for exploiting synergies given EU-OSHA's work on dangerous substances management at the workplace. The evaluation work has also identified *ad hoc* collaborations between EU-OSHA and the *FRA* (e.g. on severe forms of labour exploitation).

5.5.4. AGENCIES' COHERENCE WITH NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES

The overall picture is one of complementarity and cooperation more than duplication. The agencies support Member States and, in the case of the ETF, partner countries in ways that are appropriate to their mandates and objectives. Opportunities for collaboration with other international organisations in order to realise added value are exploited widely. Some stakeholders from Member States' governments and national social partners believe that Cedefop and Eurofound could engage more with national stakeholders and promote their outputs more effectively. However, making the current engagement with national stakeholders more wide-reaching and systematic is a resource-intensive activity, which would be difficult to accommodate within the agencies' current remit (as defined in the founding regulation) and current budgets.

5.5.5. AGENCIES' COHERENCE WITH THE PROPOSED EUROPEAN LABOUR AUTHORITY: POTENTIAL COMPLEMENTARITIES AND SYNERGIES

The agencies' potential to duplicate the work of the European Labour Authority is limited, given the Authority's mandate and objectives (see section 1.3). The agencies' functions differ significantly from those of the new Authority, since they are predominantly research-centred and do not have an operational and cross-border focus, while the ETF operates only in non-EU countries, mainly in the EU's neighbourhood.

However, the analysis suggests that possibilities for contribution exist, in particular for Eurofound and Cedefop. **Eurofound** covers a number of topics and undertakes activities that could feed into the knowledge base of the Authority, notably its task relating to cross-border labour mobility analysis and risk assessment, but also to the provision of potentially valuable information to citizens and businesses. The relevant options range from quite specific tools, such as the European Restructuring Monitor, European Jobs Monitor and EurWORK, to research activities in the areas of labour market and working conditions. **Cedefop** could contribute with the tools more closely related to providing information on cross-border labour mobility and supporting access to cross-border labour mobility services, such as Europass¹³⁶, the Skills Panorama¹³⁷ and the VET mobility scoreboard¹³⁸.

A direct transfer of these activities, including staff and budgetary resources, would *carry disadvantages in terms of their consequences for the coherence and effectiveness of other activities within the concerned research agencies*. Therefore, the evaluation concludes that the optimal solution would be for the agency concerned to retain the above tools and *forge a close relationship with the new European Labour Authority around their implementation and use*. The Authority's proposal envisages cooperation with other EU agencies, in particular in the areas of employment and social

¹³⁶ In that context, the Decision on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass), adopted by the Council on 12 April 2018, highlights that synergies and cooperation between the Europass and EURES portals could reinforce the impact of both services. The Authority should replace the Commission in managing the European network of employment services (EURES) European Coordination Office, including the definition of user needs and business requirements for the effectiveness of the EURES portal.

¹³⁷ <https://skillspanorama.cedefop.europa.eu/en>

¹³⁸ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/mobility-scoreboard>

policy, complementing their work, building on their expertise and maximising synergies in terms of skills forecasting, health and safety at work, the management of company restructuring and tackling undeclared work¹³⁹.

According to the impact assessment supporting the proposal on establishing the European Labour Authority¹⁴⁰, there may be scope for streamlining a number of logistical and managerial arrangements across the agencies. These include support services (e.g. by locating the ICT and the Brussels liaison offices in one place or pooling legal and financial management capacities), joint procurement of ICT and audio visual equipment and services, cloud services, and putting in place common systems in the area of performance management, monitoring and evaluation. As the new Authority will tap into existing research resources developed by the existing agencies in their respective areas of competence, this could also lead to pooling resources or producing joint reports on issues of common concern, e.g. on restructuring or the respect of occupational health and safety rules in mobility situations, including posting, in the context of risk assessment. On analytical tasks of common concern and on aspects that complement labour mobility rules, such as skills or OSH, the Authority is set to exchange information and possibly programme joint work with the other competent agencies.

The proposal on the Authority provides that the periodic evaluation of the Authority will make it possible to explore further synergies and streamline opportunities with agencies active in the area of employment and social policy¹⁴¹. Also, one representative from each agency is participating in the advisory group of the Authority, which is an effective tool for inter-agency cooperation in setting it up¹⁴².

5.6. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LATEST EVALUATIONS OF THE AGENCIES

The last individual external evaluations of Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA and the ETF took place in 2013¹⁴³, 2015¹⁴⁴, 2011¹⁴⁵ and 2016¹⁴⁶ respectively. **Cedefop** implemented all the recommendations except one (setting up a joint pool of potential staff with the ETF, which did not work out in practice). **Eurofound** took relevant action to implement all nine of its recommendations. However, two issues have not been fully resolved — the variable quality of output generated by the national correspondents¹⁴⁷ and the fact that governing board members engage to a different extent at national level in supporting the dissemination of relevant studies to national players. These are long-term issues, faced by other comparable organisations, and should be addressed continuously. **EU-OSHA**

¹³⁹ Recitals 15 and 30, and Articles 11 and 15 of the Authority proposal (COM (2018) 138 final).

¹⁴⁰ See impact assessment for the proposal for a Regulation establishing a European Labour Authority (SWD (2018) 68 final, p. 52-53).

¹⁴¹ See Article 41 of the proposal on establishing a European Labour Authority (COM(2018) 131 final).

¹⁴² Commission Decision on setting up the European Advisory Group for the European Labour Authority (EU 2018/402 - C/2018/1505). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32018D0402>

¹⁴³ PPMI (2013), *External evaluation of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)*.

¹⁴⁴ Ipsos MORI (2015), *Eurofound external multiannual programme evaluation — ex post evaluation of 2009-2012 work programme*.

¹⁴⁵ IES (2011), *Mid-term evaluation of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work's 2009-2013 strategy*.

¹⁴⁶ Effectiv Consortium (2016), *External evaluation of the European Training Foundation (ETF)*.

¹⁴⁷ Following the mid-term evaluation of the current network of correspondents in 2016, the agency implemented a number of quality control measures; their effectiveness is yet to be assessed.

implemented all recommendations and **ETF** took action to address all recommendations except one (because of overall staff reductions, it was unable to increase the number of senior staff as recommended).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Based on the supporting study assessment, and given the constraints of the available evidence, in the evaluation period the agencies have:

- operated overall **effectively**;
- delivered the planned outputs;
- achieved the specific objectives laid down in their work programmes; and
- contributed to the general objectives, particularly by providing in most cases timely contributions that fed into EU policymaking or, in the case of ETF, providing advice that supported policymaking in partner countries.

The four agencies adapted generally well to the challenges the EU faced in 2011-2016 and often responded promptly to EU institutions' needs. The key challenges and issues the agencies faced included:

- continuing to deliver quality outputs despite budgetary and staff constraints;
- delays in delivering certain outputs;
- accessibility/readability of certain outputs to non-specialists, policymakers and non-English speakers; linked to this is the need to increase the use and dissemination of outputs to wider stakeholders.

EU-OSHA's impact was constrained by its limited visibility in Member States beyond the organisations directly concerned, limited dissemination of information by some focal points, and difficulties in reaching employers at workplace level. ETF's effectiveness was hampered by partner countries' varying capacity to take full advantage of ETF advice and the limited sustainability of policy reforms.

Overall, the agencies also demonstrated high **efficiency**. Despite the budget saving imperatives and decreasing staff numbers, the use of agencies' outputs increased throughout the evaluation period and user satisfaction remained high, indicating good cost-effectiveness. The agencies worked to increase efficiency through, for example:

- joint procurement with other EU decentralised agencies;
- fewer translations to save publishing costs;
- fewer events;
- revision of working processes;
- a paperless policy; and
- reallocating staff from administrative to operational roles.

However, budgetary and staff constraints had in some cases negative implications on service quality and/or on outreach/dissemination.

There is clear potential for further value creation through joint activities between the agencies, and to further centralise shared services and run them jointly. Internal reviews of business processes and streamlining of procedures must be continuous rather than a one-off process.

The structure and composition of the governing boards of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA do not comply with the Common Approach, but this is explained by their tripartite nature. *Tripartite governance* has both advantages and disadvantages. Based on the evaluation, there is no evidence to support proposing at present a change in the current tripartite structure, which is also strongly supported by all stakeholders, including the Parliament and the European Social and Economic Committee.

Within the limits of the current agency mandates, their outputs and services were **relevant** both in terms of their contribution to key EU-level policy objectives, and from the standpoint of stakeholders. While several long-term planning and ad hoc response tools were in place to address needs, their planning process and resource limitations create a gap between what the Commission, Member States and social partners expect from the agencies and what the agencies can offer.

Agencies' **added value** lies in the uniqueness of outputs/services that are not available elsewhere and which could not be more efficiently implemented at other levels or by other institutions. This is because the agencies offer a *unique combination of features: EU-wide comparability, tripartite scrutiny, policy orientation and specific focus on EU policy needs*¹⁴⁸. The agencies' most valuable services include:

- Eurofound and EU-OSHA's pan-European surveys and follow-up research;
- Cedefop's skills forecasting reports, skills anticipation models and comparative VET thematic analysis;
- EU-OSHA's tools for occupational health and safety, such as OiRA; and
- ETF's tailored evidence-based policy support to third countries in the context of EU external policies.

The *cross-cutting* assessment of **coherence** identified some overlaps between the agencies' general mandates and objectives, in particular between **Cedefop** and **ETF** (e.g. they both deal with VET), and **Eurofound** and **EU-OSHA**. Nevertheless, ETF and Cedefop have different operational objectives and territorial scope and, moreover, the four agencies have developed mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation. However, *there is room to improve cooperation among agencies*. Cooperation remains largely bilateral, one-off, bottom-up and mostly consists of knowledge exchange and joint participation in different events, without leading to joint outputs. While the agencies make efforts to share programming documents before their adoption, this happens at a comparatively late stage in the planning process. Therefore, current cooperation lacks joint strategic planning, which is needed to better coordinate responses to EU policy priorities across the four agencies and in the wider network of EU decentralised agencies.

¹⁴⁸ ETF has a distinct remit as it supports policy needs in partner countries and is not tripartite.

In parallel, the agencies have to reduce costs while achieving more results without compromising quality. The Commission therefore fully endorses the recommendation for a framework for *reinforced cooperation*, setting out a new scenario that includes new structures, interventions and processes to better support deeper, more strategic and multi-lateral inter-agency cooperation.

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the four agencies have been successful overall in fulfilling their mandates, each agency can improve in a number of areas. With this in mind, the Commission suggests general and specific recommendations. These are based on the main findings of the evaluation supporting study. However, the Commission does not endorse some supporting study recommendations, mainly on specific proposals for reinforced cooperation (see Section 5.5.1(b)). Moreover, some agency-specific supporting study recommendations have not been retained because, for example, they were not relevant for the agency concerned, were already addressed in the general recommendations or were too vague.

6.2.1. OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE AGENCIES

These recommendations address issues identified in the evaluation concerning all four agencies. In order to implement these recommendations, it could be considered that each agency draws up individual action plans.

a) Service-level innovation (effectiveness and impact)

1. There is room to improve *the quality and relevance of research/monitoring reports and activities* by:

1.1 *improving the readability and policy focus of publications*, in particular for non-academic users and policy-makers; and

1.2 basing their activities on a *robust quality assurance process* (see the points for improvement on the quality of agency deliverables in Section 5.1.1.b).

2. Agencies' research/monitoring reports and activities could be improved by making use of *the most effective means of communication/dissemination*. In particular the agencies could be advised to:

2.1 continue to explore and utilise *innovative communication channels* such as webinars, communities of practice, interactive videos and live streaming, while maintaining and, if needed, expanding their social media presence, as this is a cost-effective way of reaching diverse groups of stakeholders;

2.2 *further adapt communication activities to different target group*, and identify intermediaries who could support the dissemination of outputs; and

2.3 *better disseminate and use their results at national level*, in particular by encouraging governing/management board members to take a more proactive role in disseminating and using results.

b) Agency-level innovation (efficiency)

3. While there is no single optimal internal structure or process, it is advised that the agencies *revisit internal structures* to better balance operational and administrative functions within the organisation.
4. Transparency in decision-making based on results *of performance measuring systems could be introduced*.
5. The agencies' performance measuring systems can be further aligned and made more comparable. Therefore *the agencies could work to further align their performance indicator methodologies*. They are advised to consider developing a more systematic approach to *measuring use of their outputs at national level*, while taking account of individual agencies' mandates and the cost-effectiveness of the additional investments this requires.

c) Governance (for the three tripartite agencies)

6. Following the revision of the founding regulations, *the three tripartite agencies, in cooperation with the Commission, are advised to clarify the roles of the various institutional actors involved and provide training to governing board members on the more technical issues within the boards' remit*, such as the programming cycle.
7. *Governing/management board members could brief national stakeholder networks* about the agencies' work, and the feedback received could inform members' work in the board.
8. *Electronic decision-making* (e.g. written procedure) *and, where appropriate, virtual meetings* of the governing boards could be further explored as a way to achieve more efficient and quicker decision-making. This will be a cost-effective way to make tripartite stakeholders feel represented, committed, involved and consulted.

d) Reinforced cooperation

The four agencies could engage in a *structured common framework of reinforced cooperation with the following elements*:

9. *Corporate functions* such as strategy, human resources, legal and financial management, coordination and support services such as ICT *could be shared*. *Logistical arrangements could also be shared* as regards the *Brussels Liaison Offices* (e.g. sharing a single office).
10. On *performance management*, common or coordinated systems among the agencies would lead to cost savings, as detailed in point b), while respecting each agency's specific objectives.
11. *Mutual learning and sharing of services* with decentralised agencies outside DG EMPL or with the Commission, and other forms of cooperation through the EU Agencies Network. This would save resources allocated to horizontal functions by relying when necessary on other

agencies' expertise.

12. *Joint delivery* where common tools and approaches exist, for example, managing *expert networks* and running *surveys* (e.g. a joint company panel). Agencies may join efforts and resources without substituting specific targeted surveys carried out by the EMPL agencies.

13. Joint programming and planning could be put in place, but *focused exclusively* on areas suitable for cooperation and/or joint delivery.

14. In practical terms, such reinforced inter-agency cooperation could be reflected by *broadening and aligning the time-frames of the agencies' multiannual programming documents*, since the annual work programmes will continue to be agency-specific.

e) Policy support for the EU

15. The four agencies could aim to better align with and support EU policymaking. *Work programmes must be flexible enough to allow for changes in the case of sudden reconfigurations of EU priorities.*

16. *Negative priorities could continue to be a tool for addressing ad hoc requests.* The agencies may consider introducing a *more structured and formalised reprioritisation mechanism* and embedding a certain room for manoeuvre in its programming document to allow for unforeseen activities of high policy relevance.

17. Other *adaptability instruments could be used*, such as:

- adjusting the aims of tasks or projects at the implementation stage;
- designing intermediate project outputs to feed into policy discussions rather than waiting until the project ends;
- producing short-term deliverables and updates (e.g. briefing notes) and further recalibrating ad hoc procedures so that they can be deployed relatively quickly.

f) Policy support for Member States

18. Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA *could broaden the scope of demand-driven support to the Member States on policy issues and initiatives high on the EU agenda*, while striving to maintain the balance with their research function, which is a pre-requisite for successful delivery of the direct support.

6.2.2. AGENCY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

a) Cedefop

19. Cedefop managed to meet its objectives, take on additional tasks and maintain its outcome indicators despite fewer resources. This was achieved in part by transferring staff and administrative savings to operational budget headings. *The Agency could continue looking for ways to reallocate even more resources from administration to its core operations.*

20. Cedefop's annual reports presented some indicators in a very aggregated manner. *The Agency could provide greater detail when presenting indicators relating to evidence, to inform policies and their implementation.* In particular, it is advised that the indicators 'Policy documents citing Cedefop work' and 'Participation in Presidency events and meetings of senior stakeholders, or which support policy', would not present aggregated figures for items of a very different nature.

b) Eurofound

21. The agency's governing institutions could continue to select priority projects and *focus on ensuring the continuity of its pan-European surveys, representativeness studies¹⁴⁹ and follow-up research in the long term*, ensuring high scientific quality, even if this means scaling back other research activities or reallocating resources, including from non-operational budget headings¹⁵⁰.

22. *Improve the timeliness of its deliverables*, particularly the gap between data collection and the publication of results.

23. Make further improvements to the *quality/reliability of the outputs produced by some national correspondents*.

c) EU-OSHA

24. EU-OSHA's *practical approach*, e.g. in developing tools for risk assessment or for tackling specific risks, *could be emphasised over the general academic/policy research approach*. This is because the agency's work focuses on facilitating implementation and dissemination of Commission policy, and its practical tools and communication campaigns tend to be more relevant than the analytical outputs as they are aimed more at putting OSH rules into practice.

25. To effectively reach employers at workplace level, especially in SMEs, *the agency is advised to continue to provide tools for information and communication so as to support national focal points in reaching relevant intermediaries*.

26. In addition, *a specific strategy, including adapted tools, could be developed to better reach SMEs* as these are not always covered by intermediaries such as industry associations.

27. *To improve the EU added value of its specific thematic knowledge, the agency could explore further opportunities for collaboration with the ILO and national OSH research institutes* — e.g. in implementing joint projects where each participant brings its complementary focus and expertise, and in sharing research knowledge on data and methodologies.

¹⁴⁹ These are important for the functioning of European social dialogue.

¹⁵⁰ Compensation should not only be sought in Eurofound's operational budget (Title 3) but also e.g. in the budget for infrastructure and operating expenditure (Title 2).

d) ETF

28. Given that the capacity of ETF's partner countries varies considerably, *ETF must do more to understand where its interventions are likely to have the most effect and how the nature of the required activities may vary.*

29. To ensure sustainability and adequate policy implementation by partner countries following ETF activities, *more systematic links could be put in place between ETF projects and EU programming and technical assistance.*

30. In the same vein, *better use could be made of the Torino process to identify the conditions needed for successful interventions* and to inform about the choice and right sequence of interventions.

31. ETF's *operational capacity could be strengthened based on cost savings* stemming from improved cost-effectiveness and efficiency gains. Any gaps in internal expertise could be filled by *using external experts with specific country knowledge.*

32. In addition to the biannual structured dialogue meetings between ETF and the Commission, communication and coordination could be strengthened so as to *better focus on strategic issues in work programmes.*

33. A *more systematic basis could be created for the triangular relationship between ETF, the Commission and EU delegations* in partner countries.

Annex 1: Procedural information

1. LEAD DG, DECIDE PLANNING/CWP REFERENCES

DG EMPL. Decide ref. 2016/EMPL/020.

2. ORGANISATION AND TIMING

The roadmap for evaluation was published in August 2016.

The evaluation process was supported by an Inter Service Steering Group, made up of representatives of DG EMPL (from the Evaluation & Impact Assessment units and from the four units responsible for the agencies) and seven other DGs: SG, BUDG, SANTE, DEVCO, HR, EAC and RTD. The Steering Group met six times between 6 July 2016 and 20 April 2018.

3. EXCEPTIONS TO THE BETTER REGULATION GUIDELINES

N/a

4. CONSULTATION OF THE REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD

The evaluation was selected for the scrutiny of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board. The evaluation staff working document was discussed at the meeting on 30 May 2018. The Regulatory Scrutiny Board issued a positive opinion on 27 July 2018, after the revised version resubmitted to the Board following the negative opinion issued on 1 June. The table at this end of this annex shows how this report took into account the RSB comments before launching the inter-service consultation.

5. EVIDENCE, SOURCES AND QUALITY

The evaluation was based on the evidence collection and analysis carried out by external experts. The contract was signed on 21 December 2016 with PPMI/Ecorys. The final report package was approved by the Commission services on 26 March 2018.

The quality of the final report of the external contractors was assessed as good by the Inter Service Steering Group.

Opinion 1.06.2018 (RSB comments)	How and where comments have been addressed
<p>The Board notes that the evaluation is based on a comprehensive set of supporting studies.</p> <p>However, the Board considers that the report contains major shortcomings that need to be addressed, particularly with respect to the following issues:</p> <p>(1) The report contains prospective analysis and commits to future actions. This goes beyond the purpose of an evaluation.</p> <p>The content of the report goes beyond the purpose of an evaluation. An evaluation is an empirical exercise. It should report findings, draw conclusions and identify any lessons learned based on evidence. This report inappropriately analyses options for change and makes commitments for future action. The prospective analysis should be removed, though parts may be relevant in a future impact assessment exercise or in a policy Communication.</p>	<p>(1) The SWD has been significantly redrafted in order to take out all the prospective elements and the Commission commitments for future action. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The content (and title) of the SWD ‘way forward’ Section 6.3. has been substantially modified. In particular, the content of <i>Point 6.3. A)</i> of the SWD (‘Way forward for the Commission services’) has been drastically reduced, taking out all the concrete follow up actions for the Commission and just keeping the announcement of a separate action plan from the Commission’s side, which will set up the concrete measures to operationalise the evaluation conclusions. • <i>SWD Section 5.5.1. d)</i> ‘Way forward: a new framework for reinforced cooperation’ has been deleted. • <i>SWD Section 5.5.1. c)</i> ‘Potential for mergers scenarios’ has been also deleted, for two reasons: 1) to better align to the narrowed scope for the evaluation – changes should be only incremental, keeping the agencies’ status quo and current mandates; and 2) to keep the internal coherence of the SWD (given that a merger assessment implies questioning/reviewing the agencies’ mandates) and to focus on the cross-cutting identification of potential overlaps and scope for realising synergies among agencies, without including any assessment of future potential scenarios for change.
<p>(2) The report does not sufficiently explain the scope, purpose and context of the evaluation. It does not explain why the analysis had a limited scope on issues like relevance and coherence.</p> <p>(2.1) The report should clarify the context of the evaluation. It should explain the envisaged changes in the Commission’s 2016 proposal to amend the founding</p>	<p>(2.1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SWD context section has been substantially enlarged and redrafted, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ better explain the rationale of this evaluation and its link to the revision of the founding

<p>regulations of the agencies. It should further describe how these affect the current organisation, structure, mandate, etc. of each of the three agencies. The report should better explain the rationale for certain changes in governance (such as for management and executive boards structures) and for maintaining other specific aspects (such as the tripartite governance of three of the agencies). It should also provide a more detailed presentation of the views and positions of stakeholders.</p> <p>(2.2.) In this context, the report should define more clearly the scope and purpose of the evaluation. Should the evaluation feed a debate on the mandates and possible mergers of agencies? Or is the primary purpose to identify incremental improvements beyond what the Commission proposed in 2016? It should make clear what is in the scope of the evaluation and what has already been endorsed politically or will be examined later. The report should say why it does not question the relevance of maintaining all current tasks in the agencies. It should also explain why it does not examine the coherence of delegating these activities to the four agencies in this policy domain compared with other policy domains. Efficiency could for instance have taken a broad approach with a comparison with other regulatory agencies. It should reconsider the extent to which the evaluation addresses the recent proposal on the European Labour Authority.</p>	<p>regulations of the tripartite agencies (Point 1.1.) and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ to add a dedicated subsection (Point 1.2.) with a detailed explanation of the Commission proposal to amend the founding regulations. This new section also clarifies that the proposals are just legal/technical adjustments to adapt the founding regulations to the 2012 common approach and will not impact on the current mandates, objectives and activities of the agencies (e.g. no impact at all in the agencies' intervention logics). • The rationale for the founding regulation proposals is based on the requirements of the 2012 common approach. • The SWD provides as well additional drafting in point 1.2. to underpin why the tripartite structure of the agencies is kept untouched in the proposal although this governance structure doesn't follow the common approach. • References have been added to the positions of institutional stakeholders regarding the founding regulation revision (e.g. EP Rapporteurs and ECOSOC). <p>(2.2.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SWD 'scope' section (1.3.) has been redrafted, in order to highlight the boundaries of the evaluation scope and to make clear that the main purpose is to <i>identify incremental improvements beyond what the Commission proposed in 2016, always inside the limits of the current mandates of the agencies.</i> • Therefore, in the SWD 'relevance' (5.3) section it is also clarified that the assessment does not question the relevance of maintaining the current mandates in the agencies. • The SWD scope section (1.3.) now includes a specific heading on the European Labour Authority proposal, in order to highlight the relationship of this evaluation with ELA and clarifying the scope limits of the current assessment regarding ELA.
<p>(3) Further considerations The answers to the evaluation questions should be better supported by evidence. It is</p>	<p>(3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conclusions and recommendations for the agencies, general and specific stem from the

<p>not clear how some conclusions have been arrived at. The evaluation relies too heavily on views from insiders. The report should present more details about the various positions of Member States, of other EU institutions and of external stakeholders on the different aspects of the agencies.</p>	<p>evidence from the evaluation supporting study, either from the agency-specific assessments or from the cross-cutting analysis. The SWD now makes clearer in the recommendations section the links to the evidence that underpins some of the recommendations mentioned by the RSB. Therefore, a cross reference to the relevant analytical section has been added in those cases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SWD makes more explicit in the methodologic section (4.2.) how the potential bias from insiders has been addressed in the evaluation. • The SWD provides more details about stakeholders' views on relevance and added value to the extent possible, based on the information collected in the evaluation supporting study. In particular a new subsection -5.3.1. c)- has been added about the relevance for <i>national stakeholders</i> (Member States/partner countries) Concrete examples of the impact and added value of agencies' work for Member States have been provided, based on case studies and external stakeholders views. • The relevance and added value of the ETF has been more explicitly highlighted and concrete examples and evidence from ETF stakeholders have been provided. • Finally, the SWD has also addressed a number of specific written comments to the SWD contained in the RSB checklist.
Opinion 27.07.2018 (RSB comments)	How and where comments have been addressed
<p>(1) The report does not sufficiently explain the reasoning behind limiting the scope and discarding some variations of the reinforced cooperation scenario.</p>	<p>(1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A paragraph has been added in the scope section explaining the rationale for the boundaries in the evaluation scope. • Regarding reinforced cooperation scenario, parts of Section 5.5.1. b) have been redrafted, including for justification for discarding some options, in particular the 'joint planning' one.
<p>(2) The report does not sufficiently present stakeholders' views with regard to choices about the reinforced cooperation scenario.</p>	<p>(2) Similarly, Section 5.5.1. b) has been completed, adding views of stakeholders on reinforced cooperation (mainly from the open public consultation and from the 8 December validation seminar), in general and also regarding the sub-options that are not retained by the Commission at this stage without further assessment.</p>
<p>(3) The report explains that revisions did not propose changes to the tripartite structure, and argues that the evaluation findings do not support policy changes in this regard. The report could further</p>	<p>(3) The reasoning about keeping the tripartite structure has been reinforced in Section 5.2.5 and in the conclusions (Section 6.1)</p>

Annex 2: Stakeholder consultation

1. Consultation methods and target groups

The stakeholder consultation carried out for the evaluation consisted of a wide-ranging programme of interviews, several surveys, a public consultation and a validation seminar.

Type of consultation	Type of stakeholder
High-level interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> members of agencies' governing boards/bureaux Commission staff (DG EMPL)
In-depth interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission staff (EMPL, EAC, GROW, HOME, ESTAT, JRC, RTD, SANTE, JUST, NEAR, DEVCO, EEAS) agencies' managerial staff members of agencies' governing boards/bureaux other EU and international organisations
Surveys of stakeholders and governing board members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU-level stakeholders beneficiaries at EU and national level members of agencies' governing boards
Surveys of agencies' staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> agencies' staff
Open public consultation	Open to any interested party or individual for 12 weeks, in all EU languages.
Interviews through case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stakeholders and beneficiaries based on a sample staff involved in the selected case studies
Validation seminar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> members of agencies' governing boards agencies' management staff stakeholders and beneficiaries at EU and national level

2. Summary of consultation results

2.1. Targeted surveys

Seven online surveys were launched at the end of April 2017 and were active for 2 months:

- four staff surveys — one for each agency:
 - European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound);
 - European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop);
 - European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA); and
 - European Training Foundation (ETF); and
- three stakeholder surveys (for Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA). No stakeholder survey was carried out for the ETF, since it had been covered by an earlier evaluation, the results of which were re-used for this evaluation.

The design of the surveys made it possible to differentiate between members of the agencies' governing boards, staff and other stakeholders. The questions were drafted so

as to ensure comparability across groups of respondents and complementarity with the other consultation methods, including the open public consultation.

Information on targeted surveys

Agency	Invitations sent	Bounced invitations	Complete responses	Partial responses
Stakeholder surveys				
Eurofound	2 254	223	229	101
Cedefop	1 825	59	198	157
EU-OSHA	972	52	278	78
Staff surveys				
Eurofound	112	2	82	5
Cedefop	117	0	36	10
EU-OSHA	n/a ¹⁵¹	n/a	53	10
ETF	129	0	83	8

The survey data fed into the replies to the evaluation questions. All evidence from the surveys was incorporated in the final evaluation report, taking into account the representativeness of the responses.

Evaluation question	Summary of survey results
1.1. Effectiveness	The majority of stakeholders believed that the agencies achieved their specific objectives, their products addressed the stakeholders' needs to a great or some extent, and the use of the products was extensive. User satisfaction was generally high.
1.2. Efficiency	Over 50 % of the respondents to the surveys of the governing boards believed that physical resources were sufficient, but they had mixed views on financial and human resources. The majority believed that the agencies had adequate mechanisms to ensure accountability, transparency and appropriate assessment of their performance. The agencies' stakeholders evaluated the tripartite composition of the governing board very positively.
1.3. Relevance	The agencies were relevant for a majority of stakeholders in 2011-2016. Around 70 % of the stakeholders agreed or strongly agreed that Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA showed flexibility and adaptability in the context of changing situations. Evidence from surveys also showed that they contributed as knowledge providers to EU-level policy initiatives that are significant for citizens.
1.4. EU added value	The pan-European coverage and quality of the data provided were the agencies' most valued features. Only a minority believed that their activities could be substituted to a large extent by EU-level, international or Member State organisations. The surveys showed that stakeholders (including governing board members) do not support the termination of the agencies.

¹⁵¹ Sent through an internal bespoke mailing address, so the number of panellists is not known.

Evaluation question	Summary of survey results
	Around 75 % across all three agencies said that this would have a negative or very negative effect.
2.1. Analysis of coherence among agencies	<p>The largest proportion of respondents did not see areas of duplication or overlap between the agencies. For a substantial proportion, there were complementarities or synergies in some or most areas of activity, in particular between Eurofound and EU-OSHA, and between Cedefop and the ETF.</p> <p>A large proportion of respondents to the stakeholders' and governing boards' surveys did not respond to the questions on the existence of duplication, complementarities or overlaps between the agencies.</p>
2.2. Analysis of coherence between agencies and EU institutions, in particular the Commission	<p>Over half of the respondents (with the exception of EU-OSHA stakeholders) saw complementarities and/or synergies in some or most areas.</p> <p>The percentages of respondents who saw complementarities and/or synergy exceed the proportions who saw duplications. Where respondents did see duplications, these tended to be in some areas only, rather than most areas.</p>
2.3. Analysis of coherence between agencies and other decentralised agencies	Overlaps were considered to be marginal, formal and informal mechanisms for collaboration exist, and no major issues of concern were raised. There were still areas where cooperation could be reinforced to exploit complementarities, such as between Cedefop and the European Agency for Fundamental Rights, and between EU-OSHA and the European Chemicals Agency.
2.4. Analysis of coherence between agencies and other stakeholders at national and international levels	<p>A large proportion of respondents did not see duplications or overlaps between the four DG EMPL agencies and other relevant stakeholders at national level. There was also substantial agreement on the existence of complementarities or synergies between the agencies and stakeholders at national and international level, in some or most areas of activity.</p> <p>A large proportion of respondents to the governing board and stakeholder surveys saw duplications in some or most areas of activity between the agencies and stakeholders at international level, more than with stakeholders at national level.</p> <p>As with coherence between agencies, a large proportion of respondents to the surveys of stakeholders and governing boards did not respond to questions on the existence of duplications, complementarities or overlaps.</p>

2.2. Interviews

The interview programme encompassed high-level/in-depth and case-study-related interviews. In total, 228 individual interviews were carried out:

- 110 high-level/in-depth interviews in the first phase of the project; and
- 118 relating to the case studies and conducted after the interim report's submission.

The programme involved the agencies' key stakeholder groups, including social partners, staff, EU institutions and other clients/beneficiaries. It was designed to cover a wide variety of views. Depending on the question, it was used either to supplement other sources of evidence with experts' views or to gain insider insights where other data sources were scarce.

Interview programme: high-level/in-depth interviews

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	No of interviews
Agencies' staff	Eurofound	11
	Cedefop	8
	EU-OSHA	5
	ETF	0
Social partners and governments	In relation to Eurofound	11
	In relation to Cedefop	15
	In relation to EU-OSHA	16
	In relation to ETF	2
European Commission	EMPL	11
	EAC, SANTE, ESTAT, GROW, JUST, RTD, JRC, DEVCO, NEAR, SG	21
Other EU-level institutions and bodies	European Parliament, European External Action Service, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions, European Institute for Gender Equality, European Agency for Fundamental Rights	7
International organisations	International Labour Organisation, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	3
Total		110

2.3. Case studies

The consultant carried out 15 agency-specific and 5 cross-agency in-depth case studies. The former were aimed primarily at tracing the agencies' impacts on specific EU policy initiatives or assessing the efficiency of some core activities. The latter were designed to explore possible duplication, complementarity and synergy between the agencies and with the Commission and national and international stakeholders. Some interviews fed into two or more case studies. On average each case study used 6.9 interviews.

List of case studies

Reference agency	Name of case study	No of interviews used
Cedefop	Apprenticeship country reviews	6
	Forecasting skills demand and supply	6
	Vocational education and training (VET) for labour market integration, social inclusion and adult learning	7
	VET policy monitoring	8
	Work on European tools — European Qualification Framework and Europass	7
EU-OSHA	A collaborative tool to enhance Member States' cooperation: the OSH-wiki	7
	Anticipation of occupational security and health (OSH) risks from labour market developments: green jobs	6
	Facilitating SMEs' compliance and risk assessment: the OiRA tool	4
	OSH management in the context of an ageing workforce	6
	EU-OSHA's contribution to the 'Safer and healthier work for all — modernisation of EU occupational safety and health legislation and policy' package	6

Reference agency	Name of case study	No of interviews used
Eurofound	Communicating knowledge and organising debate with stakeholders on working and living conditions, industrial relations and the labour market	9
	Conducting pan-European surveys	13
	Contribution to policy discussions and decisions in relation to improving work-life balance, in particular the ‘New start for working parents’ initiative	8
	Role in the adoption of the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee	10
	Supporting the Commission’s work on the European Semester	9
Cross-cutting	Decent and safe working conditions for all: stress and psychosocial risks at work	4
	Mobility (geographical): integration of migrant workers	9
	Skills and VET: development of skill anticipation systems	7
	Social dialogue: building capacity of social partners	6
	Surveys: surveys of employers and employees	9

The findings from the interviews were fed into the external contractors’ analysis.

2.4. Open public consultation

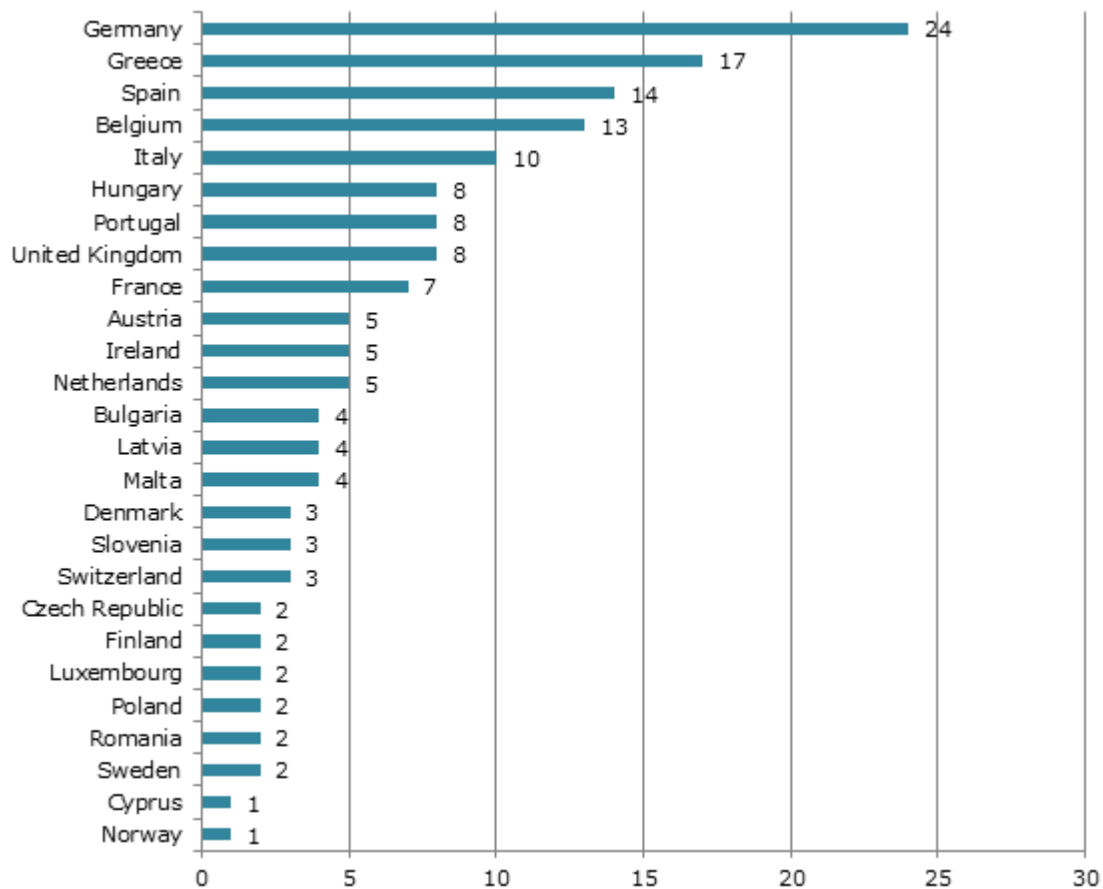
The open public consultation (OPC)¹⁵² ran from 5 April to 5 July 2017. The Commission promoted it on its websites and through social media. It was structured around three main sections: 1) knowledge of and involvement with the four agencies; 2) the agencies’ effectiveness, efficiency, added value and relevance; and 3) cross-cutting and prospective issues for the agencies. The findings from the consultation were fed into the analysis of each evaluation question and taken into account in the drafting of the forward-looking aspects of the evaluation.

2.4.1. Information about respondents

In total, there were 159 respondents, from 24 EU Member States and 2 non-EU countries. The majority (94) answered in a professional capacity or on behalf of an organisation, while others (65) replied in a personal capacity.

¹⁵² An OPC to support the external evaluation of the ETF was conducted from April to June 2016, so this consultation focused mostly on Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. Nevertheless, questions on cross-cutting issues relating to all four agencies and prospective analytical questions cover the ETF.

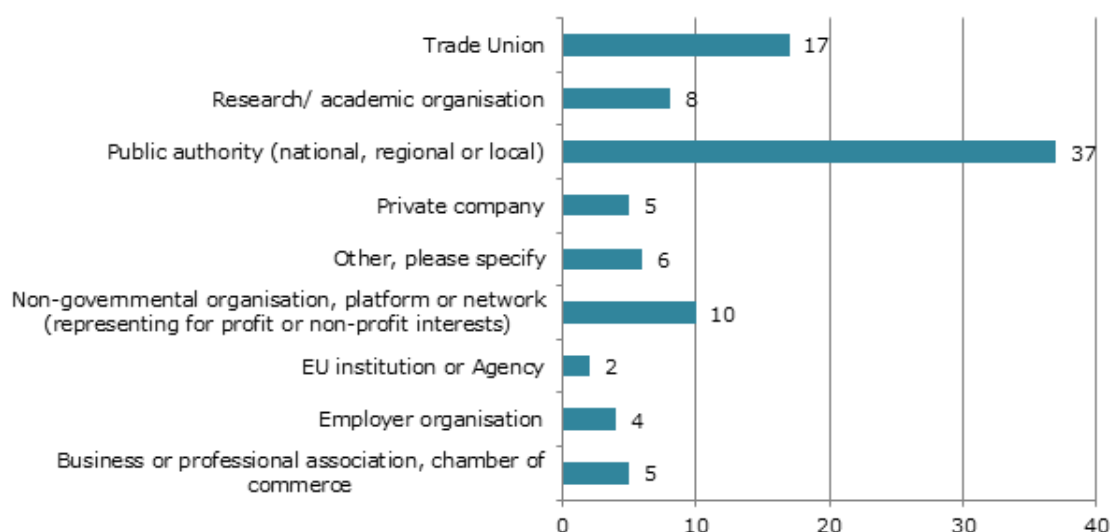
Respondents' countries of origin



Source: adapted by PPMI based on OPC results.

Among professional respondents, the largest group was public authorities (at national, regional or local level), followed by trade unions and non-governmental organisations (see graph below). Contributions from private companies were relatively scarce, as were responses from employer organisations, business or professional associations and chambers of commerce.

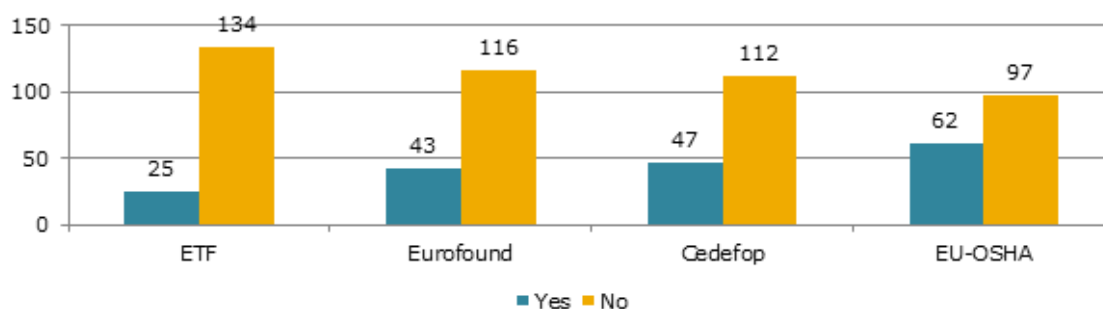
Types of organisation represented by professional respondents



Source: adapted by PPMI based on OPC results

The respondents had various degrees of involvement with or roles in the agencies, with overall involvement lowest for the ETF and highest for EU-OSHA (see graph below). Over 60 % said that they did not have a role in or involvement with any of the agencies. Among the individual respondents, 22 % had a role in or involvement with Eurofound, 26 % with Cedefop, 23 % with EU-OSHA and 12 % with the ETF. The proportions among the professional respondents were 31 % for Eurofound, 32 % for Cedefop, 50 % for EU-OSHA and 18 % for the ETF.

Respondents' role in or involvement with the agencies



Source: adapted by PPMI based on OPC results.

Respondents were most confident in their knowledge of EU-OSHA's objectives and actions (41 % had detailed knowledge and 36 % had general knowledge), had more general knowledge of Eurofound's (28 % with detailed knowledge and 41 % with general knowledge) and had least knowledge of the ETF (12 % with detailed knowledge, 35 % with general knowledge and 53 % with no knowledge at all). The responses regarding respondents' knowledge of Cedefop's objectives and actions were quite evenly distributed between detailed (34 %), general (30 %) and no knowledge (36 %).

2.4.2. Summary of responses to evaluation questions

The OPC results show that respondents were generally positive about the effectiveness, efficiency, added value and relevance of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. However, some differences can be observed between 1) respondents in general, 2) respondents who had a role in or involvement with one or more agencies, and 3) those who had no role or involvement. The proportion who agreed or strongly agreed that the agencies had been effective, efficient, added value and been relevant was higher in the second group¹⁵³.

The proportion of ‘do not know/ cannot answer’ responses across evaluation questions (on the effectiveness, efficiency, added value and relevance of Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA) was generally high (27-53 %). It was comparatively higher among respondents who had no link with any of the agencies (43-69 % on average). This calls for caution in interpreting the results. Also, the consultation did not aim to be representative of the EU population. A summary of the responses to each evaluation question is provided below:

Evaluation question	Summary of OPC results
1.1. Effectiveness	<p>On average, 58 % of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the agencies achieved their objectives and less than 5 % disagreed. There was little variation in replies depending on the agency in question. Respondents with more knowledge of a particular agency and/or those who had a role in or involvement with an agency were more likely to agree that it achieved its objectives.</p> <p>34-39 % did not answer the questions on the effectiveness of Eurofound and Cedefop, and 29-32 % did not answer the questions on that of EU-OSHA.</p> <p>In response to the open question, several said that the agencies should focus more on communication and visibility. This included communication and collaboration with stakeholders, especially at national level, and more effective dissemination of the agencies’ work.</p>
1.2. Efficiency	<p>An average of 45 % agreed or strongly agreed that the agencies were efficient and that their current governance arrangements were suitable for meeting their objectives effectively and efficiently, and fewer than 9 % disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents with a role in or involvement with the agencies were more likely to consider that they were efficient and less likely to respond ‘do not know/cannot answer’. Over 52 % of all respondents did not answer the questions on the efficiency of Eurofound or Cedefop; this percentage was 41 % for EU-OSHA.</p> <p>Most respondents who provided open replies said that the agencies were efficient considering their resources. Most also said that the governance arrangements and tripartite nature of the agencies’ governing boards were important and positive in view of their mandate, mission and thematic remits.</p>
1.3. Relevance	<p>An average of 60 % agreed or strongly agreed that the agencies were relevant and played a role in addressing socio-economic needs in their respective fields, and an average of 6 % disagreed or strongly disagreed. As for previous</p>

¹⁵³ See detailed figures split by respondents with and without involvement with agencies in PPMI/Ecorys (2018) supporting study, Annex 16 (OPC report).

Evaluation question	Summary of OPC results
	<p>questions, the rate of agreement was higher among those with a role in or involvement with the agencies (88 % on average), while the percentage of ‘do not know/cannot answer’ responses was higher among respondents in general (30-42 %).</p> <p>Over half of all respondents agreed that termination of the agencies would have a negative impact on EU policies and their field of work. The proportion varied across agencies and was highest for EU-OSHA (62 % against 56 % for Eurofound and 52 % for Cedefop). This negative perception was lower among respondents without a link to the agencies, but even here 38-46 % considered that the impacts would be negative (38 % for Cedefop, 44 % for EU-OSHA and 46 % for Eurofound).</p> <p>The proportion of those who foresaw positive impacts from the termination of the agencies was generally low, but slightly higher among those without a link to an agency (5 % for Cedefop and Eurofound, 8 % for EU-OSHA).</p>
1.4. EU added value	<p>An average of 58 % agreed or strongly agreed that the agencies provided added value in their activities, in particular in generating knowledge at EU level, in their cooperation with EU institutions and other agencies, and compared with other national and EU initiatives, instruments and programmes. An average of 5 % disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, 29-47 % did not answer these questions. Respondents with a role in or involved with an agency were more likely to express an opinion about the kind of added value the agencies provide.</p> <p>Most respondents who replied in the open part of these questions underlined that Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA provided added value. Many said that the agencies’ tripartite nature and European scope gave them added value compared with other local, regional, national or international initiatives. Respondents also mentioned the quality of some of the agencies’ activities, such as the European working conditions survey (EWCS), European company surveys (ECSs), the NQF, ReferNet, Skills Panorama, Europass and the OSH-wiki.</p>
2. Synergies, complementarities and overlaps	<p>The number of respondents who did not see overlaps between the agencies and other relevant EU, national or international stakeholders was greater than the number of those who did. The percentage of the former was higher among those with a role in or involvement with the agencies (63 %) than among respondents in general (31 % on average) or among those with no role or involvement (19 % on average).</p> <p>An average of 53 % did not comment on the existence of synergies and overlaps. An average of 45 % was unable to respond to questions on the existence of synergies and overlaps between EU-OSHA and other stakeholders.</p>
3. Potential improvements	<p>A significantly larger proportion of respondents agreed rather than disagreed that the following measures could improve the operation of the agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing mechanisms of joint delivery between the agencies (60 % agreed or strongly agreed; 23 % disagreed or strongly disagreed); • allocating additional funding to the agencies (57 % vs 17 %); and • sharing support services (48 % vs 27 %). <p>On the other hand, a larger proportion did not consider that the following measures would help improve the agencies’ operation:</p>

Evaluation question	Summary of OPC results
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> merging the agencies whose tasks overlap (56 % vs 20 %); contracting out more activities to external providers (64 % vs 19 %); delegating some activities to other relevant EU networks and instruments (49 % vs 24 %); and stopping activities with limited value (41 % vs 24 %). <p>A slightly higher proportion believed that streamlining the structure/composition of the governing boards would improve the agencies' operation (37 % vs 33 %).</p> <p>37 %, 48 %, 50 % and 60 % respectively disagreed or strongly disagreed with the option of terminating the ETF, Eurofound, Cedefop or EU-OSHA. 72-81 % of respondents with a role in or involvement with the agencies disagreed or strongly disagreed with the potential termination of any of the agencies and 31-49 % of those without such a link also disagreed or strongly disagreed with this option. Only 6-7 % in each category agreed or strongly agreed with the termination of any of the agencies.</p> <p>An average of 53 % did not answer questions on cross-cutting issues for Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF, and an average of 24 % did not answer those on prospective issues.</p>

2.5. Validation seminar

A seminar was held in Brussels on 8 December 2017 to present and validate the findings of the evaluation. A total of 50 stakeholders took part, including members of the agencies' management, governing boards and bureaux (including representatives from Member States and social partners), beneficiaries and customers, and representatives from the European Commission.

The main findings were presented in plenary sessions and individual workshops were held, grouping stakeholders by agency. The participants agreed/validated the findings and provided useful feedback which has contributed to the final evaluation report.

Discussion centred on four main issues:

- Reinforced cooperation** — most participants were in favour of reinforced cooperation, provided that this added value. Possible areas for such cooperation were the development of common 'language' and 'themes', and the development/sharing of methodological tools and instruments, IT tools and common approaches to programming and planning. Also mentioned was cooperation with other local EU agencies. On the other hand, participants were against specific proposals for reinforcing cooperation such as the merging of governing boards. Moreover, they were reticent as regards actual physical mergers, even the common location of specific services or resources. Most highlighted the risks and possible dysfunctions of mergers, as mandates and workloads differed, but also because of the costs involved and the risk of losing expertise and capacity;

- **Governing board tripartite structure** — all participants showed a very strong support to the current governing structure in general and to its tripartite nature in particular.
- **Outreach** — i.e. reaching stakeholders and customers in a more effective manner, so that greater use is made of the agencies' products. Stakeholders concerned by the outreach differ across agencies (e.g. SMEs in the case of EU-OSHA, Member States in the cases of Eurofound and Cedefop), but comparable possible approaches were highlighted, including awareness-raising, networking and a demand-driven focus.
- **Relations with the European Labour Authority (ELA)** — all workshops developed to a greater or lesser extent the idea that, while cooperation with and the continued provision of services to the ELA are clearly essential, the scope of the agencies' work was different. In all cases, given the different mandate of ELA, it was therefore agreed that it was not appropriate to transfer activities and competences.

Annex 3: Methods used in the evaluation

1. Overall approach to the evaluation work

In line with the better regulation guidelines, DG EMPL took a mixed approach to this evaluation, by relying on the work of external evaluators to:

- collect and analyse the relevant evidence (including consultation work);
- provide initial answers to all evaluation questions; and
- present evidence-based conclusions.

2. Rationale of the evaluation

The *main objective* of this evaluation is to provide an assessment of the four agencies' relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU added value. The evaluation encompasses *both an individual assessment of each agency and a cross-cutting comparative perspective*. The supporting study collected and examined evidence covering the period 2011-2016 (if relevant, earlier evidence was also taken into account) and included a prospective reflection on the future functioning of the agencies.

3. Evaluation questions and structure of the report

The evaluation was based on the following evaluation questions:

- EQ1: How did the four agencies perform as regards relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and EU added value in 2011-2016?
- EQ2: To what extent are the agencies' mandates and activities coherent among themselves and with those of other bodies with similar objectives?
- EQ3: To what extent were the recommendations from the latest external evaluations and those stemming from recent audits put into practice?
- EQ4: On the basis of this evaluation, are there changes to be made to the agencies active in the field of employment and social policy that would ensure better achievement of the objectives they pursue and/or make efficiency gains, by exploiting potential synergies among them e.g. sharing services,?

The evaluation work and the report were structured around the conclusions reached on each of the questions.

4. Methodology and data sources

The evaluation was based on a complex methodology aimed at collecting solid evidence and providing well-informed answers to the evaluation questions.

It consisted of:

- extensive desk research;

- several surveys;
- an open public consultation;
- a wide-ranging interview programme;
- in-depth case studies;
- a cost-effectiveness analysis; and
- a final validation seminar with stakeholders.

The various sources were triangulated, and approaches were combined where the evidence was insufficient or inconclusive: data-based, documentary and perception-based sources as well as quantitative and qualitative techniques, depending on the nature of the evaluation question and the strengths of the relevant data and approaches.

4.1. Desk research

The desk research covered both publicly available sources and information provided by the agencies. It included documents determining the legal framework of EU decentralised agencies, a variety of documents adopted by the Commission and other EU bodies, previous external evaluations of the agencies, various analyses and studies and administrative, planning and monitoring data from the agencies themselves. It offered a wealth of information used in the answers to all the evaluation questions, although some information was not full or comparable across agencies (see assessment of the methodology in Section 5).

4.2. Surveys

Seven **surveys** were launched at the end of April 2017 and were active for 2 months: four staff surveys (Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF) and three stakeholder surveys (Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA). The design of the surveys allowed a differentiation between several groups of respondents, such as governing board members, internal staff and other stakeholders. The survey questions were discussed with the Inter Service Steering Group and drafted so as to ensure comparability across groups of respondents and complementarity with the public consultation.

The numbers of invitations sent and answers received are presented in the table below. Proven protocols were applied to make sure that the survey links were sent to active users and not filtered out by spam filters. Three well-timed reminders were also sent. The proportion of responses is in line with other evaluation and survey exercises for similar initiatives. The survey data were fed into all the evaluation questions, in particular into the aspects of the questions for which respondents' opinions of respondents are of prime importance, such as relevance and added value.

Information on implementation of surveys

Agency	Number of	Number of	Number of	Number of
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	invitations sent	bounced invitations	complete responses	partial responses
Stakeholder surveys				
Eurofound	2254	223	229	101
Cedefop	1825	59	198	157
EU-OSHA	972	52	278	78
Staff surveys				
Eurofound	112	2	82	5
Cedefop	117	0	36	10
EU-OSHA	N/A ¹⁵⁴	N/A	53	10
ETF	129	0	83	8

4.3. Open public consultation

The open public consultation was launched on 5 April 2017 and ran until 5 July 2017. In total, 159 responses were received from 24 Member States; 59 % of the respondents replied in a professional capacity or on behalf of an organisation and 41 % replied in a personal capacity. The public consultation questions mirrored the evaluation questions and provided important evidence in the form of structured responses and open comments. The contractors, who contributed to every step of the consultation process, produced a public consultation report (Annex 16 of the supporting study final report).

4.4. Interview programme

The interview programme involved 228 individual interviewees: 110 high-level/ in-depth interviews carried out during the first phase of the project (see Table in Annex 2) and 118 relating to the case studies and conducted after the submission of interim report. The interview programme involved the key stakeholder groups, including social partners, internal staff as well as clients/ beneficiaries. It was designed to cover a wide variety of views, including the agencies themselves, their governing structures and outside stakeholders. Depending on the question at hand, the interviews were used either to supplement other sources of evidence with expert views or to gain insider insights in cases where other data sources were scarce.

4.5. Case studies

The case studies played an essential role providing evidence to underpin the contributions identified through other sources. Each was meant to contribute to the assessment of a number of evaluation criteria. The contractors carried out 20 in-depth case studies, including 15 agency-specific and 5 cross-agency case studies.

¹⁵⁴ Sent through an internal bespoke mailing address, so the panellists' number is not known.

- The **agency-specific case studies** were aimed primarily at tracing the agencies' impacts on specific EU policy initiatives or assessing the efficiency of some of the core activities, such as communication or surveys.
- The **cross-agency case studies** were designed to explore duplication, complementarity and synergy between the agencies and also with the European Commission and national and international stakeholders.

For the agency-specific case studies, two types of model were developed:

- a case study aimed at contribution analysis; and
- a case study aimed at process-oriented analysis.

The main goal of the **contribution case study analysis** was to establish (or reject) a causal relationship between the actions of an agency and the outcome of policy-making. By drawing on diverse sources of data, the objective was to determine the extent to which the agencies contributed to particular policy initiatives, selected for in-depth examination.

In the case of the **process-oriented case studies**, the objective was to develop an in-depth explanation of selected processes in the agencies (e.g. communication activities, research, networking), in particular in order to assess their efficiency.

Type of agency-specific case studies and evaluation criteria

Case study	Case study type	Evaluation criteria
<i>Eurofound</i>		
1. Supporting the Commission's work on the European Semester	Contribution analysis	Effectiveness, EU added value (impact), coherence
2. Role in the adoption of the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee	Contribution analysis	Effectiveness, EU added value, relevance (impact)
3. Contribution to policy discussions and decisions in relation to improving work-life balance, in particular the 'New Start for Working Parents' initiative	Contribution analysis	Effectiveness, EU added value, relevance (impact), coherence
4. Communicating knowledge and organising debate with stakeholders on working and living conditions, industrial relations and the labour market	Process-oriented analysis	Efficiency, effectiveness, EU added value, relevance
5. Conducting Pan-European surveys	Process-oriented analysis	Efficiency, effectiveness, EU added value
<i>Cedefop</i>		

Case study	Case study type	Evaluation criteria
1. VET policy monitoring	Contribution analysis	Effectiveness, EU added value, relevance (impact)
2. Apprenticeship country reviews	Contribution analysis	Effectiveness, EU added value, relevance (impact)
3. Work on European tools — EQF and Europass	Contribution analysis	Effectiveness (impact), coherence
4. Forecasting skills demand and supply	Process-oriented analysis	Efficiency, effectiveness, EU added value, relevance, coherence
5. VET for labour market integration, social inclusion and adult learning	Contribution analysis	EU added value (impact)
EU-OSHA		
1. OSH management in the context of an ageing workforce	Contribution analysis	Effectiveness, EU added value (impact)
2. Anticipation of OSH risks from labour market developments: green jobs	Contribution analysis	Effectiveness (impact)
3. Contribution of EU-OSHA to the package — Safer and Healthier Work for All — Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation Policy	Contribution analysis	Effectiveness, EU added value, relevance (impact)
4. Facilitating SME compliance and risk assessment: the OiRA tool	Process-oriented analysis	Effectiveness, EU added value
5. A collaborative tool to enhance Member States cooperation: the OSH-Wiki	Process-oriented analysis	EU added value

4.6. Cost-effectiveness analysis

The cost-effectiveness analysis assessed the extent to which objectives had been achieved at the lowest possible cost commensurate with the required level of quality. This requires a detailed evaluation of how far the various inputs (including deployment of human resources) are mobilised in the most cost-effective manner.

The evaluation of the agencies does not lend itself to conventional cost-effectiveness analysis as performance has to be considered against multiple objectives rather than a single, fixed objective. Therefore, rather than conducting a ‘conventional’ cost-effectiveness analysis, analysis has focused on two broad areas:

- analysis of the potential to improve the agencies’ efficiency; and
- analysis of the agencies’ cost-effectiveness in comparison with hypothetical alternative scenarios.

One indication of the cost-effectiveness of decentralised agencies is the extent to which expenditure is directed to ‘front-line’ activities rather than to the administration of the agencies themselves. To carry out this analysis, three categories of expenditure were considered:

- Title 1 (Staff): salaries and related costs, including training;
- Title 2 (Administrative): items such as buildings, equipment, furniture, software and payment to EU for IT systems;
- Title 3 (Operational): expenses relating to performance of specific activities and missions through outsourcing of services.

Subsequently, an analysis was carried out to check whether the expenditure items were relevant for the work of the agency (e.g. widely used and/or appreciated by stakeholders and audiences) and the extent to which they contributed to the desired outcomes. The research identified a number of activities that had limited impacts or where improvements in the delivery approach could increase effectiveness.

4.7. Final validation seminar

A final validation seminar was held on 8 December 2017 in Brussels to present and validate the contractors’ findings. Over 50 stakeholders took part, including members of the agencies’ management staff, governing boards and Bureaus (including representatives from Member States and social partners), beneficiaries and customers, as well as representatives from the European Commission. The main initial findings from the evaluation were presented and discussed in plenary sessions and individual workshops grouping stakeholders from the four agencies.

5. Overall assessment of strengths and weaknesses of methodology and data

The evaluation relied on extensive documentary evidence which provided a good understanding of the agencies’ internal operation and performance. Nevertheless, methodological differences make certain indicators difficult to compare between agencies. For example, differences exist between the various agencies’ annual reports, and some monitoring information does not cover the whole evaluation period. The figures on information downloads and website traffic are also not directly comparable between agencies and over time, as data collection methodologies differ and have changed over time. Also, Cedefop does not collect data on the programme delivery indicator.

Given that knowledge generation and dissemination is an important part of the agencies’ work, the *figures on references and quotations* in policy documents, academic literature, etc. are an important indicator of performance (effectiveness, impact). However, there are some data limitations in this respect. First, EU-OSHA does not monitor references/quotations in EU policy documents. Second, the use of the agencies’ outputs at national level is not extensively or systematically monitored. Finally, some caution is required in the use of data on quotations and references, because (as demonstrated by the

case studies) some stakeholders may use evidence from the agencies without directly referencing them. For this reason, any quotation/reference data must be contextualised and used in conjunction with other data sources.

The evaluation also drew on a number of sources that offer opinions and perceptions, including surveys, interviews and the public consultation. Data on opinions and perceptions are important evidence where answering an evaluation question or sub-question involves asking for the views of stakeholders. Moreover, in some cases, respondents or interviewees may be the only source of knowledge or witness accounts of events when no other sources are available.

Nevertheless, the evaluation took into account the fact that opinions are naturally influenced by respondents' relationships with an agency. The respondents were therefore grouped for analytical purposes, trends were examined within and between groups, and equal consideration was given to consensus views and divergent views. Furthermore, perception-based sources were compared with other sources of evidence, in particular desk research data. Finally, with regard to multifaceted and complex issues (e.g. the functioning of the governing boards) in-depth interviews with direct participants and informed outsiders helped in forming a full and contextualised account of the situation.

Under the better regulation guidelines, the open public consultation is an important tool for collecting stakeholders' input and views on EU policy initiatives. It cannot be expected to provide a representative view of EU public opinion, but it does offer a voice to those who care about the issues in question. As expected, respondents' knowledge and involvement with the agencies varied significantly, but the public consultation's design made it possible to differentiate between those respondents who were well-informed and others. Analysis of the responses was informed by this distinction, and triangulated with other sources of evidence.

The evaluation also had to take into consideration certain complexities pertaining to each evaluation criterion. In particular, the effectiveness criterion deals with the achievement of objectives, ranging from operational to general. General objectives or impacts must be assessed with particular caution, as they are usually the broadest and have a long causal chain involving many milestones, and many other causal factors may complement or interfere with the process. Therefore, in addition to other sources, the assessment of impacts was informed by the case studies, which aimed to trace carefully the processes behind specific policy initiatives. Moreover, the assessment of efficiency was complicated by the fact that agencies do not always consistently monitor some of the key aspects and monitoring methodologies are not always comparable over time or between agencies. The fact that the agencies' objectives differ limited the extent to which a conventional cost-effectiveness analysis approach could be applied. Instead, the approach used sought to draw conclusions on efficiency and cost-effectiveness by comparing

similar expenditure items and their contribution to the achievement of their specific objectives.

A particular issue for the evaluation was how to integrate the previous evaluation of the ETF in 2016¹⁵⁵, as the work relied, to the extent possible, on the 2016 report. In many cases, the previous ETF evaluation did not collect data that could be directly compared with those for Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA. In such cases, the contractors used comparative evidence for the three agencies.

In conclusion, while acknowledging some data gaps and methodical limitations (see above) the evaluation presents to the extent possible, well-informed evidence-based and reliable answers to the questions. In particular, the cross-cutting element is a very useful feature of the analysis, as it allows both to assess the agencies individually and to compare them with each other, highlighting common trends, differences and potential directions for cross-agency learning and exploiting synergies.

¹⁵⁵ Ecorys (2016) External Evaluation of the European Training Foundation (ETF). *Final Report by the EFECTIV Consortium*, October.

Annex 4: Intervention logics of the four agencies

1. EUROFOUND

The intervention logic of Eurofound is presented in Figure 1. It was produced by reviewing the agency's key strategic documents and an external evaluation report:

- Four-year work programmes for 2009-2012 and 2013-2016¹⁵⁶
- Annual work programmes from 2011 to 2016¹⁵⁷
- Annual reports from 2011 to 2015¹⁵⁸
- *Ex post* evaluation of the 2009-2012 work programme¹⁵⁹

2. CEDEFOP

The intervention logic of Cedefop is presented in Figure 2. The intervention logic was produced by reviewing the key strategic documents of the Agency and the last external evaluation report. In particular, Cedefop's:

- Founding Regulation¹⁶⁰;
- medium-term priorities 2012-2014 (extended by governing board Decisions of 25 April 2014 and 25 February 2015 to cover respectively 2015 and 2016)¹⁶¹ and 2009-2011¹⁶²;
- annual work programmes from 2011 to 2016¹⁶³; and
- annual reports and consolidated annual activity reports from 2011 to 2015¹⁶⁴.

¹⁵⁶ Eurofound's four-year work programmes can be found here: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/about/what-we-do/work-programmes-list>

¹⁵⁷ Eurofound's annual work programmes can be found here: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/work-programmes-1997-2012>

¹⁵⁸ At the time of the Inception report writing, the annual report for 2016 was not yet published. Eurofound's annual reports for 2011-2015 can be found here: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publication-types/annual-report>

¹⁵⁹ Ipsos MORI (2015), 'Eurofound external multiannual programme evaluation — *Ex post* evaluation of 2009-2012 Work Programme'. Final Report, London.

¹⁶⁰ Regulation (EC) No 2051/2004 of 25 October 2004 amending Regulation (EEC) No 337/75 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.

¹⁶¹ Cedefop (2011), Medium-term priorities 2012-2014. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

¹⁶² Cedefop (2008), Cedefop's medium-term priorities 2009-2011. Enhancing European cooperation in vocational education through evidence and expertise: continuity, focus and flexibility. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

¹⁶³ Cedefop's annual work programme for 2016 can be found here: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/about-cedefop/what-we-do/work-programme>.

¹⁶⁴ At the time of the Inception report writing, Cedefop's annual report for 2016 was not yet available. Cedefop's annual reports for 2012-2015 can be found here: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/about-cedefop/what-we-do/annual-reports>.

- External evaluation (2013), Final report¹⁶⁵

3. EU-OSHA

The intervention logic of EU-OSHA is presented in the Figure 3. It was produced by reviewing the key strategic documents of the agency and the EU OSH strategies in force in the evaluation period:

- Council Regulation (EC) No 2062/94 of 18 July 1994 establishing a European Agency for Safety and Health at Work¹⁶⁶
- Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), and repealing Council Regulation (EC) 2062/94¹⁶⁷
- EU-OSHA strategy 2009-2013¹⁶⁸
- EU-OSHA multiannual strategic programme 2014-2020¹⁶⁹
- Community strategy 2007-2012 on health and safety at work¹⁷⁰
- EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020¹⁷¹

Commission Communication ‘Safer and Healthier Work for All — Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation and Policy’¹⁷²

4. ETF

The intervention logic of the **European Training Foundation (ETF)** is presented in Figure 4. It was constructed for the external evaluation of the European Training Foundation (2016)¹⁷³ and was amended to integrate the new developments within the 2015 and 2016 Work Programmes¹⁷⁴.

¹⁶⁵ European Commission (2013), External Evaluation of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), Final Report. Prepared by PPMI for the European Commission.

¹⁶⁶ Council Regulation (EC) No 2062/94 of 18 July 1994 establishing a European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

¹⁶⁷ European Commission (2016), Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council — Establishing the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), and repealing Council Regulation (EC) 2062/94, COM(2016) 254.

¹⁶⁸ EU-OSHA (2008), EU-OSHA strategy 2009-2013, Bilbao.

¹⁶⁹ EU-OSHA (2013), EU-OSHA multiannual strategic programme (MSP) 2014-2020, Bilbao.

¹⁷⁰ European Commission (2007), Communication on Improving Quality and Productivity at Work: Community Strategy 2007-2012 on Health and Safety at Work, COM/2007/0062 final, Brussels.

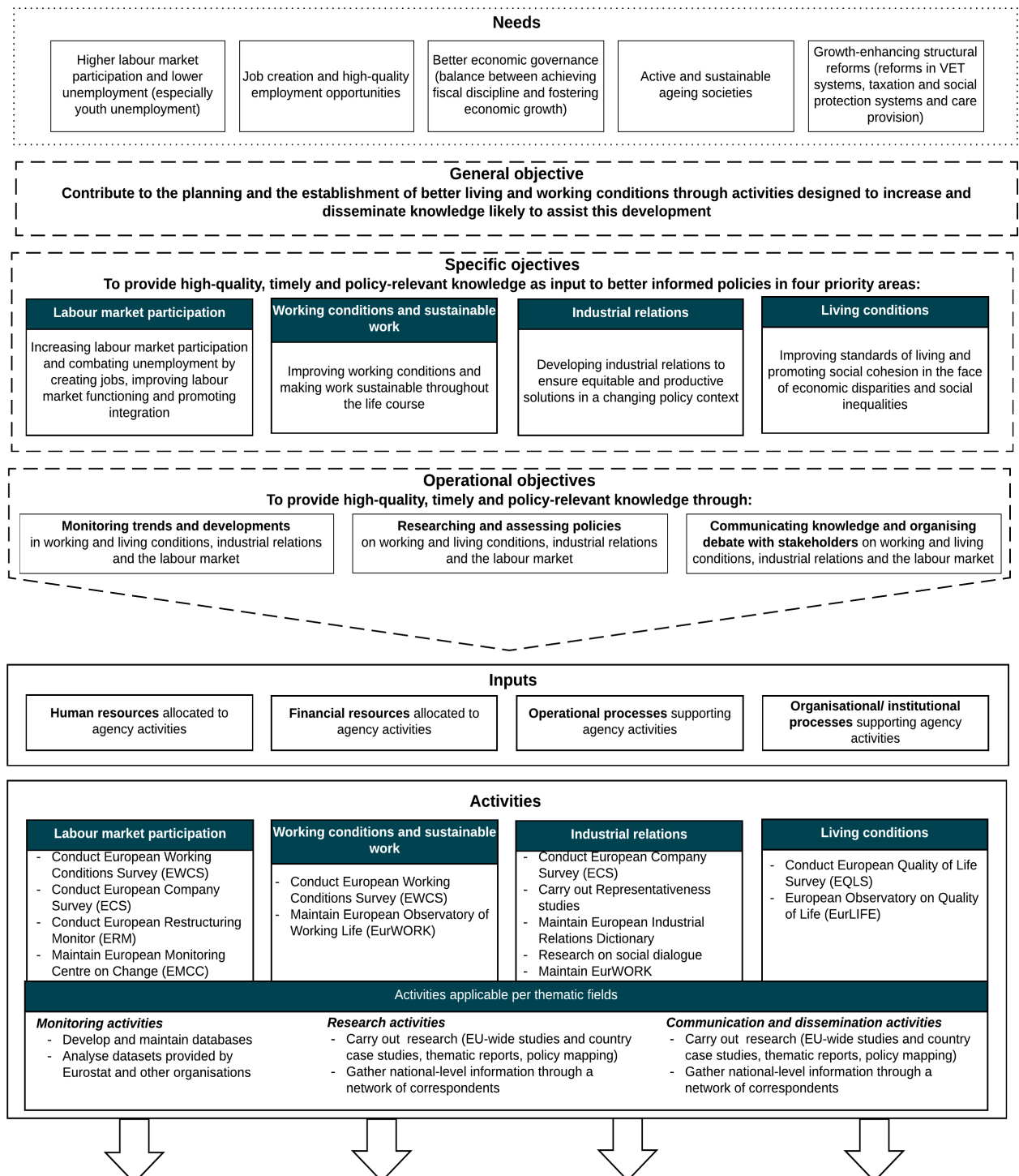
¹⁷¹ European Commission (2014), Communication on an EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020, COM (2014) 332 final, Brussels.

¹⁷² European Commission (2017), Communication on Safer and Healthier Work for All — Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation and Policy, COM (2017) 12 final, Brussels.

¹⁷³ European Commission (2016), External Evaluation of the European Training Foundation (ETF), Final Report by the EFECTIV Consortium, Brussels.

¹⁷⁴ ETF’s work programmes for 2015-2016 can be found here: http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Work_programme

Figure 1: Intervention logic of Eurofound



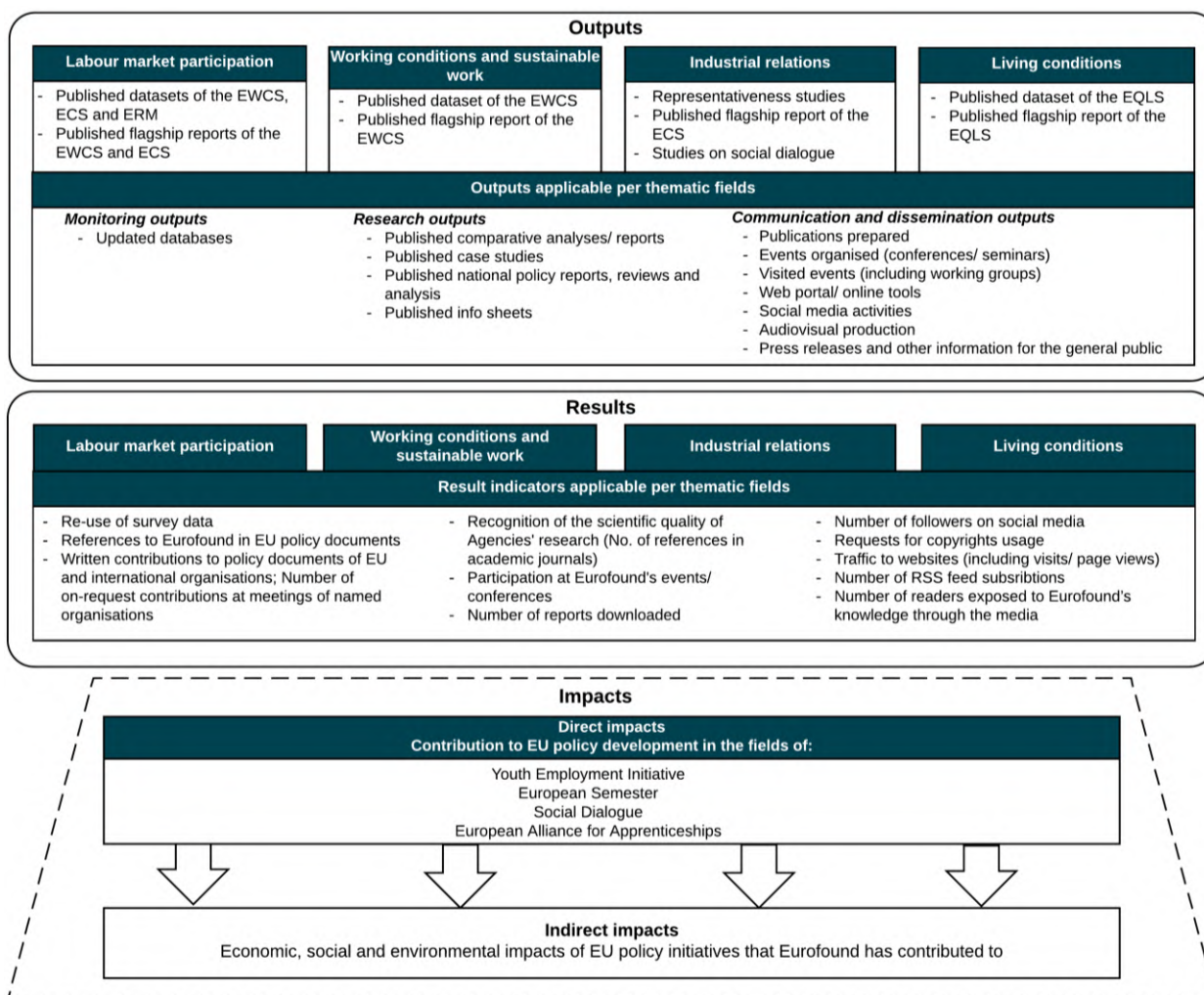
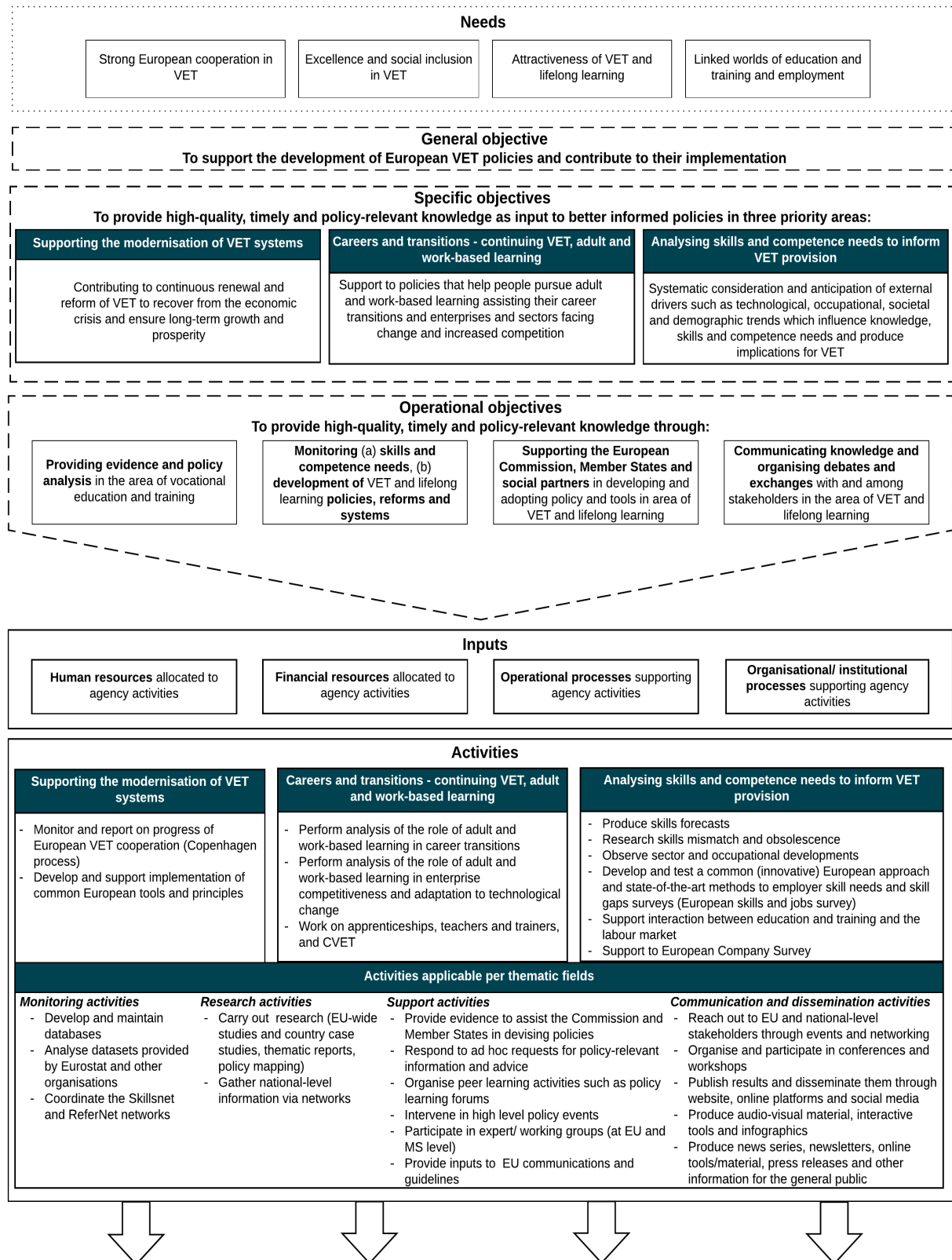


Figure 2: Intervention logic of Cedefop



Outputs			
Supporting the modernisation of VET systems	Careers and transitions - continuing VET, adult and work-based learning	Analysing skills and competence needs to inform VET provision	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reports on Copenhagen Process, esp. Bruges short-term priorities- Thematic snapshots on VET for EU Presidency semesters- Deliverables related to common European tools and principles (e.g. Europass, EQF/NQFs, ECVET, EQAVET, ESCO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Publications of studies carried out by Cedefop in the field- Apprenticeships review and outputs related to work on teachers and trainers and CVET	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Skills forecasting reports- Skills Panorama website- European skills and jobs survey (methods, approach, results)- Contributions to European Company Survey- Skills index- Profiles of EU national skills anticipation systems	
Outputs applicable per thematic fields			
Monitoring outputs <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Updated databases- Outputs produced by networks	Research outputs <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Published comparative analyses/ reports- Published case studies- Published national policy reports, reviews and analysis- Published info sheets	Support outputs <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Contributions provided to policy development at EU and MS level- Inputs to EU communications and guidelines- Deliverables produced in response to ad hoc requests- Peer learning activities organised- Interventions produced in policy events or expert/working groups- Policy briefings	Communication and dissemination outputs <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Publications prepared- Events organised (conferences/ seminars)- Visited events (including working groups)- Web portal/ online tools- Social media activities- Audiovisual production- Press releases and other information for the general public

Results			
Supporting the modernisation of VET systems	Careers and transitions - continuing VET, adult and work-based learning	Analysing skills and competence needs to inform VET provision	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use of Copenhagen process reports- Use of the thematic snapshots by the Council Presidency- Use of deliverables related to common European tools and principles- Use of Cedefop's work in developing EU and national VET and lifelong learning policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use of Cedefop's publications in the field- Use of the apprenticeships review and outputs related to work on teachers and trainers and CVET	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use of forecasting reports- Number of visits to Skills Panorama website- Use of the results of the European skills and jobs survey- Use of skills index and profiles of EU national skills anticipation systems	
Result indicators applicable per thematic fields			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- References to Cedefop in EU and Member States' policy documents- Written contributions to policy documents of EU and international organisations; Number of on-request contributions at meetings of named organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Recognition of the scientific quality of Agencies' research (No. of references in academic journals)- Participation at Cedefop's events/ conferences- Number of reports downloaded	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Number of followers on social media- Requests for copyrights usage- Traffic to websites (including visits/ page views)- Number of RSS feed subscriptions- Number of readers exposed to Cedefop's knowledge through the media	

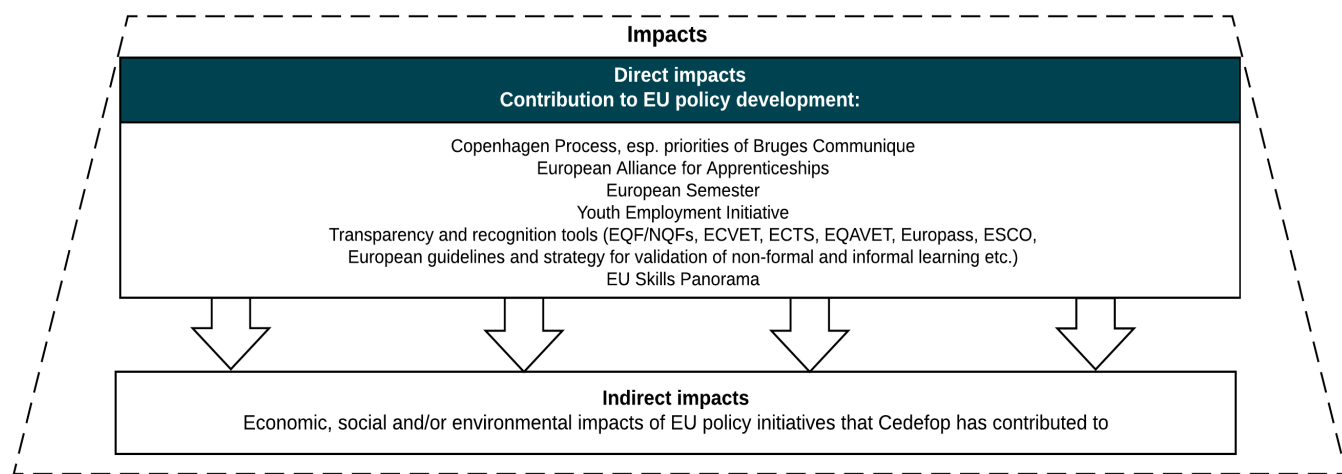


Figure 3: Intervention logic of EU-OSHA



Outputs

Developing forecasting information on OSH risks	Generating and maintaining information on working environment	Promoting networking and coordination	Communicating and raising-awareness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated European Risk Observatory (ERO) - Foresights studies reports - Useful contribution to development of OSH information systems project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Published datasets of the European Surveys (ESENER, opinion polls) - (Online) risk-assessment tools, checklists, guides - Thematic overviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic networks - Operational networks (national focal points) - Outputs of EU cooperation projects (ERA) - Outputs of programmes outside the EU (e.g. IPA) - Networking knowledge tools (OSH-wiki) - Good practices inventories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshops, meetings, conferences - Training events - Corporate communication products - Materials of awareness-raising campaigns - Outreach of awareness raising campaigns (quantity, quality)

Results

Developing forecasting information on OSH risks	Generating and maintaining information on working environment	Promoting networking and coordination	Communicating and raising-awareness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of forecasting knowledge in policy and practical initiatives - Experts satisfied with relevance of risks identified and reliability of forecasting data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of datasets and online tools by stakeholders - Use of thematic overviews - Experts satisfied with relevance of information and reliability of data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic and operational networks established - Coverage, quality and composition of established networks - Satisfaction of stakeholders networking activities - Increased cooperation on information and research among MS, joint projects - Knowledge and use of tools by SME's and other OSH actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Behavioural changes following awareness-raising campaigns - Knowledge and awareness of OSH issues by target groups of awareness raising campaigns - Knowledge and replication of good practices examples

Impacts

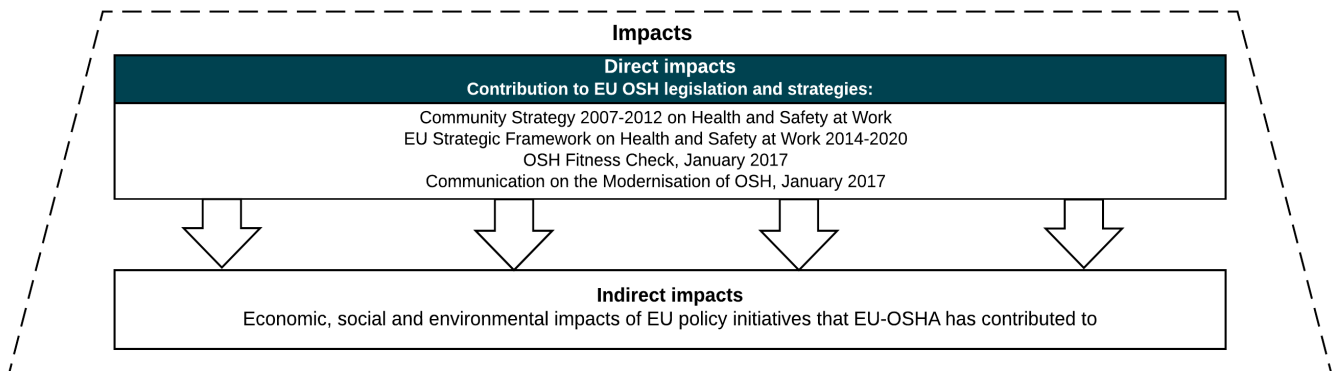
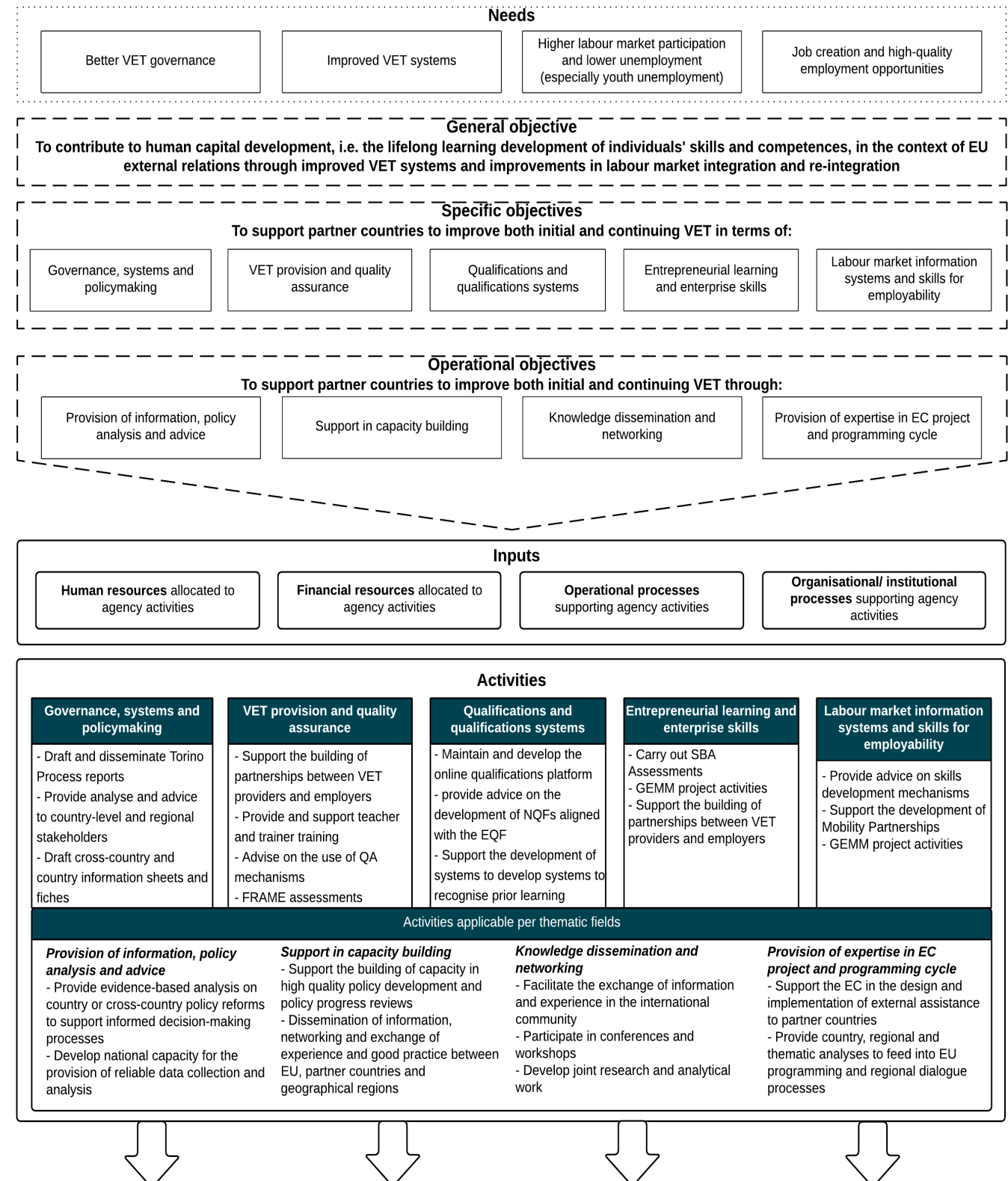
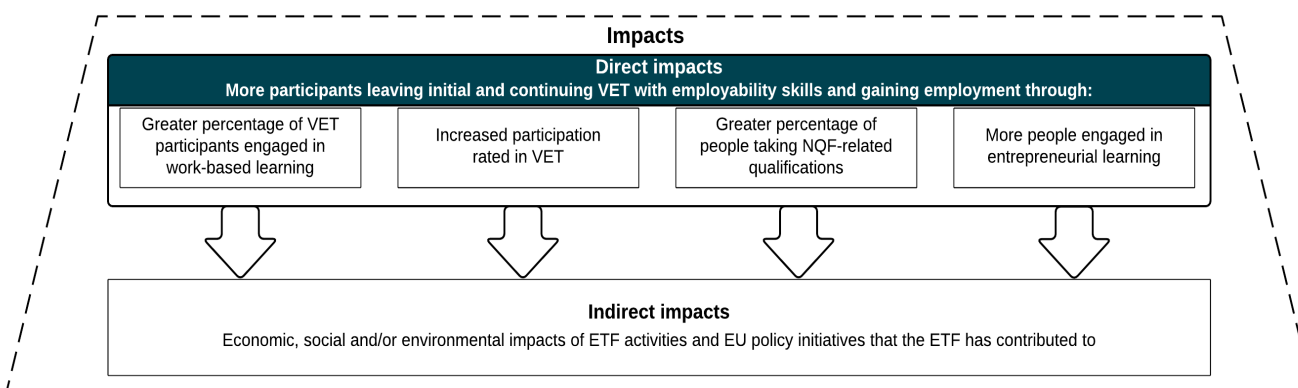
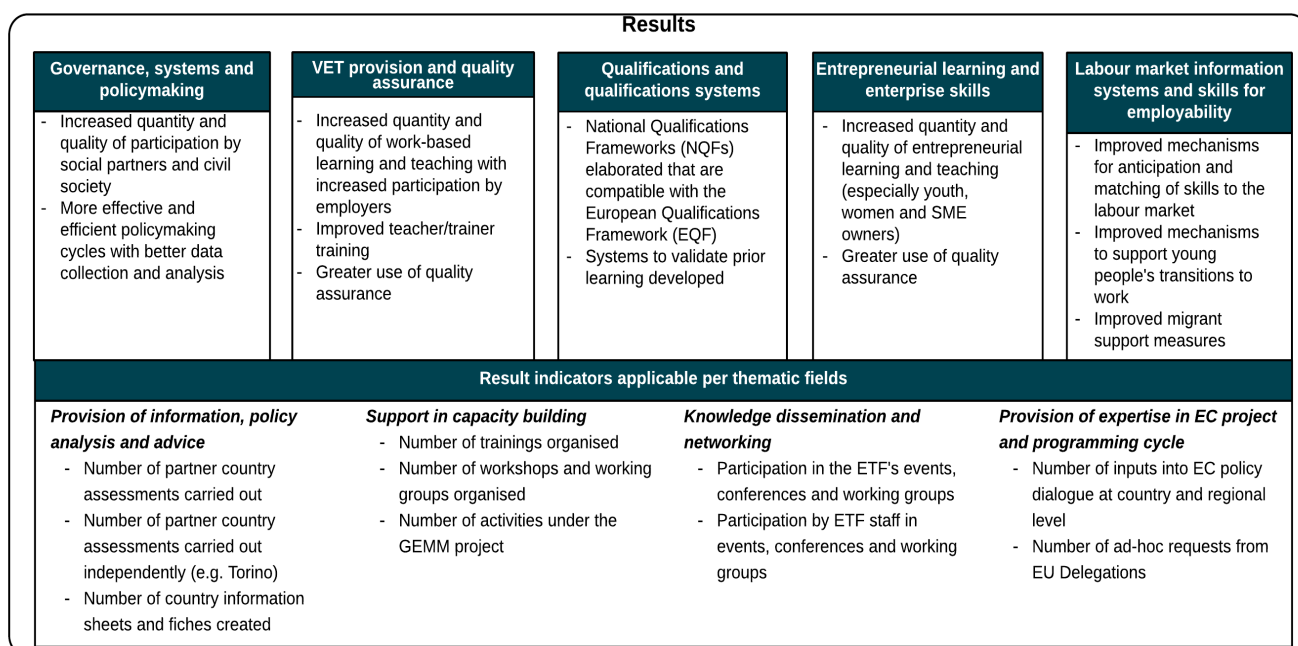
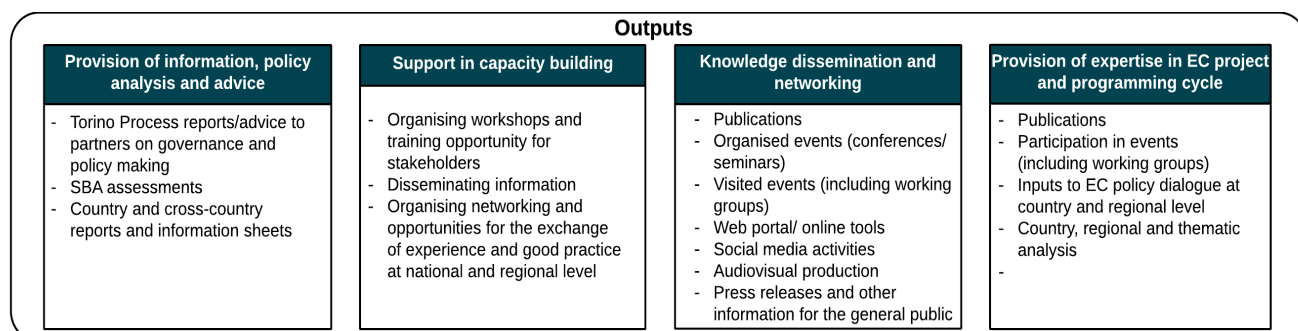


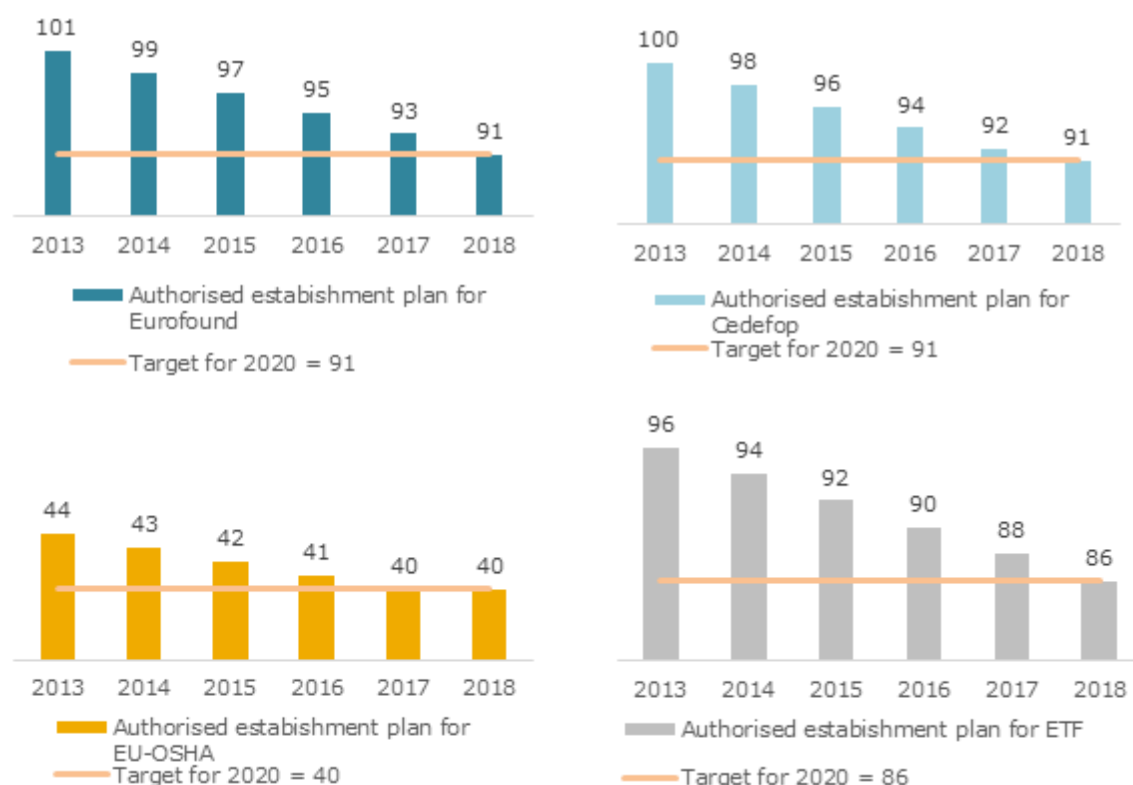
Figure 4: Intervention logic of ETF





Annex 5: Complementary tables and figures

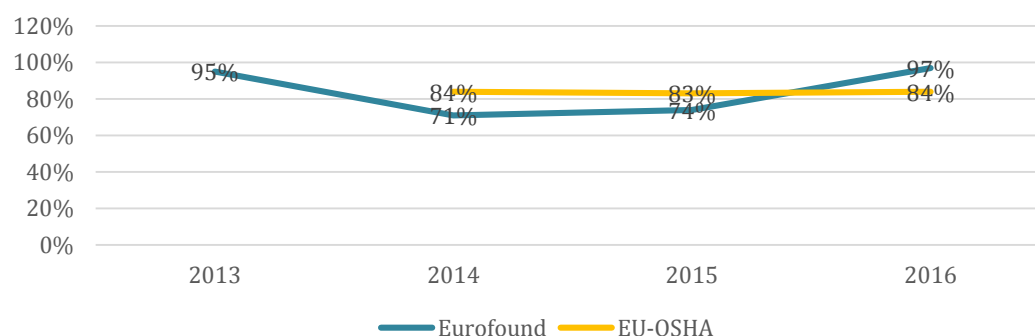
Figure 1: Number of posts authorised in the establishment plans of the agencies*



Source: Draft General Budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, Working Document Part III, Bodies set up by the EU and having legal personality and Public-Private Partnership.

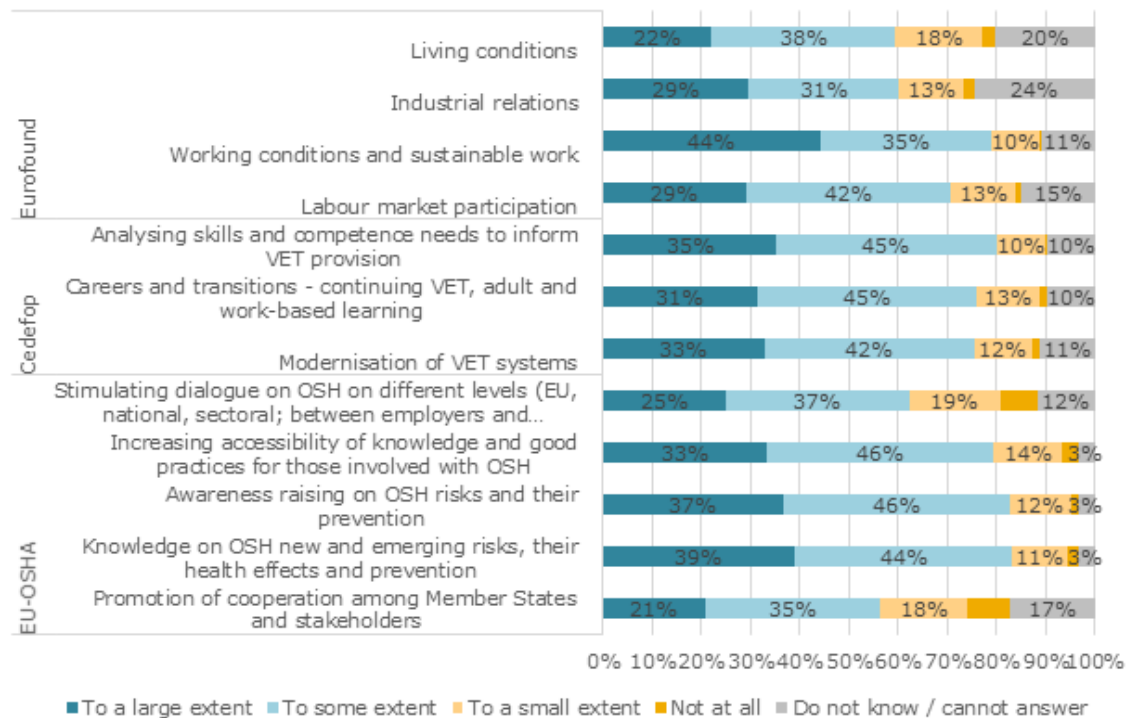
*Note: the agencies' Establishment plans exclude 'external staff' (contract agents and local staff). External staff has been kept constant overall during the period (e.g. 29 posts for CEDEFOP, 25 posts for EU-OSHA, around 13-14 posts for EUROFOUND and 40-42 for ETF). The staff target was set in the Commission Communication to establish a programming of human and financial resources for decentralised agencies 2014-2020 - COM(2013) 519 of 10.7.2013-.

Figure 2: Programme delivery rates



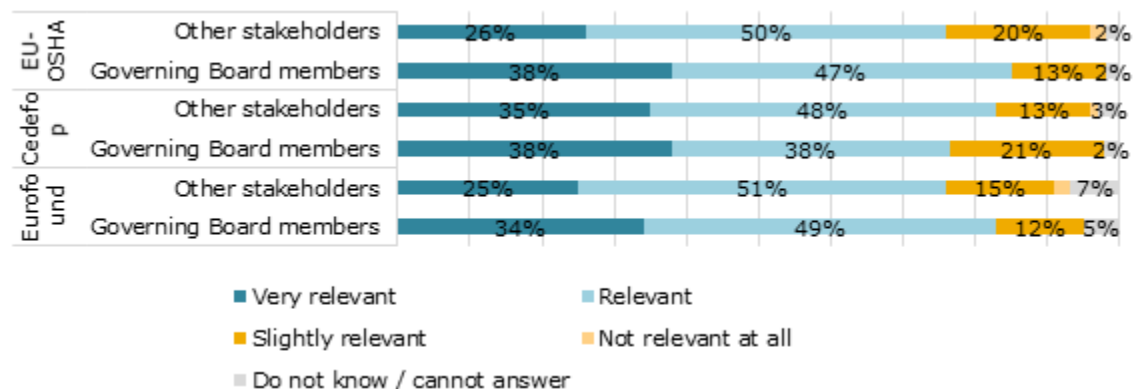
Source: Annual reports of Eurofound and EU-OSHA.

Figure 3: To what extent, if at all, did agencies' outputs in the following thematic fields meet your needs in 2011-2016?



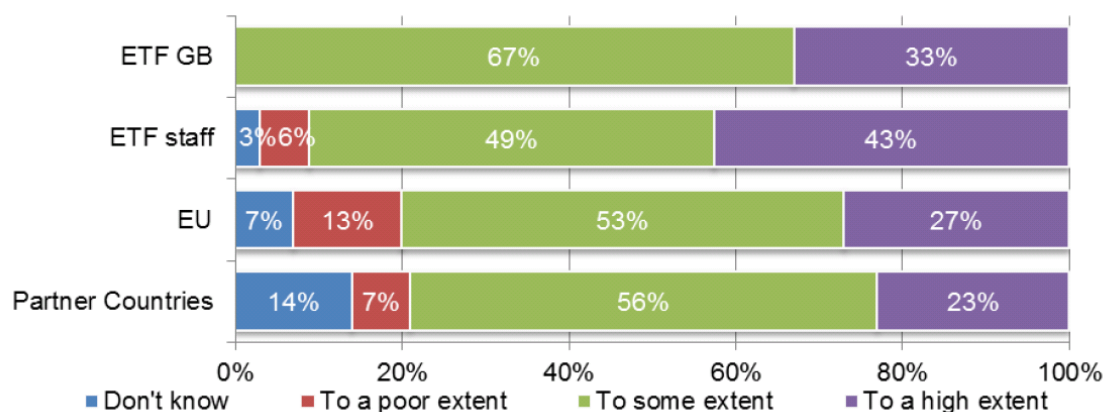
Source: Stakeholder surveys, all groups. Eurofound N=237; Cedefop N= 213; EU-OSHA N=278.

Figure 4: How relevant, if at all, were an agency's overall activities and outputs to your work in 2011-2016?



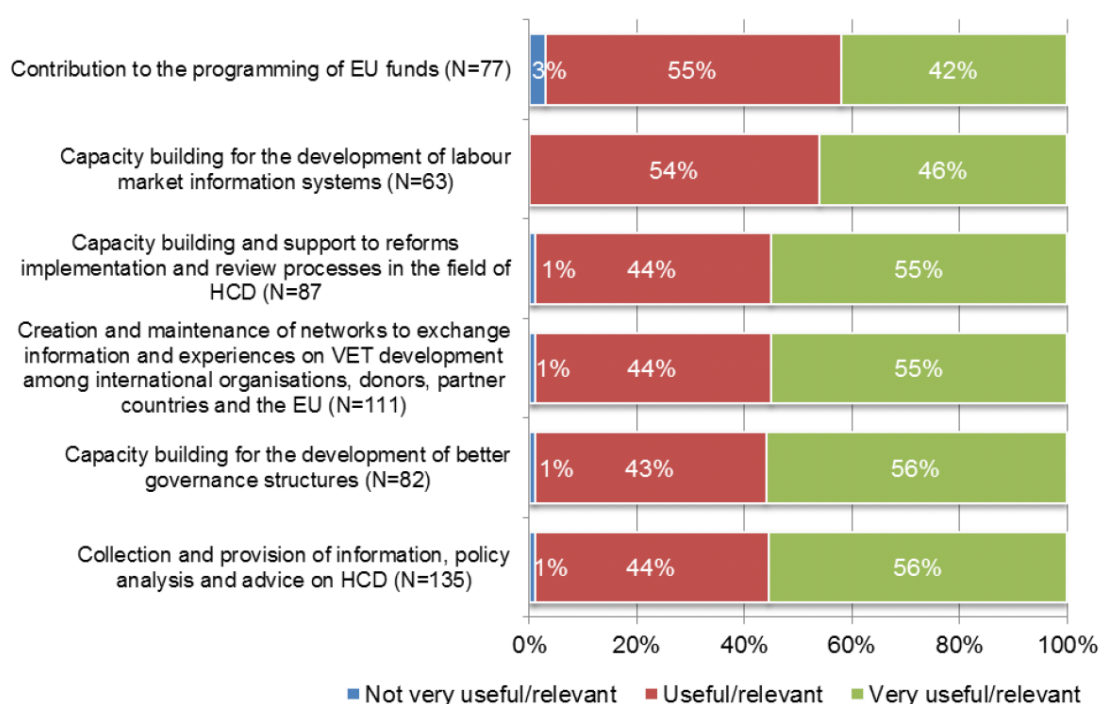
Source: Stakeholders surveys, responses from governing board members (Eurofound N=82; Cedefop N=42; EU-OSHA N=87); responses from other stakeholders (Eurofound N=174; Cedefop N=207; EU-OSHA N=231).

Figure 5: ETF survey responses on the effectiveness of the Torino Process in achieving its objectives



Source: Ecorys (ETF GB, N=9; ETF staff, N=35; EU respondents, N=15; Partner country respondents, N=116)

Figure 6: ETF Partner country survey responses on the extent that ETF activities met the needs of their respective countries



Source: Ecorys (2016)

Table 1: Specific objectives of the agencies

	Specific objectives
Cedefop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supporting the modernisation of VET systems</i> — contributing to continuous renewal and reform of VET to recover from the economic crisis and ensure long-term growth and prosperity • <i>Careers and transitions — continuing VET, adult and work-based learning</i> — support to policies that help people pursue adult and work-based learning assisting their career transitions, and businesses and sectors facing change and increased competition • <i>Analysing skills and competence needs to inform VET provision</i> — systematic consideration and anticipation of external drivers which influence knowledge, skills and competence needs and have implications for VET
Eurofound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing policy-relevant knowledge for <i>increasing labour market participation</i> and combating unemployment — by creating jobs, <i>improving labour market functioning</i> and promoting integration • Supporting policy-makers with evidence in the field of <i>working conditions and sustainable work</i> • Monitoring trends and developments in <i>industrial relations</i> • Conducting research for improving <i>standards of living and promoting social cohesion</i> in the face of economic disparities and social inequalities
EU-OSHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting <i>cooperation among Member States and stakeholders</i> to make the best use of OSH resources • Generating <i>high-quality knowledge on OSH new and emerging risks</i>, their health effects and prevention • <i>Raising awareness</i> of OSH risks and their prevention • Making <i>knowledge and good practices accessible</i> for those involved in OSH and stimulating dialogue on different levels
ETF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Governance</i>, systems and policy-making in partner countries outside the EU • <i>VET provision</i> and quality assurance in partner countries outside the EU • <i>Qualifications</i> and qualifications systems in partner countries outside the EU • <i>Entrepreneurial learning</i> and enterprise skills in partner countries outside the EU • <i>Labour market</i> information systems and <i>skills</i> of employability in partner countries outside the EU

Table 2: Operational objectives of the agencies based on their intervention logics

Agency	Operational objectives
Cedefop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Support • Communication and dissemination
Eurofound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring • Research • Communication and dissemination
EU-OSHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing forecasting information • Generating and maintaining information on working environment • Promoting networking and coordination • Communicating and raising awareness
ETF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of information, policy analysis and advice • Support in capacity building • Knowledge dissemination and networking • Provision of expertise in EC project and programming cycle