



Evaluation of the EU Agencies under the remit of DG Employment: EUROFOUND, CEDEFOP, ETF and EU-OSHA

FINAL REPORT

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**Evaluation of the EU Agencies
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Employment: EUROFOUND,
CEDEFOP, ETF and EU-OSHA
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List of Abbreviations

CA	Common Approach
CAAR	Consolidated Annual Activity Report
CEA	Cost-effectiveness analysis
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CoR	Committee of Regions
DG COMM	Directorate-General for Communication
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
DG EAC	Directorate General for Education and Culture
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
DG ESTAT	Statistical office of the European Union
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
DG SANTE	Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EaSI	European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation

EC	European Commission
ECHA	European Chemicals Agency
ECS	European Company Survey
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EP	European Parliament
EQ	Evaluation Question
EQLS	European Quality of Life Survey
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EU-OSHA	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
Eurofound	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
EWCS	European Working Conditions Survey
ERM	European Restructuring Monitor
FRA	European Agency for Fundamental Rights
GB	Governing Board
Gov	Government
HR	Human resources
IASs	Internal Audit Services
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILO	The International Labour Organization
ISSG	Interservice Steering Group
JRC	Joint Research Centre
MAC	Management Committee
MS	Member State
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPC	Online public consultation
PPMI	Public Policy and Management Institute
QMS	Quality Management System
TIC	Testing, Inspection and Certification
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VET	Vocational education and training

INTRODUCTION

Subject of the evaluation

Four decentralised agencies operate under the remit of DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPL): Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF. The prime objective of these agencies is to generate knowledge and contribute to the policy process in their respective fields of activity. According to the Founding Regulations:

- Cedefop (established in 1975) works to promote vocational training and in-service training
- The mandate of the ETF (established in 1990) encompasses human capital development in partner countries
- Eurofound (established in 1975) covers broadly living and working conditions
- EU-OSHA (established in 1994) focuses its activities on occupational safety and health

In terms of *modus operandi*, the respective Founding Regulations state that Eurofound and Cedefop are to provide policy advice and assistance to the Community institutions; EU-OSHA works to provide information to the Community bodies, the Member States, social partners, and those involved in the field; finally, the ETF is to contribute, in the context of EU external relations policies, to improving human capital development in a number of countries and regions outside the EU. Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA are tripartite agencies, meaning that Member States, employers' organisations and trade unions are represented equally in their Governing Boards. The ETF's Governing Board is composed mostly of representatives from the Member States.

Comparing the four agencies

The project team carried out an in-depth evaluation of Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA. The ETF has already been evaluated in 2016¹ and therefore, in line with the Terms of Reference, this assignment has drawn, to the extent possible, on the 2016 report and produced an update. In many cases the previous ETF evaluation **did not collect** data that could be directly comparable to that of Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA. In such cases the project team used comparative evidence for the three agencies.

Rationale of the assignment

The Commission's Better Regulation Guidelines and the Financial Regulation require periodic evaluation of EU interventions of over 5 million EUR, which is applicable to all four agencies, as their annual budgets are all above this threshold. The **main objective** of this evaluation was therefore to provide an **independent external evaluation** of the four agencies with regard their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and EU value-added. The evaluation encompassed both an individual assessment of each agency as well as a cross-cutting and comparative perspective. It collected and examined evidence covering the period 2011-2016 (if relevant, earlier evidence was also taken into account) and undertook a prospective assessment with regard to the future functioning of the agencies.

The **timing of the evaluation** is very appropriate, as it feeds into a number of EU policy streams. The first of these is the Common Approach (CA) on the decentralised agencies, which was signed in 2012 by the European Parliament, Council and the Commission. The CA defines a more coherent and efficient framework for the functioning of agencies. The agencies' Founding Regulations are being amended within

¹ Ecorys (2016) External Evaluation of the European Training Foundation (ETF). *Final Report by the EFECTIV Consortium*, October.

this framework. The present evaluation provides evidence covering both the ongoing implementation of the Common Approach, as well as the likely changes.

Second, the role and mission of the agencies will be debated in the context of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). While the staff resources of the agencies have been reduced in line with the 10% target applied to the decentralised agencies belonging to the 'cruising speed' category², the policy environment in which the agencies operate remains complex and demanding. We therefore assessed both the effects of the reduction, and the potential for actions that could generate further synergies and economies.

Finally, in his 2017 State of the Union address, the President of the EC, Jean-Claude Juncker, announced plans for a European Labour Authority (ELA) to strengthen cooperation between labour market authorities at all levels, and to better manage cross-border situations. While this development was not covered by the Terms of Reference, and came during the later stages of the evaluation, the announcement may have important implications for the four agencies. We therefore took ELA into consideration by covering it as part of the relevance and future scenarios analysis.

Evaluation questions and structure of the report

The evaluation covered the following evaluation questions:

- EQ1: How have the four agencies performed as regards relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and EU added value in the period 2008-2016?
- EQ2: To what extent are the mandates and activities of the agencies coherent among themselves and with the ones of other bodies that have similar objectives?
- EQ3: To what extent have the recommendations made by the latest external evaluations and those stemming from recent audits been put into practice?
- EQ4: Based on this evaluation of the agencies, 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 efficiency gains, exploiting potential synergies among them e.g. sharing of services, and/or possible mergers/ termination of the agencies?

This text is structured along the lines of the four evaluation questions and their sub-questions. In the annexes we provide the agency-specific and transversal reports and account for the key sources of evidence, including the survey reports as well as report of the Open Public Consultation (OPC).

Methodology and data sources

The evaluation team used complex methodology aimed to collect solid evidence and provide well-informed answers to the evaluation questions. It consisted of extensive desk research, several surveys, contribution to an open public consultation, in-depth case studies and a wide-ranging interview programme. We worked to triangulate different sources and combine distinct approaches whenever the evidence was insufficient or inconclusive. We combined data-based, documentary as well as perception-based sources as well as quantitative and qualitative techniques, depending on the nature of the evaluation question and the respective strengths of data and approaches.

The **desk research** of documentary evidence and other sources covered both publicly available sources and information provided by the agencies. It included documents defining the legal framework of EU decentralised agencies, a variety of documents adopted by the Commission and other EU bodies, previous external evaluations of the

² 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.

agencies, various analyses and studies, as well as administrative, planning and monitoring data, which came from the agencies themselves. The desk research offered a wealth of information that we drew on to answer all evaluation questions, although some information was not full or comparable across agencies (see the assessment of the methodology used in the next section).

The **surveys** were launched at the end of April 2017 and were active for two months. As agreed during the inception phase, the research team implemented seven surveys: four staff surveys (Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF) and three stakeholder surveys (Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA). The design of the surveys allowed us to differentiate between several groups of respondents, such as the Governing Board members, internal staff, other stakeholders. The survey questions were discussed with the ISSG and carefully crafted to ensure comparability across groups of respondents and complementarity with the OPC.

The total number of invitations sent and answers received are presented in the table below. We followed proven protocols that we developed over the years to make sure that the survey links are sent to active users and are not filtered out by spam filters; these include personalised links and invitation texts, limited number of url links in the text, etc. We also used well-timed reminders (three reminders in total). The share of responses is in line with similar evaluation and survey exercises for similar assignments. The survey data fed into all the evaluation questions, in and in particular the aspects of these questions in regard to which opinions of respondents are of prime importance.

Table 1. Information on implementation of surveys

Agency	Number of invitations sent	Number of bounced invitations	Number of complete responses	Number of 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 ³	N/A	53	10
ETF	129	0	83	8

The **open public consultation** (OPC) was launched on 5 April 2017 and run until 5 July 2017. The evaluation team contributed to the development of the questionnaire, coordinated the OPC with the survey programme, provided suggestions on improving the reach of the OPC, and produced an OPC report (Annex 16). In total the OPC received 159 responses from 24 Member States; 59% of the respondents provided answers in their professional capacity or on behalf of an organisation and 41% responded in their personal capacity. The OPC questions mirrored the evaluation questions and provided important evidence both in terms of structured responses and open comments.

The interview programme encompassed high-level/ in-depth as well as case-studies-related interviews. In total the programme involved 228 individual interviewees: 110 in the context of high-level/ in-depth interviews carried out during the first phase of the project and 118 related to the case studies and conducted after the submission of interim report. Table 2 below presents a summary of the high-level and in-depth interviews and Table 3 lists interviews in relation to the case studies. The interview programme involved the key stakeholder groups, including social partners, internal staff as well as clients/ beneficiaries. It was designed to embrace a wide variety of views, including those coming from the agencies themselves, their governing

³ Sent through an internal bespoke mailing address, so the panellists' number is not known.

structures as well as from outside stakeholders. Depending on the question at hand, the interview programme was used either to supplement other sources of evidence with experts' views or to gain insider insights in cases when other data sources are scarce.

Table 2. Interview programme: high-level and 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	DG EMPL	11
	DG EAC, DG SANTE, DG ESTAT, DG GROW, DG JUST, DG RTD, JRC, DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, RTF, SG	21
Other EU level institutions	EU Parliament, EEAS, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions, EIGE, FRA	7
International organisations	ILO, OECD	3
Total completed		110

Finally, the evaluation team implemented 20 in-depth **case studies**, including 15 agency-specific and 5 cross-agency case studies. The agency-specific case studies were aimed primarily to either trace the agencies' impacts on specific EU policy initiatives or assess efficiency of some of the core activities, such as communication or surveys. The cross-agency case studies were designed to explore the ways in which duplication, complementarity and synergy arise between the agencies and also with the EC and national and international stakeholders. The case studies drew on detailed desk research as well as surveys and OPC data as presented above. In total 118 interviewees were consulted for the case studies; given that some interviewees fed into two or even more case studies, on average one case study used 6.9 interviews. The list of the case studies is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. List of the case studies

Reference agency	Name of the case study	No. of interviews used
Cedefop	Apprenticeship country reviews	6
	Forecasting skills demand and supply	6
	VET for labour market integration, social inclusion and adult learning	7
	VET policy monitoring	8
	Work on European tools – EQF and Europass	7
EU-OSHA	A collaborative tool to enhance Member States cooperation: the OSH-Wiki	7
	Anticipation of OSH risks from labour market developments: green jobs	6
	Facilitating SME compliance and risk assessment: the OiRA tool	4
	OSH management in the context of an ageing workforce	6
	The contribution of the EU-OSHA Agency to the package - Safer and Healthier Work for All - Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation Policy	6
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

Reference agency	Name of the case study	No. of interviews used
Transversal	Supporting the Commission's work on the European Semester	9
	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: capacity building of social partners	6
	Surveys: surveys of employers and employees	9

Overall assessment of the strength and weaknesses of the methodology and data

The evaluation team used extensive documentary evidence which provided a good understanding of the internal operation of the agencies, as well as their performance. Nevertheless, we noted that some performance information is not collected by all the agencies, and methodological differences exist that make certain indicators difficult to compare between agencies. For example, the structure and content of the agencies' annual reports has evolved over the years. 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 differ and have changed over time. Finally, 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 numbers of references and quotations that appear in policy documents, academic literature, etc. is an important indicator of performance (effectiveness, impact). Some data limitations exist in this respect. First, EU-OSHA does not monitor references/quotations in EU policy documents. Second, the use of agencies' outputs at the national level is not extensively or systematically monitored. Finally, some caution is required in the use of data concerning quotations and reference, in the sense that, as demonstrated by the case studies, some stakeholders may use evidence presented by 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 upon a number of sources that offer opinions and perceptions. These include surveys, interviews and the OPC. Data on opinions and perceptions is an important piece of evidence where an evaluation question or sub-question implies asking for the views of stakeholders. For example: how do the outputs or services of the agencies' respond to the needs of users? (effectiveness); do they think that agencies operate transparently? (efficiency); do they feel that agencies responded flexibly to emerging issues and changing EU policy contexts? (relevance). In some cases, respondents or interviewees may provide the only source of knowledge or witness accounts of events when no other sources are available. Nevertheless, the evaluation team was careful to consider the fact that opinions are naturally influenced by respondents' relationship with an agency. We therefore grouped the respondents for analytical purposes, examined tendencies inside and between groups, and gave equal consideration to consensus views and divergent views. Furthermore, we corroborated perception-based sources with other sources of evidence, in particular desk research data. Finally, with regard to multifaceted and complex issues (for example, the functioning of the Governing Boards) we used in-depth interviews with both direct participants as well as informed outsiders, in order to gain a full and contextualised account of the situation.

The number of responses collected through the surveys was significant, and in line with what was expected, based on similar exercises in the past. For the two groups whose response rates can be counted because the number of all potential respondents is finite (staff and Governing Board members), the response rate was more than 50

per cent (with the exception of Cedefop's staff). Nonetheless, all survey exercises depend on the willingness of respondents to respond. The evaluation team used all appropriate tools aimed at encouraging participation, such as explaining clearly the aims and importance of the survey in the invitation letter; attaching a letter from the Commission requesting cooperation; designing the surveys in a way that was easy to understand; addressing spam filters; undertaking an individualised approach to each respondent; providing a dedicated help-desk for participants/respondents; and sending timely reminders.

In line with the Better Regulation Guidelines, the OPC is an important tool for collecting input and views from stakeholders about EU policy initiatives. An OPC cannot be expected to provide a representative view of opinion among the EU public, but it does offer a channel to those who care about the issues at hand to voice their ideas. As expected, the knowledge and involvement of respondents varied significantly with regard to the agencies, but the OPC's design allowed us to differentiate between those respondents who were well-informed and others. The analysis of responses was informed by this distinction, and triangulated with other sources of evidence.

Finally, the evaluation also had to take into consideration certain complexities pertaining to each evaluation criterion. First, the criterion of effectiveness deals with the achievement of objectives which, according to the intervention logics of the agencies, range from operational to general. General objectives or impacts must be assessed with particular caution, as they are usually the broadest, their causal chain is long and involves many milestones, and many other causal factors exist which 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 carefully trace the processes behind specific policy initiatives. Second, the assessment of efficiency is made more complex by the fact that agencies do not always consistently monitor some of the key aspects, as well as by the fact that the monitoring methodologies used are not always comparable over time or between agencies. The assessment of relevance was informed, among other factors, by the new initiative concerning the European Labour Authority announced by President Juncker in the State of the Union Address 2017. While technically the ELA is not part of the period covered by the evaluation (2011-2016), it is an important new development that could have far-reaching repercussions for the agencies. The evaluation team therefore appraised this development during the final stages of the assignment. Finally, the assessment of the value-added and prospective analysis included the identification and assessment of future scenarios. This is an evidence-based exercise, to the extent that this is possible; however, any judgement about the future involves uncertainty and assumptions, which we aim to present clearly and transparently.

In conclusion, the data collected and methods used drew on the principles and tools presented in the Better Regulation Guidelines, and follow the best practices of evaluation. While acknowledging some data gaps and methodical limitations as presented above, we believe that, to the extent it is possible, the evaluation presents well-informed and reliable answers to the questions formulated in the Terms of Reference. The cross-cutting element forms a very useful feature of the analysis, as it allows us both to assess the agencies individually, and to compare them with each other, highlighting not only the common trends, but also the differences and potential directions for cross-agency learning. The validation seminar in regard to the conclusions and recommendations of this assignment was carried out in December 8, and the messages from this seminar informed the final stages of this evaluation.

1. EQ1: HOW HAVE THE FOUR AGENCIES PERFORMED AS REGARDS RELEVANCE, EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS, IMPACT AND EU ADDED VALUE?

1.1 EFFECTIVENESS

According to the Better Regulation Guidelines, effectiveness analysis considers how successful EU action has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives.

As demonstrated by the respective intervention logics of Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF (see Annex 1), the agencies' objectives can be categorised in terms of general, specific and operational that are mirrored by implementation-related terms of activities, outputs, results and impacts. Figure 1 shows the interaction between various elements of the intervention logic.

Figure 1. Elements of the intervention logic analysed in answering the effectiveness questions

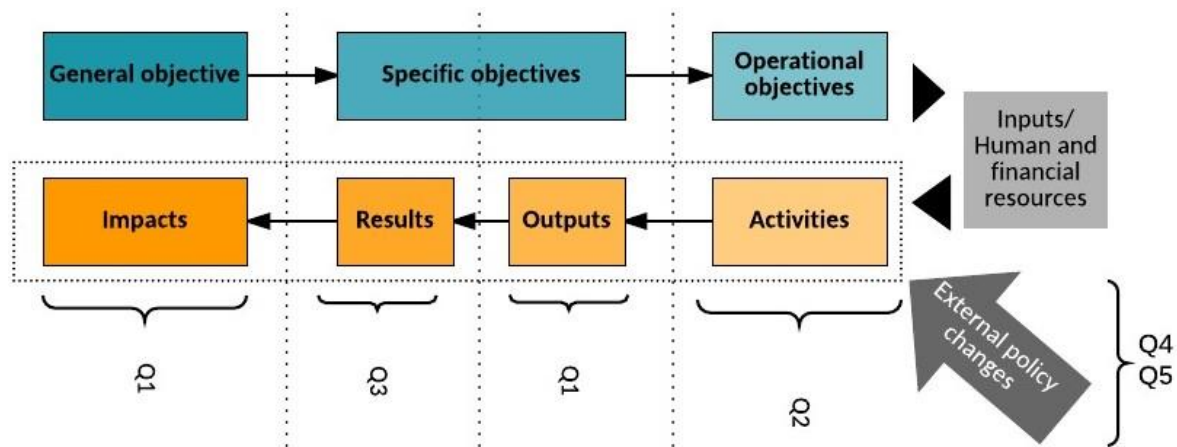


Figure 1 also presents how the evaluation team structured the concepts referred-to in the Better Regulation Guidelines in view of the questions formulated in the Terms of Reference. Accordingly, effectiveness section consists of five sub-sections, each devoted to a specific question of the Terms of Reference:

- To answer the first question (How successful are the agencies in reaching the expected objectives, results and making impacts?), we investigate the *specific objectives/outputs and impacts* presented in the intervention logics of the respective agencies.
- To answer the second question (To what extent are the current activities carried by the agencies appropriate for achieving their objectives?), we look at the level of *operational objectives/activities*.
- The third question (To what extent are the services that the agencies provide actually used by their stakeholders, by EU institutions and by international bodies and organisations? How well does it respond to their needs?) discusses the evidence on the agencies' *results*.
- The fourth question (How is the agency adapting to the changes in the EU policy and in the political and socio-economic situation in the EU?) examines the operation of the agencies in view of their external environment or changing EU policy contexts.
- Finally, the fifth question summarises evidence from different sections in the light of the requirements of the Common Approach on EU Decentralised Agencies.

Analysis of effectiveness does not cover inputs or the resources – the links between inputs and various outcomes are part of the efficiency analysis

1.1.1 How successful are the agencies in reaching the expected objectives, results and making impacts?

To answer this question, we first assess the extent to which the agencies produced their planned outputs under each specific objective during the evaluation period. The table below lists the specific objectives of the agencies and presents examples of corresponding outputs. Further, we analyse the stakeholder's perceptions on how effective the agencies were in achieving these specific objectives. Finally, we present an analysis of the impact that the agencies had on the EU policy making in their fields of activity. In order to evaluate these aspects, we draw on evidence from desk research, interviews, surveys, case studies and the OPC.

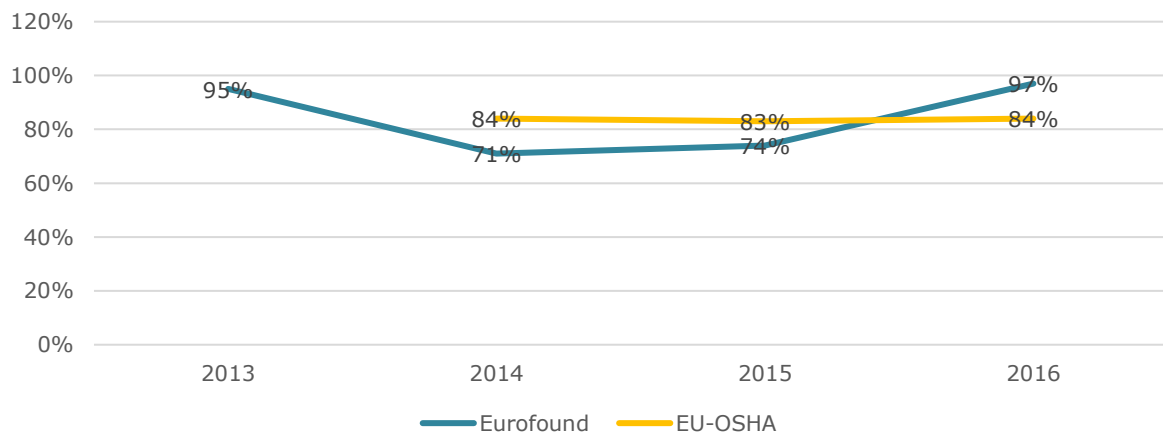
Table 4. Specific objectives of the agencies

	Specific objectives	Examples of outputs
Cedefop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributing to continuous renewal and reform of VET to recover from the economic crisis and ensure long-term growth and prosperity • Support to policies that help people pursue adult and work-based learning assisting their career transitions, and enterprises and sectors facing change and increased competition • Systematic consideration and anticipation of external drivers which influence knowledge, skills and competence needs and produce implications for VET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET in Europe country reports, national news on VET, European mobility scoreboard for initial vocational education and training • Project Apprenticeships in work-based learning, European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning • Project Assisting EU countries in skills matching, Trends and skill needs in tourism, EU Skills Panorama
Eurofound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing policy-relevant knowledge for increasing labour market participation and combating unemployment – by creating jobs, improving labour market functioning and promoting integration • Supporting policy-makers with evidence in the field of working conditions and sustainable work • Monitoring trends and developments in industrial relations • Conducting research for improving standards of living and promoting social cohesion in the face of economic disparities and social inequalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Company Survey, follow-up reports • European Working Conditions Survey, follow-up reports • Mapping key dimensions of industrial relations in Europe • European Quality of Life Survey; report Delivering public services: a greater role for the private sector?
EU-OSHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting cooperation among MS and stakeholders to make the best use of OSH resources • Generating and high-quality knowledge on OSH new and emerging risks, their health effects and prevention • Raising awareness of OSH risks and their prevention • Making knowledge and good practices accessible for those involved in OSH and stimulating dialogue on different levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign toolkit • European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks • OSH wiki, Napo • OSH e-tools, E-guide on vehicle safety, E-guide for all ages
ETF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance, systems and policy-making • VET provision and quality assurance • Qualifications and qualifications systems • Entrepreneurial learning and enterprise skills • Labour market information systems and skills of employability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET Governance partner country profiles • Torino process reports • Project Qualifications for the Mediterranean • Entrepreneurship competence framework • Country reports education, training and employment developments

Delivering the planned outputs

The analysis presented in the agency-specific reports indicated that Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF delivered the outputs planned in their annual programming documents during the evaluation period. Nonetheless, delays in delivery were observed in Eurofound in 2014 and 2015⁴, when the rate of delivery was below the agency's target of 80%. These delays can be attributed to delays by contractors, increased number of ad-hoc requests, resource limitations (including the 10% staff reduction) and unrealistic planning⁵. The situation of programme delivery in Eurofound improved significantly in 2016⁶, as the agency adapted to the workload under these circumstances⁷. Meanwhile, EU-OSHA's, programme delivery rate was steady in 2014-2016, and reached over 80%⁸, which was consistently below the agency's target of 90% (Figure 2). It is hard to compare the two agencies though, as EU-OSHA has a smaller number of planned deliverables and overall different, higher level understanding of this indicator. ETF also had a share of outputs (12-21%) cancelled or delayed each year. This normally occurred due to developments in partner countries or European Commission's ad hoc requests. Cedefop does not collect data on the programme delivery indicator.

Figure 2. Programme delivery rates



Source: Annual reports of Eurofound and EU-OSHA.

Timely delivery of certain outputs was named as a potential area for improvement by some stakeholders of Cedefop. They mentioned lengthy periods between collecting and publishing information as one of the drawbacks of the agency's outputs. This was echoed by some stakeholders of Eurofound, who noticed the lengthy period from survey data collection to publication of results. Nonetheless, more than 70% of the agencies' stakeholders who responded to the surveys thought that the agencies delivered their outputs in a timely manner (see the figure below).

⁴ Eurofound (2017), Consolidated annual activity report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2016.

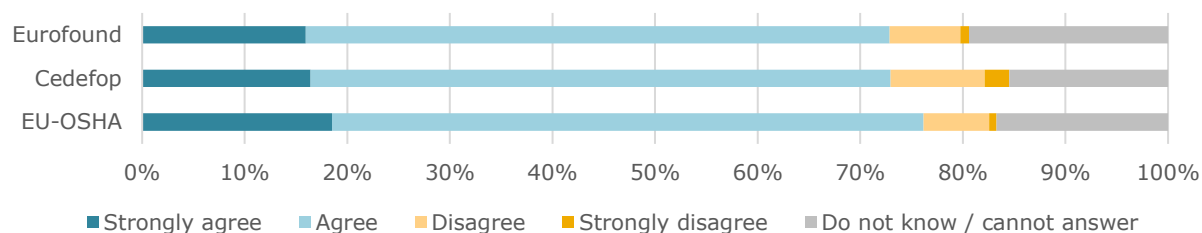
⁵ European Parliament (2015) Discharge 2015: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)

⁶ Eurofound (2016), Consolidated annual activity report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2015.

⁷ The 2017 programme delivery indicator was 90%.

⁸ EU-OSHA annual reports.

Figure 3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements about the agency below? It delivers its outputs in a timely manner



Source: Stakeholder surveys, all groups. Eurofound N=232; Cedefop N=207; EU-OSHA N=281

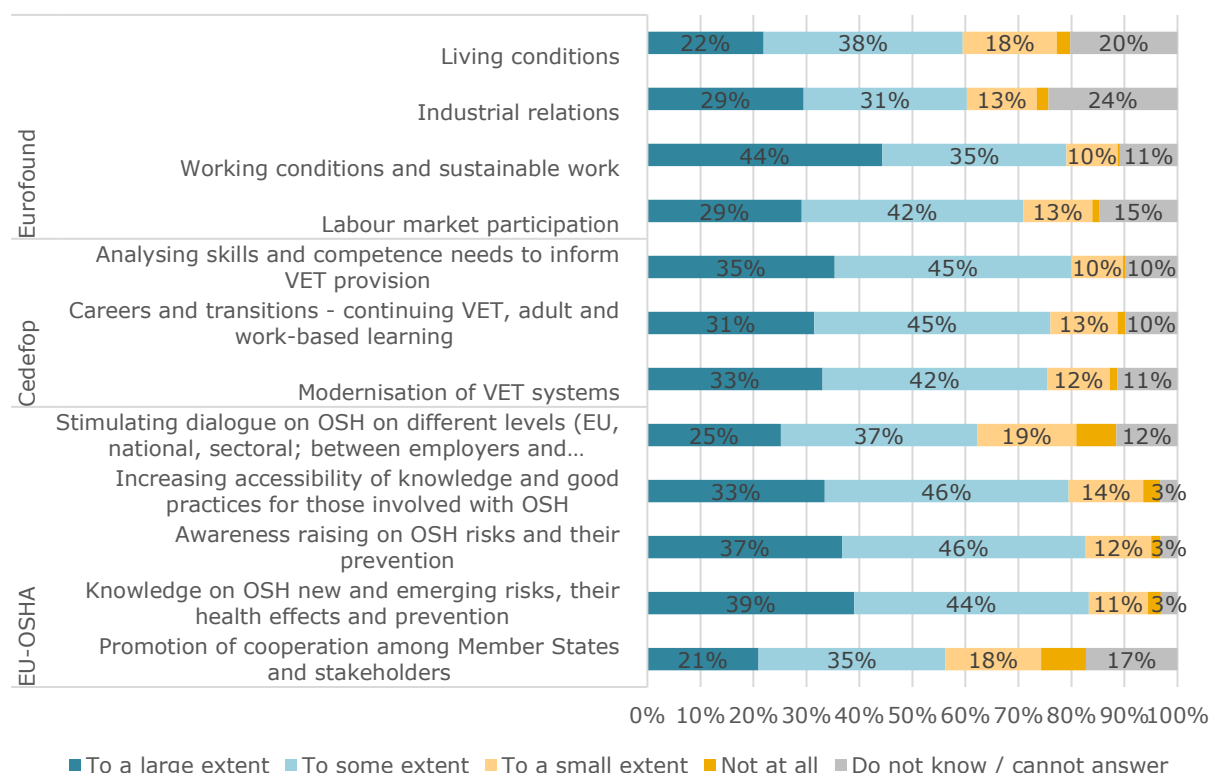
A more important issue is planning and delivery of outputs in relation to the relevant EU policies of the Commission, Parliament, Council and European social partners. This issue is addressed in more detail in Section 1.1.4. Overall, the evaluation found that agencies' outputs usually feed into the relevant policy processes, but there is scope for further improvement, especially when the agencies must react quickly to the needs of the Commission. While the agility of the agencies' contribution tends to be restricted by the nature of their modus operandi (early planning of the work programmes, long-term nature of the scientific research, procedure of accepting ad hoc requests), it is important that they cooperate with the Commission to better anticipate its needs and be ready to support them with evidence and advice.

Stakeholders' perceptions on the achievement of objectives

In line with the Founding Regulations and the multiannual work programmes of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA, their key objectives are related to furnishing their stakeholders with policy-relevant knowledge the agencies' fields of activity. These stakeholders include, first and foremost, the Commission and other EU institutions, policy makers in national governments, trade unions and employers' organisations. The views of these stakeholder groups were consulted through surveys, the OPC and interviews.

There was a consensus between the participants of the interview programme that Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA achieved their specific objectives during the evaluation period. The surveys showed that more than 50% of respondents thought that all of the agencies' outputs – in all of the thematic/ activity areas – met their needs to a large or to some extent. There were some differences across different fields within each agency. For example, Eurofound's performance in the areas of living conditions and industrial relations, and EU-OSHA's work in promoting cooperation among Member States and stakeholders were evaluated somewhat more reservedly. Nonetheless, each agency's fields of research are difficult to compare to each other, as they differ in scope and nature.

Figure 4. To what extent, if at all, did agencies' outputs in the following thematic fields meet your needs in the period 2011-2016?



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

Such findings were corroborated by the OPC. The majority of participants responded that the agencies achieved their objectives of providing EU institutions, Member States and social partners with high-quality, timely and policy-relevant knowledge across various policy areas. The incidence of OPC participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that the agency achieved its objectives was over 50% in all areas for Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. However, a large share of other participants – around 30-35% for all agencies – did not provide an opinion (i.e. selected the answer 'do not know'). Relevant information on ETF is provided the following sub-section.

Making impacts

According to the intervention logics, the Eurofound's, Cedefop's and (to some extent) EU-OSHA's impacts can be assessed in terms of their contribution to the design of EU policies in their areas of activity. EU-OSHA, besides this, has a role in policy implementation. Meanwhile, ETF's impacts are understood as development and increased effectiveness of the VET systems in the partner countries. Several sources and methods help to measure such impacts: documentary analysis, detailed process tracing (carried out in the case studies) and usage of agency's outputs in policy documents. The evaluation team supplemented the documentary evidence with views and testimonies of experts as well as policy makers.

To begin with, the evidence on Cedefop's contribution to policy-making indicated that the knowledge generated by the agency was employed by national as well as EU-level actors. Overall, according to Cedefop's performance monitoring system, the agency contributed to the preparation of 48 policy documents of the EU institutions in 2016, to 114 in 2015 and to 127 in 2014.

The case studies explored Cedefop's contribution to the European Semester (VET policy reporting) and EU policies in the area of VET for labour market integration, social inclusion and adult learning (e.g., Renewed Agenda for Adult Learning, A New

Skills Agenda for Europe, Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults). These case studies (see the box below) showed that Cedefop supported the Commission, Member States and its stakeholders through various activities, research projects, and by participating in high-level meetings and events. Cedefop had policy impact at both European and national level. Sometimes the agency's contribution at the national level was even more tangible than at the EU level. For example, the case study on the apprenticeship review project showed that recommendations provided in the review to some extent informed the reforms in two Member States (Lithuania and Malta). On the other hand, the evidence collected did not allow to confirm Cedefop's contribution to the implementation of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) and increased EU knowledge base through this specific project.

Cedefop's move towards increasing support to Member States was evident during the evaluation period. On the other hand, interviews with Commission staff revealed that the results of the work carried out by Cedefop at national level in the context of apprenticeship reviews could be better integrated into the EU policy making and discussions.

Box 1. Evidence of Cedefop's impact from case studies

VET policy monitoring

The policy monitoring information collected by Cedefop was included into policy making at least to some extent, specifically through the ACVT meetings. During the evaluation period, Cedefop presented progress of VET monitoring in 19 ACVT meetings, including meetings of Bureau and enlarged Bureau. According to an interview with a European Commission representative responsible for overseeing DGVT meetings, Cedefop also regularly presents the progress of VET policy monitoring at these meetings. This indicates that both government representatives and the national social partners should be familiar with their progress and progress of other countries in achieving the Copenhagen Process deliverables.

National-level stakeholders also seemed to use Cedefop's data to inform the policy making process. According to one government representative interviewed, in general, Cedefop's work in the thematic areas related to the Bruges short-term or Riga medium-term is useful in implementing reforms. Peer learning was also mentioned as an important source for the improvement of VET policies at national level.

The evidence collected also suggests that information provided by Cedefop within the framework of VET policy reporting fed into outputs of the European Semester, namely the country reports. Despite the lack of direct references to policy reporting outputs, one interviewee representing the European Commission claimed that Cedefop's data informed the preparation of the country reports to a large extent. Cedefop's monitoring report was also quoted in the 2014 Education and Training Monitor. Cedefop's data also possibly informed national policy developments, yet this contribution is not direct, thus difficult to judge. Nevertheless, EU Member States achieved progress in achieving Bruges and Riga deliverables as well as in implementing CSRs, pointing to overall improvements of VET systems in Europe. Based on the evidence collected, Cedefop played a role in facilitating the Copenhagen process (including Bruges and Riga deliverables) and to some extent informed the formulation of the CSRs.

EU adult learning and early school leaving policy

The evidence suggests that policy makers included Cedefop's evidence into the policy-making process in the two areas of adult learning and early leaving from education and training in the period 2011-2016. The participation of Cedefop in the ET 2020 Working Group (WG) on Adult learning in 2011-2016, in the WG on Early School Leaving in 2011-2013, and the WG on Schools in 2014-2016 in diverse roles (providing evidence, participating and intervening in meetings, and supporting policy makers in policy implementation) demonstrates the agency's contribution in these policy areas. Moreover, the publication of multiple research outputs in the areas of adult learning and early leaving supported the implementation of the European Agenda on Adult Learning, the 2011 Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving and the 2015 Council Conclusions on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school. Cedefop also supported the Commission in preparing several key EU policy initiatives such as the Council Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning, and supported its implementation. In addition to this, the agency provided input to the New Skills Agenda, in particular to the preparation of the 2016 Council Recommendation on 'Upskilling Pathways' and related staff working documents.

Evidence also suggests that Cedefop provided additional support to policy makers and stakeholders in these areas. According to Cedefop representatives, the agency has for example followed up on the implementation and use of the VET Toolkit for tackling early leaving with policy makers at Member State level and with other relevant stakeholders, notably through its participation in high-level events to improve the impact of the project.

Forecasting skills demand and supply

A study conducted in 2013 found that Cedefop's work on skill supply and demand forecasts for Europe was recognised across different EU institutions and EU-level stakeholders and its results cited in several EU strategic documents⁹. Cedefop's work constituted a primary source of evidence for developing and supporting a number of EU education and training, employment, industrial, immigration and qualification recognition policies¹⁰.

Another indication of the performance of Cedefop in making forecasting data available to the public is the success of the Skills Panorama portal. Even though the development and maintenance of the Skills Panorama portal is done under other Cedefop's project, it is directly related to skills forecasting as this project provides most of the data. This portal has been designed for policy makers, policy experts, and intermediaries advising citizens on labour market policy.

Portals like the Skills Panorama enable Cedefop's department for Skills and Labour Market to better disseminate their research results by providing an attractive user interface. Cedefop's stakeholders interviewed pointed out that interactive data presentation and visualisation such as included in the Skills Panorama is a highly effective way to make skills intelligence data more accessible and more useful for every-day work purposes. The interviewees working on the Skills Panorama in Cedefop noted that in the future, the portal should be made even more accessible by representing available complex datasets and adapting specific terminology not only to the professionals, but also to the general public.

The Skills Panorama relaunch exemplified how research results may be used to inform both policy-makers and practitioners. It demonstrated how labour market intelligence could be made available and accessible to inform decisions and advice related to education and training policy.

In the case of Eurofound, the ratio of key EU policy documents that quote Eurofound out of a total number of EU policy documents in Eurofound's fields of expertise (KPI 9) has been around 80-90 policy documents out of around 300 annually in 2014-2016¹¹. The case studies further revealed that the agency's data/ research was used for the development of such EU policy initiatives as the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee, and "New Start for Working Parents". The Commission also drew on various outputs produced by the agency when preparing its own contribution to the European Semester. The documentary analysis showed extensive referencing to Eurofound's data in Commission's papers (see also Section 1.1.3). Evidence indicates that the timely provision of the needed evidence not available elsewhere was the most important precondition for the agency's impact. Nevertheless, in line with the agency's mandate, this contribution cannot be considered as a decisive factor that determined the start or design of policies, including those analysed in the case studies. See more information in the box below.

Box 2. Evidence of Eurofound's contribution to EU policies from case studies

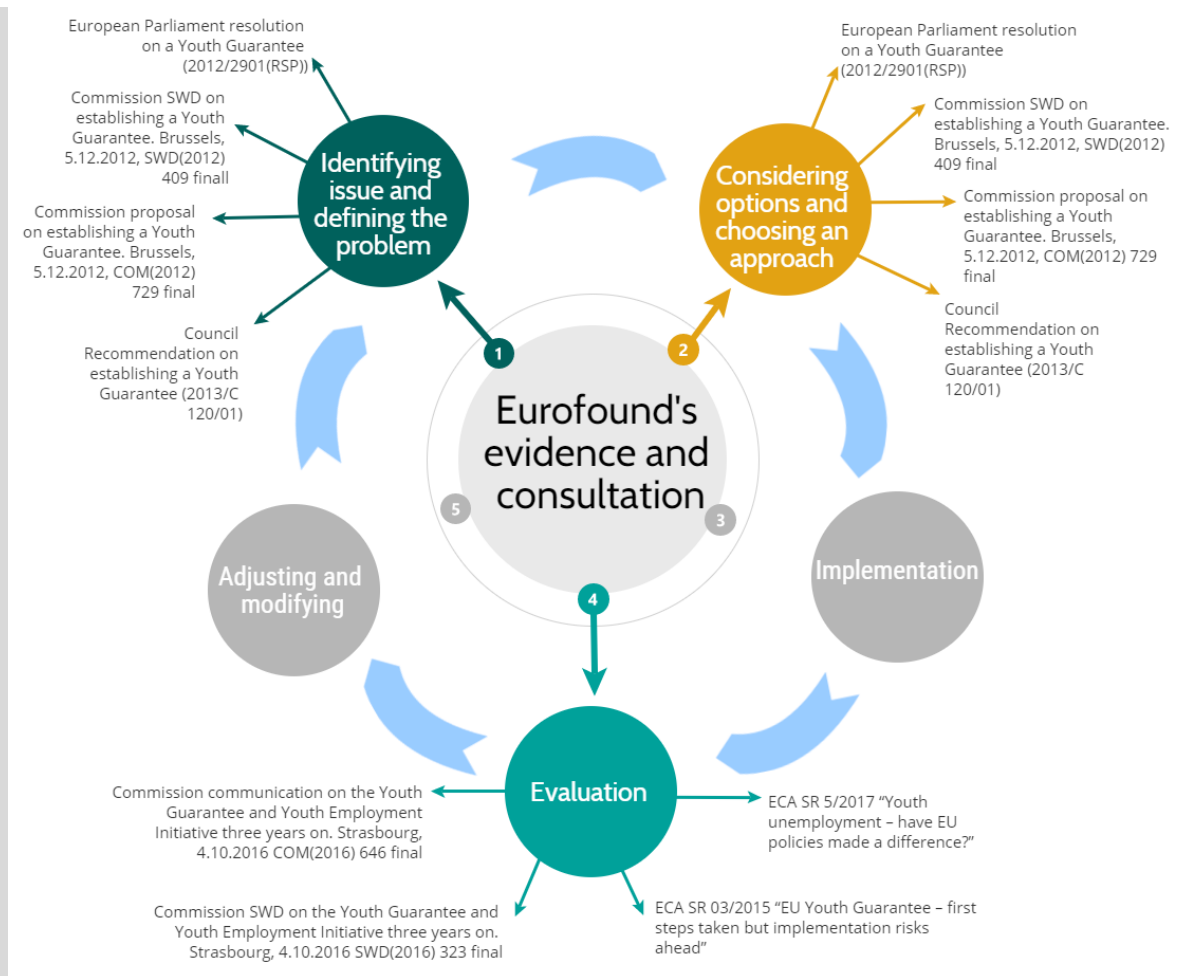
Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee was one of the major initiatives in the Eurofound's area of expertise during the evaluation period. The case study confirmed that Eurofound contributed to the development of Youth Guarantee, by providing very timely and unique information on NEETs to the policy makers. The research was provided at the moment when the policy makers were considering the initiative; without Eurofound, they would have needed to engage in a lengthy process of additional evidence generation. Besides this, Eurofound's research on NEETs received wide attention from media in and outside Europe, contributing to the emphasis of the problem of youth unemployment. Ultimately, the agency's contribution was continuous, as it also provided evidence to the evaluation of Youth Guarantee three years on. This way, Eurofound fed into several stages of the policy cycle: identification of an issue, choice of approach and evaluation. This was confirmed not only by involved policy officials from the European Commission, European Parliament and Council (national ministers), but also by significant quotation of Eurofound in the policy documents, as illustrated below.

⁹ Cedefop (2013). Mid-term skills supply and demand forecast. Policy implications of the skills forecasts.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Eurofound annual reports.



European Semester

Eurofound's research themes and areas of expertise overlap with the thematic fields of the European Semester to a large extent. During 2011-2016, Eurofound shared outputs with the Commission, such as data from the flagship surveys, research reports (including draft reports from ongoing research projects), monitoring data on the labour market and industrial relations. Interviewed representatives from DG EMPL mentioned, that country profiles carried out by national correspondents for the European Observatory of Working Life (EurWork) and the report on 'the Role of Social Partners Involvement in the European Semester'¹² were particularly relevant and useful outputs in the context of the European Semester. Interviewed representatives from DG EMPL noted that throughout 2011-2016 Eurofound was an important source of information.

The agency's outputs were also used to prepare European Semester documents (especially, to develop Country Reports, CSR). For example, the Croatia's 2014 Country Report had a reference to the Eurofound study on tackling undeclared work¹³. The next year, the Country Reports for France, Latvia and Romania had references to Agency's outputs. In 2016, Eurofound's outputs were used in seven country reports. Moreover, interviewed officials from DG EMPL noted that throughout 2011-2016 outputs from different EU institutions were often used in European Semester documents without making any references to original sources. This was also the case with Eurofound. Nevertheless, agency's outputs rarely played a role in inspiring particular CSRs for the Member States. Few exceptions, mentioned by both DG EMPL officials and Eurofound management, were Eurofound reports on youth unemployment¹⁴ and on the involvement of social partners in the European Semester¹⁵, which were influential to propose corresponding CSRs.

New Start for Working Parents

One of Eurofound's four-year work programme (2013-2016) priorities was to improve working conditions

¹² Eurofound (2016), *Role of the social partners in the European Semester*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

¹³ Eurofound (2013), *Tackling undeclared work in Croatia and four EU candidate countries*, Eurofound, Dublin

¹⁴ For example: Eurofound (2012), *NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

¹⁵ Eurofound (2016), *Role of the social partners in the European Semester*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

and make work sustainable throughout the life course, including the aspect of work-life balance. These corresponded to the aims of the "New Start for Working Parents"¹⁶ initiative. Desk research and interview evidence shows that the agency contributed to the policy discussions leading to the adoption of this initiative. Eurofound's research were used and quoted in a number of related policy documents such as:

- Commission policy roadmap for the "New start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working Families initiative" (August 2015)¹⁷.
- European Parliament resolution¹⁸ on 'the application of Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC'. (May 2016)
- European Parliament resolution on 'Creating Labour Market Conditions Favourable for Work-Life Balance'¹⁹ (September 2016)
- Council conclusions on enhancing skills of women and men in the EU labour market called for giving priority to removing barriers of women's participation in the labour market, including reconciliation measures²⁰ (December 2016)
- Commission Communication: An Initiative to Support Work-Life Balance for Working Parents and Carers²¹ (April 2017)

Meanwhile, the case studies on EU-OSHA examined EU-OSHA's contribution to the Communication "Safer and Healthier Work for All – Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation and Policy"; the Green Employment Initiative and the pilot project Safer and healthier work at any age – occupational safety and health (OSH) in the context of an ageing workforce. The Commission's representatives acknowledged EU-OSHA's role in developing these initiatives. The Green Jobs case study revealed some examples of research findings that fed into the national policy debates. Nevertheless, although 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 EU-OSHA's outputs is mostly restricted to the policy actors concerned with occupational health and safety, and rarely reaches other audiences. The evidence from case studies is presented in more detail in the box below.

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

Safer and Healthier Work for All: Modernisation of the EU OSH Legislation Policy

In 2011 the European Commission initiated an-ex post evaluation of the EU OSH legislation. EU-OSHA was invited to be part of Inter-Service Steering Group (ISSG). Throughout the process, both during the evaluation and during the drafting of the Communication as well as the practical guidance document, EU-OSHA's input was utilised as documented by the various citations of EU-OSHA outputs in the above presented text. In the evaluation data limitations were a challenge, and the Regulatory Scrutiny Board pointed to the need to mention initiatives for the improvement of data availability by working with both EU-OSHA and Eurostat. The ESENER survey in any case was a relevant source.

The outcomes of the evaluation report fed into the Communication Safer and Healthier Work for All - Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation and Policy. In the Communication as well as the Staff Working Documents accompanying the Communication EU-OSHA information is extensively used and quoted. Moreover, EU-OSHA is the designated organisation for implementing several activities envisaged by the Communication, because of its key role in disseminating knowledge, information and practical tools. It can therefore be concluded that the EU-OSHA information fed significantly into the policy process.

Moreover, the contribution of EU-OSHA to the Package was not limited to the evaluation and the Communication. In 2017, the Commission disseminated a practical guidance document for employers in the form of a Staff Working Document that is considered as part of the same "package". The document seeks to assist companies in getting most out of obligatory risk assessments, preventive measures and training. EU-OSHA's contribution to its preparation is acknowledged in the very introduction of the document.

¹⁶ From Crisis to Recovery: Four-Year Work Programme 2013-2016: Better informed policies for a competitive and fair Europe (published in 2012)

¹⁷ European Commission, DG JUST and DG EMPL, August 2015, Roadmap for the New start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2015_just_012_new_initiative_replacing_maternity_leave_directive_en.pdf

¹⁸ European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2016 on the application of Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC (2015/2097(INI))

¹⁹ European Parliament, Resolution of 13 September 2016 on creating labour market conditions favourable for work-life balance, 2016/2017(INI)

²⁰ Council, Conclusions On Enhancing the Skills of Women and Men in the EU Labour Market, 3 March 2017

²¹ Brussels, 26.4.2017; COM(2017) 252 final

OSH management in the context of an ageing workforce

In order to assist Member States in their initiatives on the occupational health dimension of active ageing, the European Parliament initiated the pilot project "Safer and healthier work at any age – occupational safety and health (OSH) in the context of an ageing workforce". The project was carried out between 2013 and 2016 by EU-OSHA. The activities within this project resulted in various outputs. Besides this, the pilot project served as an inspiration for the launch of a campaign Healthy Workplaces for All Ages 2016-17. The campaign was launched by EU-OSHA in April 2016 and focuses on sustainable work and healthy ageing from the beginning of working life. The campaign highlights the benefits of good occupational safety and health for workers, companies and society as a whole and the importance of risk prevention throughout a person's career.

The work done was used by some Member States to carry their strategy forward. For example, the Dutch minister of Social affairs and employment indicated that the campaign of EU-OSHA contributes to the effort of the Dutch government to make the Dutch labour market more sustainable as it helps to stimulate employers and employees to invest in sustainability. The European Commission used and cited the Campaign in the recent Communication on Modernisation of the EU OSH legislation and policy, presenting it as "world leading"²². There seems to have been limited use of the information in DG EMPL activities related to active ageing beyond the Health and Safety at Work Unit. AGE Platform informed that work of EU-OSHA played a role in the discussion on working conditions between social partners, ETUC and Business Europe related to the carers' leave directive, which AGE platform strongly asked for. This is however not reflected in position papers of social partners retrieved on the issue, while for instance Eurofound work on work-life balance is mentioned.

Anticipation of OSH Risks from Labour Market Developments: Green Jobs

The foresight study on risks associated with green jobs was the result of a two-year project, conducted between 2010 and 2012. Several of the technology areas identified as having OSH issues - green buildings, small scale solar energy applications and wind energy - were investigated in-depth. The study resulted in several outputs, including fact sheets and reports.

To promote the relevance for policy makers of the foresight study and to foster the use of the drafted scenarios two workshops of stakeholders were held in 2013 and 2014. While stakeholders showed interest in the products of EU-OSHA on green jobs, there is not much information available on the extent to which it influenced policy making at national, EU or company level. Some policy impact of EU-OSHA's work on green jobs could be found in Commission Staff Working Document on exploiting the employment potential of greening the economy²³. In the document, references are made to the foresight study (at the time still forthcoming), to expert forecasts on emerging chemical risks related to occupational safety and health and emerging biological risks related to occupational safety and health. Based on this information the importance of "ensuring that workers have the adequate prevention culture and occupational safety and health skills to perform green jobs" is emphasized²⁴. The SWD was also a part of the preparatory work of the Communication on Job-rich Recovery. In the Communication, however there is only a marginal reference to occupational health and safety implications of the development of new jobs in the identified key sectors when the issue of retaining older workers is discussed²⁵ and no reference is made to OSH in green jobs.

Meanwhile, the 2014 Communication on Green Employment Initiative: Tapping into the job creation potential of the green economy makes explicit reference to EU-OSHA work²⁶. It suggests that the concerns over OSH implications of the green economy that the EU-OSHA study contributed to raise have gained some additional attention in the policy debate at EU level since the prior 2012 Communication. This might be due to the overall developments in the green economy and to a more realistic and balanced attention by policy makers to the new employment sectors which also gives full consideration to potential risks being more receptive to studies such those of EU-OSHA.

Distinctly from other agencies, ETF's impacts are not viewed in terms of EU policy-making or implementation support, but understood as development and increased effectiveness of the VET systems in the partner countries. Generally, the agency-specific evaluation concluded that the ETF made a significant contribution in helping partner countries integrate in the Copenhagen process, supported development of national strategies and reform programmes while ensuring the development of national ownership. Nonetheless, these impacts were not necessarily sustainable in the long term, a lot depends on the level of development of individual countries as

²² Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Safer and Healthier Work for All - Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation and Policy. Brussels, 10.1.2017 COM(2017) 12 final, p. 10.

²³ European Commission (2012). Commission staff working document. Exploiting the employment potential of green growth. SWD(2012) 92 final.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 16.

²⁵ European Commission (2012), Communication A job-rich recovery of 18.4.2012 COM(2012) 173 final, p. 16.

²⁶ European Commission (2014). Communication Green Employment Initiative: Tapping into the job creation potential of the green economy of 2.7.2014 COM(2014) 446 final p. 7.

well as the appropriate tailoring of ETF's interventions. Evaluation also found that this impact is evaluated more positively by smaller partner countries rather than large ones; and is the strongest in three areas: governance and policy-making, VET and qualifications systems; and less positively in entrepreneurial learning and labour market. Several brief case studies help to illustrate this impact (see the box below).

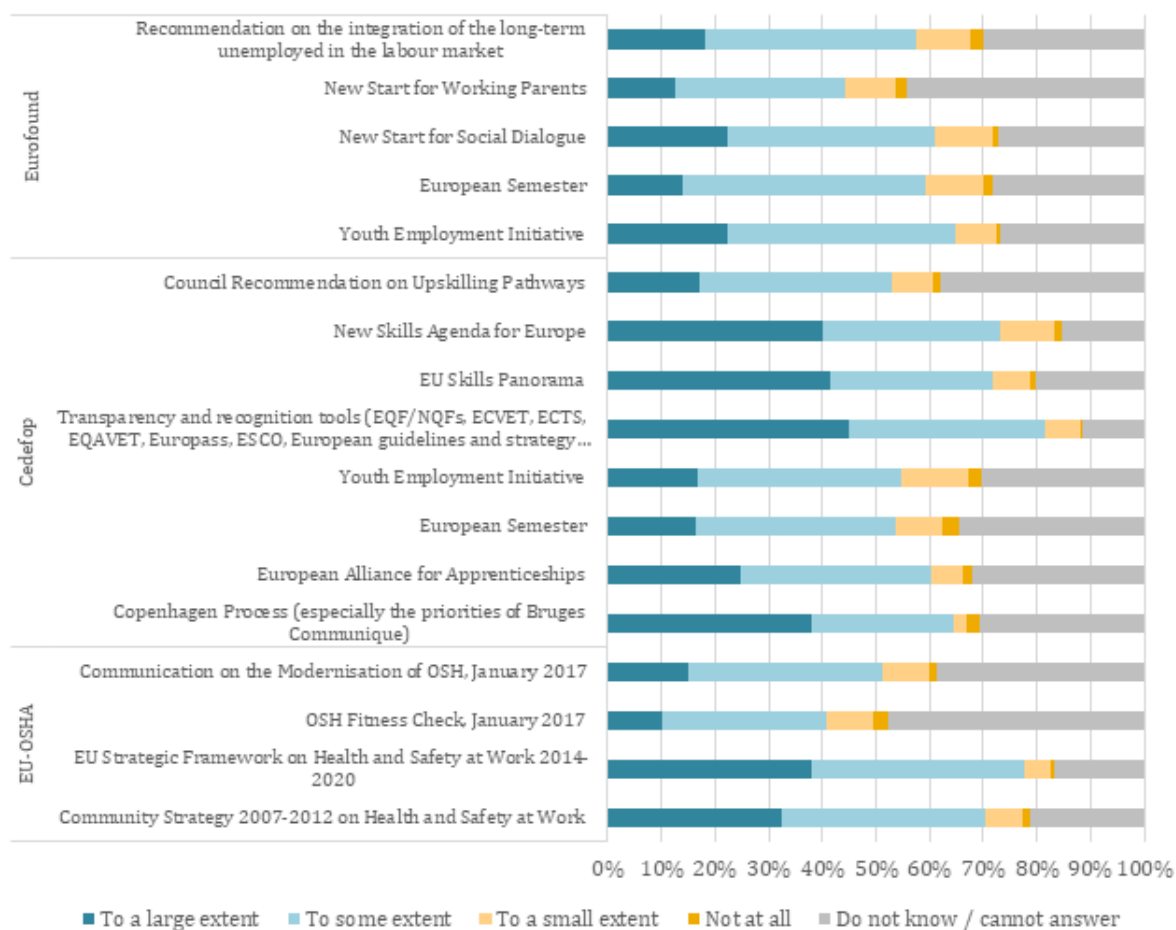
Box 4. Evidence of ETF's impact from case studies

- In Georgia, the ETF helped to shape the retraining programme for the unemployed based on the country needs and gave recommendations for policy development to improve and extend training for the unemployed. The ETF conducted a feasibility study in order to assess the capacity of particular VET institutions to implement the training and provided recommendations, and the first 400 persons were trained by the government in 2015.
- ETF's school development project in Central Asia included development of teacher training modules. It was reported that these had resulted in increased internship opportunities, an increase in partnerships between schools and the private sector, and improved internal governance of schools. Moreover, it had also resulted in improvements in student and community satisfaction with the programmes and increased enrolment rates.
- A specific case study on Medinine Pilot Project showed that ETF was instrumental in building capacity, among TVET stakeholders, in the Medinine region in Tunisia. It played an important role in changing the mindset of stakeholders, and the way Tunisian stakeholders think, act and envision the vocational education and training system; especially when it comes to making sure that the world of work and world of education talk to each other. However, notwithstanding these positive effects, Tunisia has not benefited fully from the outcomes of the Medinine Pilot Project or sustained them in the medium and long term. No equivalent to the pilot project in Medinine has been carried out elsewhere in Tunisia. There has been no up-scaling, not even locally/marginally. In short, there was some success in this ETF action over the period 2011-14 within that region, but this may never benefit the rest of Tunisia, despite the general scope of the action, skills development for employability.

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

Additional evidence on the agencies' impact comes from the stakeholder survey and interviews. Figure 5 shows that survey respondents recognised the agencies' contribution to specific EU policy initiatives. Nevertheless, a significant share of respondents did not feel informed enough to report their judgement (i.e., they selected 'do not know').

Figure 5. In your view, to what extent (if at all) has the agency contributed to the following EU policy developments during the period 2011-2016?



Source: Stakeholder surveys, all groups. Eurofound N=229; Cedefop N=200; EU-OSHA N=274.

Meanwhile, a survey of ETF stakeholders conducted for the mentioned earlier evaluation (N=114) showed more differentiated views. The partner country representatives thought that ETF:

- contributed highly (33%) or partially (47%) to VET systems based on effective policy-making in their country;
- contributed highly (26%) or partially (60%) to the involvement of relevant stakeholders in VET systems;
- and contributed highly (32%) or partially (50%) to focusing the VET systems more on the labour market²⁷.

Answers to another survey question showed that 67% of the surveyed partner country representatives thought that ETF was the main driver of change or provided important support in governance, systems and policy-making developments; 55% thought the same about developments in VET provision and quality assurance; as well as about developments in qualifications and qualification systems. This evaluation was poorer for developments in entrepreneurial learning and enterprise skills; and developments in labour market information systems and skills for employability: 36% and 33% of partner country representatives, respectively, thought that ETF was the main driver of change or provided important support.

²⁷ Ibid.

Nonetheless and importantly, sustainability of ETF’s impacts was a major challenge reflected in the survey responses where most respondents stated that “some” activities/results rather than “most” are still being taken into account or have generated other activities and results (“medium” sustainability), while more than one fifth of partner country respondents highlighted poor or no sustainability.

1.1.2 To what extent are the current activities carried by the agencies appropriate for achieving their objectives?

The activities of the agencies (Table 5) are derived from their operational objectives that are related primarily to generating and communicating knowledge and expertise to policy makers and other stakeholders. We therefore assume that the activities are appropriate, but only if they are implemented well and are used by and useful for the agencies’ clients and beneficiaries.

Table 5. Main activities of the agencies based on their intervention logics

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

Cedefop

Cedefop carries out four types of operational activities: research, monitoring, support and communication. In 2011-2016 the agency continued its work in providing evidence and analysis on VET and lifelong learning, developing and maintaining monitoring databases and assisting the Commission and Member States in devising policies. The majority of participants in interviews, surveys and the OPC agreed that Cedefop’s monitoring, research and support were useful to them. For example, around 90% of survey respondents considered that the agency was successful to some or to a large extent in achieving its operational objectives related to monitoring, and around 80% thought the same about the agency’s support activities.

The evaluation period for Cedefop was marked with the shift towards more direct support to Member States. This was implemented via a new approach of thematic country reviews, allowing for inductive gathering of comparative evidence (going from specific to general level of evidence). Whereas such shift was appreciated by the Member States targeted and was used to support national policy developments, it raised some important questions for the future direction of Cedefop. Interviews with Commission staff revealed that the results of the work carried out by Cedefop at national level in the context of apprenticeship reviews could better inform the EU policy making and discussions.

Regarding Cedefop’s communication and dissemination activities, the evidence suggests that they were generally successful in 2011-2016. Since 2014, Cedefop implemented a new communication strategy, which contributed to better adaptation to

emerging challenges and intensified the outreach towards key stakeholders at EU level. The agency's Brussels liaison office was an important tool in this process, the office was reinforced in 2015. However, human resources used for the liaison office represented 0.6 FTE, compared to, for example, 2 FTE for Eurofound's Brussels liaison office. Larger resources dedicated to this matter could increase the visibility of the agency, the policy relevance of its work and its reactivity to the changing policy landscape.

Furthermore, the agency's website was revamped to make it more citizen-oriented and give more attention to visual elements, data visualisation, and link it better to social media. Cedefop was also considering further collaboration with other agencies on communication activities – e.g. on creation of an open access repository together with Eurofound and EU-OSHA. The agency also collaborated more systematically with DG EMPL on communication, such as by agreeing on a common communication approach in 2016 and joining forces on communication, most notably on the Vocational Skills Week and the New Skills Agenda.

A large majority (over 80%) of respondents to the stakeholder survey considered that the agency was successful in achieving its operational objectives of communication to some or to a large extent. 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. However, some interviewees noted that the agency's connections in Brussels (most importantly with the European Parliament) could be strengthened.

Eurofound

To achieve its objectives in the fields of labour market, living and working conditions, and industrial relations, Eurofound implements research, monitoring and communication/dissemination activities.

Eurofound implements its research and monitoring activities in-house or via sub-contractors. In response to budgetary constraints, during the evaluation period the research activities were increasingly implemented in-house rather than subcontracted. These activities are supported by the network of national correspondents, who collect data and perform analysis on individual Member States. The evaluation indicated some remaining issues with the quality of their outputs and dissatisfaction by some of the stakeholders. Following on internal mid-term evaluation of current Network of Correspondents in 2016, the agency implemented a number of quality control measures. However, their effectiveness could not be assessed in the present evaluation.

Eurofound's research and monitoring outputs were used extensively by the stakeholders (for more details see the following section). The stakeholder survey showed that around 85% of respondents thought that Eurofound achieved its operational monitoring and research objectives to a large or to some extent. This is corroborated by the OPC findings, where 55% - 60% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the agency drew on its research and monitoring activities to furnish its target groups with high-quality, timely and policy-relevant knowledge (the majority of other respondents selected 'do not know').

Eurofound implemented the communication and dissemination activities through a number of existing channels (including publications, events, electronic dissemination, social media, website, Brussels Liaison Office, etc.). The communication activities were also shaped by the budgetary constraints and the need to make such activities more targeted and efficient. The cost-saving measures included, for example, the reduction of the number of events and the scope of translations (i.e., Eurofound now translates all the executive summaries in all the EU languages, but fewer reports and other publications). Another important step in adjusting to the decreased communication budget was improved targeting by undertaking the stakeholder mapping and differencing between the core and other stakeholder groups. Eurofound undertook a

deliberate effort to prioritise and concentrate resources on the core target groups in order to achieve better EU-level impact. The agency considers the strategy as one of the key reasons of increased contribution to EU policy-making.

The latter development was reflected in stakeholder views on Eurofound's communication. The majority of interviewed and surveyed participants from the core stakeholder groups (the Commission and the Governing Board) argued that Eurofound's communication was effective. Meanwhile, the stakeholders that do not belong to the core target group (i.e., the Governing Board) provided more reserved views. Also, both OPC and survey participants argued, in particular through the open questions, for the need of a more outreach at the national level.

EU-OSHA

According to EU-OSHA's intervention logic, there were four main streams of EU-OSHA's activities in 2011-2016: developing forecasting information on OSH risks; generating and maintaining information on working environment; promoting networking and coordination; and communicating and raising awareness.

EU-OSHA's research and forecasting activities aimed at generating information on OSH were continued and expanded during the evaluation period. The agency made progress in developing forecasting information by establishing a European Risks Observatory (ERO)²⁸. This initiative received an increasing number of page views in the period 2013-2015 (from 10,177 to 41,398)²⁹. The activities of generating and maintaining information on working environment have also been continued and received increasing attention from the stakeholders, as illustrated by the numbers of webpage downloads and views (e.g., the number of downloads of tools for OSH management grew from 593 in 2013 to 1,248 in 2015)³⁰. Over 80% of survey respondents thought that EU-OSHA was successful in achieving the objectives of forecasting OSH risks and generating information on working environment to a large or to some extent and similar trend was revealed by the OPC.

EU-OSHA's coordinates a network of national focal points that help the agency to gather more insight into how various Member States dealt with EU directives as well as to spread information and engage national social partners on OSH topics. It is a crucial tool in the agency's operations. However, the analysis of interview data suggests that in some focal points the information is not spread optimally to all social partners. The evaluation identified two weaknesses in the network: it is not embedded in a policy framework, which reduces its impact; and to some extent it duplicates the existing national structures in certain countries. In addition to this, EU-OSHA's networking with the Member States and stakeholders is also complicated by its still insufficient visibility in Member States beyond the organisations directly concerned and (alleged) lack of influence on legislation. The stakeholder survey showed that 79% of respondents thought that EU-OSHA achieved the objectives of networking and coordination to large or to some extent. Among the informed OPC respondents, 87% agreed or strongly agreed that EU-OSHA achieved these objectives.

Besides networking with focal points, EU-OSHA expanded the networks with research institutes over the years. This cooperation was established principally through setting up a collaborative exercise called OSHwiki, which foreseen inputs from the participating research organisations. The agency however did not achieve the desired level of cooperation in the production and revision of contents.

Finally, raising awareness across Europe on importance of OSH is another key activity of the agency. EU-OSHA undertook a considerable effort to use different languages, platform, and initiatives to spread its messages in 2011-2016. The evidence generally

²⁸ <https://osha.europa.eu/en/about-eu-osha/what-we-do/european-risk-observatory>.

²⁹ EU-OSHA Annual Report 2015.

³⁰ Ibid.

shows that campaigns of the evaluation period were appropriate to raise awareness of policy-makers and intermediaries, but dissemination to the workplace level was less strongly developed. The agency encounters challenges in reaching employers at workplace level, especially micro and small enterprises (MSEs). In view of an absolute majority the stakeholders, however, EU-OSHA achieved the communication objectives to a large or to some extent; this view was supported by the majority of survey and OPC respondents as well as interviewees.

ETF³¹

The ETF works according to requests from the European Commission services and EU Delegations which also form a foundation stone of its annual Work Programmes. We can distinguish four fields of activity of the agency: provision of information, policy analysis and advice; support in capacity building; knowledge dissemination and networking; and provision of expertise in EC project and programming cycle. Agency-specific evaluation identified that capacity building is widely valued, along with the provision of information, policy analysis and advice. Knowledge dissemination and networking are similarly valued, although the ETF could have ensured more widespread development of networks to help sustainability. Meanwhile, the provision of expertise with regard to the EU project and programming cycle would benefit from being placed on a more systematic basis so that EU Delegations are obliged to tap into ETF expertise.

While there are variations in the extent of the contribution made by the ETF across partner countries (as noted previously), these are not sufficient to justify any major changes in the way in which the ETF conducts its activities. The ETF operates by offering packages of support to individual partner countries drawn from a 'menu' of activities. There is no reason to believe that this menu of activities is inappropriate for achieving the ETF's objectives particularly since the effectiveness of activities depends on individual country contexts. The evaluation findings support the idea that the introduction of the Torino process and the focus on governance, systems and policy-making increases the capacity of the ETF to support countries at strategic points and helps to identify the most appropriate mix of activities and to maximise their impact. It has become accepted and owned by most partner countries as a valuable systematic framework, although in some countries it still needs better linking to policy development and to be more embedded by involving more stakeholders. Similarly, the introduction of strategic projects has the potential to enable all partner countries to benefit from common approaches based on ETF expertise.

Nonetheless, evaluation identified several potential weaknesses of ETF's activities. First of all, effective working relationships with EU Delegations are important for the success of ETF activities in partner countries. Currently, these are too dependent on informal aspects which hinder efficiency and effectiveness and there is a need for a more structured cooperation framework. This would help to ensure stronger, systematic inputs to the EU project and programming cycle which would help to increase impacts and sustainability. Furthermore, there is evidence that the ETF underperforms in terms of the achievement of synergies between interventions and their cumulative effect which Torino could help address. Finally, the agency needs to continue to strengthen its communication efforts to ensure stakeholders understand its role, work and objectives fully.

³¹ McCoshan, A., Ruitinga, C., Curtarelli, M. (2016), External Evaluation of the European Training Foundation (ETF). Final Report by the EFECTIV Consortium.

1.1.3 To what extent are the services that the agencies provide actually used by their stakeholders, by EU institutions and by international bodies and organisations? How well does it respond to their needs?

Generating and disseminating knowledge and expertise are key services that Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA provide to their stakeholders at the EU and national levels. Meanwhile, ETF covers a broader range of services, including policy analysis as well as policy and reform assistance outside the EU. Table 6 lists the main services of the agencies.

Table 6. Services provided by the agencies

Agency	Main services of the agencies
Cedefop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring, e.g., VET policy monitoring within Copenhagen process, Mobility Scoreboard, monitoring of the European tools (EQF, Europass, ECVET) • Research, e.g., Skills panorama, Opinion survey on VET, Forecasting Skills supply and demand, European skills and jobs (ESJ) survey, Thematic country reviews, VET in Europe country reports • Support, seminars and events
Eurofound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey publications, e.g., the European Company Survey (ECS); the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), and the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) • Observatory publications, e.g., European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC), European Observatory of Working Life (EurWORK) and European Observatory on Quality of Life (EurLIFE) • Other publications, e.g., Eurofound News, Eurofound research reports, Living and working in Europe Eurofound Yearbook, Foundation Findings policy briefs series and Foundation Focus • Support, seminars and events
EU-OSHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey and research reports, e.g. enterprise survey (ESENER), EU polls on OSH, data visualisation tools • Checklists and guidelines, e.g. E-guide on vehicle safety, E-guide for all ages, Campaign toolkit, E-guide manage stress • Online risk assessment tools, e.g. OiRA • Knowledge sharing tools and communication materials, e.g., Napo, • Support, seminars and events
ETF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner country assessments, country information sheets and fiches • Trainings, workshops, GEMM project • Events, conferences, working groups • Inputs in EC policy dialogue, ad hoc requests by delegations

In terms of the intervention logic this section examines the agencies' results, namely the extent to which the agencies' services are actually used by their stakeholders, and how these respond to their needs. We examine the evidence collected with regard to the main users of agencies' services, purposes of use, the scope of use and user satisfaction.

Main users

The main stakeholder types were overlapping to some extent across Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. The agencies' outputs were used by governments, employers, unions, the EU institutions (including the Commission, the EP, the Court of Auditors and various Council configurations), researchers as well as international organisations (especially in the case of Eurofound and Cedefop). Due to the nature of some of EU-OSHA's outputs, its users also tend to include private companies, various sectoral or industry-level organisations, which implies more presence on the national level. The main users of ETF outputs were the stakeholders in partner countries.

In the case of Eurofound and Cedefop, the main user of their outputs was the European Commission. As it has the right of initiative, targeting the Commission corresponds with the provisions of the Founding Regulations of the two agencies to contribute to EU policies and support policy-makers. In 2011-2016, the Commission

quoted Eurofound in 586 documents³². Overall the annual number of Eurofound quotations in EU policy documents increased during the evaluation period. Cedefop's work was referenced in 474 Commission's documents during the same period. For Eurofound, the EP and Council were respectively the second and the third most important users³³, also in line with its mission to advise the institutions. For Cedefop these were the EP as well and other EU agencies³⁴. Although EU-OSHA does not measure the indicator of quotations to EU policy documents, our collected data showed that the most intensive users of EU-OSHA's services were the national focal points.

Meanwhile, ETF responds to requests by the European Commission and EU Delegations. The EU delegations were the main users as measured by the percentage of overall requests for ETF. This number varied from 36% to 63% in 2011-2015. Among the Commission's DG, the most important user was DG EAC (with 16-30% of requests), followed by DG ELARG, DG DEVCO, DG EMPL, DG HOME, DG ENTR and other, issuing significantly smaller shares of requests.

Purposes of use

EU-level policy-making was the main purpose of the use of Eurofound's and Cedefop's knowledge. As presented in the table below, the number of EU policy documents (issued by EU institutions, EU-level social partners, NGOs, think-tanks) quoting Eurofound increased steadily in 2011-2014 and stabilised at around 320 per year in 2014-2016, reaching the total of 1,605 during 2011-2016. For Cedefop, this number was 813 EU policy documents during the same period³⁵. The performance monitoring system (PMS) of EU-OSHA does not gather data on this indicator, so the evaluation of this aspect relies more on stakeholder perceptions³⁶ (see further).

The quotations data has to be treated with caution. First, annual fluctuations may happen due to the periodicity of important publications (e.g., the agencies' surveys are implemented and published once every several years). Secondly, the figures cannot be used for cross-agency comparisons because of different methodologies used to count the references (e.g., what counts as an EU-level policy documents). 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.

Table 7. 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. The figures are not fully comparable between agencies as the methodologies of estimation differ.

The extent of usage of the agencies' outputs at the national level was not systematically monitored, therefore the evaluation team used country-level interviews, case studies and other sources that showed that agencies' services were used at the national level to some extent (see also Section 1.1.2). This is especially true for EU-OSHA, which works closely with the national focal points. Its products and services were meant for practical use and further dissemination (in the case of intermediary organisations) and for feeding into policy-making and social dialogue.

Further, there is evidence that the agencies' data is also used by international organisations (Table 8). For example, Eurofound was referenced in 198 documents,

³² Eurofound (2017), EU impact Report 2016; Eurofound (2013), EU Impact Tracking 2012 Report.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Cedefop (2017), Annual report 2016. Luxembourg: Publications Office.

³⁵ Cedefop Performance Measurement System data.

³⁶ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2017), Annual Activity Report 2016, p. 13.

Cedefop – in 291 documents issued by international organisations in 2011-2016³⁷. No such performance data is collected for EU-OSHA, but the evaluation found that the agency’s work is of interest to some international organisations, especially the ILO.

Finally, Eurofound’s, Cedefop’s and EU-OSHA’s outputs were also used in scientific research. For example, our analysis showed that data generated by Eurofound was used by other researchers and organisations at all stages of their research, from formulating the research question to contextualising conclusions, in both EU and national level studies³⁸. In total, Eurofound was referenced in academic journals 4,025 times in 2011-2016³⁹. Cedefop’s publications were quoted 1,874 times in academic literature in 2012-2015⁴⁰ (see the table below).

Table 8. Quotations of agencies' outputs in academic literature and by international organisations

	Agency	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Academic literature	Cedefop	<i>No data</i>	479	491	413	491	<i>No data</i>
	Eurofound	873	820	542	562	601	627
	EU-OSHA	150	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	300	<i>No data</i>
International organisations	Cedefop	5	68	43	31	56	88
	Eurofound	19	16	28	52	32	51
	EU-OSHA	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>

Source: Annual reports. The figures are not fully comparable between agencies as the methodologies of estimation differ. Note: the citations of Cedefop in academic literature are based on the data from Annual activity report 2015 and 2014. The data available for 2011 and 2016 is monitored only for two calendar years, and is not comparable.

Meanwhile, due to specificity of its activities and the target group which is outside the EU, it is hard to assess ETF based on the same criteria. The agency’s outputs were aimed at policy development and implementation in the third countries. It does not measure comparable quantitative indicators of the application of its outputs. There is evidence, however, of ETF’s outputs also being used by international organisations, such as UNESCO, ILO, World Bank and OECD.

Scope of use

The first indicator of the scope of use of the agencies’ outputs is the number of visitors and downloads from their websites. For Eurofound, the number of downloads increased during the evaluation period, from 118,576 in 2011 to 155,943 in 2016⁴¹. For Cedefop, the number of downloads was significantly higher and relatively stable throughout the evaluation period: around 800,000 of total downloads and 600,000 publications downloads annually. Nonetheless, it is hardly comparable with Eurofound, as Cedefop’s figures include such products as Europass – a practical tool targeted at the general population and therefore significantly more popular than reports targeting policy makers, which is the main target group of Eurofound. Number of Cedefop’s website visits fluctuated by year, and was around 250,000 on average in 2011-2016. Finally, EU-OSHA’s publications were downloaded around 50,000-80,000 times annually from the agency’s website during the evaluation period. The number of visitors to EU-OSHA’s website is large and has increased over time, which indicates increased usage: in 2011, this number was 1.8 million; in 2015, it reached 3.3 million.

³⁷ Cedefop Performance Measurement System data.

³⁸ For example, Bussi, M., & Geyer, L. (2013). Youth Guarantees and recent developments on measures against youth unemployment. A mapping exercise, Background analysis; Klinglmair, R. (2013). Individuelle Auswirkungen von Bildungsarmut Eine empirische Analyse der Arbeitsmarkt-situation von Jugendlichen in Kärnten; Benavides, F. G., Benach, J., Diez-Roux, A. V., & Roman, C. (2000). How do types of employment relate to health indicators? Findings from the Second European Survey on Working Conditions. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 54(7), 494-501; Cottini, E., & Lucifora, C. (2013). Mental health and working conditions in Europe. *ILR Review*, 66(4), 958-988; Ronda Pérez, E., Benavides, F. G., Levecque, K., Love, J. G., Felt, E., & Van Rossem, R. (2012). Differences in working conditions and employment arrangements among migrant and non-migrant workers in Europe. *Ethnicity & health*, 17(6), 563-577.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ Cedefop Performance Measurement System data.

⁴¹ Eurofound Consolidated annual activity reports of the Authorising Officer for the years 2012 and 2016.

In this case also, the number of downloads is hardly comparable to other agencies, due to wider circles of users and national level focus. Generally, the download rates depend on the number, purpose, size and nature of the material published online, as well as on the publication dates of important outputs that are not produced annually (e.g., Eurofound’s surveys).

Table 9. Downloads and website traffic

Agency		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Cedefop	Downloads	665,000	860,000	857,000	802,000	857,000	<i>No data</i>
	Page views	1,418,660	1,201,390	1,119,336	929,128	1,266,071	1,268,527
	Unique visitors	319,216	250,047	268,952	214,634	224,783	260,493
Eurofound	Downloads	118,576	94,238	111,313	119,809	118,589	155,943
	Page views	1,953,149	2,078,035	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>
	Unique visitors	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>
EU-OSHA	Downloads	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	50,788	66,379	50,237	82,558
	Page views	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>
	Unique visitors	1,800,000	2,800,000	3,200,000	4,200,000	3,300,000	2,400,000
ETF	Downloads	<i>No data</i>	Over 250,000	234,948	262,976	238,739	<i>No data</i>
	Page views	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	1,574,757	<i>No data</i>
	Unique visitors	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	106,369	<i>No data</i>

Source: Annual reports of Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF and Cedefop. The figures are not fully comparable between agencies and across time as the methodologies of estimation differ and changed over time. Note: as of 2015 Cedefop introduced a new measurement tool, thus no comparable data is available for 2016 (for 2015 there are both types of data).

The second indicator to measure the scope of use is the reporting by stakeholders themselves, coming from interviews, surveys and the agencies’ performance monitoring data. In case of Eurofound, the scope and frequency of usage differed by publication type and respondent affiliation, but generally varied from several times a year to daily use. The output which was most widely used and valued by all stakeholder groups were the Eurofound’s European surveys – ECS, EQLS and EWCS. The EWCS remained the most used Eurofound’s survey throughout the evaluation period, with over 60% of stakeholders using EWCS-based publications over most of the evaluation period⁴². The majority of interviewees also highlighted it is the most unique and useful output of the agency. Meanwhile, the comparative analytical reports of Eurofound’s observatories were used by around 30% of Eurofound’s users in 2016. Also, significant number of users regularly consulted other Eurofound’s publications, such as Eurofound News (62%) and the Living and working in Europe Eurofound Yearbook (35%).

The Cedefop stakeholder survey indicated that majority 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 during the evaluation period. Meanwhile, peer-learning activities, thematic snapshots on VET for

⁴² 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). There is no comparable data for previous years.

EU Presidency Semesters and the Mobility Scoreboard were among the less often used outputs, with only around 10% of respondents using these outputs at least once a month or weekly.

EU-OSHA's outputs the most used by stakeholders were the online risk assessment tools, checklists, guidelines, the good practices inventories, and the information on OSH risks and prevention for different stakeholders. Around 25-30% of stakeholder survey respondents said that they use these at least once a month. Other outputs were used less frequently. In the case of the ESENER survey and opinion polls the intensity of usage coincides with the timing of the output. The table below summarises the most and least useful (as a combination of frequency of use and quality assessment) outputs of the agencies.

Table 10. Most and least useful of the agencies' outputs

	Most useful	Least useful
Cedefop	EU-wide study reports, Country reports, Thematic research reports	Opinion survey on VET in Europe, Online VET bibliographies, Mobility Scoreboard
Eurofound	European Working Conditions Survey publications, European Quality of Life Survey publications, 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 reports
ETF	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>

Sources: Stakeholder surveys; for Eurofound the user satisfaction survey data was also used. The distinction between the 'most' and 'least' useful outputs is based on a combination of responses concerning the frequency of use as well as stakeholders' views concerning the quality of respective outputs. The outputs that were used more frequently and received the highest quality scores were deemed the most useful. Conversely, the outputs listed under the 'least useful' category reflect the combination of a relatively less frequent use as well as somewhat less positive quality assessment. Nevertheless, given that all the outputs received mostly good quality scores, the 'least useful' category should be read as a comparative assessment with regard to other outputs rather than as an absolute measure of sub-standard quality.

User satisfaction

Generally, all four agencies received high rates of user satisfaction, although several areas for improvement can also be pointed out.

Regarding Eurofound, evidence shows rather high user satisfaction with the quality of Eurofound's outputs and responsiveness to stakeholders' needs, especially in the area of working conditions and sustainable work. This view was shared by the interviewed representatives of the Commission, national governments, both groups of social partners, as well as international organisations. Further, most of the surveyed stakeholders from the Commission, national governments and social partners noted high scientific and methodological quality as the most valued characteristics of agency's outputs. This is supported by Eurofound's user satisfaction survey which indicated that they largely agreed on Eurofound's scientific rigorousness, neutrality and uniqueness⁴³. Longitudinal stakeholder satisfaction data also indicates that the outputs improved over the years in terms of their quality and usability. However, there is scope for improving the readability and focus of the agency's reports, in particular for users with non-academic background and non-native English speakers. Improvements are also needed with regard to quality/ reliability the outputs produced by some within the network of national correspondents. Finally, Eurofound has decreased the number of translations which was received negatively by some national actors.

Cedefop's stakeholders also valued the quality of the agency's outputs. Cedefop's services corresponded to the needs of its stakeholders in terms of their usefulness, relevance and quality. The majority of the stakeholder survey respondents (around

⁴³ Eurofound Annual User Satisfaction Survey 2016, Final Report (January 2017); N=411.

70-90%, depending on a specific output) perceived the agency's outputs as being of very good or good quality. This was corroborated by interviewees. The key issue, according to a number of stakeholders, was the timing (or delays) concerning publication of some outputs. Whereas the long multiannual timeline of some research projects could be justified from a methodological point of view, this created a risk that the evidence gathered may no longer have sufficient policy relevance when it is finally presented.

Among EU-OSHA's outputs, the users are most satisfied with the online risk assessment tools, checklists, and guides. Around 80% of stakeholder survey respondents evaluated the quality of the main EU-OSHA's outputs as good or very good. The stakeholders generally considered that their needs were addressed adequately, but some of them pointed to several areas for improvement. They noted that data and reports were useful to scientific/technical users but less to social partner organisations, because of language barriers and lack of translations. Meanwhile, some focal points expected more services from the agency. The Member States with less developed tripartite structures called for more guidance in setting the standards.

Finally, a survey of ETF's partner country representatives indicated that the respondents overwhelmingly found activities of the agency to be useful or very useful. The assessment was very similar across all the ETF's areas: 55-56% and 43-44% of respondents reported that ETF's work was very useful or useful, respectively, in the following areas: collection and provision of information, policy analysis and advice; capacity building for the development of better governance structures; networks to exchange information and practices of VET development; and capacity building and support in the field of HCD. Arguably, there is scope to improve on activities that contribute to the programming of EU funds (42% evaluated this as very useful, 55% - as useful), and capacity building for the development of labour market information systems (46% and 54%, respectively), but from an already strong base.

1.1.4 How is the Agency adapting to the changes in the EU policy and in the political and socio-economic situation in the EU?

The evaluation period of 2011-2016 was marked by several major social, economic and political developments in the EU. These included the post-crisis recovery, the debt crisis, immigration crisis, as well as the long-term developments of the ageing workforce, changing working patterns, new forms of employment, technological change. The agencies needed to adapt, in some cases very rapidly, to generate evidence that could feed into policy making. We evaluated the agencies' performance in adapting to the changes in the EU policy and the political/ socio-economic situation in several steps: examining the main challenges to adaptability, overviewing the mechanisms that the agencies deploy to adapt, and discussing the evidence of actual adaptation. We based our analysis on desk research, survey and interview data.

The evaluation revealed both evidence of fast adaptation/ responsiveness by the agencies (see e.g. Table 11) as well as constraints. Furthermore, the migration crisis, a strategic challenge to the EU, has been approached differently among the agencies and in a fragmented way, without a coordinated and systematic response.

Several constraints, mostly relevant to Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA slow down the agencies' responsiveness to changes in the EU policy and in the political and socio-economic situation. First, the decision-making process within the tripartite governing structures is intrinsically slower. Sometimes the agencies face a multiple principal situation when the views on what projects should gain an immediate priority differ between the Member States, social partners and the Commission. Secondly, the programming cycle, according to which the future activities need to be planned in detail early in advance, also makes it more difficult for the agencies to adjust to unexpected changes. Meanwhile, the Governing Boards of Cedefop and Eurofound meet once a year, although their Bureaus meet regularly. Thirdly, the major research projects are long-term by nature (e.g. surveys, skills forecasts), so any sudden

changes of focus might impede the timing and quality of their implementation. Finally, the continuing budgetary limitations prevent agencies from engaging easily with new research topics⁴⁴. For ETF, the greatest challenge is that it operates in the strongly heterogeneous and variable geo-political environment of the partner countries.

The agencies use several mechanisms to adapt to emerging needs and changing circumstances. In the most generic sense, EU-OSHA, Cedefop, ETF and Eurofound endeavour to align their activities with the EU policy priorities in their fields of expertise by keeping close contact with the relevant policy units of DG Employment and other EU institutions and bodies. In the case of EU-OSHA, the agency's Board members are also members of the Advisory Committee on Health and Safety at Work, which regularly discusses EU OSH policy. In case of Eurofound, the agency's Brussels Liaison Office (BLO) monitors the political landscape and may offer a contribution from the agency. Cedefop has also recently strengthened a Brussels Liaison Office. Meanwhile, ETF generally works according to requests from the European Commission services and EU Delegations.

The four agencies may provide their services to the stakeholders though *ad hoc* procedure, although their processes differ. For example, every year, around 10-15% of ETF's activities originate from ad hoc requests. Torino process provides a stable and logical framework within which new needs and requests can be considered. Eurofound also has a pool of resources reserved for ad hoc research projects in their annual work programmes ("Stakeholder Enquiry Services" budget line). The case study on Eurofound's contribution to European Semester indicated that the agency faced difficulties to react to an *ad hoc* request within the time frame set by the policy maker. This was related primarily to constraints to reallocation/ mobilisation of resources. While stakeholders provide somewhat differing accounts of specific events, it is clear that an ongoing discussion and clarification of what could feasibly be expected from Eurofound is needed. Eurofound and Cedefop also have the so-called 'negative priorities' – projects and outputs that can be postponed if the agency receives more urgent requests. The agencies' Bureaus meet several times a year to discuss, among other things, the emerging issues to be addressed. Also, the multi-annual programmes of the agencies are revised every year to include activities addressing the urgent evidence needs⁴⁵. It is a rather lengthy process and could not be used to quickly respond to short-time changes but could still be used to adjust the direction of an agency in upcoming years.

All of these tools were applied by the agencies to some extent during the evaluation period, and the newly emerged issues were reflected in their outputs of this evaluation period. A number of examples are presented in the table below. For instance, EU-OSHA developed a specific section of their website on OSH and young people in response to the challenge of youth unemployment. Also, it rearranged the working programme to implement a pilot project on ageing of workforce for the European Parliament⁴⁶. Eurofound included new elements in its "New forms of employment research" project, organised events on migrant integration. Cedefop initiated a peer-learning activity on "How to make visible and value skills and competence of refugees" in the context of the refugee crisis.

Table 11. Examples of the agencies' responses to newly emerged needs during the evaluation period

Agency	Example of a response
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⁴⁴ European Parliament (2017), Discharge 2015: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). Available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0182+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

⁴⁵ Eurofound (2013), Annual activity report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2012.

⁴⁶ Project "Safer and healthier work at any age – occupational safety and health (OSH) in the context of an ageing workforce". More information at <https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/osh-management-context-ageing-workforce/ep-osh-project>

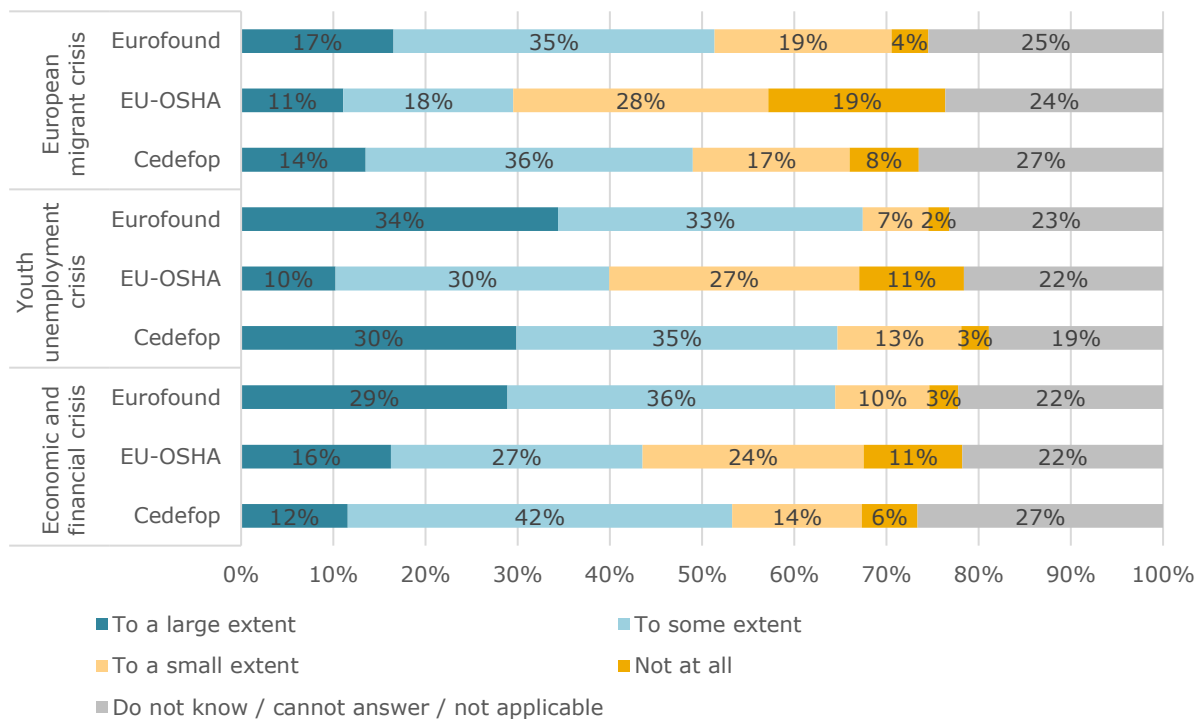
Cedefop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiated a peer-learning activity in April 2016 on “How to make visible and value skills and competence of refugees” under the Dutch presidency of the Council, in the context of the refugee crisis. • Provided input and support to Malta in the context of an apprenticeship review, which helped the country to reform its apprenticeship system and was used as a basis for new legislation • Example of an ad hoc request fulfilled is Cedefop’s work on the New Skills Agenda for Europe, where Cedefop gave a major contribution for the Commission to come up with the package of the New Skills Agenda by being involved in drafting the Staff Working Document supporting the revision of the EQF, the proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Skills Guarantee, the Blueprint for Sectoral Collaboration on Skills, and giving comments on the drafts of the planned Europass decision and the related Staff Working Document. • Due the its work on EU-level policy initiatives the New Skills Agenda, the Skills Panorama, the EAfA or the Council Recommendation on “Upskilling Pathways” the agency postponed other projects (of lower priority) on its work programme.
Eurofound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work programme changed in 2009-2012 programming period in response to the shift in policy priorities brought about by the financial and economic crisis; the agency identified four priority themes, under which a limited number of new projects for 2012 were clustered • 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 the stakeholders, the agency enlarged the scope of the New Forms of Employment study • Brussels Liaison Office was involved in networking with policy makers to better understand their evidence needs
EU-OSHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised activities around the topic of active ageing in accordance with the EU policy on this subject following a specific request of the European Parliament • During the year 2014, the allocation of resources in the working programme was adapted to changed needs • Developed a specific section on OSH and young people on the website in the context of youth unemployment • More attention to the costs and benefits of OSH with specific studies and publications in the context of economic and financial crisis
ETF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite the political tensions in Egypt erupting in January 2011, ETF has successfully been able to readjust its priorities and activities in terms of TVET development. To address the new situation, and upon the request of the EU Delegation, the ETF placed an emphasis on activities increasing the employability of the Egyptian people through its TVET Reform Programme and the EU Pre-University Intervention Programme. The national circumstances meant that the ETF had to readjust its projects according to the level of commitment from representatives within the Egyptian government and VET stakeholders.

Source: Annual activity report of the agencies.

To get a better understanding of how successful the agencies were in actual adaptation to changing circumstances, we also collected the views of the stakeholders. The majority of interviewees agreed that EU-OSHA, Eurofound and Cedefop were responsive to the urgent policy needs in 2011-2016. Stakeholder survey results, however, revealed a more nuanced picture.

The survey results indicate that more than half or respondents thought that both Eurofound and Cedefop were responsive to youth unemployment, migrant and economic crises to a large or to some extent. Meanwhile, stakeholders did not perceive EU-OSHA to respond extensively to wider socioeconomic developments in the EU (see Figure 6). A closer analysis showed that only the stakeholders that are in direct contact with the agency – Governing Board and focal points – were aware of such influences. The difference can also be explained by the fact that EU-OSHA’s thematic scope is much narrower than that Eurofound and Cedefop.

Figure 6. The European Union faced several social and economic crises during the period 2011-2016. In your view, to what extent (if at all) was the agency responsive during this period to the pressures arising from these events?



Source: Stakeholder surveys, all groups. Eurofound N=224; Cedefop N=200; EU-OSHA N=271.

Meanwhile, most of stakeholders interviewed for ETF’s evaluation agreed that the agency has been able not only to cover heterogeneous geographical contexts, but to adapt to the (sometimes abrupt) changes in country contexts. This has required the ETF to ensure a combination of flexibility and continuity in its work.

1.1.5 To what extent do the governance model (and tripartite nature), internal structures, mandates, objectives and activities of the agency, achieve the objectives of the Common Approach on Decentralised Agencies on coherency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency?

The Common Approach on Decentralised EU Agencies lists requirements for the agencies in several fields that fall under the scope of this evaluation. These include agencies’ structure and governance; operation; programming activities and resources; as well as accountability, controls and transparency.

According to the Roadmap to the CA, some of the activities are the responsibility of the Commission and some of them – of the agencies themselves. Evidence shows that the CA has been high on the agenda of the Governing Board meetings of the agencies. The agencies introduced a variety of measures to implement the Roadmap (see examples presented in the table below). Also, some of the structures/ procedures mentioned in the CA were already present in the agencies before the adoption of the CA. We further overview the agencies’ compliance to the CA and the steps they have taken in the view of its general requirements.

Table 12. Examples of actions that the agencies took to comply with the CA

Agency	Example of an action
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Agency	Example of an action
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 follow-up of the Common Approach Implemented internal review of performance measurement system in 2014 Adopted an Anti-Fraud Strategy, following the workshops and agency-specific assistance organised by OLAF in 2014 The first multi-annual work programme in the new, activity-based format was adopted for the years 2017-2020
Eurofound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Had been implementing ex-ante evaluations of its multiannual work programmes Had implemented provisions related to follow-up evaluations and audits (already before the adoption of the CA) Endorsed guidelines on performance monitoring, including a set of KPIs for measuring Directors' performance Negotiated and concluded a comprehensive headquarters agreement with the Irish government
EU-OSHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU-OSHA became compliant with the provisions of CA since 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"> ETF has been reporting on its activities under the priority areas Reported collaborative activities with other agencies in the Annual Reports and the recent Mid-term Perspective 2014-2017 Concluded collaboration agreements with Eurofound and Cedefop

Source: Annual reports of the agencies, interviews.

Governance

According to the CA, 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). According to the Roadmap to the CA, the "rationale is to avoid the situation where boards are so large (up to more than 80 members) that they act more as consultative assemblies than as a true supervisory body". Currently, while the ETF almost meets these requirements, the size and composition of the Governing Boards of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA do not follow the CA. The Governing Boards are tripartite bodies that include stakeholders from all the Member States, representing both employers and employees (see the table below).

Table 13. Composition of the agencies' Management Boards

	Total GB	Rep. of MS	Rep. of Employers	Rep. of Unions	Rep. of the EC	Rep. of the EP	Term of office	Executive Board
Common Approach	~30-40	28	'fairly limited number'		2	0-1	4 years	Should exist
Cedefop	87	28	28	28	3	0	3 years	Yes (12)
Eurofound	87	28	28	28	3	0	3 years	Yes (11)
EU-OSHA	87	28	28	28	3	0	3 years	Yes (11)
ETF	32	28	0	0	1	3	3 years	No

Source: CA, agency websites. Note: Observers not included.

The tripartite structure is embedded in the current founding regulations of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. The larger boards can be more expensive than smaller boards, although empirically the cost differences are not very large (given that the Boards do not meet often). Decision-making tends to be more protracted in larger bodies. Finally, some members of the Governing Boards tend to change frequently or may be not sufficiently engaged with the agency's work. Nevertheless, the agencies' stakeholders and decision makers seem to have adapted to operate within the given management structure. The Governing Boards meet once (Eurofound, Cedefop) or

twice (EU-OSHA) a year to discuss and take decisions (usually by consensus). The discussion and decision materials are prepared beforehand by tripartite Bureaus and discussed by each of the three groups separately.

On the positive side, the tripartite structure of the Boards and balanced representation of stakeholders contributes to the acceptance and usage of the agencies services, as these are perceived as more neutral, balanced and reliable. In addition, the large tripartite bodies add to dissemination of agencies' outputs. For example, EU-OSHA's focal points distribute products from the agency within the Member States through a tripartite operational network of social partners. Cedefop also relies on the social partners for the dissemination of the agency's work at the national level. Overall, tripartite governance stands at the heart of the policy areas covered by the agencies – VET, employment and OSH – at the national and local levels. Stakeholders prefer this at the EU level as well, more than changes that could potentially increase efficiency of decision making but decrease or disbalance the visibility and influence of the social partners.

Internal structures

The analysis carried out for this evaluation revealed that the agencies' internal structures and procedures generally functioned in line with the objectives of the CA on coherency, efficiency and effectiveness. Nonetheless, they may require some revisions or improvements. For example, Cedefop's recent internal re-organisation brought more coherence and sorted out some overlaps or similar tasks observed within the previous structure. Similarly, ETF's new structure introduced in 2015 aims at enabling a more strategic approach to increasing agency's efficiency and effectiveness. Meanwhile, EU-OSHA's distinctive structural feature – the focal points – can be exploited better if their communication with the Governing Board is improved. In Eurofound's case, an ambiguous structural feature is the position of deputy director, which is not envisioned in the CA. The dual management may potentially have effects on the effectiveness and efficiency of the agency, because the roles and responsibilities of the deputy director are legally not well delineated in relation to the director, while the appointing authority is the same for both positions. Such structure leaves the actual division of roles largely dependent on the personalities in these positions and their relationship.

Operation of the agencies

The requirements for the operation of agencies listed in the CA aim at the effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of their functions. All the agencies implemented several related steps of the Roadmap to the CA during the evaluation period, and there are several more prominent examples. Firstly, in line with the CA, Eurofound and Cedefop invested in reviewing and developing their communication activities (see also Section 1.1.2.). Secondly, the four agencies took measures to start sharing services with other EU decentralised agencies, either on the basis of proximity of locations or policy area. This collaboration takes place e.g. via NAPO (Network of Procurement Officers), ICTAC (ICT network) and the network of heads of administration. For example, Eurofound mapped tools and services already shared with the network of EU agencies, compiled a catalogue of services which could potentially be shared, and actually implementing some shared services. Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA took part in interagency calls for tenders for cloud services, staff engagement surveys, and others. EU-OSHA collaborates with other agencies in developing a new IT system to collect and handle data linked to programming and project management in a simpler way.

Programming of activities and resources

In order to align their processes with the CA, the agencies introduced changes in their programming activities. Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF developed new templates for a programming document – integrating the multi-annual programme, the annual programme of work and the multi-annual staff policy plan into one single

document⁴⁷. Activity-based budgeting was started by EU-OSHA and Cedefop in 2013 (it was already present in Eurofound since 2011). By the end of the evaluation period, all four agencies had started applying the activity-based management approach. The first activity-based multi-annual work programmes in the new format, replacing the medium-term priorities tool, were adopted for the years 2017-2020. In addition, Eurofound, Cedefop, EIGE, ETF, EU-OSHA and FRA implemented collaboration agreements, ensuring the early exchanges of draft work programmes to avoid overlaps.

Accountability, transparency and controls

In line with the Common Approach, all four agencies took steps to enhance their accountability and transparency during the evaluation period. They fulfilled most of relevant requirements listed in the Roadmap on the follow-up to the CA. For example, Eurofound had been compliant to some of the related provisions of the CA (e.g., ex-ante evaluations of multiannual work programmes; provisions related to follow-up evaluations and audits; Financial Regulation rules⁴⁸) before the document was adopted. As part of the process of adjustment to the CA, Eurofound endorsed guidelines on performance monitoring, including a set of KPIs for measuring Directors' performance; undertook the development of an anti-fraud strategy based on guidelines for all agencies (developed by OLAF), and finalised its own policy on Management of Conflict of Interest. Later the agency implemented specific staff training activities to raise awareness about the conflict-of-interest policy as well as the anti-fraud policy. Meanwhile, Cedefop was one of the few agencies⁴⁹ which by 2015 had adopted an Anti-Fraud Strategy, following the workshops and agency-specific assistance organised by OLAF in 2014⁵⁰.

The new activity-based programming procedures also introduced more transparency. The main steps in the programming cycle are detailed, easy to follow and end with the approval of the programming document by the Governing Board. Accountability of this process is enforced as the process is monitored by the quality team, which checks the information provided by activity coordinators and makes sure all steps are followed.

1.1.6 Agency-specific recommendations/ points for improvement of effectiveness

Table 14. Agency-specific recommendations/ points for improvement of effectiveness

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
	Cedefop	
1.1(c)	Some of the outputs, including the Mobility Scoreboard and the opinion survey on VET in Europe (projects that were still at a development stage during the evaluation period), while being evaluated positively, had a sizeable minority of stakeholders concerned about their quality. Cedefop should explore the main causes for concern among stakeholders, and actions that could be taken to alleviate such concerns. These should be discussed with the Governing Board and policy makers, and decisions should be made on the actions to be taken. As regards the Mobility Scoreboard and opinion survey on VET projects, which were still at development stage during the evaluation, the agency should monitor the quality of these outputs once they are finalised by consulting stakeholders.	R1.11, R1.14

⁴⁷ Eurofound (2015), Consolidated annual activity report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2014.

⁴⁸ Eurofound (2014), Annual activity report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2013.

⁴⁹ EFCA, CEDEFOP, EASA, EIGE, EIOPA, ESMA, OHIM, EBA.

⁵⁰ 2015 Progress Report on implementation of Common Approach.

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
1.2(c)	<p>Cedefop's communication activities were restructured during the evaluation period to better adapt the agency to emerging communications challenges, and to better reflect the needs and interests of the agency's key stakeholders. Nonetheless, among Cedefop's four operational objectives and types of activities, the communication activities were less positively assessed by stakeholders. Several additional steps may be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A translation strategy with a demand-driven approach to Cedefop's products could improve the agency's visibility. • To further improve its communication activities, the agency should continue exploring and applying innovative communication channels such as webinars, communities of practice, interactive videos and live streaming of Cedefop's events. • Cedefop should continue to increase its social media presence, which is a cost-effective way of increasing accessibility and visibility, and of reaching diverse stakeholder groups. In addition, increased collaboration is encouraged with other EU institutions, Council Presidencies and national actors in communication activities. • The agency has become more visible to the Commission's policy officers and a wider array of stakeholders (e.g. the European Parliament and Council Presidencies) since the strengthening of its Liaison Office in Brussels in September 2015. However, its human resources are rather small (0.6 FTE, compared to 2 FTE for Eurofound's BLO). Cedefop's Brussels Liaison Office could be further strengthened to ensure better communication between the agency and Brussels-based stakeholders, including the Commission, Parliament, Council, European social partners, NGOs and any other relevant parties. 	R1.12, R1.13
1.3(c)	<p>Cedefop's move towards increasing support for national policy developments in EU Member States was evident during the evaluation period. For maximum policy impact at national and EU level, country-specific support provided by Cedefop (e.g. country thematic reviews) should continue to stay aligned with the agency's strategy and capacity; demand from Member States in the context of national reforms; and the needs of the Commission, notably in the context of the European Semester (CSRs). Cedefop should seek to better communicate cross-country findings from these projects to increase their impact at EU level.</p>	R3.5, R3.6
1.4(c)	<p>While Cedefop's contribution to major EU policy documents resulted in additional workload and reprioritisation of some of the agency's operational activities, it also increased the agency's policy relevance. Cedefop should continue to give its full support to <i>ad hoc</i> requests that have high policy relevance. 'Negative priorities' (the process of distinguishing lower-priority tasks) should continue to be one of the main tools for addressing <i>ad hoc</i> requests from stakeholders. The agency may consider introducing a more structured reprioritisation mechanism, which could function as a flexibility margin for accommodating unforeseen activities of high policy relevance.</p>	R3.1
1.5(e)	<p>Eurofound</p> <p>Eurofound applies a number of measures aimed at providing timely and relevant policy advice, as well as to adapt it to changing circumstances. Nonetheless, the case study on Eurofound's contribution to the European Semester indicated that the agency faced difficulties in reacting to an <i>ad hoc</i> request within the time frame set by the policy maker. This was related primarily to constraints in the reallocation/ mobilisation of resources. To improve the timeliness of its deliverables, Eurofound should work together with the Commission and social partners to coordinate their activities and better feed into the EU policy cycle. While stakeholders provide somewhat differing accounts of specific events, it is clear that ongoing discussion and clarification is required as to what can feasibly be expected from Eurofound.</p>	R3.1, R3.3

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
1.6(e)	Following on from the imperative to save and focus resources, the agency began to prioritise its activities by introducing 'negative priorities', and intrinsically through the programme development process. Meanwhile, a consensus existed between stakeholders from all groups that the most used, unique and valuable of the agency's products are the pan-European surveys (and follow-up research). At the same time, some non-survey-related research (e.g. the study on NEETs) has demonstrated usefulness to, and uptake by, the Commission and other stakeholders. The governing institutions of the agency should continue to select priority projects and focus on ensuring the continuity of its pan-European surveys and follow-up research in the long term. The agency should ensure their high scientific quality, even if this requires the scaling-back of other research activities. This should be done by carefully selecting 'negative priorities', in order to avoid jeopardising the ability of Eurofound to implement its mandate.	R3.1, R3.3, R3.4
1.7(e)	Despite relatively high user satisfaction with the quality of Eurofound's outputs and the agency's responsiveness to stakeholders' needs, scope exists for improving the readability and focus of the agency's reports, in particular for users with non-academic backgrounds. Although the agency systematically includes policy pointers in its reports, some of the policy makers interviewed still expressed the need for more actionable recommendations. Eurofound should explore possibilities to further improve the readability and focus of its reports, in particular for users who aim to use them for policy-making purposes.	R1.11, R1.12, R1.14
1.8(e)	In line with its translation strategy, Eurofound has decreased the scope of translations (i.e., it translates all executive summaries, but fewer reports and event materials), which was received with a certain reservation by some non-native English speakers. The agency should explore cooperation with national governments and stakeholders, and adopt a demand-driven translation approach, so that external stakeholders can initiate translations and contribute financially if a specific output is of major interest to them.	R1.13
1.9(e)	The evaluation indicated some remaining issues with the quality of outputs from the Network of Correspondents, and dissatisfaction among some of its stakeholders. Following on from the mid-term evaluation of the current Network of Correspondents in 2016, the agency implemented a number of quality control measures; however, their effectiveness could not yet be assessed in the present evaluation. Further improvements (e.g. more extensive quality control measures, more frequent feedback, safeguards introduced in the tendering procedure, and so on) should be implemented with regard to the quality/ reliability of the outputs produced by some within the network of national correspondents.	R1.11
1.10(e)	The assessment of Eurofound's communication activities during the evaluation period showed an increasing number of communication channels, as well as better targeting and increasing reach of these activities, even in the context of a reduced communication budget. The agency started prioritising core target groups in its communication activities, and concentrating resources on EU-level impact. Related to this, however, the stakeholders that do not belong to the core target groups were more reserved in their assessment of Eurofound's communication and visibility. To further improve its communication activities without extending its communication budget, the agency should continue to expand the use of innovative communication channels, such as webinars, communities of practice, interactive videos and live streaming from Eurofound's offices. Also, Eurofound's social media presence should continue and be further expanded, as it represents a cost-effective way of reaching diverse groups of stakeholders.	R1.12
1.11(o)	EU-OSHA The agency's impact on policymaking appears to have been limited to those sectors dealing with OSH. The role of the agency can be considered stronger in policy implementation. Regarding EU-OSHA's adaptability to changing situations, the overall assessment is that some adaptation to EU policy has taken place, and EU policy developments were followed. In order to increase its policy impact at EU level, the agency and the Commission should further disseminate the outputs of EU-OSHA's work in relevant DG EMPL units, as well as among other units from different DGs and EU-level stakeholders, as appropriate.	R1.12

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
1.12(o)	The agency encounters challenges in reaching employers at workplace level, especially micro and small enterprises. It is difficult to reach the target audience even though intermediaries, due to time constraints, while very small companies have few opportunities to attend meetings or conferences. Overall, the agency should continue supporting national focal points in reaching relevant intermediaries by providing tools for information and communication. In addition to this, a specific strategy, including adapted tools, should be developed in order to better reach MSEs, as these are not always covered by intermediaries such as industry associations.	R1.12
1.13(o)	The agency's effectiveness of networking with Member States and stakeholders was limited. Some limitations in EU-OSHA's outreach were identified in its still-insufficient visibility in Member States beyond the organisations directly concerned, and its lack of influence on legislation. The analysis of interview data suggests that in some focal point networks, the information is not spread optimally to all social partners. This related mainly to a limited engagement with OSH at the national level in these countries. The agency could enhance networking between Member States by organising more networking events and study -visits, and by strengthening the position of focal points in this respect. By adding study visits or networking events among focal points as an option to the portfolio approach, Member States would be stimulated to share knowledge and learn from each other. Furthermore, focal points should be stimulated to share best practices with each other.	R3.5, R3.6
1.14(t)	ETF There is evidence of variation in its effectiveness at the level of specific objectives. Its contribution to partner country developments has been especially strong in respect of governance, systems and policy-making, the development of VET provision and quality assurance, and in the domain of qualifications and qualifications systems. Nevertheless, the ETF should consider whether the more limited contribution to developments in partner countries in the areas of labour market systems/skills for employability and entrepreneurial learning/enterprise skills is due to circumstances beyond its control or requires action on its part.	R1.11, R1.12, R1.14
1.15(t)	The capacity of partner countries to absorb ETF interventions varies and requires attention and tailoring. Countries (and different stakeholders within countries) vary in terms of the distance they may have to travel to implement policy reforms and their capacity to absorb developments. The ETF should do more to understand systematically where its interventions are likely to have most effect and how the nature of required activities may vary depending upon factors such as country size and general stage of development, as well as the stage of policy development in individual policy fields.	R1.12
1.16(t)	Generally, the evaluation found that a gap exists between the high quality of ETF activities and the implementation and sustainability of subsequent policy reforms. On the one hand, the quality of its activities is considered to be high whilst on the other hand there is evidence of weak levels of policy implementation and a lack of sustainability. To address this issue, the ETF and the EC should work together to ensure more systematic links between ETF projects, and EU programming and technical assistance since current links depend too often on informal relationships.	R3.1, R3.3, R3.4
1.17(t)	The evaluation provided evidence that the Torino process has been a key and successful development for the ETF and many partner countries. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the ETF underperforms in terms of the achievement of synergies between interventions and their cumulative effect which Torino could help to address. The ETF should therefore use the Torino framework to identify the conditions needed for the success of interventions and thereby establish, on the basis of good practice, which interventions need to take place in which sequence to guarantee a greater chance of success.	R1.11, R1.12, R1.14

Note: letter 'c' after the number of a recommendation means Cedefop-related recommendation; 'e' means Eurofound-related recommendation; 'o' means EU-OSHA-related recommendation and 't' means ETF-related recommendation.

1.2 EFFICIENCY

Following the Better Regulation Guidelines, this criterion is assessed as the extent to which the agencies have conducted their activities and achieved objectives at a reasonable cost in terms of financial and human resources, as well as administrative arrangements.

The Tender Specifications put forward six specific questions operationalising the efficiency criterion and we address them in the subsequent six sections.

1.2.1 To what extent is the Agency cost-effective? How well are administrative and operational budgets balanced?

The cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) incorporates an assessment of how far activities have been implemented 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-efficient manner. In these cases, CEA involves “calculating the cost needed to achieve the objective and then comparing the costs of the different options”. According to a study for DG Budget, there are four pre-requisites for CEA to be feasible, namely that it is possible to:

- Concentrate on one single effect or to combine several effects
- Apply a recognised indicator or rating grid for each effect or to develop such an indicator
- Quantify the effect of the intervention
- Compare several interventions or scenarios

Given these pre-requisites, we do not consider that the evaluation of the agencies easily lends itself to a conventional CEA as performance needs to be considered against multiple objectives rather than a single, fixed objective. As explained in an Ecorys study on cost-effectiveness analysis for DG EAC, a conventional CEA is more suitable when the initiative consists of a fixed objective, i.e. a certain level or target to be realised by a given date. The EU’s decentralised agencies are all unique, with their own distinctive remits, objectives and activities. This means that it is difficult to apply a set of comparable performance indicators. Indeed, this difficulty is recognised by the Commission in its consideration of the most appropriate indicators of efficiency and effectiveness: “the choice of indicators for a given... agency depends on the particular business model and requires an in-depth understanding of its services... and of its organisation. Hence it would not be advisable to set out a set of indicators applicable to all the fee-financed agencies”.

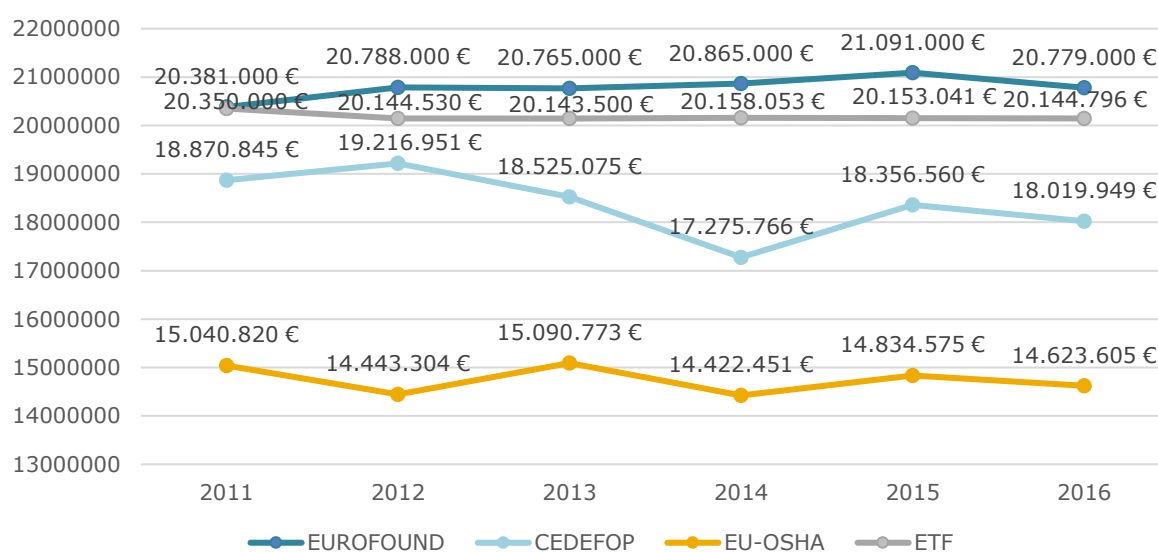
Rather than conducting a ‘conventional’ CEA, to evaluate the extent to which the agencies have been cost-effective, we first analyse administrative and monitoring data related to the budget and expenditure of the agencies. Next, we assess the balance between administrative and operational expenditure. We then present stakeholders’ perceptions of the overall cost efficiency of the agency, including findings of the surveys and user satisfaction with outputs of the agencies.

Budgets of the agencies

Cedefop and EU-OSHA had relatively varying budgets over the evaluation period, with significant drop between 2013 and 2014, and a noticeable growth between 2014 and 2015. Eurofound’s and ETF’s budgets have been stable throughout the evaluation period. Compared to other agencies in the cluster of Competitiveness and Growth,

Eurofound and ETF had average approx. 20 million budgets⁵¹, while EU-OSHA and Cedefop had lower than average budgets in this cluster.

Figure 7. Budget of the agencies 2011-2016



Source: Annual activity reports, commitment appropriations.

The agencies have also been demonstrating high operational efficiency by realising nearly hundred percent of annual budget for each year during the evaluation period (see the table below).

Table 15. 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.

Balance of different types of expenditure

One indication of the cost-effectiveness of decentralised agencies is the extent to which expenditure is directed towards 'front-line' operational activities rather than to the administration of the agencies themselves. This sub-section considers the balance of expenditure of the agencies within a comparative setting.

The budget of the agencies has been divided into three categories:

- Title 1: Staff: this includes salaries and related costs, such as staff training;
- Title 2: Administrative: infrastructure and operating expenditure: this includes maintenance of buildings, equipment, furniture, software, etc.;
- Title 3: Operational expenditure: this includes expenses related to the performance of the key activities of the agency, including missions, meetings and interpretation, pilot, studies and projects, and communication.

Agencies' budget trends from 2011 to 2016 showed that the proportion of operational and staff expenditure took different directions in the four agencies (see Figure 8).

⁵¹ Draft General Budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, Budget implementation 2014: Decentralised agencies of heading 1a – Competitiveness for growth and jobs. Decentralised agencies under this heading include ECHA, GSA, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, Cedefop, EASA, EMSA, ERA, ENISA, BEREC, EBA, EIOPA, ESMA, ACER.

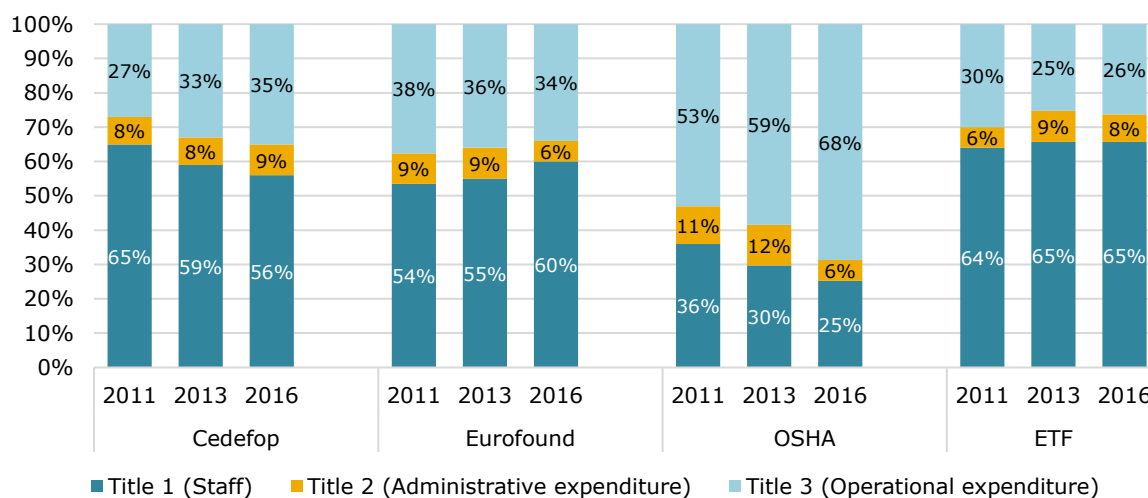
Cedefop tended to transfer its staff title savings towards administrative and operational expenditure in 2011-2015, and in 2016 both staff and administrative savings towards operational activities (more details on Cedefop’s budget transfers in the agency-specific report). In this way Cedefop kept a stable trend of administrative expenditure (8-9%) and managed to increase its operational spending by 8% over the evaluation period, allowing more resources for the core activities.

Eurofound’s expenditure demonstrated an opposite trend, decreasing the overall operational and administrative expenditure by increasing the staff expenditure to 60% (compared to 54 in 2011). This trend could be explained by an increase in the Irish correction coefficient. In other words: Eurofound had a legal obligation to adjust the salaries in line with this coefficient, which was not correspondingly compensated through EU subsidy, leading to a reduction of the operational budget.

ETF had the highest proportion of expenditure on internal staff costs. This reflects the fact that this agency is not only a centre of expertise, but also provides its expertise to the partner countries through relatively ‘labour-intensive’ forms of support such as networking and exchanges that require a continuity of staffing inputs meaning it would not be practical to outsource such activities.

The significantly higher share of operational expenditure in EU-OSHA has been observed due to significantly lower staff expenditure. Such ratio reflects the fact that the agency’s remit relates more to gathering and disseminating information (e.g. via the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks) and developing tools to promote good practice in the management of occupational safety and health.

Figure 8. Staff, administrative, and operational expenditure (% of budget)



Source: Compiled by authors, based on data from Annual activity reports.

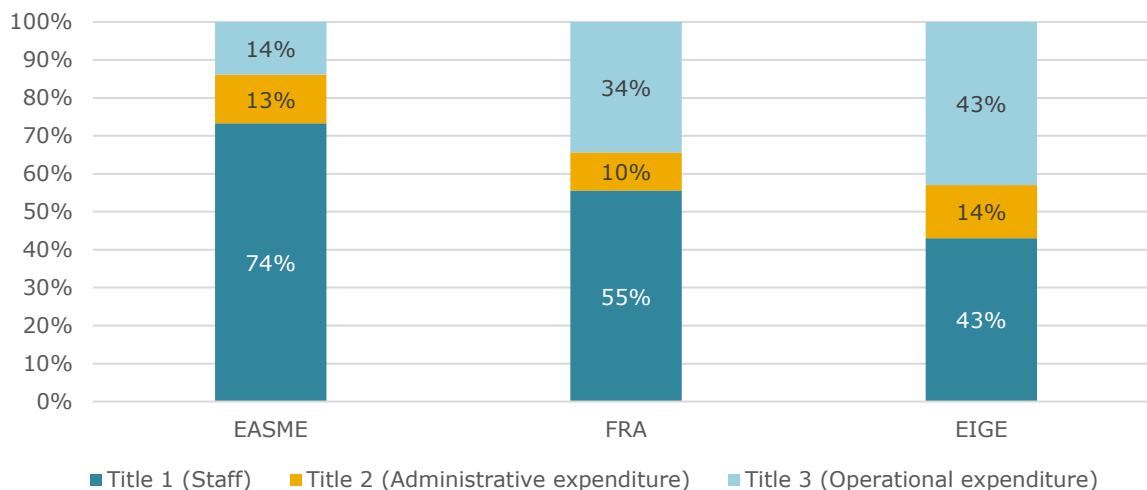
To provide a comparative perspective on the balance of expenditure we benchmarked Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA and ETF with the following decentralised and executive agencies operating in related policy areas:

- Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME)
- Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)
- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

The comparison allows us to judge whether the costs of the agencies are broadly in line with other agencies or commensurate with the types of activities supported, despite the limits of such a comparison, given the very different remits, objectives and activities of each agency. It also allows to identify any obvious inefficiencies or instances of good value for money.

As shown in the figure below, for these agencies the proportion of expenditure spent on administration ranges from 10% to 14%, which is significantly higher than the four DG EMPL agencies (6%-9%). This comparison provides further evidence that the four agencies have made good progress in keeping their administration costs to a minimum.

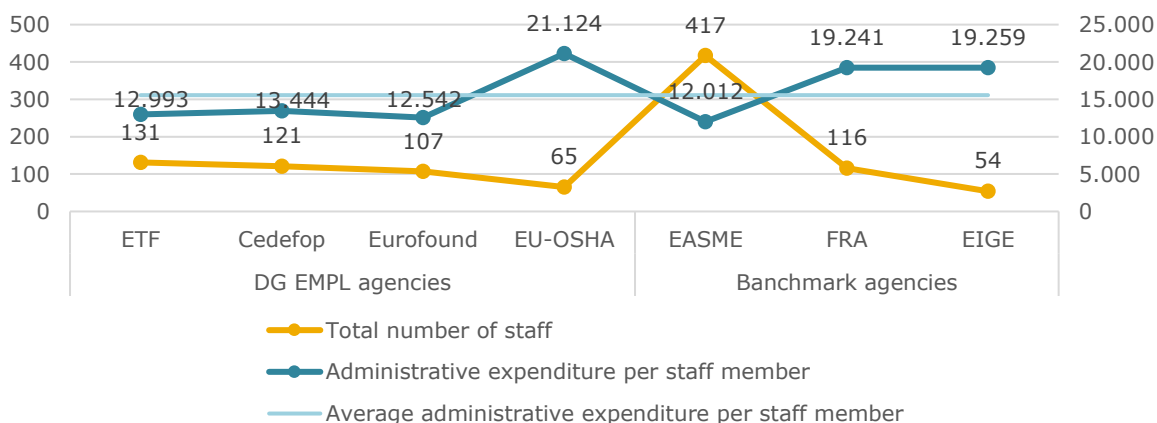
Figure 9. Balance of expenditure – benchmark agencies (2016)



Source: Compiled by authors, based on agencies' reports.

As shown in the figure below, ETF's, Cedefop's and Eurofound's average administrative expenditure per staff member was below average of the seven agencies, whereas the figure for EU-OSHA was higher. In respect of EU-OSHA, the relatively high figure is consistent with stakeholder views which argued that the administrative burden stemming from reporting to ensure accountability is rather high for such a small agency. The chart below reflects this trend showing that bigger agencies incur relatively less administrative expenses per staff member due to economies of scale. The interview programme respondents explained that smaller agencies have to deal with relatively higher administrative workload since the minimum administrative procedures related to programming, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation are the same for all agencies.

Figure 10. Administrative expenditure per staff member (2016)



Source: Compiled by authors, based on agencies' reports.

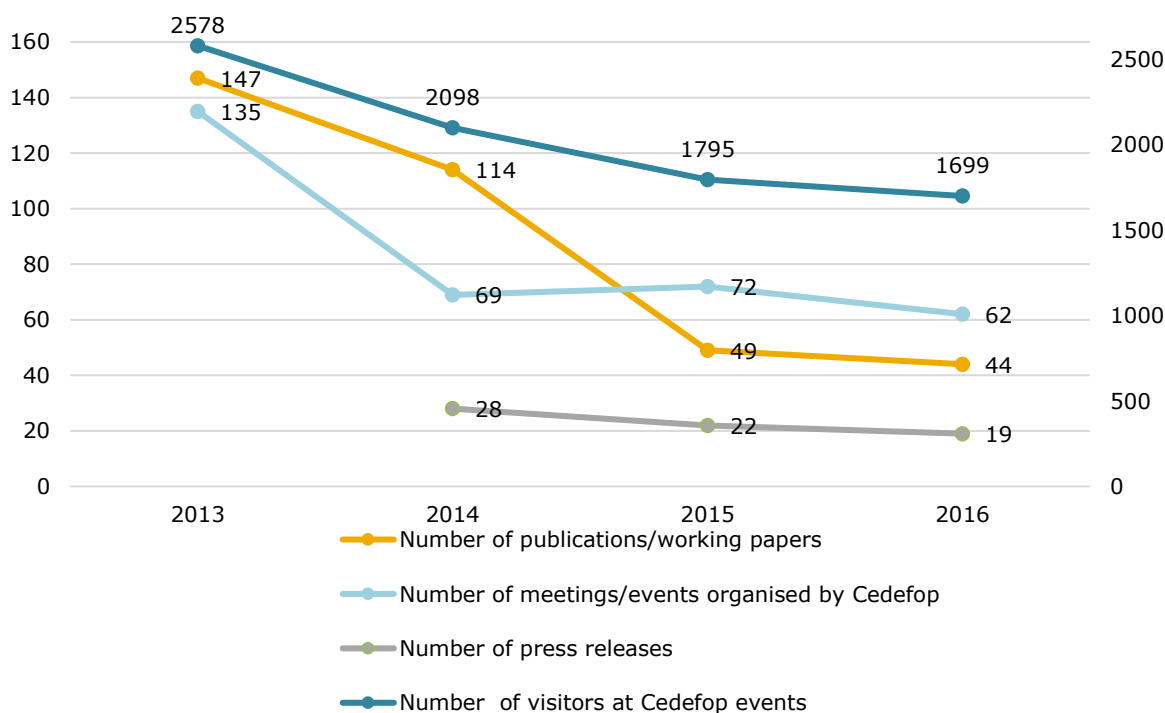
Resource-related challenges

During the evaluation period, Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA faced different resource-related challenges.

One of the biggest challenges for Cedefop were ad-hoc requests (activities not foreseen in the work programmes) from the stakeholders, mainly the Commission. The budgetary authority [The European Parliament] also flagged the risk that additional activities may be difficult to meet with the Centre’s available resources⁵². In 2016 Cedefop gave a major contribution for the Commission to come up with the package of the New Skills Agenda by being involved in drafting of the Staff Working Document supporting the revision of the EQF, the proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Skills Guarantee, the Blueprint for Sectoral Collaboration on Skills, and giving comments on the drafts of the planned Europass decision and the related Staff Working Document. Despite the reported additional workload, only 4% of planned outputs were postponed⁵³, and by the end of the year Cedefop reached 99.99% budget implementation⁵⁴ indicating high agency’s cost-effectiveness and ability to adapt to changing requirements. One of the ways to better accommodate ad-hoc requests was adoption of ‘negative priorities’ for operational activities. This strategy functioned as a flexibility margin enabling to accommodate higher priority activities. However, despite the successful accommodation of the ad-hoc requests, the Governing Board interviewees were concerned that increasingly ambitious work programmes and shrinking resources may eventually compromise the quality of Cedefop’s outputs.

Cedefop tended to produce fewer outputs every year in 2013-2016, according to Cedefop’s PMS (see the figure below)

Figure 11. Cedefop’s outputs, 2013-2016.



Source: Cedefop’s PMS indicators.

Cedefop’s outcome indicators⁵⁵ showed that even though the agency produced significantly fewer outputs every year since 2013, it managed to increase the number of citations in EU policy documents, increase event quality, and regain a positive trend

⁵² Report on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training for the financial year 2015, (2016/2161(DEC))

⁵³ Total planned outputs for 2016 (134); Completed/ongoing (114; 85%); Delayed/cancelled (20; 15%) of which due to additional requests (6; 4%). Source: compiled by authors using data from Cedefop’s progress report on the Work Programme 2016.

⁵⁴ Consolidated Annual Activity Report (CAAR) of Cedefop, 2016.

⁵⁵ Evidence to inform policies and their implementation; new knowledge and insights generated; raised awareness among stakeholders, source: Cedefop’s PMS data.

in Cedefop's website visits (see the figure below)⁵⁶. This shows that the agencies' cost-effectiveness has increased because it produced the same outcomes with fewer outputs.

Figure 12. Selected Cedefop's outcome indicators



Source: Cedefop's PMS indicators.

For Eurofound, one of the main challenges was the freeze of its budget for four consecutive years and the growing prices of the surveys that constitute one of the main activities of the agency. This means that while *de facto* the budget was gradually decreasing in real terms due to inflation, the surveys required a larger proportion of the operational budget every year⁵⁷. For example, Eurofound had to reduce the sample size of the latest wave of EQLS from 43,636 in 2012 to 35,800 in 2016. This has repercussions for the statistical analysis of the data.

In response to increasing survey prices, Eurofound signed an agreement and issued a joint call for tender for the European Company Survey (ECS) in cooperation with Cedefop, dividing the costs equally amongst the two agencies. Eurofound was also exploring new ways to finance the responses to stakeholder needs. For example, if a MS requested to increase sample size in their country, Eurofound asked them to contribute to the cost. In 2015, Belgium, Spain and Slovenia paid for an increase in the sample size of the 6th wave of the European Working Conditions Survey. In 2017, the sample size for Italy was increased for the 4th wave of the European Quality of Life Survey. The agency also proposed to reduce frequency of the surveys. Finally, in late 2017 Eurofound started an in-depth option appraisal for the future of surveys as high-level decisions are needed to ensure their sustainability.

The budget constraint has also influenced Eurofound's expenditure on the Network of Correspondents; in 2016 it dropped from €1,994,000 to €1,481,000, comprising 21% of the overall operational expenditure of 2016. In the face of the reduced expenditure, during the most recent network's contractual cycle (2014-2018), Eurofound managed to achieve some cost-efficiencies. For example, the new contractual setup (i.e., provision of two contract types for scheduled and on-request services) facilitated broadest possible coverage with only a marginal cost increase in comparison to previous periods.

Despite the decreased resources, there was no evidence this has impacted the level of usage of Eurofound's work or stakeholder satisfaction.

⁵⁶ Cedefop's PMS data; no comparable data for downloads of publications for the period 2013-2016.

⁵⁷ For instance, 3rd EQLS survey (€ 2 120 922) in 2010 took 27% of operational expenditure, 4th EQLS in 2015 (€ 2 893 936) took 40% of the operational expenditure. Similarly, 5th EWCS survey in 2009 (€ 2 899 311) took 39% of the operational expenditure, and 6th EWCS survey (€ 3 374 260) took 47% of operational expenditure in 2014.

EU-OSHA has coped with budget reduction without cancelling major activities, by scaling down or reducing the frequency of some activities (e.g. awareness-raising campaign became biannual instead of annual).

Measures for efficiency gains

In the context of fiscal consolidation, the Council has been calling all the EU institutions to reduce their administrative expenditure as much as possible⁵⁸. To bring about efficiency gains the agencies have implemented a number of resource saving strategies.

Sharing services to save resources has been high on the agencies' agenda during the evaluation period. It also forms part of the strategy agenda for the Network of EU Decentralised Agencies (the so-called Dublin Agenda)⁵⁹. The Network of Agencies prepared a catalogue⁶⁰ of almost 900 shared services available to members of the network. For instance, Cedefop's representatives found the inter-agency networks for procurement officers (NAPO) or ICT professionals and a catalogue of shared services extremely useful in improving internal agency's procedures. The other two agencies also noted the benefits being part of the agency network, therefore the systematic development of the catalogue of shared services and more structured inter-agency cooperation in sharing of practices, procedures, and tools could be further reinforced.

Sharing administrative services between the EU decentralised agencies present an opportunity for more efficiency gains. The work programme of the Network of EU Agencies envisages stronger cooperation in common ICT/digital services or common procurement procedures.

The programme envisages common cloud migration strategy and solutions for shared disaster recovery services⁶¹. Moreover, based on proximity criterion, the agencies operating near each other could potentially share some of the physical IT centres or business continuity structures, as well as part of legal services among the agencies located in similar legal environments. Moreover, common tendering procedures in the area of audit, logistics, ad-hoc legal services have been also included in the NAPO network working programme. The agencies could organise joint calls for various horizontal goods and services such as ICT and audio-visual equipment, cloud services, press/social media monitoring reports, catering, external evaluation, data protection, etc. The agencies have already demonstrated efficiency gains by initiating joint procedures, for instance, Eurofound signed an agreement to launch the European Company Survey (ECS) in cooperation with Cedefop, dividing the costs equally amongst the two agencies.

It should be noted that it may be rather problematic to share some administrative services due to uncertainty in liability and accountability. For instance, legal services or procurement procedures could be seen as sensitive areas in this regard. Moreover, Eurofound and EU-OSHA have been exploring the general skillset among their employees to see whether they could join forces in recruitment. However, earlier efforts for joint recruitment by Cedefop and ETF were not successful due to different requirements in skills profiles, especially regarding the operational staff.

To redistribute some of the administrative resources to the operational or staff titles, the agencies also implemented a set of measures to improve efficiency of their internal processes. For example, Cedefop has set up an internal working group focusing on deploying electronic tools and e-workflows, simplifying internal rules and procedures (e.g. procurement thresholds, rules for expert reimbursement). EU-OSHA

⁵⁸ Council conclusions on the budget guidelines for 2016

⁵⁹ Strategy agenda for the Network of EU decentralised Agencies, Dublin, 23 October 2015

⁶⁰ 2017-2018 Work Programme of the Network Of EU Agencies Under the chairmanship of EFSA, retrieved from https://euagencies.eu/assets/files/agencies_work_programme.pdf

⁶¹ Ibid.

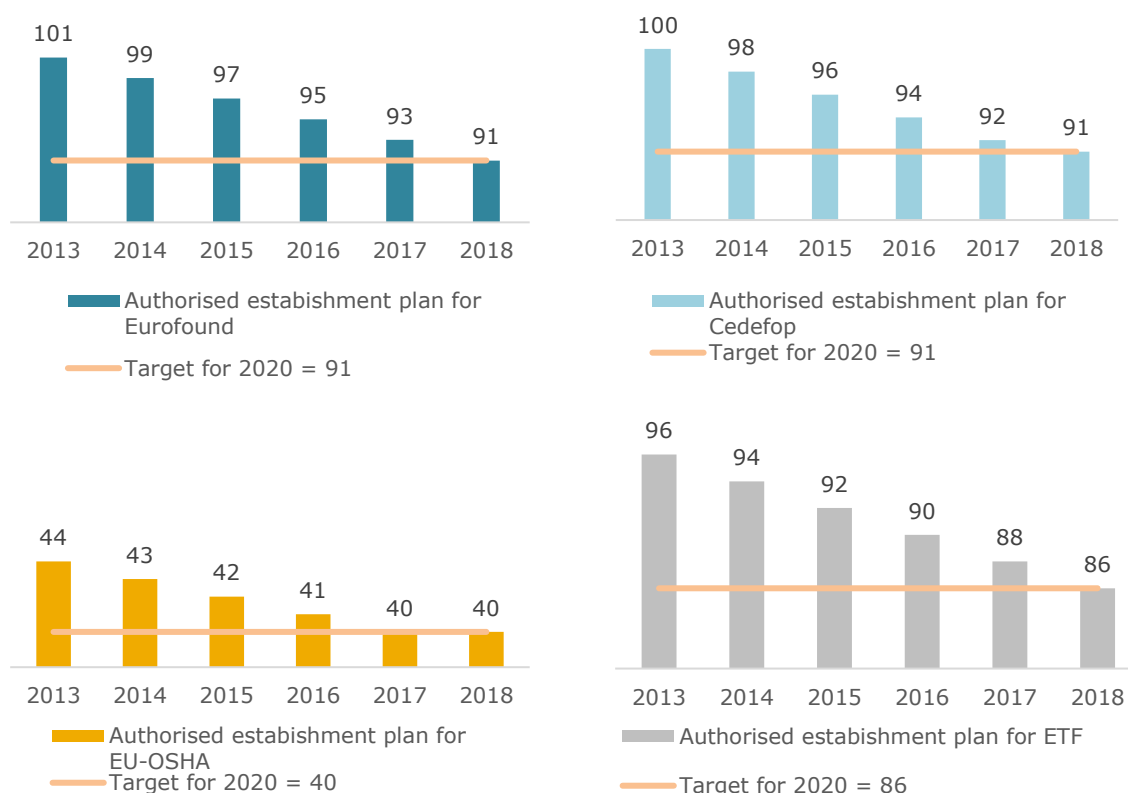
replaced paper workflows with on-line administrative procedures, and Eurofound implemented a business process improvement exercise on its financial circuit and has been working to review procurement processes to make the process more efficient.

1.2.2 To what extent are staff resources and workload appropriate to fulfil efficiently and effectively the Agency's objectives and activities?

To determine the extent to which staff resources and workload were appropriate to efficiently and effectively fulfil the agencies' objectives, we discuss the balance between operational and administrative staff, the staff reductions that have been taking place during the evaluation period, and survey findings about the extent to which staff perceive their workload as appropriate.

The agencies have been committed to implementing 10% staff cuts, as far as possible without impact on their level of activity. Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA and ETF have followed these commitments; by 2018 the four agencies have implemented the target staff cuts.

Figure 13. Number of posts in authorised in the establishment plans* of the agencies



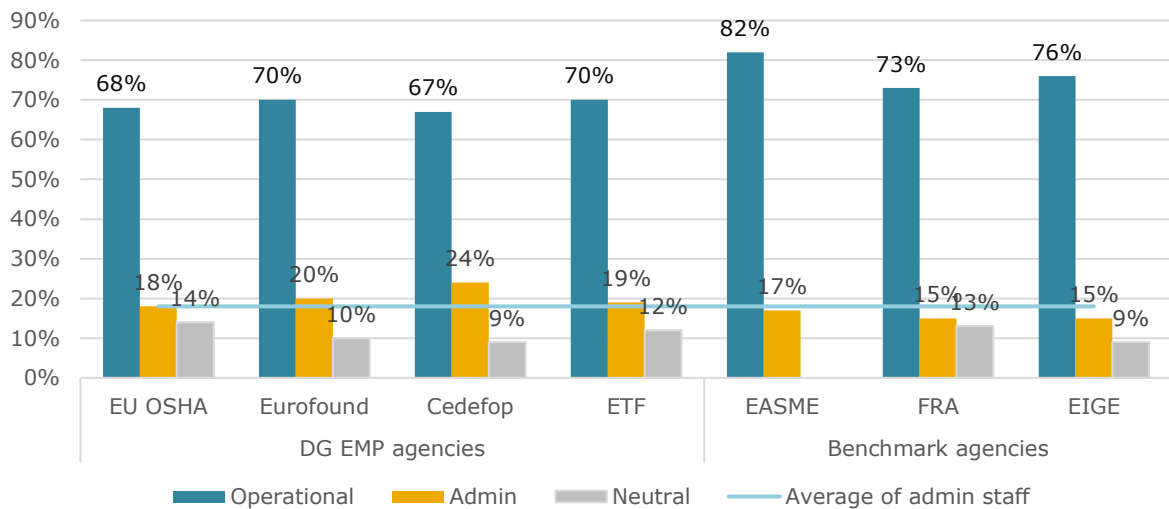
Source: Draft General Budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, Working Document Part III, Bodies set up by the EU and having legal personality and Public-Private Partnership. *Note: excluding contract agents and local staff

Balance between operational and administrative staff

Whilst administrative staff perform functions that are essential to the performance of an agency, such as human resource management, finance, ICT, legal, and evaluation, it is expected (e.g. by the Inter-Institutional Working Group of the Council, Parliament and Commission) that such functions will be streamlined as far as possible to maximise the proportion of the staff employed in operational roles.

During the evaluation period operational and administrative/neutral staff ratio has been rather stable in all the four agencies at approximately 70/30 ratio.

Figure 14. Operational, Administrative and Neutral staff ratio in 2016



Source: Annual activity reports 2016.

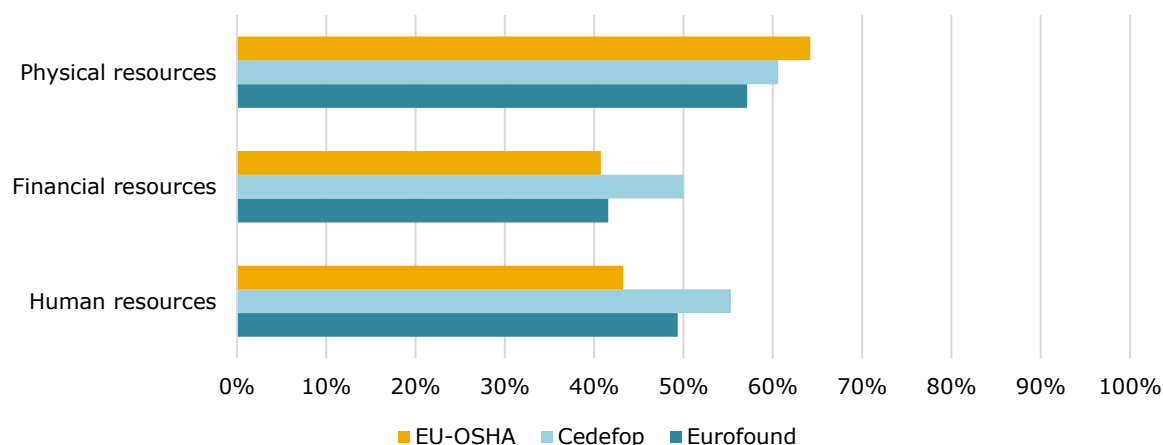
Note: Staff categories according to Job Screening Methodology: Operational (frontline activities), Administrative (enablers of core business activities), Neutral (intermediate/mixed, e.g. linguistic).

From a cost-effectiveness perspective, it is generally positive that the proportion of administration roles is generally around the 20% level. From the figure above it can be seen that Cedefop has a relatively higher proportion of staff engaged on administrative matters (i.e. 24% against an average of 18%). Based on a comparison with the three agencies operating in related policy areas (EASME, FRA and EIGE), there would appear to be some scope for reducing the numbers of staff engaged on administrative duties at Cedefop in particular.

Despite the reasonable balance, which is proportionate to the sizes of the agencies, simplification of administrative procedures and introduction of more efficient workflows have potential to further adjust the HR ratio from administrative towards the operational side. As discussed above, sharing horizontal administrative services such as monitoring or evaluation with the other agencies or with the Commission could be further explored to reduce administrative staff needs of the four agencies.

We also asked the members of the Governing Board, who among their other duties are also responsible for the supervision of the budgetary management of agencies, for their views on whether the resources allocated to achieve the agencies' objectives were sufficient. While over 50% of the respondents believed that physical resources were sufficient, they had a rather mixed view over financial and human resources. Less than half of the GB members in EU-OSHA and Eurofound believed that human and financial resources were sufficient, compared to 55% and 50% in Cedefop.

Figure 15. Percentage of respondents who believe that the resources are sufficient



Source: Stakeholder survey, responses from Governing Board members. Cedefop N=38, EU OSHA N= 81, Eurofound N = 78.

Workload

In Eurofound, 62% of staff respondents thought their workload was either very well-balanced or rather balanced. However, more than a third (38%) of respondents to the survey felt their workload is rather or very unbalanced (see the figure below). The perception of high workload and inadequate human resources may be linked to an increase in weekly working hours from 37.5 to 40 across the EU institutions at the beginning of the evaluation period⁶². Moreover, the evaluation evidence shows that Eurofound’s researchers conducted more research internally than before. Furthermore, according to Eurofound management, overtime, when it happens, has not been compensated.

The majority of Cedefop’s staff agreed that overall the workload within the agency has been gradually increasing. Internal Cedefop’s staff survey carried out in 2013 indicated administrative procedures, simultaneous involvement in various projects, frequent ad hoc external demands and the effects of turnover as the main drivers for high work pressure and heavy workload⁶³. The interview programme carried out for this evaluation (2017) identified that in addition to the internal factors, increasing scope of the agency’s operational activities (e.g. policy support at national level) and reducing resources contributed to increasing workload within the agency. The staff survey results⁶⁴ supported this trend, with two thirds of employees identifying their personal workload as too high, and 77% of the employees perceiving the amount human resources allocated to fulfil the functions of their department or unit as too low (Figure 16).

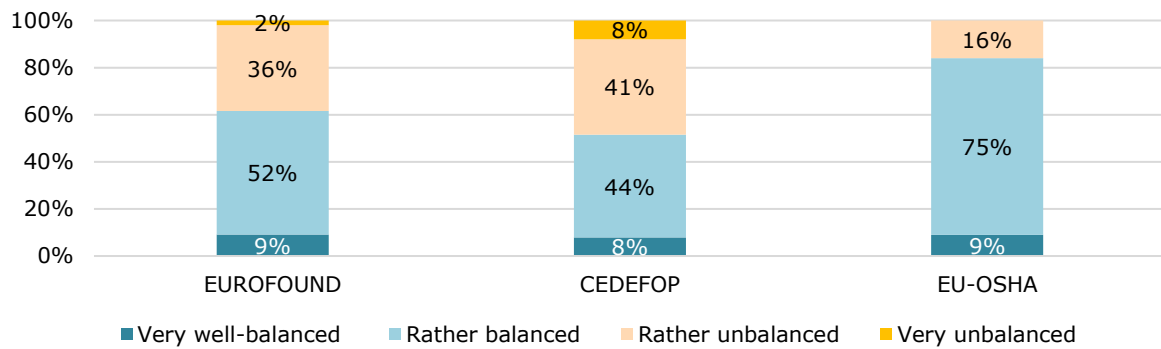
Compared to other two agencies, the majority of EU-OSHA’s staff perceived their workload as balanced throughout the year.

⁶² MEMO/11/907 Brussels, 13 December 2011, retrieved from http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-11-907_en.htm?locale=en

⁶³ Internal Cedefop Staff Survey, 2013.

⁶⁴ Cedefop staff survey carried out for the four agencies evaluation, 2017.

Figure 16. How do you perceive your workload balance throughout the year?



Source: Staff survey 2017, Cedefop N=39, EU-OSHA N= 57, Eurofound N = 86.

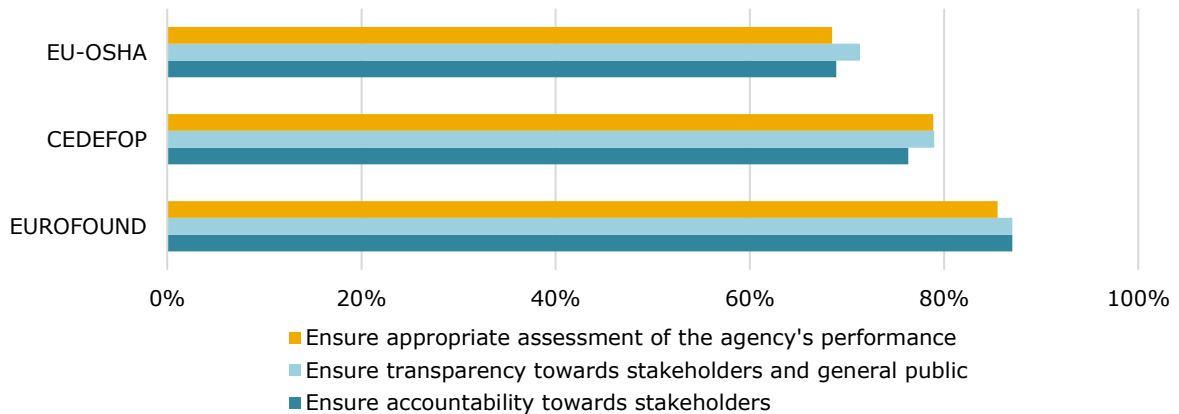
1.2.3 To what extent are the internal mechanisms for programming, monitoring, reporting and evaluating the agency’s adequate for ensuring accountability and appropriate assessment of the overall performance of the agencies while minimising the administrative burden of the agencies and its stakeholders?

Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA have applied mechanisms aimed at ensuring accountability and appropriate assessment of their overall performance, compliant with the Common Approach:

- Publicly available annual and multiannual work programmes
- Monitoring of a set of key performance indicators
- Publicly available Annual Reports and Annual Activity Reports that include information on the implementation of the annual work programmes, budget and staff policy plans, management of the agencies, and other relevant information
- Internal and external audits and evaluations of the agencies’ performance
- Multilingual websites, including relevant information on governance, procurement, work programmes, staff, stakeholders and other aspects of the agencies’ works

The majority of the surveyed members of the Governing Boards of the agencies also believed that the agencies had adequate mechanisms to ensure accountability towards stakeholders, transparency towards stakeholders and the general public, and appropriate assessment of the agency’s performance (Figure 17). Eurofound’s GB members have been the most confident about the agency’s transparency and accountability mechanisms (over 80%), compared to Cedefop’s (over 70%) and EU OSHA’s (over 60%) respondents.

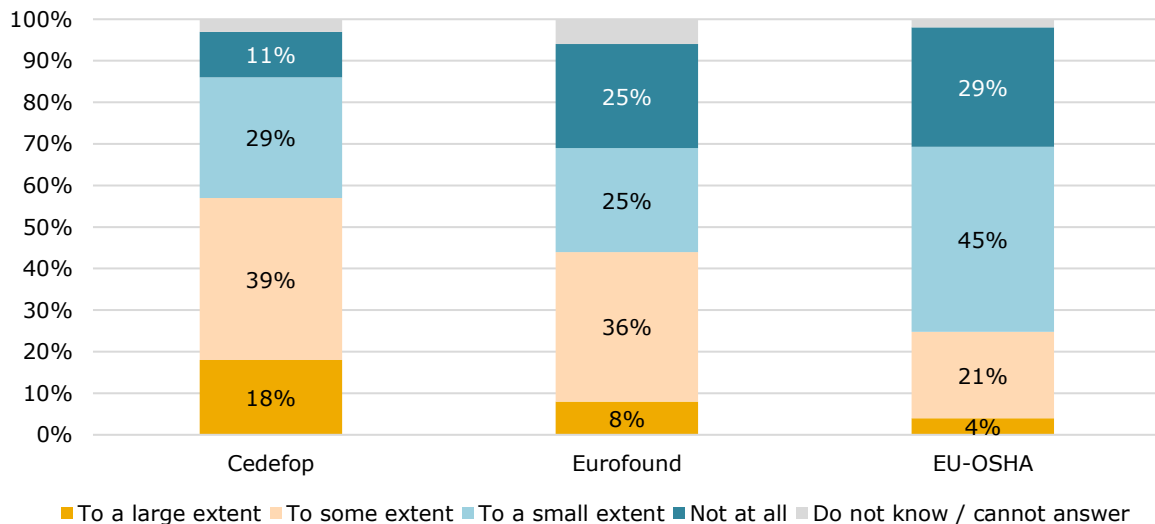
Figure 17. Percentage of GB members who strongly agree or agree that the agencies have adequate transparency and accountability mechanisms in place



Source: Governing Board survey, Cedefop N=38, EU OSHA N= 81, Eurofound N = 78.

However, further analysis of these mechanisms indicated high complexity requiring significant effort from the agencies' staff. Results of the staff survey indicated that 57% surveyed of Cedefop's staff, 44% of Eurofound's staff, and 25% of EU-OSHA's staff members found tasks related to programming, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation tend to interfere with implementation of their primary tasks (see the figure below).

Figure 18. To what extent the administrative tasks related to the following activities (programming, monitoring, reporting and evaluation) hinder the implementation of your primary tasks?



Source: Staff survey, Cedefop N=38, EU OSHA N= 56, Eurofound N = 84.

Recognising that programming, monitoring, and reporting are crucial internal tasks for the functioning of the agencies, the evaluation indicated a need for further optimisation and strategic alignment of these mechanisms. For instance, Eurofound's staff committee representatives noted that there was a lack of feedback mechanisms on tracking and logging various internal metrics. In a recently implemented system (in relation to activity-based budgeting), employees have been requested to log hours spent on specific projects, however, staff representatives reported receiving too little feedback; they did not feel informed on how this data has been used for decision making.

Comparative analysis of the Performance Measurement systems showed that the four agencies have been reporting a set of similar performance indicators, however, there have also been significant differences in monitoring and reporting outcomes (Table 16).

Table 16. Performance indicators of the four agencies

Type of indicator	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
Citations in policy documents	Policy documents citing Cedefop work	No. of key EU policy documents quoting Eurofound (including sub-totals per organisation) out of a total no. of EU policy documents over the year	-	-
Contribution to policy documents	Policy documents which Cedefop has helped prepare	-	-	-
Participation in events	Participation in Presidency events and meetings of senior stakeholders or which support policy; Participation in conferences and events	No. of on-request contributions at meetings of named organisations	-	-
Dissemination of agencies' outputs	Downloads of publications/working papers/other	No. of downloads (PDF) and page views (HTML)	Downloads of publications; OSHmail newsletter subscribers; Number of stakeholders reached through events	Number of downloads of publications (Not a KPI); Number of participants in corporate and regional events (Not a KPI)
	Website traffic	No. of downloads (PDF) and page views (HTML)	Visitors to EU-OSHA's websites	Number of unique visitors to the website (Not a KPI); Number of page views; Number of subscribers to social media channels (Not a KPI)
	Europass outcomes among citizens	n/a	n/a	n/a
Citations in academic literature	Citations of Cedefop publications/studies in the literature	No. of references in academic journals	-	-
Quality of agencies' outputs	Quality of events organised by Cedefop	Addressing through stakeholder survey	Addressing through stakeholder survey	Addressing through stakeholder feedback surveys
Exposure of agencies' knowledge through the media	Media coverage, take-up of articles and press releases	No. of readers exposed to Eurofound's knowledge via media	-	-
Work programme delivery	-	Programme delivery rate	Work programme delivery	Timely submission of Annual WP/SPD to the EC; Activities completion rate; Timely achievement of activities of the

Type of indicator	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
				ETF Work Programme;
Implementation of audit recommendations	Reported in annual activity reports, but not as KPI	Reported in annual activity reports, but not as KPI	Reported in annual activity reports, but not as KPI	Audit recommendation Implementation (%)
Staff capacity	Percentage of establishment plan filled	% of positions in staff table filled/MASPP	Staff capacity	Average vacancy rate; Administrative support and coordination / operational staff ratio; Staff engagement
Budget execution	% of budget executed	(budget implementation) % of (cumulative) commitments of total budget in euro	Budget execution: Staff expenditure; Buildings, equipment; Operations	Commitment appropriation implementation; Payment appropriations cancellation rate; Rate of outturn
Timeliness of payments	Timeliness of payments (number of days to make payments)	-	-	Timely Payments (Rate (%) of payments executed within the legal/contractual deadlines)

Source: compiled by authors based on annual work programmes and annual reports.

Cedefop and Eurofound had similar indicators for monitoring contribution to policy development, while EU-OSHA and ETF did not monitor this information. Cedefop and Eurofound monitored and reported citations in policy documents and participation in stakeholder events. There were some inconsistencies in reporting policy contribution indicators within the agencies. For instance, the agencies 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, or event participants. ETF, however, presented this information under achievements by function, but not as key performance indicators. While monitoring of outputs' quality was only partially present in the performance measurement systems, the agencies found other ways to address this issue. Cedefop had an indicator for measuring quality of its events in its PMS, while Eurofound, EU-OSHA and ETF organised separate stakeholder satisfaction surveys for collecting and reporting quality of their outputs.

All the four agencies reported staff capacity (% of establishment plan filled) and budget execution. Eurofound, EU-OSHA and ETF also had quantitative indicators on work programme delivery rate. Cedefop tended to report delivery of the planned outputs on the project basis, providing high level of detail, but omitting the overall number of delivered/cancelled/postponed outputs. All the agencies reported audit results, but only ETF reported implementation of audit recommendations as a key performance indicator.

1.2.4 To what extent do the agencies' internal organisational structures contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations?

During the evaluation period Cedefop and Eurofound implemented major reorganisations of their internal organisational structures.

In 2015, Cedefop's Director initiated an internal reorganisation of the agency and established three operational departments⁶⁵ instead of two areas for Enhanced Cooperation on VET and LLL (ECVL), and Research and Policy Analysis (RPA). The reorganisation was also meant to streamline Cedefop's activities and use available human resources more efficiently⁶⁶. The new structure introduced a more thematic approach instead of having one area for research, and one for cooperation on VET⁶⁷. The new thematic structure of the operational departments strengthened the agency's strategic alignment by reflecting the agencies medium-term priorities (2012-2016) and future strategic areas of cooperation foreseen for the period 2017-2020⁶⁸. Moreover, after the reorganisation the activities of the departments became more visible within the agency and it was easier to match them with the Commission's 'mirror units'.

The interviewed Cedefop's staff members agreed that the reorganisation of departments brought more coherence and sorted out some overlaps observed within the previous structure. The new structure enabled Cedefop's employees to specialise in particular thematic issues, but the agency has to ensure horizontal cooperation among the different structural units.

Similarly to Cedefop, Eurofound was reorganised in 2011 to "reinforce thematic expertise and alignment of the organisational set up of the research function with Eurofound's mandate, as well as to improve communication within and between units"⁶⁹. As a result, the number of research units was reduced from five to three, focusing on the following thematic areas: Employment and Change, Working Conditions and Industrial Relations, and Living Conditions and Quality of Life. In 2016 the research units were restructured again in accordance with the strategic areas of intervention of the programming document. As part of this reorganisation, new roles of Chief Researcher/ Coordinator and Industrial Relations Adviser were created aimed at better coordination of research. Despite the optimisation the management committee (MAC) remains rather large (12)⁷⁰ and the interview programme pointed out towards a need to decrease the MAC in order to ensure more efficient decision making.

In 2011 a new function of senior programme manager was introduced, increasing the levels of hierarchy and distance between management and staff within the agency, which was not appreciated by the staff. In 2016 this role was "supressed"⁷¹. Overall, during the interview programme the staff pointed out to some internal communication issues and in particular the lack of information or feedback from top management to employees (e.g. in regard to project monitoring data). Interviews with staff members also revealed a perception among the staff members that reorganisations take place too frequently and their effect on the quality of agency's work is uncertain. The evaluation observed varying perceptions between Eurofound's staff and Governing Board regarding the balance in sizes, responsibilities and resources of different departments and units. 51% of the surveyed Governing Board respondents strongly agreed or agreed that there is a good balance (45% of respondents did not know/ could not answer); on the contrary, 49% of staff respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (8% of respondents did not know/ could not answer)⁷². Such developments were reflected in Eurofound's internal staff engagement survey. Compared to 2013, in 2015 the overall staff engagement dropped by five points, to 60%, with the largest decrease in the areas of leadership and accountability.

⁶⁵ Department for VET Systems and Institutions (DSI), Department for Learning and Employability (DLE), Department for Skills and Labour Market (DSL).

⁶⁶ Director's Decision on the reorganisation of Cedefop's two operational areas into three departments.

⁶⁷ Interview programme, senior staff.

⁶⁸ Medium term priorities 2012-2014 (transferred to 2016); Programming document 2017-2020.

⁶⁹ Eurofound's Annual activity report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2011

⁷⁰ There were 12 people in the management committee (MAC) in Dec 2016.

⁷¹ Eurofound's Annual activity report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2016

⁷² Eurofound's stakeholders (N=76) and staff (N=86) surveys.

Due to smaller size of the agency, EU-OSHA tended to keep the organisational structure simple, consisting of two units (Communication and Promotion Unit; Prevention and Research Unit), a Network Secretariat, and Resource and Service Centre. The evaluation indicated that the current structure ensured sufficient effectiveness and efficiency of operations, providing a good balance in the sizes, responsibilities and resources of different departments and units. However, the evaluation observed communication issues between EU-OSHA's focal points and the Governing Board. Focal points are meant to distribute products from the agency within the Member States through a tripartite operational network of social partners. Limited communication between Governing Board members and focal point members of the same social partner group within a country tended to have a negative impact on dissemination of the agencies deliverables.

ETF underwent two reorganisations during the evaluation period. Up until January 2011, there had been a single Operations Department organised into three geographical subunits in line with the main European instruments. The dominant way in which ETF organised its activities had been geographical. The new structure introduced in 2011 established 3 operational departments: geographical operations; evidence-based policy making; and thematic expertise development.

In 2015 ETF introduced a single Operations Department consisting of two units responsible for what are termed strategic projects, which are also cost centres. After the reorganisation ETF's activities were structured around themes which have been an important focus of the ETF on an increasingly systematic basis since 2013. Country managers have been replaced by country desks representing an attempt to bundle activities into seven clusters and enable the ETF "to become more strategic and [to] increase [...] efficiency and effectiveness"⁷³. In 2014 ETF has still had a large number of activities (50), thus the new structure represented a further attempt to address this issue. The external ETF evaluation found that operational and organisational changes in the ETF structure sought to alter the balance between how to organise activities geographically, functionally and thematically, shifting more towards function and themes with the aim of making the organisation more strategic in terms of its interventions⁷⁴.

There have been concerns that the new structure might negatively affect ETF's responsiveness to partner countries due to replacement of the individual country managers. However, while it is challenging to convey the impact of the reorganisation due to the limited time-frame, initial findings show that the restructuring allows for more effective interventions as a particular issue within a partner country can be addressed holistically by a pool of thematic experts. The ETF seems to have maintained its country presence despite the organisation along thematic rather than geographic lines and the prioritisation of particular partner countries⁷⁵.

1.2.5 To what extent do the size and composition of the Governing Boards affect the work of the agencies?

In this section we focus on the size and composition of the tripartite Governing Boards of Cedefop, Eurofound, and EU-OSHA. Firstly, we discuss the size of the Governing Boards and whether it creates concerns in terms of effectiveness and efficiency of governance. Then, we analyse the composition of the Boards and present the advantages and disadvantages of their tripartite structure. Finally, we look at potential membership overlaps between the agencies.

Cedefop's, Eurofound's and EU-OSHA's Governing Boards are among the largest compared to other EU agencies. All of them consist of 87 members, and a number of

⁷³ ETF Annual Activity Report, 2014

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ ETF update report

observers/other participants. The Governing Boards of the three agencies include three representatives per each Member State (social partners and government), representatives from the Commission, and observers⁷⁶. The Boards of the three agencies have been particularly inflated by the enlargement of the EU from 15 to 28 Member States. The size of the Boards is not in line with the Common Approach. Under the CA, the composition of the Managing Board should include 28 MS representatives, two representatives from the European Commission, and where appropriate, one member from the EP and a fairly limited number of stakeholder's representatives⁷⁷. According to the Roadmap to the CA, the "rationale is to avoid the situation where boards are so large (up to more than 80 members) that they act more as consultative assemblies than as a true supervisory body".

In order to streamline decision making, the CA recommends following a two-level governance structure. In this approach, in addition to the Governing Board, a small-sized Executive Board operates and closely monitors agency's activities, with a view to reinforcing supervision of administrative and budgetary management. In the three agencies' case, the Bureau is implementing such functions.

The discussion of the size of the agencies' Governing Boards has two central issues:

- Whether the size creates significant financial implications, e.g. by increasing the cost of governance
- Whether the size (be it too large or too small) allows effective decision making while ensuring the representation of all parties concerned

Cedefop spends around EUR 106 000 annually⁷⁸ on the Governing Board meetings (comprising approx. 1,7% of annual operational expenditure), and the agency's budget foresees a combined amount of approximately EUR 260 000 annually⁷⁹ for the Governing Board and Bureau meetings, including Cedefop staff participation. Overall, the interviewed stakeholders agreed that the combination of actual attendance rate and frequency of meetings makes the costs of maintaining Cedefop's Governing Board comparable to those of the other EU agencies. In comparison, Eurofound spends approximately EUR 145 000 annually⁸⁰ on its Governing Board, comprising around 1,87% of annual operational expenditure. The evaluation did not identify any data on the costs of ETF's Governing Board.

Turning to the question of effective decision making, the engagement and level of knowledge is likely to vary across members in such a large governing body. According to the estimations of the Governing Board members and the administrative data, the average attendance of the Governing Board meetings in the agencies has been approximately 70%. Moreover, the interview programme indicated some issues with the engagement of the Governing Board members. For instance, Cedefop's or EU-OSHA's interviewees reported cases where the Board members could not fully follow the meetings due to the language barrier, low preparation or little interest. The engagement and motivation issue has appeared in the previous evaluations of Eurofound and Cedefop⁸¹. To tackle this issue, Cedefop conducted a self-assessment of how Governing Board members perform their supervisory responsibilities to stimulate learning and discussion on the governing model, as was recommended in the previous evaluation. Eurofound implemented actions aimed to optimise the level

⁷⁶ In comparison, ETF's Governing Board is not tripartite and consists of one representative of each of the EU Member States, three European Commission representatives, three independent experts appointed by the European Parliament, and the EEAS with observer status.

⁷⁷ Joint Statement of the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission on decentralised agencies (2012 July 19th). Retrieved from https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/docs/body/joint_statement_and_common_approach_2012_en.pdf

⁷⁸ Cedefop's annual activity reports 2014, 2015, 2016; commitment appropriations.

⁷⁹ Cedefop's annual management plan 2016

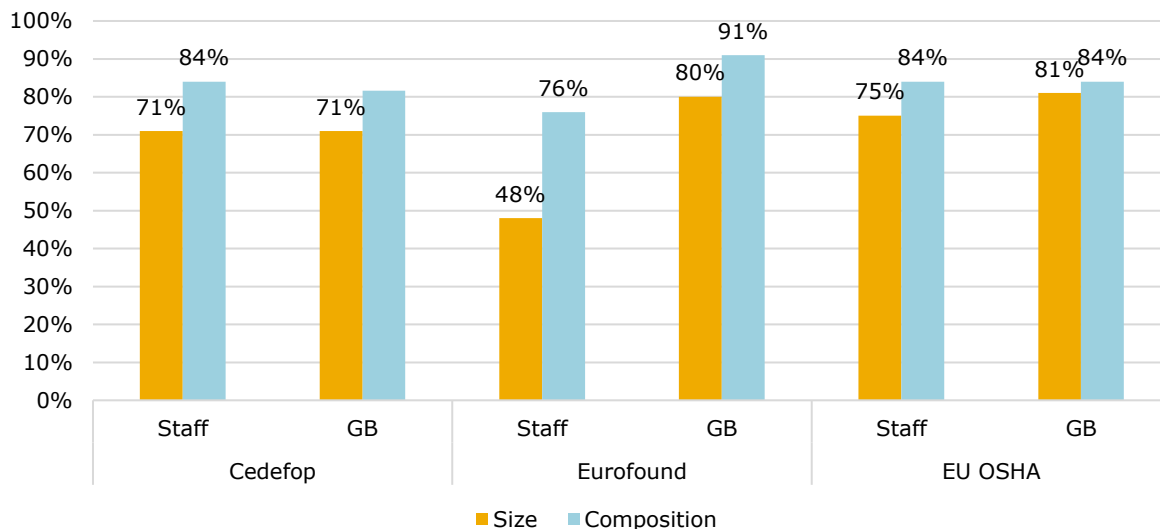
⁸⁰ Eurofound's annual activity reports 2014, 2015, 2016.

⁸¹ Eurofound external multiannual programme evaluation – Ex post evaluation of 2009 – 2012 Work Programme, Ipsos MORI, February 2015.

and quality of input from the GB by agreeing meeting dates one year in advance, designating substitute members for every GB representative, and considering incentives for the GB members.

The survey data shows that overall the size and composition of the Governing Boards has not been a significant concern for the agencies themselves or for the Board members. The majority of staff and the GB members positively evaluated the size and composition of the Boards, although the Eurofound's staff had a mixed view regarding the size of the body (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. Appropriateness of the size and composition of the Governing Boards

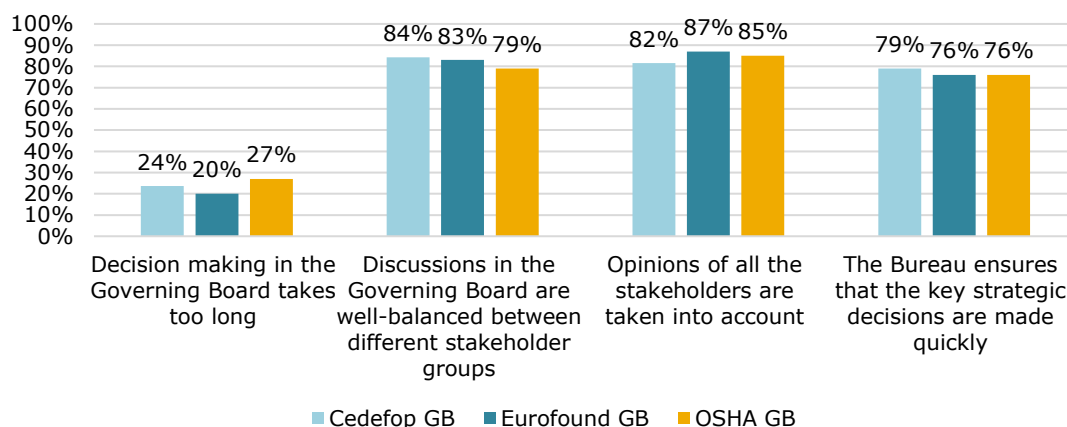


Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that the size and composition of the Governing Board of the respective agencies are appropriate. Source: Governing Board and Staff surveys, Cedefop: N = 38; 38; Eurofound N = 84; 76; EU OSHA N = 82; 57.

The tripartite composition of the Governing Board has been evaluated positively by the agencies' tripartite stakeholders (interviewees, survey respondents), arguing that this adds credibility to their research in the eyes of both employers and employees'. The social partners also act as a vehicle to promote agencies' work at the national level and use it in national policy debates.

While there have been considerations that the large Governing Boards may have a negative impact on the quality of discussions, just above 20% of surveyed Governing Board members from the three agencies agreed with the statement that the decision making-process was taking too long. Moreover, the majority of the surveyed GB members agreed that the discussions in the Boards have been well balanced between different groups of stakeholders, and opinions of the stakeholders have been taken into account (see the figure below). There has been no substantial independent evidence to evaluate the internal proceedings of the Governing Boards.

Figure 20. The extent to which respondents agree or strongly agree with the following statements about the functioning of the GB (%)



Source: Governing Board surveys, N=38; N=76; N=82.

The evidence above shows that despite the size of the boards, they have been usually able to reach consensus on the questions considered without a significant delay. The executive Bureaus, responsible for operational supervision and preparation for the Governing Board meetings in all three agencies has been instrumental in this respect. 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 GB members agreed that the Bureau ensured quicker strategic decision-making.

The Governing Board membership mapping exercise did not show any significant overlaps. In terms of only primary memberships without alternates, Eurofound and EU-OSHA had four overlapping members, Eurofound and Cedefop also had four overlaps. After including alternate members into the calculations, we found somewhat more overlaps; the employer and employees groups tend to overlap more as compared to the Member States' group (Table 17).

Table 17. Membership overlaps between Cedefop, Eurofound and EU OSHA

Agencies	All overlapping representatives and alternates	Overlapping government representatives and alternates	Overlapping employer group representatives and alternates	Overlapping employee group representatives and alternates
Cedefop/Eurofound	8	-	5	3
Eurofound/EU-OSHA	12	2	6	4
EU OSHA/Cedefop	3	1	-	2

Source: compiled by authors based on annual reports 2016.

The evaluation observed more significant overlaps between Cedefop's Governing Board and the composition of the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT). Slightly less than a half of members of the two bodies were the same; however, when the institutional affiliation was considered, the same organisations were represented in 2/3 of the cases.

1.2.6 How effective was the host Members State in fulfilling its obligations as defined in the Headquarters Agreements between the Agency and Member State where the seat is located? To what extent were actions undertaken by the host Member State appropriate to ensure multilingual, European-oriented schooling and appropriate transport connections? Are there any areas for improvement?

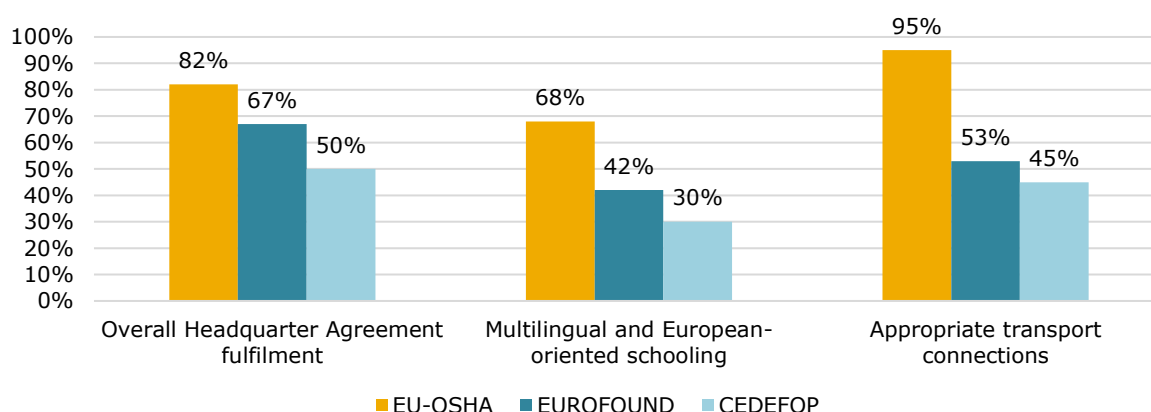
The Common Approach states that all agencies must have a signed Headquarters agreement with the host country. According to the CA, the host State must ensure

accessibility of the agency, all necessary conditions for its operation, which may include existence of adequate education facilities for children of the staff members and appropriate access to the labour market, social security and medical care for both, children and spouses.

EU-OSHA signed its seat agreement with Spain in 2014; Eurofound with Ireland in 2015; and Cedefop with Greece in 1995. The staff survey and interviews indicated that Cedefop was the least satisfied with its seat agreement, partly due to the fact that it has not been renewed for more than twenty years. In the interviews, the agency's representatives noted that in case of a new agreement, it could potentially include a direct VAT exclusion (from which ENISA, based in Athens and Heraklion, is benefiting). Such arrangement may help to attract staff and reduce the administrative burden. Currently, Cedefop has had a VAT exemption on intra-Community purchases of goods and services subject to limits set by Greece⁸².

While all the agencies had access to international schooling facilities, Cedefop's representatives felt the need for more Europe-oriented education opportunities. Moreover, Cedefop has experienced difficulties concerning the agency's building, although the Greek government made significant progress in undertaking the necessary repairs. Eurofound and Cedefop respondents have also expressed mixed opinions with regard to the transport connections (see the figure below).

Figure 21. Percentage of respondents satisfied with the host country's fulfilment of Headquarter Agreement obligations



Source: Staff survey 2017, Cedefop N=36, EU OSHA N= 53, Eurofound N = 82

1.2.7 Agency-specific recommendations/ points for improvement of efficiency

Table 18. Agency-specific recommendations/ points for improvement of efficiency

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
Cedefop		
2.1(c)	Cedefop managed to achieve its objectives, take on additional tasks, and maintain its outcome indicators despite a reduction in resources. This was achieved in part by managing to transfer staff and administrative savings towards operational budget titles. Internal review of administrative practices and the recently adopted paperless policy was recognised by staff as one of the main administrative efficiency gains. The agency should continue looking for ways to reallocate even more resources from the administration to its core operations.	R1.8
2.2(c)	Cedefop has been actively involved in inter-agency cooperation (both individually and through the Network of EU Agencies, EUAN). The agency should continue to participate in inter-agency cooperation, and seek to	R1.3, R1.4, R1.5, R1.6

⁸² Headquarters agreement

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
	achieve a more systematic and structured exchange of administrative practices, procedures and tools. Moreover, the agency should continue its efforts towards efficiency gains by further exploring common tendering procedures for horizontal goods and services such as ICT and audio-visual equipment, cloud services, catering, evaluation, or data protection.	
2.3(c)	The evaluation noted that 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, the indicators 'Policy documents citing Cedefop work' and 'Participation in Presidency events and meetings of senior stakeholders, or which support policy', should not present aggregated numbers relating to items of very different nature, which may lead to different interpretations of the agency's impact.	R1.10
2.4(c)	The comparative analysis of the performance measurement systems of Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA showed that the four agencies have been reporting a set of similar performance indicators. However, there have also been differences in monitoring and reporting the performance of internal processes such as the delivery of the work programme. The agencies should align the methodologies of process performance indicators unrelated to policy outcomes, such as budget execution, work programme delivery, staff capacity etc.	R1.10
2.5(c)	Because the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT) and Cedefop's Governing Board share a significant proportion of their membership, it is vital to coordinate the meetings of these groups in a way that ensures that their discussions do not overlap, and that their meetings serve their immediate purpose. If the structure and size of Cedefop's Governing Board is revised in the future, and its tripartite representation is reorganised, it is important that ACVT is used as a forum to continue the tripartite consultation on agency-related matters, and to ensure the acceptance of its work by social partners.	R1.16, R1.18
2.6(c)	As tripartite representation in the Governing Board is seen as particularly important feature of the agency by its stakeholders, intermediary solutions should be explored to make the size of the meetings more manageable. These could include: (a) a rotational system of only the social partner representatives (the experience of EIGE shows that the rotation of government representatives creates significant issues, such as when the Council Presidency countries are not represented in the Board); and (b) organising the work of the Board into smaller thematic groups. Electronic decision making (e.g. written procedures) and, where appropriate, virtual meetings, should be further explored as a solution for making the Governing Board's work more efficient and immediate. Such options could provide greater opportunity for the engagement of the Governing Board at short notice, as issues arise – as opposed to meeting only annually. The governing institutions of the agency could be further revisited, depending on political decisions concerning the design and future of the EMPL agencies, as discussed in Chapter 4 of this report.	R1.15, R1.17, R1.19
2.7(c)	Cedefop should ensure that a new Headquarters Agreement with Greece is signed. An effort should be made to negotiate a direct VAT exclusion (ENISA's Headquarters Agreement could be used as an example); to include more detailed provisions on the responsibilities of the Greek government with regard to the agency's building; as well as (to the extent that it is feasible), improvements on schooling and transportation conditions.	R3.6
	Eurofound	
2.8(e)	Sharing services to save resources was high on Eurofound's agenda during the evaluation period. The agency should continue to participate in inter-agency cooperation in sharing best administrative practices, procedures and tools, and should seek more systematic and structured exchange. The agency, together with other agencies and EU bodies, should continue their efforts towards efficiency gains by, for example, using common tendering procedures, sharing back-office functions and front-office services, and/ or even merging some of their functions. The eventual set of actions will depend on political decisions concerning the design and future of the EMPL agencies, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this report.	R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R1.4, R1.5, R1.6
2.9(e)	In the context of budget limitations, Eurofound has had to reduce the sample size of the EQLS (which has had repercussions for the statistical analysis of data), and further options for saving costs are being considered. The agency should further explore measures aimed at ensuring the continuity of surveys and follow-up research, together with the Commission and other stakeholders.	R1.5, R1.6, R1.7

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
	Its key aim is to maintain statistical robustness and methodological quality. Examples of relevant actions include: expanding the practice of financial contribution from the Member States (multi-part financing); drawing on the example with Cedefop/ ECS for other surveys; and launching a company panel together with other agencies.	
2.10(e)	Eurofound undertook measures to save resources by making its internal processes more efficient. These included, among others, a business process improvement exercise on its financial circuit, and a review of procurement processes to make them more efficient. The agency should continue to increase the efficiency of its internal processes through further streamlining, and the systematic implementation of business performance improvement initiatives (BPI) in all areas of operations and support (e.g., business development, human resources and administration).	R1.8
2.11(e)	In the interviews and staff survey, agency staff expressed that they felt insufficiently informed on the way data on the agency's performance is used in decision-making and management within the organisation. The staff should be informed more thoroughly about personal/ team-level or agency-level performance, on the basis of information logged by the employees. While the informants of the evaluation offered differing accounts of the situation, with the management of the agency providing numerous examples of the way in which staff were being informed, it is suggested that the agency's management and staff committee discuss in greater detail how performance information is shared internally and used for decision making.	R1.9
2.12(e)	The structure of the Governing Board of Eurofound does not meet the requirements of the Common Approach (CA). Some of the key participants of the ISSG suggested that in the process of negotiating the revised Founding Regulations, a decision has already been taken to maintain the current size and tripartite nature of the Governing Board. However, the governing institutions of the agency could be revisited depending on political decisions concerning the design and future of the EMPL agencies, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 of this report.	R1.15, R1.16, R1.17, R1.18
	EU-OSHA	
2.13(o)	The size and composition of the Board is not aligned with the Common Approach. However, there is quite some opposition to proposals to downsize the board. The agency should either align with the Common Approach regarding the composition of the board or optimise its existing set-up so that the tripartite representation of each Member State keeps generating the added value it is said to produce. Optimisation could be achieved by further emphasising the role of the Bureau and organising meetings efficiently.	R1.15, R1.16, R1.17, R1.18
2.14(o)	Interview evidence reveals room for improvement regarding communication between the Governing Board members and focal point members of the same social partner group within a country. The agency should monitor and improve the information flow between Governing Board members and focal points in Member States, in order to reduce communication gaps where and if they exist. This could be achieved by, for instance, encouraging the organisation of periodic country-level debriefings and joint meetings, or by circulating Governing Board meetings minutes more widely, not just as a top-down input but with the possibility of further interaction and follow-up at national level.	R1.12, R1.18, R3.5, R3.6
	ETF	
2.15(t)	Even though the external ETF evaluation did not identify any <i>prima facie</i> reasons for concluding there are major issues with the ETF's cost-effectiveness, some steps could be taken to improve efficiency. Where the ETF's new approaches and efficiency actions deliver cost savings, it might prove useful to use such savings to increase the number of staff in operational roles (particularly at senior level) and/or to fill any gaps in internal expertise by using external experts with requisite country knowledge and contacts.	R1.18
2.16(t)	As the ETF moves away from its bottom-up approach based on the individual expertise of country managers, the fulfilment of its 'centre of expertise' role will increasingly be based on the provision of corporate approaches and tools that can be commonly applied to partner countries, as well as country projects, communities of practice and so on. In that context, it might be appropriate to allocate more resources to operational activities than is the case at present. Therefore, there is scope for the ETF to make greater use of digital communication tools and it could also use any resources freed up by efficiency gains to purchase more expertise located in partner countries.	R1.11, R1.12, R1.14
2.17(t)	It was also deemed important that the ETF monitors and publishes information on its relative cost-effectiveness, including on the costs associated with the Governing Board.	R1.18

Note: letter 'c' after the number of a recommendation means Cedefop-related recommendation; 'e' means Eurofound-related recommendation; 'o' means EU-OSHA-related recommendation; and 't' means ETF-related recommendation.

1.3 RELEVANCE

The criterion of relevance assesses whether the objectives of an EU intervention still match the current needs and problems. The answer to this evaluation question is based on detailed desk research, supplemented with evidence from surveys, case studies, the open public consultation and interviews.

1.3.1 To what extent do the original objectives still correspond to the needs within the EU?

We used top-down and bottom-up perspectives to assess whether Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF mandates and objectives corresponded to the needs within the EU. The objectives of the agencies are presented in the Founding Regulations and work programmes. From the top-down perspective we assessed how Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF corresponded to the EU policy needs set out in the strategic EU documents such as Europe 2020 Strategy⁸³, the Juncker's Political Guidelines⁸⁴. In addition, we analysed how the agencies responded to new emerging policy needs, such as migration crisis or rapid technological developments. From the bottom-up perspective we assessed to what extent stakeholders can draw on their needs to inform the agencies' activities.

Top-down assessment: agencies' relevance to EU policy needs

Assessment of the EU 2020 strategy and Juncker's political guidelines shows that a number of key policy issues felt within thematic research areas of the agencies. Several examples include: social and economic repercussions of the economic and financial crisis (e.g. structural unemployment, social exclusion and poverty), youth unemployment crisis, skills mismatch, lack of social dialogue, and insufficiently functioning labour markets.

Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF corresponded to similar policy priorities set in the Europe 2020 strategy and the Juncker's political guidelines. Cedefop, the ETF and to a lesser extent Eurofound work in the areas of labour markets, skills and VET, while EU-OSHA and Eurofound overlap to certain extent on the occupational health and safety (for a further discussion of complementarity vs. overlaps see Section 2.1). All agencies contributed to the implementation of "Sustainable growth" and "Inclusive growth" pillars of the Europe 2020 strategy and played a role in achieving the "Jobs, growth and investment" and "Internal market" priorities of the Juncker Commission Guidelines. Given that Cedefop, the ETF and to a smaller extent Eurofound work on topics relating to skills, the three agencies corresponded to the "Smart Growth" pillar the Europe 2020 strategy and more specifically to the "Education, training and life-long learning" area of action. However, differences between agencies do exist. While Cedefop, the ETF and Eurofound were relevant in achieving the priority on "New policy on migration", only Eurofound contributed to the implementation of the priority of "Justice and fundamental rights", and only the ETF (as the agency works with partner countries) contributed to the priority "A stronger global actor".

The table below shows that Cedefop, Eurofound and the ETF corresponded to eight priorities. EU-OSHA came next, with two areas of action from Europe 2020 strategy and two priorities from Juncker Political Guidelines; this shows that the thematic scope of EU-OSHA's work is narrower. All in all, from the top-down perspective the agencies' objectives were commensurate with the policy needs of the EU during 2011-2016.

⁸³ European Commission, Communication from the Commission. EUROPE 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, 3 March 2010, COM(2010) 2020.

⁸⁴ Jean-Claude Juncker (2014), *A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change*. Political Guidelines for the next European Commission. Retrieved on 17 January 2017 from https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/juncker-political-guidelines-speech_en_0.pdf

Table 19. 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 U.S.					
	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?).

During 2011-2016, new policy challenges emerged such as refugee crisis, changing working conditions due technological developments, new form of employment or demographic changes⁸⁵. Evidence from desk research shows that the agencies responded to changing policy needs by designing their multi-annual work programmes on the basis of key policy documents adopted by the EU. Eurofound, for example, focused more on development of industrial relations and sustainable work in its multiannual work programme for 2013-2016. In 2012, Cedefop revised its strategic priority to focus on policies for an attractive VET that promotes both excellence and social inclusion. EU-OSHA in its 2014-2020 strategic programme included analysis of OHS risks developments from new working patterns (e.g. prevalence of self-employment or 'green jobs'⁸⁶). The ETF drew on two human capital flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 strategy ('Youth on the move' and 'An agenda for new skills and jobs') during the evaluation timeframe to inform its work with partner countries. At the level of activities, Eurofound introduced a new research project on Europe's refugee crisis⁸⁷ into its 2016 annual work programme; Cedefop initiated a peer-learning activity on "How to make visible and value skills and competence of refugees" under the Dutch presidency of the Council; EU-OSHA, in 2013, published a foresight study on new and emerging risks associated with new technologies⁸⁸.

Stakeholders had similar opinions on the extent to which Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA showed flexibility and adaptability in the context of changing situations (see the figure below). Trends are similar across all three agencies. Around 70% of surveyed stakeholders agreed or strongly agreed that Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA showed flexibility and adaptability in the context of changing situations.

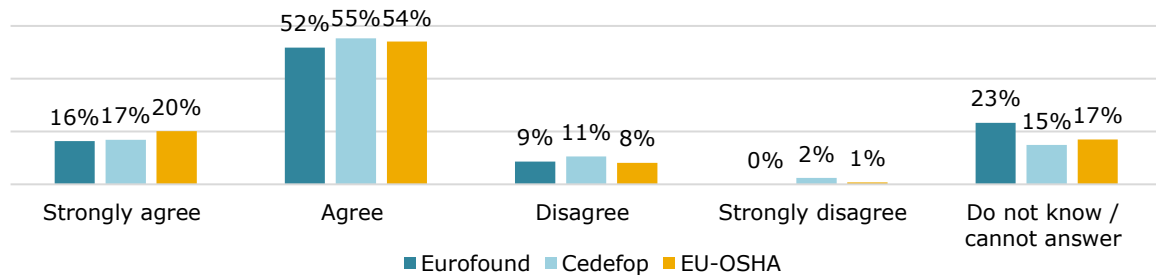
⁸⁵ European Commission (2017), White Paper on the Future of Europe, COM(2017)2025, Brussels.

⁸⁶ EU-OSHA (2013). EU-OSHA MULTI-ANNUAL STRATEGIC PROGRAMME (MSP) 2014-2020.

⁸⁷ The project "Europe's refugee crisis: Evidence on approaches to labour market integration of refugees".

⁸⁸ EU-OSHA (2013). Green jobs and occupational safety and health: Foresight on new and emerging risks associated with new technologies by 2020, Luxembourg.

Figure 22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below? The agency shows flexibility and adaptability in the context of changing situations



Source: Stakeholders surveys (Eurofound N=232; Cedefop N=208; EU-OSHA N=283).

Although the reference period for this evaluation is 2011-2016, it is also important to discuss the relevance of Eurofound in the context in the most recent policy developments. In 2017, Jean-Claude Juncker's state of the union address presented new priorities and commitments of the European Commission. Among them was the establishment of the **European Labour Authority (ELA)** that would work to ensure enforcement of all EU rules on labour mobility, strengthen cooperation between labour market authorities and facilitate cross-border movement. There is a need for a new EU structure that would help to tackle such challenges as fragmented cooperation arrangements between Member States in the areas of posting of workers, undeclared work, and social security coordination; lack of transparency for business regarding national administrative requirements for cross-border activities; or lack of transparency among mobile workers or job-seekers regarding their rights and obligations.

At the time of writing the Commission was still exploring different options with regard to the exact delineation of objectives and modalities of the ELA. It is possible to envision in broad terms how Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF might support and contribute to the work of the new EU body (see the chapter 4.5. *Implications of the European Labour Authority* for more detailed analysis). Cedefop, for example, has tools to support mobility (Europass, EU Skills Panorama and VET Mobility Scorecard) that could be relevant the ELA's work. Eurofound carry out research and monitoring on labour market and working conditions that might be of relevance to the new EU body. The ELA could take advantage of the whole research areas or certain research projects such as European Restructuring Monitor, European Jobs Monitor or EurWORK. EU-OSHA has OSH wiki that could be relevant to the ELA due to its descriptions of national OSH systems, but, in general, it is less clear how the agency could be relevant to ELA's work. No relevant activities could be identified for the ETF. Nevertheless, all the four agencies might be affected if a decision is taken to finance ELA, at least partly, through savings from the other EMPL agencies or indeed establish ELA in place of one of the agencies.

All in all, the establishment of the ELA provides a rationale for rethinking the mandates of Eurofound, Cedefop and, to a lesser extent, EU-OSHA. However, during the validation seminar Agencies' stakeholders supported the idea of the allocation of new functions to existing EU bodies, rather than creation of a new agency. According to them, numerous EU bodies, networks and instruments already carry out ELA-related work (e.g. European platform for tackling undeclared work, FreSsco network).

Bottom-up assessment: relevance to stakeholders

We assessed the agencies' relevance to the needs of three stakeholder groups: a) EU institutions and agencies; b) social partners represented in the Governing Board; and c) other stakeholders who have a direct interest in agencies.

The Founding Regulations of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA foresee EU bodies as a primary target group, while for the ETF it is the partner countries:

- Cedefop’s aim is to “assist the Commission in encouraging, at Community level, the promotion and development of vocational training and of in-service training”⁸⁹
- Eurofound “shall advise the Community institutions on foreseeable objectives and guidelines by forwarding in particular scientific information and technical data”⁹⁰
- EU-OSHA aim “to provide the Community bodies, the Member States, the social partners and those involved in the field with the technical, scientific and economic information of use in the field of safety and health at work”⁹¹
- The ETF aim “contribute to the development of the vocational training systems of the countries ... designated as eligible for economic aid by the Council in Regulation (EEC) No 3906/89 or in any subsequent relevant legal act. The Foundation shall in particular: seek to promote effective cooperation between the Community and the eligible countries in the field of vocational training, contribute to the coordination of assistance provided by the Community, its Member States and the third countries referred to in Article 16”⁹²

Representatives from a number of different DGs are members of agencies' Governing Boards and Bureaus (see the table below). These DGs are involved in the process of discussing and adopting the work programmes of the agencies. This involvement allows different DGs to communicate their needs so that they are reflected in the agencies’ activities. In addition, DG EMPL has to agree on the programmes separately from the Governing Boards.

ETF holds bi-annual structured meetings between with DG EMPL, DG DEVCO, DG NEAR and the EEAS. These meetings are a platform to capture the priorities of the EC services and help them shape the new ETF Work Programme as well as review the Annual Activity Reports. However, the 2016 ETF evaluation found that the agency lacks clarity how the priorities of different DGs should be balanced in the process of preparing the Work Programmes.

The European Parliament and the Council – are not members of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA Governing Boards, but are intended users of agencies’ outputs. The ETF Governing Board has three independent experts appointed by the European Parliament.

Table 20. Overview of EU institutions in the agencies’ Governing Boards

Governing Boards	Directorates-general
Eurofound	DG EMPL, DG SANTE and DG RTD
Cedefop	DG EMPL
EU-OSHA	DG EMPL and DG GROWTH
ETF	DG EMPL and DG NEAR

Source: Compiled by PPMI and Ecorys.

The agencies responded to the needs of EU institutions in the sense that their outputs were used for a variety of policy purposes. The Commission, for example, used Cedefop’s and Eurofound’s outputs to prepare Country reports for the European Semester. The former mostly provided analysed on latest developments in VET policy and Adult learning at Member States, while the later informed in the labour market reforms and working conditions developments. Cedefop and ETF also supported DG EAC in making expert contributions to the European Qualifications Framework and the inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and by participating in several ET 2020 Working Groups (WG) during the evaluation period, such as the WG

⁸⁹ Regulation (EEC) No 337/75 of the Council of 10 February 1975 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocation Training.

⁹⁰ Regulation (EEC) No 1365/75 of the Council of 26 May 1975 on the creation of a European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions.

⁹¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 2062/94 of 18 July 1994 establishing a European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. (Article 1).

⁹² Regulation (EEC) No 1360/90 of the Council of 7 May 1990 establishing a European Training Foundation.

on Adult Learning (2011-2016), the WG on Early School Leaving (2011-2013) and the WG on Schools (2014-2016). The ETF also provided to Commission services specific country knowledge (e.g. DG EAC involved the ETF in thematic meetings with ministries in partner countries). Eurofound, at the request from DG EMPL, conducted Representativeness Studies to identify social partners that are capable and representative to engage in social dialogue at the EU level. EU-OSHA took part in Commission's comprehensive evaluation of the EU OSH legislation (the Framework Directive⁹³ and 23 related Directives). Nevertheless, there is scope for improvement in planning and delivery of outputs in relation to the relevant EU policy initiatives. According to DG EMPL interviewees, in some cases they approached DG EMPL expert networks and other competency centres (rather than the agencies) when there was a need for highly specialised inputs in a short time frame.

Box 5. Relevance of Eurofound outputs to EU institutions (evidence from case studies)

Eurofound: Contribution to policy discussions and decisions in relation establishing the Youth Guarantee

The Eurofound's research on NEETs was timely in the sense that the youth unemployment problem was very prominent in Europe at that time. Therefore, when Eurofound's study on NEETs was published, it immediately attracted the attention of the Commission, the European Parliament (EP), as well as Council Presidencies (held by Denmark, Cyprus and Ireland during that period). The research on NEETs was widely relevant and discussed even outside the context of EU policies. Eurofound's project on the topic was the first study on EU level, although there were many national level studies on NEETs in the UK⁹⁴, Scandinavia and several other countries.

Eurofound: Supporting the Commission's work on the European Semester

In 2016 Eurofound completed a study on 'The Role of Social Partners in the National Reform Programmes and in the European Semester'⁹⁵, which assessed the social partners' involvement in different stages of European Semester (both EU and national level) and examined the role played by the Commission and the national governments in communicating CSRs to social partners⁹⁶. The study included recommendations on how involvement of social partners could be further enhanced. An update of the study, by the request of the Commission and EMCO, was issued in February 2017⁹⁷. Until the study was published, there were no reliable and comparable data on social partner involvement in European Governance at both EU and national level. According to the same DG EMPL officials, the report helped to put a topic of involvement of social partners in the political agenda of the EPSCO Council and its committees.

On a more general level, monitoring data shows that the number of EU policy documents quoting agencies increased during the evaluation period. In 2011, Eurofound was quoted in 193 EU policy documents (e.g. Country Reports of the European Semester, communications and staff working documents of the Commission, thematic overviews of EMCO and the SPC) whereas in 2016, the number grew to 315 documents⁹⁸. Although to a lesser extent, the number of EU policy documents quoting Cedefop also increased from 105 in 2011 to 167 in 2016⁹⁹. The main users of the Eurofound and Cedefop outputs are: the European Commission, the social partners, the European Parliament, and the European Council. EU-OSHA collects no similar monitoring data.

Social partners take part in the Governing Boards of the tripartite agencies: Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. As the result, their views and positions are reflected in the work programmes as well as activities of these agencies. Eurofound's and Cedefop's Governing Boards meet once a year while EU-OSHA's and ETF's – twice a year. Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA also have smaller tripartite management

⁹³ Council Directive of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work (89/391/EEC)

⁹⁴ For example, Bynner, J., & Parsons, S. (2002). Social exclusion and the transition from school to work: The case of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). *Journal of vocational behavior*, 60(2), 289-309.

⁹⁵ Eurofound (2014) *Annual Work Programme 2014*, Dublin.

⁹⁶ Eurofound (2016), *Role of the social partners in the European Semester*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg

⁹⁷ Eurofound (2017), *Involvement of the social partners in the European Semester: 2016 update*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

⁹⁸ Eurofound (2017), *EU impact Report 2016*

⁹⁹ Cedefop PMS Data.

bodies – Bureaus, which meet more frequently and support the activities of the Governing Boards. In addition, the agencies apply several approaches to take into account the needs of Governing Board members. Eurofound, for example, carried out consultations over several rounds of email exchanges. In all agencies the role of coordinators of the Member States, employers' and employees' groups was important in gathering and aggregating the opinions of stakeholders. Neither desk research nor surveys or interviews signalled that any of the stakeholders on the Governing Boards of different agencies felt disregarded or outvoted. Nevertheless, during interviews several representatives of the social partners signalled that during the last several years they see a growing influence of the Commission on agencies' agendas (in particular, Cedefop and Eurofound) and expressed a concern that the balance might be tilting too much. Indeed, evidence shows that in the context of limited resources the agencies aimed to focus even more on their mission as defined in the Founding Regulations, which is serving the EU bodies.

Agencies to a different extent respond to the urgent/ changing needs of their stakeholders. Eurofound has the Customised Report Service that produces customised and tailored reports (including additional data or analysis which is relevant only to a specific stakeholder), and the Stakeholder Enquiry Service that allows the stakeholders to make *ad hoc* requests for research projects. For example, at the request of chemical social partners from Germany, Eurofound carried out study on information and consultation procedures at local and European level¹⁰⁰.

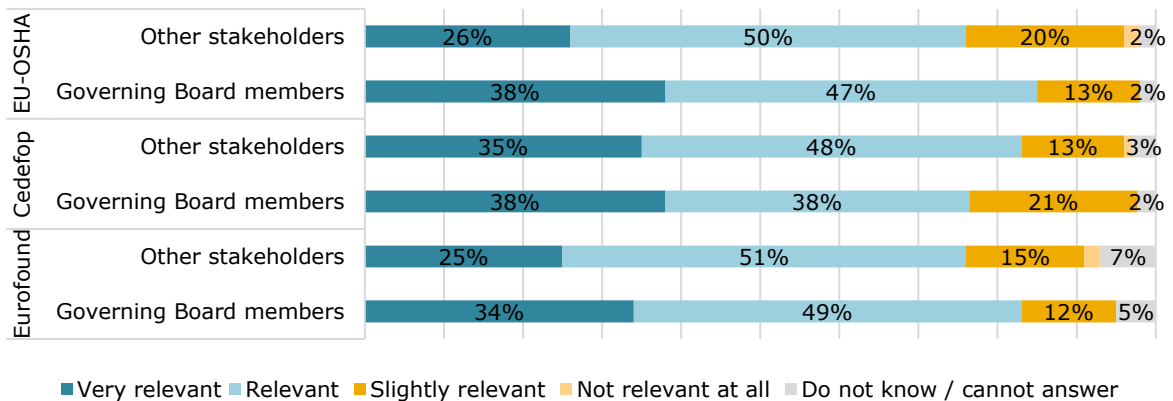
Cedefop and EU-OSHA do not have such specific services to respond to urgent needs of stakeholders. Cedefop's reference service 'Ask a VET expert' was discontinued in 2014, as part of the downsizing of its library service. However, to better accommodate activities not foreseen in the work programmes, Cedefop adopted the practice of so-called 'negative priorities'¹⁰¹. This implied planning which activities or outputs could be postponed or cancelled to free up resources necessary for implementation of unforeseen *ad hoc* requests from stakeholders (mainly the Commission). While such requests implied additional workload for Cedefop, they also significantly contributed to the agency's relevance. The ETF also applies a similar approach – any *ad hoc* request from the Commission, Delegations or partner countries, that were not foreseen before the adoption of the Work Programme by the Governing Board, are agreed with the Commission with a re-prioritisation of existing activities.

Data from surveys shows that the majority of Governing Board members of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA agreed that the agencies' outputs were relevant or very relevant to their work (see Figure 23).

¹⁰⁰ Eurofound (2015), Linking information and consultation procedures at local and European level, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

¹⁰¹ Whereas it could be argued that a term such as 'lower priority activities/outputs' would reflect the nature of this programming practice better, this was the term used by the majority of interviewees.

Figure 23. How relevant, if at all, were an agency's overall activities and outputs to your work in the period 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).

Other stakeholders who have a direct interest in the agencies' research form a heterogeneous group and consists of national parliaments, international organisations, research institutes, universities, think-tanks and NGOs. These stakeholders are not involved in the development of agencies' work programmes; however, Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA collect feedback from this stakeholder group on relevance of their outputs. Eurofound, for example, carries out "User Satisfaction Surveys" on an annual basis, EU-OSHA conducted stakeholder surveys in 2014 and 2016, while Cedefop collects feedback from stakeholder after various events/ peer learning activities. Evidence from desk research shows that outputs of these three agencies were visible in the academic world. During the evaluation period, the average number of references to Eurofound's outputs in academic journals exceeded 500. For Cedefop, this number was a bit lower and reached around 460 citations, while EU-OSHA's average number of references increased from around 150 in 2011 to 300 in 2015. The ETF does not collect similar data on references in academic journals.

Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF to a different degree engage in activities and policy debates at the Member States level. Cedefop and Eurofound, for example, work more closely with Member States holding the Council presidency. The agencies provided support by preparing and presenting reports for various policy meetings and by participating at international conferences. Eurofound, for instance, took part in the conference on "Trade Union Role in Promotion of Sustainable Growth and Job Creation"¹⁰². Cedefop supported several Member States by carrying out thematic country reviews on apprenticeships. During the period 2011-2016, such reviews were completed in Lithuania and Malta and still ongoing in Greece, Italy and Slovenia. In Malta, the review was used as a basis for new legislation that reformed its apprenticeship system. The OECD also provides similar support for countries by carrying out specific policy reviews in such fields as labour market and social policies¹⁰³, VET and adult learning¹⁰⁴, innovation policy¹⁰⁵. The ETF, through the Torino process, supports partner countries in reviewing the status and progress of their vocational education and training. Eurofound could also consider providing similar thematic country reviews in its thematic research fields, if a need arises in certain Member States. EU-OSHA is different 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. The agency provided expertise, produced content and

¹⁰² Eurofound (2016), Consolidated annual activity report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2015, Dublin.

¹⁰³ http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-reviews-of-labour-market-and-social-policies_20743408

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/countrystudies.htm>

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/sti/inno/oecdreviewsofinnovationpolicy.htm>

communicated to the national level through focal points. However, some non-English speaking groups and national level stakeholders (as revealed in the open answers to the OPC and stakeholder surveys) would like to have more outputs translated as limited number of translations somewhat decreased the usability of agencies' expertise (this, however, has cost implications and therefore in the recommendations chapter we address this issue by suggesting a demand-driven approach and cost-sharing).

Box 6. Cedefop contribution to national level policy developments (evidence from case studies)

Cedefop: Case study on apprenticeship reviews

Apprenticeship review project of the agency helped to improve the apprenticeship systems in Malta and Lithuania, particularly regarding reforms of the legal environment. As countries themselves approached Cedefop expressing their willingness to participate in the thematic review, this created a facilitating condition for cooperation. The case study found that in Lithuania the stakeholders included the apprenticeship review results into the policy dialogue during the discussions on the new Labour Code and the ongoing discussions on a new law on vocational education, which will also include provisions about apprenticeships. Moreover, the case study found that in Lithuania not only the results of the review itself helped to inform the policy dialogue, but also the peer learning activities and exchange of good practices among the countries within the apprenticeship review project. The results of the apprenticeship system review in Malta were also included into the policy dialogue, notably within a broader initiative to review the apprenticeship system in the country. Recommendations from the review inspired changes at system and provider level.

Cedefop: Case study on common transparency tools (European Qualifications Framework)

The case study on common transparency tools found that Cedefop's input was particularly valuable to national stakeholders in the context of development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and their referencing with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The national policy makers developing the NQFs relied heavily on Cedefop's technical and conceptual understanding. Cedefop, as expertise centre on qualifications frameworks, was also providing written comments on the national referencing reports prior to their approval. Finally, by maintaining an inventory of NQFs, Cedefop also provided valuable comparative information to policy makers involved in their development. The development of NQFs has not only been a valuable national level achievement by itself, but also has influenced wider policy discussions about qualification systems and heavier and more sustainable involvement of labour market stakeholders in such discussions.

1.3.2 How relevant is the agency to EU citizens?

We assessed agencies' relevance to EU citizens in four ways. Firstly, we analysed to what extent agencies target the general public as a target group. Secondly, we examined, the extent to which citizens have been exposed to agencies' outputs through their websites and other relevant channels. Thirdly, agencies' outputs are also indirectly relevant to the extent it contributes to policy initiatives that are important to the citizens. Finally, based on the open public consultation we assessed the perception of the wider public on whether Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA had a role to play in addressing the most pressing needs in Europe.

The Founding Regulations of all four agencies do not define the general public as a primary target group. Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF, first and foremost, are specialised research institutes and European knowledge providers. Therefore, Eurofound and the ETF implements no activities and Cedefop has only one activity targeted at the general public – Europass. From 2013 to 2016, on average 14.9 million people created CVs on the Europass website every year¹⁰⁶. EU-OSHA is different in this sense, as it develops practical knowledge and tools, and runs communication campaigns to raise awareness about OSH that to some extent also involve workers/ the general public. For example, the ongoing campaign on "Healthy Workplaces for All Ages"¹⁰⁷ includes events in Member States and EU level. Around 240 events have been held at the moment of writing this report, with over 15,000 participants¹⁰⁸. However, the changing nature of work (e.g. prevalence of self-

¹⁰⁶ Cedefop annual activity reports from 2013 to 2015, and the 2016 Annual report of Performance Measurement System.

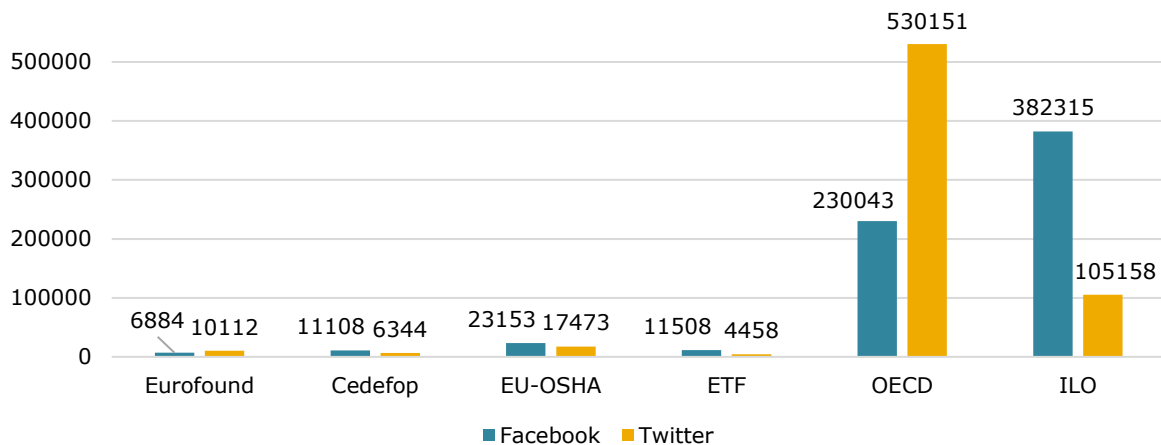
¹⁰⁷ [https://healthy-workplaces.eu/en/events?f\[0\]=field_start_date%253Avalue%3A2017](https://healthy-workplaces.eu/en/events?f[0]=field_start_date%253Avalue%3A2017)

¹⁰⁸ Data provided by EU-OSHA on 9.10.2017. See also: <https://healthy-workplaces.eu/en/events>

employment) is a trend that potentially suggest revisiting the relevance of EU-OSHA to EU citizens. The citizens, which are not well represented by social partner organisations, have a limited voice in EU-OSHA’s governance (e.g. non-unionised workers, minorities that suffer from OSH problems related to discrimination at work, age groups or people with disabilities).

While there is no comprehensive statistical evidence, some intermittent data shows that all four agencies are not widely known for the EU citizens. All four agencies have accounts in Facebook and Twitter but possess moderate numbers of followers. Eurofound, Cedefop and ETF, for example, have a similar number of followers across both social networks (around 16,000-17,500 followers). EU-OSHA has a higher number of followers (over 40,000 followers across both social networks); however, it is also behind major international research organisations such as the OECD or ILO (see Figure 24). Notably, the comparison with the two international organisations must be treated with caution, as these are significantly larger organisations than the four agencies, with much larger budgets.

Figure 24. Number of followers in social networks



Note: Data collected by PPMI and Ecorys, all numbers as of 15 January 2018.

Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF publish most of outputs and data on their websites. They are the main depositories through which the general public can access agencies’ research results. The accessibility of websites in different languages vary between the agencies. The EU-OSHA’s website is almost fully translated to all EU28 languages. Notably, EU-OSHA together with CdT¹⁰⁹ and EUIPO¹¹⁰ developed a tool that enables a more efficient management of multilingual websites and therefore was awarded with 2017 EU Ombudsman award for excellence in public administration. The Eurofound’s website has entry/ landing pages and the executive summaries of the key reports available in all EU languages. The Cedefop’s website has several key pages translated to all EU official languages, while ETF’s website only has one page (“About the ETF”) translated in most of the official EU languages There are also significant differences in terms of publications downloaded from agencies websites. In Eurofound case, for example, 155,943 publications were downloaded in 2016 (a 31% increase from 2015). EU-OSHA’s publications were downloaded 82,558 times in 2016 (a 64% increase from 2015). The ETF’s publications were downloaded 262,976 times in 2015 (a nearly 12% increase from 2014). Cedefop clearly stands out from the other two agencies as its publications from 2012 to 2015 were downloaded more than 600,000 times every year.

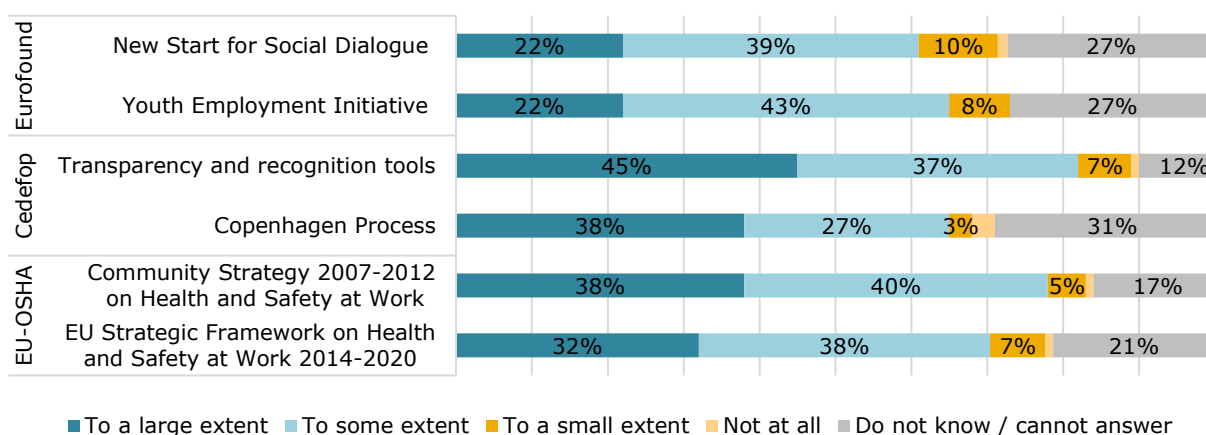
Evidence from desk research, interviews and case studies shows that Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA contributed as knowledge providers to EU level policy initiatives

¹⁰⁹ Translation Centre For the Bodies of the European Union

¹¹⁰ European Union Intellectual Property Office

that are significant to the citizens. The outputs of the agencies are specifically designed to feed into EU policy making. Eurofound, for example, was an important source of information in developing the “Youth Employment Initiative” and “New Start for Working Parents”. Cedefop (and to a lesser extent the ETF) played a part in developing transparency and recognition tools in VET, contributed to the Copenhagen process and the EU’s response to the youth unemployment crisis (in light of the relevance of VET in labour market integration and social inclusion) EU-OSHA supported the implementation of the “Community Strategy 2007-2012 on Health and Safety at Work” and contributed to the development of the “EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020”. Data from the stakeholders’ surveys corroborate these findings as the majority of stakeholders agreed that the agencies contributed to the above-mentioned initiatives to a large or to some extent (see the figure below).

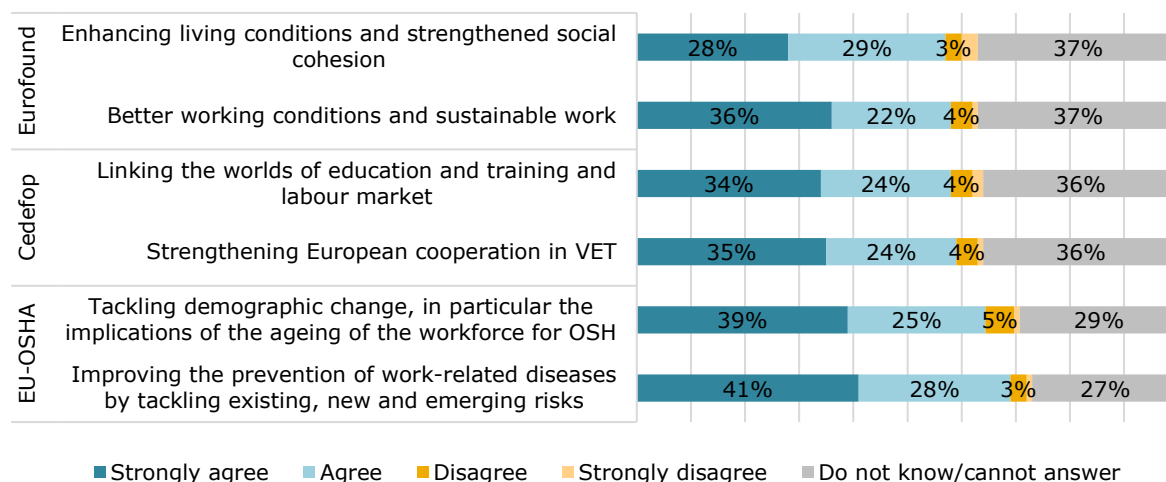
Figure 25. In your view, to what extent (if at all) has an agency contributed to the following EU policy developments during the period 2011-2016?



Source: Stakeholders surveys (Eurofound N=230; Cedefop N=200; EU-OSHA N=279).

Finally, we draw on the open public consultation to understand the perception of the wider public on the roles of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA in addressing the most pressing public needs in Europe. Generally, OPC respondents agreed that the agencies had a role to play in addressing the key policy needs in their areas of activity (Figure 26). Roughly half of participants agreed that Eurofound had a role to play in addressing such needs as: better working conditions and sustainable work and enhancing living conditions and strengthened social cohesion. In the case of Cedefop, 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 labour market. About two third of respondents agree that EU-OSHA has a role to play in addressing demographic change and in preventing diseases by tackling new and emerging occupational risks.

Figure 26. Do you agree that an agency has a role to play in addressing the following needs in Europe?



Source: OPC (Eurofound N=143; Cedefop N=145; EU-OSHA N=151).

1.3.3 Agency-specific recommendations/ points for improvement of relevance

Table 21. Agency-specific recommendations/ points for improvement of relevance

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
Cedefop		
3.1(c)	In 2017, Jean-Claude Juncker’s state of the union address announced the establishment of a European Labour Authority (ELA), which would work to ensure the enforcement of all EU rules on labour mobility, strengthen cooperation between labour market authorities, and facilitate cross-border movement. It is possible to envision in broad terms how Cedefop might support and contribute to the work of this new EU body. Cedefop carries out research and monitoring on VET and, more generally, labour market challenges and needs, which could be of potential relevance to ELA’s work. This could only be achieved following a careful rethink of the mandates of all DG EMPL agencies.	R2.2, R2.3, R2.4
3.2(c)	Cedefop’s activities do not directly target EU citizens (with the exception of Europass), making the agency only indirectly relevant to the general public. There were several ways in which Cedefop was relevant to EU citizens during the evaluation period. Whereas the revised Europass could contribute significantly to increasing the relevance of the agency to citizens, the activities being considered are ambitious and it will be important to dedicate sufficient human and financial resources to their implementation. Moreover, the agency should continue communication efforts aimed at increasing the visibility of the agency to citizens. These include social media presence, further efforts to increase the user-friendliness of the agency’s website, as well as a translation strategy targeted at the most relevant outputs for each country, and involving national actors where possible.	R1.12, R1.13, R1.14
Eurofound		
3.3(e)	The new European Labour Authority will be involved in addressing cross-border movement issues, and may acquire or coordinate relevant research areas or tools from other agencies, including Eurofound. Potentially ELA could take advantage of whole areas of research by Eurofound (the labour market, working conditions) or certain research projects such as European Restructuring Monitor, European Jobs Monitor and EurWORK. Depending on the remit and functions of the new agency, an amendment of Eurofound’s mandate and activities will have to be considered.	R2.2, R2.3, R2.4
3.4(e)	There is scope for further discussion concerning the planning and delivery of Eurofound’s outputs in relation to the relevant EU policy initiatives and processes. The evaluation revealed some discrepancy between what is expected from the agencies by the Commission, Member States and social partners, and what they can offer, given early planning and resource	R3.3, R3.4

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
	<p>limitations. During the interviews, several representatives of the social partners signalled that over the last few years they have seen a growing influence of the Commission on agencies' agendas (in particular, Cedefop and Eurofound), and expressed a concern that the balance might be tilting too much. Indeed, evidence shows that in the context of limited resources, the agencies aimed to focus even more on their mission as defined in the Founding Regulations, which is serving the EU bodies. Therefore, Eurofound, together with the Commission and other stakeholders, should discuss what can feasibly be expected from the agency, including measures aimed to further improve the timing and relevance of Eurofound's inputs.</p>	
3.5(e)	<p>In line with its mandate and strategic objectives, Eurofound engaged in national-level communication only if it concerned an issue of EU relevance to which the agency could offer its expertise. However, Eurofound could potentially improve its relevance to national-level stakeholders by considering examples from other agencies and international organisations. Cedefop, for example, carries out thematic country reviews that include close cooperation with national-level stakeholders, and which result in the provision of evidence-based, tailored recommendations. The OECD supports countries by carrying out specific policy reviews in fields such as the labour market and social policies, VET and adult learning, and innovation policy. There is a need among Member States for specialised expert support to tackle socioeconomic challenges such as demographic changes, migration, changing work conditions, youth unemployment, skills mismatches, and others. Eurofound, together with the Commission and other stakeholders, should consider options for providing country-specific support to Member States. The support could be aligned with the needs of EU policy making as well as national reforms, to achieve maximum policy impact. Importantly, such recommendation can only be implemented on the basis of a systematic rethinking of the agency's mission, mandate and resources.</p>	R3.5, R3.6, R3.7, R3.8
	EU-OSHA	
3.6(o)	<p>The changing nature of work (e.g. the prevalence of self-employment) could influence the relevance of EU-OSHA to EU citizens. In its strategic planning documents, EU-OSHA has increasingly emphasised the need to address the risks posed by new working patterns. Nevertheless, citizens who are not well represented by social partner organisations do not have a say in the work of the agency (e.g. non-unionised workers, but also minorities that suffer from OSH problems relating to discrimination at work, age groups or people with disabilities). The agency could further explore the needs of these specific groups by carrying out research on the ways in which these groups are affected by OSH, their coping-mechanisms, opportunities and threats, and by feeding these insights into its activities. Cooperation with EU-level stakeholders representing these specific groups should be strengthened (see the suggestions concerning potential changes to the agencies' governance in Chapter 5).</p>	R1.17, R3.7, R3.8
	ETF	
3.7(t)	<p>There are bi-annual structured meetings between the ETF and EC services. This meeting is chaired by DG EMPL and includes among others DG DEVCO, DG NEAR and the EEAS. These meetings are a platform to capture the priorities of the EC services and help shape the new ETF Work Programme as well as review the Annual Activity Reports. Further steps should be taken to improve communication and coordination between the ETF and the EC so that the ETF is clearer as to how the priorities of different DGs are to be balanced through a stronger focus on strategic issues in the process of preparing Work Programmes, and through better articulation by the ETF of its objectives at the strategic and detailed partner country levels. There should also be a more systematic basis to the 'triangular' relationship between the ETF, the EC and EU Delegations in the partner countries, including a link to the ETF being made from EU Delegations' websites.</p>	R3.3, R3.4

Note: letter 'c' after the number of a recommendation means Cedefop-related recommendation; 'e' means Eurofound-related recommendation; 'o' means EU-OSHA-related recommendation; and 't' means ETF-related recommendation.

1.4 EU ADDED VALUE

We define the criterion of EU added value as the extent to which an agency has been more effective and efficient in achieving its results and impacts, compared to other existing/ possible national level and EU level arrangements. According to the Better Regulation Guidelines, the concept of value added points out to changes that can reasonably be thought to have occurred as a result of the intervention analysed, rather than because of any other factors. In line with the Better Regulation Guidelines, this section brings together the relevant findings of the other evaluation criteria and draws partly on the evidence presented in previous chapters. This includes evidence from the stakeholders' surveys, interviews, open public consultation, previous evaluations and other desk research sources.

1.4.1 What is the EU added value of the agency, in particular as regards process and role effects?

To determine the EU added value provided by the agencies, we assessed two key elements. First, we analyse the extent to which the contributions of Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF are unique, when compared to those of other agencies and organisations that work to produce policy-relevant research. Second, we explore to what extent the agencies' activities could be substituted by other EU, international or national organisations. Note that this section partly overlaps with cross-cutting evaluation question 2 ("To what extent are the mandates and activities of the agencies coherent among themselves and with the ones of other bodies that have similar objectives?").

How unique are the contributions of the agencies?

Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF carry out several types of activities and produce various outputs:

- Research – surveys, comparative studies, national policy reports, thematic studies
- Monitoring – datasets and monitoring reports, management of expert/ stakeholder networks
- Communication – events, newsletters, social media activities, awareness raising campaigns
- Support/ capacity building activities – peer learning seminars, development of methodologies and tools, inputs to EU/national policy developments

The evidence suggests that a set of common added value features can be identified for Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. Although the ETF is different from other agencies due to its work with partner countries and focus on capacity building activities, certain added value features are also shared by the ETF:

Specific knowledge, quality of data and European coverage. A large portion of the studies and reports produced by Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF are not unique in the sense that they contribute to the scientific debate in parallel with numerous other research outputs produced by universities, think tanks and other research institutions. Eurofound's most unique outputs are its pan-European surveys (i.e. the European Working Conditions Survey [EWCS]; European Company Survey [ECS]; and European Quality of Life Survey [EQLS]). These surveys are repeated regularly, provide comparable data across the EU28, and are accessible to researchers for non-commercial purposes. The surveys also form a large part of Eurofound's thematic work, and result in research reports, policy papers and presentations. No other organisation produces surveys that contains similar thematic coverage, longitudinal data, and geographical scope.

In terms of knowledge production, the most unique output of EU-OSHA is the pan-European survey of enterprises on new and emerging risks in OHS (ESENER). Launched in 2009, this survey collects data on the way in which European workplaces

manage safety and health risks; psychosocial risks at work (such as bullying and harassment); drivers of and barriers to OSH management; and workers participation in health and safety practices. Certain Member States carry out surveys at national level, but no other organisation produces similar surveys on OHS at the pan-European level. Although most of OSHwiki content is not unique, articles on OSH management/organisation and on specific OSH legislation/ strategies applied in EU and Member States also create added value as comparable articles can be hardly find in any other similar tools (e.g. ILO's Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety or the OSH Wikipedia section).

One of the most unique Cedefop's outputs are skills forecasting reports that provide detailed data on skills needs at both national and EU level. The agency developed a unique methodology for building EU-wide forecasting models and analysing EU and national-level data. In ETF case, the outputs of the Torino process create the highest added value as they provide high quality VET related information and expertise tailored to partner countries specificities and needs. Notably, all four agencies are in a good position to cooperate and produce joint outputs. Since different agencies can contribute to joint publication with their highly specific knowledge, the cooperation often results in rather unique cross-thematic outputs. For example, Eurofound and EU-OSHA published a joint report on 'Psychosocial risks in Europe: Prevalence and strategies for prevention' in 2014.

Box 7. Examples of EU-OSHA and Eurofound added value features (evidence from case studies)

EU-OSHA: OiRA, an online tool to support risk assessment

Through projects such as OiRA, practical tools for managing OSH at the workplace are shared across Europe in a way that would not happen without EU-OSHA. EU added value appears to be at the core of the the OiRA design since social partners from one country do not have to invent their own online tool but instead build further on tools already developed in other countries. However, each tool has to be adapted to the national context, translated, and also adapted to the specific kinds of risk in each sector and to each specific company. This is an investment for an employer – especially a small entrepreneur. Barriers to use are therefore still high.

EU-OSHA: OSHwiki, a collaborative tool to pool and share knowledge

Similar tools do exist as OSHwiki. For example, ILO has an Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety, a tool for academia, journalists and the general public. The tool appears much more structured than OSHwiki and is developed by a central editorial team with the support of a university institute. At the same time, the content is much less specific in terms of EU and national legislation and strategies and does not include the original EU-OSHA knowledge output as OSHwiki does. Another example of similar source is the OSH Wikipedia section. Although, the quality and relevance of OSHwiki materials is overall good and higher than Wikipedia. The added value of (part of OSHwiki contents with respect to other sources is not obvious. The overlaps analysis conducted in the feasibility study¹¹¹ suggest that the articles on OSH management and organisation and those which describe EU and MS specific legislation and strategies are those that most represent the unique added value of the tool.

Eurofound: Contribution to policy discussions and decisions in relation establishing the Youth Guarantee

Eurofound provided timely knowledge on an issue which had not been studied on EU level before. The main added value of Eurofound's work on NEETs was the following:

- this was the first comparative report on NEETs with EU-wide coverage
- the agency revealed the problems that were not that clearly visible in the statistics
- the agency provided a structured and systemised policy overview, which is not available from other sources
- although from methodological point of view estimations of costs (as the cost of NEETs in this case) are always not very precise, Eurofound's findings showed the actual scale of these costs

Eurofound: contribution to policy discussions and decisions in relation to improving work-life balance, in particular the "New Start for Working Parents" initiative

The Commission could not collect data from each Member State by its own and, if Eurofound did not exist,

¹¹¹ Ikei et al. (2016), Feasibility study of the future of the OSHwiki. Final Report, EU-OSHA, December 2016.

there would be no national-level information to support some of the aspects included in the proposal for the "New Start for Working Parents" initiative. Interviewees from DG EMPL and the EP concluded that the initiative would potentially be somewhat different, if Eurofound did not exist. Unique aspects of Eurofound's work in the context of "New Start for Working Parents" initiative were the following:

- comparable data across all 28 EU Member States
- trusted, reliable data, credible in the eyes of both employers and employees' organisations
- information collected by network of correspondents and from companies would not be available from any other sources and enables relevant information to be updated very quickly
- Eurofound has in-house expertise, relevant to this initiative, which allowed Eurofound to examine the issue from numerous different angles (e.g. working conditions, leave arrangements, care provision for children and elderly)

Focus on EU policy needs. The outputs of Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and (to a lesser extent) the ETF are specifically designed to feed into EU policy making. The agencies' work programmes are approved by their Governing Boards on the basis of their relevance to the EU policy agenda (mostly driven by the Commission, as it has a right of initiative), among other considerations. Few other research institutions possess such mandates and links to policy making. In this sense, the agencies' contributions are unique when compared to those of most universities or think-tanks, which focus primarily on fundamental research, prioritise scientific publications and are more distant from the policy processes.

Tripartite representation. Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA are tripartite agencies, which means that their work programmes and research projects reflect the needs of Governments, employers and employees (in addition to the European Commission) and that the Governance of the agencies is exercised by these parties. This contributes to their acceptance among the social partners and national Governments. This contrasts with most think tanks, which may be policy-oriented but often follow a more ideological agenda. Few other EU and international organisations have similar governance settings that would involve representatives from all three social partners groups: government, employers and employees. One example would be the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT) which has tripartite structure and aims to assist the Commission in implementing a EU vocational training policy. However, the ACVT only provides advice and support for the Commission, while Cedefop, first and foremost, is a research organisation.

Pan-European networks. EU-OSHA's network of national focal points distinguishes it from other decentralised agencies and actors in this field. Each Member State has a national focal point, which is formed on a tripartite basis. The network facilitates the exchange of information and facilitates horizontal cooperation between policy makers and social partners in different Member States. The network also provides a two-way communication channel between the Commission and Member States. On the other hand, the network of focal points is usually not embedded in the policy frameworks, which reduces its impact; and it duplicates existing national structures in certain Member States.

Eurofound and Cedefop have EU-wide networks of experts. The Network of Correspondents, managed by Eurofound, provides inputs on developments in the labour market, employment policies, industrial relations and other social policy topics. Such thematic collection (especially industrial relations) is not covered by any other network. In addition, there are limited possibilities of thematic integration of the NEC with other DG EMPL expert networks as potential synergies could be achieved on rather narrow thematic aspects¹¹². Cedefop maintains its own 'ReferNet' network of national institutions, which provides information on national VET systems and VET policy developments. However, the modes of operation employed by these networks are not unique and are comparable to those of other networks under the remit of DG EMPL, such as the European Social Policy Network, and the Network of independent

¹¹² Eurofound (2016), Interim Evaluation of the Network of Eurofound's Correspondents (NEC) 2014-2016, Interim evaluation 2016. Final report. Dublin, 2016.

experts in the fields of free movement of workers and social security coordination in the European Union (FreSsco). The ETF manages no networks comparable to that of other three agencies.

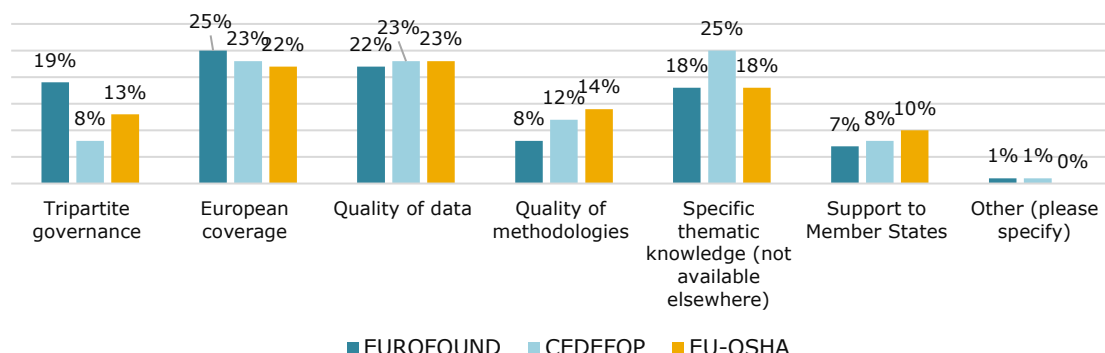
Support for Member States/ partner countries. Eurofound provides this added value feature to a limited extent. In line with its mandate and strategic objectives, national level engagement took place only if it concerned an issue of EU relevance to which Eurofound could offer its expertise¹¹³; some support was offered through the agency's Stakeholder Enquiry Service (e.g. study on linking information and consultation procedures at the request of German social partners). Cedefop has developed a methodology for thematic reviews that includes close cooperation with national-level stakeholders to provide evidence-based, tailored recommendations. During the evaluation period, the agency completed thematic country reviews on apprenticeships in Lithuania and Malta, and launched new reviews in Greece, Italy and Slovenia. In Malta the review process revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the country's apprenticeship system, identified possible actions and facilitated stakeholder dialogue and awareness. This review was used as the basis for new legislation and helped Malta to reform its apprenticeship system. Cedefop also organised workshops for developing national skills forecasting methodologies in Malta and Iceland and supported national referencing processes of the European Qualifications Frameworks. In Member States with less developed OHS systems, EU-OSHA is important source of information on OHS topics. It is also a key organiser of OHS awareness campaigns, as these countries do not possess capacity of their own for detailed analysis, and in general do not view OHS issues as a policy priority.

EU-OSHA's contribution to the policy process has to be seen more as part of policy implementation than as feeding into policymaking. In this sense, the practical tools and the communication campaigns tend to be more relevant than the analytical outputs as they are more aimed at putting OSH considerations in practice. The ETF through the Torino process supports partner countries in reviewing their status and progress of vocational education and training and developing necessary policy responses. ETF's capacity to foster the capitalisation and exchange of experiences and the ETF relations and positioning towards key actors allow for the adoption of unique participatory approaches in partner countries, supporting the ownership and involvement of partner countries by a variety of stakeholders and helping the countries in identifying their own priorities.

We also examined the perceptions of key stakeholders of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA with regard to the added value provided by the agencies. The surveys show that pan-European coverage, and the quality of the data employed, were the most valuable characteristics (Figure 27).

¹¹³ Eurofound Communication strategy (updated June 2013); retrieved from https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1338en.pdf

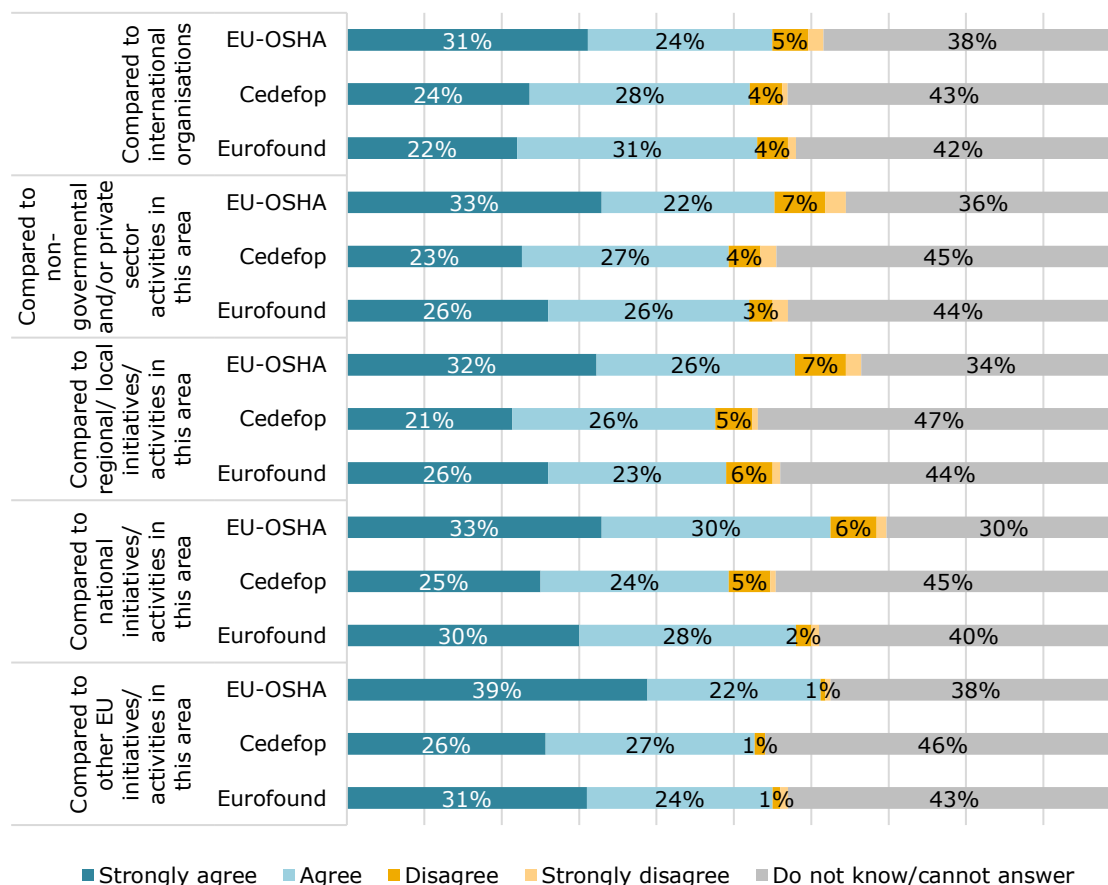
Figure 27. Which characteristics of agencies' work in the period 2011-2016 do you think were the most valuable?



Source: Stakeholders surveys (Eurofound N=256; Cedefop N=249; EU-OSHA N=318). Note: multiple answer options were allowed.

During the open public consultation, we gathered data on general public perceptions on certain aspects of added value of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. We asked the OPC participants to provide their opinion whether the agencies provide added value compared to other existing initiatives/ instruments/ programmes. In response, half of the OPC respondents agreed that Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA provide added value in comparison with other existing initiatives, instrument and programmes, especially other EU initiatives in this area; initiatives by national agencies and research institutions; regional and local initiatives; initiatives from private sector.

Figure 28. Do you agree that the activities of an agency provide added value compared to other existing initiatives/instruments/programmes?



Source: OPC (Eurofound N=143; Cedefop N=146; EU-OSHA N=151).

To what extent the agency's activities could be substituted by other agencies or institutions

In this subsection we explore the extent to which each element of the agencies' added value could be substituted by international research organisations, EU bodies that possess relevant thematic expertise, and universities, think tanks and other research institutions at national level. We present a summary of our findings in the table below, followed by an explanation.

Table 22. Summary overview of the agencies added value in comparison to other agencies and institutions

Cross-agency added value features	International organisations: ILO and OECD	Eurostat	EU institutions and agencies	Universities, institutes, think tanks
1) Specific thematic knowledge, quality of data and methodologies	+	+	+	++
2) Produces pan-European surveys, comparable data for EU28	+	++	+	+
3) Produces policy-relevant research, which is accepted as a reliable source of information by policy makers and tripartite partners	+	+	++	+
4) Tripartite representation and platform for discussion	-	-	++	-
5) Manages network of experts/ correspondents; monitors and reports on policy developments in all EU Member States	+	-	++	+
6) Support to Member States (less relevant for Eurofound)	+	-	+	+

+ the element agencies' added value can be partly substituted by these organisations.

++ the element of agencies' added value can be substituted by these organisations.

Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF create added value through specific thematic knowledge as well as quality of data and methodologies in their respective working fields. A number of well-respected institutions, usually in larger and older Member States, also operate in agencies' thematic areas (several examples include Maastricht University, Institute for Labour Economics (IZA), Germany's Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB), Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH) and many others). Although, these institutions are in a good position to maintain detailed and specific knowledge about their country of residence; their outputs often lack the comparative element and especially EU-wide comparability. In addition, not all Member States (and especially the partner countries that the ETF works with) have strong national level research institutions in all the thematic fields that the agencies cover. In certain cases, Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF are the only high-quality knowledge providers. EU-OSHA campaigns, for example, often were the only OSH awareness raising activities in the new Member States. However, Member States with advanced OSH systems also found some added value in EU-OSHA's research activities. In the UK, the ESENER survey allowed to avoid running a similar national survey. A number of EU bodies also possess thematic expertise in agencies' thematic research fields (see Table 23). Eurostat, for example, produces well accepted and high-quality data but, in contrast to Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA, it does not publish policy-oriented research reports. The European Commission possess thematic expertise on themes of all four agencies work; however, the DGs are policy making institutions and the provision of knowledge is not their primary function. Other EU-agencies (e.g. EIGE, FRA) and EU research centres (Joint Research Centre (JRC), Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography (KCMD), EU expert networks (European Social Policy Network (ESPN), FreSsco¹¹⁴) also have relevant methodological skills, but they do not cover the full

¹¹⁴ FreSsco - Network of independent experts in the fields of free movement of workers and social security coordination in the European Union

scale of agencies thematic expertise. Eurofound overlaps thematically to some extent with the ESPN, which focuses its work on social protection, social inclusion and social investments. However, both institutions to a large extent complements each other as Eurofound mostly produces comparative studies, while ESPN focuses more on country-specific reports. Several examples, when the ESPN produced thematic outputs at the country level and Eurofound carried similar cross-country studies, are provided in the Table 24. Finally, none of other EU bodies possess the ETF's country specific knowledge of partner countries (geographic expertise).

Table 23. Overview of EU bodies possessing knowledge and expertise in the agencies' thematic fields

Agency	European Commission's DGs	Other EU institutions
Eurofound	DG EMPL and DG EAC (to a smaller extent DG JUST, DG SANTE, DG GROW)	Eurostat, EIGE, FRA, JRC, KCMD, ESPN, FreSsco
Cedefop	DG EMPL and DG EAC	Eurostat, JRC, ACVT
EU-OSHA	DG EMPL (to a smaller extent DG GROW)	Eurostat
ETF	DG EMPL and DG EAC	JRC, ACVT (only thematic VET dimension, without geographic expertise)

Source: Compiled by PPMI and Ecorys.

Table 24. Examples of ESPN and Eurofound outputs in similar thematic fields

ESPN outputs	Eurofound outputs
ESPN Flash Report 2017/56 - Spain - Parliamentary discussion on the reform of self-employed workers' regulation in Spain (2017)	Exploring self-employment in the European Union (2017)
ESPN Flash Report 2017/23 - Malta - "Job brokerage scheme" for migrants and refugees seeking jobs (2017)	Approaches to the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers (2016)
Access to social protection for people working on non-standard contracts and as self-employed in Europe (2017)	Exploring self-employment in the European Union (2017) New forms of employment in Europe (2014-2016)
ESPN Flash Report 2017/58 - Austria - Austrian federal provinces have started altering minimum income schemes (2017)	Coordination in activation policies for minimum income recipients (2012)
ESPN Flash Report 2017/62 - Estonia - Estonia: Reform of the parental leave and benefit system to better reconcile work and family life (2017)	Parental leave in European companies (2008)
ESPN Flash Report 2017/63 - Germany - New regulations on occupational pensions in Germany (2017)	Extending working lives through flexible retirement schemes: Partial retirement (2016)

Source: Compiled by PPMI and Ecorys.

International organisations such as the OECD or the ILO also carry out research in Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA thematic fields, which sometimes result in production of similar thematic outputs (see the table below). However, these outputs supplement each other rather than duplicate. It is a common practice for the OECD/ILO to use agencies' data in their reports and studies and *vice versa*. In ETF case, a thematic overlap is less evident, as the OECD and the ILO rarely produce outputs specifically focused on one of the partner countries. Generally, the OECD and ILO could substitute part of the expertise and thematic knowledge of Eurofound, Cedefop, but it would lack specific EU focus due to its diversified portfolio and wider geographical scope. In addition, OECD and ILO outputs would be less synchronized with EU policy needs' when compared with agencies' work. Finally, not all EU countries are members of the OECD¹¹⁵.

¹¹⁵ BG, HR, CY, LT, MT, RO are not members of the OECD.

Table 25. Examples of OECD/ILO and agencies outputs in similar thematic fields

	Agencies outputs	OECD/ILO outputs
Eurofound	Win-win arrangements: Innovative measures through social dialogue at company level (2016)	ILO, Social Dialogue and Economic Performance. What matters for business - A review (2017)
	Income inequalities and employment patterns in Europe before and after the Great Recession (2017)	OECD, In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All (2015)
	NEETs - Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe (2012)	OECD, NEET Youth in the Aftermath of the Crisis (2015)
Cedefop	Tackling unemployment while addressing skill mismatch: lessons from policy and practice in European Union countries (2015)	OECD, Skill mismatch and public policy in OECD countries (2015)
	Governance and financing of apprenticeships (2016)	OECD, Engaging Employers in Apprenticeship Opportunities (2017)
	Work-based learning in continuing vocational education and training: policies and practices in Europe (2015)	OECD, Policy Reviews of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and adult learning - Country Studies (2008-2015)
EU-OSHA	OSHwiki (ongoing)	ILO, Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety (online) ¹¹⁶ (ongoing)
	The business case for safety and health at work: Cost-benefit analyses of interventions in small and medium-sized enterprises (2014)	ILO, Can productivity in SMEs be increased by investing in workers' health? (2017)
	OSH in figures: Occupational safety and health in the transport sector — an overview (2009)	Priority safety and health issues in the road transport sector (2015)

Source: Compiled by PPMI and Ecorys.

The next aspect of the added value of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA is the **European coverage** and especially the production of pan-European surveys that provide comparable data for EU28. Several reputable universities or think-tanks engage into comparable activities, financed, for example through Horizon 2020 programme and other channels. The methodological approach, the target groups, questionnaires may be very different from that used by the agencies, but the gist of the activity, which is collection and analysis of representative, comparative, country-based data is essentially similar. Nevertheless, such institutions depend on availability of project or grant funding, which may put the longitudinal dimension or regularity of surveys in jeopardy.

EU and international institutions also have necessary competences and experience to manage or run EU-wide surveys. DG Communication, for example, manages Eurobarometer surveys on comparable themes (e.g. living conditions, skills and OHS themes)¹¹⁷, but these surveys are not followed-up with research publications and policy relevant outputs. EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) regularly runs EU-wide surveys (e.g. European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey; Survey on Violence Against Women), but their thematic fields are too distant from the agencies' surveys. The ILO and the OECD guide or undertake their own surveys on similar thematic fields (e.g. Labour Force Survey; Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)). The ILO cooperates with Eurofound on the forthcoming Global Working Conditions Survey (GWCS). However, the OECD and the ILO have a much wider number of countries to cover, which means that EU28 receive less attention as compared to the research of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. In addition, the OECD does not cover all the EU countries as not all of them are members of this organisation.

¹¹⁶ <http://www.iloencyclopaedia.org/>

¹¹⁷ E.g. European Commission (2014), Living Conditions in the European Union, Standard Eurobarometer 81 / Spring 2014; European Commission (2014), European Area of Skills and Qualifications, Special Eurobarometer 417/ June 2014;

Another added value aspect, shared between all four agencies, is **producing policy-relevant research**, which is accepted and used by policy makers. As universities and research institutes and similar organisations tend to focus on scientific research, they are usually further from the policy process and provide fewer channels to public access. Many think tanks may be policy oriented but pursue their own agenda, which is often underpinned by a specific ideology. The OECD and the ILO are authoritative sources of information; however, these organisations have their own stakeholders and *modus operandi*, which makes their work more difficult to synchronise to EU's/ DG EMPL policy needs in the way comparable to Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF. Eurostat produce relevant data, but it has to be taken over by someone and analysed in relevant policy context. Other EU institutions mostly produce policy-relevant research by contracting it out to external public or private research organisations. The majority of agencies' outputs could be also contracted out in this way; however, full substitution would be difficult (some outputs are produced internally at the agencies or co-produced with contractors).

The added value of the tripartite representation of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA is most evident when compared with national level knowledge providers. Tripartite nature of these agencies contributes to their acceptance as objective research institution both on the employees and the employers' side. In contrast, national and EU level think tanks, research institutions and to some extent universities might follow a more ideological agenda and therefore be less acceptable for different groups of social partners. The added value of tripartite scrutiny in terms of impartial and objective research results is less evident when compared with well-respected international research organisations. The OECD or World Bank, even without tripartite governance structures, are broadly accepted as high-quality and objective knowledge providers.

The management of **pan-European expert networks** that monitor policy developments in all EU Member States is another added value feature of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. International organisations such as the ILO, the OECD as well as multiple universities, research institutions also assemble multi-national expert networks for their own purposes. While such networks do generate policy-relevant knowledge, the case for using them to substitute for agencies network of correspondent's is uncertain. These organisations have their own needs and agendas, and their expert networks are created to serve primarily such needs. Various EU institutions and agencies also have experience in contracting, overseeing, working with expert networks (e.g. DG EMPL oversees the ESPN and FreSsco expert networks). The EU-OSHA's network of focal points cannot be substituted by the current networks because of their different thematic focus and operational modes. The *modus operandi* of Cedefop's 'Refernet' network is more conventional, but the thematic scope is unique at the current EU institutional setting. The Eurofound's network of correspondents to some extent thematically overlaps with the European Social Policy Network (ESPN). If ESPN's thematic scope of work was to be expanded, this network could potentially replace the Eurofound's network of correspondents.

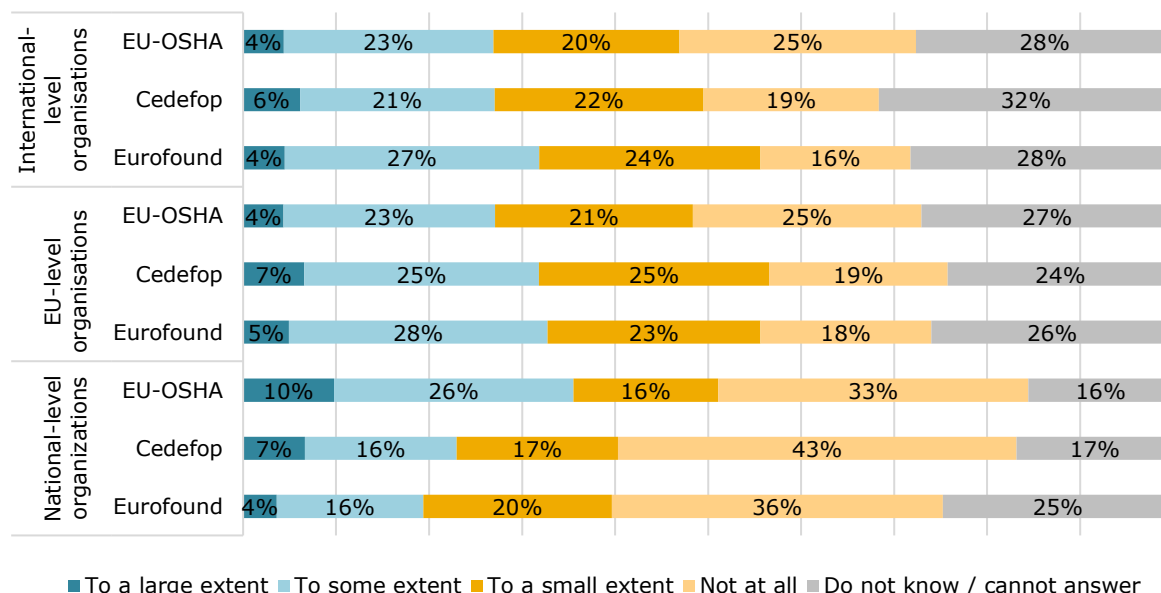
There is a case for economies of scale in managing the expert networks of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA. At the moment, the agencies use their in-house financial and human resources to manage them and coordinate the work of national experts. Potentially, the networks could be managed centrally, in a similar move to what DG EMPL did when it replaced the European Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion and the network responsible for the Analytical Support on the Socio-Economic Impact of Social Protection Reforms (ASISP) by the single ESPN. If management of the networks would be centralised, it is important to maintain the specific thematic scope and ensure effective coordination and smooth information flows between the network managers and experts who use the network's outputs within the agencies.

The final aspect of all four agencies added value is their **support for Member States/ partner countries**. Cedefop and the ETF tends to provide support for the

Member States/ partner countries that ask for such support and do not have enough internal capacity to build quality VET policy. Similarly, EU-OSHA’s support is most relevant for Member States that lacks capacity and resources to carry out high-quality OHS analysis at national level, develop OHS assessment tools or organize awareness raising campaigns. Eurofound offers support through the agency’s Stakeholder Enquiry Service. Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA could most likely be substituted by research institutes or think tanks at Member States level, provided they have sufficient human and financial resources and specific thematic knowledge. However, such scenario would be less likely in partner countries as national research institutes/ think tanks could hardly replace the ETF’s participatory approaches to involve stakeholders in policy analysis, development and implementation. The agency can undertake such approaches due to its long-time expertise and status among stakeholders as highly impartial and independent European knowledge brokerage. However, international organisations such as the OECD could to a large extent replace the agencies as it already supports countries by carrying out specific policy reviews in such fields as labour market and social policies¹¹⁸, VET and adult learning¹¹⁹, innovation policy¹²⁰. However, due to OECD’s wider geographical scope, its assistance would lack specific EU focus and would be less informed by EU policy priorities.

The surveys show that agencies’ stakeholders (including Governing Board members) are reserved with regard to the possibility of other organisations substituting the activities carried out by Eurofound, Cedefop or EU-OSHA. Only a minority believed that the agencies’ activities could be substituted to a large extent by EU level organisations, international organisations, or national organisations in the Member States (see the figure below).

Figure 29. To what extent, if at all, could other organisations substitute the activities carried out by an agency in terms of their level of expertise and organisational capacity?



Source: Stakeholders surveys (Eurofound N=222; Cedefop N=196; EU-OSHA N=276).

¹¹⁸ http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-reviews-of-labour-market-and-social-policies_20743408

¹¹⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/countrystudies.htm>

¹²⁰ <http://www.oecd.org/sti/inno/oecdreviewsofinnovationpolicy.htm>

1.4.2 What would be the most likely consequences of the termination of the agency?

In this section, we provide evidence concerning the likely consequences of termination of Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF. We begin with a discussion on the scenario of substitution or absorption. Then, we assess the total termination scenario in a sense of ceasing the agencies' activities and outputs. Note that this part overlaps with the cross-cutting evaluation question 4 on possible future changes of the agencies and use evidence from the cost-effectiveness analysis.

In the case of a decision to terminate all four agencies and reallocate their activities to other institutions, a number of risks that should be taken into consideration. The reallocation of activities would take several years needed for reassigning the resources, reassigning or recruiting personnel, contracting out survey field work, re-establishing the correspondents network, etc. This would leave a (temporary) void in terms of policy relevant research that was supplied by the agencies to EU institutions and other stakeholders. Next, reorganisations usually lead to loss of institutional memory; in other words, exit of people who followed a stream of work for a number of years, contributed to the development of methodologies and questionnaires, and know what trade-offs were already considered and what choices were made. Thirdly, if the current research and survey activities were enacted under different organisations, the potential loss of methodological and/ or longitudinal consistency has to be taken into consideration. If this risk is not addressed, the usage, usefulness, and comparability to the previous research might be compromised, and thus it will take a number of years and waves of surveys until data for time-series analysis is available again. The table below provides the weighting of risks of agencies substitution by their likelihood and potential impact on policy relevant research.

Table 26. Weighting of substitution risks

Risks of agencies substitution	Likelihood	Impact on policy relevant research
Long substitution process (reassignment of resources, reassigning or recruiting personnel, contracting out activities etc.)	High	Moderate
Loss of institutional memory	High	Moderate
Loss of methodological and/or longitudinal consistency of surveys	Moderate	High

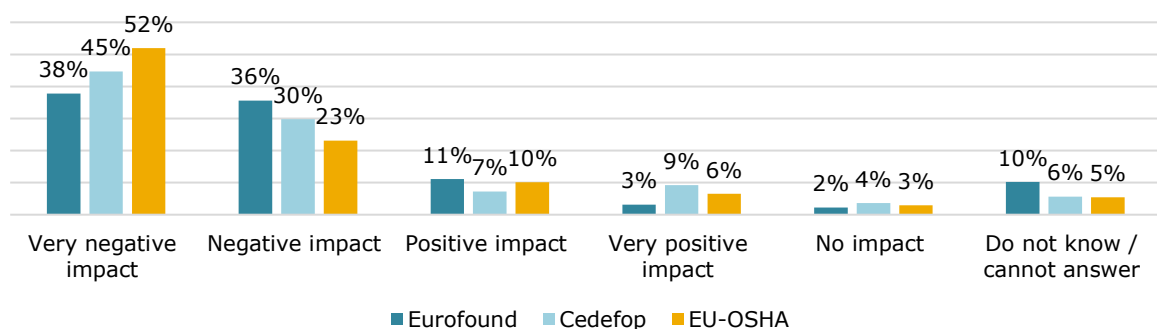
Source: PPMI and Ecorys

A second scenario involves termination of Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF without re-enacting their various outputs under the umbrella of other organisations. This scenario means losing all the elements of the added value of the agencies as presented in the previous section. The EU institutions, stakeholders and researchers would lose an important source of cross-European and comparable data. The Commission/ DG EMPL and other EU institutions would have fewer knowledge sources to draw on when developing their policy initiatives and working on European Semester. Various stakeholders and researchers would lose a data source that they could previously draw on when preparing for policy discussions and conducting research. The termination of Cedefop would likely drive VET policy to eventually lose its identity in the EU, since there would be no single organisation dedicating its resources and expertise to gathering the evidence base and supporting cooperation in this specific policy field among Member States. In addition, such an action would constitute the loss of an important forum to meet and discuss VET policy developments (including policy learning), and could lead to 're-nationalisation' of VET policy in the European Union. In EU-OSHA's case, the direct connection from the EU to the Member States, enabled by the network of focal points, would be lost.

The cost-effectiveness analysis shows that the short-term cost of the termination scenario would be around 3 million EUR for Cedefop, Eurofound and the ETF, and around 2 million EUR for EU-OSHA¹²¹. In addition, loss of expertise relating to monitoring, research and support in the respective thematic fields of the agencies (VET, skills, working conditions, living conditions, labour market policies, industrial relations and OHS) would hinder EU’s ability to develop policies in these areas. At national level, social partners in certain Member States (and partner countries) would feel negative effects as their own capacity for strong evidence-based analysis in certain thematic fields is limited. It is likely that Member States with undeveloped OHS systems would no longer possess quality information on OSH issues and would not undertake awareness-raising campaigns given that OSH issues are not seen as policy priority. Total termination scenario would also pose a threat that established relationships with social partners in Member States, partner countries and international organisations could be damaged. It is very likely that such reform would face political opposition, including host countries of the agencies (see Chapter 4/ EQ4 for a more detailed analysis).

The survey showed that stakeholders (including Governing Board members) do not support termination of the agencies; around 75% of stakeholders across all three agencies said that termination would have a very negative or negative effect. The wider public in the OPC also expressed similar perceptions. In EU-OSHA’s case 62% of the OPC participants stated that termination would have very negative or negative effect. For Cedefop it reached 53% of the OPC participants and in Eurofound’s case 56% of stakeholders had the same opinion (see Figure 30, Figure 31).

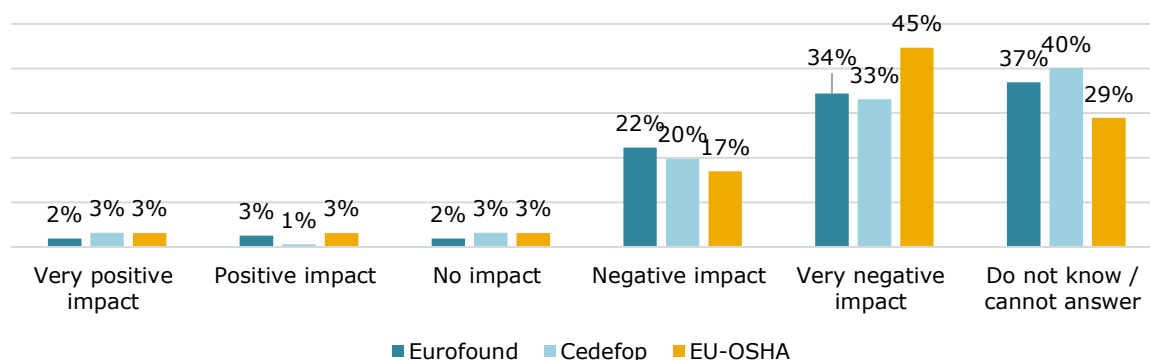
Figure 30. In your opinion, what would be the potential impact of the termination of the activities of an agency?



Source: Stakeholders surveys (Eurofound N=225; Cedefop N=195; EU-OSHA N=277).

¹²¹ It includes administrative burden for the Commission and other EU institutions of completing the necessary political and legal processes; indemnity payments to staff/agents with definite period contracts; resettlement allowances for staff; legal costs, e.g. if termination of employment is challenged; expenses linked to the termination of lease agreements, etc.

Figure 31. In your opinion, what would be the potential impact of the termination of the activities of an agency on EU policy?



Source: OPC (Eurofound N=157; Cedefop N=157; EU-OSHA N=159).

1.4.3 Agency-specific recommendations/ points for improvement of EU added value

Table 27. Agency-specific recommendations/ points for improvement of EU added value

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
Cedefop		
4.1(c)	Cedefop provided unique contributions to developing European-level skills anticipation models and methodologies for harmonising forecasting data. Cedefop should continue its work on skills forecasting, in which it is considered to be one of the pioneers, not only at European but at international level.	R1.11, R1.14
4.2(c)	Cedefop's European coverage, the quality of its data and methodologies, unique scientific thematic knowledge, tripartite governance, and support to Member States, have been the main added-value elements provided by the agency. While the evaluation identified a few areas that could potentially be substituted by other EU institutions, agencies or settings, Cedefop's thematic knowledge and unique support to Member States could hardly be substituted in the short or medium term. If some of Cedefop's activities are transferred to another organisation, precautions should be taken to ensure that the significant thematic knowledge, track record and experience held by the agency's staff is not lost in the process.	R2.4
Eurofound		
4.3(e)	Evidence stemming from this evaluation shows that Eurofound should concentrate its resources on pan-European surveys and follow-up research, as well as activities/ projects that directly address the policy initiatives of EU bodies. The evaluation revealed some options for further change that point in two opposite directions. If a political decision is taken to implement downsizing and cost savings, merging the Network of Correspondents with other comparable networks or some form of shared management could be an option. On the other hand, if the EU bodies decide to aim for a further increase in the added value of Eurofound, its remit could be extended to provide policy advice to the Member States. This option involves a fundamental rethink of the agencies' mandate and additional resources.	R1.6, R3.5, R3.6
4.4(e)	Eurofound should continue cooperating with other EMPL agencies to find options for joint value creation in the most integrated way. In line with the reinforced cooperation and/ or partial merger models presented in Chapter 4 of this report, the agencies should engage in joint planning and joint delivery of research/ advice, through sharing capabilities and instruments. The options include: shared governance, joint programming, sharing 'back-office' or corporate functions as well as front-office services, such as surveys. If some of the activities are joined, merged or transferred to another organisation, precautions should be taken to ensure that the thematic knowledge, track record and experience held by the agency is not lost.	R1.1, R1.2, R1.3, R1.4, R1.5, R1.6, R1.7, R2.4
EU-OSHA		

No.	Recommendation/ point for improvement	Feeds into the overall recommendation (see Chapter 5)
4.5(o)	One of the main sources of added value provided by EU-OSHA comes from its specific thematic knowledge and the quality of its data and methodologies. A number of research institutes in and outside Europe operate in this area, such as universities (Maastricht University and the ILO, for example). Other agencies, such as Eurofound, have relevant methodological skills for EU-OSHA to use. Hence, this element of added value can be partly substituted by other organisations. To improve its EU added value, the agency should explore further opportunities for collaboration with other EU agencies (particularly Eurofound), the ILO or national OSH research institutes – for example, in implementing joint projects where each participant brings its complementary focus and expertise, and in sharing research knowledge on data and methodologies.	R1.5, R1.6, R1.7
4.6(o)	The analysis of OSHwiki suggests that the articles on OSH management and organisation, and those which describe EU and MS-specific legislation and strategies, are those that most represent the unique added value of the tool. In relation to OSHwiki, the agency could in the upcoming years retain the unique components of OSHwiki with respect to similar sources, namely information on OSH strategies and systems at Member State level and on EU legislation and its implementation ¹²² .	R1.11
4.7(o)	Some of the analytical outputs produced by EU-OSHA have a broader scope than OSH, potentially overlapping with research fields that are more typical of Eurofound. In research studies, the specific focus on OSH should characterise the intervention of the agency in multidimensional and interdisciplinary fields like age management in order not to overlap and replicate other work.	R1.7
4.8(o)	EU-OSHA's contribution to the policy process has to be seen more as part of policy implementation than as feeding into policymaking. In this sense, the practical tools and the communication campaigns tend to be more relevant than the analytical outputs, as they are aimed more towards putting OSH considerations into practice. The practical approach of EU-OSHA, for instance in developing tools for risk assessment, should be emphasised over the general academic/ policy research approach.	R1.11
	ETF	
	<i>The 2016 ETF evaluation contains no added value recommendations.</i>	

Note: letter 'c' after the number of a recommendation means Cedefop-related recommendation; 'e' means Eurofound-related recommendation; 'o' means EU-OSHA-related recommendation; and 't' means ETF-related recommendation.

¹²² Alternatively, this type of information could also be provided by the European Labour Authority, as it might be relevant in the context of cross-border cooperation.

1.5 EVALUATION QUESTION 1: CONCLUSIONS

In this section we present a summary answer to the first evaluation question: how have the four agencies performed as regards relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and EU added value? The evaluation covered the period 2011-2016; however, earlier evidence was also taken into consideration. We draw on variety of sources and methods, including desk research and documentary evidence, analysis of administrative and monitoring data, as well as a variety of surveys, open public consultation, interviews and case studies.

Effectiveness

The analysis of effectiveness deals with the achievement of, or progress towards, the agencies' objectives. Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF possess a complex set of objectives, including operational, specific and general objectives. At the stage of implementation these objectives are mirrored, respectively, by activities, outputs and results, and impacts (see the agencies' intervention logics in Annex 1). Furthermore, the effectiveness of the agencies is determined by their agility in adapting to external developments such as changes in EU policies, as well as the adoption of the Common Approach. In this section we present the key conclusions on the achievement of: a) operational objectives/ activities; b) specific objectives/ outputs and results; and c) general objectives/ impacts. In addition, we assess the agencies' adaptation to d) key policy changes and e) the requirements of the Common Approach.

In order to implement their **operational objectives**, the agencies undertake two broad types of activity: first, research and monitoring; and second, activities aimed at communication, dissemination, raising awareness and capacity building. The balance between these types of activity differs between agencies. Eurofound and Cedefop have focused first and foremost on producing and managing research, and providing advice to EU bodies. EU-OSHA has worked both to feed into EU policy-making on OSH issues and to raise awareness of/ support for OSH policies in the Member States. The ETF has directed its efforts towards supporting capacity building in the partner countries. The activities of the agencies stem from their respective Founding Regulations and working programmes; in this sense, these activities are appropriate to the achievement of their objectives.

During the period 2011-2016, the agencies implemented several changes broadly aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of their activities. The changes in **research and monitoring** included more project work; more thematic focus; better coordination between research projects; the revision of staff functions; and more internal collaboration. Changes concerning the agencies' **communication, dissemination, awareness-raising and capacity-building activities** included revised communication and translation strategies; the redesigning of web-sites; greater focus on social media; cooperation in order to share the costs of research (e.g. collaboration between Cedefop and Eurofound on the European Company Survey); and joint events with other agencies or with the Commission. Eurofound and Cedefop increased their presence in Brussels through their Liaison offices, although Cedefop's Liaison Office is rather small (0.6 FTE, compared to 2 FTE for Eurofound). Further strengthening could involve not only additional human resources, but also cooperation or sharing resources with other agencies.

The evaluation demonstrated some demand among Member States for research-based policy advice (inspired by the example of OECD), in particular from Eurofound and Cedefop. For example, Cedefop has implemented a thematic country review for apprenticeships in Malta, which was one of the sources informing the reform of apprenticeships in this country. Nevertheless, such country support has been difficult to fit into the current regulatory framework, as Cedefop is expected to support, primarily, EU institutions. Cedefop should also work to better feed the country-level findings from such projects in order to inform EU policy making. Overall, more systematic decisions are needed in the context of the ongoing revision of the agencies'

Founding Regulations, as to whether the role of policy advice at national level (and corresponding resources) could be assigned to the agencies under consideration.

The aforementioned changes to the agencies' communication and translation strategies followed two aims that are not always easy to reconcile: (a) to increase the use, visibility and exposure of stakeholders to the agencies' services; and (b) to save costs. In effect, among Cedefop's four operational objectives and types of activity, communication activities were regarded relatively less positively by stakeholders. The cost-saving imperative has resulted in, for example, Eurofound identifying its core groups and refocusing its communication accordingly, while also decreasing its translation budget. This was received with a certain reservation by some non-native English speakers. Furthermore, while the agency has put a lot of effort into improving the accessibility and readability of its outputs, some stakeholders argued that further work was required to make the agency's reports more accessible to readers with non-academic backgrounds. Some policy makers who were interviewed expressed the need for more actionable recommendations.

No easy options are available to combine wider reach with cost considerations; however, the most promising direction is to continue cooperation at various levels and **cost-sharing**, identifying the core outputs together with the Member States and/ or social partners, and involving them in the co-production, translation and dissemination of materials that are of greatest interest to specific countries or stakeholders.

We assessed the achievement of **specific objectives** in terms of the realisation of outputs (e.g., studies, reports, tools, events, etc.) and results. Overall, the agencies delivered the outputs they had planned in their annual programming documents. One area of concern was delivering outputs on time; for example, during some years, 15-20% of outputs were delivered later than planned. The reasons for the delays were complex, ranging from delays by contractors to internal human resource limitations, unexpected changes of policy contexts, and urgent requests by stakeholders. In some cases this delayed implementation resulted in an agency's contributions being less useful to policy makers. In others, the delays occurred precisely because resources were reallocated to respond to more urgent needs of the Commission. Delays must therefore be approached in a contextualised way, rather than formally. If delays could lead to an agency's outputs failing to feed into the policy cycle, then the implementation of specific outputs must be adjusted in order to mitigate such a risk. If, however, resources need to be reassigned precisely because of immediate EU policy needs, then it is more important to be responsive to such needs, rather than achieving a perfect implementation rate. The agencies should continue drawing on the 'negative priorities' approach to identify in advance which projects might be postponed in the event of more urgent priorities.

We assessed the achievement of **results** on the basis of the use made of agencies' outputs and services, as well as on their quality. This, in turn, was operationalised in terms of responsiveness to the needs of users and user satisfaction.

Quotations and reference numbers show that the **main user** of Eurofound and Cedefop data was the Commission, which is in line with the provisions of the Founding Regulations. For example, in 2011-2016, the Commission quoted Eurofound in 586 documents, while Cedefop was quoted 474 times. The overall number of EU policy documents referring to Eurofound and Cedefop (including documents produced by EU institutions, EU-level social partners, NGOs and think-tanks) has also increased. The agencies' outputs, in particular those of Eurofound and Cedefop, were also used for academic research, and contributed to work undertaken by international organisations such as the ILO and OECD.

This quotation/ reference data is subject to some important limitations, however. First, EU-OSHA and the ETF collect such data to much more limited extent than Eurofound and Cedefop. Second, the methodology differed between agencies (e.g. what counts as an EU policy document?). Third, interviews and case studies revealed situations in

which agencies' materials were used (e.g. for country fiches in the context of European Semester), but were not directly referred to. Finally, no systematic monitoring exists of the use of the agencies' outputs at national level, while other sources (case studies, surveys, interviews) indicate that, in some cases, this use may be quite extensive.

Do the agencies' outputs respond to the **needs of stakeholders**, and what is the level of **user satisfaction**? The surveys showed that more than 50% of respondents thought that, in general, the agencies' outputs –with some variation between thematic/ activity areas – met their needs to a large extent, or to some extent. This finding was corroborated by the OPC. User satisfaction was also generally high, with 60-90% of respondents saying that the outputs of an agency were of very good or good quality. This finding was corroborated through interviews, surveys, the OPC and the agencies' own user satisfaction surveys.

Some of the agencies' outputs were more useful, or of higher quality, than others. For example, Eurofound's surveys and follow-up research was very much appreciated by stakeholders, while much more varied opinions were expressed with regard to the outputs produced by the Network of Correspondents¹²³. Cedefop's country reports were more highly regarded than the Mobility Scoreboard or VET in Europe opinion survey (notably, these projects were still in the development stage during the evaluation). EU-OSHA's risk assessment tools were better received than its Foresight Studies Reports. The evaluation highlighted issues or points for improvement, such as the readability of reports by non-specialists as well as policy makers; their timeliness with regard to relevant EU and national policy cycles; and the limited supply of services at national level by Eurofound and Cedefop. Furthermore, the imperatives to save resources also led to solutions and compromises (such as the decreasing sample sizes of surveys) that may eventually have repercussions for the quality of the services.

In line with the agencies' intervention logics, the achievement of **general objectives and impacts** has been analysed, first and foremost, in terms of the agencies' contribution to EU policies within their areas of activity. In the case of the ETF, this means EU external relations policies/ contribution to partner countries. The assessment of impacts must be approached with caution, as they are usually medium-to long-term; the causal chain is long and involves many milestones; and factors exist that can complement or interfere with the process, catalysing or weakening the role of an agency.

The evaluation revealed cases in which the agencies' contribution was especially valuable to, and used by, policy makers. For example, Eurofound provided evidence (such as the study on NEETs) that fed into the development of the Council Recommendation establishing a Youth Guarantee, and the "New Start for Working Parents" initiative. EU-OSHA contributed to the Communication "Safer and Healthier Work for All – Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation and Policy", and the Green Employment Initiative. Cedefop played a role in informing EU policies within the area of VET for labour market integration, social inclusion and adult learning (e.g. the Renewed Agenda for Adult Learning, A New Skills Agenda for Europe, and Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults). In the case of the ETF, the Torino process has been a key and successful development for the agency and many partner countries. The ETF's contribution to partner country developments has been especially strong in respect of governance, systems and policy-making; the development of VET provision and quality assurance; and in the domain of qualifications and qualification systems.

¹²³ Following on from the mid-term evaluation of current Network of Correspondents in 2016, the agency implemented a number of quality-control measures; however, their effectiveness could not yet be assessed in the present evaluation.

The key preconditions for achieving impacts were: the timely provision of evidence that was not available elsewhere; a proactive approach from the agencies, which included anticipating the needs of the Commission and other clients; working together with policy makers; and a receptive context, which often goes beyond the reach of the agencies. For instance, the impact of EU-OSHA has been constrained by its insufficient visibility in Member States beyond the organisations with which it is directly concerned; the limited dissemination of information by some focal points; the limited effectiveness of networking between Member States and stakeholders; and challenges in reaching employers at workplace level, especially micro and small enterprises. It was hard to reach the target audience, even through intermediaries, due to time constraints. In addition, very small companies hardly have an opportunity to attend meetings or conferences. Finally, the key issues hampering the impact of the ETF were the varied capacity of partner countries to absorb ETF interventions, as well as sustainability of subsequent policy reforms. In effect, the ETF underperforms in terms of the achievement of synergies between interventions and their cumulative effect – a factor that Torino could help to address.

The evaluation period 2011-2016 was marked by several major social, economic and political developments within the EU. These included the post-crisis recovery; the debt and immigration crises; as well as long term developments in the ageing workforce, changing working patterns, new forms of employment, and technological change. The agencies **needed to adapt** – in some cases, very rapidly – in order to provide evidence that could feed into policy making. The evaluation demonstrated evidence both of rapid adaptation and of responsiveness by the agencies, as well as of constraints. For example, in order to provide additional support on the Skills Agenda, Cedefop had to reprioritise some of its activities and postpone six outputs – yet this also increased its policy relevance. The case study on Eurofound's contribution to the European Semester indicated that the agency faced difficulties in reacting to an *ad hoc* request within the time frame set by the policy maker, which related primarily to constraints in the reallocation/ mobilisation of resources. While stakeholders provide somewhat differing accounts of specific events, it is clear that an ongoing discussion and clarification of what could feasibly be expected from Eurofound is needed. According to DG EMPL interviewees, in some cases they approached DG EMPL expert networks and other competency centres (rather than the agencies) when they had a need for highly specialised inputs during a short time frame. On the other hand, the agencies themselves felt that they were not always included early enough into policy discussions, at a stage when their contribution would be most useful to policy makers.

The agencies used a number of tools aimed at reacting to EU policy needs. These include monitoring EU policy developments through, for example, the Brussels Liaison Offices (Eurofound and Cedefop); *ad hoc* request procedures; 'negative priorities'; and changing the scope of specific projects or even multi-annual work programmes. Nevertheless, the ability of the agencies to adapt was constrained by several factors. These included the early programming and multi-annual programming cycle; limited resources that are planned well in advance; and the long-term nature of research projects (surveys, forecasts). The tripartite agencies also face a multiple-principal situation, in which views as to which projects should gain immediate priority differ between the Member States, social partners and the Commission. Overall, the key steps required to further increase the agencies' responsiveness to changing policy needs are: further engagement with policy makers (especially the Commission); greater agility/ acceptance of change in programming documents; as well as the production of smaller, intermediate and short-term deliverables and updates (e.g. briefing notes). In the case of EU-OSHA, this means better dissemination, a more systematic outreach to relevant intermediaries and micro/small enterprises, and more effective networking.

Finally, during the period 2011-2016, the agencies also had to adapt to one other major change: the **Common Approach** to the decentralised agencies, which was adopted in order to define a more coherent and efficient framework for the functioning

of the agencies. The agencies introduced a number of measures in line with the Common Approach, such as *ex-ante* evaluations; multi-annual programming; guidelines on performance monitoring, including a set of KPIs, anti-fraud strategy and guidelines on the management of conflicts of interest; activity-based budgeting; reviews of communication activities; collaboration agreements; joint procurement; and sharing services with other agencies. In 2017, the internal structures and activities of the agencies were mostly in line with the objectives of the CA on coherency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency. The evaluation pointed out the need to improve communication between EU-OSHA's focal points and its Governing Board, as well as some ambiguities regarding the formal position of the deputy directors of Eurofound and Cedefop. The size and composition of the Governing Boards of the three tripartite agencies was the key issue, as the agencies do not follow the model suggested by the CA. While at the time of the evaluation (in late 2017) most stakeholders assumed that the issue has already been settled in the context of negotiating the revision of the Founding Regulations, the evaluation team was asked to report on options for possible changes. Further detail is provided in the next section, as well as in Chapters 4 and 5.

Efficiency

The criterion of efficiency refers to the extent to which the agencies have conducted their activities and achieved objectives at a reasonable cost in terms of financial and human resources, as well as to the agencies' administrative arrangements. In line with the evaluation's Terms of Reference, we structured the analysis of the efficiency criterion in terms of budgetary resources, staff resources, internal processes, organisational structures, the operation of the Governing Board, and the fulfilment of Headquarters Agreements by Member States.

During the period 2011-2016, the **budgetary resources** of Eurofound and ETF remained broadly constant with only slight variation, while Cedefop and EU-OSHA experienced a decrease of a few per cent (4.5% for Cedefop; 2.8% for EU-OSHA). *De facto*, this means some decrease in the resources of all agencies due to inflation (e.g. the costs of surveys have been increasing). The agencies adapted by finding internal efficiencies and streamlining wherever possible. For example, they implemented cost-saving measures that included joint procurement with other EU decentralised agencies; fewer translations, to save publishing costs; fewer events; paperless policy and the reallocation of staff from administrative to operational roles. As an example, Cedefop achieved some savings in staff and administrative expenditure, and directed the money saved towards operational expenditure. Further cross-agency learning, simplification, electronic workflows, and the sharing of services with other agencies or with the Commission should be continued, to further improve the agencies' cost-effectiveness.

The evaluation revealed that operational, administrative and staff budgets differ between agencies; in particular, EU-OSHA devotes more resources to Title 3 (operational expenditure) compared with the other agencies (e.g. in 2016, Title 3 expenditure accounted for 68% of EU-OSHA's budget; for Cedefop, Eurofound and ETF, the figure ranged from 26 to 35%). This can be explained by the agencies' differing remits and modes of operation. 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 spent a higher share of its budget on internal staff costs because it provides its expertise to partner countries through relatively 'labour-intensive' forms of support, which require continuity of staffing inputs. Benchmarking of administrative costs (Title 2) with agencies such as EASME, FRA and EIGE shows that the four EMPL agencies spend less resources, in relative terms, on administration. EU-OSHA administrative expenditure per staff member is relatively high – not least because, although the agency is small, administrative responsibilities do not decrease proportionally with staff size.

By 2018 the four agencies reduced their staff numbers in line with the 10% target. Overall, the agencies possessed a balanced mix of human resources, with approximately 70%/30% ratio of operational-to-administrative and neutral staff. The balance between operational and administrative staff remained relatively stable throughout the evaluation period, and was reasonable given the agencies' size. From a staff perspective, the workload within the three agencies has risen due to an increase in weekly working hours from 37.5 to 40 hours across EU institutions, and a reduction in staff numbers. The staff surveys and interview data showed that a significant minority (around one-third) of staff in Cedefop and Eurofound felt that their workload was too high, human resources within their department or unit were too low, and/ or the workload was unbalanced over the course of a year. Interviews demonstrated that staff reductions and the increased use of fixed-term contracts created concern and a feeling of insecurity within the agencies' staff.

Despite budgetary constraints and decreasing staff numbers, the use of the agencies' outputs increased throughout the evaluation period and user satisfaction remained high, which is an indicator of **increased efficiency**. Staff reduction was implemented mostly through retirement, and the agencies aimed to manage changes in such a way that reductions affected mostly administrative staff rather than those involved in research/ core functions. Nevertheless, the budgetary and staff constraints necessitated compromises in terms of quality and out-reach. For example, Eurofound had to reduce the sample size of the latest wave of EQLS from 43,636 in 2012 to 35,800 in 2016 (this was also due to the surveys becoming more expensive). This has repercussions for the statistical analysis of the data. In late 2017 Eurofound began an in-depth option appraisal for the future of surveys as high-level decisions are needed to ensure their sustainability.

During the period 2001-2016, Eurofound, Cedefop and the ETF underwent structural changes aimed at streamlining their internal structure, reducing overlaps within the organisation, improving planning and horizontal cooperation, and encouraging more cost-effective use of resources. The actual approaches differed somewhat between agencies; for example, Eurofound introduced a new role of research coordinator and industrial relations adviser, and reduced the number of research units (from five to three). Cedefop increased the number of departments (from two to three). The ETF has been restructured around priority themes/ strategic projects. Eurofound and Cedefop have 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 of the agency still appears complex, and the number of its units too high. The management committee is too large, which is not an efficient format for taking decisions. Interviews with staff members and a staff survey also revealed a perception that reorganisations take place too frequently, and that their effect on the agency's performance is uncertain.

The four agencies implemented a number of **internal measures** to streamline their internal processes, as well as to improve programming, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. There is evidence that internal procedures have been revised by internal working-groups (e.g. Cedefop), and via business process improvement exercises on the financial circuit (e.g. Eurofound). Procurement processes have also been reviewed to make them more efficient (Eurofound), which has led to the simplification of internal rules and procedures, such as for procurement and financial management, and paperless policy has been implemented (Cedefop). Nevertheless, internal streamlining must be continuous, rather than a one-off process; interviews with staff members revealed internal process inefficiencies; e.g. staff using several ICT platforms, rather than a single one, to input or report their information.

The evaluation showed that the agencies possessed **adequate mechanisms** to ensure accountability as well as transparency towards stakeholders and the general

public, and to ensure the appropriate assessment of the agency's performance. The measures implemented in 2011-2016 included, for example, the preparation of annual and multi-annual work programmes; publicly available annual activity reports; the monitoring of a set of key performance indicators; and multilingual websites. The comparative analysis of the **performance measurement systems** of Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA and the ETF showed that the four agencies have been reporting a set of similar performance indicators. Nevertheless, there is room for the better alignment of process-related indicators between agencies. The most notable inconsistencies concern monitoring and reporting on the delivery of the agencies' work programmes. For example, Cedefop's annual reports presented some indicators in a very aggregated manner (in particular, the indicators 'Policy documents citing Cedefop work' and 'Participation in Presidency events and meetings of senior stakeholders, or which support policy').

To save resources, exploit synergies and improve cost-efficiency, the agencies have been exploring and undertaking **cooperation and shared services** initiatives, both among the EMPL agencies as well as within a larger Network of EU Decentralised Agencies (the so-called Dublin Agenda)¹²⁴. For example, the Network prepared a catalogue of almost 900 services available for sharing among the members of the network; it envisages stronger cooperation in common ICT/digital services or common procurement procedures, common cloud migration strategy and solutions for shared disaster recovery services and many others. Examples of ongoing or implemented initiatives include: cooperation and cost-sharing on the European Company Survey (Cedefop/ Eurofound); joint procurement of evaluation services; the Eurofound-EU-OSHA joint report on psychosocial risks at work; as well as efforts at joint recruitment (the ETF/ Cedefop). Nevertheless, cooperation between agencies is currently still more at the planning/ trying/ testing stage. The majority of cooperative activities were bilateral and somewhat eclectic in nature, consisting of knowledge-exchange and joint participation in events, and one-off initiatives. This is understandable, given that the entire field of sharing, joining or even merging services or functions is relatively new. With progress achieved through trial and error, both successes and negative experiences are likely in the future. For example, earlier efforts for joint recruitment by Cedefop and the ETF were unsuccessful due to different requirements in skills profiles, especially regarding the operational staff. It is important to learn both from positive as well as negative experiences, and to build on such knowledge and continue to explore the options for further innovative changes.

The structure and composition of the **Governing Boards** of Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA do not comply with the Common Approach. Their tripartite Governing Boards each consist of 87 members, including social partners and government representatives from all of the Member States. The Common Approach suggests that Management Boards should be limited in size so that they can function as true supervisory bodies, rather than as consultative assemblies. The evaluation showed that the current system has both advantages and disadvantages. On the negative side, attendance rates and overall engagement vary between members. A 'multiple principals' situation can also be observed, in that a difference of perception is apparent among the social partners, the Member States and the Commission with regard to the agencies' prime objectives and key clients. On the positive side, the Bureaus have played an important role in the governance process, contributing to the effectiveness and timeliness of decision-making within the Governing Boards. The stakeholders (particularly the social partners) are familiar with and adapted to operating within the present arrangements, and thus expressed overwhelmingly supportive views.

Tripartism in the agencies' governance has important benefits in terms of acceptance of the use and dissemination of the agencies' work. The tripartite composition of the Governing Board has been evaluated very positively by the agencies' tripartite

¹²⁴ Strategy agenda for the Network of EU decentralised Agencies, Dublin, 23 October 2015.

stakeholders (interviewees, survey respondents and participants in the validation seminar on 8 December 2017). The social partners also act as a vehicle to promote the agencies' work at national level, and use it in national policy debates. Any transformation of the Governing Board into a Managing Board, aimed at meeting the requirements of the CA, should take into consideration the advantages of the current system. The current bodies such as Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT), which shares a significant proportion of membership with Cedefop's Governing Board, could also be taken into consideration. Measures should be taken to ensure that tripartite stakeholders feel represented, committed, involved and consulted.

Finally, representatives of EU-OSHA demonstrated the greatest satisfaction with regard to the fulfilment of obligations by the **host state**. Eurofound's representatives were mostly satisfied, but expressed mixed views concerning the transport connections available. Cedefop's staff identified issues such as availability of multilingual 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 latter issue¹²⁵. There is also a case for a renewed Headquarters Agreement with Greece (e.g. along the lines of ENISA in Athens), which could help to attract new staff and reduce the administrative burden.

Relevance

The criterion of relevance assesses whether the objectives of an EU intervention still match the current needs and problems. We used top-down and bottom-up perspectives to assess whether the mandates and objectives of Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF corresponded to the needs within the EU. From the top-down perspective, we assessed whether the four agencies corresponded to the EU policy needs set out in strategic EU documents such as the Europe 2020 Strategy and Juncker's Political Guidelines. From the bottom-up perspective, we assessed to what extent the agencies' activities have been informed by the needs of their stakeholders.

The evaluation showed that the mandates and objectives of the four agencies corresponded to the political priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy and Juncker's Political Guidelines, which also reflect the most pressing socioeconomic needs within the EU. The agencies responded to new emerging policy needs by designing their multi-annual work programmes in view of the key policy documents adopted by the EU. The majority of respondents in the OPC agreed that the agencies played a role in addressing pressing needs in Europe such as achieving better working conditions and sustainable work; strengthening European cooperation in VET; and tackling existing, new and emerging OHS risks.

In 2017, Jean-Claude Juncker announced the establishment of the European Labour Authority, which will aim to ensure consistent and coordinated enforcement of EU rules on labour mobility. Potentially, all four agencies could support and contribute to the work of this new EU body. For example, Cedefop carries out research and monitoring on VET and, more generally, labour market challenges and needs, which could be of potential relevance to ELA's work. Eurofound works in the areas of the labour market and working conditions. Its projects such as European Restructuring Monitor, European Jobs Monitor and EurWORK could also be of interest. All four agencies will also be affected if a decision is taken to finance ELA, at least partly, through savings from the other EMPL agencies. All in all, the establishment of ELA provides a rationale for rethinking the mandates and activities of the four agencies (this question is further discussed in Chapters 4 and 5).

From the bottom-up perspective, Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF were relevant for their stakeholders in 2011-2016. According to the Founding Regulations, EU bodies are the primary target group of the agencies, while ETF also aims to

¹²⁵ Further details on the fulfilment of obligations by the host state are provided in Section 1.2.6 of the Final Report.

support, as part of EU external relations policy, human capital development in the partner countries. The agencies' Governing Boards and Bureaus include representatives of EU institutions as well as, in the case of the tripartite agencies (Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA), social partners from all Member States. Each agency's programming documents must be discussed and approved by its Governing Board. In this sense, the needs of stakeholders are reflected both in the programming documents and the agencies' activities.

Nevertheless, there is a case for revisiting how representative each of the Governing Boards is, in order to more closely involve: first, the European Parliament; and second, those stakeholders who are not directly represented by the social partners (e.g. NGOs representing the youth or older population, the youth, self-employed, think tanks and academics). Furthermore, while several tools are in place for long-term planning as well as ad hoc response, the evaluation revealed some discrepancy between what is expected from the agencies by the Commission, Member States and social partners, and what they can offer, given early planning and resource limitations. During interviews, several representatives of the social partners signalled that during the last few years they have seen a growing influence of the Commission on agencies' agendas (in particular, Cedefop and Eurofound) and expressed a concern that the balance might be tilting too much. Indeed, evidence shows that in the context of limited resources, the agencies aimed to focus even more on their mission as defined in the Founding Regulations, which is serving the EU bodies. Finally, the 2016 ETF evaluation found that the agency lacks clarity as to how the priorities of different DGs should be balanced in the process of preparing Work Programmes.

Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF are specialised bodies that work towards the generation of knowledge, raising awareness and (in the case of the ETF) institutional capacity building. The Founding Regulations of the agencies do not define **the general public** as a primary target group. Only EU-OSHA devotes a larger share of its activities to address workers/the general public (e.g. practical tools on OHS, communication and awareness-raising campaigns). Cedefop implements one activity targeted at the general public (Europass); Eurofound and the ETF have none. Cedefop considered activities to revise Europass that would increase the relevance of the agency to citizens. Overall, the agencies are not widely known to citizens. However, the use of the agencies' resources has been growing, as reflected in the increasing number of downloads from their web-sites. Finally, as presented in an earlier paragraph, in the context of broader socio-economic changes, it would be reasonable to revisit how representative the agencies' governing institutions are, to ensure that a wider array of views and interests are taken into account.

EU added value

EU added value describes the extent to which an agency has been more effective and efficient in achieving its results and impacts, compared to other existing/ possible arrangements at national or EU level. According to the Better Regulation Guidelines, the concept of added value points to changes that can reasonably be thought to have occurred as a result of the intervention analysed, rather than because of any other factors.

To determine the EU added value of the agencies, we assessed two key elements. First, we analysed the extent to which the contributions of Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF are unique, when compared to those of other agencies and organisations. Second, we explored to what extent the agencies' activities could be substituted by other EU, international or national organisations. Notably, we talk about 'unique' activities in the sense that other organisations or institutions are not concurrently engaged in such activities, in terms of objectives, methodology, target groups and geographical scope. Nevertheless, 'unique' does not necessarily mean that such activity could not be substituted, provided the right level of expertise, resources and time is given to other relevant actors.

According to the data collected, Eurofound's three surveys and follow-up research are the agency's **most unique** outputs; they are repeated regularly, provide comparative data across the EU28, and are easily accessible. No other organisation produces surveys that offer such a combination of thematic coverage, longitudinal data, and geographical scope. Cedefop employs a unique methodology for building EU-wide skills forecasting models: in this field, it is considered among the pioneers at European and international level. The agency has in-depth expertise in the anticipation of skills needs, which would be difficult to substitute. EU-OSHA's network of national focal points is unique both in terms of its thematic coverage and its mode of operation. The analysis of OSHwiki suggests that the most valued parts of this tool present OSH management and organisation as well as legislation and strategies in the EU and the Member States. The most unique feature of the ETF 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.

The four agencies create added value through specific **thematic knowledge** and the **quality of data**, as well as **tools, processes and methodologies** that they apply in their respective working fields. Furthermore, the tripartite governance of Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA contributes to their acceptance as objective research institutions by both employees and employers. A number of well-respected national research institutions also work on the same themes, and could potentially act as **substituting** organisations, but currently their outputs often lack EU-wide comparability and/ or tripartite scrutiny. Numerous EU bodies also possess thematic expertise in the agencies' thematic research fields, but some of these do not publish policy-oriented research reports (e.g. Eurostat), or are primarily policy-making institutions and not knowledge providers (e.g. DG EMPL, DG EAC). Other agencies produce knowledge, but do not cover all of the agencies' thematic fields (e.g. EIGE, FRA).

The outputs of the four agencies are specifically designed to feed into the **policy making of the EU**. EU-OSHA and Cedefop create added value through the support they provide to Member States – or, in the case of the ETF, to the partner countries. Some universities and research institutes at national level could potentially aim to **substitute** this role, but currently they cannot fully replace these agencies. Such bodies tend to focus on scientific research and are therefore further from the policy process (they would also often lack the comparative EU28 dimension). International organisations such as the OECD or ILO possess both the policy focus and comparative perspective. Nevertheless, it would be impossible to fully synchronise the work of these organisations so that they could provide policy support to EU bodies/ DG EMPL, as these organisations have their own stakeholders, objectives and *modus operandi*. Besides, not all the EU countries are members of the OECD.

Eurofound and Cedefop manage **pan-European expert networks**. The modes of operation of Cedefop's Refernet network and Eurofound's Network of National Correspondents are not particularly unique, and are comparable to those of other EU expert networks such as ESPN and FreSsco. At the moment, the agencies use their in-house financial and human resources to manage and coordinate the work of national experts. If a political decision is taken to implement downsizing and cost savings, economies of scale could be achieved if different networks are merged or managed centrally.

The final aspect of the agencies' added value is their **support for Member States/ partner countries**. Cedefop and the ETF tend to provide support to Member States/ partner countries that ask for such support, and do not possess sufficient internal capacity to build quality VET policy. Similarly, EU-OSHA's support is most relevant to Member States that lack the capacity and resources to carry out high-quality OHS analysis at national level, develop OHS assessment tools or organise awareness-raising campaigns. Eurofound offers support through the agency's Stakeholder Enquiry Service. Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA could most likely be substituted by research institutes or think tanks in Member States, provided they have sufficient

human and financial resources and specific thematic knowledge. However, such scenario would be less likely in partner countries, as national research institutes/ think tanks could hardly replace the ETF's participatory approach to involving stakeholders in policy analysis, development and implementation.

We analysed the potential consequences of the **termination** of Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF in terms of (a) terminating the agencies, with the relocation of their activities to other organisations; and (b) terminating the agencies in the sense of ceasing the production of their activities and outputs.

Conceptually, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which all the activities of Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and ETF could be taken over or allocated to a set of other organisations. However, a number of potential risks should be taken into account. The reallocation of activities would take a number of years and would incur costs such as staff resettlement and indemnity payments. In the meantime, the scope of policy-relevant research available to EU institutions and other stakeholders would be reduced significantly. In addition, such a process would entail the risk of losing institutional memory, as well as methodological and/ or longitudinal consistency.

If the four agencies were terminated without their various activities being re-enacted under the umbrella of other organisations, this would result in the loss of all elements of added value. EU institutions, stakeholders and researchers would lose an important source of comparable, cross-European data within the agencies' respective working fields. Chapter 4 presents a more detailed discussion of various future scenarios, including termination, absorption and mergers.

EQ 2: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE MANDATES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE AGENCIES COHERENT AMONG THEMSELVES AND WITH THE ONES OF OTHER BODIES THAT HAVE SIMILAR OBJECTIVES?

This evaluation question relates to the potential for synergies and complementarities and the risk of duplication between the work of each agency and the work carried out by the EU institutions, other stakeholders and decentralised agencies¹²⁶.

In essence, this evaluation question asks: are the four agencies realising synergies, duplications or complementarities (i) among themselves, (ii) with the work carried out by the European Commission and other EU institutions, (iii) with other decentralised agencies, and (iv) with other stakeholders? Each question is answered in turn and a summary is provided in the concluding section (Section 2.5).

2.1 ANALYSIS OF COHERENCE AMONGST AGENCIES

2.1.1 Overlaps in mandates, objectives, governance, audiences/stakeholders, modus operandi and outputs and outcomes

In terms of **mandates and objectives**, there are noticeable overlaps between Cedefop and the ETF in terms of the policy field covered. Interestingly the ETF has a wider mandate (covering human capital) but in recent years has chosen to focus on vocational education and training as the chief means by which it seeks to achieve its objectives in relation to this wider mandate. There is a strong overlap in some of the themes where both agencies are involved, such as qualification frameworks, quality assurance or teacher training. In terms of modus operandi, however, there are significant differences between the two agencies: the ETF works within the context of EU external relations policy and delivers advice "hands-on" in neighbourhood partner countries as well as being involved in knowledge creation and sharing; Cedefop provides support to EU Member States and the Commission through knowledge creation and sharing, although in recent years it has also begun to offer country-level support, e.g. in apprenticeships and skill anticipation systems.

The other notable area of overlap, between Eurofound and EU-OSHA, concerns the extent to which occupational health and safety can be considered a sub-set of "working conditions" which is part of Eurofound's mandate/objectives. Indeed, Eurofound's activities include work on health and safety, for example as far as the European Working Conditions Survey (ECWS) and the related *Health and well-being at work* questions are concerned. However, EU-OSHA was created when Eurofound was already established, and its Founding Regulation sets out a very specific focus. In terms of modus operandi, whilst both agencies are involved in knowledge creation and sharing, EU-OSHA works in different ways related to the network of national focal points that exists in the policy field, its focus on delivering practical knowledge and tools, and also to its running of communication campaigns to raise awareness about OSH amongst workers/the general public, which sets it apart from Eurofound whose focus is on research and policy-makers.

In relation to **governance**, three of the four agencies have tripartite Governing Boards, the exception being the ETF which does not have social partner representation and which also differs by having independent experts appointed by the European Parliament and observers from Candidate Countries. Eurofound and EU-OSHA respectively have advisory committees and advisory groups appointed by the Governing Board and the administration to provide strategic guidance and feedback.

¹²⁶ The key terms are defined as follows: *duplication* occurs where agencies replicate activities leading to inefficiencies; *complementarity* is achieved where agencies carry out activities that are distinct and complementary to one another (either by accident or design); *synergy* is achieved where agencies cooperate to use mutually complementary skills that deliver results that are greater than the sum of the parts (maximum efficiency), and *overlap* is regarded in this context as a neutral term.

With regards to the composition of the agencies' respective Governing Boards, there is an overlap between Cedefop and the ETF (16 Member States – 57% of the total – are represented by the same organisation in both Board, often the Ministry of Education or its equivalent, of which 6 or 21% of the total by the same individuals), and between the tripartite agencies. The overlap between the ETF and Eurofound and EU-OSHA in terms of their respective Governing Boards is limited.

Among the three tripartite agencies' Governing Boards, out of a total of 84 represented stakeholders (government, employers and unions for each of the 28 Member States), 17 or 19% are represented by the same organisation¹²⁷ in all three Governing Boards; of these 17 stakeholders which are represented by the same organisation, 9 are unions representatives and 7 employers representatives. When looking at the different pairs of tripartite Agencies, there is some overlap at organisational level (up to 45% between Eurofound and EU-OSHA's Boards).

In terms of **audiences and stakeholder groups**, all the agencies work with governments, social partners and researchers, although in different ways and to different degrees that reflect the nature of their respective policy fields and in the case of the ETF the nature of the countries concerned (in some countries social partners are much less developed than in others and the research community in neighbourhood countries is in general much less well developed than in Europe). The agencies' Founding Regulations also set different target groups for each agency: 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", the description of Eurofound's aim mentions advice to the "Community institutions". The ETF's aim is specifically aimed at partner countries, "in the context of EU external relations policies". Finally, EU-OSHA's stated aim clearly identifies the EU institutions and its tripartite stakeholders as a recipient of their work: "the Community bodies, the Member States, the social partners and those involved in the field of safety and health at work".

Regarding **modus operandi**, in general terms the agencies differ in terms of the mix of, on the one hand, research, knowledge creation and sharing activities directed primarily at policy-makers, and, on the other hand, the development and provision of practical tools and advice which might also be aimed at a wider audience. Cedefop and Eurofound conduct similar knowledge creation and sharing activities, undertaking research of various types and producing outputs for use principally by governments and social partners in policy-making activities. Nevertheless, the mix between creation and sharing varies, and Cedefop is also strongly identified with the development and 'maintenance' of practical tools such as the EQF, Europass and the Skills Panorama. Eurofound's work, on the other hand, is structured to an important extent by its surveys of employers and employees (EWCS, ECS, EQLS), follow-up research and other policy-oriented studies.

In contrast, the ETF stands out from the other agencies by virtue of its "on the ground" work in partner countries that it conducts as an integral part of its work alongside knowledge creation and sharing, which means it is less focused on undertaking the type of trans-national research that is a feature of the other agencies. It should be noted, however, that both Cedefop and Eurofound have begun, in recent years, to offer tailored support to countries, although this remains limited and specific.

EU-OSHA is unique in its emphasis on campaigns to raise awareness on the issues it focuses on, in its strong focus on delivering practical knowledge and tools to companies and in promoting the exchange of existing knowledge (rather than producing a lot of new knowledge), although dissemination and communication is also an important part of the work of the other agencies.

¹²⁷ Ministry or department in the case of Member States' representation.

The EU agencies can respectively count on a national level network to provide inputs into its work. Cedefop can call on its network of national partner institutions, called Refernet, and Eurofound on its network of national correspondents to gather information on policy developments at national level and to provide inputs to the European Observatory of Working Life (EurWork) and the European Monitoring Centre on Change. EU-OSHA' network of national focal points is different however because it makes inputs to the agency's work but it also assists it with dissemination of its outputs.

In terms of **outputs and outcomes**, there are also important differences, and therefore limited overlaps, in what the agencies strive to achieve and how they plan to reach their intended outcomes, which are visible in their planning and reporting documents:

Eurofound is very much centred on its research outputs. Important resources are allocated to collect data through its own survey tools, observatories and monitoring mechanisms, through its network of correspondents who provide information on policy developments and practices in their countries and also through external contractors, and also through the analysis of external data. The main outputs of the agency, resulting from this collection and analysis of primary and secondary data, consist of reports and databases, with a particular focus on Member States' policies and practices. Accordingly, a number of the agency's key performance indicators focus on the exposure, uptake and recognition of these research outputs in the media, in the academic literature and in policy documents, along with the contribution of Eurofound to policy developments through events.

Cedefop is also geared towards research, data collection and analysis, using among other sources its Refernet network to gather information at Member State level, its own survey tools as well as contractors for specific studies, and accordingly publishes a number of studies and publications. The agency however puts a stronger emphasis on delivering messages to policy-makers through briefing notes which are much shorter than typical research documents. The agency also has a strong link with the Commission, which is in line with its mandate, and accordingly uses the number of references in EU policy documents, the number of active contributions to EU senior stakeholder meetings that support policy implementation and the number of written contributions to policy documents of EU as key performance indicators. Cedefop also focuses on the creation of tools, methodologies and indicators, and the events and workshops it organises are key to most activities.

The ETF has a completely different focus in that the agency delivers on-hand support to third countries. As a result, almost all the agency's outputs and outcomes are country specific, such as the request for assistance by EC services received and answered, the capacity-building of national policy-makers and the mutual learning activities, or the different diagnostics of national states. When the ETF develops common tools or platforms, they are also geared towards those specific countries, such as its learning programme on "Skills need anticipation for shaping education, training and labour market policies" aimed at partner countries policy-makers, which includes technical and working group sessions as well as study visits, or the ETF's qualification platform. Accordingly, the description of the ETF's activities outcomes and the related indicators are focused on changes in the countries where the agency intervenes. For example, the number of countries which have adopted or are in advanced stage of new VET legislation or have had their VET governance reviewed or have improved for the strategic project on VET governance, are all used as outcomes indicators for the VET governance strategic project.

EU-OSHA, as already noted, focuses on awareness raising as a core part of its mandate. Accordingly, the biggest single line in its budget refers to its campaign (around 20% of its total annual budget and 800,000 items of campaign material distributed in 2016, in 25 languages – campaign guide, case studies, leaflet, poster on good practice award, etc.), which is complemented by other awareness raising

actions. The agency's core business statistics, such as the reach of online user and the reach of users through networking, also reflect this focus on promotion of OSH. Another line of outputs consists of the online tools aimed at practitioners, such as the OSHwiki or the OiRA (Online interactive Risk Assessment, a web platform that enables the creation of sectoral risk assessment tools in any language in an easy and standardised way, based on the Dutch risk assessment instrument RI&E). However, EU-OSHA also produces research and data, through its own survey of employers (ESENER) and its OSH overview reports.

2.1.2 Inter-agency cooperation mechanisms

There has been a certain level of pressure on the agencies to avoid duplicating efforts and to exploit potential complementarities and synergies, in a context of limited budgets in the past few years. To achieve this, they have developed a number of formal and informal mechanisms to exchange relevant information and cooperate as early as possible in the policy cycle, consisting of bilateral frameworks of cooperation and annual joint action plans implementing those frameworks.

The efforts to implement formal cooperation mechanisms have been focused on the pairs of agencies with the strongest potential overlaps, as identified at the level of mandates, objectives and modus operandi, with formal cooperation dating back to 1997 for example for the ETF and Cedefop.

The collaborative activities that have taken place under the cooperative agreements span a broad range of areas, including analytical work and methodologies, data collection, report writing, observatories and advisory committees, as well as communication and administrative areas. Evidently they deliver benefits. Knowledge exchange activities have two-fold benefits: the first level of benefits is related to improvements in the quality of methodologies and outputs, building on each other's expertise and experience. The second level is that those activities can be used as a platform to develop joint projects, by building inter-personal trust between the staff of different agencies (and other organisations), one of the most oft-cited factor of success of collaborative projects. However, most cooperation activities consist of knowledge exchange and joint or reciprocal participation at events, rather than joint projects and joint outputs.

Evidence from the case studies shows that cooperation has also delivered a number of benefits, which draw on the complementarities in thematic and methodological expertise and experience between the agencies and the other actors involved, their access to different data sources as well as their different geographical coverage where the ETF or other international stakeholders are involved. The case studies demonstrate the range of benefits as follows:

- First and foremost, collaboration can mean the output is better than if the Agencies had worked alone. ETF and Cedefop staff reported that the guides on skills anticipation they produced through joint working were better than if the Agencies had not collaborated; as one interviewee from the ILO phrased it, *"if you cook a soup with the same ingredients for too long, it becomes tasteless"*.¹²⁸ Similarly, interviewees reported that the EU-OSHA/Eurofound report on stress would not have developed an output with such a wide perspective alone.
- Secondly, cooperation can feed back into Agencies' individual activities as well. The skills anticipation case study shows that data analysis on this topic is seen as very beneficial by the ETF for its capacity building activities with partner countries; for its part, Cedefop has started doing capacity building with EU countries, liaising with the ETF to use their practical experience of working with national stakeholders. Furthermore, the joint collection of data on skills needs

¹²⁸ Case study on skills anticipation

with the OECD in 2014 inspired individual publications by both Agencies on future skills needs in their respective geographical regions.

- Thirdly, collaboration opens up greater dissemination possibilities. For instance, the report on stress produced by Eurofound and EU-OSHA was promoted by both agencies, and together they could reach out to a greater audience, building on both Agencies' dissemination networks as well as the additional effect of embedding the report in EU-OSHA's Healthy Workplaces campaign.
- Fourthly, complementarities have in several cases been exploited to deliver synergies, where the joint outputs are greater than the sum of each individual contribution. This synergy can be achieved for the agencies themselves (e.g. Eurofound and Cedefop having access to a full large-scale European company survey for half the costs¹²⁹), or from the perspective of the users of the outputs, as is the case when practitioners have access to the guides on skills anticipation and matching which draw on the knowledge and experience of Cedefop, the ETF and ILO in one single document¹³⁰.
- Finally, successful cooperation can sow the seeds for further joint working. After the joint EU-OSHA/Eurofound stress report was published, EU-OSHA decided to develop a new joint report in the framework of the next campaign, the 2016-17 Healthy Workplaces for All Ages Campaign.¹³¹ On this occasion, EU-OSHA led the report and invited several agencies to participate: Eurofound, Cedefop and the European Institute for Gender Equality. The result was the release in June 2017 of the publication 'Towards age-friendly work in Europe: a life-course perspective on work and ageing from EU Agencies'¹³², where each agency contributed by developing a chapter.

The experiences of agencies working together to prepare joint outputs highlight a number of common key **success factors** and **obstacles** to cooperation that have been identified through the case studies. Regarding success factors, there needs to be commonality of interest. This commonality can be in a thematic area, e.g. skills anticipation between Cedefop and the ETF, psychosocial well-being between Eurofound and EU-OSHA. But it can take other forms as well: e.g. on the European Company Survey, Eurofound was looking for an organisation to share the costs of the next ECS wave, and Cedefop made a good candidate since the initial ECS already had an important focus on skills and they wanted to implement a European company survey but had not been able to mobilise the budget. Joining forces with Eurofound was a good way to share the costs as well as their complementary expertise.

Alone, however, a common interest is not sufficient: there also needs to be complementarity between the different parties in terms of the following:

- expertise: e.g. in their collaboration on surveys, Eurofound has brought the experience of having implemented three waves of the European Company Survey, the design of the survey as well as an existing questionnaire, whilst Cedefop has brought the thematic expertise on topics related to skills (skill needs and gaps, recruitment and skills development), as well as the experience of having implemented other skills-related surveys (European Jobs and Skills Survey) and the lessons of its pilot employer survey on skill needs; and/or

¹²⁹ Case study on surveys of employers and employees

¹³⁰ Compendium of methodological guides on anticipation and matching of skills supply and demand available at http://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_534345/lang--en/index.htm

¹³¹ Further information on the campaign is available in the EU-OSHA website: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/healthy-workplaces-campaigns/2016-17-campaign-healthy-workplaces-all-ages> (accessed 28th July)

¹³² EU-OSHA, Cedefop, Eurofound and EIGE (2017), Joint report on Towards age-friendly work in Europe: a life-course perspective on work and ageing from EU Agencies, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/towards-age-friendly-work-europe-life-course-perspective-work/view> (accessed 28th July)

- geographical coverage: e.g. in skills anticipation Cedefop covers EU MS, whilst ETF deals with the pre-assistance, neighbourhood and partner countries, and international organisations like the ILO cover the rest of the world); and/or
- information sources/datasets: e.g. Eurofound's Working Conditions survey data from an employee perspective was complementary to EU-OSHA's ESENER data in the field of psychosocial risks at work, from the perspective of employers.

In terms of the processes of cooperation, advanced planning and an effective division of roles and responsibilities are important to success. In the case of their collaboration on the report on psychosocial stress, Eurofound and EU-OSHA allocated responsibility for sections of the report to the different organisations according to expertise right from the start and also peer reviewed one another's chapters; clarity in this regard was critical to success and mutual feedback enriched the results. Where such factors are not in place, difficulties can result. In the case of the guides on skills anticipation, a cause of the long publication timeline was the way in which roles were organised: Cedefop was responsible for editing, ETF for printing, and the ILO for the technical review – interviewees note that it may have been more efficient to have just one organisation responsible for the entire publishing process, with the other organisations making a financial contribution. Regular on-going communication is also important, e.g. as cited in the case of the Eurofound/Cedefop cooperation on the European Company Survey where contact through their nominated experts has been a driving force.

Another set of success factors are linked to the level of trust between the experts involved, which has usually been high due to previous contacts and inter-personal knowledge. This is indeed a possibly unintended effect of bringing together experts from different agencies to seminars, conferences, study visits and other knowledge-exchange mechanisms. While this may not lead directly to joint outputs and synergetic cooperation, it can pave the way for future cooperative endeavours. Indeed, trust takes time to develop and this is well illustrated by the skills anticipation case study where cooperation has spanned a number of years. In this case, a success factor has been not just a high level of trust but the opportunity for informality that comes with it. Informality is, indeed, so highly valued that, in the words of one informant, "we almost deliberately try to avoid bureaucracy because it might slow things down".

The cooperation frameworks never appear as an obstacle to cooperation, as they are flexible enough to accommodate a wide range of cooperation activities and to bring in inputs from across the hierarchies of the organisations. Thus, the initiative for cooperation sometimes comes from the GB / Bureau / Director level (e.g. decision to implement a joint European Company Survey between Eurofound and Cedefop) and at other times from the experts involved in a particular topic (e.g. methodological guides to anticipating and matching skills and jobs prepared by Cedefop, the ETF and ILO).

Also of importance to the success of cooperative activities is the support of organisational hierarchies and Governing Boards, which generally have a positive view of cooperative projects, and the goodwill of the parties involved to accommodate the needs and requirements of the other, as is the case for example in the ongoing European Company Survey, jointly developed by Eurofound and Cedefop. In this case, Eurofound accepted to integrate Cedefop as a truly equal partner (sharing half of the costs but also half of the responsibilities and decision powers) when it was initially looking for a junior partner.

Among the obstacles and difficulties faced in cooperative projects, the cooperation inevitably involves some transaction costs (the time and resources involved in managing the cooperation itself and reaching agreement between the parties involved) and extra delays due to different timetables, workloads, priorities, conflicting deadlines, etc., as evidenced in different ways across all the case studies. Such transaction costs may offset some of the efficiency gains achieved by cooperation but neither can be easily quantified. The actors involved in cooperation activities can mitigate those risks with additional planning compared to what would be expected in a

project implemented by a single organisation. Defining clear deadlines, responsibilities and detailed expectations in terms of process and quality are ways to avoid future problems, as well as clear and regular communication.

While the current cooperation mechanisms and joint action plans have led to a number of benefits and have enabled the identification of the most prominent areas of overlap, there are a number of limitations to the current state of play which reveal that cooperation could be more synergistic and more strategic.

First, most cooperative activity is based on the complementarity of the agencies and, whilst this delivers clear benefits for end users, it does not go further to exploit potential synergies: joint projects are not numerous, although the management of one agency (Eurofound) pointed out that in fact more projects are considered, but not necessarily pursued due to considerations of effectiveness or efficiency. There are examples of effective cooperation where agencies make the most of their complementary expertise, but these are mostly one-off (such as the joint Eurofound/EU-OSHA report on psychosocial stress) rather than on-going and with multiple outputs (as in the case of skills anticipation between Cedefop and the ETF). Arguably synergy would lead to innovation in the space between agencies, but evidence of this is lacking.

Secondly, in some areas there has been limited cooperation (as far as joint outputs are concerned) between the agencies despite common interests and where one agency has a broad general interest in the area. This is evidenced by the case study on social dialogue in the employment domain which is core to Eurofound's work, and which is also a topic of interest to Cedefop and the ETF, as far as it affects VET governance. There is potential for Agencies to play stronger 'conceptual leadership' roles in situations such as these.

Thirdly, another feature of current cooperative activity is that there are areas of strategic importance where the agencies cooperate little beyond the regular exchange of knowledge and information and the occasional participation in each other's events and conferences. The case study on migration, for example, has shown that while Cedefop, the ETF and Eurofound each address the issue of migration in different ways, there was very limited collaboration between the three agencies in this field between 2011 and 2016.

Fourthly, the underlying process for cooperation is based on the exchange of work programmes in the framework of cooperation agreements that provide lists of thematic areas of interest and potential coordination mechanisms (overall, for exchanges of information). The development of the different multi-annual and annual work programmes is thus coordinated, as the agencies that have signed collaborative agreements share and comment on their respective programming documents ahead of their approval. However, this is at a comparatively late stage in the planning process, once work programmes have been drafted and it is a *bi-lateral* process between individual agencies.

Fifthly, questions should be asked about what incentives currently exist to foster close joint working. As interviews revealed, agencies are acutely aware of the need to avoid duplication since there is an ongoing discourse to this effect at political levels in the EU. Avoiding duplication is also in the self-interest of agencies since it helps to highlight their distinctiveness. In contrast, it is difficult to identify any incentives that encourage synergistic collaboration and the development of innovations in the space between agencies (apart from a desire to improve project outcomes). Indeed, as just noted, cooperation comes with transaction costs which may offset savings from cooperation to some degree and these are almost inevitably higher in synergistic collaboration than straightforward information exchange or joint writing of reports. Hence there is a cost disincentive to closer working, accentuated during the current period of resource constraints. This needs to be recognised in any future attempts to encourage closer working. Furthermore, these features of the system also mean that

trying to achieve closer cooperation simply through a process of 'exhortation' is unlikely to be wholly successful.

In light of these limitations, there is evidently scope for more thoroughgoing, inter-agency joint planning and cooperation around broad policy themes related to European social and economic needs and DG EMPL priorities. In this respect, DG EMPL is pivotal in influencing the working programmes of the agencies in order to avoid duplications and explore complementarities. This role is seen as key by many stakeholders interviewed. At the same time, it would be possible to envisage a situation where there was multi-lateral planning involving all relevant agencies around identified policy fields which might generate more thoroughgoing cooperation to address important social and economic needs.

2.2 ANALYSIS OF COHERENCE BETWEEN AGENCIES AND THE EU INSTITUTIONS, IN PARTICULAR THE COMMISSION

2.2.1 Overview

In the case of all the Agencies, the relationship with the EC is that the Commission both oversees their work and at the same time is one of the consumers of their outputs, although the oversight role and the nature and extent of the outputs consumed varies from agency to agency, partly according to the needs of the policy field and different Founding Regulations.

The most direct ways in which the Commission is involved in the agencies is via desk or liaison officers, having a role in Governing Boards, Bureaus and making inputs into programming cycles.

Another issue to consider is how agencies interact with DGs beyond DG EMPL (their Partner DG) especially since this can raise important issues of coordination and coherence. Indeed, the agencies interact with a wide range of DGs. Such interactions tend to be based around specific subjects. In general, such activities with other DGs did not emerge as giving cause for concern in any of the evidence sources consulted in relation to Cedefop, Eurofound or EU-OSHA. However, in relation to the ETF its position as working in the VET/ labour market field and also in the context of EU external relations policy means that important issues of coordination and coherence can arise since it responds to requests from a large number of EC services (mostly from the EEAS/EU Delegations) and its remit covers policy territory spanning DG DEVCO and DG NEAR as well as DG EMPL¹³³.

There is also cooperation around specific issues or projects between the agencies and other EU institutions. For instance, Cedefop and Eurydice work together on the Learning Mobility Scoreboard and on the Eurydice country reports Cedefop also collaborates closely with EUROSTAT in respect of the Skills Panorama, and generally exploiting and improving data and variables on VET, lifelong learning and skills. In general, such cooperation can be significant for the individual activities themselves but are minor adjuncts to the main relationships in which the agencies are involved and do not give rise to much concern amongst stakeholders.

There are also important synergies with EU Presidencies, with all EU-focused agencies reporting events (conferences, workshops, launching events) realised in the framework of EU Presidencies. For example, Cedefop produces description of national VET systems for Presidency countries. Through this channel, the agencies reach wider audiences because of the media spotlight on EU Presidencies, while the Member States which hold the Presidencies need that type of event to maintain the attention of the stakeholders and the media.

¹³³ Ecorys (2016) External Evaluation of the ETF

The agencies interact with the Commission in a variety of ways depending upon their objectives and modus operandi. Agencies may be invited to input thematic expertise into Commission work or, in the case of the ETF, country expertise as well. They may also be invited to participate in working groups (such as the participation of Cedefop and the ETF in the Education and Training 2020 Vocational Education and Training Working Group). Cedefop has made expert contributions and been instrumental in the development of important tools over a number of years, such as the European Qualifications Framework and the inventory on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (the Commission will soon take over financing and management of the latter from Cedefop). EU-OSHA is distinctive in that, through its network of focal points, it provides a two-way communication channel between the Commission and Member States. Information sharing was reported to be working well. The ETF is also distinctive insofar as it works according to requests from the Commission services and also EU Delegations in partner countries. A large number of requests are received each year and from a broad range of DG's. Typically, around 10% of requests are unplanned and a slightly higher percentage is cancelled, requiring great flexibility on the part of the ETF.

Evidence highlights scope for improved coordination. On the side of the agencies, the view was expressed that the Commission could call upon the agencies more systematically/ automatically or bring them into policy/development processes at earlier stages; on the Commission side, the view was expressed that the agencies could also anticipate better and in advance the Commission's needs¹³⁴. Specific instances where coordination could be improved, include DG Employment's programme of studies. Cedefop interviewees noted that they often took part in study steering groups to ensure coordination with their activities and in order to input expertise; similarly, Eurofound reported that sometimes it is formally invited to take part in tender evaluation committees with the Commission to help coordinate various research efforts. Since the Commission is, in such cases, in the position of being able to have the overview of activities, the onus falls as much upon the Commission as the agencies to ensure coordination, as was noted in the ETF external evaluation. All in all, the agencies and DG EMPL use a range of both formal and informal mechanisms by which duplications are minimised and complementarity/ synergy maximised, and such issues were not identified in the interviews as a major issue.

Three agencies (i.e. excluding ETF), as well as DG EMPL, have their own network of national experts or similar (correspondents, focal points, experts, Refernet). While each network is geared towards different profiles and domains of expertise, there could be scope for some economies of scale in managing all these networks, which is a very time-consuming task that requires specific skills and experience. At the moment, all agencies have to have that expertise in-house to find these experts, manage them and coordinate their inputs. However, there is scope to rationalise this structure, in a similar move to what DG EMPL did when it replaced the European Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion and the network responsible for the Analytical Support on the Socio-Economic Impact of Social Protection Reforms (ASISP) by the single European Social Policy Network, which also acts as the secretariat to the MISSOC (Mutual Information Systems on Social Protection). The selection and management of the experts as well as the contacts with them could be centralised, with only one team involved in managing the networks and the requests to the experts. If management of the networks would be centralised, it is important to maintain the specific thematic scope and ensure effective coordination and smooth information flows between the network managers and experts who use the network's outputs within the agencies.

As far as the coherence between the agencies and the EU institutions are concerned, survey respondents' views provide a useful overview on the question of the extent to

¹³⁴ In response to such point the agencies referred to the planning process, *ad hoc* requests, BLO offices and other measures they are using to anticipate the Commission's needs as swiftly as possible.

which agencies overlap with the work of EU institutions, bearing in mind that these are opinions based on a variety of experiences and understanding of the topic. In the case of almost all groups of respondents affiliated to all the agencies, over half of the respondents believe that complementarities/ synergies exist in some or most areas (the exception being EU-OSHA stakeholders), with 'some areas' being a much more common response than 'most areas'. Amongst ETF staff, the percentage of respondents believing that complementarities/ synergies exist is over 90%, which might reflect their operating environment which is different to a number of ways to those of the other agencies and which reflects the steps the agency takes to ensure its activities are in line with partner country needs and capitalise on the work of other bodies.

The percentages for complementarity/ synergy tend to significantly exceed the proportions of respondents who believe that duplications exist. Where respondents do indicate that duplications exist, these tend overwhelmingly to be in some areas rather than most areas. Staff in the agencies tend to be much more likely to report the absence of duplication than other groups. They are also likely to be amongst the most knowledgeable respondents (as indicated by the relatively low numbers of 'don't know' responses) which may (as above) suggest that at a detailed level the perception of duplication is different to when respondents are further removed from activities.

2.2.2 Cedefop

Cedefop has strengthened its Brussels Liaison Office, to further its cooperation with the institutions of the European Union, including the European Parliament and the Council.

While there is no formal cooperation mechanism between them, Cedefop has kept a strong relationship with its former parent DG (Education and Culture). Current relationships with DG EAC and its Executive Agency EACEA include collaboration with Eurydice, for example on the Learning Mobility Scoreboard, which was designed to provide a framework for monitoring progress made by European countries in creating a positive environment supporting learner mobility. The objective of this collaboration was to optimise user experience despite the fact that data is collected separately by Cedefop (VET) and Eurydice (Higher Education), which was achieved through the creation of a joint EACEA/Eurydice - Cedefop platform¹³⁵; however, the two scoreboards follow different structures, which is explained by the specificities of each sector.

To develop the Skills Panorama, Cedefop, under the strategic steering of DG EMPL, worked with Eurostat to integrate its data into the platform, designed as "a central access point for data, information and intelligence on skill needs in occupations and sectors that provides a European perspective on trends in skill supply and demand and possible skill mismatches, while also giving access to national data and sources"¹³⁶. Cedefop successfully integrated Eurostat's Labour Force Survey data and national datasets, along with its own data from its European Skills and Job Survey, Skills Forecasts and Making Skills Work data, as well as OECD PIAAC and PISA.

2.2.3 ETF

As well as working with numerous DGs, the ETF also plays a key role in respect of EU Delegations in partner countries. The ETF external evaluation found that "the complexities of the relationships with the EC services and Delegations continue to reduce efficiency and effectiveness", and recommended that further steps should be taken to "improve communication and coordination between the ETF and EC so that

¹³⁵ <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/mobility-scoreboard>

¹³⁶ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/eu-skills-panorama>

the ETF is clear as to how the priorities of different DGs are to be balanced"¹³⁷. The update of the ETF evaluation found progress has been made on this front, including through "more efficient" bi-annual structured meetings between the ETF and EC services, which include among others DG DEVCO, DG NEAR and the EEAS, and through the encouragement from the EC to the 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, while others are less aware of the possibilities of using the ETF's services which can be a result of a turnover in staff within the EU Delegations. One programme submitted for funding by a partner country was deemed not fit for purpose and an EC representative recognised that the ETF had not been involved in setting up the programme and subsequently raised this fact with the Delegation.

2.2.4 Eurofound

Eurofound has a Brussels Liaison Office with 3 members of staff (a Head of office and two information officers), whose objective is feed Eurofound's research into the policy-making process. Brussels liaison officers have been invited to speak at high level events, such as EU Presidencies, OECD or ILO events, hearings at the European Parliament, etc. The liaison office also monitors closely EU tenders to avoid duplication with new and emerging lines of work by all parts of the European Commission (besides, Eurofound is sometimes invited by the European Commission to participate in tender evaluation committees, where there is a thematic overlap with their activities).

The overlap between Eurofound's network of correspondents and DG EMPL's European Social Policy Network ESPN is limited as far as the experts themselves are concerned (both networks include the same expert organisations in only five EU countries). There are also important differences in the thematic areas in which their contributions are required (for instance, the ESPN provides the EC with contributions related to labour markets, migrants and minimum income and taxation which are more distant from the work of Eurofound's correspondents network; meanwhile, the Eurofound's correspondents network works much more on social dialogue/ industrial relations). However, there may be scope for economies of scale between the two networks (and other EMPL agencies networks), as discussed earlier in Section 2.2.1.

Examples of cooperation with other DGs include a collaboration with DG JUST, which used Eurofound's data in the preparatory phases of the "New start for working parents" initiative, including the impact assessment. Eurofound responded to DG JUST's request by establishing direct communication between Eurofound researchers and DG JUST, adjusting the scope of their work and providing data before it was published. Eurofound's documents are cited four times in the Commission Communication¹³⁸, including a reference in the opening paragraph of the documents with regards to the economic loss due to the gender employment gap. Eurofound's research was also used to identify success factors in developing policies for working parents. Another example is the "Future of Manufacturing¹³⁹" project that started as a proposal from the European Parliament and was entrusted to Eurofound by DG GROW through a delegation agreement in 2015, with a view to run the pilot project for four years, with a transferred budget of EUR 1.6 m.

¹³⁷ Ecorys (2016) External Evaluation of the ETF, pp. 139-140.
http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Evaluation_of_the ETF_EN

¹³⁸ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. An Initiative To Support Work-Life Balance For Working Parents and Carers. COM(2017) 252 final. Accessed at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0252&from=EN>

¹³⁹ See project description at <https://reshoring.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/FOME%20-%20project%20description%20-%20flyer.PDF>

2.2.5 EU-OSHA

The essence of the relationship between EU-OSHA and DG EMPL is that the agency provides expertise, produces content and communicates to the national level and focal points, and also the other way around, channelling the needs of the national level and focal points up to the European level. EU-OSHA's expertise inputs to the EU policy cycle in OSH-related matters include ad-hoc requests which are analysed and decided by the Board.

The mandate and activities of EU-OSHA 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 occupational safety and health (OSH) and rationalise the bodies created in this area by previous Council Decisions. The Committee's remit is to assist the European Commission in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of activities in the fields of safety and health at work, in particular by: giving opinions on EU initiatives in the area of OSH (e.g. draft proposals for new legislation, EU programmes/ strategies, any other EU initiatives having impact on health and safety policy); contributing pro-actively to identifying OSH policy priorities and to establishing relevant programmes/ strategies; and encouraging the exchange of views and experience between Member States and stakeholders, operating as in interface between EU and national level.

While EU-OSHA is focused on technical expertise and awareness and communication, the ACSH is more closely involved in decision-making. The strongest link between the EU-OSHA and the Advisory Committee is the fact that EU-OSHA Board members have to be members or alternates of ACSH.

Further cooperation on European level is with Sectoral social committees (social partners from different countries coming together from different sectors). EU-OSHA is invited in these committees and provides information for them to do campaigns, etc.

2.3 ANALYSIS OF COHERENCE BETWEEN AGENCIES AND OTHER DECENTRALISED AGENCIES

2.3.1 Overview

With regards to the relationships between the EMPL agencies and other EU decentralised agencies, they work in different areas and overlaps are therefore marginal. Both formal and informal mechanisms for collaboration exist, and no major issues of concern were raised by interviewees and participants to the surveys and consultation.

It is worth noting that all the agencies participate in the network of agencies, in the framework of which the Heads of the EU agencies adopted the Dublin Agenda in 2015. The first priority of this Strategy Agenda is "sharing services and capabilities between agencies, as a way to pursue efficiency".

2.3.2 Cedefop

Beyond the ETF and Eurofound, and to a lesser extent EU-OSHA, Cedefop does not undertake much cooperative activity with other decentralised agencies with regard to producing outputs in light of its mandate and objectives. Indeed, cooperation with international organisations such as the OECD and the ILO more frequently appear in its reporting than cooperation with other non-DG EMPL agencies. In respect of corporate services, Cedefop has worked with other agencies via relevant networks and meetings and has, for example, contributed to the shared services catalogue, offering support to agencies in all horizontal services (HR, IT, procurement, facilities). In 2016 it also participated in ENISA's pan-European cyber crisis cooperation exercise to enhance its ICT security infrastructure.

2.3.3 Eurofound

Cooperation is formalised between Eurofound and EIGE through a cooperation agreement since 2010 and joint action plans. EIGE uses Eurofound's data on the quality of work; there is collaboration for example on the gender equality index, as Eurofound contributes with data concerning the domains of work and working time from their survey on working conditions. From EIGE's perspective, it is important to ensure that any data collected is disaggregated by gender, which is the case at Eurofound. Eurofound also Memorandum of Understanding with FRA.

2.3.4 EU-OSHA

EU-OSHA and EIGE adopted a framework of cooperation in 2010, on the back of the increasing recognition of the importance of the gender dimension to OSH. The framework covers exchange of information between the two agencies, dissemination of public information and publications related to each other's activities, invitations to meetings and conferences and sharing of expertise and experience. The two agencies also exchange and review their respective work programmes to identify additional opportunities for collaboration as the agencies move into fields of work and develop new activities.

EU-OSHA also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ECHA in 2010, "in order to develop synergies and share knowledge on matters of mutual interest through increased cooperation and, in particular, through active information exchange"¹⁴⁰. Through the MoU, they endeavour to collaborate technically on the common areas of interest, to implement joint communication activities, including risk communication and joint approaches to the media and information campaigns.

Given EU-OSHA's work on dangerous substances management at the workplace and the renewed interest in the topic since the Governing Board decided in 2015 that the campaign theme for 2018-2019 would be "establishing a prevention culture on dangerous substances and targeting specific groups of workers".

The fieldwork has also highlighted ad-hoc collaborations between EU-OSHA and FRA (for example on severe forms of labour exploitation), as well as to a smaller extent with the European Marine Safety Agency, the European Railway Safety Agency, the ECDC (on infectious diseases and OSH) and with CHAFEA.

2.3.5 ETF

The ETF does not have any formal cooperation agreements with other decentralised agencies outside the agreements with Cedefop and Eurofound. Their work is predominantly with the EU Delegations and other EC Services outside their parent DG, DG EMPL, especially the European External Action Service (EEAS) but also with a range of other DGs including DG NEAR, DG DEVCO, DG HOME and DG ENTR.

2.4 ANALYSIS OF COHERENCE BETWEEN AGENCIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

2.4.1 National stakeholders

With regards to the coherence between the agencies and the work of national stakeholders, it is worth noting that Member States are represented at the Board of the four agencies (tripartite and non-tripartite), which already provides a first mechanism to ensure some coherence between the two, both in steering the work of the agencies and in disseminating their work in EU countries.

¹⁴⁰ Memorandum of Understanding between the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), available at <https://osha.europa.eu/en/file/53601/n>

EU-OSHA is different to the other agencies because of its network of focal points. The consultations carried out in the framework of the interview programme show that this allows for national stakeholders to use the information provided by EU-OSHA, often as a “starting point” to establish new standards. The EU-OSHA outputs are also deemed very useful in providing a European perspective and to compare standards and approaches between Member States. Overall, the interviews show that the EU-OSHA outputs are valued by the national stakeholders, which is also indicative of coherence. We also found evidence of collaborations between EU-OSHA and national research institutes, for example around the Foresight methodology.

The ETF also stands out (as already highlighted) because of the nature of its work, which involves in-depth cooperation with national actors in the partner countries where it is engaged. The 2016 evaluation of the ETF found that this cooperation with national stakeholders was working well and, in the case of Candidate Countries, allowed the ETF to make significant contributions to helping countries to integrate into the EU coordination process for vocational education and training (the Copenhagen process). In all partner countries the ETF supports the development of national strategies and reform programmes while also ensuring the development of national ownership. At the same time, the evaluation found there was scope to further engage social partners and stakeholders.

In contrast, the general *modus operandi* for Cedefop and Eurofound in respect of individual countries (EU Member States) is for the Agencies to use a variety of working methods including European level studies that compare and contrast countries as well as country-specific reports. Generally, Member States use the reports and tools as they deem appropriate without direct Agency help (in line with the principle of subsidiarity). However, Cedefop and Eurofound also respond to requests for support from Member States, such as when Cedefop supported Greece and Cyprus “in their work to establish National Qualifications Frameworks”¹⁴¹ in 2015, following a formal request by the Greek Ministry of Education and Labour the previous year and its subsequent inclusion in the Agency’s work programme. Overall, during the evaluation period we observed Cedefop’s move towards increasing support to Member States. Cedefop has taken up a knowledge broker role in apprenticeship reviews or developing national skills anticipation systems. Cedefop has been providing country-specific support only upon request from the Member States and it proved to be a successful strategy in establishing policy learning and implementation networks. Eurofound also created a stakeholder enquiry service, through which stakeholders can request small studies not originally foreseen in the work programmes. In 2015 for example, Eurofound carried out a study on linking information and consultation procedures at the request of a chemical social partner, and a study on maternity leave provisions in EU Member States at the request of the European Parliament’s women’s rights and gender equality committee (FEMM). Recently, Cedefop has also embarked on provision of support to countries regarding apprenticeships. In general, however, support to individual countries, whilst gaining in significance and being important to the countries concerned, remains small part of its work overall.

2.4.2. International stakeholders

With regards to international stakeholders, the review of their links with agencies, generally paints a picture of complementarity and synergy rather than duplication. International cooperation depends on both formal and informal networks and, looking across the agencies' activities as a whole, there is a wide range of relationships both bilateral and multilateral. For example, in TVET there is the Inter-Agency Working Group on TVET, which brings together the ETF and since 2014 Cedefop with other actors such as the OECD, UNESCO and the ILO, along with the European Commission.

¹⁴¹ Cedefop, 2016. Annual report 2015.

Examples of fruitful multi-lateral cooperation include a 2016 Cedefop conference on skills forecasting with the OECD, UNESCO, and the ETF.

Turning to the individual agencies, there are examples of successful bi-lateral and multi-lateral activities.

In respect of the ETF, there is a particularly deep and successful cooperation with the OECD in the countries where the ETF intervenes. All stakeholders highlight this relationship as complementarity/synergy, and not as duplication. Regarding Cedefop, the organisation has expanded cooperative activities, for example with UNESCO on Qualifications Frameworks, looking at regional qualification frameworks (Asian, African, Latin American, Pacific) during meetings held on a regular basis. The OECD reports using Cedefop's predictions for future skill needs, and its analysis on different aspect of VET.

Experts from UNESCO, ILOE and the OECD highly value the quality of Cedefop's methodologies and frameworks (EQF, ECVET definition), and the ETF's knowledge and expertise in the countries where it works. By comparison, the other international organisations usually have a much smaller number of staff following a larger set of countries, and therefore do not have the capacity to accumulate the same amount of experience in a specific region or topic.

Eurofound was reported by all the parties involved to have fruitful cooperation with ILO and OECD, which are in essence very different kinds of organisations, covering a larger or different set of countries. For example, Eurofound allowed ILO to use the EWCS methodology in order to extend the survey beyond the EU countries; in other words, Eurofound has established an international standard on conducting surveys on working conditions. OECD used the results of EWCS instead of launching its own survey. OECD used concepts from the European Company Survey in its PIAAC survey (concerning the use of skills).

The relationship between Eurofound and the ILO was formalised through a Framework for Cooperation adopted in 2015, identifying key areas of mutual interest and establishing the general terms for cooperation. The Framework recognises the shared interest of the organisations on employment, working conditions and social dialogue and, stipulates that ILO and Eurofound are to exchange information, methodologies and project context, seek to identify opportunities where matching activities and projects can broaden the geographical scope of the work to the benefit of both organisations and their tripartite constituencies, invite each other to relevant key events and other working groups, as well as engage in reciprocal peer-reviews.

The decision to enter a more formal agreement resulted from a shared will of the two organisations to continue and expand previous collaboration, which had been ongoing for several years. Originally, cooperation was ad hoc and mainly initiated at the level of researchers, who informally made contact with relevant staff within the other organisation. The agency started collaborating more formally with ILO in the context of the European Working Conditions Survey. While working conditions remains at the core of cooperation among the organisations, this has since expanded to other thematic areas including social dialogue, undeclared work, youth unemployment, as well as opening to the sharing of methodological expertise, fitting now in a broader strategy, as shown above.

In the field of social dialogue, Eurofound staff have contributed to training and capacity building activities carried out by ILO, such as the 'Academy on National Tripartite Social Dialogue' carried out in 2014 at the ITC-ILO. In the period covered by the evaluation, Eurofound has also been involved in joint projects of the European Commission and ILO. In the context of the ILO-EC project 'Social Dialogue in times of crisis', Eurofound contributed to conferences and seminars as well as to the final publication of the project (specifically to the chapter Impact of the crisis on industrial relations in Europe).

2.5 EVALUATION QUESTION 2: CONCLUSIONS

In this final sub-section we provide our conclusions and recommendations regarding complementarity, synergy and duplications amongst the agencies and between the agencies and other organisations. The foregoing analysis has shown that current relationships between the agencies and other organisations generally work effectively to ensure complementarity and synergy and to avoid duplication. Regarding the relationships amongst the agencies themselves, there is scope to make improvements to build on the work that has taken place already in recent years to establish stronger cooperation.

2.5.1 Relationships between the DG EMPL agencies

Evidence presented in this chapter points to the need for a new framework for cooperation that includes new structures, interventions and processes for better supporting inter-agency cooperation that is deeper, more synergistic, multi-lateral and strategically sensitive. The basis for this conclusion lies in a number of findings:

- 1) Joint working between agencies has grown in recent years, building on the fact that the perimeters of the agencies are quite well defined and where they do share overlapping topics of interest, they usually do so with a different perspective or *modus operandi*. The partial overlaps identified at the level of general mandates and objectives have provided opportunities for productive cooperation where agencies make use of differences in their knowledge and expertise, especially between Cedefop and the ETF, Eurofound and EU-OSHA and to a lesser extent between Cedefop and Eurofound.
- 2) There is no doubt that individual cooperation activities have been effective and delivered clear benefits. However, most of the cooperation activities consist of knowledge-exchange and joint participation in different types of events, while there have been to date few examples of more synergistic joint outputs such as the joint Cedefop – Eurofound company survey (in preparation at the time of the evaluation), the Cedefop – ETF – ILO methodological guide on skills anticipation and skills matching, Cedefop’s cooperation with ETF on monitoring VET developments in the EU, Partner and Candidate countries, or the Eurofound – EU-OSHA joint report on psychosocial risks at work. Further, most cooperation activities are one-off rather than on-going and with multiple outputs. Indeed, existing cooperation mechanisms have not dealt effectively with some newly emerging issues (such as migration that presents strategic challenges to the EU) and have not enabled a coherent and systematic response from the agencies when viewed as a whole.
- 3) The agencies have been under pressure to avoid duplicating one another’s work, an objective which is reflected in several cooperation documents. While there is an obvious need to avoid wasting public resources in carrying out duplicated work, the focus on avoiding duplications can sometimes hamper the development of deeper and synergetic activities. Furthermore, the absence of incentives to encourage closer collaboration in the current arrangements combined with the greater transaction costs involved in closer collaboration which may offset savings from cooperation to some extent, suggests that an ‘exhortation’ approach is unlikely to be effective.
- 4) While there has been an effort to share programming documents before their adoption in the framework of cooperation agreements, this is at a comparatively late stage in the planning process. Furthermore, cooperation remains largely bi-lateral between agencies which contributes to the current position where there is scope to better coordinate common responses to common social and economic issues (and hence to EU policies and priorities) across the four agencies, as shown by the example of migration especially.

In order to address these issues a new framework for inter-agency cooperation is needed that would enable the agencies to be more strategically sensitive to evolving

trends/EU policy initiatives, as well as making their cooperation deeper, more synergistic and multi-lateral. Key features of such a framework could include:

- a more active role for the European Commission in facilitating multi-lateral inter-agency discussions ahead of preparing annual and multi-annual work programmes by seeking to develop common priorities and parameters for closer inter-agency cooperation
- joint programming by the agencies (e.g. developing one joint programming document)
- development of a set of common indicators/ KPIs that could be compared among the agencies (currently the information on downloads and website traffic is also not directly comparable between agencies and across time because the data collection methodologies differ; Cedefop does not collect data on the programme delivery indicator while Eurofound does)
- joint delivery of programmed actions by deploying the financial and human resources allocated to the individual agencies and monitoring of the actions based on the (common) sets of indicators
- reviews of areas where common tools and approaches might be shared, e.g. networks of experts¹⁴².

A new framework might also include **bringing together and streamlining Agency governance arrangements**. Existing overlaps between Governing Boards at the level of organisations/government departments vary across the Agencies (being strongest between Cedefop and the ETF, and amongst the tripartite Agencies). Following on discussions on the revision of Founding Regulations of the Agencies, the stakeholders agreed to keep the current governing structures intact. Nevertheless, further changes are still possible, if policy makers decide to pursue some of the scenarios presented in this report, such as mergers (see analysis presented under Evaluation Question 4).

2.5.2 Agencies' coherence with the European Commission

Regarding coherence with the European Commission, the agencies interact with the Commission and other EU institutions in a variety of ways. In all cases, however, the Commission both oversees their work and is, at the same time, one of the consumers of their outputs – though to varying degrees. Currently, DGs and agencies are equipped with a range of mechanisms, both formal and informal, via which duplications are minimised and complementarity/ synergy maximised. Occasionally, however, examples have occurred in which agencies could have been called upon more systematically/ automatically by the Commission (for example, in preparing and steering the work of external contractors in areas where agencies have a specific expertise, which is sometimes but not always the case). In other cases, agencies could have been brought into policy/ development processes at an earlier stage than they are at present. Although such issues were not identified as a major or systematic problem in evidence analysed, DGs should nevertheless ensure that the agencies are systematically consulted with, and engaged in, strategic activities that are of key relevance to the Community institutions and the agencies' stakeholders.

2.5.3 Relationships between the EMPL agencies and other EU decentralised agencies

With regards to the relationships between the EMPL agencies and other EU decentralised agencies, their respective mandates imply that there is no direct duplication. Both formal and informal mechanisms for collaboration exist, and no major issues of concern have been identified. Formal mechanisms for cooperation include cooperation agreements, joint action plans, frameworks of cooperation, and a

¹⁴² This latter point is also examined in respect of EQ4 where more details are provided.

memorandum of understanding, and are used by Eurofound and EU-OSHA. There are multiple examples of other more punctual cooperation.

2.5.4 Agencies' coherence with national stakeholders and international bodies

With regard to coherence with national stakeholders and international bodies, the overwhelming picture is one of complementarity and synergy more than duplication. The agencies support EU 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 have been exploited, in order to realise added value. Some stakeholders from the governments of Member States and social partners believe that Cedefop and Eurofound could engage more strongly with national stakeholders, that there could be better promotion of their outputs. It should be noted, however, that making the current engagement with national stakeholders more wide-reaching and systematic would be a resource-intensive activity that would be difficult to achieve within the current remit of these agencies (as defined in the Founding Regulation), and the current level of the agencies' budgets.

3. EQ3: IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RECENT EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS AND AUDITS

Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA and the ETF received a number of recommendations in the previous external evaluations of each agency, finalised in 2013¹⁴³, 2015¹⁴⁴, 2011¹⁴⁵ and 2016¹⁴⁶ respectively. This evaluation question considers the success of the agencies in putting these recommendations into practice. We draw on evidence collected through desk research and interviews to evaluate the extent to which the agencies implemented these recommendations.

Firstly, we categorise all recommendations into eight broad areas of agencies' operation. This is followed by a table with a detailed assessment of actions taken to address all recommendations. Then we provide overall conclusions about the agency's success in implementing the recommendations.

3.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

We categorised all recommendations received by the agencies into eight broad areas concerning different aspects of the agencies' operation (see the table below). In total, Cedefop received 23 recommendations across all eight areas; Eurofound received nine recommendations covering four areas; EU-OSHA received six recommendations also across four areas; and the ETF received 10 recommendations over five areas.

Table 28. Number of recommendations received by each agency

Area of recommendation	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
Programming of activities	1	1	1	5
Type of activities the agency should engage more often	5		2	1
Direct work with Member States	2		1	
Engaging stakeholders	2		2	
Quality of outputs		2		1
Collaboration with other agencies and international organisations	5	2		1
Internal processes (e.g., recommendations relating to PMS, ABB, staff, project management)	7	3		2
Governing / Management Board	1	1		
Total	23	9	6	10

A detailed summary of these recommendations and steps the agencies took to address them are provided in the table below together with the judgement on their implementation status.

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 2009-13 Strategy".

¹⁴⁶ EFFECTIV Consortium (2016), "External Evaluation of the European Training Foundation (ETF)".

Table 29. Implementation of recommendations

Area of recommendation	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
<p>Programming of activities</p>	<p>The recommendation with regard to the programming of activities was addressed to the European Commission and not the agency itself. It was recommended that the Commission should enhance further its internal coordination before sending the ad hoc requests to Cedefop. For multiple new requests priorities for Cedefop should be clearly identified so that it is able to address the priorities with sufficient resources. From Cedefop's part, the agency managed to comply with the ad hoc requests in a timely manner. Yet ad hoc requests still forced the agency to delay some of the planned activities (set in the work programmes), with the agency's Governing Board setting up 'negative priorities' (projects that would be delayed to accommodate ad hoc requests) for Cedefop's work beforehand.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 1 Implemented: 1</p>	<p>Eurofound decided that no additional steps are needed to address the recommendation of introducing an approach that can ensure that irrespective of Governing Board discussions the scope and objectives of projects are limited to what is practically feasible and relevant against the agency's mission in the EU policy context. The discussions concerning the work programme and the 'negative priorities' indeed show that the question of feasibility is regularly considered. The agency decided that actions taken in response to the recommendation concerning better involvement of academic community will help address this recommendation (see below).</p> <p>No of recommendations: 1 Implemented: 1</p>	<p>In order to develop the recommended internal systems and procedures to help achieve greater prioritisation and impact in agency's work, EU-OSHA adopted the following measures: a) new vision and mission statement from 2013 onwards; b) long-term policy framework; c) strategic framework for prioritisation since 2014; and d) ex-ante evaluation per new activity is performed. These together with diminishing staff resources helped achieve greater prioritisation of activities.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 1 Implemented: 1</p>	<p>In total, ETF received five recommendations related to programming of its activities.</p> <p>With regard to the recommendation to do more to systematically understand where its interventions are likely to have most effect (based on factors such as country size and general stage of development, as well as the stage of policy development in individual policy fields), ETF noted that it has been working systematically through the Torino Process and related policy analysis tools to identify its interventions and to tailor them according to stages of development.</p> <p>As recommended, ETF continued to draw on the Torino Process findings and recommendations and its other more specific thematic policy analyses to identify multiannual support priorities and actions. These are included in the Country Strategic Perspectives 2017-2020 for circulation to the GB, in which "soft conditionalities" (which were also recommended) and assumptions have been highlighted.</p> <p>ETF welcomed the recommendation of working closer with EC to ensure that links to EC projects and programming and technical assistance are built more systematically than at present where current arrangements depend too much on informal relationships. It was also recommended for ETF to increase its analysis of what could have been done differently in order to generate lessons to improve the chances of more and greater impacts in the longer term, feeding these into its ex-</p>

Area of recommendation	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
				<p>ante impact assessment processes. The agency has foreseen discussions with the EC and more systematic deployment of ETF VET and skills expertise in policy dialogue, the programming cycle and projects at regional, national and subnational levels. It should also ensure that sustainability planning is built into projects with clear steps as to the next stage in development, and that assistance is provided to follow-up and embed benefits.</p> <p>ETF also believed that steps taken to address the recommendation above will also help improve communication and coordination between the ETF and EC so that the ETF is clearer as to how the priorities of different DGs are to be balanced. This should be through a stronger focus on strategic issues in the process of preparing Work Programmes, and through better articulation by the ETF of its objectives between the strategic and detailed partner country levels.</p> <p>The same steps will also help to address the recommendation of timeframes when considering future projects that are additional to core ETF work.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 5 Implemented: 2 Ongoing: 3</p>
<p>Type of activities agency should (more often) engage in</p>	<p>Cedefop received five recommendations with regard to the type of activities it should engage in more.</p> <p>Cedefop was encouraged to organise more policy learning</p>		<p>EU-OSHA received two recommendations related to the types of activities the agency should engage in. EU-OSHA shifted the focus on a smaller number of larger projects with potential to achieve greater reach and impact. The agency also continued</p>	<p>During the last evaluation it was stated, that it is not economically feasible for the ETF to have permanent presence in partner countries, i.e. field offices, yet ETF continues to assure country presence on the ground within the limitations of its resources (there</p>

Area of recommendation	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
	<p>between clusters of countries. To this end, agency set up a Policy Learning Fora (PLF) – in total 23-PLFs were organised per year since 2014. Cedefop also encouraged knowledge exchange within the thematic country reviews project.</p> <p>At the same time, according to analysis carried out in the agency-specific report, Cedefop managed to avoid duplication with national actors, which was also addressed in the recommendations.</p> <p>Cedefop also managed to align its open source function to EU policy needs well as recommended, Cedefop’s work programmes reflected this strategy in distribution of resources towards the priorities ‘Modernisation of VET systems’ and ‘Skills’.</p> <p>As recommended, the activities under priority ‘Careers and transitions’ have been reviewed and streamlined and now focus on access to and attractiveness of VET, effectiveness of VET policies and programmes, and VET for labour market integration and social inclusion. Adult learning is reflected in strategic areas for operation in Cedefop’s Programming Document 2017-2020. A stocktaking exercise concerning CVET was also carried out in 2015.</p> <p>The proposal for amendment of the Founding Regulation includes the elements suggested in one of the recommendations (agency’s work on skills and more clearly defined</p>		<p>with large projects involving all MS, campaigns and ESENER.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 2 Implemented: 2</p>	<p>is now prioritisation of partner countries based on needs) even without having dedicated country officers anymore. ETF also committed to using digital technology to enhance its outreach. However, the agency stated that it will continue to ensure that its core functions are developed and delivered through ETF internal expertise.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 1 Implemented: 1</p>

Area of recommendation	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
	<p>work on policy reporting and common European tools and initiatives).</p> <p>No of recommendations: 5 Implemented: 5</p>			
Direct work with Member States	<p>The recommendations to provide country-specific support and more policy learning have been taken into account particularly strongly by Cedefop and was one of the major changes following the 2013 external evaluation. Cedefop launched multiple initiatives to support policy learning about EU initiatives at national level in light of European Semester and implementation of common EU policies and tools: provided country-specific information to the Commission to be used in developing CSRs; launched Apprenticeship review project; developed country-specific indicators, as well as VET systems descriptions and Spotlights. Thematic country reviews of apprenticeships also helped to address the recommendation of supporting MS separately, and participated in ET 2020 WGs.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 2 Implemented: 2</p>		<p>Agency adopted a portfolio with list of options, which is offered to Focal Points (FOPs) with aim to allow MS to decide which projects to participate in, as was recommended in the previous evaluation. This was seen as a positive development, yet some of the interviewees believed that it still could be more flexible with respect to choosing activities.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 1 Implemented: 1</p>	
Engaging stakeholders	<p>Cedefop has adopted a new Communication strategy to improve interactivity with the wider community of experts as was recommended in the previous evaluation. Cedefop identified several hundred key accounts of its stakeholders, and continued to develop tailored approaches to reach those stakeholders. The agency also relaunched and</p>		<p>To address one of the recommendations, EU-OSHA made some improvements with regard to consulting with focal points to explore ways of engaging them and network partners more in the agency's work. EU-OSHA implemented a programme to regularly visit the focal points and their networks. FOPs are also included more into the programming process through portfolio based approach. Yet</p>	

Area of recommendation	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
	<p>updated its website and downsized its library services.</p> <p>Also, as recommended, Cedefop further continued and even increased its networking activities with the strengthening of the Brussels Liaison Office.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 2 Implemented: 2</p>		<p>reaching social partners through FOPs remains a challenge, as FOPs also expect more from the agency in terms of facilitating communication.</p> <p>Also, intermediaries / beneficiaries are engaged as was recommended, for example by asking for their opinion through stakeholder surveys.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 2 Implemented: 2</p>	
<p>Quality of outputs</p>		<p>Eurofound implemented actions to address the recommendation of better academic expert involvement to ensure better quality of outputs. These actions include developing an implementation plan for peer review process for selected final project results / reports, for adoption of agreed approach by GB and implementing the plan starting from Working Programme 2017. Academic experts are also members of the advisory committees.</p> <p>Evidence from the current evaluation indicates continuous variability of outputs by national correspondents. Improvement is expected after a new network is brought together after the tender in 2017 for the next four year contractual cycle of NEC 2018-2022. Eurofound implemented a mid-term evaluation of current Network of Correspondents operations, based on available data; the findings presented to a bureau meeting in Dec 2016. The findings informed the tender, launched in 2017, "Provision of scheduled and on-request reporting services – Network of Eurofound Correspondents".</p> <p>No of recommendations: 2 Implemented: 1</p>		<p>ETF has revised its Strategic Projects in employment, skills and employability and in Entrepreneurial Learning and Enterprise Skills to make its interventions homogeneous across partner countries as it was recommended for ETF to consider whether its more heterogeneous contribution to developments in partner countries in the areas of labour market systems / skills for employability and entrepreneurial learning / enterprise skills are due to circumstances beyond its control or require action on its part.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 1 Ongoing: 1</p>

Area of recommendation	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
Collaboration with other agencies and international organisations	<p>Cedefop received five recommendations with regard to cooperation with other agencies. The annual work programmes now detail yearly activities to be carried out in collaboration with the other agencies. The collaboration of the agencies has been kept at a similar level as before and the overlaps have been avoided as was recommended. Where the collaboration was expanded (e.g. with Eurofound on European Company Survey – which was also a separate recommendation), it was beneficial for both agencies and recommended by the previous evaluation. The joint events continued to be organised as recommended, as evidenced by the Annual Reports of the agencies.</p> <p>Cedefop received a recommendation to explore setting up a joint pool of potential staff with ETF. The agency implemented this recommendation, yet due to labour market differences in Thessaloniki and Torino it did not work in practice.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 5 Implemented: 4 Explored: 1 (there was an effort to set up a joint pool of potential staff with ETF but implementation of this recommendation was unfeasible as described above)</p>	<p>Progress made: 1</p> <p>Eurofound continued collaborating with other EU agencies. Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) have been in place with Cedefop, EUOSHA, ETF, FRA, EIGE for several years, updated and implemented annually in a systematic process. MoUs with the sister agencies were updated systematically and adjusted to new four-year programming cycle 2017-2020. Consultations on the programming documents took place with number of agencies and organisations.</p> <p>To advance collaboration with international organisations Eurofound signed a framework of cooperation with ILO in 2015, and implemented it accordingly. Currently Eurofound cooperates with ILO in applying EWCS methodology to a global survey. Further, Eurofound cooperates ad hoc with OECD in all research policy priority areas: providing access to EWCS data for different projects and in the area of measuring job quality/ commenting each other’s research reports/ participation in expert seminars and events. The international cooperation is mentioned in the programming document and reported in progress reports and annual reports.</p> <p>Eurofound suggested the Commission to join the tender for Network of Correspondents in 2017 in order, among other considerations, to attract bids of higher quality. The Commission decided not to join.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 2 Implemented: 2</p>		<p>To address a recommendation of collaborating closer with Eurofound when developing Annual Work Programmes or Mid-Term Perspectives in order to capitalize more systematically on potential opportunities for joint work, ETF has made explicit cooperation with Eurofound, and also with Cedefop. ETF also continued its collaboration with international organisations, which was also encouraged in the last evaluation.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 1 Implemented: 1</p>
Internal	Cedefop received seven	Full ABM rolled out in January 2017 by		It was recommended that where ETF’s

Area of recommendation	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
<p>processes</p>	<p>recommendations aimed at improving agency's internal processes.</p> <p>As recommended, Cedefop developed PMS indicators to monitor social media reach. Cedefop also followed up on it previous staff survey, having an external contractor carry out a new edition of the survey in 2017. To use internal evaluations as a tool of employee involvement Cedefop includes the members of their working groups on the basis of not only expertise, but also representation.</p> <p>Evaluation expert groups composed of competent staff, are also used by the agency as was recommended. The effort was made to express more clearly the evaluation objectives in the mandates of working groups. Cedefop's Annual Management Plans outline follow-up action related to recommendations from previous evaluations. Where appropriate this includes links to development of PMS and ABB.</p> <p>A working group was set up to review the performance measurement system (PMS). The review used an internal survey (in 2015) to gather evidence and streamlined the PMS, aligning it to the new multiannual objectives and strategic areas of operation. The review of the PMS was also targeted at strengthening the link with ABB activities.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 7</p>	<p>activity-based reporting on full costs (based on actual cost and actual time recording per project).</p> <p>The agency also worked on introducing project management training and project management system. Based on the report on project management training needs analysis, an action plan for strengthening planning and implementation was discussed at MAC meeting on the 2nd of Dec 2015. This action plan was also implemented.</p> <p>Eurofound made efforts to renew the rolling action plan in context of general action plan review. Other steps to improve production of representativeness studies include: a) including a project to establish a social partner database in WP 2016; b) liaising closely with the EC; c) organising a workshop with correspondents and the EC; d) piloting the grouping of data collection for more than one study to achieve synergies; e) grouping procurement of overview reports; f) working to widen the pool of potential tenderers; and g) drawing on research on the concept of representativeness and on academic exchanges to review the methodology.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 3 Implemented: 3</p>		<p>new approaches and efficiency actions deliver cost savings, it might be useful to use such savings to increase the number of staff in operational roles (particularly at senior level) and/or fill any gaps in internal expertise by using external experts with requisite knowledge and contacts. Yet the agency claimed that in the context of 10% reduction of staff, the ETF cannot increase the number of operational staff at senior level. The redeployment between departments may eventually lead to an increase in junior staff in operations.</p> <p>As recommended, ETF plans to include the cost of the Governing Board in its Consolidated Annual Activity Reports. With regard to adopting EUAN's common framework of performance and workload indicators, ETF stated that as of October 2016 Heads of Agencies network meeting EUAN did not adopt any specific performance indicators.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 2 Ongoing: 1 Not implemented: 1 (ETF claimed that increase in senior staff is unlikely in context of overall staff reductions)</p>

Area of recommendation	Cedefop	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	ETF
<p>Governing / Management Board</p>	<p>Implemented: 7</p> <p>Cedefop conducted a self-assessment of how Governing Board members perform their supervisory responsibilities to stimulate learning and discussion on the governing model as was recommended in the previous evaluation.</p> <p>No of recommendations: 1 Implemented: 1</p>	<p>Eurofound implemented actions recommended to optimise the level and quality of input from the GB. Some ongoing changes were introduced. GB very closely involved in discussions concerning the programming documents. Meetings set one year in advance. Regular information to Bureau and Board (around 5 progress reports per year) The agency/ stakeholders are waiting for clarity concerning the (potentially) new governance arrangements in view of the requirements of the CA and revision of the Founding Regulation. Eurofound addressed the recommendation to further incentivise/ encourage Governing Board members to engage on national levels by exploring the willingness of the GB for more engagement at the national level. A note on good practices was presented to a Bureau meeting in 2016 and Governing Board in 2017. Mixed evidence with regard to the actual engagement of the GB members at the national level. No of recommendations: 1 Progress made: 1</p>		

3.2 EVALUATION QUESTION 3: CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the recommendations from last external evaluations of Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA have been implemented. While ETF has already implemented four of the recommendations received, the implementation of five other recommendations is still ongoing. This was confirmed by analysis of documents through desk research and explored further through the interviews.

In Cedefop, implementation of recommendations was to a large extent guided by the agency's management, following an action plan approved by the European Commission. The action plan was closed when the last recommendation from this plan was implemented on 5-6 October 2017 after the Governing Board's self-assessment was carried out¹⁴⁷. The only recommendation Cedefop could not implement was to set up a joint pool of potential staff with the ETF. This option was explored by the agency and implementation was attempted, but it did not work out in practice due to existing differences of the labour markets within the cities in which the agencies are located. The implemented recommendations seem to have contributed to positive changes in the agency, as confirmed both by desk research and interviews.

Analysis shows that Eurofound took relevant actions to implement all nine recommendations stemming from the last external evaluation¹⁴⁸. Nevertheless, two issues cannot be said to have been fully resolved: a) the variability of output generated by the national correspondents¹⁴⁹; and b) the differing extent to which Governing Board members engage at the national level in supporting the dissemination of relevant studies to national actors. These are long-term issues, faced by other comparable organisations and should be addressed continuously. The recommendation made with regard to optimising input from the Governing Board had been addressed to a certain extent, but further steps will depend on (potential) changes to governance arrangements in view of the requirements of the Common Approach and the revision of the Founding Regulation.

EU-OSHA also has a standardized follow-up on all evaluations, which is monitored by an internal group. In the case of external evaluations, the Bureau and the Governing Board are also involved into this process, while the process is reported in the Programming Document. Based on the agency's 2017-2019 Programming Document¹⁵⁰, all six recommendations were implemented, as was also evidenced by data research and interviews with stakeholders.

The ETF's last external evaluation was finalised in 2016, and the implementation of its recommendations is still ongoing. The ETF developed the main action lines¹⁵¹ in which actions to address each of the recommendations were outlined. Research carried out for this evaluation showed that the ETF has taken steps to act on all but one of the recommendations the agency received in 2016. The agency stated that in the context of overall staff reductions, it could not increase the number of senior staff as was recommended. Overall, the agency has already implemented four recommendations and made progress on the remaining five.

¹⁴⁷ Action plan to follow up Cedefop's external evaluation, as discussed in the Governing Board meeting on 5-6 October 2017.

¹⁴⁸ Ipsos MORI (2015), "Eurofound external multiannual programme evaluation - Ex post evaluation of 2009-2012 Work programme"; Progress on Action plan for implementation of recommendations of "Eurofound external multiannual programme evaluation - Ex post evaluation of 2009-2012 Work Programme".

¹⁴⁹ Following on from the mid-term evaluation of current Network of Correspondents in 2016, the agency implemented a number of quality control measures; however, their effectiveness could not yet be assessed in the present evaluation.

¹⁵⁰ EU-OSHA (2016), Programming Document 2017-2019.

¹⁵¹ ETF (2016), ETF external evaluation. Main action lines in response to the key issues and recommendations, 21 October 2016.

4. EQ 4: ARE THERE CHANGES TO BE MADE TO THE AGENCIES THAT WOULD ENSURE BETTER ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVES THEY PURSUE AND/OR EFFICIENCY GAINS, EXPLOITING POTENTIAL SYNERGIES AMONG THEM, E.G. SHARING OF SERVICES, AND/OR POSSIBLE MERGERS/ TERMINATION OF THE AGENCIES?

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, the evaluation turns to a consideration of changes that might be made to the agencies, especially in terms of how they might better secure synergies, in order to improve their effectiveness and efficiency.

First, the chapter provides a recap of the main findings of EQ2. As the analysis of EQ2 has demonstrated, whilst to date there has been a growth in the extent to which agencies cooperate, there is scope to deepen collaboration further. This chapter then turns to an analysis of a number of alternative future scenarios, which it narrows down into a consideration of a smaller number that offer the greatest prospects for improved effectiveness in relation to costs. Consideration is also given to the implications for the four agencies of the recently announced European Labour Authority (ELA). Although at the time of writing the ELA's parameters are still to be made firm, and its announcement came at a late stage of the evaluation, it is important to reflect on the potential effects of launching the ELA on the agencies. Consideration is also given to the likely need for a sharp budget reduction in light of the UK's exit from the EU.

4.2 EVIDENCE ON POTENTIAL TO AVOID DUPLICATION AND EXPLOIT COMPLEMENTARITIES AND SYNERGIES

The evaluation research has sought to identify duplications in activity across the agencies and any potential synergies and complementarities that could be reached through the coordination of particular activities (e.g. regular or one-off research tasks or dissemination events or through more systematic joint working). The exploitation of synergies has the potential to reduce the overall costs of activities while at the same time enhancing their overall effectiveness. Improvements in effectiveness can occur when the effect of a joint action is greater than the total effect of individual actions if taken forward independently.

The fieldwork evidenced a level of existing cooperation among the agencies and between the agencies and other organisations. A range of formal and informal mechanisms exists that enable them to collaborate amongst themselves in the planning and implementation of their activities (though naturally to varying degrees according to the extent of commonality in their mandates and objectives). Agencies make explicit efforts to avoid duplications and to exploit potential complementarities and synergies; indeed, such collaboration has increased in recent years. It is therefore clear that the agencies have been taking steps to actively exploit complementarities and avoid duplications over the period covered by the evaluation. However the evidence on current cooperation practices presented elsewhere indicates that cooperation is driven by common interests in a particular thematic area and complementarity between the different parties, either in terms of expertise, geographical coverage or datasets. The general conclusion of the evaluation, which is that cooperation agreements and practices build from the specific and existing interests of the agencies rather than from joint strategic planning, forms the baseline for the assessment of the effects of alternative scenarios on synergies, as developed below.

The evaluation evidence points to a number of areas where there is potential to improve collaborative working and exploit potential synergies. These include general mechanisms that would need to be established to promote more collaborative working as well as more specific activities (which may be linked to the general issues) as follows:

- Although work programmes are shared and discussed, there is scope to enhance the level of strategic joint planning by considering broad policy areas or social and economic needs
- While there are 'soft' incentives in the system to discourage duplication there are none to support deeper synergistic cooperation and innovation in the spaces between agencies
- Decisions to cooperate are taken largely bi-laterally rather than multi-laterally amongst the agencies
- Hence, deeper strategic joint planning and/or some form of multi-lateral coordination in relation to broad policy areas (e.g. migration, social dialogue) would be beneficial.

4.3 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVE FUTURE SCENARIOS

This element of the analysis considers to what extent alternative hypothetical scenarios would increase the cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the agencies compared to the current allocation of resources. Such an exercise is more typically part of an impact assessment where there is a clear need to consider the merits of alternative options in advance of introducing a new intervention. Clearly, this evaluation cannot undertake such an exercise in the depth that would be required for an impact assessment as it is not possible with the available resources to develop detailed costings of alternative (hypothetical) scenarios and present detailed judgements on the most cost-effective option. Instead, the analysis provides a broad picture of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the different scenarios, which should allow the Commission (and other audiences) to make their own judgements as to the overall value for money of the agencies in their present form. A full impact assessment should be undertaken in the event that implementation of any of the scenarios is to take place.

The overall approach adopted has been to make an initial first screening of the large number of scenarios with a view to narrowing them down into a smaller set of scenarios that offer the greatest potential to maximise the advantages of change and minimise the negative effects. As will be seen, some scenarios are quite easily rejected on the basis that they are not realistic and/or feasible in current circumstances. The smaller set of scenarios is then given more detailed consideration. In turn, this process leads, to the proposition of a scenario that combines the advantages from the scenarios in this smaller set – a 'reinforced cooperation' scenario that could represent a radical step forward whilst at the same time minimising some of the risks inherent in other scenarios.

It is important to highlight two important caveats to this process. First, making judgements is inherent to such a process. The authors have made judgements based on the evidence gathered but have also had to extrapolate from that evidence base into the future; this is inherently a speculative activity. Secondly, it needs to be emphasised that the authors are neutral analysers of the agencies. The ultimate choice of which scenario(s) might be followed would be a political decision that may attach values to the factors/effects identified in different ways to those of the authors.

Another key aspect of the process has been to examine the implications of the European Labour Authority. Although the ELA's parameters are yet to be made firm, it is clear that it will change the landscape within which the four agencies operate in important ways. The ELA is being launched at a time when there are limited resources for another external body and therefore its resources might, at least partly, need to come from the other agencies. The ELA's likely mandate raises the possibility that – irrespective of the issues related to resources/costs – it might be more effective for the authority to be combined with an existing agency rather than standing alone and/or to take under its remit or coordinate relevant activities currently undertaken by other agencies.

Finally, in recent months the nature of the UK's exit from the EU have begun to take shape and it is clear that this will have an effect on the budget of the agencies with the real possibility that cuts of up to 25% may need to be made. This will come on top of the real terms cuts already made in recent years. Evidently this is a major shift in the operating environment of the agencies that affects the judgements that might be made in respect of balancing the risks inherent in some scenarios (e.g. short-term disruption in the case of mergers) against the imperative to make savings.

4.3.1 The scenarios and their likely effects

For this analysis, the following hypothetical scenarios have been considered:

Table 30. Overview of future scenarios

Scenario	Description
'No change' scenario	The agency continues in its current form from its current premises. Any changes are gradual and of the type that would occur in any "normal" year.
'Expansion' scenario	The agency retains its current form and implements the same type of activity as at present, but receives increased funding to implement more activity – it is assumed that this would result in additional ongoing staffing costs of 0.5m EURO per agency.
'Discontinuation' scenario	The agency is abolished and its roles and responsibilities are not formally adopted by any other body.
'Absorption' into EC or other EU networks and instruments	The agency is abolished and one or more of the European Commission DGs or other EU networks and instruments would employ the necessary staff to perform the roles of the agency and implement activities in pursuit of the stated objectives.
'Partial absorption' into EC or other EU networks and instruments scenarios	Some of the functions of the existing agencies are transferred to the Commission or other EU networks and instruments. In order to illustrate the potential effects of partial absorption it is assumed that the agencies' communication and dissemination functions are transferred to the Commission.
'Contracting-out by the European Commission' scenario	The agency is abolished and one or more of the European Commission DGs would have political responsibility for achieving the stated objectives but would employ only a minimum of staff. The DGs would deliver activities through one or more external providers, whether selected through calls for tender, calls for projects or direct grant funding.
'Merger' scenarios	The agency is merged with another agency or agencies in order to form larger organisational entities. Drawing on the analysis of the agencies' functions, three potential alternative sub-options emerge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All agencies are merged (to become one 'super labour market/employment agency') • Cedefop/ETF • Eurofound/EU OSHA • Eurofound/ Cedefop
'Partial merger' scenario	The Governance Boards of all agencies are merged to form one board.
'Joint delivery' scenario: sharing 'front office' functions	Front office functions in this context refers to the operational activities of the agencies. For illustrative purposes, this scenario concerns the sharing of two front office functions: country networks of experts and surveys. The sharing of country experts would involve transferring networks of local experts / correspondents / focal points to DG EMP or one agency only (Cedefop/Eurofound/EU-OSHA). One team at DG EMPL or one agency would manage national contacts and requests for national research services would be centralised. The common call for applications would give national experts / universities and research centres / consultancies / NGOs an opportunity to create consortia to make sure they cover all relevant policy areas of the agencies. This scenario would also involve transferring survey functions to one team.
'Shared corporate functions' scenario	The corporate functions of different agencies are shared in order to improve efficiency in their operation. Corporate functions to be shared would include: IT, legal, Human Resources, communication, procurement, monitoring and evaluation.

For all scenarios, the following factors and assumptions have been taken into account:

Estimates of **one-off costs** of closing down the agencies and/or relocating staff cannot be known with certainty. However, it is possible to identify the main types of

costs and give an indication of their scale, where possible drawing on the requirements of the Staff Regulation and previous exercises of this type. The closure and restructuring costs, for example, are largely based on broad assumptions regarding the extent of indemnity payments that would need to be made to staff/agents with definite period contracts who would no longer be required as a result of the changes (Annex 17).

In terms of **ongoing financial costs**, it is assumed that the Staff Regulation would continue to apply and that any staff contracts would be of the same type as at present, i.e. mostly Temporary Agents and Contract Agents.

Risk of political damage within the EU and within the partner countries. Other risks include the risk of finding suitably qualified labour (where redundancies might occur).

Impact on cost-efficiency of agency: based on the findings from the rest of the evaluation research, it is possible to assess how far any restructuring or scaling down of inputs might impact on the agencies' capacity to perform their respective functions and achieve the desired outputs

Impact on objectives: the potential restructuring options could impact on the effectiveness of the agencies in achieving their specific strategic objectives as well as wider EU policy objectives and Treaty obligations.

The effect of the different scenarios is considered in terms of the different forms of European added value currently provided by the agencies and identified elsewhere in this report.

For each scenario the cost-effectiveness of the four agencies is compared to the current allocation of resources (taking into account the cost of change, changes to ongoing costs and scope for improvements in effectiveness).

The final assessment of each scenario is based on all evidence sources including the prospective analysis, which includes an analysis of relevant and recent policy developments at the EU level, as well as an in-depth analysis of the agencies' tasks. Full analysis of each option for each agency is shown in Annex 17. In summary, the likely effects of the different scenarios have been analysed to be as follows.

The following symbols are used to indicate whether a particular effect is regarded as positive, negative or neutral:

- Positive: +
- Negative: -
- Neutral: n

The ordering of the effects reflects the degree of importance attached to each.

Table 31. Likely effects of different scenarios: summary points

Scenario	Likely effects – summary points
'No change' scenario	<p>Potential to continue to make gradual improvements in performance through "institutional learning", building thematic and geographic expertise and strengthening networks. (+)</p> <p>Potential for gradual increase in effectiveness e.g. in delivering against agency and EU policy objectives. (+)</p> <p>Potential synergies identified in the evaluation research unlikely to be realised. (-)</p> <p>No additional one-off financial costs and no change in ongoing costs i.e. approximately 80m EURO p.a. (n)</p> <p>No new risks. (n)</p>
'Expansion' scenario	<p>Possibilities to increase the reach to the stakeholder groups that currently use agencies' outputs less often. (+)</p> <p>Potential for marginal improvements in quality of evidence on labour market/employment issues and policy influence. (+)</p> <p>(For ETF only) More services could be provided to more countries enabling ETF services to achieve a "critical mass" in more countries. (+)</p> <p>Potential for additional, marginal improvements in capacity to respond to policy issues as they emerge particularly short-term issues. (+)</p> <p>Potential synergies with other agencies unlikely to be realised. (-)</p> <p>No additional one-off financial costs and but small increase in ongoing costs to cover cost of expansion (depending on numbers of additional staff). (-)</p> <p>Some minor risks (e.g. recruiting suitably qualified staff / diseconomies relating to premises capacity). (n)</p>
'Discontinuation' scenario	<p>Ongoing cost savings of 80m EURO p.a. (+)</p> <p>Closure costs in the region of 2-3m EURO per agency. (-)</p> <p>Loss of body of expertise and "stock of knowledge". (-)</p> <p>Significant scaling-down of research and capacity-building activity. (-)</p> <p>EU's ability to develop evidence-based labour market/VET/employment policies severely hindered. (-)</p> <p>Risk of loss of priority attached to labour market/VET/employment issues in many Member States. (-)</p> <p>Negative effects more severe with respect to social partners, smaller countries and countries with less developed employment/ VET policies. (-)</p> <p>Loss of independent expertise and visibility of policy issues at a European level. (-)</p> <p>Risk of damage to relationships with stakeholders and other international organisations. (-)</p>
'Absorption' scenario	<p>Potential for increased synergies with other Commission services and other EU policy areas e.g. to respond more effectively to cross-cutting areas (+)</p> <p>Closure costs in the region of 2-3m EURO per agency. (-)</p> <p>Loss of agencies' body of expertise and "stock of knowledge" in the medium-term at least as would take years to be recreated within the DGs. (-)</p> <p>Reduced ability to respond effectively to policy issues and to shape effective policy responses in the medium-term. (-)</p> <p>Reduced visibility for independent research and expertise in agencies' respective policy fields. (-)</p> <p>Potential for modest cost savings (relative to the agency annual budget) but some uncertainty (e.g. would new premises need to be found?). (n)</p>
'Partial absorption' scenario (communication functions transferred to EC)	<p>Potential for economies of scale and modest cost savings (relative to the agencies' annual budgets) but some uncertainty (+)</p> <p>Loss of key staff who do not move to Commission may reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of communication activities in the short to medium term. (-)</p> <p>Additional ongoing transaction costs associated with decoupling of communication and thematic work. (-)</p> <p>One-off costs (e.g. related to staff relocation/recruitment); for example, if staff is moved from Greece to Belgium, the salary costs will</p>

Scenario	Likely effects – summary points
	increase due to the higher salary coefficient. (-)
'Contracting-out by the European Commission' scenario	<p>Ongoing cost savings of 80m EURO p.a. balanced against the costs of contracted services and additional EC operational staff required for contract management. (+) Results-based approach of contracting may improve efficiencies in the delivery of services. (+) Closure costs in the region of 2-3m EURO per agency. (-) Risk of damage to relationships with stakeholders and other international organisations. (-)</p> <p>Some uncertainty regarding how far suppliers can adequately replace institutional memory and employees' knowledge and expertise. (-) Reduced ability to respond effectively to policy issues and to shape effective policy responses at EU level in the medium-term. (-)</p>
'Merger of all four agencies' scenario	<p>Economies of scale are achieved in the management 'overhead' and 'back office' functions therefore potential for some reduction in staff required to perform corporate functions (legal, financial, IT, etc.). It is assumed that 30% of the administration costs of all agencies will be saved on the basis that administrative functions would be more efficient. This could result in ongoing savings of 2.5m – 3.5m EURO per annum. (+) Potential for enhanced joint planning and enhanced strategic leadership with regard to cross-cutting policy areas, for example mobility and migration. (+) Potential to develop more efficient research processes e.g. through the pooling of knowledge and closer working on methodological development and data collection. (+) Practical difficulties in collaborating on capacity building tools identified in the evaluation research (e.g. for ETF and Cedefop) should be overcome leading to more efficient production of tools. (+) Potential for increased visibility with regard to some broader labour market policy goals. (+) Some additional savings on staff operational roles. (+) Closure costs high in relation to the cost of the agencies in the region of 2-3m EURO per agency. (-) Conversely, likely to be diseconomies relating to governance and management costs associated with increased organisational complexity. (-) Risk of losing momentum, motivation and knowledge among agency staff. (-) Political opposition, including from the host countries and stakeholder groups. (-) Risk of damage to relationships with ETF partner countries due to loss of (perceived) independence and other international organisations. (-) Effectiveness reduced in relation to some policy objectives as a result of refocusing of priorities. (-) Potential reduction in visibility of specific policy goals e.g. VET. (-) Potential degradation of specific and unique thematic knowledge in some areas, along with weakened cooperation with EU institutions/agencies, Member States, national and European-level stakeholders. (-)</p>
'Merger of ETF & Cedefop'	<p>Economies of scale are achieved in the management 'overhead' and 'back office' functions therefore potential for some reduction in staff required to perform corporate functions (legal, financial, IT, communication, HR, etc.). It is assumed that 30% of ongoing administrative costs will be saved on the basis that administrative functions would be more efficient. This could result in ongoing savings of approximately 1m – 2m EURO. (+) Practical difficulties in collaborating on capacity building tools should be overcome leading to more efficient production of tools. (+) Potential synergies could be exploited in developing methodological expertise, e.g. in skills anticipation and matching. (+) Potential to develop more efficient research processes e.g. through the pooling of knowledge and closer working on methodological development and data collection. (+) Potential savings of up to 2m EURO from rationalisation of research and analysis functions. (+) Different mandates and intervention logics of the agencies. (-) Different Governing Board structures (Cedefop tripartite, ETF not) would need resolution: MS might object if social partners have voice in EU</p>

Scenario	Likely effects – summary points
	<p>external actions. (-) Closure costs high in relation to the cost of the agencies – estimated to be 2-3m EURO per agency. (-) Loss of specialist knowledge in relation to working in partner countries (particularly if ETF relocates). (-) Likely to be diseconomies relating to additional governance and management costs associated with increased organisational complexity. (-) Cedefop might emerge as the dominant partner, prioritising EU Member States given it is much more closely bound into EU policy-making processes and institutions weakening activities focused on neighbouring MS or partner countries. (-) Some activities unlikely to be sustained due to restructuring. (-) Potential degradation of specific and unique thematic knowledge in some areas, along with weakened cooperation with EU institutions/agencies, Member States, national and European-level stakeholder. (-)</p>
'Merger of Eurofound/ EU-OSHA'	<p>Potential synergies could be exploited by pooling methodological expertise in researching working conditions and S&H issues. (+) Potential to develop more efficient research processes e.g. through the pooling of knowledge and closer working on methodological development and data collection. (+) Economies of scale are achieved in the management 'overhead' and 'back office' functions therefore potential for some reduction in staff required to perform corporate functions (legal, financial, IT, communication, HR, etc.). It is assumed that 30% of ongoing administrative costs will be saved on the basis that administrative functions would be more efficient. This could result in ongoing savings of 0.5m - 1m EURO per annum. (+) Potential savings of up to 1m EURO from rationalisation of front office functions. (+) Closure costs high in relation to the cost of the agencies – estimated to be 2-3m EURO per agency. (-) Likely to be diseconomies relating to additional governance and management costs associated with increased organisational complexity. (-) Some activities unlikely to be sustained due to restructuring. (-) Risk that Eurofound (as the larger agency) becomes the dominant partner and S&H policy issues are given insufficient priority relative to other issues, reducing their visibility at European level. (-) Potential degradation of specific and unique thematic knowledge in some areas, along with weakened cooperation with EU institutions/agencies, Member States, national and European-level stakeholder. (-)</p>
'Merger of Eurofound/ Cedefop'	<p>Potential synergies could be exploited through joint working in areas such as long-term unemployment, youth unemployment, skills, employment and migration. (+) Potential to develop more efficient research processes e.g. through the pooling of knowledge and closer working on methodological development and data collection. (+) Economies of scale can be achieved in the management 'overhead' and 'back office' functions therefore potential for some reduction in staff required to perform corporate functions (legal, financial, IT, communication, HR, etc.). It is assumed that 30% of ongoing administrative costs will be saved on the basis that administrative functions would be more efficient due to efficiency savings. This could result in ongoing savings of approximately 1m – 2m EURO. (+) Economies of scale possible from merger of the two tripartite boards (+) Potential savings of up to 1.5m EURO from rationalisation of front office functions. (+) Closure costs high in relation to the cost of the agencies – estimated to be 2-3m EURO per agency. (-) Likely to be diseconomies relating to additional governance and management costs associated with increased organisational complexity. (-) Very broad thematic scope, risk of decreasing/ limited priority to some fields or issues, such as VET (-) Potential degradation of specific and unique thematic knowledge in some areas, along with weakened cooperation with EU institutions/agencies, Member States, national and European-level stakeholder. (-)</p>

Scenario	Likely effects – summary points
Partial merger: 'Shared governance model'	<p>Enhanced strategic leadership with regard to cross-cutting policy areas for example mobility and migration. (+)</p> <p>Merged boards would be less specialised (loss of knowledge, experience and expertise as although large degree of overlap in organisations on current boards different individuals attend) – this could have a negative impact on quality and speed of decision-making. (-)</p> <p>Effectiveness likely to be reduced in relation to some policy objectives as a result of refocusing of priorities. (-)</p> <p>Minimal savings relative to the overall agencies' budgets (less than 1%) as cost of maintaining a large Governing Board is limited to compensation of travel and accommodation arrangements of its members. (n)</p>
'Joint delivery' scenario: sharing 'front office' functions	<p>Potential to develop more efficient research processes e.g. through the pooling of knowledge and closer working on methodological development and survey data collection. (+)</p> <p>Some limited savings as a result of cuts in staff numbers of those currently coordinating the networks of local experts and survey managers. Estimated saving of 0.1m – 0.5m EURO. (+)</p> <p>The quality of country level research and expert inputs could increase if potential synergies are exploited i.e. through collaborative working at the country level if consortia of experts are used. (+)</p> <p>Potential improvement in quality of expert inputs could improve effectiveness of agencies (e.g. in relation to identification of best practice and knowledge sharing). (+)</p> <p>Conversely, there is a risk that some key experts may be lost if they decide not to participate in new consortia arrangements. (-)</p>
'Shared corporate functions' scenario	<p>High potential savings in ongoing costs but needs to take into account national specific legislation and regulation (e.g. legal services, IT and data protection). (+)</p> <p>Potential for increased efficiency of delivery through sharing of knowledge and development of more efficient practices. (+)</p> <p>Some limited positive effects on performance and agencies' effectiveness. (+)</p> <p>Loss of key people may reduce efficiency of certain activities in the short to medium term. (-)</p> <p>One-off costs could be in the region of 0.1m – 0.5m EUROS (depending on the extent to which services are rationalised). (-)</p> <p>Pooling of resources and expertise could strengthen certain activities such as communications e.g. improve reach to wider stakeholders. (+)</p> <p>Conversely, there is a risk that agency-specific activities will become less visible. (-)</p>

4.3.2 Conclusions of scenarios assessment

Costs vs advantages

A comparison of the scenarios allows some conclusions to be drawn.

Costs of change

Implementing the scenarios will inevitably involve costs. Scenarios that would involve some degree of rationalisation of agency activities or discontinuation altogether may have significant direct financial costs due to restructuring, relocation, redundancies, etc. These one-off costs, especially of closure, could be equivalent to a significant proportion of the annual budgets of the agencies. The one-off costs of closure or scaling down of operations would need to be weighed against any potential savings to be made from reduced running costs.

Effects on running costs of the agencies

The different scenarios would have a variety of effects on running costs. Some scenarios would bring direct cost savings that are easy to measure. For example, discontinuation of an agency would allow the full budget of the agency(ies) to be wound down and saved. In scenarios where functions are transferred to the Commission (the absorption scenarios), such functions would not necessarily be performed at a significantly lower cost. Other scenarios should enable scale economies to be achieved. Mergers, partial mergers or shared services would enable scale economies in the management 'overhead' and 'back office' functions.

Impacts on cost-efficiency

Effect on staff knowledge, experience and expertise

The cost-efficiency (and cost-effectiveness) of the four agencies is largely driven by the knowledge and expertise of their staff so the likely effects of the scenarios in this area are an important consideration. In scenarios that imply making operational staff redundant (discontinuation of functions or agencies, absorption into the EC, contracting-out of functions to external providers) personal expertise, experience and contacts would be lost. It is inevitable that the loss of key staff from any restructuring process would result in a loss of efficiency in delivery. In scenarios that involve a partial restructuring of agency functions (e.g. mergers) cost-efficiency is also likely to be disadvantaged by staffing issues albeit in a more limited way with negative effects likely to disperse over time. For scenarios where staff would need to move or be replaced ('absorption', mergers and 'contracting out') the loss of expertise is likely to be recovered only in the medium-term.

As highlighted in the table, consideration should also be given to the effect of scenarios on the entire stock of knowledge, experience and expertise within individual agencies. This stock forms an important part of the 'culture' of an organisation. It is widely acknowledged that culture is both an important and yet intangible and hard to analyse factor within organisations. It is generally taken to mean "the taken-for-granted values, underlying assumptions, expectations, collective memories, and the definitions present in an organisation. It represents 'how things are around here'." It is not possible to analyse this cultural dimension within the scope of the evaluation, but the concept serves to emphasise that we cannot assume that an agency is simply the sum of its parts.

With the exception of the 'expansion' scenario, it is not clear that any of the scenarios would improve the capacity of agencies to respond more quickly to short-term political issues. In fact, many of the scenarios may have the opposite effect, as staff reductions and in some cases enhanced managerial complexity could restrict the agencies' capacity to respond in a timely manner. Moreover, these issues should be addressed by more detailed consideration of how governance and management structures could be improved to allow more flexibility in short-term planning.

Effects on governance, strategic direction and management

For scenarios that involve an element of restructuring, particularly the absorption and merger scenarios, cost-efficiency is likely to be affected in the short-term as time will be needed to re-establish strategic focus and direction and to allow new organisational arrangements to bed in. The merger scenarios are also likely to lead to increasing organisational complexity and, therefore, additional expenditure on governance and management functions.

Extent to which duplications can be minimised and synergies exploited

The 'no change' and 'expansion' scenarios would ensure that the current approach to cooperation activity is maintained. A number of the scenarios should increase the potential for enhanced cooperation and collaboration in particular the 'merger', and 'partial-merger' scenarios. The analysis of evidence in relation to EQ2 (To what extent are the mandates and activities of the agencies coherent among themselves and with the ones of other bodies that have similar objectives?) shows that in terms of mandates and objectives the most significant thematic overlap is between (i) Cedefop and the ETF and (ii) Eurofound and EU-OSHA, as well as less marked overlaps between Cedefop and Eurofound. But analysis also shows that much of this overlap is potential and that there are equally significant differences in modus operandi between these pairings which supports their distinctiveness. The consideration of potential synergies cannot take place in isolation of operational issues. For example, Cedefop and the ETF service different communities with different needs and, as the last evaluation of the ETF demonstrated, there is a close relationship between the objectives and approach of the agency and its operations.

As highlighted above, the agencies have been taking steps to exploit complementarities and avoid duplications over the period covered by the evaluation, which forms the baseline for alternative scenarios. Nevertheless, the qualitative evidence shows that there is some potential for the agencies to develop more strategic joint planning on cross-cutting policy issues such as migration or governance where there is potential for synergies to be exploited. Any of the scenarios that bring the agency remits under the same strategic umbrella (i.e. the 'merger' and 'partial merger' options) should increase the ability of the agencies to address such issues.

Effects on objectives and EU added value

Reflecting the conclusions on cost-efficiency, in scenarios that imply making operational staff redundant (discontinuation of functions or agencies, absorption into the EC, contracting-out of functions to external providers) it is highly likely that the loss of personal expertise, experience and contacts would have a negative impact on the ability of the European Commission to meet its policy objectives.

Removing part of an agency's functions or merging agencies is also likely to lead to reconsideration of their specific strategic objectives. Conversely, merging agencies might deliver advantages in terms of enhanced strategic leadership and joint planning, allowing the agencies to engage in genuinely cross-cutting policy areas (for example migration) which would not have occurred under the baseline scenario of agency-led cooperation agreements and practices.

The 'European Commission absorption' scenario or the 'contracting-out' scenario might enable the European Commission to fulfil its policy obligations, albeit without the same degree of (perceived) impartiality and independence that is currently provided by the agencies. However, under those scenarios there is a substantial risk of failing to achieve those objectives (to the same degree as currently) in the short to medium term. The 'no change' scenario would ensure that the current level of impact continues in the short, medium and long term, whilst the 'expansion' scenario would offer the potential for some specific shortcoming to be addressed, albeit at extra cost.

The evaluation research underlines that stakeholders and beneficiaries with less institutional capacity (social partners, smaller and less-developed Member States or partner countries) would be disproportionately affected by any scaling-down of agency activities. Scenarios that envisage joint or merged governance would create issues in terms of who is represented in agencies' governing boards, especially in the case of a merger/ joint governance of a tripartite agency such as Cedefop with the non-tripartite ETF.

Conclusions on individual scenarios

As noted above, it has not been possible within the confines of this evaluation to undertake a detailed impact assessment of the individual scenarios. Nevertheless, the analysis allows an initial assessment of the relative advantages and disadvantages of each scenario in order to inform conclusions on the feasibility of certain changes. Building on this initial assessment, a more detailed analysis of the preferred scenarios is provided in Section 4.4.

There is clear evidence that the 'discontinuation' scenario would have the most negative outcomes. Based on the evidence from the evaluation that the agencies are generally effective in meeting their objectives, it is reasonable to conclude that the substantial ongoing cost savings from the closure of the agencies would be more than offset by the negative outcomes resulting from the reduced capacity of the EU to develop and implement effective labour market policies.

The 'no change' scenario is shown to be generally positive as no major shortcomings have been identified in the evaluation. It is likely that agencies will continue along a pathway of gradual improvement based on institutional learning and therefore, it is conceivable that the agencies would have the necessary capacities to address some of the specific effectiveness issues raised in the evaluation. However it is unlikely that the particular issues raised by the evaluation with regard to developing closer working on areas of commonality and the development of synergies would be addressed.

Notwithstanding the question of whether additional funds would be available to support expansion, the 'expansion' scenario can also be regarded as a positive scenario as it should enable the agencies to go further in addressing particular areas for improvement identified by the evaluation (for example, improving quality of research outputs or efficiency of stakeholder engagement). There is no evidence, however, that increased funding alone (without accompanying reorganisation and governance changes) would address the more complex challenge of developing closer working.

It is clear that the 'absorption' and 'contracting out' scenarios, which would both involve substantial short-term costs, would create a great deal of uncertainty regarding the ability of the European Commission to fulfil its policy obligations, at least in the medium-term.

In relation to the merger scenarios, the costs involved in merging all four agencies, taking into account both the monetary costs of closure of some of the agencies and the indirect ongoing costs (e.g. loss of specific policy knowledge and expertise), are likely to be high relative to the value of the identified advantages. Regarding the case of merging pairs of agencies (Cedefop/ETF and Eurofound/EU-OSHA and Eurofound/Cedefop) there is more of a balance of positive and negative factors, partly stemming from their closer thematic relationships.

The effects of the 'partial merger' scenario of shared governance would appear to balance one another out. Any advantages that might result from enhanced strategic leadership in terms of deeper joint planning and multilateral cooperation might be countered by a loss of specialist knowledge and specific policy areas being neglected at a strategic level. If this scenario were to be pursued, it implies a need for strategic political choices to be made to pursue greater cooperation with the risk of loss of priority in some areas, although effective management could mitigate this risk.

There are a number of corporate services where the agencies would benefit in terms of realising some significant savings from sharing provision, the 'shared corporate functions' scenario. Whether there would be a positive outcome overall would depend on how far the rationalisation of 'back office' compromises the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the individual agencies. The pooling of resources and expertise could strengthen certain activities such as communications, for example by improving efficiency and methods in the targeting of specific stakeholder groups and audiences; however this could be countered by the loss of key people in the short to medium term which might result in a loss of focus for example in relation to activities in particular countries.

The 'joint delivery' scenario appears to be the most positive scenario. There would be limited savings in terms of ongoing costs, but the sharing of 'front office' functions such as country networks (centralising requests to and contacts with the national level, with a further option to also rationalise and simplify the network structure itself, with a single organisation or consortia from each country, covering all EMPL areas) and surveys has scope to improve the quality of outputs in those areas. As with all scenarios which involve an element of restructuring or reorganisation, there is a risk that some expertise will be lost in the reshuffling of roles. However, it is regarded that the potential loss of staff knowledge would be limited compared to the 'absorption' and 'merger' scenarios which would involve staff redundancies and relocations are on a much larger scale.

4.4 NARROWING DOWN THE SCENARIOS: MAXIMISING THE ADVANTAGES OF CHANGE AND MINIMISING THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS

4.4.1 Approach

In assessing the different scenarios, it is important to bear in mind the objectives they might seek to deliver, and problems they aim to resolve. First, it is important to take into account a number of EU policy objectives:

- the Common Approach on EU decentralised agencies, which aims to improve coherence, effectiveness, accountability and transparency in the performance of these agencies,
- progressive staff reductions in all EU bodies, including EU decentralised agencies (by 10% in these agencies from 2013 to the end of 2018), and
- the development of recommendations by the Secretariat-General of the Commission to ensure future efficiency gains and synergies in agencies that will affect the design of the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework.

In addition it is important that we do not aim to 'fix what is not broken'. In particular, the suggestions made as part of EQ4 need to be aligned with the findings of the evaluation against the other evaluation questions. Taking into account the findings of the evaluation regarding EQ1 (Effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and added value), EQ2 (coherence), EQ3 (implementation of past recommendations) and the ETF Evaluation, it needs to be borne in mind that there do not seem to be any major shortcomings in terms of the agencies' relevance and performance. The findings from the evaluation indicate that the four agencies are still relevant, that they add value to the work of existing national, European and international stakeholders, that their expertise is recognised and valued by different stakeholders and that they perform in a satisfactory way.

It is therefore important to be clear as to the nature of the 'problems' or issues to which the scenarios might be the 'solution'. The scoping phase of the evaluation led us to conclude that the overarching issues were as follows:

- the prima facie high number of agencies in the field of employment, social affairs and inclusion (four) with mandates and objectives that overlap to varying degrees;

- the relatively small size of each of these agencies which raises questions of cost-efficiency and the potential for scale economies¹⁵²;
- a lack of alignment with the Common Approach for some of the four agencies; and
- the evolving EU policy context which has given rise to the proposed European Labour Authority.

From consideration of the evaluation evidence on efficiency and effectiveness, however, there seems not to exist an 'obvious' scenario that would improve the performance and effectiveness of the agencies such as discontinuing one or a number of agencies because they have become redundant or merging a highly inefficient agency into a better performing one. Moreover, the expansion scenario does not appear to be realistic in the context of the current climate of reduced or frozen budgets. It is also evident that the costs associated with fully merging or winding down the agencies (including absorption and contracting-out) taking into account both the monetary costs of closure and the indirect ongoing costs (e.g. loss of specific policy knowledge and expertise) are likely to be high relative to the value of the identified advantages.

The assessment of the various impacts of the scenarios and their distribution across affected stakeholders therefore points towards a smaller set of scenarios that seek to enhance the coordination and integration of the agencies. The objective of implementing alternative scenarios to the status quo ('no change') would therefore be to enhance the effectiveness of the agencies against their own objectives and wider EU policy priorities and avoid duplications/ exploit complementarities and synergies to a greater extent than under the baseline scenario. In order to be considered a viable alternative, a scenario would need to achieve one or both of these goals, and the gains achieved would need to outweigh the costs of change.

The table below sheds light on this issue. It draws on the individual agency evaluations by identifying common strengths and weaknesses and then examines the opportunities/ threats of closer working or merger. It shows that closer working/ merger has the potential to have a positive effect in some areas of common strengths and weaknesses but that it is by no means a 'cure-all' for all agency weaknesses. Areas of potential positive impact include: achieving greater impact through more effective combination and focusing of resources and expertise; identifying new opportunities for deeper more synergistic cooperation; improving strategic governance. The analysis also highlights areas where closer working might deliver negative effects such as in relation to internal management complexity and accountability, transparency and performance management.

The next section examines in more detail scenarios that seem more feasible in light of these considerations. In addition, it presents a 'hybrid' scenario that might be built by drawing on the strengths of the other scenarios, whilst minimising the weaknesses.

Table 32. Analysis of common agency strengths and weaknesses and potential opportunities and threats from closer working/ merger

Strengths and weaknesses common to more than one agency	Cede-fop	ETF	Euro-found	EU-OSHA	Opportunities and threats from closer working/ merger
Objectives have relevance with social and economic needs and coherence with EU policy	✓	✓	✓	✓	Existing cooperation agreements ensure joint working is consonant with agencies' objectives so closer working unlikely to have an effect. But more systematic (reinforced) cooperation would enable joint planning and more

¹⁵² This should not be taken to mean that the Agencies are inefficient in themselves, as this is not the case. As shown by the evaluation results, there are no major concerns in this respect. Small agencies can achieve a lot with limited budgets, e.g. by leveraging resources through collaboration with others and making good use of multipliers.

Strengths and weaknesses common to more than one agency	Cedefop	ETF	Eurofound	EU-OSHA	Opportunities and threats from closer working/ merger
					wholesale review of objectives against needs. Merger would also enable (and probably necessitate) a review of objectives against needs but might require steps to ensure clarity and relevance of objectives continues without loss of focus by being spread across too broad a terrain of social and economic challenges, e.g. in case of Cedefop and ETF.
Achievement of objectives is effective	✓	✓	✓	✓	Joint working/merger offers possibility of achieving greater impact than would be the case if agencies worked alone (more than the sum of parts) since resources/expertise can be combined and focused on identified needs. More systematic (reinforced) cooperation might enable greater focus of expertise and resources – and development of new approaches/tools - on common issues.
Unique sources of European data, knowledge and expertise in respective policy fields	✓	✓	✓	✓	Joint working or merger could realize synergies and cost savings although this is not automatic and would require deliberate steps; merger might also reduce the relative priority given to some topics/approaches that would otherwise not occur or lead to a loss of focus, e.g. occupational health and safety in the event of EU-OSHA merger with Eurofound which has a wider remit.
Need for greater influence on countries' policy development/legislation (In the case of ETF needs to be more synergies between activities and greater sustainability of impacts)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	✓	Effect of joint working/merger is probably neutral - should not be assumed that larger merged organisations are more 'remote', although a larger organisations might have more resources and weight at Member State level
Variability in quality of outputs from expert networks	✓	X	✓	✓	Requires careful selection of network and monitoring of quality of outputs. Unlikely to be affected by closer working/merger. However, joint working/merger might be beneficial in terms of cost-effectiveness.
Inter-agency cooperation in sharing of practices, procedures, and tools could be reinforced and more structured – Cedefop. Inter-agency cooperation should be strengthened – between ETF and Eurofound	✓	✓	✓	(✓)	Closer working/merger would self-evidently have a direct and positive effect on this issue

Strengths and weaknesses common to more than one agency	Cedefop	ETF	Euro-found	EU-OSHA	Opportunities and threats from closer working/ merger
Strengthen communications especially to reach a wider group of interested parties	✓	✓	✓	✓	Joint working/merger might enable pooling of resources and expertise to strengthen communications and to reach wider stakeholders. However, it might also make it more difficult to communicate clear messages about an agency as a whole, e.g. if ETF merged with Cedefop.
Governance is generally effective but large Governing Boards can be cumbersome and there are issues regarding the level and quality of participation and overlaps between agencies. In case of Eurofound, tripartite nature of governing board may give outputs added legitimacy amongst social partners. Role of Governing Boards in communicating with Member States could be improved in the case of Eurofound and EU-OSHA	(✓)	n/a	✓	✓	<p>Joint governance or merger per se would not address the issues raised by large governing boards, and cost savings would be relatively small. Questions would be raised about the ability of individuals to hold sufficient expertise related to several agencies and to dedicate sufficient time. If ETF were to be merged with Cedefop, the issue of different board structures would have to be addressed.</p> <p>Joint governance or merger would likely increase the number of topics on which governing board members would need to communicate with their Member States, probably making improvements in communications unlikely, and possible worsening the position, although this might be addressed if Governing Board members were to come from more senior positions.</p>
Internal management issues: structure is complex in Eurofound and cooperation between units needs strengthening; need for more horizontal cooperation across units in Cedefop; need to balance thematic and geographical aspects of work in ETF is on-going issue.	✓	✓	✓	No major issues	Joint working inevitably comes with transaction costs because of increased management complexity. More systematic cooperation (e.g. reinforced cooperation) and merger would increase internal management complexity, rather than reduce it.
Accountability, transparency and performance management tools, whilst effective, may be too burdensome.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Joint working, ceteris paribus, probably requires more efforts to achieve accountability and transparency. Care would need to be taken with mergers, especially where it results in larger and/or more complex organizations, that there is not a burgeoning of accountability, transparency and performance management tools.

4.4.2 Merging Cedefop and the ETF

There is a rationale for merger based on the thematic overlap between the agencies and on the nature of the relationship between the two, as well as on potential savings in running costs. Currently there is knowledge sharing and, on balance, the ETF might benefit from a merger with Cedefop owing to the latter's greater research capacity although the ETF also co-creates knowledge on VET in its own right because of its

different operating context; like Cedefop, the ETF is at the leading edge of global thinking about VET. Merger should also enable efficiencies to be achieved if it proves possible to achieve staff savings in areas of thematic overlap. It is not possible to estimate with any accuracy the level of cost savings that might be made through the rationalisation of the agencies' research and analysis functions. If a 20% saving is assumed based on the complementarity of the agencies' research and analysis functions, savings of approximately 2m EUROS could be made. However, there may be a constraint in the scale of savings that can be delivered in this respect since the evaluation has found no evidence of major areas of duplication in activities: the topics of the agencies may be similar, but they still differ. It would also need to be born in mind that the ETF covers a wider area of human capital development and has areas of expertise not shared by Cedefop e.g. governance and entrepreneurial learning so a new, merged agency would need to have a wider brief to reflect this.

Merger should enable more synergies to be achieved. However, this, like many other aspects, presupposes active management to deliver the potential advantages of merger. Indeed, it is likely that merger would create a larger and more complex organisation because of the constituent organisations' different operating needs and hence their quite different management structures and internal cultures. In such cases, the possibility needs to be considered that economies of scale might be offset to some extent by diseconomies of scale.

Economies of scale could be achieved in the integrated management 'overhead' and 'back office' functions leading to some reduction in staff required to perform corporate functions (legal, financial, IT, communication, HR, etc.). It is assumed that 30% of ongoing administrative costs will be saved on the basis that administrative functions would be more efficient. This could result in ongoing savings of approximately 1m–2m EURO (the final figure will also depend on whether the two agencies are brought in the same location).

Bringing the two agencies together in one location is likely to maximise cost savings in the longer term as well as the likelihood of realising synergies etc. However, such a move would also carry cost in the short term. The closure costs estimated to be 2–3m EURO (it includes administrative burden for the Commission and other EU institutions of completing the necessary political and legal processes; indemnity payments to staff/agents with definite period contracts; resettlement allowances for staff; legal costs, e.g. if termination of employment is challenged; expenses linked to the termination of lease agreements, etc.).

If the ETF were to transfer to Cedefop in Thessaloniki, this might be particularly problematic to business continuity as there would be inevitable staff departures and these could have a particularly disruptive effect on working in partner countries where individual contacts play an important role. We can of course conceive of a merger that leaves Cedefop and ETF in their respective locations but brings their activities under the same planning process and maximises use of modern digital technologies for communication. However, this would not achieve the same cost efficiencies in respect of 'back office' functions as a single location. Furthermore, in the end, it would probably not realize many savings in respect of top management since it is difficult to envisage a situation where, even if there were to be just a single director, there would not be, in effect, a deputy director in each location.

In respect of governance, merger would also have to address the issue of how to bring together two differently constituted governing boards (one tripartite, the other not), although this could be taken as an opportunity to adopt a more streamlined board structure for the new agency.

The most important potential disadvantage of merger is that the ETF would lose out in a merger (irrespective of location) and as a result the EU would lose some significant added value. The ETF is in a unique position amongst agencies in being the only one working in partner countries, forming a triangular relationship between the

Commission and the EU Delegations. It is highly valued in this role in many partner countries, as well as in the EC and EU Delegations. Yet this part of its modus operandi is also quite fragile and has been built up over many years. Merger could jeopardise this. One could conceive of a merged Cedefop-ETF having a section/department/division dealing with neighbourhood countries but this would not avoid the perception issues that it would be closer to the EU and therefore no longer offering advice seen as independent in partner countries which was identified as a key ETF strength in its last external evaluation and is closely linked to building trust in its relationships in partner countries. Furthermore, at a time when relationships with neighbourhood countries are requiring careful attention, there is a case for strengthening the role of the ETF and this would seem to be unlikely under a merger scenario. Cedefop might emerge as the dominant partner in a merger given it is much more closely bound into EU policy-making processes and institutions.

4.4.3 Merging Eurofound and EU-OSHA

The rationale for a merger between Eurofound and EU-OSHA would be similar to that of the ETF-Cedefop merger scenario, specifically the thematic overlap between the agencies and the complementary nature of their respective activities, as well as the potential savings in running costs. The strong degree of overlap of the agencies' Governing Boards (nearly one half of the total possible number of organisations are represented on both), provides an indication of the complementarities between the agencies in terms of strategic focus and target stakeholder audiences. However, the EU-OSHA Governing Board members have valuable specialist expertise since they are appointed from the members and alternate members of the tripartite Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work and they are instrumental in designing and programming the activities of the Agency, and also in ensuring implementation is practical and effective. Hence, merging the Governing Boards could hamper the capacity of EU-OSHA to play its role in the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) policy field.

The evaluation has highlighted many examples of cooperation between the agencies. Eurofound was involved in the design and planning of EU-OSHA's first European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER), which was carried out in 2009. This allowed EU-OSHA to benefit from Eurofound's experience in carrying out the European Company Survey (ECS). EU-OSHA and Eurofound also share information related to surveying through advisory groups and informal contacts between project managers with respect to tender specifications, translations of questionnaires, sampling, interviewer training, fieldwork conditions and market prices for survey implementation.

Eurofound and EU-OSHA both conduct similar knowledge creation and sharing activities, undertaking EU-level research using a similar range of methodologies and producing outputs for use principally by governments and social partners in policy development activities. Particular synergies can be seen in the area of surveys and datasets. The evidence therefore suggests commonality between the two agencies in terms of the specific processes used to deliver research projects and develop evidence. This suggests that there are potential synergies to be exploited by pooling methodological expertise (as well as subject expertise) and there is an argument that a merger between the agencies should help to facilitate these types of synergies. Based on the available data, the combined research budget of Eurofound and EU-OSHA (excluding surveys) is estimated to be approximately 10m EUROS. If a 10% saving is assumed (which is lower than the percentage assumed for Cedefop-ETF scenario where complementarities are likely to be greater) savings of 1m EUROS would be made.

At the same time, there are significant differences between the agencies in terms of modus operandi that do not point to an easy fit between them in merger terms. For example, EU-OSHA, conducts awareness-raising initiatives, pan-European campaigns and the preparation of practical tools to support and facilitate compliance with OSH

rules, especially for micro and small enterprises. These kinds of activities reduce the potential advantages and synergies of a merger.

Economies of scale can be achieved in the management 'overhead' and 'back office' functions leading to some reduction in staff required to perform corporate functions (legal, financial, IT, communication, HR, etc.). It is assumed that 30% of ongoing administrative costs will be saved on the basis that administrative functions would be more efficient. This could result in ongoing savings of 0.5m - 1m EURO per annum. The final figure will also depend on whether the two agencies are brought in the same location.

The closure costs would be high in the short term; it is estimated to be 2-3m EURO per agency. It includes administrative burden for the Commission and other EU institutions of completing the necessary political and legal processes; indemnity payments to staff/agents with definite period contracts; resettlement allowances for staff; legal costs, e.g. if termination of employment is challenged; expenses linked to the termination of lease agreements, etc.

If one of the agencies closes and moves to the other's location – realistically this would likely be EU-OSHA as the smaller agency. However, if EU-OSHA were to relocate, there is a risk that specialist policy knowledge would be lost in the area of OSH which is likely to have a negative impact on the achievement of policy objectives in this area, at least in the medium-term. A further risk from the perspective of S&H policy is that Eurofound becomes the dominant partner and S&H policy issues are given insufficient priority relative to other issues, reducing their visibility at European level.

The same potential issues related to diseconomies of scale as noted in the case of Cedefop-ETF might also apply here, although it is easier to envisage a fit between the two agencies since OSH can be regarded as a sub-set of the topics addressed by Eurofound. However, the internal structure of Eurofound is already regarded as too complex and the number of units too high. This implies that there is a risk that the merger would exacerbate current inefficiencies.

In the end, the potential net advantages of a merger between Eurofound and EU-OSHA hinge on the extent to which the advantages of joint governance and enhanced synergies outweigh the increased management complexity and the risk that OSH policy issues are afforded less priority in joint research planning. On balance, scope for achieving synergies is low because of the differences in *modus operandi* between the organisations and the risk of losing specialist knowledge, notably in the OSH field.

4.4.4 Merging Eurofound and Cedefop

A key element of the rationale for a merger between Cedefop and Eurofound would be the complementarities between Cedefop's vocational skills focus and Eurofound's general labour market remit and the potential for a merger to facilitate greater synergistic working. Overlaps in strategic focus and target stakeholder audiences are demonstrated by the number of common organisations represented on the agencies' Governing Boards, 38% of the member organisations being common to both boards.

The evaluation has highlighted a number of specific examples of past cooperation. The agencies have been working as equal partners on the European Company Survey (sharing half of the costs but also half of the responsibilities and decision powers). This successful example of collaboration provides a model for further joint research projects. However much of the cross-organisational learning between the agencies currently takes place on an ad hoc basis through knowledge exchange seminars and other expert meetings and events. There has been very limited project collaboration for example in areas such as long-term unemployment, youth unemployment and migration although both agencies have addressed these issues in different ways.

The agencies' main operational activities are broadly similar in that they both undertake knowledge creation and sharing activities in order to influence policy development at the EU-level. The combined research budgets of Cedefop and Eurofound (excluding surveys) are estimated to be between 10m and 15m EUROS. If a 10% saving is assumed, savings could amount to 1.5m EUROS. At the same time, Cedefop has a more specific focus (on vocational skills development) while Eurofound's research activities cover a broader range of labour market topics. Cedefop's effectiveness depends on more specific policy expertise while Eurofound staff have a greater reliance on more generic research skills. In line with the assessments above, the achievement of synergies in such areas as long-term unemployment and migration would again partly depend on the efficiency of new governance and management arrangements in encouraging collaboration. There is a risk however that integration of Cedefop experts into research teams with broader remits may dilute the new agency's focus on vocational skills, compromising strategic effectiveness in this area. More broadly, merger might risk VET being seen solely as an instrument of employment policy.

Economies of scale can be achieved in the management 'overhead' and 'back office' functions therefore potential for some reduction in staff required to perform corporate functions (legal, financial, IT, communication, HR, etc.). It is assumed that 30% of ongoing administrative costs will be saved on the basis that administrative functions would be more efficient due to efficiency savings. This could result in ongoing savings of approximately 1m–2m EURO. The final figure will also depend on whether the two agencies are brought in the same location.

Eurofound and Cedefop are similar in size, however it is assumed that at least one of the agencies would need to relocate meaning that the costs of the reorganisation would be high in relation to current on-going costs. In contrast to the Eurofound-EU-OSHA case, however, it is difficult to envisage one of the agencies emerging as the dominant partner which means that there is less risk that priority themes would be marginalised. However, specialist policy knowledge and momentum could be lost in the short-term if staff decide not to relocate, and this is likely to be a particular issue in view of the large distance between the organisations' current locations. The short-term closure costs are estimated to be 2-3m EURO per agency. It includes administrative burden for the Commission and other EU institutions of completing the necessary political and legal processes; indemnity payments to staff/agents with definite period contracts; resettlement allowances for staff; legal costs, e.g. if termination of employment is challenged; expenses linked to the termination of lease agreements, etc.).

4.4.5 Partial merger: shared governance model

Based on the operational costs of the Governing Boards, it is estimated that up to 500,000 EUROS could be saved through a merger of the Boards. Although the merging of Governing Boards would not generate substantial cost savings relative to the budgets of the agencies, it offers the potential to improve coordination and cooperation across the agencies. In particular, it would address the finding of the EQ2 analysis that there is scope to develop deeper joint planning and multilateral cooperation. A merged Governing Board would almost inevitably need to take a broader view than it does at present (or else take more time and resources in order to apply the same level of detailed scrutiny) but this would be the inherent trade-off for being able to better focus on cross-cutting issues and to consider broader policy fields and the connections between them. If this turns out to be problematic, advisory groups to deal with specific topics could be introduced.

This scenario would also provide the opportunity to consider introducing a more streamlined Governing Board, consisting of fewer members. One option would be to follow the Common Approach and include in the governing board 28 MS representatives, two representatives from the European Commission, and where

appropriate, one member from the EP and a fairly limited number of stakeholder's representatives.

The stakeholders who took part in the interview programme and well as the participants of validation seminar on 8 December 2017 expressed a very strong support to the current governing structure in general and to its tripartite nature in particular. One argument advanced in support of the tripartite arrangement is that it confers greater legitimacy, relevance and acceptance on the outputs of the agency. The social partners feel included in decision making and thus a certain level of 'ownership' of the agencies.

It would be possible to consider a structure that maintains tripartite representation but does not require each Member State to provide social partner representatives; this would enable the size of the Governing Board to be reduced. In this scenario each Member State is represented by a government representative; the Governing Board also includes a limited number of social partner representatives from EU umbrella organisations; in addition, several social partners are also included from the Member States on a rotating basis. The advantages of such scenario would mainly lay in smaller size of the Governing Board plus additional scrutiny with regard to potential candidates, which would potentially lead to more informed and engaged representation.

Alternatively, it is possible to envision a governance structure consisting entirely of representatives of Member States as well as the Commission and European Parliament (similar to the current ETF governing structure). It may also include representatives from social partner organisations/ NGOs as observers or indeed a separate non-governmental body or forum could be created in an advisory/ observer role. The key advantage of this arrangement would be the smaller size of the board as well as the possibility to include more and diverse voices in the non-governmental body. On the negative side, the social partners might resent the decreased role in decision making. Another option, a streamlined Governing/ Management Board could cooperate with bodies such as Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) to inform them on the agencies' activities and receive feedback from the social partners.

4.4.6 Sharing corporate or 'back office' functions

The relatively small size of the four agencies means there is prima facie evidence that sharing certain corporate functions would improve efficiency. Furthermore, sharing services between the EMPL agencies from their respective locations is now more viable than it would have been in the past thanks to digital technologies, which offer cost-effective solutions.

'Back office' functions where there is potential to share services include: finance, IT, legal, HR, communications, procurement, and monitoring and evaluation. Shared services are already being explored to some extent by the Network of EU Agencies through the 'Dublin Agenda' which sees possibilities for ensuring that the agencies realise efficiencies by sharing services. The evaluation research has also identified a number of small-scale and ad hoc initiatives that demonstrate some potential for services to be shared more widely, for example Eurofound is running an evaluation framework tender on behalf of a number of agencies. Agencies also invest resources in monitoring their own work, with performance measurement resources having increased in recent years in the pursuit of greater efficiency and effectiveness. Some aspects of such systems might be more efficiently performed collectively, e.g. collecting mentions in the press or in policy documents.

The one-off costs of restructuring, resulting largely from redundancy payments to any staff that are no longer needed where there are duplicated roles, are likely to be less

than 1m EUROS (depending on the extent to which services are rationalised)¹⁵³. These costs would be offset by high potential savings in ongoing costs as a result of economies of scale through knowledge sharing. There is clear potential for increased efficiency of delivery through sharing of knowledge and development of more efficient practices. Other potential costs and benefits would be analogous to those associated with the merger scenarios. The pooling of resources and expertise could strengthen certain activities such as communications, for example by improving reach to wider stakeholders; however, this could be countered by the loss of key people in the short to medium term. In addition, the extent to which back office functions are integrated into individual agencies' operations needs to be considered and this is particular germane in regard to IT¹⁵⁴: sharing services risks a negative effect on agencies' ability to extract full value from IT given digital services are increasingly integrated with business functions.

Regarding the quality and effectiveness of particular operational activities, hypothetically there is some potential for shared services to make a positive impact. This could occur where sharing services frees up resources to focus on output-driven activities or where the more efficient delivery of services (e.g. communication) has a direct relationship with agency objectives. For example, it is possible to envisage a scenario where more efficient communication practices help to enhance the impacts of the agencies' activities by allowing the agencies to reach new audiences. It is possible that knowledge sharing on communication approaches would be beneficial to all agencies. The evaluation has highlighted the potential for Eurofound, for example, to increase its social media presence as these are cost-effective ways of reaching diverse groups of stakeholders. Its accessibility and visibility could also be improved through increased collaboration with other European organisations and European Presidencies.

At the same time, cooperation may be rendered difficult because of inter-agency and inter-country differences. This is well illustrated by Cedefop's implementation of a previous evaluation's recommendation to implement joint recruitment with ETF, e.g. by having a pool of potential candidates: it failed due to different profiles of staff required by the two agencies and the differences of the Torino and Thessaloniki job markets. Sharing services might also make management more complex.

More specifically, some services would need to take into account national regulatory frameworks and this might make sharing difficult. In general, national legislation does not apply to the agencies (e.g. financial, staff, data protection); rather, EU legislation applies. However, in relation to activities or facilities that are locally specific (e.g. fire safety) agencies can voluntarily decide to adhere to national legislation. For example, while procurement policy is not bound by national laws, staff providing a service e.g. catering, cleaning, security staff, are bound by national employment law. However, even here the responsibility for such staff rests with the service provider who remains their employer and technically it is the service provider who has the primary obligation to comply with national legislation (and normally are the party that would be sued in the context of a legal dispute). Hence procuring such local services would be complex on a shared basis amongst agencies. In order to address this issue, an option would be for an agency to share services with another agency in the same country, although this would involve agencies outside the remit of DG Employment. For example, there should be scope for Cedefop to share legal services with the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA), also based in Greece.

On balance, then, there is a number of corporate services where the agencies would benefit from sharing provision, although detailed analysis should be undertaken of whether an entire service or just some of its components should be shared, according to the costs and benefits. Some services would need to take into account national

¹⁵³ The restructuring costs are largely based on broad assumptions regarding the extent of indemnity payments that would need to be made to staff/ agents with definite period contracts who would no longer be required as a result of the changes.

¹⁵⁴ EU-OSHA has commented that in their case sharing IT services would take them in the opposite direction to recent recommendations from the Internal Audit Service.

legislation and more general national/local issues, but major areas are virtually unencumbered by these latter requirements, e.g. finance, procurement, legal, HR, IT (including data protection), communications, monitoring and evaluation and performance management. A full impact assessment would be required to identify which parts of corporate services would improve cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

4.4.7 Sharing 'front office' services

Sharing common 'front office' methods and tools has the potential to deliver improvements in terms of both efficiency and effectiveness for the agencies. Two examples identified through the evaluation are the management of country networks of experts and of surveys, which provide good illustrations of the types of arrangements that might be needed and their pros and cons.

In terms of expert networks, two DG EMPL agencies (Eurofound and Cedefop), as well as DG EMPL itself, currently have their own network of national experts or similar (in some cases these are referred to as correspondents). All agencies have in-house expertise to identify experts with appropriate experience, manage them and coordinate their inputs. Transferring the networks to DG EMPL or one agency only (Cedefop/ Eurofound) would involve one team managing a single set of national contacts and centralising requests for services. This would deliver economies of scale. An objection to this approach is that it could lead to a loss of specialist expertise from networks as a single network would need to cover a wider range of topics than at present.

Regarding surveys, all the EMPL agencies rely on surveys of employers and employees to collect information, and dedicate substantial parts of their budget to this purpose. For example, when the fieldwork of Eurofound's last European Company Survey was carried out in 2012, the surveys represented 50% of the agency's total research budget. As a general rule, the agencies carry out their surveys independently of each other, although already the planning and development of the surveys usually involves some form of cooperation with other agencies and other stakeholders through consultation groups of some kind ('expert groups' for Cedefop, 'advisory groups' for Eurofound). Cedefop and Eurofound are currently preparing the next wave of the European Company Survey jointly. This collaboration illustrates very well the motivations and advantages of cooperation, as well as the forms it may take, as shown in relation to EQ2, and also some of the downsides, e.g. in respect of EU-OSHA's decision not to continue cooperation.

However, inter-agency cooperation on surveys could be taken a step further to a more formal and systematic arrangement for sharing expertise and for managing surveys involving joint management and planning, as well as the creation of a permanent company panel. Regarding joint management and planning, joint projects are currently piloted by a steering group which brings together representatives from agencies' Governing Boards. Each agency has nominated a key contact person for the project. Both agencies report to have received the keen support of their Governing Boards provided they are reassured about key aspects of the collaborative project, looking especially for reassurance that their agency would obtain the data it needed from the joint survey. In order to move beyond the baseline cooperation model towards joint planning, an independent management board would be required to manage decision-making and ensure that synergies are maximised.

A consequence of moving towards greater cooperation in both the ways described in this section (in networks and surveys) is that posts or parts of posts may become redundant and hence that there may be staff losses. An attendant risk is that, moreover, any sharing of front office functions such as surveys would inevitably result in key there is a loss of institutional memory with regard to good practice approaches. However, neither of these is inevitable, and to some degree whether they occur will depend on how well the change process is managed.

4.4.8 Combined scenario: reinforced cooperation

It is evident from the assessment of the scenarios just provided, that there is no single scenario that presents itself as being clearly an 'obvious' choice in front of the others: all have their strengths and weaknesses and would deliver advantages and disadvantages of different sizes and shapes. In this light, a question arises: is it possible to build a scenario that maximises the most advantageous elements of the scenarios reviewed above and minimises the most disadvantageous elements. With this in mind, a 'combined' scenario is herewith presented.

It is possible to envisage a 'reinforced cooperation' scenario that seeks to maximise the advantages of closer cooperation under the scenarios of partial merger (shared governance model), sharing 'back-office' and 'front-office' functions whilst minimising the disadvantages identified above. Under this scenario, there are two variants. Under the first variant, the agencies would retain their current locations and management structures, but there would be joint governance through either a merged Governing Board or some form of integrated planning while maintaining separate Governing Boards. There would be a focus on synergistic working based around common policy domains and European social and economic needs. This would ensure multi-lateral planning rather than the bilateral arrangements currently in place. Each constituent agency would provide leadership in its policy field and also provide leadership for identified common tools and approaches, such as in the management of expert networks and the carrying out of surveys (as identified in the section on joint delivery of front office services¹⁵⁵). Corporate/ back-office functions would be shared wherever possible. In performance management, monitoring and evaluation, common systems would be put in place to realise cost savings. The second variation on this scenario would go a step further to locate corporate strategic functions and support services such as IT in one place, such as in one of the current agencies¹⁵⁶. In terms of costs, the sharing of strategic and corporate functions could save between 3m and 5m EUROS per annum¹⁵⁷.

The downsides of this scenario would be that a single Governing Board would be less specialised than each agency having its own, meaning that additional mechanisms might need to be put in place such as advisory bodies. In addition, consideration would need to be given to the Founding Regulations so as not to add a layer of complexity. Loss of specialism would be a particular challenge in respect of EU-OSHA as noted above and in the case of Cedefop and the ETF there might be a risk to VET insofar as it might become just an instrument of employment policy. The large distances between locations would also present challenges in terms of joint working, notwithstanding the availability of modern digital communications. Rationalisation of activities through close joint working might also lead to loss of expert staff in the short term. However, on balance this scenario would avoid most of the risks associated with merger.

These sorts of reinforced cooperation arrangements could be applied either to all the agencies or to sub-sets. For example, it could be applied separately to the sets of agencies with the potential to realise the greatest synergies (Cedefop/ETF, and Eurofound/EU-OSHA, and Eurofound/Cedefop). However, joint planning in the case of Cedefop and the ETF is a less feasible option than in the case of Eurofound and EU-OSHA because of their different operating contexts, as discussed elsewhere in the report.

¹⁵⁵ This does not include the EU_OSHA network in EU Member States.

¹⁵⁶ This variant draws on the experience of the Joint Research Centre. 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.

¹⁵⁷ 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. Further details on the calculations behind the estimation of overall administrative expenditure are provided in Annex 17.

Furthermore, feedback received in validation seminar on 8 December 2017 and follow-up discussions with stakeholders show that coordination also incurs costs (e.g. dividing roles between agencies, delineating the respective fields of interest). From certain level of cooperation, it is more feasible to follow mergers scenario (as presented in Sections 4.4.2-4.4.4) instead of reinforced cooperation.

The table below summarises the likely positive and negative effects of the 'reinforced cooperation' scenario.

Table 33. Likely effects of different scenarios: summary points

Scenario	Likely effects - summary points
'Reinforced cooperation' scenario	<p>Enhanced strategic leadership with regard to cross-cutting policy areas for example mobility and migration. (+)</p> <p>Potential to develop more efficient research processes e.g. through the pooling of knowledge and closer working on methodological development and survey data collection. (+)</p> <p>Ongoing savings as a result of merged or streamlined governance arrangements and enhanced coordination of front office and back office functions. (+)</p> <p>Potential for increased efficiency of delivery through sharing of knowledge and development of more efficient practices. (+)</p> <p>Merged boards would be less specialised (loss of knowledge, experience and expertise as although large degree of overlap in organisations on current boards different individuals attend) – this could have a negative impact on quality and speed of decision-making. (-)</p> <p>Loss of key people through rationalisation of activities may reduce efficiency and effectiveness of certain activities in the short to medium term. (-)</p>

4.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN LABOUR AUTHORITY

As noted already, the announcement of the European Labour Authority took place during the course of the evaluation. Since it evidently changes the landscape within which the DG Employment agencies sit, it will evidently be helpful to examine, as far as possible, its implications. It should nonetheless be noted that the evaluation was not designed to take it into account and the data collection phase of the evaluation had been completed by the time the evaluators were asked to take it into account as an additional activity on top of the original Terms of Reference. Furthermore, at the time of writing only the outline parameters for the Authority were known.

The establishment of a European Labour Authority is intended to contribute to ensuring fairness in the Single Market. Bringing together national liaison officers with permanent staff, it would be an effective organ to support national administrations, businesses, and mobile workers on cross-border employment and social security matters. A European Labour Authority could strengthen operational cooperation between competent labour authorities and social security institutions at all levels and better manage cross-border situations. The Authority could also support labour mobility by providing easier access to information for individuals, employers and organisations concerned. Concretely, the objectives of the Authority would be:

- Improving cooperation at EU level between national authorities on cross-border mobility and social security coordination matters including by solving possible disputes
- Improving access to information and transparency regarding rights and obligations in the field of labour mobility and social security systems by providing a one-stop-shops for citizens, businesses and public authorities
- Fighting abuse and organising joint control by national inspectorates
- Building on existing agencies and structures to manage better joint activities, for instance in terms of skills forecasting, health and safety work, and the management of restructuring and tackling undeclared work

Although the way in which the new European Labour Authority might be organised has not been finally determined, it is possible to envision in broad terms how the existing agencies might support and contribute to the work of the new Authority's objectives. First, the ELA might be built from an existing agency. Secondly, existing agencies might transfer relevant tasks into the ELA.

4.5.1 Building the ELA from an existing DG EMPL agency

The scenario of building the ELA from an existing agency stems from the fact that the ELA's likely mandate means it might be more cost-effective for the authority to be combined with an existing agency rather than standing alone. The question therefore arises as to what the fit might be with other agencies, and how we might test the scenario of building the ELA from an existing agency.

In terms of its thematic scope, the ELA will be focused on labour mobility. In terms of its modus operandi, the Authority will likely have a strong operational role and be involved in the technical aspects of strengthening administrative cooperation and mutual trust between national authorities, as well as in the provision of information and access to services to individuals and businesses. Indeed, it is envisaged that the Authority will pool existing tools such as EURES, the European Health Insurance Card, EU blue card etc. The Authority may also have the role of offering support to national authorities to develop their capacity in respect of cross-border mobility and may therefore need to be able to develop and deploy relevant tools such as guidelines and mutual learning opportunities, perhaps also establishing standards.

Evidently these features of the ELA set it apart from DG EMPL's four agencies: the ELA is currently envisioned as an 'authority' with operational powers rather than an 'agency' with advisory/ research capacities; and it will be much more operational and 'hands on' in respect of contact with citizens and businesses. This suggests that were the ELA to be built from an agency, it might not simply be a question of 'bolting' the two together but is likely to change the nature of the 'host' agency. At the same time, the ELA's activities will, logically, need to be supported by detailed knowledge of how labour mobility systems operate, current trends and the wider social and economic context within which they sit. Furthermore, the Authority will presumably need the resources to monitor developments to ensure that barriers to cross-border mobility are being brought down. Hence the Authority will either need its own analytical resources or be able to draw on those of others efficiently and effectively.

In light of these considerations, what does the evaluation evidence enable us to say about the possibility of an existing agency providing the basis for the ELA? First, it should be noted that there is complementarity between the proposed Authority and DG EMPL's four agencies, but none has a direct and obvious fit. At the same time, the closest fit in terms of thematic area is with Eurofound and, hence, this is used as a means of assessing the issues likely to arise in building the Authority from an existing agency. The following assessment is offered.

In terms of thematic focus/objectives and modus operandi, Eurofound is not concerned primarily with cross-border issues and has a strong research focus. Indeed, a key Eurofound added value lies in its research capabilities and the generation of new knowledge and expertise. Eurofound would have less to offer the ELA in terms of technical support to national authorities and running platforms for citizens and businesses. However, this would make for a complementary fit between the two bodies and indeed synergies could be developed. Knowledge and expertise in areas such as working conditions, industrial relations, labour markets, living conditions and quality of life in which Eurofound specialises would be relevant to the work of the ELA. Information from Eurofound's surveys might be useful for citizens and businesses, e.g. enabling them to undertake cross-country comparisons to inform mobility decisions by using information on wages and job quality. Eurofound has also undertaken work relating to fraudulent practices and undeclared work which would be relevant. The

agency also has well-established links to Member States that might be of benefit to the ELA.

However, there may also be downsides to building the ELA on Eurofound. There is a risk it would reduce the relative priority given to some topics/approaches (e.g., industrial relations and quality of life). It is readily apparent that Eurofound would have the capability to form a 'research arm' of a new organisation but its current remit is much wider than the ELA and it would be important for Eurofound not simply to be absorbed by the Authority and for its research not to become focused on cross-border mobility issues to the exclusion of other topics in which it has established expertise. Analytically there are two possible ways to proceed: (i) the current remit of Eurofound could be significantly slimmed down to fit it to the ELA; or (ii) the remit of the ELA could be expanded to fit that of Eurofound in order not to lose some of the key elements of Eurofound's added value. It is also important to recall that evaluation evidence highlights that Eurofound's internal structure is already complex and cooperation between units needs strengthening; adding the ELA into this context will likely add to complexity. Naturally, the current organisational structure of Eurofound would have to be revised significantly. In addition, the ELA would inevitably mean a change in the context in which Eurofound currently does its work from research for advice to research that might be used both for advice and/or regulation/ policy implementation.

Regarding financial costs, an ELA built on Eurofound has the advantage of lower back-office/corporate costs compared to the ELA being a separate organisation, although there would be some costs involved in creating a new organisation since almost inevitably there would have to be some reorganization of the ex-Eurofound elements. Premises costs are a further consideration since new buildings would be required at the Dublin site of Eurofound to accommodate ELA staff.

The governance of the new organisation may raise challenges. The tripartite structure of the organisation was perceived by survey representatives as well as validation seminar participants (8 December 2018) to be beneficial in terms of giving added credibility to the agency's outputs. Furthermore, the involvement of social partners could be seen as beneficial to the ELA, e.g. in respect of understanding wage bargaining and collective agreements in the context of labour mobility, and in developing its activities more generally.

Nevertheless, extending Eurofound's tripartite structure to the ELA is not necessarily the most optimal governance arrangement. Firstly, it is relatively complex; secondly, other stakeholders than the employers/ employees' representatives might be important to include and consult.

The first option would be to follow the Common Approach envisioning that the Management Board consists of representatives of Member States plus Commission, European Parliament and limited number of stakeholders. The stakeholder representatives could be delegated by European umbrella organisations that are the key players in the area of workers' mobility. A supplementary option could be to establish a consultative forum to provide advice to the Management Board. It could include a variety of stakeholders, such as social partners, NGOs, and researchers.

4.5.2 Transferring tasks from other DG EMPL agencies to the ELA

Another scenario for the ELA is that it takes on activities currently conducted by other agencies. In order to consider what these might be, activities were identified that would likely be *most directly* relevant to the mandate of the ELA, i.e. to support cross-border labour mobility. Hence the list of activities that might potentially be transferred does not include all activities that might be relevant.

The table below shows activities most directly relevant to the ELA. As can be seen, Cedefop and Eurofound would be the prime 'donors'. No relevant activities could be identified for the ETF. In the case of the EU-OSHA, the OSH wiki could be relevant to

the ELA because of its descriptions of national OSH systems (the latter point was not supported by stakeholders who took part in the validation seminar on 8 December 2017). EU-OSHA focal points network could be potentially considered as a prototype of a network the ELA would draw upon to provide assistance and practical guidance to the Member States. Nevertheless, an option to transfer this network to the ELA is questionable, all the more so that the network was considered as one of the key elements of EU-OSHA added value in Section 1.4.1.

Table 34. Agency activities of most relevance to the ELA

Agency	Activity	Annual Budget (€)
Cedefop	Europass	250,000
	EU Skills Panorama	240,000
	VET mobility scoreboard	225,000
Eurofound	Activities/projects	
	European Restructuring Monitor	415,000
	European Jobs Monitor	305,000
	European Observatory of Working Life (EurWORK)	1,300,000
	Research areas	
	Labour market	1,570,000
	Working conditions	3,290,000
EU-OSHA	Networking knowledge tools (OSHWiki)	367,672

In the case of Cedefop, the agency is responsible for the technical implementation and content management of Europass but does not have policy responsibility. Europass is not central to Cedefop's mandate. Recently it has been proposed that the EURES and Europass portals be better integrated. Since EURES will probably be under the responsibility of the new Authority, there is a good case for transferring Cedefop's responsibilities over to the ELA. Regarding the Skills Panorama, Cedefop has invested substantially in its development and has developed much in-depth expertise in skills forecasting and skills analysis around the Panorama. Moving the Panorama to the ELA without Cedefop's in-house team would likely have negative effects. Finally, VET mobility scoreboard could also be considered as transferable, although it is closer to the mission of Cedefop rather than ELA.

Regarding Eurofound, two of its monitors and one observatory have direct relevance to the ELA, having the potential to feed into its knowledge base, monitoring and data activities, risk and vulnerability assessment, and also to provide information of potential value to citizens and businesses. Yet these activities are integral part of Eurofound's work on specific research areas, first in and foremost working conditions and labour market. Removing specific research activities risks hollowing out Eurofound's work on a particular research area. Therefore, as an alternative the transfer of a research area as a whole could be considered. However, this scenario would mean that Eurofound as an agency changes significantly and therefore its mission and mandate would have to be revised.

4.6 EVALUATION QUESTION 4: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has assessed a range of scenarios for the agencies, in terms of their cost effectiveness. It has also examined in greater detail those scenarios with the most potential for delivering advantages. The results of our analysis are not straightforward –no single optimum alternative exists for making changes to the four agencies active in the field of employment and social policy. Ultimately, the choice of one or other scenario requires the comparison of a large number of different factors, not least whether one wishes to prioritise efficiency or effectiveness. This requires stakeholder agreement or political judgement. In addition, in the event that any of the scenarios were to be implemented, a full impact assessment would need to be conducted. Nonetheless, a number of conclusions can be drawn.

The evaluations of the individual agencies show that there are no major issues regarding efficiency and effectiveness that need to be addressed. This means that one of the rationales often used in the case of mergers is absent – namely, that a 'weaker'

or 'underperforming' organisation should be merged with a 'stronger' or 'high-performing' one. At the same time, there are certainly opportunities to: (a) reduce costs/ increase efficiency; and (b) achieve greater effectiveness through stronger synergies. Both of these opportunities have been prominent factors in driving mergers between organisations in public administrations within many EU Member States. As the analysis of EQ2 demonstrated, scope does exist to develop cooperation more closely and systematically. Such results could be achieved while also addressing the new priorities and commitments of the European Commission, including the European Labour Authority, and at a time when EU's objectives beyond 2020 are being examined.

The analysis has considered the extent to which alternative scenarios would increase the cost-effectiveness of the agencies, compared to the current allocation of resources. It has been impossible within the confines of this evaluation to undertake a detailed impact assessment of the individual alternative scenarios. Nevertheless, broad conclusions can be made with regard to the relative disadvantages and advantages of the individual scenarios, in order to inform conclusions as to the feasibility of certain changes.

A group of scenarios are judged not to be viable: negative effects outweigh positive effects. First, a '**discontinuation**' scenario would have the most negative outcomes: the substantial ongoing cost savings from the closure of the agencies would be more than offset by the loss of capacity within the EU to develop and implement effective labour market policies. Second, the '**expansion**' scenario appears unrealistic in the context of the current climate of reduced or frozen budgets. Third, the '**absorption**' and '**contracting out**' scenarios, both of which would involve substantial short-term costs, would create a great deal of uncertainty regarding the ability of the European Commission to fulfil its policy obligations, at least in the medium-term.

Regarding the viable scenarios, comparing the different options leads to the following conclusions. On its own, **shared governance** would not deliver many benefits, and would need to occur in concert with other measures to share services in order to realise the full benefits. The **sharing of back-office and front-office services** themselves represent comparatively low-risk scenarios that would deliver advantages and cost savings, but they would not tackle the need for stronger strategic, multilateral cooperation that has been identified as the key current gap in terms of complementarity and coherence.

Of the **merger scenarios**, the Cedefop/ ETF and Cedefop/ Eurofound options offer the best prospects. (involving EU-OSHA in a merger with Eurofound would face a number of stumbling blocks stemming largely from the specialist nature of EU-OSHA's work). These scenarios would deliver cost savings and probably enable more advantages to be derived from their similar thematic interests, through more joint working on common tools. However, they also carry risks in terms of a loss of priority for some thematic areas; greater management complexity (diseconomies of scale); and disruption in the short term through staff losses due to the need for relocation. The Cedefop/ ETF merger carries an added risk to the future effectiveness of the ETF, insofar as it might alter perceptions within neighbourhood countries as to its ability to deliver advice that is perceived to be independent. Overall, these merger scenarios remain feasible but are finely balanced between potential positive and negative effects, and represent a high-risk strategy amongst the viable scenarios.

On the **cost side**, it is difficult to arrive at clear conclusions on the relative merits of the two favoured merger scenarios. The closer thematic fit of Cedefop and the ETF means that greater potential may exist to achieve synergies in relation to front-office functions than is the case with Cedefop/ Eurofound. Indeed, in the latter case one might envisage a scenario in which the key departments of Cedefop are moved as a whole to become a subdivision of Eurofound, such that the main cost savings would be in terms of corporate management functions rather than being directly related to functional operations. However, it is also possible to envisage some limited

rationalisation of front-office functions in relation to research roles, which could result in cost savings of up to €1.5m. This figure is based on assumptions regarding potential overlaps in the generic research competences of the agencies' staff, and potential economies to be gained through the pooling of staff. Because the research complementarities between Cedefop and the ETF are clearly greater, it is reasonable to assume that greater savings could be made through the rationalisation of their research and analysis functions. Our estimates suggest savings of up to €2m, compared to the estimated €1.5m for similar functions under the Cedefop/ Eurofound scenario. In terms of back-office functions, it has been impossible to provide a detailed analysis of potential cost savings. Based on assumptions regarding the administrative costs of the agencies, estimates of cost savings produce very similar results, with ongoing cost savings estimated to be in the region of €1.5m for each scenario (due to the uncertainty ranges are included in the scenarios table in Section 4.3).

Outside of costs, arguments as to how these two merger options compare are clearest **in relation to risks**, with Cedefop/ ETF merger posing the fewest risks. With regard to benefits, the evidence is less conclusive¹⁵⁸. In terms of the thematic fit of their mandates, there is clearly a closer fit between Cedefop and the ETF, than between Cedefop and Eurofound. The Cedefop/ ETF merger would not carry the same risk of loss of priority/ profile for the policy field of vocational education and training, as would a Cedefop/ Eurofound merger. A Cedefop/ Eurofound merger also involves the risks that VET would become regarded as simply an instrument of employment policy, and that specialist VET knowledge might become watered down over time. One of the major drawbacks of any merger of agencies into one location is the potential for staff losses among employees who do not wish to relocate. All else being equal, the risk of such losses might be greater in the case of a Cedefop/ Eurofound merger than a Cedefop/ ETF merger, owing to the greater distances involved – but given Turin and Thessaloniki are not in close proximity either, this argument might be irrelevant in practice. In terms of governance, the merger of Cedefop and Eurofound (tripartite agencies) would, all things being equal, probably be less problematic in broad terms than merging Cedefop and the ETF, which have differently constituted Governing Boards. Finally, a significant advantage of a Cedefop/ Eurofound merger would be that such a merger, by virtue of leaving the ETF intact, would not run the risk of having a negative effect on the ability of the ETF to operate effectively in partner countries¹⁵⁹.

In light of the finely balanced nature of the arguments relating to mergers, a further scenario of **reinforced cooperation** has been elaborated, which offers the potential to maximise the advantages inherent in the other scenarios, and minimise their disadvantages. It could also deliver strong, multilateral strategic cooperation without the costs and uncertainties of merger, as well as preserving the specialist expertise that currently exists and which is highly valued by European stakeholders. It would also open up the possibility of more extensive and effective sharing of services.

Ultimately, though, the choice depends on the priority accorded to different variables. It is evident that the conclusions need to take into account two key factors: the constrained resource situation due to Brexit and the ELA. If the imperative is to reduce costs rapidly whilst simultaneously bringing the ELA into existence, the picture changes. In this new context, the sharing of back-office/ corporate functions and 'joint delivery' of common tools and approaches might be unlikely on their own to deliver the cost savings required. In such a case merging Cedefop and ETF or CEDEFOP and EUROFOUND might be seen as a means of achieving the cost savings required to handle the negative budgetary consequences of Brexit – notwithstanding the drawbacks and risks involved that have been highlighted.

¹⁵⁸ At the same time, a critical caveat is that all of the arguments are finely balanced and will depend on how well any merger is managed in order to deliver benefits that outweigh the disadvantages.

¹⁵⁹ As noted above, there is a perception in partner countries that the ETF acts independently that is vital to its ability to build trust and work effectively; this could be undermined by merger.

Another option is to transfer relevant activities into the ELA and analysis suggests that there are possibilities in respect of Cedefop and Eurofound but these also carry disadvantages in terms of the consequences for the coherence of other activities within these agencies.

The implementation of any scenario should be based **on a comprehensive and feasible plan** for transition from the current situation to a future situation. If possible, the actual benefits and costs of the selected scenario should be tested by executing a few specific pilot actions involving some of the EU decentralised agencies under the remit of DG EMPL. During this process it is important to gather and analyse data on the outputs and results of implementing the specific scenario in order to measure its impact on the performance of the agencies in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. This monitoring could be added to the framework of the existing monitoring systems and tools applied by the individual agencies.

In general, the monitoring systems of the four agencies appear to be adequate, although the burden of reporting appears to be high in relation to Cedefop, and the ETF was found in the last evaluation to be in need of strengthening its approach towards monitoring impacts. From a cross-cutting perspective, some standardisation in the indicators related to outputs and results would be beneficial to enable the agencies to be more easily compared and contrasted. Naturally there are limits to standardisation in light of the differences between the agencies. Nonetheless, a core group of common indicators should be feasible and agreement could be reached on how data is collected to ensure compatibility (for example, Cedefop does not collect data on the programme delivery indicator, while Eurofound does).

In addition, there is scope to develop a set of impact indicators that could be linked to DG Employment's objectives and broad European social and economic needs. Evidently, such indicators would need to reflect the ways in which the agencies work, e.g. through influencing Member State governments in the case of Cedefop; and the issue of 'attribution' needs to be taken into account, i.e. any indicator system needs to allow for the fact that changes, e.g. in Member State policy in the case of Cedefop, cannot normally be attributed solely to the work of an agency – other factors come in to play.

Alongside these developments in monitoring, the agencies participating in the rationalisation of their structure and performance could be subject to external reviews or evaluations in order to verify improvements in efficiency and effectiveness, as well as to confirm that the execution of the selected scenario is still justified, taking into account the initial implementation results and important EU policy developments.

5. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The four DG EMPL agencies – Cedefop, the ETF, EU-OSHA and Eurofound – were established to generate knowledge and contribute to the policy process in their respective fields. These fields range from more general ones such as living and working conditions (Eurofound) and human capital development (the ETF), to more specific ones such as occupational safety and health (EU-OSHA), and vocational and in-service training (Cedefop). These agencies have developed their own modes of operation, both by following their Founding Regulations, and guided by their stakeholders, as well as by the nature of their policy field. In effect, Eurofound has primarily become a research and research management/ coordination body. It provides evidence to EU policy makers; addresses the sometimes divergent needs of its stakeholders; manages the network of national correspondents; and liaises with the academic and expert community and international organisations. In many ways, Cedefop has followed a similar path – although, in addition to its EU-level role, the agency has occasionally engaged with policy makers and other stakeholders within Member States to provide evidence that has fed into national policy reforms. EU-OSHA undertakes the role of interlocutor between stakeholders at EU and national levels. It works to acquire, collect and systematise information relating to occupational health and safety at work. This information is passed on as a contribution to EU policy making, or drawn upon to raise awareness within the Member States. Finally, the ETF conducts knowledge creation and sharing activities, and provides advice to EU partner countries in the Balkans, North Africa, Central Asia and other regions.

The evaluation revealed that, within their remit of activity, the agencies have operated mostly **effectively and efficiently**. Their outputs and services were **relevant** both from the top-down perspective of key EU-level policy documents, as well as from the bottom-up standpoint of stakeholders. The case for **EU added value** consists of the uniqueness of outputs/ services that are not available elsewhere, in terms of thematic coverage and geographical scope. These include the pan-European surveys and follow-up research produced by Eurofound (EWCS, ECS, EQLS) and EU-OSHA (ESENER); skills forecasting reports and skills anticipation models produced by Cedefop; and EU-OSHA's network of national focal points in the field of occupational health and safety. The ETF occupies a unique position among the agencies, being the only one that works in countries outside the EU, providing evidence-based policy support. In the assessment of **coherence**, the evaluation identified partial overlaps between agencies at the level of general mandates and objectives. However, these overlaps have provided opportunities for productive cooperation under which agencies make use of differences in their knowledge and expertise.

Nevertheless, the current policy environment is very different from that seen between the 1970s and the 1990s, when the agencies were established. It is therefore reasonable to ask if the four DG EMPL agencies still have a role to play, in view of current and prospective policy challenges. If so, what is the most appropriate role? Based on the evaluation evidence, and drawing on both **retrospective and prospective analysis**, we suggest that the future of the four agencies will be determined by three key drivers:

- The imperative for an agile, innovative and efficient network of organisations working together to provide effective and efficient support for policy making and implementation
- The future direction of the EU, and in particular the need for further cooperation between Member States to support the development of an agile and skilled workforce fit for the future labour markets, and to tackle both internal challenges of cross-border mobility – as well as the need to foster trust among themselves, and with neighbouring countries
- The need for evidence-based policy advice in an environment of new social challenges, fragmented data and contested methodologies

5.1 ENGAGING IN REINFORCED COOPERATION AND ORGANISATIONAL INNOVATION

The success of public organisations will increasingly depend on their ability to focus on their core mission, work in cooperation with their clients and stakeholders, and tap into the resources of wider networks connected through synergetic and non-hierarchical relationships. For organisations working to generate knowledge and inform policy making, this means more thematic and project-based work, team work, inclusive leadership, internal collaboration and coordination, the flexibility of internal roles, joint planning and shared services. This affects all aspects of an organisation, including its structure, management, internal processes and staff tasks.

Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA and the ETF have so far engaged in cooperation, although to varying degrees, depending on the extent of the commonality between their mandates and objectives. They have drawn on a number of formal and informal cooperation mechanisms that have led to the exchange of experience; participation in each others' events; joint projects; and, in a few instances, to joint procurement. Yet such efforts have been too careful, cautious and *ad hoc*. Much of the cooperation has focused on knowledge exchange and joint participation; examples of joint research, joint publications and joint services have been too infrequent. Cooperation practices have so far been primarily bottom-up, developed bilaterally rather than multilaterally, and have relied primarily on the existing interests of the agencies rather than joint strategic planning. Such focus implies costs in terms of foregone opportunities for sharing work and resources.

In parallel, the four EMPL agencies face an imperative to reduce costs while still achieving more results without compromising quality. This fits very well into the wider context of EU institutions and bodies working to review their structures and procedures in order to deliver better results with fewer resources. In 2015, for example, the European Commission launched the EU Budget Focused on Results initiative, which aimed to maximise the Union's budget effectiveness. In 2016, the Commission adopted a communication on synergies and efficiencies in the exercise of support functions (human resources management, ICT, communication, logistics, events and meeting room management). The Secretariat-General of the Commission recently developed a set of recommendations on ensuring future efficiency gains and synergies within agencies. Brexit will further strengthen the savings imperative, with the real possibility that cuts of up to 25% may be necessary.

In view of these pressures, we suggest recommendations that include: (1) reinforced cooperation between agencies; (2) organisational innovation; (3) service-level innovation; and (4) streamlining of governance.

5.1.1 Reinforced cooperation between agencies

This evaluation assessed a number of scenarios regarding the future of the agencies, ranging from no change to mergers and termination. The scenario of reinforced cooperation emerged as a feasible option that combines the advantages and minimises the disadvantages presented by the other scenarios. In essence, reinforced cooperation involves agencies cooperating at a much more fundamental level than currently occurs, and engaging in **joint value creation**. Such an approach offers the potential for innovations, fostering cross-agency learning, and setting up an 'innovation space' between the agencies that would help to offset any increases in transaction costs.

Table 35. Overall/ synthetic recommendations concerning reinforced cooperation

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R1.1	The agencies retain their current locations and management structures. However, the corporate functions such as strategy, legal and financial management, coordination and support services such as ICT, as well as Brussels Liaison Offices, could be merged and/ or located in one place.	EQ1, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF
R1.2	Joint programming and planning by the agencies to replace the bilateral and/or <i>ad hoc</i> arrangements currently in place (e.g. one programming document for all agencies). DG EMPL should play a more active role in directing cooperation between agencies, by facilitating the development of common priorities and actions, and by making sure that agencies' work feeds into EU policy cycle.	EQ1, EQ2, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF, EC
R1.3	Joint procurement of ICT and audio-visual equipment and services, cloud services, etc.	EQ1, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF
R1.4	In the area of performance management and evaluation, common or coordinated systems could be put in place that would realise cost savings.	EQ1, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF
R1.5	Mutual learning and sharing of services with decentralised agencies outside DG EMPL or with the Commission, as well as engaging in other forms of cooperation through the EU Agencies Network.	EQ1, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF, EC
R1.6	Joint delivery where common tools and approaches exist: for example, the management of expert networks and the carrying out of surveys. The idea of a company panel was floated during the evaluation; the agencies may join efforts and resources to develop such a panel.	EQ1, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF
R1.7	Eurofound, Cedefop, EU-OSHA and the ETF could draw on their specific expertise by producing joint cross-cutting reports, unique cross-thematic outputs, sharing capabilities and instruments.	EQ1, EQ2, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF

5.1.2 Agency-level innovation

In line with the evidence provided in this report, and following the principles of successful organisations presented at the beginning of this section, the agencies should continue to innovate via reviews of their internal processes, further simplification, electronic workflows, project-based work, thematic focus, horizontal cooperation and coordination, and networking with other organisations. There is no single, static point at which an organisation becomes 'innovative'. An innovative organisation improves continuously, through self-reflection and learning from other organisations.

Table 36. Overall/ synthetic recommendations concerning agency-level innovation

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R1.8	During the period 2011-2016, Cedefop, the ETF and Eurofound redesigned their internal structures and revisited their work processes. While there no single optimal internal structure or process, it is important that the functioning of units, departments and work processes is continuously revisited, with the long-term aim of ensuring that information flows within organisation, as well as cooperation and efficiency in decision making.	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R1.9	The evaluation demonstrated the need for greater staff engagement in the agencies, and better exchange of information between management and staff. The agencies log and process ever more information on their performance, and use it for reporting, accountability and internal decision making. The staff should be informed and consulted systematically, with decisions being made on the basis of such information.	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF
R1.10	A comparison of the agencies' performance-measuring systems demonstrated that there is room for better alignment and comparability between agencies. Currently, monitoring and reporting data is not fully comparable; for example, the agencies monitor their policy contributions differently. There have been differences in monitoring and reporting the performance of internal processes such as the delivery of the work programme. Furthermore, the agencies should develop a more systematic approach to measuring the use of the agencies' outputs at national level. The agencies should work further to align the methodologies of their performance indicators.	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF

5.1.3 Service-level innovation

The agencies should also continue improving their key services, both in terms of quality and cost-effectiveness. The evaluation did not reveal any significant issues in this respect, and most users were satisfied with the agencies' services or outputs. Nevertheless, some services or outputs were clearly more unique than others, and the agencies may need to focus even more on the key services – especially in view of current budgetary and staff restraint. Conversely, sharing services and pooling resources, as presented under the reinforced cooperation scenario, might help to maintain or even increase the scope or supply of services. Further, the agencies should keep innovating with regard to their current services, in order to make them as useful as possible to the EU policy process, and responsive to changing needs of their users.

Table 37. Overall/ synthetic recommendations concerning service-level innovation

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R1.11	In order to ensure the quality and use of research/ monitoring reports, the agencies should work closely with their own contractors, correspondents and other direct stakeholders. They should establish, from the outset, the key challenges of the assignment, the expectations and needs of the direct target groups, and most effective means of communication/ dissemination. Major emphasis is required on the readability and policy-focus of publications, in particular for users with non-academic backgrounds, and policy-makers.	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF
R1.12	The agencies should continue to explore and utilise innovative communication channels such as webinars, communities of practice, interactive videos and live streaming. The agencies should further develop and expand their social media presence, as this is a cost-effective way of reaching diverse groups of stakeholders. The agencies should work further to differentiate between their different target groups, as well as to identify intermediaries that could support the dissemination of the outputs.	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF
R1.13	The agencies should explore cooperation with national governments and stakeholders, and adopt a demand-driven translation approach so that external stakeholders can initiate translations and contribute financially if a specific output is of major interest to them	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF
R1.14	Continuous learning/ staff training in both research and communication methods, as well as team work and project management, is the key to the continuous improvement of the	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA,

		Evaluation question	Addresses
	quality of services/ outputs.		ETF

5.1.4 Streamlining governance

Currently, the size and composition of the governing institutions of Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA do not correspond to the Common Approach on Decentralised EU Agencies. The current Governing Boards of the agencies are larger than is suggested by the CA. The governing institutions are also tripartite, through the involvement of governments as well as social partners from each Member States. Meanwhile, the Common Approach suggests that 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 representatives from stakeholders (where appropriate). The discussions that have taken place to inform and provide feedback on this evaluation have pointed out to the fact that the stakeholders had agreed, by the end of 2017, to retain the tripartite structure of the agencies’ management. Nevertheless, the evaluation team has also been specifically requested to elaborate on some alternative governance options.

In line with the reinforced cooperation scenario, this evaluation points to the possibility of the joint governance of Cedefop, the ETF, Eurofound and EU-OSHA through a merged Governing Board. This would pave the way for integrated/ joint planning, would provide for some savings in resources, and would allow the Governing/ Management Board to take a truly cross-cutting approach. Nevertheless, this option entails risks, as presented elsewhere in this report (in particular, the loss of specialisation on issues of, say, occupational health and safety). It was strongly opposed by many stakeholders, including members of the current Governing Boards, who took part in the validation seminar on 8 December, 2017.

The evaluation team suggests that the current tripartite system may be reconsidered in order to: (a) to make the management institutions smaller and more agile, while (b) providing options for wider and more open-ended representation.

Table 38. Overall/ synthetic recommendations on streamlining governance

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R1.15	As demonstrated by the evaluation, the tripartite governance is a feature that makes Eurofound, Cedefop and EU-OSHA unique in comparison to many other agencies and organisations. While this creates a ‘multiple principals’ situation, and sometimes leads to differing perceptions with regard to the direction of the agencies, it is also an asset that contributes to the relevance, acceptance and dissemination of the agencies’ work. The tripartite stakeholders have adapted to operating within the current institutional structure, and take decisions on the basis of discussion and compromise. Therefore, measures should be taken to ensure that within any governance structure, the tripartite stakeholders feel represented, committed, involved and consulted.	EQ1, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF, EC
R1.16	If a decision is made to downsize the governing institutions, a range of options exists to inform and consult the tripartite partners. These include: (a) using bodies such as Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT) to provide opinion on the agencies’ activities and receive feedback from the social partners; (b) introducing an observer status so that tripartite stakeholders who are interested and committed could still take part in meetings; and (c) involving the social partners more extensively in various advisory groups and committees.	EQ1, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF, EC

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R1.17	There are stakeholder groups that do not necessarily inform the positions of the social partners; for example, non-unionised workers, groups representing youth or older persons, academic interest groups and others. There is a case for involving, informing or even consulting these groups alongside the social partners, through more open-ended formats than are currently used. Such formats include the observer status mentioned above, or some form of a broader stakeholders' consultative group or forum.	EQ1, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF, EC
R1.18	The Governing/ Management Board members should debrief national stakeholder networks about the work and decisions of the agencies. They should use the feedback received to inform their work in the Governing/ Management Board.	EQ1, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF
R1.19	Electronic decision making (e.g. written procedure) and, where appropriate, virtual meetings should be further explored as an option to achieve more efficient and quicker decision making.	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF

5.2 BECOMING PART OF EU FUTURE SCENARIOS

In 2017, the European Commission published a White Paper on the Future of the EU: Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025. The Commission offered several scenarios, ranging from 'Carrying on' to 'Doing more together'. 'Carrying on' is hardly an option, as signalled by President Juncker in his 2017 State of the Union Address. Among other initiatives, in this speech Juncker introduced the European Labour Authority (ELA). While at the time of writing the specifics of ELA are still to be worked out, its key aims will be to (a) improve cooperation at EU level on cross-border mobility and social security coordination matters; and (b) improve access to information and transparency regarding rights and obligations in the field of labour mobility and social security systems. DG EMPL agencies could support and contribute to the work of this new EU body. The establishment of ELA provides a rationale for rethinking the composition of DG EMPL agencies, including the revision of their mandates and functions.

It is possible to envision how the four EMPL agencies might become part of the future scenarios for the EU27, in terms of becoming part of improved cooperation on cross-border mobility. Three possible future directions exist: (1) ELA is established to undertake functions that no other agency currently implements; (2) ELA acquires or coordinates relevant tools from other agencies, principally Cedefop and Eurofound; or (3) ELA is established from an existing EU agency.

5.2.1 ELA undertakes functions that no other agency is currently implementing

In this case, the key action for all the current EMPL agencies would be to engage in cooperation (for example, along the lines presented in the reinforced cooperation scenario, Section 5.1.1) in order to exploit synergies and avoid duplication.

Table 39. Overall/ synthetic recommendations if ELA undertakes only the functions that no current EMPL agency implements

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R2.1	Include ELA in ongoing and future endeavours in inter-organisational cooperation (including reinforced cooperation), in order to exploit synergies and avoid duplication	EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF, EC

5.2.2 ELA acquires or coordinates some tools from the current EMPL agencies

Given that some of the current activities of the EMPL agencies have direct or indirect repercussions for cross-border mobility, ELA could acquire or coordinate relevant tools from other agencies, principally Cedefop and Eurofound.

Table 40. Overall/ synthetic recommendations if ELA acquires or coordinates some tools/ functions from the current EMPL agencies

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R2.2	Tools that could be transferred include, from Cedefop: the Skills Panorama, Europass, the VET mobility scoreboard. Eurofound covers a number of topics and undertakes activities that could feed into the knowledge base of ELA, its monitoring and data activities, risk and vulnerability assessment, and also provide information of potential value to citizens and businesses. The relevant options range from rather specific tools, such as the European Restructuring Monitor to research activities in the areas of working conditions and labour market.	EQ4	EC
R2.3	Decisions on which tools to acquire, and which to coordinate, would need to consider the synergies that might already exist with other functions in the agencies, along with the expertise that may have been built up around them. For example, moving relevant skills-related activities out of Cedefop would significantly hollow out the work that Cedefop has built up in recent years around skills that complement its VET focus. The optimal solution would be for them to be retained by the agency concerned, and for a close relationship to be forged with the new ELA, around their implementation and use.	EQ4	EC
R2.4	The implementation of any scenario should be based on a comprehensive and feasible plan for transition from the current situation to a future situation. The benefits and costs of the selected scenario should be tested through pilot actions involving some of the EU decentralised agencies under the remit of DG EMPL. During this process, it is important to gather and analyse data on the outputs and results of implementing the specific scenario, in order to measure its impact on the performance of the agencies in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.	EQ4	EC

5.2.3 Establishing ELA from an existing EU agency

Several features set ELA apart from DG EMPL's four agencies: ELA is currently envisioned as an 'authority' with operational powers, rather than an 'agency' with advisory/ research capacities. ELA will be much more operational and 'hands on' in respect of its contact with citizens and businesses. At the same time, ELA's activities will, logically, need to be supported by detailed knowledge of the ways in which labour mobility systems operate, as well as current trends and the wider social and economic context within which they sit. In other words, the Authority will require resources to monitor developments in order to ensure that barriers to cross-border mobility are brought down. Hence, the Authority will either need its own analytical resources, or it will need to take on those of others. There are two arguments for establishing ELA from an existing EU agency: first, if cost-efficiency becomes the prime argument for rethinking the current setup of the DG EMPL agencies; and second, if under the previous option one of the agencies' gives up too many of its current functions to the ELA, it might become hollowed out to the extent that it would be better to blend it into a larger institution.

Table 41. Overall/ synthetic recommendations if ELA is established from an existing EU agency

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R2.5	There is a cost-efficiency related case for establishing ELA from an existing DG EMPL agency. This would have the advantage of lower back-office/corporate costs compared to ELA being a separate organisation –although some costs would be involved in creating a new organisation (for example, it would still be necessary to build new premises or expand existing ones).	EQ4	EC
R2.6	If ELA is established from an existing DG EMPL agency, there is a risk that it would reduce the relative priority given to some topics/approaches of the current agency. Analytically there are two ways to proceed: (i) the current remit of the existing agency could be significantly slimmed down to fit it into ELA; or (ii) the remit of ELA could be expanded to fit that of the current agency, in order not to lose some of the key elements of its EU added value.	EQ4	EC

5.3 SHAPING THE FUTURE THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY ADVICE

The policy fields in which the four agencies work have been changing rapidly. Relevant developments include demographic change and ageing societies; new technologies, changing skills needs and new ways of working; safety and security; new types of health risks in the work place; migration, mobility and integration. In addition, the very process of collecting, analysing and communicating data and information has changed, due to the arrival of new sources of evidence (e.g. social media, big data), and new methods with which to process it. New players have entered or are entering the field – both producers and users of research. In parallel, despite the apparent abundance of data, the field of policy-oriented research has become more fragmented and contested – not least because much of the available data is fuzzy, inconclusive and/or can be manipulated for doctrinal or market-driven reasons. In this context, it is ever more important for the EU institutions to have the option of drawing on trusted bodies that not only work to produce evidence-based advice, but also organise their work with the aim of supporting EU policies. The decentralised EMPL agencies can play this role in their respective fields, but they must do so with ever greater agility, adaptability and anticipation. Furthermore, given the multilateral nature of EU policy design and implementation, is it necessary to rethink whether the agencies, and in particular Eurofound and Cedefop, could be given an even stronger mandate to provide evidence and advice to Member States, as well as to social partners and a broader range of stakeholders.

This evaluation recommends that the agencies should work to provide policy-oriented and useful evidence and advice to EU institutions, on the basis of agile and cooperative planning. Engaging more closely and systematically with Member States, social partners, and a broader circle of non-governmental actors, also merits consideration. In this case, the final decision will depend on the availability of resources and the willingness the Member States and relevant partners to contribute their own resources (financial, human, time) to those activities that are of direct value to them.

5.3.1 Policy support to the EU institutions

The EMPL agencies should become hubs of policy-oriented and useful evidence to the Commission and other EU bodies. The programming documents of the agencies must be designed to feed into the EU policies and future initiatives.

Table 42. Overall/ synthetic recommendations concerning policy support to EU institutions

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R3.1	The process of adopting and implementing the work programmes must be flexible enough to allow for changes in the case of sudden reconfiguration of EU priorities. Other instruments of adaptability should be used, such as: adjusting the aims of tasks or projects during the implementation stage; designing intermediate outputs of projects to feed into policy discussions, rather than waiting until the project ends; and further recalibration of <i>ad hoc</i> procedure, so that it could be deployed relatively quickly.	EQ1, EQ2, EQ4	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF, EC
R3.2	The European Commission could further facilitate multilateral inter-agency discussions ahead of preparing annual and multi-annual work programmes. The key aim of such an exercise should be the development of common priorities and parameters for closer inter-agency cooperation and EU policy support.	EQ1, EQ2, EQ4	EC
R3.3	The evaluation revealed that the agencies themselves felt they were not always included early enough in discussions concerning policies in their respective fields. The Commission should therefore ensure that the agencies are brought in at earlier stages of policy development, while taking into account the EU decision-making process.	EQ1	EC
R3.4	The agencies should aim to engage more closely with policy makers, and to better anticipate the needs of the Commission and other EU bodies, as well as producing smaller, intermediate and short-term deliverables and updates (e.g. briefing notes).	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF

5.3.2 Policy support and advice to the Member States

Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA could create EU added value by providing policy support and advice to the Member States. Such advice to the partner countries is already at the core of the ETF's mandate, and the ETF's experience provides a valuable pool of expertise upon which the other agencies should draw. There is a need in some Member States for research-based policy advice, as their own institutions may lack capacity, resources and comparative cross-country perspective. Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA have so far been involved in such activities, although to different degrees and not systematically. Importantly, stronger engagement by the agencies with Member States would have to be based upon a revision of their mandates and additional resources. If the focus is on saving resources, expanding advice to the Member States is not possible.

Table 43. Overall/ synthetic recommendations concerning policy support to the Member States

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R3.5	Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA could broaden the scope of demand-driven support to the Member States on policy issues and initiatives that are high on the EU agenda. Such support may include missions, policy analysis, the facilitation of policy learning, and mediation of internal discussions.	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA
R3.6	It is crucial that Member States and national/ regional social partners and research bodies become an integral part of such policy support exercises, engage actively with the agencies, and contribute both with their expertise and their human and budgetary resources.	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA

5.3.3 Policy support and advice to the social partners and other stakeholders

As tripartite agencies, Cedefop, Eurofound and EU-OSHA have developed a relationship of mutual understanding and trust with social partners, who over the years have influenced the agencies' agenda and used the agencies' outputs and services. While the nature of tripartite governance has been subject to discussion in view of the Common Approach, it is important that (a) the cooperative relationship between the agencies and social partners is maintained, and (b) the range of stakeholders that are informed and consulted on the agencies' activities is expanded. Nevertheless, more extensive outreach to non-governmental actors will have to be based on revision of the agencies' mandates, and additional resources. If the focus is on saving resources, expanding the agencies' remit is not possible.

Table 44. Overall/ synthetic recommendations concerning policy support and advice to the social partners and other stakeholders

		Evaluation question	Addresses
R3.7	The agencies could engage in more extensive cooperation with social partners and other stakeholders (NGOs, researchers) at the national/ regional level. In particular, the agencies could offer advice and expertise aimed at strengthening social dialogue in countries where the tradition of such dialogue has been weak. In the case of the ETF, this would be part of its already extensive set of activities in relation to governance in partner countries.	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF
R3.8	Such contribution should be demand-driven, should aim for the better design/ implementation of EU policy priorities, and should draw on the collaboration, contribution and resources of all the parties involved.	EQ1	Cedefop, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF

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