

# INTRODUCTION TO TRACER STUDIES

Learning Programme on measuring labour market outcomes of participants in VET courses, Prizren, 3-5 May 2017

Source: Carrying out tracer studies - Guide to anticipating and matching skills and jobs;  
[http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Vol. 6 Tracer studies](http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/Vol._6_Tracer_studies)



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- 4. THE QUESTIONNAIRE**
- 5. IMPLEMENTATION**
- 6. CHALLENGES, COUNTRY PRACTICES AND LESSONS**



# WHAT AND WHY

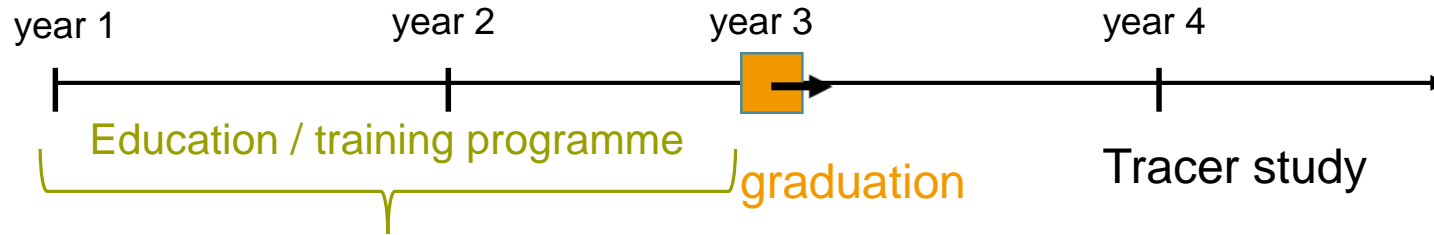


# WHAT ARE TRACER STUDIES

- **SURVEYS OF FORMER PARTICIPANTS OF (INITIAL AND CONTINUOUS) EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES**
- **SIMILAR TERMS: GRADUATE SURVEY; ALUMNI RESEARCH; FOLLOW-UP STUDY OR SURVEYS; GRADUATE CAREER TRACKING**
- **TARGET POPULATION: GRADUATES OF AN INSTITUTION/EDUCATION OR TRAINING PROVIDER (REGARDLESS LEVEL AND TYPE OF DEGREE)**
- **WHEN – AFTER GRADUATION**



## RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSES OF GRADUATES THROUGH A STANDARDISED SURVEY, WHICH TAKES PLACE AFTER GRADUATION (VARIOUS POINTS IN TIME)



# TRACER STUDIES VS SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION SURVEYS

## TRACER STUDIES

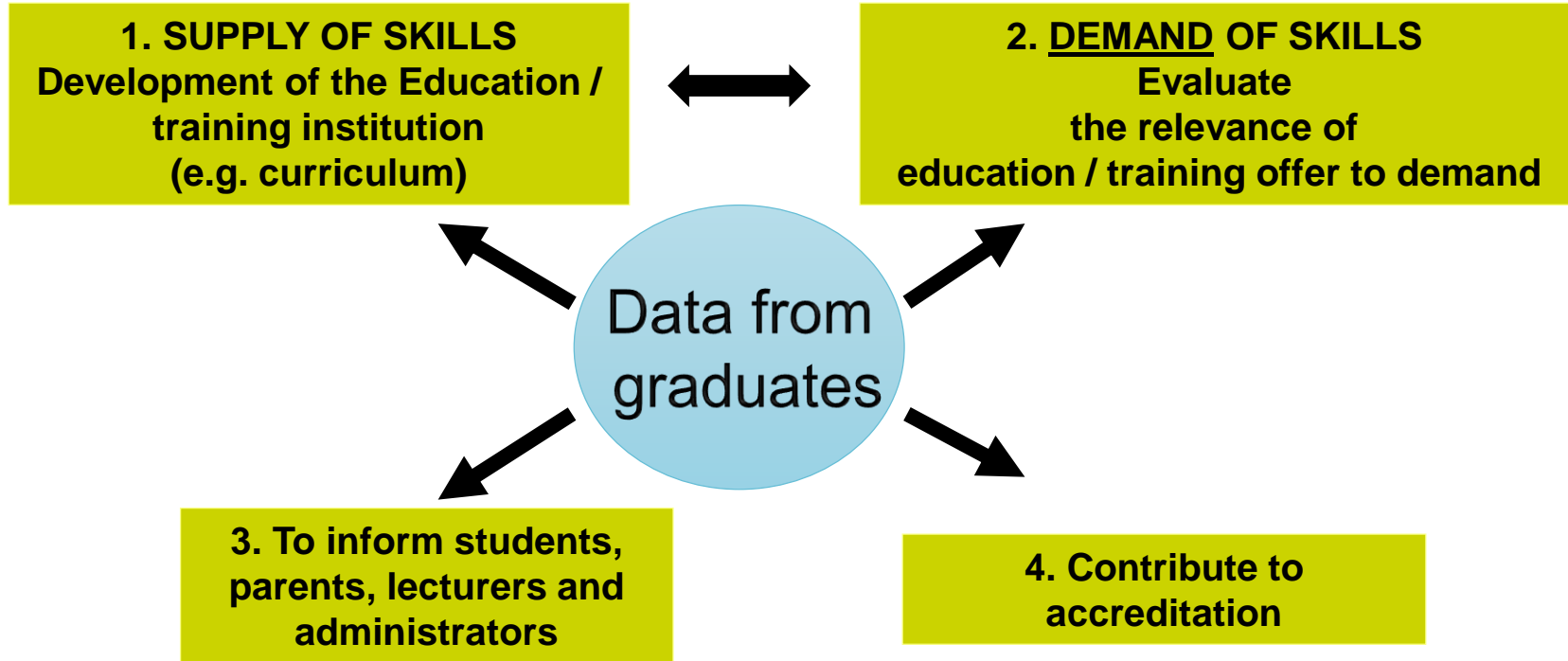
- HOMOGENEOUS COHORT OF GRADUATES (NORMALLY)
- GRADUATES FROM AN EDUCATION OR TRAINING PROGRAMME

## TRANSITION SURVEYS

- (SAMPLE OF) YOUTH UNDER A CERTAIN AGE (NORMALLY BETWEEN 15 AND 29 YEARS)
- MIGHT NOT HAVE FINALISED (EVEN OR FOLLOWED) AN EDUCATION PROGRAMME



# OBJECTIVES OF INSTITUTIONAL TRACER STUDIES



# WHICH ARE THE KEY QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE ANSWERED WITH A TRACER STUDY?

**WHAT HAPPENS TO GRADUATES AFTER LEAVING THE EDUCATION/TRAINING INSTITUTION?**

**WERE THEY ABLE TO GET EMPLOYMENT IN AN ACCEPTABLE TIME AND CONDITIONS?**

**DO THEY USE THE SKILLS AND COMPETENCES THEY HAVE ACQUIRED IN THEIR EDUCATION/TRAINING? IF NOT WHY?**

**WHAT ARE THE SKILLS AND COMPETENCES DEMANDED IN THE LABOUR MARKET?**

***!!! TRACER STUDIES CAN COMPLEMENT FINDINGS OF EMPLOYERS' SURVEYS***





# INDICATORS OF CAREER/EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS I.E. EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Objective indicators	Subjective indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Short job search duration</li><li>Employed (or in further education)</li><li>High income</li><li>Appropriate position regarding level of education</li><li>Work tasks closely related to field of study</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Perceived links between the job and own level of education</li><li>Perceived high use of competences</li><li>Perceived high status (income, career perspectives)</li><li>Perceived high work autonomy</li><li>Perceived high job satisfaction</li></ul>

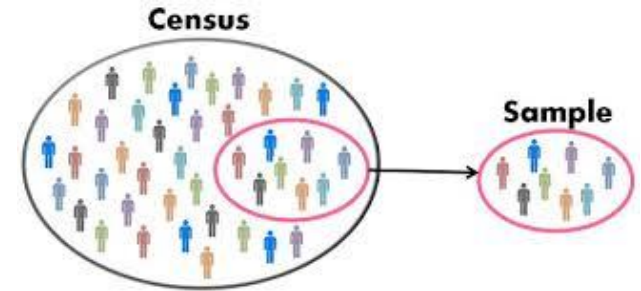
# DESIGN



# TS DESIGN (1), TARGET

**TARGET POPULATION: DEFINE THE COHORT OF GRADUATES AND:**

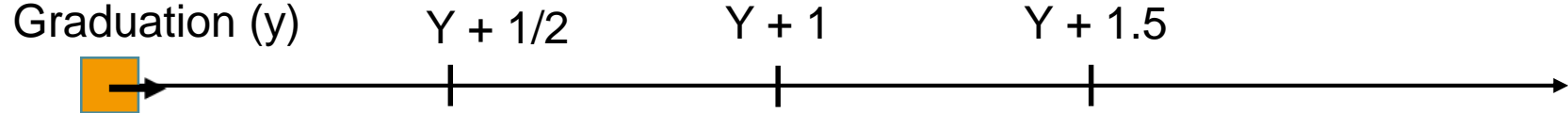
- **CENSUS: ALL GRADUATES (FROM A COHORT)**



- **SAMPLE OF GRADUATES (FROM A COHORT)**

# TS DESIGN (2), TIME AFTER GRADUATION

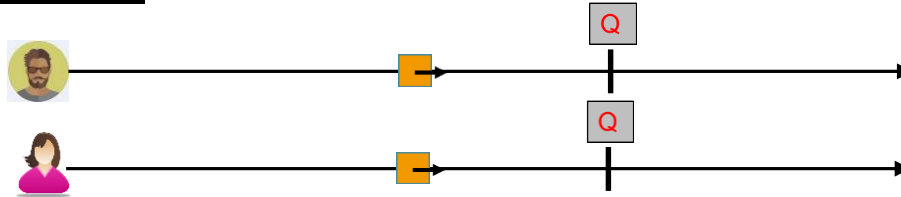
## TIME AFTER GRADUATION



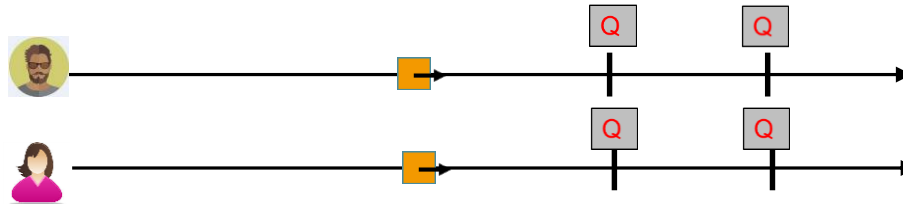
# TS DESIGN (3), HOW MANY SURVEYS?

## CROSS-SECTION VS PANEL













- **CROSS-SECTION** : ONE SURVEY TO EACH GRADUATE



- **PANEL**: MORE THAN ONE SURVEY TO EACH GRADUATE












# DIFFERENT DESIGN POSSIBILITIES

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
2007							
2008							
2009							
2010							
2011							
2012							

One survey, every cohort






# DIFFERENT DESIGN POSSIBILITIES

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
2007							
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2011							
2012							

One survey, every X cohorts



# DIFFERENT DESIGN POSSIBILITIES



















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2007							
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2012							

Two surveys, every cohort  
- panel: same cohort twice  
(i.e. 1 year + 4 years)





# DIFFERENT DESIGN POSSIBILITIES

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
2007	 						
2008		 					
2009			 				
2010				 			
2011					 		
2012						 	

Two surveys (exit + employment),  
every cohort - panel: same cohort  
twice (after graduation + 1 year  
before graduation)



# KEY PROBLEMS (I)

## THE RESULTS ARE ALWAYS TIME RELATED:

- In which year was the survey conducted?
- Which graduates were invited to participate?
- Which graduates participated (response rate?)
- At what after graduation was the survey conducted?

## MANY CONTEXT FACTORS HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

- Individual abilities and motivation
- Labor market situation
- Education and training before and after

## CAUSAL EFFECTS OF THE COURSE OF STUDY/TRAINING ARE DIFFICULT TO MEASURE



# KEY PROBLEMS (II)

WHICH INDICATORS DO WE NEED?

HOW TO MEASURE THE LABOUR MARKET SIGNALS?

WHICH FACTORS ARE RELEVANT TO EXPLAIN THE SUCCESS OF THE GRADUATES BESIDES EDUCATION?

TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS/CAREER CAUSED BY EDUCATION?

WHICH ELEMENTS OF EDUCATION (STUDY CONDITIONS AND PROVISIONS, ETC) HAVE AN IMPACT?

***!!! TEST AND ADAPT THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS***



# DATA COLLECTION MODES QUESTIONNAIRE

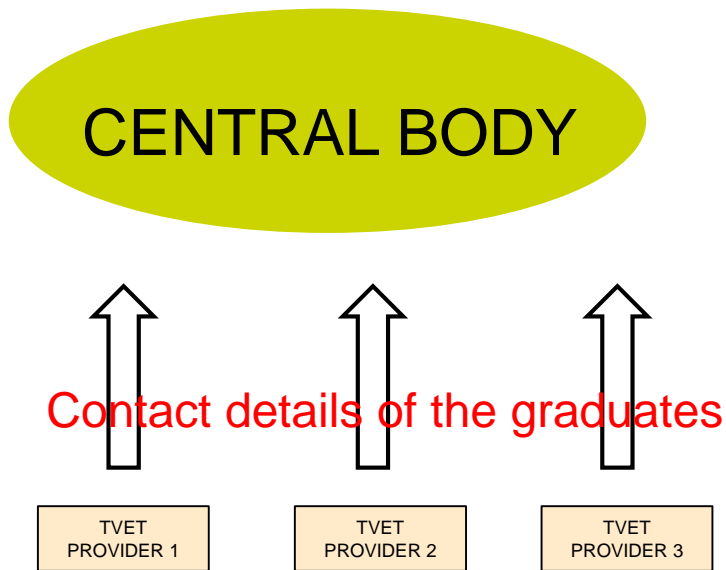


# DATA COLLECTION MODES

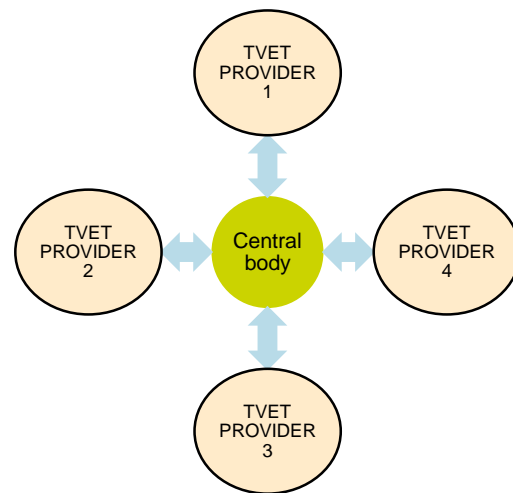
Mode	Cooperation rate	Cost per respondent	Advantages	Disadvantages
Face to face	medium	high	interviewer rapport, nonverbal cues	respondent apprehension, expensive
telephone	high	medium	Fast	Limited time
mail	low	medium	fast, in-person	Difficult cooperation without incentive
online	medium	low	automatic data entry	Requires computer literacy

# APPROACHES TO TRACER STUDIES (CENT/DECEN)

## CENTRALISED APPROACH



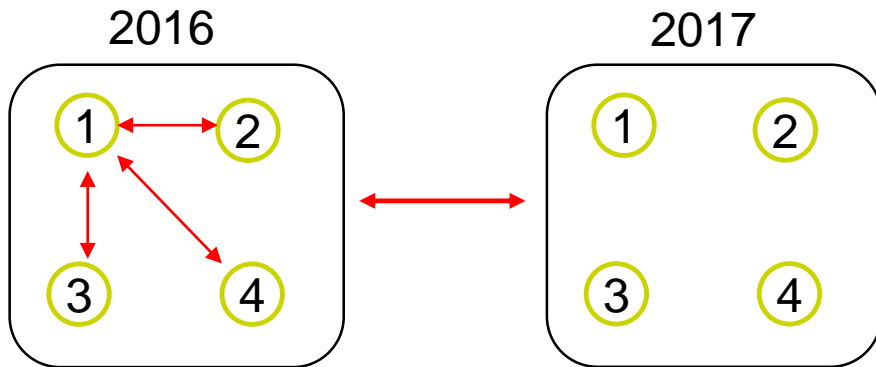
## DECENTRALISED APPROACH



# THE QUESTIONNAIRE



- **Structured (few open questions)**
- **ONE QUESTIONNAIRE: CORE + MODULES** (i.E. Add questions on a pilot traineeship)
- **Some tailoring (to institutions, fields, regions) can be allowed**



We should assure  
**comparability**  
(**between** providers  
and **within** years)



# COMPLEX APPROACH

## 1. Core questions

(have to be fixed for the whole project, mandatory to all institutions, contained in all versions of the questionnaire, warranted / guarantees comparability for institutions and national monitoring)

Core question

Core question

Optional question

## 2. Optional questions

(should be fixed for the whole project, optional for institutions, institution decide the use in its questionnaire, give comparability only for institutions which using it, but no national monitoring)

Specific question

Core question

Core question

## 3. Specific / individual questions

(institutions are completely free for the content, no comparison possible, except some institutions using the same specific / individual questions, the layout have to fit the other quest. )

Core question

Optional question

Core question



# THE CONTENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: MODULES

Module number and title	Minimum questionnaire
	Questions
A The course of studies at the TVET institution	2
B Internship and work experiences during course of studies at the TVET institution	2
C Evaluation of study conditions and study provisions at the TVET institution	2
D Satisfaction with study	3
E After graduation from the TVET institution	5
F Employment and work	12
G Work requirements	1
H Relationship between study and employment	6
I Work orientation and job satisfaction	3
J Vocational education/training before your study at the TVET institution	3
K Further vet or higher education after the study at the TVET institution	2
L Further vocational/professional training	2
M Demographic information	2
N Migration and regional mobility	2
O Your comments and recommendations	3
Total	50

Source: ETF-Cedefop-ILO (2016)



# IMPLEMENTATION



# IMPLEMENTATION PHASE 1: CONCEPT AND INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT; PREPARATION OF DATA COLLECTION

- What will be the key objectives,
- The target population (all students / a sample of students),
- The time after graduation when graduates will be reached,
- Preparing and testing the questionnaire
- Contact details of graduates



# PHASE 2: DATA COLLECTION

## Instruments ready

- **Online platform / telephones / interviewers**
- **IT infrastructure**
- **Trained team**



# PHASE 3: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION

- Coding and data storage (technical) [QTAFI is automatized]
- Data analysis tools (excel, statistical packages: SPSS, r, STATA) [QTAFI allows some basic analysis]
- Proper interpretation of the data (expert/s)
- Preparation of method report by team
- Preparation of content report/s
- Dissemination and use of the results



# CHALLENGES COUNTRY PRACTICES LESSONS



# CHALLENGES

- Clear objectives
- Structured questionnaire, of good quality and proper length.
- Institutional setting with clear roles and responsibilities and capacity
- Good response rate
- Appropriately interpret the results, and with the right level and depth of analysis
- Good method report
- PROPER DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS (WEB? Research? Good expertise)



# COUNTRY EXAMPLES

## SIMPLE APPROACH (SELDOM)

- United Kingdom: First destination survey  
(six months after; focus only on employment status at one time point; one page length)

## COMPLEX APPROACH (FREQUENT)

- E. g. France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland (one to two years after graduation; panel study about 3 to 5 years after graduation; competencies, work requirements, mobility, competences, retrospective study assessment; 10 to 30 pages length)





# TRACER STUDY DEVELOPMENTS

## TRADITIONAL – REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE SURVEY TO INFORM THE MINISTRY AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Since more than 30 years
- E.g. France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland
- Irrelevant for individual institution
- Relevant for research

## NEW TYPE – INSTITUTIONAL GRADUATE SURVEYS (ALL GRADUATES FROM ONE INSTITUTION OF VET/HE)

- Germany, Hungary, Italy, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Romania
- Combination of a national monitor and a feedback instrument for VET/HE institutions
- Relevant for individual institutions (reports for individual institutions, study program level breakdown of results)
- Relevant for a national monitor and research

**ETF Partner Countries examples:** Kyrgyzstan, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Moldova



# KYRGYZSTAN

SINCE 2013 SUPPORT FROM THE EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION (ETF)  
DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE TRACER STUDY METHODOLOGY WITH AND  
FOR INITIAL AND SECONDARY VET PROVIDERS IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC  
CAPACITY BUILDING FOR VET PROVIDER STAFF (INITIAL AND SECONDARY VET)  
JOINT DEVELOPMENT OF A FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE  
18 VET PROVIDERS IN THE SURVEY 2014  
ABOUT 1,500 RESPONDENTS, MAINLY ONLINE  
EXTENSION OF NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS 2015



# FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

**SKILLS AND INNOVATION SUPPORT PROJECT AT MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (WORLD BANK LOAN)**

**WITHIN THE SKILLS OBSERVATORY (TO BE ESTABLISHED)**

**LAUNCH OF ACTIVITIES TO BUILD CAPACITY AND CARRY OUT SURVEYS AND ANALYSES, NOTABLY GRADUATE TRACER STUDIES IN VET AND HIGHER EDUCATION (2015-2016)**

**ALL VET AND HE INSTITUTIONS; 2 YEARS AFTER GRADUATION; CENSUS; ONLINE SURVEY (QTAFI 3 SOFTWARE)**

**SUPPORT FROM EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION (ETF)**



# LESSONS LEARNED

**HIGH RESPONSE RATES ARE POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE IN ALMOST ALL COUNTRIES**

**HIGH QUALITY OF THE DATA IS A PRE-REQUISITE OF THE RELEVANCE OF THE FINDINGS FOR RESEARCH AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF GRADUATES' CONTACTS/ADDRESSES**

**DOCUMENTATION OF SURVEY PROCEDURES AND DATA EDITING IS NECESSARY – CULTURE OF CRITIQUE**

**CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN EDUCATION/TRAINING PROVIDERS AND EXPERTS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

**METHOD REPORT – DETAILED DOCUMENTATION OF SURVEY PROCEDURES**

**TEST OF REPRESENTATION OF THE SAMPLE**

**USE OF A PROFESSIONAL TOOL FOR DATA ANALYSIS LIKE SPSS, STATA OR R (THE USE OF EXCEL IS NOT SUFFICIENT)**



# THANK YOU

