



Report

Policies promoting medium skills in the workplace

Peer Learning Activity



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The aim of PLA: by comparing and contrasting policies from three countries, to identify the essential conditions for success of policies promoting the acquisition of medium skills

1. Context

The aim of the peer learning activity (PLA) was learning about successful policies promoting the acquisition of medium skills by adults in the workplace (WP). We looked at three very different and successful policies, the French Personal Training Account; the Irish Skillnets; the Swedish Government grants. By analysing, comparing and contrasting them, essential conditions for success were identified.

The PLA built upon previous work in this field, notably the mapping of current national policies that promote skills learning in the workplace. This mapping was conducted by the ET2020 Working Group on Adult Learning in 2016. This mapping shows that there is only a very limited number of specific policies and programmes on medium skills learning at the workplace identified in the 32 countries included in the mapping exercise, but that medium skills learning is included in many broader policies. In particular, the Public Employment Services (PES) policies and programmes offered to job seekers serve both low and medium skilled adults and focus on job-specific competences or transversal working competences (which were found in 31 countries). In addition, policies and programmes related to non-formal Vocational Education and Training (VET) (incl. employer-driven programmes) and policies and programmes related to the (formal) education system often relate to medium skills learning.

Aspects that were considered by countries to be important for the successful implementation of specific policies and programmes on skills learning at the workplace included the following:

- Ensure close cooperation between PES and employers;
- Finding sufficient employers to provide work placements;
- Ensuring cooperation between education providers and employers.

An aspect that is considered challenging in policy making concerns the fact that what is provided in terms of medium skills learning is very much at the discretion of the employers, and mostly based on employer-level, sectoral level and national level agreements, and the willingness to invest in the skills development of employees.



2. Work process and content of the PLA

Basic information about PLA

This peer learning activity was organised as part of the work programme of the Working Group on Adult Learning, within the framework of the Education and Training 2020 programme and the European Agenda for Adult Learning.

The PLA took place from 31 May to 2 June 2017 in Reims (France) in the DAFPIC de Reims (Délégation académique à la formation professionnelle initiale et continue). This institution is responsible for the initial and continuing VET system in Grand Est region for the minister of education. In total there were 18 participants, from 10 countries, mostly from ministries of education.

The PLA did not set out with a fixed definition of medium skills but indicated that these are not basic skills (literacy, numeracy, digital skills) and not higher education. The policy examples and the discussions showed that the focus of the PLA was mainly on vocational skills, however it did not leave out transversal medium level skills.

First day – introduction to PLA, the topic and the first policy (France)

During the **first day**, in the morning the participants were introduced to how a PLA works and discussed different approaches to analysing policies. In addition, expectations for policy analysis were gathered and synthesized.

Based upon their countries' interests, the main (overarching) expectation was to learn about successful policies and strategies in medium skills learning in the workplace. The following expectations were identified to guide the analysis of the three policies presented and discussed during the afternoon of the first day and the second day: participants wanted to learn about:

- how to improve collaboration with stakeholders (all that are involved: employers, employees, training providers, institutions, PES, local or regional education authorities);
- how to ensure quality of provision and the quality of other organisational processes related to the provision of medium skills training;



- how to measure results and gather feedback (indicators, methods);
- successful factors of financing models of practices;
- incentivizing participation in education and training for learners and employers: What is the range of (financial) incentives to get learners and companies involved;
- how to reach out to those that need to be encouraged; and
- how to embed general/ soft skills in training.

During the **afternoon of the first day** and the **second day** policies from France, Ireland, and Sweden were presented and analysed by the PLA participants. For each, policy success factors were identified. The three policy examples can be summarised as follows:¹

- **France:** The (C)VET system in France is reliant on a rich legal framework and large involvement of social partners. The presentation focused on the development of the Personal Training Account: an individual right to 150 hours of training in more than 7 years (24 hours each year during 5 years then 12 hours each year). The Account can be used by the individual to follow any (registered in a national list decided mainly by social partners and employers) training course and is funded via the VET levy (1 per cent of the wage bill for large companies 0.55 per cent for small companies). The presentation also focused on accompanying measures such as the system for validation of experience; the modularisation of initial VET programmes in units / 'bloc de compétence' and the establishment of the quality seal (Eduform) for VET qualifications and units. A specific example in languages, the DCL was also presented. The basic idea is to empower the individual (adult) to take responsibility, to get involved in learning and to remove some of the more pressing barriers to learning (time, money, lack of flexible provision). Of the working population of 25 million, almost 4 million accounts are activated and 500 000 are financed. Since January 2015, 216 million training hours have been awarded.
- **Ireland:** The Irish presentation focused on Skillnets: a private company fully funded through the Ministry of Education by the

¹ The presentations can be found on yammer: <https://www.yammer.com/et2020workinggroups/#/notes/3260451>



employers' levy. It aims at promoting workplace learning, enhancing productivity and innovation and stimulate companies to get a strategic stance towards learning and upskilling. The key element of the approach is that Skillnets facilitates the establishment of regional or sectoral networks of companies that identify training needs and organise training for the companies in the network. The companies co-fund the training (usually at a rate of 50 per cent). The basic idea is that the initiative is employer-led and -owned and that companies take control of their own learning. In 2016, there were 63 Skillnets networks; 14 000 firms were involved and 50 000 trainees participated. External evaluation is very favourable in terms of impact reached (company sales, innovativeness, turnover). The companies' needs are usually based on the demands and requirements of employees, in addition to the requirements of businesses.

- **Sweden:** In Sweden, local authorities are responsible for providing upper secondary education to young people and adults. This includes VET provision. While for adults grants are available for low qualified people (with less than upper secondary education), due to the crisis and recently influx of migrants more and more pressure is being put on the system. The government provided an additional grant of €145 million annually for local authorities to organise VET training including work-based learning elements for medium skilled adults. The local authorities receive the grant to organise the training (and find the workplaces); the workplace and in-company trainers receive funding to deliver the training. The grant is provided on condition that the local authority cooperates with all main stakeholders (companies, PES, associations in industry) and that the need for training is demonstrated for companies and individuals.

By comparing the success factors identified for each policy, a first draft framework of policy preconditions and successful policy approaches was developed.

During the **third day**, the group visited a GRETA (GRoupement Regional d'ETAbliissements d'enseignements publics) centre in Reims, which comes under the responsibility of the national education ministry responsible for continuous education. The group visited several

*Third day – additional input from
social partners*



workshops related to construction and spoke with adult learners enrolled in GRETA courses. In addition, input was provided by representatives of social partners, SMEs' collecting bodies and the GRETA. Inspired by their input, the draft framework of medium skills learning in the WP was further discussed by the participants and several clarifications were made and missing elements and aspects were added, after which consensus was found on the form and content of the overarching framework.

As a final activity, PLA participants grouped by country to see what they could take home from the PLA to their specific national contexts as inspiration for policy development in medium skills learning in the workplace.

This concise report will not provide a presentation of the detailed discussions that took place, but presents the overarching results in chapter 3 indicating where the elements identified derived from.



3. Key elements of successful policies promoting medium skills learning in the workplace

The elements were identified based on amalgamating the factors for success identified in relation to the three policy examples discussed during the PLA. In this it is important to keep in mind that these elements do not provide an exact 'blueprint' for what needs to happen in a country: the country context plays a vital role in situating the elements identified; for example, countries with a more top-down tradition in policy making and implementation in the (adult) education area might emphasise various aspects compared to countries that have a more liberal and cooperative tradition in policy development and implementation.

The elements are divided into three sets. The first set concerns broad preconditions that need to be in place at governance level to enable policies to be sustainable. The second set concerns elements that deal more with how the policies are quality assured, monitored and evaluated. The third set deals with what can be considered characteristics of successfully designed and implemented policies for medium skills learning. These three sets of elements are clearly identified in the schematic overview presented below.



Schematic overview of the key elements for effective policy promoting medium skills learning in the workplace. In the rest of this section each of the elements is discussed in more detail.

<p>Preconditions at governance level</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) There is a legal foundation, or government commitment through links to national strategies to work on medium skills development in the workplace. 2) There is a cooperation framework in which all the key organisations and stakeholders are involved and in which their role is clear. 3) The policies include elements of decentralisation, whereby responsibilities are assigned to organisations at the most appropriate level. 4) There is a financial system and there are accompanying measures that support and incentivise the medium skills training (training costs, hours, training development etc.) targeting the responsible stakeholder: companies (e.g. co-funding), learners (e.g. free of charge, low interest loans) and other governing bodies (e.g. additional grants for local authorities).
<p>Quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5) There is a quality assurance system or mechanism in place to ensure that the training taking place is of high quality. 6) There is a system in place to monitor the implementation of the policy and that provides the steering mechanism for the stakeholders involved and the government for improving the policy. 7) The policy is regularly evaluated, making visible whether the policy is leading to impact at learners', employers' and national level, what are challenges of the policy, and how it can be improved.
<p>Characteristics of the design and implementation of successful policies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8) The policy on medium skills training is responsive to employers', sectoral- and regional needs and contributes to company and national competitiveness and innovation. 9) The policy contributes to a change of mind-set, in the organisations involved, towards work-based learning, lifelong learning and establishing a learning culture in companies (where it does not already exist). 10) There are mechanisms in place to ensure that the training is responsive to the learners' needs and leads to enhanced employability. 11) The policy on medium skills training puts the learner on a lifelong learning pathway by providing encouragement and opportunities (for instance concerning recognition of experience and further learning). 12) The policy ensures that medium skills training is delivered in a flexible and adult-learner friendly manner (balancing studies adult life, working time, duration of the programme). 13) The policy on medium skills training includes a high proportion of work-based learning and takes into account both work-related/ technical skills and transversal/ soft skills as well and even basic skills (such as language skills for migrants). 14) The provision for medium skills training is accessible to all who need it, including vulnerable groups. 15) There is a system in place for provision of information, advice and (career) guidance related to medium skills development.



1) There is a legal foundation, or government commitment through links to national strategies to work on medium skills development in the workplace.

Description: Medium skills policies operate in the interplay between government, companies and learners themselves. To sustainably provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling, these policies require a firm legal foundation or close link to national strategies on lifelong learning and skills development.

Preconditions that need to be in place at governance level

Evidence from PLA: The French policy example provides an example where the individual right to training (personal training account) is laid down in a legal framework. The Irish case indicated that the Skillnets initiative is closely tied up with the national skills strategy. Finally, the Swedish example showed that the government, through its government grant to local authorities, is committed to providing VET training for medium skilled persons.

2) There is a cooperation framework in which all the key organisations and stakeholders are involved and in which their role is clear.

Description: Cooperation between different stakeholders is essential to medium skills development policies. The stakeholders include the government (different governments); PES; training providers; industry association / chambers of commerce; companies; and learners themselves. Cooperation structures can depend on the existing infrastructures (for instance related to initial VET provision) or be based on newly developed constellations. Within the cooperation frameworks, it needs to be clarified who is responsible for what.

Evidence from PLA: The Irish policy is built upon a network model: the companies within a sector or region take responsibility to work together with a network manager (from a designated organisation) to organise industry-relevant training. Skillnets, a private body, fully funded by the Ministry of Education facilitates the establishment of the networks and that they deliver training (through funding and advice). In Sweden, the initial VET infrastructure is used to provide the VET training for adults. This involves a coordinating role for the local authority. In France, traditionally, the involvement of the social partners is significant, through the social dialogue and collective agreements. A specific body is established to collect the employer levy (Approved joint collecting bodies (Organismes Paritaires Collecteurs Agrées (OPCA))).



3) The policies include elements of decentralisation, whereby responsibilities are assigned to organisations at the most appropriate level.

Description: Developing medium skills in companies is less dependent on government-developed and implemented programmes and policies and implementation relies more on intermediary bodies and organisations that are closer to companies and learners, and can even give responsibility to companies and individuals to develop medium level skills. A key issue here is that what is needed in terms of skills development is best known at the level it concerns: companies and learners.

Evidence from PLA: The policies discussed in the PLA showcase different approaches to the allocation of responsibility, but agree that the key responsibility for determining what is needed in terms of skills is not solely at national level. In Ireland, the Skillnets initiative empowers companies to take responsibility in seeing the strategic value of learning for their employees. In France on the other hand, the main responsibility is put in the hands of individuals, who can, through the personal training account devote training hours to whatever training they desire (being relevant for their situation). In Sweden, upper secondary education (including VET) is the responsibility of the local authorities: they determine what VET programmes are relevant, based on thorough needs assessment.

4) There is a financial system and there are accompanying measures that support and incentivise the medium skills training (training costs, hours, training development etc.) targeting the responsible stakeholder: companies (e.g. co-funding), learners (e.g. free of charge, low interest loans) and other governing bodies (e.g. additional grants for local authorities).

Description: Being dependent on the interplay of different stakeholders, involving the government, PES, companies and the learners themselves, the financial models need to be able to provide tailored incentives for each type of stakeholder to further develop medium skills. In addition, financial schemes need to be provided together with accompanying measures that enable the financial schemes to work (such as establishing a coordination body). The policies presented included employers levy systems (whereby a percentage of the annual wage bill is collected to be invested in VET); co-funding models, where by the government provides only part of the funding and whereby the other part is provided by companies or other bodies responsible for VET



training (local authorities in the case of Sweden). Incentives for learners can be that the training is free of charge, that there are low-interest loans or that instead of a monetary incentive, a time-bound incentive is provided (an individual training account that is measured in hours of training as is the case in France). Key for this success factor is that the financing model needs to be in line with the line of reasoning through which the policy is expected to reach results because the financial modalities provide the incentives for the key stakeholders to act in medium skills development.

Evidence from PLA: The PLA looked at very different financing models. The Irish policy is based on an employers' levy and co-funding by the companies because it is based on enterprise-ownership. A crucial role is played by the network managers in implementing the training within the company network. The Swedish policy is based on a government grant to steer the local authorities to do more on work-based learning for medium skilled persons. The French policy is funded through the employer levy system whereby the collecting bodies provide the funding for the personal training accounts (hours of training). The learners keep their salary while being trained.

5) There is a quality assurance system or mechanism in place to ensure that the training taking place is of high quality.

Description: When the medium skills training is organised in a decentralised manner, it is important to have a mechanism in place to ensure that training is of the desired quality. The quality assurance can be organised in diverse ways depending on the approach to medium skills training. In this, 'high quality' does not mean that the provision is a complete course; but that it effectively responds to companies' and learners' needs.

Evidence from PLA: The French policy example indicated that a quality seal is developed for VET public and private organisation which organise the units of VET qualifications (Eduform); also, all registered training (training programmes eligible to be used by the personal training account) need to meet specific quality criteria. In Ireland, quality is assured through the close contact between the Skillnets organisation and the network managers and through close follow up on training activities. In addition, the networks need to apply every year for funding, and quality of provision is a core criterion within the funding assessment process. In Sweden, the apprenticeships for adults are provided by the same VET institutions as the initial VET programmes, which are subject to national supervision.

*Quality assurance, monitoring
and evaluation*



6) There is a system in place to monitor the implementation of the policy and that provides the steering mechanism for the stakeholders involved and the government for improving the policy.

Description: The fact that policies tend to be decentralised and implemented at lower levels than the ministerial level requires an effective system to monitor implementation. This concerns overseeing enrolment/ take-up of the provision of medium skills training; information concerning the financial implementation rate; whether the provision responds to employers' and learners' needs and to what extent the policies lead to result and impact (at the level of the companies, learners and country).

Evidence from PLA: In France, the introduction of the personal training account is accompanied by the introduction of an overarching ICT monitoring system that enables an individual's skills development and the extent to which the account (e.g. hours) are used for skills development to be tracked. In Ireland, Skillnets closely monitors the existing networks with regard to what they envisaged to deliver within the year on training (and training development). In Sweden, the Swedish National Agency for Education; Swedish School Inspectorate, and Statistics Sweden monitor various aspects of the VET system.

7) The policy is regularly evaluated, making visible whether the policy is leading to impact at learners', employers' and national level, what are challenges of the policy, and how it can be improved.

Description: As medium skills learning policies are implemented in often complex environments in which different stakeholders carry responsibilities, it is essential that the policies are regularly evaluated to obtain an external perspective of whether the policy actually leads to results and impact; and whether there are aspects that need further attention.

Evidence from PLA: The Irish policy example involved external evaluation. This evaluation led to the conclusion that the policy is having favourable results, but that more needs to be done to capture the learners' demands. The French policy was only recently introduced and hence is not yet evaluated. In Sweden, IFAU - The Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy, a research institute under the Swedish Ministry of Employment, has just started an evaluation of the labour market impacts of the policy.



8) The policy on medium skills training is responsive to employers', sectoral- and regional needs and contributes to company and national competitiveness and innovation.

Description: Medium skills training should be based on an analysis of what is needed in the labour market. This concerns skills needed by employers, sectors and regions so that the skills gained contribute to an increased competitiveness and innovativeness of the companies and a stronger position of the country as well. As medium skills policies and training are often funded by employers (through levies or co-funding), these policies need to meet their requirements as well. This does not necessarily mean that there should be a focus on practical / technical work-related skills, as companies also value more transversal skills.

Characteristics of the design and implementation of successful policies

Evidence from PLA: In the Swedish policy, the local authority is responsible for involving companies and other stakeholders to assess the skills needs in the municipality. The government grant is only provided to the local authorities when a thorough needs assessment is conducted. In France, although the individuals are in the drivers' seat when it comes to deciding on what to spend the training hours, also companies have an increased responsibility to organise and provide training to the employees to better assure that the training is industry relevant. In Ireland, the approach is completely enterprise owned and led: this ensures that the training meets the needs of the companies in the sector or the region (including the needs of SMEs).

9) The policy contributes to a change of mind-set, in the organisations involved, towards work-based learning, lifelong learning and establishing a learning culture in companies (where it does not already exist).

Description: The medium skills learning policies should not provide a one-off training, but stimulate the organisations and persons involved to make a change of mind-set towards establishing a sustainable learning culture in which learning in the workplace is happening at a continuing basis. This change of mind-set can take place within the companies where learning needs to be enhanced to increase competitiveness and innovativeness; the learners, who take responsibility for their own learning, and supporting/ coordinating bodies who need to focus more and attune better to the needs of adult learners and companies.



Evidence from PLA: The Irish policy has explicitly in mind that through the network organisation, companies are stimulated to see learning as a strategic direction for growth. This requires a change in mind-set from seeing learning as something that costs money to something that saves money. Within the networks learning is not only provided in course-like settings, but also through informal learning events, such as meetings, workshops, company-visits. In the French example, the change of mind-set is anticipated to take place at the level of the individual: the personal training account empowers the individual to organise and take up his/her own learning pathway on a continuous basis. In Sweden, the government grant to local authorities comes with conditions that could stimulate a change in mind-set towards more workplace learning and focus on adult learners' needs.

10) There are mechanisms in place to ensure that training is responsive to learners' needs and leads to enhanced employability.

Description: The training provided to medium-skilled people needs to take into account their needs, demands and prior experience. Clearly adult learning principles related tailoring the provision to adult learners' needs is applicable here. The training should support the learners in enhancing employability; meaning that it helps them to get into employment; change employment; sustain their employment; progress in employment; or increase salaries through skills development.

Evidence from PLA: The French policy starts from the idea that the individual needs to be empowered to define his or her own learning needs. In addition, the modularisation of VET qualifications allows individuals to focus more on developing a specific skills-set instead of obtaining a full qualification (which they might not need in their situation). In Ireland, although the focus is on the employers' needs, there are mechanisms in place to ensure that the employers' needs are based on inventories among the employees. 40 per cent of training participants responded to the external evaluation that the training was based on their training needs. In Sweden, the training is less based on specific adult learners needs (it is based on the regular VET curriculum), but it does lead to good employment outcomes (75 per cent of those completing it are in employment one year after the course).



11) The policy on medium skills training puts the learner on a lifelong learning pathway by providing encouragement and opportunities (for instance concerning recognition of experience and further learning).

Description: Medium skilled people need continuous reskilling and upskilling. It is therefore necessary that the policies put the learners on a continuous learning pathway by:

- Establishing the positive disposition to learn;
- Providing the opportunities to learn through making use of validation of experiences, informal learning, providing certifications that allow further learning progression, and;
- Providing the incentives to learn (funding; time available).

It can be the case that individuals do not see the need (any more) to learn at the work place. This could be the case when they are close to retirement.

Evidence from PLA: The French policy has the deliberate objective to allow individuals to continue learning by providing 24 hours of working time per year which can be devoted to learning (even more for unemployed people). In Ireland, the policy is directed first and foremost at companies, but through acknowledging the strategic role of learning also the employees are put on a continuous learning pathway. Also, many of the courses developed within Skillnets are accredited and referenced to NQF/EQF levels. The Swedish policy provides evidence that graduates of the VET training for adults continue their studies.

12) The policy ensures that medium skills training is delivered in a flexible and adult-learner friendly manner (balancing studies adult life, working time, duration of the programme).

Description: Medium skills training is provided to people in employment, who are unemployed, or who have other (family) obligations. For this reason, as is true for all adult learning, training should be provided in a way that is flexible in terms of timing and duration and aligns with the situation the adults are in.

Evidence from PLA: In the Swedish example, the VET programme can be completed in a shorter period compared to the initial VET programme (1½ years)². In Ireland, as the policy is employer led, considering the learners' needs, the training is developed and delivered in a flexible way, suiting what

² The Swedish fast VET track for adults is not at Craftman certificate level (IVET EQF level 3-4).



the employees need. In France, there are many initiatives to make the offer more attuned to adult learners. First, the individual can make his or her own decisions on what training to follow (within the personal training account); secondly, VET programmes are becoming more modularised (units/ bloc de competence); thirdly, there is a functioning system for validation of experience.

13) The policy on medium skills training includes a high proportion of work-based learning and takes into account both work-related/ technical skills and transversal/ soft skills as well and even basic skills (such as language skills for migrants).

Description: For medium skilled persons, the workplace provides an excellent learning environment as they already have a certain level of skills and are - usually – able to formulate their learning needs. This does not mean that the learning should solely focus on technical, work-related skills. Both from the side of learners and employers there is a demand for more overarching, transversal skills and competences. These skills and competences are becoming more and more important in times of structural change and continuous technological development.

Evidence from PLA: In the Irish example, the networks emphasise the importance of the combination of technical and transversal skills in order to make a change towards acknowledging the strategic value of learning. Direct implementable skills can impact competitiveness and innovation in short term; investing in transversal skills might have longer term effects on competitiveness and innovation. In Sweden, the policy strengthened the work-based part in the VET programmes (school-based pathway includes 15 per cent of work-based learning; the work-based learning pathways included 70 per cent of work-based learning). In addition, the policy for VET for medium skilled adults is also opened to immigrants and for this reason the provision is closely linked to Swedish for immigrant courses.

14) The provision on medium skills training is accessible to all who need it, including vulnerable groups.

Description: Basic skills policies have a specific target group to focus on. For medium skills training policies, this is not the case; these policies are considered more general policies which need to be accessible for all who need reskilling and upskilling. Within the group of medium skilled people, there can



be specific groups that lack skills and competences making them vulnerable in the labour market (e.g. people without a VET qualification (only general education qualification); people lacking host-country language skills).

Evidence from PLA: The Swedish policy was deliberately designed to make VET for adults more broadly available (also for people who already have an upper secondary education qualification). There are financial instruments for the learners to make use of the VET programmes (being free of charge; loans with low interest rates). The French personal training accounts are an individual right for everybody in the workforce; making training accessible for all.

15) There is a system in place for provision of information, advice and (career) guidance related to medium skills development.

Description: A first step towards engaging in medium skills training is finding information about the possibilities for learning and where the adult learner could go to make use of what opportunities are available. In addition, advice and (career) guidance can support the uptake of learning by adults. Hence, policies need to include the provision of information to learners and companies; and provide advice and (career) guidance to the learners.

Evidence from PLA: The Swedish policy includes career guidance as an important element. The adults willing to enrol in the VET programme might need guidance on what direction they would like to go in professionally. Also in France, there is professional development guidance consisting of 3 steps (individualized reception, personalized counselling to define a professional project, support to implement the project). Before enrolling in a course, the GRETA system includes tests and counselling. In addition, in France, the personal training account was introduced with a broad information and media campaign. In Ireland, network managers assist companies and SMEs in particular to identify and address their skills development requirements.

Conclusions

It will be noted that several of the key factors for success identified during this PLA match those identified by other research, as outlined in section 1 above.

The evidence of the PLA strengthens the idea that medium skills training at the workplace is a complex policy area in which many different stakeholders carry responsibility and where there are many actors that can be considered ‘change agents’, for instance: the learner (as is emphasised in the French policy);



employers (as is emphasised in the Irish policy) and the local authority (as is emphasised in the Swedish policy). This calls for policies that contain the right (financial) incentives for the right change agents to make medium skills learning in the workplace part of the learning culture.

4. Implications

As can be seen, the PLA succeeded in identifying elements that are considered important in designing and implementing policies promoting medium skills learning in the workplace. What came out strongly in the concluding sessions was the need for political will by all stakeholder groups (government, employers, trade unions, and providers) to work on medium skills development and that especially for the government, mostly represented by Ministries of Education, a more holistic view needs to be taken that transcends existing formal education structures and that aligns better to other branches of government (such as Ministries of Employment, Social Affairs, Economy, PES, regional and local governments).

Inevitably, in a short PLA, not all of the expectations that participants brought with them could be addressed in detail. Perhaps the most important issues that remain to be addressed include: how to assure the quality of medium skills provision; how to gather feedback and establish effective monitoring systems; and, how to reach out to those who need encouragement for learning.