

Chapter 5 METHODS

5.1 CVTS Working Group recommendations

International statistical surveys and comparisons in the fields of education and culture must always take account of the historical characteristics of each nation, which are after all a valuable heritage for the EU. The same applies for vocational education and training. The preparation and conduct of the CVTS took this into account in that Member States were not asked to proceed all in the same way. Rather, a number of criteria and principles for method were laid down, which had to be met by all Member States. They also had the necessary freedom to adapt their procedures to national circumstances. The Working Group's criteria for the design of the survey were as follows:

5.1.1 Questionnaires

The Member States were free to transpose the Community's requirements into the national questionnaires on their own responsibility. This included producing the necessary explanatory notes, checklists and guidance for the work of interviewers in the firms.

5.1.2 Survey methods

Member States were asked to develop their own method of survey on the basis of the requirements set out in the foregoing chapters and to inform the Commission of the outcome of this preparatory work and forward all necessary documents. This enabled the Commission to seek changes for the sake of a better coordinated procedure through bilateral talks if necessary. In general, Member States were free to opt for

- a written survey,
- telephone interviews,
- direct personal interviews

or a combination of these. They were also free to decide whether the enterprise should be confronted with the complete scheme of questions right away or whether there should first be a preliminary survey to ascertain, among other things, who in the firm should be contacted with more detailed questions.

5.1.3 Sample of enterprises

The sample of enterprises was basically to be designed in such a way as to ensure representative results for each combination of economic activity and enterprise size category involved in the CVTS with sufficient quality. This requirement for a representative sample applied equally to both trainers and non-trainers. Member States were free to complement the main sample, if it satisfied all these conditions, with sub-samples for specific matters.

a) Main sample

The main sample was to be stratified at least by the seven groups of activities and six enterprise size categories mentioned previously. So far as possible, the main sample was also to be designed to provide sufficiently representative results for the 20 economic sectors referred to previously.

The enterprises to be surveyed were to be selected so as also to cover the workforce within each combination of sector and size category proportionately. The aim was a main sample designed to achieve responses from at least:

- 1000 enterprises in Luxembourg and Ireland
- 1500 enterprises in Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands and Portugal
- 2000 enterprises in Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom.

b) Sub-samples

If sub-samples were used to provide more details of certain matters, they were to be just as representative as the main sample. This applied in particular for sub-samples of enterprises providing CVT at the workplace.

In such a case, the sub-sample size was to be at least:

- 300 enterprises in Luxembourg and Ireland
- 400 enterprises in Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands and Portugal
- 500 enterprises in Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom.

In the case of larger enterprises (over 50 employees), sub-samples of the workforce could also be taken. In such cases, the sub-sample had to be representative of all employees by activity and function and comprise at least the following:

- 25% of all employees or 50 persons, whichever was the greater, for enterprises with a workforce of 50 to 999
- at least 250 persons for enterprises with a workforce of 1000 or more.

Member States were to endeavour to achieve at least the following minimum response rates from the sample of enterprises (by reminder letters and telephone contacts):

- normally 50 % and
- 60% at the first stage of a multi-stage survey.

5.2 Methods used in national surveys

The following section is based largely on the technical reports of the Member States, showing in detail the procedures followed at national level. They were passed to the Commission by the respective national authorities as part of the overall CVTS programme.