

TRAILS

Enabling Data Analytics for Actions
Tackling Skills Shortages & Mismatch



Policy brief #4 MAKING ENTERPRISE TRAINING RELEVANT AND FEASIBLE

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WHY IT MATTERS

Continuous workforce training is vital as **digitalisation, climate transition, and demographic change** reshape work. Yet, many enterprises—especially **SMEs and labour-intensive sectors**—struggle to engage in continuing vocational training (CVT), limiting Europe's capacity for inclusive and adaptable growth.

WHAT DATA SHOWS

TRAILS harmonised **CVTS data (2010–2020)** to examine how firms perceive their training needs, the barriers they face, and differences by **size, sector, and country**.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Perceived “no need for training”:** Many SMEs believe employees are already skilled, even in sectors undergoing rapid change.
- **Practical barriers:** Heavy workloads, small teams, administrative complexity, and difficulty identifying relevant courses limit participation.
- **Financial costs less limiting:** While subsidies help, organisational and perceptual barriers are now more significant.
- **Sectoral disparities:** Labour-intensive sectors (construction, hospitality, retail) show the lowest participation; knowledge-intensive sectors integrate training more systematically.
- **Training relevance matters:** Firms invest more when training aligns with operational needs; generic or outdated courses see lower uptake.



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POLICY IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Anticipatory skill development:** Skills observatories and sector-specific guidance can help firms identify emerging needs.
- **Simplify access:** One-stop skills shops and digital platforms connect SMEs to providers, funding, and modular courses.
- **Flexible training formats:** Modular, on-the-job, micro-credential approaches enable learning alongside daily operations
- **Cross-enterprise cooperation:** Large firms can support SMEs in supply chains; sectoral partnerships can expand access, supported by ESF+ and national strategies
- **Reframe training as investment:** Communication, recognition, and awards highlight productivity, innovation, and retention benefits.

LOOKING AHEAD

Making training relevant and feasible for all firms requires **motivation, accessibility, and alignment with business needs**. When enterprises see CVT as directly valuable, participation increases, supporting Europe's goals for an inclusive, skilled, and resilient workforce.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

- Full deliverables: D6.3 and TRAILS reports
- For more information, please visit the TRAILS website(<https://www.trails-project.eu/>) and social media channels.



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