

Financing Excellence

Securing the Future of Centres of Vocational Excellence

From funding projects to financing systems

THEODOR GRASSOS

Secretary General · European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB)

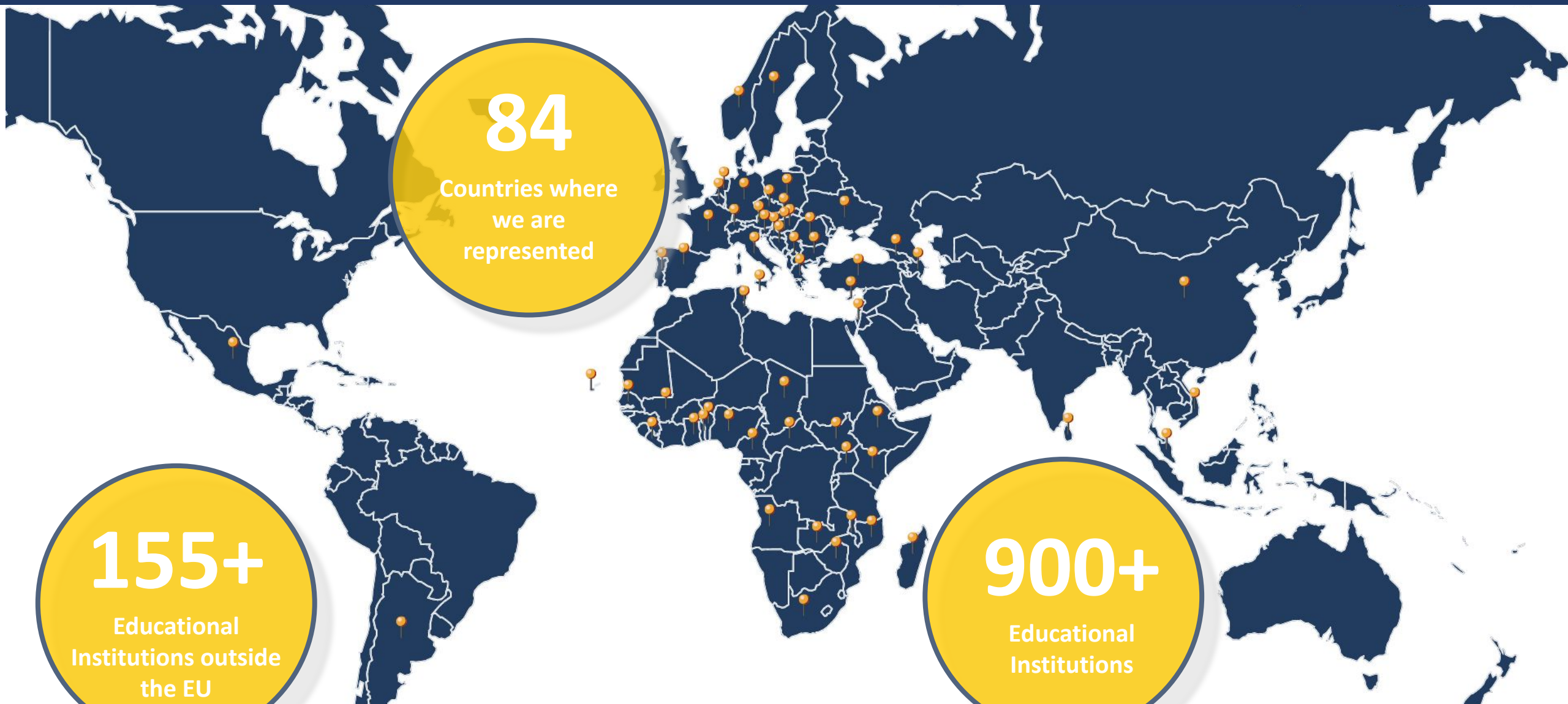
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THEODOR GRASSOS

| Secretary General @EVBB

A **global** overview of EVBB



84

Countries where
we are
represented

155+

Educational
Institutions outside
the EU

900+

Educational
Institutions

THE SHIFT

From funding projects to financing systems

YESTERDAY

Project Funding

- Short-term, single-source
- Tied to a specific call or programme
- Ends when the grant ends
- Reactive: providers chase next calls
- Non-sustainable in many cases

TODAY & TOMORROW

System Financing

- Multi-source, blended
- Embedded in the regional ecosystem
- Resilient across funding cycles
- Impactful: providers follow demand
- Industry as co-investor, not customer, not consumer

Erasmus+ CoVEs are 4-year projects. Real impact requires 10–15 years of continuity.

MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE

Five sources of financing for CoVEs

01

PUBLIC

National, regional, EU programmes (Erasmus+, ESF+, RRF)

02

LEARNER

Fees, vouchers, income share agreements

03

INDUSTRY

Cash, in-kind, equipment, salaries, sponsored cohorts

04

OWN REVENUE

Applied research, services, equipment rental, IP

05

BLENDED

Co-funded networks, public-private partnerships

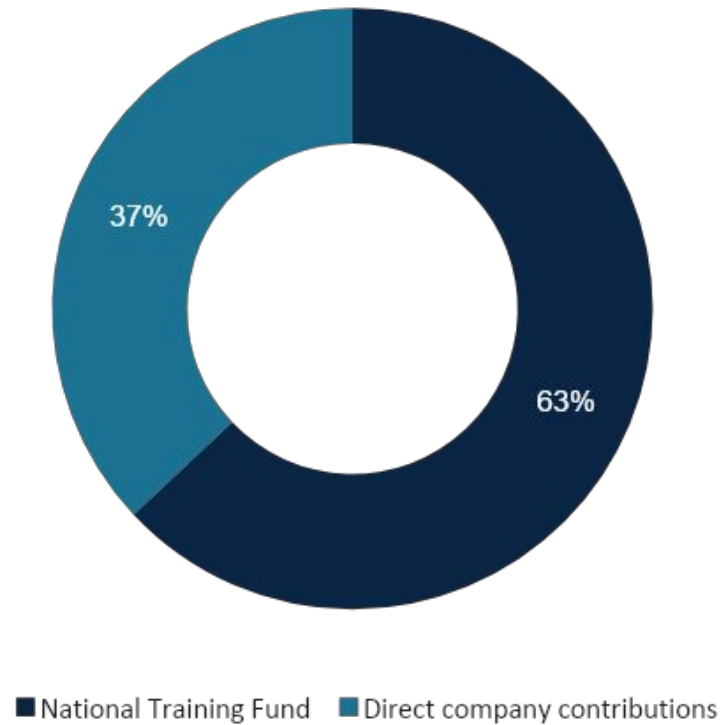
Resilience comes from a portfolio approach — most CoVEs over-rely on 1–2 sources.

Next slides focus on industry (03), own-revenue (04) and blended (05) — where the gap is biggest.

DIVERSIFICATION & BLENDED FINANCE

Building the financing mix

Indicative Skillnet Ireland funding mix



Skillnet Ireland

Joint-investment model · 70 networks · 25K businesses

- National Training Fund + direct company contributions
- Industry-led steering committee sets priorities
- Bespoke programmes per sector / region
- >90K learners / year
- **Ranked #1 for enterprise upskilling — European Commission**

Also: Dutch Katapult / CIVs

Ministry + region + industry contributions, institutionalised at scale across the Netherlands.

Blended finance is operational reality — not aspiration — where the legal architecture and governance allow it.

EU-LEVEL BLENDING

Plug-in instruments for CoVEs

RRF

Recovery & Resilience Facility

Italian ITS Academy reform mobilised ~€1.5B

Erasmus+ CoVE call

EU partnerships

Automotive · Tourism · Microelectronics

Erasmus+ (CB-VET)

Capacity building in VET

A call covering SSA, South Mediterranean, Neighbourhood East, Western Balkans, Latin America, Caribbean

Global Gateway

A direct contribution of 300B

Designed for non-EU partner countries to modernise VET systems

NDICI – Global Europe

79.5B for 2021–27

EU's main external action instrument; funds skills/VET in partner countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, neighbourhood

Off-the-shelf instruments most CoVEs aren't using strategically — no one has connected the dots.

INDUSTRY AS CO-INVESTOR — SYSTEM LEVEL

When the system structures the deal

UNITED KINGDOM

UK Growth & Skills Levy (formerly Apprenticeship Levy)

0.5% of payroll on employers with pay bill above £3M; usable for approved apprenticeship and (under reform) broader skills training in England

FRANCE

Taxe d'apprentissage / OPCOs

1 sectoral OPCOs distribute employer training contributions (collected by URSSAF) to providers; Taxe d'apprentissage 'solde' (~13%) directly allocatable by employers

GERMANY

Dual VET / Chambers (IHK/HWK)

Companies voluntarily fund in-firm training; Länder fund vocational schools; chambers oversee quality. Sectoral training funds (e.g. SOKA-BAU) in construction and a few other branches.

DENMARK

AUB (Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelsesbidrag)

Flat employer levy (~DKK 2,820/yr per full-time employee) into a central fund; reimburses companies that take on apprentices. Quotas + bonus/penalty layer via Læreplads-AUB.

Some financing is bilateral. Other mechanisms are default-on — money flows automatically once the system is set up.

THREE CONCRETE CASES

Industry isn't a customer of VET.

It's a co-investor.

01

HOSPITALITY

Greece

Cash-for-curriculum

02

RETAIL

Multi-country EU

Tripartite dual-track

03

AEROSPACE

France

Equipment-for-talent

CASE 01 · GREECE · HOSPITALITY

HOSPITALITY FORWARD

Sani/Ikos Group × IEK AKMI · Greek Ministry of Education (curriculum certification)

ACTIONS / MECHANISM

- 150 hours of experiential training added on top of the Ministry-certified curriculum — fully funded by Sani/Ikos
- **Students sign a work contract — no internship requirement as WBL is paid and counts as 6th semester**
- Specialisations: Culinary Specialist (Chef) + Hotel Services Executive
- Theory at IEK AKMI nationwide; experiential weeks at Sani Resort + Ikos Resorts
- Personal Onboarding Manager assigned to each student
- Simulation Week + Career Days co-organised at the resorts
- Soft-skills development programme run in parallel
- €1,500 graduation bonus (raised from €1,000 in 2023)

HEADLINE NUMBERS

780+

placements and counting

365

first-year students · 2025–26 cohort

3rd cycle

running since 2023

FINANCING INNOVATION: Industry pays 100% of the innovative layer on top of publicly-certified VET. No cost to the IEK, no cost to the learner, employment from semester 1.

CASE 02 · MULTI-COUNTRY EU · RETAIL

LIDL UP : LEARN & WORK

LIDL (Schwarz Group) × national VET providers × Chambers of Commerce × Ministries of Education

ACTIONS / MECHANISM

- 2-year dual-education programme — first of its kind in retail in several markets
- New "Retail Executive" specialty co-designed with the VET partner in each market
- **~50 / 50 split: theoretical training at VET school + paid practical training in LIDL stores**
- LIDL Store Managers serve as in-store trainers — certified as adult educators
- German dual-system know-how adapted into local frameworks
- Monthly salary paid to students throughout the 2 years
- Nationally recognised post-secondary VET diploma after state certification exams
- **Guaranteed permanent contract as Assistant Store Manager on graduation**

HEADLINE NUMBERS

2 yrs

dual-VET programme · ~50/50 split

3-way

co-financing structure

Permanent

contract guarantee on graduation

FINANCING INNOVATION: Two-way cost split. State funds the qualification track. Company funds salaries + workplace + trainers.

CASE 03 · FRANCE · AEROSPACE

CMQ AÉRONAUTIQUE & SPATIAL × AIRBUS

Founders: Airbus · Région Occitanie · Académie de Toulouse · UIMM-MP · Université Fédérale Toulouse · Aerospace Valley

ACTIONS / MECHANISM

- **Airbus made an A350 XWB aircraft available in worldwide exclusivity for the "Avion École" hands-on training operation**
- Airbus operates a Lycée Professionnel on its Toulouse site, delivering state diplomas with industrial-grade equipment
- Regional Industrial Skills Observatory tracks employer needs continuously and feeds curriculum updates
- "Alternance Aerospace" platform matches students directly with apprenticeship contracts
- Industry mentors deliver part of the teaching; companies host Aero Week, Parcours Découverte, Hydrokathon
- **Apprentices and graduates get priority access and first interviews at partner companies**
- Strategic orientation committee includes Airbus' HR Director — direct alignment with hiring forecasts
- National co-investment from Caisse des Dépôts (Programme d'Investissements d'Avenir)

HEADLINE NUMBERS

86,000

aerospace jobs in Occitanie

~40

training programmes · CAP → Bac+8

1 A350

MSN004 (former certification aircraft)

donated to UIMM Adour-Pyrénées training pole — first in France, training ~600 apprentices

FINANCING INNOVATION: Industry transfers production-grade equipment and first-interview privileges in exchange for a continuously refreshed talent pipeline.

SIDE BY SIDE

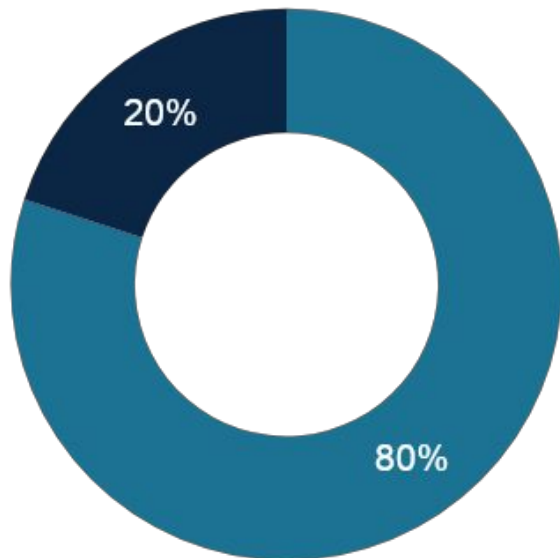
Three different financing mechanics

| | Hospitality Forward <i>Greece · Hospitality</i> | LIDL UP : Learn & Work <i>Multi-country EU · Retail</i> | CMQ Aéronautique & Spatial <i>France · Aerospace</i> |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|
| Industry contributes | Cash (training + salary + bonus) | Salary + workplace + certified trainers | Equipment + facilities + mentors + hiring access |
| Industry gets | Trained, retained workforce | Trained Assistant Store Managers | Demand-driven talent pipeline + first-hire |
| Public / state role | Curriculum certification only | Co-funds qualification track | Provides full lycée + university infrastructure |
| Innovation layer | +150 industry-funded experiential hours | New tripartite dual-track curriculum | Industrial equipment + governance seat |
| Catalyst | Bilateral | Chambers of Commerce | Regional cluster (Aerospace Valley) + UIMM |

Three sectors. Three countries. Three mechanics. One common thread: industry as co-investor.

When the CoVE earns its own way

TKNIKA applied-research model*



■ Industry contracts ■ Basque Government

**Applied-research project funding mix across the network — not TKNIKA's institutional budget*

TKNIKA · Basque Country

Applied-research as revenue · 28 public+private Basque VET centres · UNESCO-UNEVOC i-hub

- Companies pay direct contracts for applied R&D delivered by VET teachers + students
- Basque Government funds (through TKNIKA funding) 20% (teacher release time)
- Four hubs: advanced manufacturing, digital & connected factory, biosciences, energy
- Authorised Stratasys training centre (3D printing)
- Coordinates LCAMP — the Erasmus+ CoVE for advanced manufacturing

20 yrs

operating since 2005

"The proof that a company values a service is when they're willing to pay for it." — Unai Ziarsolo, TKNIKA

PERFORMANCE-BASED FUNDING

Paying for outcomes, not seat-time

ANCHOR CASE · ITALY

Italian ITS Academy

87%*employment rate at 12 months***90%+***training–job activity match*

- Reformed under Italy's RRF — funding now tied to placement KPIs
- ITS Academy Alto Adriatico (Pordenone): 32 corporate partners, 400+ collaborations
- Industry-majority governance boards (≥50% non-public members) align funding with demand

UK Apprenticeship Levy

Outcomes built into provider accountability — providers compete on completion + placement metrics within the levy system.

Finnish funding scheme

Four components:

- strategic funding (>4%),
- core funding (~50%)
- performance-based funding (~35%)
- effectiveness-based funding (~15%)

Performance funding aligns incentives — but only if the metrics are well-designed.

TRADE-OFFS · ENABLING CONDITIONS

What can I do? *Be honest. Build the institutional foundation.*

BE HONEST

The trade-offs

- Performance funding can encourage discrimination — selecting easier-to-place students
- Income Share Agreements raise equity questions
- Industry-led design can narrow curriculum to actual needs
- Bilateral deals don't scale automatically — they need institutional enablers

Resilience comes from triangulating mechanisms.

BUILD THE FOUNDATION

Enabling conditions

- Legal autonomy of providers — Dutch ROCs, Italian ITS, Spanish centros — unlocks blending
- Industry-majority governance — Italian ITS rule of $\geq 50\%$ non-public members
- Tripartite social dialogue — CENFIM Portugal model: IEFP + employers + unions
- **Contracting capacity at the CoVE level — often the missing piece**

FIVE TAKE-AWAYS FOR ENE

Lessons & practical insights for CoVEs

- 1 Financing innovation isn't one model — it's a portfolio.
- 2 Industry isn't a customer of VET — it's a co-investor.
- 3 The unit of analysis is the deal, not the funding stream.
- 4 Autonomy + governance + contracting capacity = preconditions for everything else.
- 5 Concrete cases beat frameworks — find your anchor partner first, build the architecture around it.

The CoVE label is a beginning, not an endorsement.

Financing excellence is what turns the label into a legacy.



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THANK YOU!



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a shift the ENE community is here to make.

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