Skills anticipation in Spain

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Skills anticipation in Spain involves substantial stakeholder/social partner engagement. The overall approach is designed to bring about a better match between the skills supplied by workers and those required by employers. The involvement of the social partners reflects the tradition of social dialogue around vocational education and training (VET) in the country.

Skills anticipation has been reformed recently following the introduction of Law 30/2015 to address the relatively poor labour market outcomes arising from VET provision. The law regulates VET system in relation to both employed and unemployed people and implies that more effort will be required to improve strategic planning – encompassing skills anticipation – to better coordinate and align the activities of employment and education authorities at national and regional levels. The remit of stakeholders such as employer associations and trade unions following the introduction of the Law is now that of identifying current and future training needs, but not to be providers of that training as they were in the past.

At a ministerial level, coordination of skills anticipation activities rests with the Ministry of Employment and Social Security (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social) and the Ministry of Education Culture and Sport (Ministerio de Educación Cultura y Deporte). The Ministry for Employment and Social Security has responsibility for the public employment service (PES), the Observatory of Occupations (El Observatorio de las Ocupaciones), and the State Foundation for Training and Employment (Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo, formerly the Tripartite Foundation). The Ministry of Education has responsibility for the Observatory of Professions (El Observatorio Profesional) at the National Qualifications Institute (Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones, INCUAL).

Efforts are being made by the Ministry of Employment (PES and State Foundation for Training for Employment) and the Ministry of Education (through INCUAL) to coordinate their methodologies in order to achieve a more consistent approach to skills anticipation. Additionally, the evaluation of training activities is expected to be more important in the future, thus ensuring that training provision meets labour market demand.

At the regional level, the regional governments have a responsibility to ensure that training provision meets local demand. Social dialogue takes place between workers and employers through Sectoral Joint Committees, which are responsible for assessing the skills content of qualifications and the adequacy of training provision in relation to businesses’ needs. The development of the reforms in skills anticipation activities is still taking shape. Further changes are expected, specifically with respect to the rationalisation of the work of the Sectoral Joint Committees and the role of regional authorities in anticipating skills.

Active labour market policies experienced severe budgetary cuts at the beginning of the economic crisis,
though their budgets have subsequently recovered since then. This is likely to have constrained skills anticipation activities. Furthermore, problems remain in effectively disseminating information through career and vocational guidance channels, and in reaching target groups such as small businesses and their employees, as well as self-employed workers.


Overview of the Spanish approach

Skills anticipation in Spain

Key actors

Governance
- Ministry for Employment and Social Security

Stakeholders
- Ministry for Employment and Social Security: Public Employment Service (PES, mainly through Observatory of Occupations)
- State Foundation for Training Employment
- Ministry of Education: National Qualification Institute through the Observatory for Professions
- Social partners through Sectoral Joint Committees
- Regional employment and education authorities
- Employment institutions (PES, State Foundation for Training for Employment) and PES guidance services
- Career guidance counsellors
- Collective bargaining parties at sectoral level; workers’ and employers’ representatives at company level
- Training providers, education institutions
- National Qualification Institute

Types of skills anticipation

Quantitative forecasting
- Anticipa Project (State Foundation for Training for Employment)

Skills assessments
- Annual labour market reports (by PES)
- Sector skills and training needs assessments (Sectoral Joint Committees and State Foundation for Training for Employment)

Foresight
- By 87 Sectoral Joint Committees, the PES and the State Foundation for Training and Employment

Other
- Employer surveys at sectoral level by
- Interviews/surveys to local companies by
- Employees’ interviews/surveys by
- Sectoral analysis on skills and training needs
- Graduate surveys by tertiary
Skills anticipation in Spain is a collaborative process between national government departments and agencies (namely the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport), regional governments and the social partners (employers’ and workers’ representatives). In addition, the Chambers of Commerce, of which there are 86 at local level, are co-ordinated by the Cámara de Comercio de España and assess the skills needs of their associated companies. A major reform of the training system for both employed and unemployed people was approved in 2015. It stipulates that there should be improved coordination between the multiple actors involved in the VET system. From now on the Ministry of Employment (via PES and the State Foundation for Training for Employment) and the Ministry of Education (through INCUAL) will make use of a coordinated methodology to develop training needs assessments and skills forecasting. Important here is the development of a multi-annual scenario, developed by the Ministry of Employment, that acts as a framework for strategic planning in order to ensure that training provision is guided by skills anticipation. The multi-annual scenario will be developed by using the annual report of PES that outlines skills needs.

National and regional authorities along with the social partners are part of the General Council of the National Employment System (Consejo General del Sistema Nacional de Empleo), which is the main consultation forum related to the vocational training system for employment. The Council guarantees, among other tasks, the correct implementation of Law 30/2015, in close cooperation, with the Spanish General Council on VET (Consejo General de la Formación Profesional) where necessary.

The principal outputs of skills anticipation activities consist of (a) a multi-annual scenario (described above); and (b) the annual report of the PES (Informe Anual de Necesidades Formativas) which identifies the occupations with relatively strong employment prospects and their associated training needs, and includes recommendations relating to training provision for both those in employment and those who are unemployed. Additionally, sectoral reference plans (planes de referencia sectoriales) are produced by the 87 Sectoral Joint Committees.
Aims
The primary aim of skills anticipation is to match and adapt the skills developed in the education and training system with the skills in demand in the labour market. The skills anticipation approach in Spain attempts to achieve this through the inclusion of stakeholders in the assessment of skills needs. The latter is primarily the responsibility of the respective agencies of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, and the Ministry of Education.

Legal framework
With the aim of matching the provision of training to skills demand, the skills anticipation process has undergone a major reform, though it has not yet been fully implemented. (5) The provision of training for employment will now be matched more closely to labour market skills demand, based on multi-annual strategic planning in consultation with stakeholders such as regional governments and the social partners. As a result of the reform, a focus has also been placed on the evaluation of training provision. The Sectoral Joint Committees are also responsible for producing sectoral analyses of changes in their sectors and developing training reference plans.

In summary, the recent legislative changes in 2015 ensure the following:

- The establishment of a multi-annual strategic plan – and the production of an annual report – to link training needs with training provision;
- The implementation of an integrated information system, which collates information on developments in the labour market and the associated demand for skills, alongside information on training provision at national and regional levels. This information is intended to inform training provision at national and regional levels. The evaluation of training activities has gained weight as a result of the Law;
- The assigning of the existing 87 Sectoral Joint Committees according to the sectoral mapping developed by the General Council of the National Employment System, so as to prioritise where training needs analysis is to take place.

Governance
Skills anticipation in Spain is governed by both the Ministry of Employment and Social Security and the Ministry of Education Culture and Sport and their respective agencies, as detailed above.

The role of stakeholders
A number of stakeholders play a key role in skills anticipation activities. Chief amongst them are government agencies such as PES, the State Foundation for Training and Employment, INCUAL, the Quality Evaluation and Accreditation National Agency (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación), regional employment and education authorities, and the social partners.
Coordination amongst stakeholders was strengthened with Law 30/2015. Generally, key stakeholders such as the social partners are brought together for Sectoral Joint Committees. These committees are organised on a sectoral basis involving roundtables at a national level to produce sectoral training reference plans which are taken into account by the PES. The General Council of the National Employment System is the main coordinating institution related to the provision of training in relation to employment, and is also an important forum through which the social partners play a role in skills anticipation (see section “Target groups’ uses of skills anticipation outputs”). It is comprised of representatives from the national and regional employment administrations and the social partners. The Council guarantees, amongst other things, the correct implementation of the recent reform of the VET system (c.f. Law 30/2015) with the Spanish General Council on VET. The Spanish General Council on VET, which is responsible for the development of the VET system, comprises representatives from the Ministries of Employment and Education, respectively, the regions, and the social partners.

The PES and the State Foundation for Training and Employment are both agencies of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security. The PES, through its Occupation Observatory (a sub-agency), is the main agency responsible for the assessment of training needs. The State Foundation for Training and Employment is the managing institution for training both those in employment and those who are unemployed.

The social partners (employers’ and workers’ representatives) participate in the VET system through the Sectoral Joint Committees, which provide expert guidance on skills anticipation at the sectoral level, establish priorities for vocational training and monitor trends in supply and demand. The Chambers of Commerce help to assess their member firms’ training needs.

Regional employment and education authorities have responsibility for implementing skills policies and adapting them to local conditions. The reform of the VET system foresees their role in skills anticipation being strengthened, but this has yet to be implemented. They are also part of the General Council of the National Employment System and of the General Council on VET.

**Target groups**

Among the intended target groups are both the information providers themselves and other end-users, including the PES (with its Occupation Observatory), the State Foundation for Training for Employment, the INCUAL (and its Observatory of Professions), social partners, training providers, education providers (via career guidance counsellors for young people), career counsellors (for jobseekers) and regional governments.

**Funding and resources**

According to Law 30/2015 on reforming the VET system, funding for skills anticipation will be borne by the State Foundation for Training for Employment, and the respective regional authorities. Additionally, the PES, through the Observatory of Occupations, funds in part the analysis of skills anticipation, while the Ministry of Education, through its various agencies, carries out and funds other activities. The regional authorities (both employment and education) carry out and fund skills anticipation activities.
The Sectoral Joint Committees are funded by the State Foundation for Training for Employment.

Methods and tools

Skills assessment
Skills assessment in Spain is primarily undertaken by the PES through the Observatory of Occupations, which analyses recruitment activity and employment trends to determine which occupations are increasing in employment and to identify the skills associated with these occupations. Training needs are analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The State Foundation for Training for Employment undertakes training needs assessments by analysing administrative data on training courses and their participants (persons and companies). (6) This approach was in place before the introduction of Law 30/2015, but the coordination of - and the importance attached to - skills anticipation in general, including skills assessments, has been strengthened since its introduction.

Skills forecasts
The State Foundation for Training for Employment undertakes forecasting activities by analysing administrative data on recruitment activity, social security and tax contributions, and additionally is now exploiting big data. Skills demand forecasting is relatively new in Spain and began in earnest with the Anticipa Project, in 2012, led by the State Foundation for Training and Employment. This project constructed a model which produces medium- to long-term forecasts of the most in-demand skills in the labour market. It uses data from the Labour Force Survey and Labour Contracts Statistics are compiled by the National Statistical Office (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) and the PES respectively. Following the Anticipa Project, skills forecasting is now regularly undertaken by the State Foundation for Training for Employment.

Skills foresight
Skills foresight is mostly developed in the Sectoral Joint Committees through roundtable discussions at national and sectoral levels. The outcomes of their deliberations are sectoral reference plans usually including, amongst other objectives, adapting workers and employers to the use of new technologies, training actions to reduce accidents at work, improving workers’ job specific and transversal skills, increasing firms’ competitiveness, raising awareness about lifelong learning needs, increasing firms’ international trade, modernising firms’ management, and facilitating the introduction of quality systems.

Other skills anticipation practices
Other skills anticipation practices are undertaken by the regions. They typically carry out regional employer surveys to detect skills and training needs, as happens for instance in Andalusia (7) and in Murcia. (8) They may also develop methodological studies, together with the regional social partners, relating to how to anticipate skills and training needs, and/or sectoral prospective analyses (as in Aragón). (9) Provincial and local authorities also undertake their own activities. (10) Employers’ associations may also carry out sectoral analysis on skills and training needs, frequently through focus groups, for instance in the ICT sector (e.g. CONETIC). (11) Similarly, trade unions carry out surveys on
workers in the sectors they represent. The Chambers of Commerce take advantage of their close relationship with local companies to detect their needs and organise training activities. (12) Finally, tertiary level education institutions conduct surveys of graduates to assess skills demand among graduate employers. (13)

Dissemination and use

Use of skills anticipation in policy

Among the key actors involved in the dissemination of skills information are the PES, the State Foundation for Training for Employment, the National Qualifications Institute, the social partners, regional government, Chambers of Commerce, and guidance counsellors. Additionally, education institutions (at secondary and tertiary levels) may disseminate information on skills demand to students to guide their career choices, making use of publications, studies and statistics, webpages, visits of the PES, job fairs and social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.). The PES, the State Foundation for Training for Employment, and the Observatory of the Professions provide their information to the public through publications on, for example, sectoral developments and occupational trends.

Outputs from skills anticipation activities mainly affect policies, which in turn are relevant to the delivery of training. In this regard, the PES uses the outputs of the skills assessments it runs to produce multi-annual scenarios which serve as a framework for strategic planning for training provision, supported by analysis of training needs, an annual report, (14) and numerous sectoral and thematic reports.(15) The training is then provided by authorised organisations/companies. Evaluation has been reinforced by the reforms, although the implementation process has not yet been accomplished.

Cooperation with social partners occurs primarily through the Sectoral Joint Committees where expert opinion (derived from roundtable discussions between social partners) is used to inform the skills anticipation process. The new Law (Law 30/2015) foresees a rationalisation of the work of these Committees but this element of the law has not yet been implemented. The Sectoral Joint Committees bring together employers and unions and produce sectoral reference plans, which are taken into account in the training that the PES commissions from training providers.

The workers’ and employers’ representatives, through their involvement in the Sectoral Joint Committees, provide substantial expertise which informs sectoral skills anticipation. As such, these actors play a key role in the dissemination of information through their sectoral organisations. Changes to the role of the social partners included in Law 30/2015 means they are no longer involved in delivering training, such that training providers and regional governments will have to take on a greater role in the dissemination of information about skills anticipation.

Target groups’ uses of skills anticipation outputs

Including stakeholders in the skills anticipation process facilitates the goal of reaching the respective populations that stakeholders represent, or the client groups they serve. There are, however, difficulties reaching certain groups, such as small and medium-sized enterprises and their employees, and those
who are self-employed. There are also concerns about whether outputs from skills anticipation activities are being used by careers guidance services, as they often use information not directly relevant to the labour market. Career guidance at both secondary and tertiary levels often focuses on understanding a student's (or a graduate's) ability and strengths rather than matching those strengths to labour market needs.

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Endnotes

(1) Law 30/2015, 9 September, regulating the Vocational Training for Employment System (Ley por la que se regula el Sistema de Formación Profesional para el empleo en el ámbito laboral), modifies RD 4/2015 of 22 March, for the Urgent Reform of the Vocational Training for Employment System (para la reforma urgente del Sistema de Formación Profesional para el Empleo en el ámbito laboral).

(2) The General Council of the National Employment System is one of the two coordination and
evaluation mechanisms of the National Employment System, linking national and regional authorities and the social partners (art. 2 Law 56/2003 of Employment).

(3) This Council was created in 1986, and is comprised of representatives of the Ministries of Employment and of Education, of the regions, and the social partners. It is devoted to the development of the VET system (RD 1684/1997).

(4) A list of the Sectoral Joint Committees and their composition can be found at https://www.fundae.es/Observatorio/Pages/CPListado.aspx

(5) As specified in Royal Decree 4/2015, later ratified – with some modifications – by Law 30/2015.

(6) The reports produced by the Foundation can be found at State Foundation for Training and Employment (Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo) 2017b and State Foundation for Training and Employment (Fundación Estatal para la Formación en el Empleo) 2017c

(7) Available at Junta de Andalucía n.d.

(8) Sánchez & Martínez n.d.

(9) Instituto Aragonés de Empleo. n.d.a and Instituto Aragonés de Empleo. n.d.b.

(10) The Spanish Federation of local councils and provinces, or the provincial Diputación of Valencia, have carried out analysis on training needs in their respective territories (Diputacio de Valencia. n.d. and Federacion Española de Municipos Y Provincias. n.d.)

(11) CONETIC: Confederación Española de Empresas de Tecnologías de la Información, Comunicaciones y Electrónica. n.d.

(12) See the PICE programme, Comprehensive Programme of Qualification and Employment (Programa Integral de Cualificación y Empleo), aimed at helping young unemployed people to find a job in a local firm. All 86 participating local Chambers carry out an analysis on local companies’ skills and employment needs; Spanish Chamber of Commerce (Cámara de Comercio de España) n.d.b.

(13) For an example, please consult the University of Granada at http://cpep.ugr.es/pages/documentos/estudiodemandasdelasempresasalostitulados2012/

(14) The most recent Report on the Labour Market 2016 can be found at Ministry of Employment and Social Security (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social) 2016a.

(15) For instance, individual reports on the professional profiles most wanted by the companies; sectoral prospective reports (ICT, logistics, fruits and vegetables, etc.); reports on geographical mobility, etc.