

Role of the Meso-level institutions (MLIs) / Business interest associations (BIAs) in dual and work-based VET

Co-Governance





Ingrid Portenkirchner

Head of DC dVET

Head of Secretariat, Donor Committee for
Dual Vocational Education and Training (DC dVET)



Leads the Secretariat of the Donor Committee for Dual Vocational Education and Training (DC dVET), an international platform supported by Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Liechtenstein that promotes global knowledge exchange on dual VET systems.



With extensive experience in international vocational education cooperation, she works with governments, companies and business associations worldwide to strengthen work-based learning and employer engagement in skills development.



In this webinar, she will share insights on how chambers and sector associations can play a strategic role in shaping effective vocational education systems.

The problem with current approaches in many contexts

In many countries, employer involvement is limited to:

- Informal consultation
- Project-based cooperation
- Occasional advisory input
- Symbolic representation



Result:

- X** Weak ownership
- X** Low commitment
- X** Limited impact on training quality

What is co-governance?

Co-governance means:

- Shared responsibility
- Shared decision-making
- Shared accountability

Between:

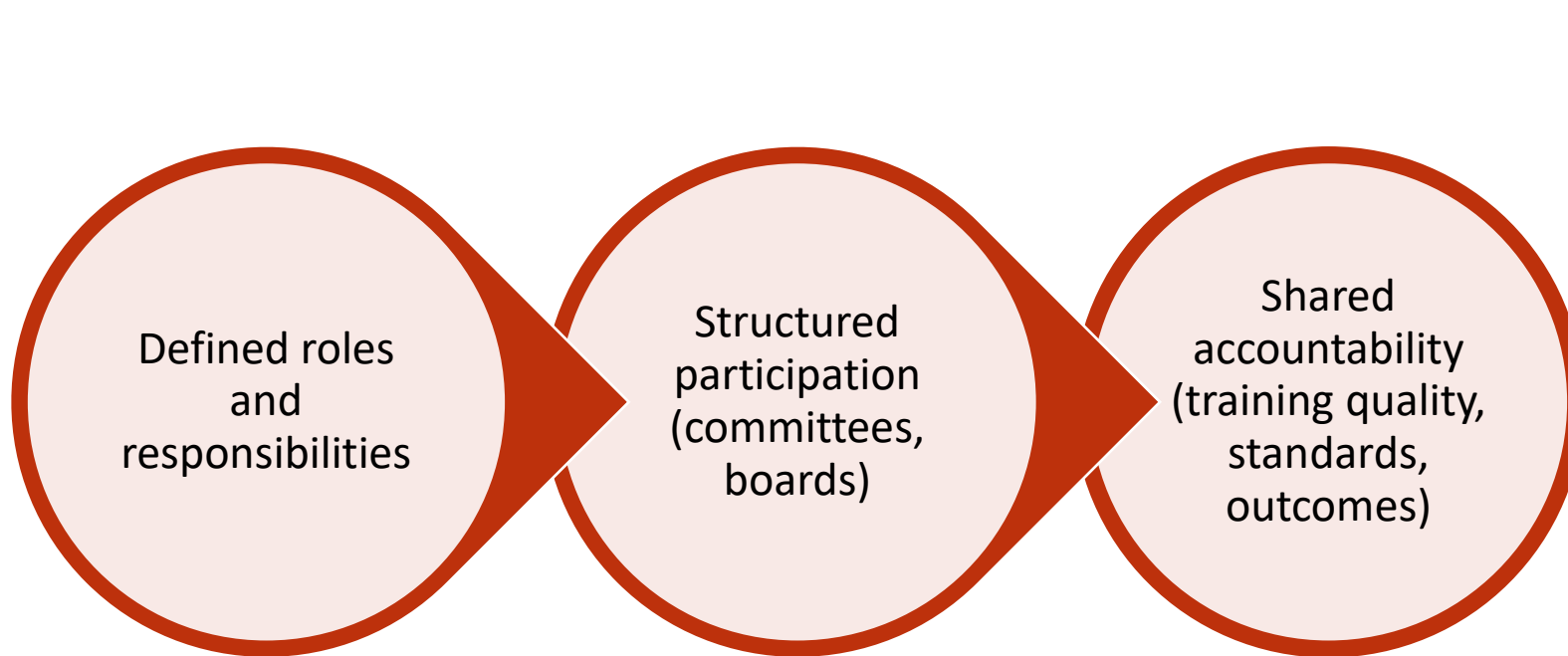
- The state
- The organised business sector

What co-governance is not

Not co-governance	Why not sufficient
Informal consultation	No real decision power
Occasional advice	Not continuous
Project participation	Not systemic
Symbolic representation	No influence

→ There are important steps, but not co-governance

What co-governance requires?



Mindset shift

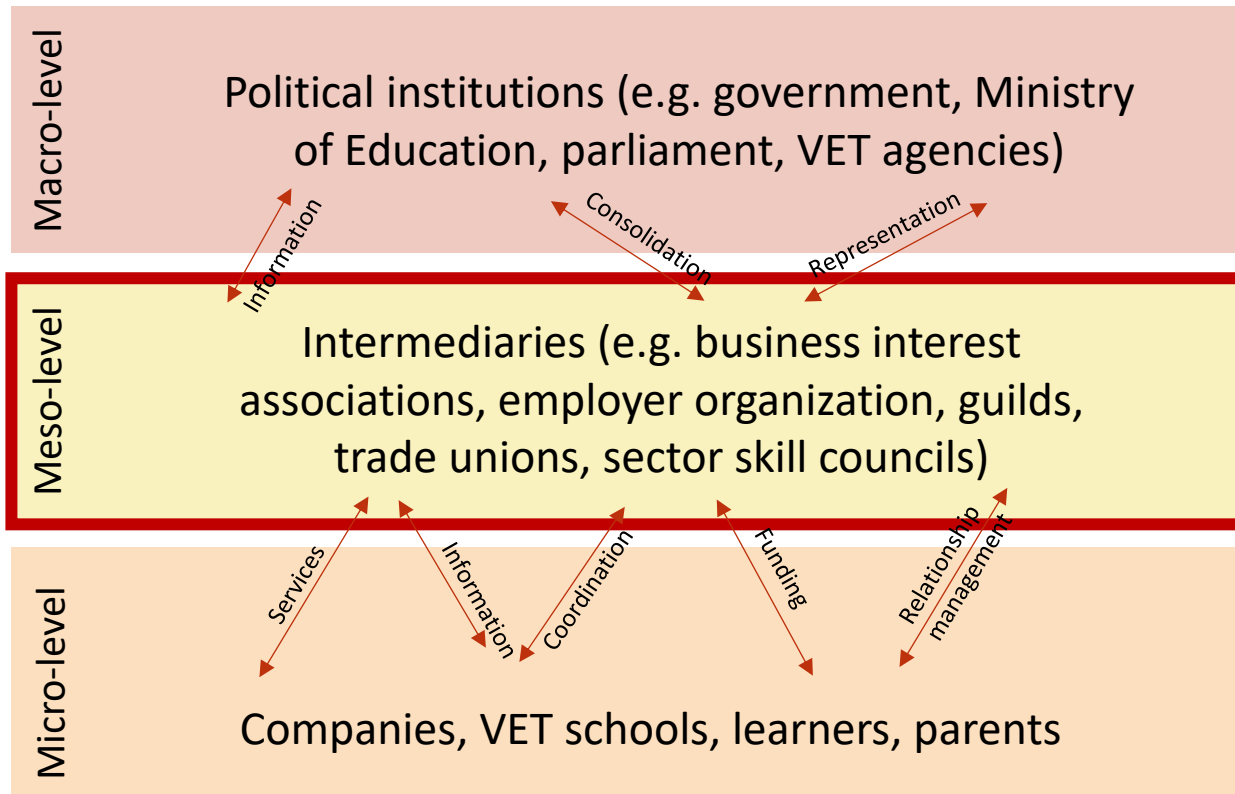
→ Co-governance is NOT about power struggles
→ It is about designing a system that works.

Goal:

- ✓ Better-trained graduates
- ✓ Relevant skills
- ✓ Stronger economy

Where do MLI's / BIAs fit in?

Traditional dual VET systems
(e.g. DACHLI-Countries)



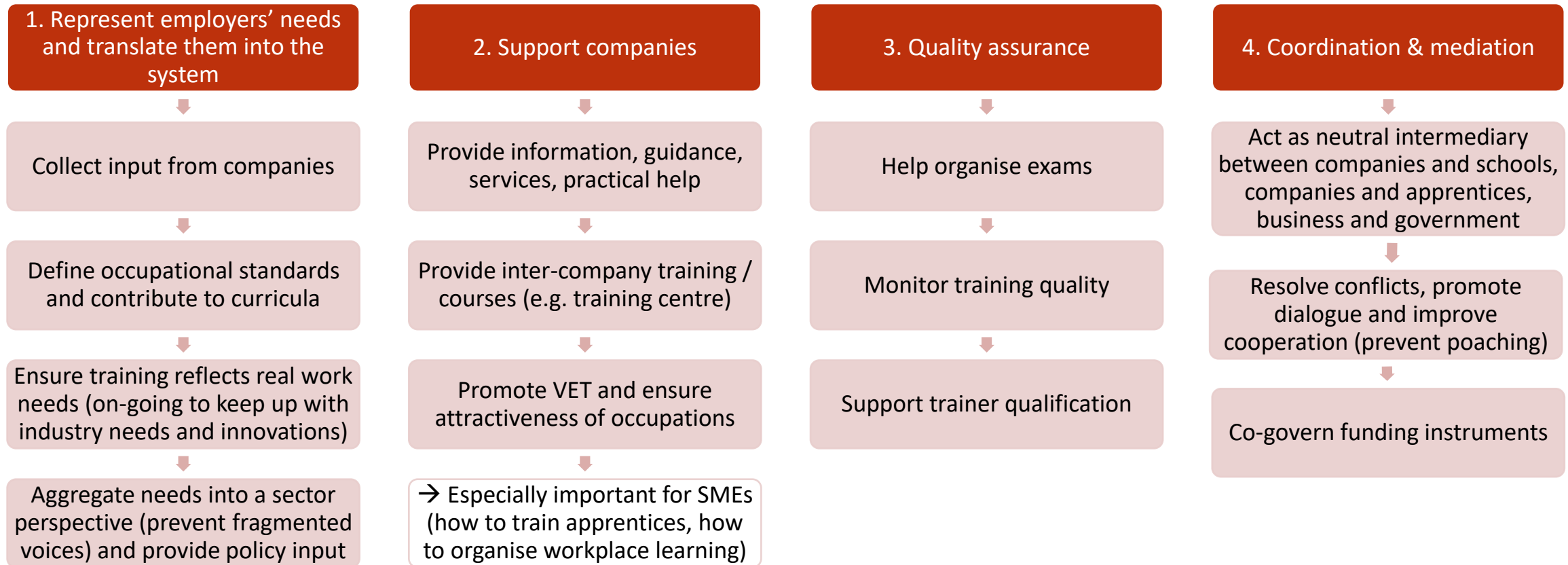
MLIs / BIA's = The bridge between all levels

→ Enable communication, coordination and cooperation

Co-governance: Roles of MLIs/BIAs

Traditionally: Business associations = lobbying organisations

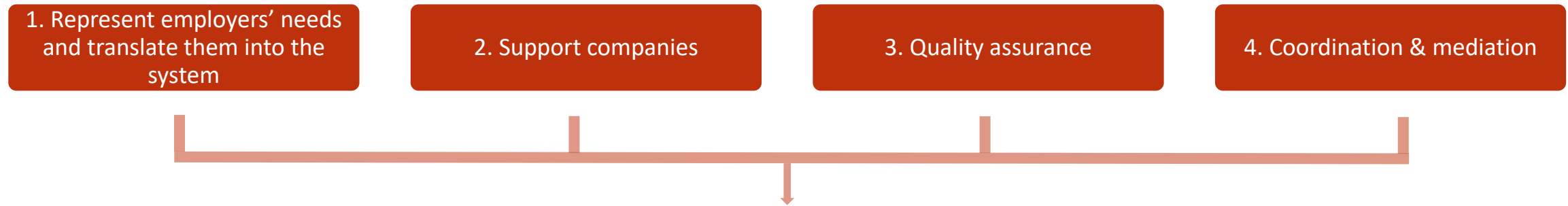
In dual VET: Business associations = **system actors, problem-solvers and co-governors**



Co-governance: Roles of MLIs/BIAs

Traditionally: Business associations = lobbying organisations

In dual VET: Business associations = **system actors, problem-solvers and co-governors**



Contribution to the dual VET system

- ✓ Ensures labour market relevance and shared ownership
- ✓ Enables effective implementation and broad participation
- ✓ Guarantees quality, credibility, and recognition
- ✓ Facilitates cooperation and system stability
- ✓ Keeps the system adaptive and future-oriented

Reality check

Many systems:

- Start with limited cooperation
- Have low trust
- Have weak employer involvement

This is normal.

Development takes time...

Strong dual systems:

- Developed over decades
- Evolved step-by-step
- Build trust gradually

There is no shortcut.

Possible development pathways

Early-stage roles

Minimum feasible roles:

- Raise awareness among companies
- Promote apprenticeships
- Provide basic advisory support
- Facilitate communication
- Support exam logistics

Intermediate roles

As systems grow:

- Participation in committees
- Coordination of company networks
- Input to occupational standards
- Formal representation of sector positions

Mature governance roles

In advanced systems:

- Co-decision on training regulations
- Joint responsibility for exams
- Steering committees
- Sectoral funding mechanisms
- Legal mandates

- Dual VET is not a cure-all for economic or social challenges
- Long-term effects require sustained effort
- Needs of disadvantaged groups must be addressed
- Context-specific approaches are essential

Key take-away

There is no need to start with systems like in Switzerland or Germany

You build your own system step-by-step:

Start small

Build experience

Grow over time