

# New Interest Associations in a Neo-Corporatist System: Adapting the Swiss Training System to the Service Economy

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## Abstract

*Collective skill formation systems need to adapt to economic change, most notably the expansion of the service economy. However, deeply anchored in the craft and industrial sectors, these systems rely on neo-corporatist institutions to undergird firms' training provision, which are often missing in the service sector. We show that Switzerland's voluntaristic approach to interest intermediation provided the flexibility needed to extend vocational training to economic sectors without neo-corporatist institutions. Yet, these adaptations resulted in the emergence of interest associations characterised by low levels of generalisability and governability. These new associations co-exist with neo-corporatist ones, rendering the overall training system surprisingly heterogeneous.*

## 1. Introduction

With the decline of the industrial sector and the expansion of the service economy, skill formation systems need to be adapted, which is particularly challenging for collective ones (Culpepper and Thelen 2008). Originally anchored in the craft and industrial sectors, these systems rely on employers' contribution to the collective good of transferable skills, that is, the provision of skills beyond firm-specific needs. Neo-corporatist institutions play a key role in undergirding firms' training provision (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012; Culpepper 2003; Marsden 1999). Most notably, employer associations

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are of crucial importance, because they define training contents in line with their members' skill needs, represent their members' interests and promote information exchange. This encourages firms' participation in training and ensures a close fit between labour market needs and training, which facilitates school-to-work transitions. Yet, newly emerging sectors often lack such capable employer associations, while in traditional sectors these associations are affected by liberalisation (Eichenberger and Mach 2011), raising the question of how collective skill formation systems can be adapted to the service economy.

This question mirrors the larger debate about the adaptability of coordinated models of capitalism in the face of structural pressures (Thelen 2014). With some scholars observing a common neoliberal trajectory, the future viability of such coordinated models has been questioned (Baccaro and Howell 2017). Among others, coordinated models of capitalism are argued to suffer from a manufacturing bias, making scholars wonder whether they can cope with an increasingly service sector-oriented economy (Blyth 2003: 222). Importantly, comparative capitalism scholarship considers collective skill formation systems a defining feature of coordinated models of capitalism (Thelen 2009: 480). Indeed, several analysts observe an increased role for the state in providing training as well as a rationing of access to employer-provided training in countries such as Austria, Denmark and Germany (Carstensen and Ibsen forthcoming ; Durazzi and Geyer 2020; Thelen 2014). Hence, challenges related to skill formation promise to speak more broadly to debates about dynamics of institutional change in advanced Western economies.

We examine the relationship between vocational education and training (VET) and neo-corporatism by exploring how collective skill formation systems can be adapted to the service economy. We focus on the associational system, which is considered crucial for fostering the provision of collective goods by private actors (Culpepper 2003; Schmitter and Streeck 1999) but has received comparatively little attention in the otherwise rich literature on collective skill formation. In a neo-corporatist associational system, interest associations unite firms or employees, often in specific economic sectors, and are hierarchically ordered in encompassing peak associations. These associations engage in collective interest representation regarding various policy domains, for example, product or labour market issues. They are supposed to integrate broad interests and form long-term goals rather than representing narrow, short-term interests of their members. Such long-term goals can be aligned with public policy aims, for example, firms offering transferable skills.

Empirically, we focus on the Swiss case, which is a prototypical collective skill formation system (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012). Skill formation is a core area of Swiss neo-corporatism with employer associations playing a key role in VET governance (Fargo and Kriesi 1986). Yet, in the early 2000s, Switzerland embarked on a major VET reform to adapt its skill formation system to the service economy and in this process also reshaped

the associational system. The reform contributed to adapt VET to the service economy by integrating new economic sectors, such as the health and care sectors, and updating training in the existing VET occupations. Often, this implied founding new interest associations. We find that many of these new organisations are not traditional neo-corporatist associations but correspond to a new type of interest associations, which we call VET organisations. Unlike traditional neo-corporatist associations, these new VET organisations are interest associations exclusively focused on skill formation but bring together very diverse actors (e.g. employers, employees, public authorities, vocational schools). Today, such new VET organisations are responsible for eight of the ten most common training occupations in Switzerland. These occupations account for over 50 per cent of all apprenticeship positions (SBFI 2018b: 14) and include important service sector occupations such as clerks, care workers and sales assistants. In this way, VET organisations contribute to anchor the VET system's role in the educational landscape as roughly 60 per cent of school-leavers continue to enter dual VET (OECD 2017).

We argue that the voluntarism of the Swiss interest intermediation system enabled this transformation of the associational system. This voluntarism allowed a more flexible and less demanding organisation type to emerge and assume VET governance activities in the newly integrated sectors, which in more traditional VET sectors continue to be performed by neo-corporatist association (traditional company, occupational and employee associations). Following Streeck (1997), a voluntaristic approach to cooperation emphasizes actors' perception of their economic self-interest rather than exogenous constraints. In the Swiss context, this voluntarism concerns in particular the lack of national regulations regarding the organisation type of interest associations, which contrasts with the more hierarchically organised German or Austrian systems (Emmenegger *et al.* 2020; Rauner 2009). Instead of prescribing a specific organisation type, the new VET law introduced the umbrella term *organisations of the world of work* (OdA), which refers to both traditional neo-corporatist interest associations and VET organisations. Importantly, this voluntarism is not a new trait of Swiss neo-corporatism (Höpflinger 1984). However, it is only with the recent VET reform that this voluntarism led to a significant transformation of the associational system. Given the important role of traditional neo-corporatist associations in the provision of collective goods, this transformation raises the question of how this new type of interest associations, what we call VET organisations, can still play their part.

To address this puzzle, we have compiled a comprehensive database on the 146 OdA that currently perform public policy functions in initial VET. We analyse the associational system and organisation-level characteristics of the OdA through the theoretical lens of interest intermediation theory on business and labour associations (Traxler 1993). First, we use the concept of 'generalisability' to distinguish organisation types with regard to their membership composition and domain of interest representation. In contrast to traditional associations, the new type of interest association, the VET

organisation, includes heterogeneous constituencies and limits its domain to the VET policy field. Second, we show that the OdA types vary in terms of 'governability' as they develop different strategies to gain autonomy from members and represent interests in VET governance. Most notably, VET organisations develop organisational autonomy by offering VET-specific services and representing their constituencies' interests outside traditional employer confederations (e.g. at events organised by government agencies). Overall, traditional neo-corporatist associations of employers and employees are still the dominant OdA types in terms of number of associations. Yet, we show that the new type of interest association is responsible for occupations with comparatively large numbers of apprentices and training firms.

Our analysis suggests that Switzerland's voluntaristic approach to interest intermediation contributed to the training systems' ability to adapt collective governance structures to the service sector. The Swiss variety of neo-corporatism provided the flexibility needed to reorganise VET in traditional sectors and extend it to economic sectors that lack a neo-corporatist tradition. However, these adaptations resulted in the emergence of a new type of organisation, alongside the traditional neo-corporatist associations. Put differently, it is precisely the associations characterised by low levels of neo-corporatism (i.e. low generalisability and governability) that allowed Switzerland to adapt its training system to the service sector. While our findings do not suggest that coordinated models of capitalism are subject to a common neoliberal trajectory, they indicate that new organisation types can be used to maintain employer cooperation.

## **2. Collective Skill Formation, Neo-Corporatism and the Swiss VET Reform**

In this section, we first review the relationship between neo-corporatism and collective skill formation systems. Subsequently, we discuss a reform of the Swiss VET system, which had a transformative effect on its associational landscape.

### *Neo-Corporatist Associations in Collective Skill Formation Systems*

In collective skill formation systems, firms contribute to the provision of the collective good of transferable, certified skills. Yet, firms offering apprenticeship positions have to overcome a cooperation dilemma. Investing in such skills is only worthwhile if a sufficient number of other firms participate in training and do not poach skilled workers from training firms. Complex institutional arrangements secure this decentralised cooperation among firms. Interest associations of employers contribute to the administration of training (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012; Culpepper 2003), labour market institutions restrain labour mobility and provide employment protection (Acemoglu and Pischke 1999; Streeck 1997), while collective wage bargaining institutions lead to wage compression, which

makes investment in training worthwhile for firms (Busemeyer and Iversen 2012; Thelen 2014).

Unsurprisingly, then, collective skill formation systems are closely associated with neo-corporatist institutions (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2012; Marsden 1999). In an ideal-typical neo-corporatist country, hierarchically coordinated, encompassing employer and labour interest associations are systematically involved in policymaking and implementation, union membership is high and wage bargaining is coordinated (Streeck and Kenworthy 2005). Thus, collective skill formation systems have historically developed in Austria, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland, which are all neo-corporatist countries.

Yet, these countries need to adapt their skill formation systems to a changing socio-economic environment such as the expansion of the service sector (Jensen 2011; Thelen 2014) and related to this the increasing importance of general skills (Culpepper 2007; Graf 2018). Yet, it is precisely in this expanding service sector where encompassing employer and labour interest associations are often missing (Culpepper and Thelen 2008). In parallel, beneficial constraints (Streeck 1997) have been loosened due to the decline of centralised collective wage bargaining (Baccaro and Howell 2017; Busemeyer and Iversen 2012) and the (partial) deregulation of the labour market (Emmenegger 2014; Jansen *et al.* 2015). If such capable associations of labour market actors are key stakeholders in collective skill formation systems but often missing in the service sector, we face the question of how such training systems can be adapted to the service economy.

While the literature has provided important insights into how formal VET institutions were adapted in response to a changing socio-economic environment (e.g. Thelen 2014; Trampusch 2010), it has paid comparatively little attention to the employer associations at the sub-national level and their role for maintaining high firm involvement in training (for comparable analyses of employer associations, but without a focus on training, see Behrens 2011; Brandl and Lehr 2019; David *et al.* 2009). However, according to interest intermediation theory, these associations of labour market actors foster the provision of collective goods (Marsden 1999; Streeck and Schmitter 1985), which is necessary for creating and preserving encompassing collective skill formation systems. In contrast, adopting or maintaining formal institutions for collective skill formation is not sufficient to secure cooperation because these systems rely on firms voluntarily providing training positions (Culpepper 2003; Emmenegger *et al.* 2019). Employer associations are key for creating or maintaining such cooperation and, thus, preventing the system's erosion.

Among collective skill formation systems, Switzerland features the highest participation rate with approximately 60 per cent of school-leavers entering dual VET (OECD 2017), which points to high levels of cooperation among employers. Similarly, firm census data confirm that firms remain active in VET (Müller and Schweri 2012: 16). Surveys of apprenticeship positions show that the firms' total offer of training positions has increased by roughly 10 per cent

since 2009 (LINK 2017: 10). At the same time, Switzerland has increasingly turned into a highly deindustrialised economy with the large majority of labour market participants now working in the service sector (Jensen 2011). This makes the need to adapt the Swiss training system, which still strongly builds on apprenticeship training, to the service economy rather pressing.

Admittedly, Switzerland is a debated case in the neo-corporatist literature. This debate is nurtured by different approaches to conceptualising neo-corporatism. One approach focuses on associational structures (Schmitter and Streeck 1999), while the other emphasizes the involvement of social partners in governance and a culture of consensus (Katzenstein 1985; Lehmbruch 1984). In the Swiss case, this culture is clearly neo-corporatist, as there is a strong tradition of consultation of all stakeholders and consensus-based decision making. Yet, concerning associational structures, Switzerland deviates somewhat from the theoretically expected features. For example, Swiss unions are comparatively fragmented and weak. Their limited role in VET is a case in point (Emmenegger *et al.* 2020). In addition, on the side of business, there is a divide between domestic market-oriented small businesses and large, export-oriented firms (Eichenberger and Mach 2011).

Yet, traditionally, Swiss interest associations correspond to neo-corporatist expectations. For instance, previous literature on Swiss interest associations identified three main organisation types: occupational associations, which unite self-employed professionals and small firms; company associations, whose members are firms in a given industry; and employee associations such as industrial unions (Fluder *et al.* 1991; Höpflinger 1984). In addition, skill formation is a core area of Swiss neo-corporatism with interest associations playing a central role in VET governance (Farago and Kriesi 1986; Gonon and Maurer 2012). Overall, then, there is a general consensus that Switzerland is a neo-corporatist country, although a more liberal type than, for instance, Austria (Katzenstein 1985; Kenworthy 2003; Trampusch and Mach 2011).

### *The 2002 VET Reform in Switzerland*

The 2002 reform of the Swiss VET system led to a significant transformation of this associational landscape. Launched in the midst of a major apprenticeship crisis and with the aim to modernise the system, the reform preserved the essential institutional dimensions of collective skill formation (Trampusch 2010): the alternation of workplace and school-based training, firms' provision of apprenticeship positions and the involvement of interest associations in policymaking and implementation. Moreover, VET legislation continues to support the idea of consensus and negotiation. For instance, all major actor groups, both private and public, are, by law, defined as jointly responsible for governing the system. Social partners are therefore included in national-level commissions for further developing the VET system. Moreover, various tasks are delegated to interest associations, for example, defining training content, providing inter-firm training and managing generally binding VET funds. Yet, even at the occupational level, all stakeholders are

consulted during the process of defining and updating training content. Thus, the neo-corporatist ideology of self-governance of private actors, cooperation with the state and a culture of consensus (Katzenstein 1985; Lehmbruch 1984) continue as uncontested cornerstones of VET governance.

However, besides these elements of continuity, the 2002 reform also entailed important changes at the level of interest associations and occupations. Most importantly, the 2002 reform integrated training previously regulated by regional authorities or other federal departments into national VET legislation. This concerned a diverse group of economic sectors, most notably service sector occupations in areas such as health, care and arts. The reform transferred the traditional governance model of apprenticeships to these sectors, which implied creating new interest associations to take over public tasks, because such associations were typically missing in the newly integrated economic sectors (Rauner 2009).<sup>1</sup>

The newly created interest associations deviate from the traditional neo-corporatist ones typically involved in VET governance because they bring together very diverse actors and focus exclusively on VET. The VET act accounted for this new diversity of interest associations by introducing the umbrella term *OdA*. This term denotes all organisations that represent labour market actors' interests in the VET policy area, that is, traditional neo-corporatist associations as well as the new type of interest associations.

Although public authorities were strongly involved in creating new and reorganising existing occupations, they relied on a voluntaristic approach to cooperation with labour market actors, that is, they did not prescribe an organisation type for the interest associations involved in VET governance. Voluntarism implies that cooperation occurs based on actors' perception of their economic self-interest rather than based on constraints (Streeck 1997: 302–303). With regard to *OdA*, we characterise federal regulations as prescribed by the 2002 VET reform as voluntaristic because they do not prescribe an organisation type for interest associations and membership of firms in these organisations is strictly voluntary. Thus, rather than obliging labour market actors to organise in a one-size-fits-all organisation type, Swiss VET legislation allows interest associations to find an individual solution for each occupation. In principle, any type of interest association can become an *OdA* on the condition that public authorities delegate tasks in VET governance to them, which is decided on a case-by-case basis (BBT 2007). Hence, although the reform led to only one new organisational type (what we call VET organisations), this type was not pre-defined, but emerged bottom-up.

By including new economic sectors and reorganising existing occupations, the VET reform led to a transformation of the Swiss associational landscape. While the traditional organisation types (occupational, company and employee associations) still seem to correspond to neo-corporatist expectations, the current associational system in VET governance includes a new type of organisations, which — in contrast to the traditional associations — is typically only active in the policy domain of VET. These VET

TABLE 1  
 Founding Periods of OdA by Organisation Type

<i>Period</i>	<i>OdA types</i>			
	<i>Occupational association</i>	<i>Company association</i>	<i>Employee association</i>	<i>VET organisation</i>
2001–2015	5 (16%)	7 (13%)	0 (0%)	17 (81%)
1981–2000	5 (16%)	9 (17%)	0 (0%)	3 (14%)
1961–1980	6 (19%)	7 (13%)	2 (66%)	0 (0%)
1941–1960	3 (10%)	4 (7%)	1 (33%)	0 (0%)
1921–1940	1 (3%)	4 (7%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
1901–1920	6 (19%)	11 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Before 1900	5 (16%)	12 (22%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	31 (100%)	54 (100%)	3 (100%)	21 (100%)

*Note:* Data on the founding years are missing for the remaining 37 organisations.

organisations have mainly been created in response or in anticipation of the 2002 VET reform, which identifies the reform as the trigger for organisational change among interest associations (see Table 1).<sup>2</sup> However, also traditional organisation types are continuously founded. Hence, the new organisation type does not simply replace others but coexists in the associational system.

In this article, we argue that the voluntaristic variety of Swiss neo-corporatism enabled the country to transfer its VET system to new economic sectors and reorganise existing occupations. Although these are not the only adaptations of the Swiss VET system (Gonon and Maurer 2012; Trampusch 2010), this reorganisation process seems crucial for adapting the training system to the service sector, because it resulted in the creation of new VET organisations in the most common service-sector occupations in which a large number of apprentices are trained. Moreover, the increased heterogeneity of interest associations is puzzling because traditional neo-corporatist associations are believed to play a crucial role in the provision of collective goods. To examine this transformation, this article applies concepts developed in the literature on business interest associations and labour unions to Swiss interest associations involved in VET governance. We introduce these concepts in the next section.

### 3. How Associations Foster Cooperation

Employer associations are key in fostering the provision of collective goods by private actors. Theories of interest intermediation systems suggest that associational characteristics vary systematically, outlining the contours of ideal-typical neo-corporatist and pluralist associational systems that underpin the involvement of private interests in policymaking (Streeck and Kenworthy 2005). This section depicts these ideal-typical characteristics. In addition, we argue that theories of interest intermediation systems can be applied to Swiss OdA. The concepts of generalisability and governability are particularly useful and are discussed in detail.



Early theories of interest intermediation systems outlined how two ideal-typical systems deal with interest associations (Schmitter and Streeck 1999). Associations in pluralist systems (e.g. Great Britain) represent narrow interests and do not support the provision of collective goods. They are limited to organise actors with similar interests and represent these interests through lobbying. Such associations are in competition, have overlapping domains and associational systems are fragmented. Pluralist associations may be particularly capable of recruiting and binding members with similar interests. Yet, they lack the ability to form more general goals in line with public policies. Conversely, in neo-corporatist systems (e.g. Germany), interest associations contribute to the provision of collective goods (Streeck and Schmitter 1985). In these systems, the state delegates public tasks to interest associations, which allows them to gain more autonomy and authority vis-à-vis their members. This enables them to unify diverging interests of a heterogeneous membership and develop forms of regulated self-regulation or private interest governance. These associational systems tend to be hierarchically ordered and organisational domains do not overlap. Neo-corporatist associations fulfil important political-economic functions.

Although primarily rooted in the literature on business associations and labour unions, theories of interest intermediation systems also provide useful analytical tools for understanding Swiss OdA. As interest associations, all OdA need to address the same challenges as traditional business and labour interest associations: overcoming collective action problems and balancing members' interests and public authorities' demands (the logics of membership and influence in Schmitter and Streeck's terminology). Moreover, applying these concepts to traditional and new types of interest associations allows us to systematically analyse the variety of associational strategies used to foster employers' contributions to collective goods provision.

Our analysis of Swiss OdA focuses on two prominent concepts within theories of interest intermediation systems: generalisability and governability (Traxler 1993, 2007). Generalisability addresses the issue of how broadly an organisation defines its domains of membership and interest representation. Governability allows understanding how interest associations manage to unify the potentially divergent interests of their members at the organisational and associational system levels.<sup>3</sup>

### *Generalisability*

Generalisability relates to the breadth of interests included in and represented by an interest association. Public authorities typically prefer to delegate public tasks to encompassing associations because they cannot easily externalise negative effects of the policies they promote. Therefore, these policies are closer to collective interests (Traxler 2007). Associations' generalisability influences their ability to foster collective action. Narrowly scoped associations find it easier to define interests because their members

are more similar and interests more homogeneous. In this case, collective action is often fostered through normative means, for example, the creation of a collective identity and norms of appropriate behaviour. Conversely, encompassing associations need to unify more heterogeneous interests and, thus, tend to use more coercive means or selective incentives to bind members (Schmitter and Streeck 1999).

Generalisability has two sub-dimensions: *membership composition* and *domain of interest representation* (Behrens and Helfen 2009). Members may differ with regard to their type, that is, individuals, firms or other collective actors, the sectors in which they are active or, in the case of business associations, firm size. The business association literature highlights that associations in which large firms play an important role find it easier to bind members, due to their role as highly interested actors with the ability and will to contribute disproportionately to the costs of collective goods (Traxler and Huemer 2007). Yet, these associations may be less autonomous from members and represent mainly the interests of powerful members (Traxler and Huemer 2007). Besides firm size, homogeneity in interests is also higher if firms stem from the same economic sector. Homogeneity in terms of firm size and economic sector may facilitate finding internal consensus but comes at the cost of less political influence (Behrens and Helfen 2009). Regarding collective skill formation, large firms have also been identified as key actors for overcoming collective action problems and promoting transformative institutional change (Culpepper 2007; Trampusch 2010).

Concerning interest representation, research on business associations distinguishes two domains: Associations active in the product market domain aim to influence tariffs, taxes, regulations for environment protection and the like. In the labour market domain, associations are involved in wage bargaining, VET and social policies. Associations may also be active in both domains, which is the most encompassing type of association. In contrast, some Swiss ODA are active only in VET and thus have a narrow domain. They limit their activities to training, which is a sub-domain of labour market policies because it determines the supply of a skilled workforce (Busemeyer and Iversen 2012).

### *Governability*

Governability or associations' ability to control members' behaviour is a key factor for the interest association's capacity to assume public policy functions (Streeck and Schmitter 1985). The governability of interest associations is defined as their capacity to 'unify [their members'] diverging interests' (Traxler 1993: 678). Associations should have the capacity to 'mould' their members' interests and police them (Traxler 2007: 27). We distinguish two sub-dimensions that favour governability: *organisational autonomy* and *organised complexity*.

Organisational autonomy is a precondition for the association's capacity to form goals. An autonomous association influences the formation of

common goals rather than just representing members' interests. Interest associations achieve organisational autonomy by diversifying their sources of income or by cooperating with the state that grants it organisational privileges (Traxler 2007: 28). For example, selling services for members or state sponsorship contribute to income diversification and indirectly increase organisational autonomy. However, previous research has shown that associations often provide services for members for free as selective incentives. This option for income diversification is thus restricted (Traxler 2007: 29). More importantly, the associations may derive autonomy through diverse forms of state licensing (Traxler 2007: 29). They provide goods or services that are linked to state authority (Schmitter and Streeck 1999: 21). These so-called monopoly goods include compulsory membership or legal provisions to extend a practice to all firms in a sector rather than just the organisations' members (extension clauses). Finally, professionalisation also matters for organisational autonomy as more professional Oda are more autonomous from their members because they rely less on members', in particular firms', voluntary support and expertise (Streeck and Kenworthy 2005: 450; Streeck and Schmitter 1985: 12; Traxler and Huemer 2007: 397).

Organised complexity refers to associational systems with the ability to 'internalize as many interests as possible and to process them in a functionally coordinated way' (Traxler 2007: 28). Such associational systems consist of associations with a rather narrow scope of activities and homogeneous membership at the bottom and associations with a broad scope of activities and heterogeneous membership at the top (Schmitter and Streeck 1999). Through hierarchically organised associational systems, business or labour can speak with one voice towards public authorities and thus increase their legitimacy while integrating a broad group of stakeholders. Hierarchical associational systems (typical of neo-corporatist systems) promote interest aggregation through two mechanisms: intra-organisational and inter-organisational concertation (Streeck and Schmitter 1985; Traxler and Huemer 2007). Interest associations belonging to the same peak organisation should be part of intra-organisational concertation. Interest associations who are not part of the peak organisations can try to be more active in other arenas, where inter-organisational concertation takes place, for example, at national peak-level meetings or in commissions (Traxler *et al.* 2007: 391). At the organisational level, if an interest association is not part of either form of concertation, it can hardly represent its members' interests. Such associations have little influence on policymaking and shaping the system. At the associational system level, if several peak associations compete for interest representation towards public authorities, the systems' organised complexity is lower.

### *Generalisability, Governability and Neo-Corporatism*

Interest associations' generalisability varies regarding their members' characteristics and the range of policy domains they cover. Traditionally,

interest intermediation theory associates encompassing associations with neo-corporatist and narrow associations with pluralist systems of interest representation. In addition, interest associations in neo-corporatist systems are expected to feature high levels of organisational autonomy and complexity (i.e. governability). Organisational autonomy allows interest associations to form collective long-term goals, while high organised complexity implies the representation of broad interests (Traxler 1993, 2007).

Given the important role of neo-corporatist associational structures in the provision of collective goods, the current composition of interest associations active in Swiss VET governance raises the question of how these organisations can achieve the observed high level of collective good provision. In our empirical analysis, we compare the new type of interest associations to more traditional (neo-corporatist) types with regard to generalisability in terms of membership composition and interest representation. Furthermore, we analyse the OdA types' organisational autonomy and organised complexity at the organisational and associational system levels. However, before turning to the empirical analysis, we briefly describe our data.

#### **4. Data**

Thus far, research on Swiss business associations was mostly based on qualitative approaches, for example, the historical analysis of business associations (Eichenberger and Mach 2011; Wettstein and Gonon 2009; but see David *et al.* 2009). In contrast, existing datasets focus on internationally comparable data on peak business and labour interest organisations (Traxler *et al.* 2007; Visser 2015). To our knowledge, no such dataset exists for lower-level organisations in Switzerland (in the domain of VET and beyond). The only recent survey among OdA was conducted in 2015 by a parliamentary commission (PVK 2015). However, this survey aimed to evaluate the cooperation between OdA and public authorities and the data are not available for further research.

The Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SBFI) publishes a register of all federally recognised occupations with their responsible organisations, that is, OdA (SBFI 2018a). Based on this register, we initially estimated that there are around 600 OdA in upper secondary and tertiary-level VET. We limit our research to organisations officially recognised as responsible for an initial VET occupation at the upper secondary level as our unit of analysis because tasks of OdA in tertiary-level VET differ from the tasks in initial VET. This reduced the number of relevant organisations to 153. Furthermore, we excluded seven OdA from the analysis because they were being reorganised during the data collection period. One OdA was in the course of dissolution, one OdA was a cantonal career counselling office, which is now being replaced by a newly created OdA, and five organisations were in the process of merging into a joint OdA.

We added statistical data on apprentices and on training firms, which was collected by the Federal Statistical Office (reference year 2016, the last year for which data is available at the time of writing). These data include information about the number of apprentices per occupation, the number of training firms and their size in terms of employees and the economic sector. The two datasets were connected through the identification number of the occupations. However, because an important part of OdA shares the responsibility for an occupation, data at the occupational level have been aggregated to the responsible OdA.

Finally, we collected new data on the organisational characteristics of OdA. Due to the prevalence of small organisations with few paid staff, we gathered data from various written sources rather than conducting a questionnaire-based survey among OdA representatives because we expected low return rates. This research strategy allowed analysing the complete population of initial VET OdA. The data collection proceeded in a structured manner. We operationalised concepts from interest intermediation theory. To ensure the quality of the data collection, we created a detailed guideline with coding rules. Data were collected from July 2017 to May 2018 from the official register of occupations and training ordinances of the occupations, the national registers of collective labour agreements and binding VET funds, member lists of extra-parliamentary commissions as well as participants' lists of federal events (all information provided by Swiss government agencies); member lists of peak associations (provided by the peak associations); and finally from the organisations' VET ordinances, statutes and their websites. By relying on official and nation-wide databases as well as standardised legal documents (ordinances and statutes), we ensured data quality and comparability. In case of limited information provided by the organisations on their websites, we conducted additional phone interviews.

In the Online Appendix, we provide more detailed information on all indicators used in the subsequent analysis, including their operationalisation and the specific data sources.

## **5. Empirical Analysis**

Our empirical analysis aims to disentangle various, coexisting patterns for fostering employer cooperation by applying the concepts of generalisability and governability to Swiss OdA. In this section, we first distinguish OdA types and discuss their generalisability. We also explore if and how the traditional associations differ from the generally newer VET organisations. Subsequently, we show that different OdA types vary in terms of governability. They develop different strategies to gain autonomy from members and to represent interests in the VET policy area. In both cases, we first present the key findings from our empirical analysis of the new OdA database, before a summary part discusses the implications of these findings from a theoretical perspective.

*Generalisability*

We analyse OdA along the two dimensions of generalisability: interest representation and membership. These are two elements of organisational structure that organisations may adapt and which vary substantially. Interest representation is relatively straightforward. Some OdA focus their activities on the VET domain, other OdA have a broad policy domain. Company, occupational and employee associations typically have a broad domain of activity, that is, they develop activities in various policy domains. Conversely, VET organisations are active only in the VET domain and, thus, are less generalisable in terms of interest representation.

The question of membership is more complex. OdA may have individuals, especially professionals and craft masters, firms or other associations as members. We identified formal membership composition of OdA as defined in their statutes. Following Höpflinger (1984), we define occupational associations as including self-employed individuals and often also firms as members with voting rights. In contrast, company associations' voting membership is defined as restricted to firms. Although some company associations originate from occupational associations, master craftsmen or skilled craftsmen no longer belong to the voting membership of these organisations. Both occupational and company associations have been subsumed under the category of business associations in earlier research on Swiss neo-corporatism (Farago and Kriesi 1986). Employee associations have only employees as members. Finally, VET organisations often unite heterogeneous stakeholders, for example, large firms, other associations and employee associations.

We categorised all OdA into one of these four types based on the analysis of their statutes or websites. Table 2 shows that 46 per cent of OdA are company associations, 26 per cent occupational associations, 25 per cent VET organisations and only 3 per cent employee associations. Overall, 88 per cent of OdA represent firms, 42 per cent an occupational group, 10 per cent employees and 5 per cent training providers. VET organisations have a higher average number of stakeholder groups than occupational, company and employee associations. This indicates that while VET organisations' generalisability in terms of interest representation is low, it is high in terms of membership composition.

After defining OdA types, this section examines the differences between traditional associations and VET organisations with regard to training firms and apprenticeship provision. Although training firms are not necessarily members of OdA, they constitute the most important stakeholder group. In the Swiss VET system, only firms can offer any apprenticeship contracts, which makes them the 'pivotal actors' in collective skill formation systems (Busemeyer 2012).<sup>4</sup> Thus, we analyse differences in generalisability among OdA types with regard to the characteristics of the firms that train apprentices in the occupation for which the OdA is responsible.

TABLE 2  
OdA Types: Domain and Membership Composition

	<i>Occupational associations</i>	<i>Company associations</i>	<i>Employee associations</i>	<i>VET organisations</i>	<i>Total</i>
Number of OdA	38	67	5	36	146
In percent of all OdA	26%	46%	3%	25%	100
Domain	Broad	Broad	Broad	Narrow	
Stakeholder group: Firms	27	67	0	34	128
Stakeholder group: Occupational group	38	0	0	23	61
Stakeholder group: Employees	0	0	5	10	15
Stakeholder group: Public authorities	0	1	0	7	8
Stakeholder group: Training providers	1	0	0	3	4
Stakeholder groups (average number per OdA)	1.74	1.01	1	2.14	1.48

Here and in the following, we use OLS regressions with VET organisations as reference category, which allows us to assess whether the differences between the organisation types are statistically significant despite differences in group sizes and heterogeneity within the four groups.

First, firm size has been identified as an important element of generalisability (Traxler *et al.* 2007). To decide whether training firms are homogeneous in terms of firm size, we define, following Behrens and Helfen (2009), a threshold of 90 per cent of training firms with less than 100 employees. Table 3 shows that the share of OdA with over 90 per cent of small firms is higher in occupational associations than in VET organisations. The second element of generalisability is sectoral concentration (Herfindahl index) of training firms, which is also higher in occupational associations than in VET organisations. Concerning the prevalence of large firms or firms with a particularly high number of apprentices, we find that VET organisations have a higher concentration of apprentices in firms (Herfindahl index) than the other OdA types but these differences are not statistically significant. Finally, occupational and company associations do not systematically differ from VET organisations with regard to the presence of large or very large firms (share of training firms with more than 500 employees). Conversely, employee associations are primarily active in occupations in which large firms play an important role in offering apprenticeship positions. However, there are only five employee associations responsible for initial VET occupations. All of them share the responsibility with employer-side organisations.

Thus far, we have established that the Swiss initial VET system includes four main OdA types, which vary with regard to membership composition and domain of interest representation. However, only occupational associations

TABLE 3  
Training Firms' Characteristics by OdA Type with Reference to VET Organisations

	<i>Dependent variables</i>			
	<i>Share of training firms with less than 100 employees ≥ 90%</i>	<i>Concentration of training firms in economic sectors (Herfindahl)</i>	<i>Concentration of apprentices in firms (Herfindahl)</i>	<i>Share of training firms with more than 500 employees</i>
Independent variables (type of association):				
VET organisation		<i>Reference group</i>		
Occupational associations	0.254*	0.122*	-0.007	-1.294
	(0.107)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(1.03)
Company associations	0.162	0.07	-0.056	-0.574
	(0.095)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.915)
Employee associations	0.033	0.158	-0.111	4.612*
	(0.219)	(0.111)	(0.111)	(2.11)
Constant	0.167*	0.592***	0.341***	2.849***
	(0.076)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.738)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.06
Number of observations (OdA)	146	146	146	146

Note: OLS estimates, standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ .

TABLE 4  
Differences in Apprenticeship Provision with Reference to VET Organisations

	<i>Dependent variables</i>	
	<i>Number of apprentices</i>	<i>Number of training firms</i>
Independent variables (type of association):		
VET organisation		<i>Reference group</i>
Occupational association	-4,039.8***	-1,320.9***
	(1194.6)	(391.8)
Company association	-2,521.0*	-807.0*
	(1,061.4)	(348.1)
Employee association	-2,591.4	-700.9
	(2,451.3)	(804.0)
Constant	4,632.8***	1,597.7***
	(856.0)	(280.8)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.08	0.08
Number of observations (OdA)	146	146

Note: OLS estimates, standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ .

are more homogeneous with regard to training firms than VET organisations, while training firm size is larger only in case of employee associations. Next, we compare OdA types' average number of apprentices and training firms.

Concerning the provision of apprenticeships, Table 4 reports that VET organisations are responsible for a significantly higher number of apprentices than occupational and company associations as well as a significantly higher number of training firms.<sup>5</sup> In case of employee associations, the difference is



not significantly different from zero, which is likely due to the small number of employee associations. Even if commercial training, which is by far the largest occupation and governed by a VET organisation, is excluded from the analysis, the results remain similar.

In sum, regarding generalisability, VET organisations combine a narrow domain of interest representation with a heterogeneous membership composition, while company, occupational and employee associations have broad domains but unite members of similar types. Large firms only play an important role in occupations that are co-governed by employee associations. Yet, occupational associations' training firms are more concentrated in economic sectors and they have a higher share of small training firms than VET organisations, so that they can be described as less generalisable than VET organisations. However, large firms and firms that train a large share of apprentices in an occupation seem not to play a different role in VET organisations than in company associations. This means that large firms do not cluster in a specific organisation type and, in turn, the average VET organisation and company association include firms of varying sizes and from different economic sectors. Put differently, they are both capable of defining training content that meets the needs of a heterogeneous group of firms. Our findings also confirm the key role of VET organisations as responsible for occupations in which a comparatively large number of apprentices are trained by a comparatively large number of firms.

### *Governability*

Governability has two sub-dimensions: organisational autonomy and organised complexity. This section addresses them in turn. As discussed above, organisational autonomy is higher if interest associations cooperate with the state and gain access to resources and authority through this cooperation. One form of cooperation with the state is to offer so-called monopoly goods, that is, goods backed by state authority. Examples include legal provisions to extend a practice to all firms in a sector rather than just the organisations' members or a monopoly for the provision of certain types of services. All OdA enjoy state support as — per definition — they have been publicly recognised as responsible for the public tasks associated with initial VET. Yet, they offer monopoly goods to various extents. The most important monopoly goods offered by OdA are specialised branch-level training courses, so-called inter-firm courses, the management of generally binding VET funds and — in their role as employer or employee associations — negotiating collective labour agreements.

Professionalisation also matters for organisational autonomy. Yet, unfortunately, information on financial resources or paid staff of OdA is rarely made available. As an alternative, we developed an indicator based on the structured analysis of OdA websites. We assess the degree of professionalism by evaluating outreach activities and communication strategies and, more specifically, the extent to which they publish and

TABLE 5  
Organisational Autonomy: Monopoly Goods with Reference to VET Organisations

	<i>Dependent variables</i>		
	<i>Number of inter-firm course days</i>	<i>Generally binding VET funds</i>	<i>Generally binding collective labour agreements</i>
Independent variables (type of association):			
VET organisation		<i>Reference group</i>	
Occupational association	0.515 (3.20)	-0.224* (0.089)	7.33e-17 (0.075)
Company association	8.13** (2.844)	0.019 (0.079)	0.299*** (0.067)
Employee association	15.10* (6.569)	-0.25 (0.183)	0.2 (0.154)
Constant	21.097*** (2.293)	0.25*** (0.064)	-1.39e-16 (0.054)
$R^2$	0.09	0.08	0.18
Number of observations (OdA)	146	146	146

Note: OLS estimates, standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ .

make accessible relevant information on their websites to members and other interested parties. This information includes visions, missions and aims, statutes and membership regulations, advertising membership, and organising activities for members or offering them various services. More specifically, we distinguish between information on VET-specific services (e.g. documentation for training firms and information about occupations) and on general organisational development (e.g. mission statements or information about membership). We argue that producing and making available these documents and information is indicative of an educational organisation's financial resources and professionalised staff. However, it should be emphasized that this indicator might also capture the extent to which OdA need to formalise their structures, which is likely to be affected by size.

Table 5 reports provision of monopoly goods of OdA. Concerning the number of inter-firm course days, company associations and employee associations offer significantly more course days than VET organisations. Second, 28 OdA manage a generally binding VET fund (19 per cent). Occupational associations offer this monopoly good less often than VET organisations. Third, 21 OdA (14 per cent) are responsible for generally binding collective labour agreements. Company associations are significantly more often parties of an agreement than VET organisations.

OdA also vary in terms of their degree of professionalisation (see Table 6). The maximum score of our professionalisation index is 13 (seven organisation-specific points and six VET-specific points). Concerning the overall indicator, OdA reach up to 12 points, while the average is 7.1 points. Only company associations score significantly higher than VET organisations. If the indicator is split in organisation-specific and VET-specific aspects, VET organisations reach significantly more points in terms of VET-specific

TABLE 6  
Organisational Autonomy: Professionalisation with Reference to VET Organisations

	<i>Dependent variables</i>		
	<i>Professionalisation (overall)</i>	<i>VET-specific professionalisation</i>	<i>Organisation-specific professionalisation</i>
Independent variables (type of association):			
VET organisation		<i>Reference group</i>	
Occupational association	0.224 (0.577)	-1.282*** (0.308)	1.506*** (0.386)
Company association	1.720** (0.512)	-0.667* (0.274)	2.387*** (0.343)
Employee association	0.55 (1.183)	-1.661* (0.632)	2.211** (0.792)
Constant	6.25*** (0.413)	3.861*** (0.220)	2.389*** (0.277)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.10	0.12	0.26
Number of observations (OdA)	146	146	146

Note: OLS estimates, standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ .

professionalisation and fewer points in terms of organisation-specific professionalisation than occupational, company and employee associations.

In sum, our analysis of organisational autonomy shows rather clear patterns for the different OdA types. Company organisations gain autonomy through the provision of inter-firm courses and collective labour agreements and score higher than VET organisations on organisation-specific professionalisation. Occupational organisations score lower than VET organisations on all indicators except organisation-specific professionalisation. Employee associations offer a high number of inter-firm courses and score high on organisation-specific professionalisation in comparison to VET organisations. In contrast, VET organisations score high on VET-specific professionalisation and do not differ significantly from company and employee associations in the managing of generally binding VET funds. Overall company associations develop the highest level of organisational autonomy and, thus, come closest to the neo-corporatist ideal of regulated self-regulation. Yet, also VET organisations may gain some autonomy by managing VET funds and through VET-specific professionalisation.

The second aspect of governability, organised complexity, is the degree to which an organisation is integrated into a hierarchically coordinated associational system. If an organisation is integrated, it is systematically included into a broader process of formulating and representing interests through neo-corporatist channels. OdA may be members of peak associations of employers or union federations, directly appointed to federal commissions or participate in less formalised events for stakeholders in the VET policy domain. Such events are regularly organised by public authorities. At the associational system level, organised complexity reveals if a system is highly

TABLE 7  
Organised Complexity with Reference to VET Organisations

	<i>Dependent variables</i>			
	<i>Membership in peak associations</i>	<i>Federal commissions</i>	<i>Networking events</i>	<i>Overall score</i>
Independent variables (type of association):				
VET organisation		<i>Reference group</i>		
Occupational association	0.368** (0.119)	-0.278** (0.085)	-2.367*** (0.467)	-2.276*** (0.556)
Company association	0.851*** (0.106)	-0.248** (0.076)	-1.293** (0.414)	-0.690 (0.494)
Employee association	8.96e-16 (0.245)	-0.278 (0.175)	-2.072* (0.958)	-2.35* (1.141)
Constant	-9.44e-16 (0.085)	0.278*** (0.061)	2.47*** (0.334)	2.75*** (0.398)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.34	0.09	0.16	0.12
Number of observations (OdA)	146	146	146	146

Note: OLS estimates, standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ .

hierarchically coordinated or if there is a degree of competition between different groups of stakeholders.

First, concerning membership in peak associations, occupational and company associations are more often members of employer confederations than VET organisations (see Table 7). Second, only eight OdA are directly appointed to one or more of the four federal commissions concerned with VET (these commissions are EBBK, EKBV, EBMK and EKHF). Table 7 shows that, overall, occupational and company associations are significantly less represented in these commissions than VET organisations. Third, VET organisations participate in networking events (the VET Stakeholder Conference and the VET Autumn Conference, 2015–2017) significantly more often than employee, occupational and company associations. Overall, occupational and employee associations are less integrated in the interest representation system than VET organisations.

Concerning the overall associational system, our analysis reveals that 58 per cent of OdA are not *directly* members of any peak association active in the VET policy field.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, no OdA is a direct member of a labour-side peak association. Thirty-six per cent of OdA participated at events organised by public authorities to foster exchange among stakeholders in the VET policy domain. We calculated an overall score for participation in the network by attributing one point to each interest representation activity (maximum = 12). This score reveals that 41 per cent of OdA do not participate at all in any of the three possible channels for interest representation, 27 per cent in only one channel, 10 per cent in two, while the remaining 22 per cent represent their interests through three up to twelve activities. Thus, surprisingly, a large part of OdA (of different types) is not integrated in any of these neo-corporatist forms of interest representation, which implies a low level of

organised complexity of the associational system in VET. We suspect that this might be the result of the large number of comparatively small associations in terms of number of apprentices.

The analysis of organised complexity documents that OdA types differ with regard to how they represent their members' interests through neo-corporatist channels. Company and occupational associations are integrated into traditional confederations more often than VET organisations, while VET organisations are more often directly active in federal commissions and participate more in informal events organised by public authorities. Concerning the overall associational system, organised complexity is relatively low despite the availability of various channels for interest representation. An important part of OdA does not participate in any national-level processes of formulating interests.

## **6. Conclusion**

Against the backdrop of a changing socio-economic environment, especially the rise of the service economy, Swiss policymakers aimed to strengthen collective skill formation. Previous research on institutional change has highlighted the self-preserving character of this reform. However, the reform also led to a transformation of the associational system. Based on a voluntaristic approach to interest intermediation, that is, the absence of prescriptions for organisation types, a new type of organisation has developed, in response to which public authorities created the umbrella term OdA to designate all interest associations fulfilling tasks in the VET system.

We have shown that Switzerland's voluntaristic approach to interest intermediation contributed to the training systems' ability to adapt collective governance structures to the service economy. In particular, it provided the flexibility needed to extend collective governance to economic sectors that lack a neo-corporatist tradition. Put differently, this voluntarism allowed a more flexible and less demanding organisation type to emerge and assume VET governance activities in the newly integrated sectors, which in more traditional VET sectors continues to be performed by neo-corporatist associations (traditional company, occupational and employee associations). This new organisation type has a narrow domain of interest representation but unites more heterogeneous stakeholder groups. This finding suggests that, more generally, interest associations may face a trade-off between these two dimensions of generalisability, that is, narrowing down the domain of interest representation to VET may enable including heterogeneous actor groups.

The four organisation types have also developed different patterns of governability. Compared to VET organisations, occupational associations provide fewer monopoly goods to their members and their level of professionalisation is relatively low, pointing towards lower organisational autonomy. Company associations offer a larger amount of monopoly goods in the area of VET are part of collective labour agreements and have a higher

level of professionalisation than VET organisations. Still, VET organisations have developed some organisational autonomy by offering VET-specific services. These findings suggest that occupational associations are likely to represent their members' interests most loyally. In contrast, company associations developed tools to gain autonomy from their members, which should strengthen their ability to engage in negotiations. VET organisations are positioned somewhere between.

With regard to the integration of OdA in neo-corporatist interest representation, we have identified two patterns. The traditional neo-corporatist system of interest representation still plays an important role in VET governance, as occupational and company associations are often members of these confederations. Conversely, VET organisations are less integrated in this hierarchical intra-organisational coordination process. However, some of them are members of federal commissions in VET alongside the peak-level employer and union associations. In addition, VET organisations regularly participate in informal forums of exchange organised by public authorities.

In sum, our analysis has shown that the new VET organisations appear rather untypical of interest associations in a neo-corporatist system due to their narrow domain of interest representation and lacking integration into traditional neo-corporatist peak-level associations. However, the analysis has also shown that the new VET organisations have developed different strategies to 'unify [their members'] diverging interests' (Traxler 1993: 678), although many of these strategies are to some extent dependent on state support. With regard to generalisability, VET organisations' exclusive focus on VET enables them to include heterogeneous actor groups.

Overall, then, the Swiss VET system is increasingly heterogeneous and no longer supported by a coherent, encompassing associational system. Thus, in line with other recent studies (Behrens 2011; Brandl and Lehr 2019), we suggest that associations adapt to political and economic change — and with them the institutions of coordinated capitalism more generally. These gradual transformations merit analytical attention because they, over time, may also affect macro-level institutional outcomes (Streeck and Thelen 2005). Yet, our findings do not suggest that coordinated models of capitalism are subject to a common neoliberal trajectory. Rather, they indicate that new organisation types are used to shore up employer cooperation.

The Swiss strategy to facilitate the creation of new organisation types is certainly an interesting approach to further the transfer of dual apprenticeships to new economic sectors, new occupations and new actors. This finding underlines the importance of flexible types of interest associations and enabling them to develop monopoly goods to strengthen and expand the collective type of skill formation. However, this reorganisation has also created the potential for tensions and competition for interest representation between traditional neo-corporatist peak-level associations and newly created VET organisations, which often act outside the system of peak-level associations and in direct contact with public authorities. Little

surprise, then, that this transformation of the Swiss associational landscape has given rise to debates about the relationship between VET organisations and training firms as well as the need to integrate VET organisations into more traditional, neo-corporatist forms of interest representation (EBBK 2018). Yet, for now, Switzerland has succeeded in defending the VET system's role in the educational landscape. The Swiss case thus indicates that flexible adjustments to neo-corporatist systems are feasible, but necessitate a constant balancing act, the sustainability of which can only be judged in the long run.

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### **Notes**

1. Moreover, public authorities encouraged occupations to merge to form broader occupational fields. This implied bringing together neo-corporatist associations from several occupations to define training content together. In this process, the responsible interest associations sometimes reorganised as well.
2. The main exception is the OdA Hotel & Gastro Formation, founded in 1926. However, only with the 2002 reform did VET organisations become widespread.
3. Next to generalisability and governability, research often focuses on the interest associations' capacity to recruit and bind members (associability). However, we are primarily concerned with employers' participation in the provision of the collective good of certified, transferable skills, which in Switzerland is not directly linked to membership in interest associations.
4. There are no detailed data on the numbers and characteristics of member firms of OdA. However, it can be assumed that the large majority of training firms are (directly or indirectly) OdA members.
5. OdA may be responsible for various occupations or share responsibility for an occupation with other OdA. Occupation-level information was therefore aggregated to the responsible OdA. The numbers of apprentices and training firms were summed. For the size of the training firms in terms of employees, the average number of employees was calculated. While employee associations are never solely

responsible for an occupation, only 14 per cent of VET organisations share the responsibility with other OdA. An important part of both occupational (53 per cent) and company (40 per cent) associations have shared responsibilities.

6. These peak organisations are Swiss Employer Association, Swiss Trade Association, Travail Suisse and Swiss Trade Union Federation. VET organisations are sometimes 'indirect' members of peak organisations. In this case, the OdA itself is not a member, yet at least one party to the joint OdA is. This is the case for 15 out of 36 VET organisations. Counting both direct and indirect memberships, 52 per cent of OdA are members of a peak organisation.

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## Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Online Appendix