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**Stream “ 17. Capital and Social Policy” (Giuliano Bonoli, Traute Meyer)**

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**The Politics of Skills in Small Coordinated Market Economies**

**Employers and Continuing Vocational Training in Austria, Switzerland, Denmark, and the Netherlands**

**Summary**

Although lifelong learning is a decisive condition for the economic performance of advanced economies, until now comparative political economy has nearly neglected the analysis of continuing vocational training (CVT) systems. In the Varieties of Capitalism (Voc) literature the main focus is on vocational training systems and their relation to other political-economic institutions. The comparative industrial relations research focuses on wage bargaining. The contention of this paper is to address this deficiency. On the basis of an in-depth analysis of the role of sectoral collective agreements in CVT in Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland this paper offers the first systematic study of the institutional and political conditions under which collective agreements finance and organize continuing vocational training. Combining the comparative method with pattern matching, the most important result of the paper is that the research on the development of political-economic institutions in CMEs has to analyze more carefully how state activities and the behavior of small and medium sized firms affect the coordination of economic activities in skills formation.