

Declaration of the joint Vocational Education and Training providers on the contribution of Vocational Education and Training to the EU 2020 strategy

“Without the opportunity to learn through the hands, the world remains abstract, and distant, and the passions for learning will not be engaged”

(Doug Stowe, Wisdom of the hands (blog), october 16, 2006)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

EfVET, EUproVET, EVTA and EVBB¹, the main European networks of vocational education and training providers express their appreciation for the proposed Bruges Communiqué which in a distinct way place Vocational Education and Training (VET) at the centre of European attention.

We stand in support of the comprehensive and global European vision of integration which empowers VET, employment, innovation and development.

Achieving this vision will require strong cohesion between the policies on education and training, culture, social issues, employment and economy. It will also stress the necessary interdependence between the EU 2020 objectives – competitiveness, sustainability, social cohesion, fairness and widespread and knowledge-based innovation. Together they are specific features and necessary preconditions for the social, political and economic development of the European Union and the individual Member States.

The further development and enhancement of the Copenhagen process will strongly contribute to achieving the goals set for EU 2020, particularly through initiatives such as those aimed at establishing a common qualifications framework and, above all, improving the quality and attractiveness of VET.

The continuance of the Copenhagen process demonstrates the need to increase the impact of the policy directions of the Council and to appeal, to national and local governments, to maintain adequate levels of financial investment and organisational support for education and training during this economic crisis. Equally important is the desire to promote and stimulate the involvement of public and private providers of VET.

We welcome the connection established between VET and the wider and richer development of key competencies, thus recognizing the contribution that VET can make to the improvement and ongoing development of skills, even in the framework of general education. This promotes the interaction of theoretical knowledge and practical skills in education and training.

Curricula and training paths based on learning outcomes form the conditions to enhance the quality of VET, to which the Council's Conclusion makes repeated reference. For Initial Vocational Education and Training (I-VET) in particular, quality assurance is a pre-requisite in order to value VET pathways established in school systems or in other contexts, as being equal to those of general education, in terms of skills development, basic knowledge and access to higher education.

In addition to quality, we also wish to underline the references to the promotion of equity, social cohesion, active citizenship and combating the serious problem of early school leaving. Also the relationships with the labour market, the attractiveness of VET, training the trainers' programmes, the flexibility of training, innovation and entrepreneurship, must all receive the attention required to ensure improvement.

¹**EfVET:** *EFVET is a European-wide professional association involving providers of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in all European countries.*

EVTA: *EVTA is a European network of VET providers, employment services and Regional authorities.*

EVBB: *The EVBB is a European umbrella association of independent and non-profit vocational training Associations.*

EUproVET: *EUproVET is the European Platform of Representative VET- Associations.*

Recognition of these elements enhances the ability of VET to offer to all learners, including individuals who do not follow the traditional schooling systems, an I-VET pathway that open doors to tertiary education or to Continuing Vocational Education and Training (C-VET), just like general education, without compromising the quality of education and training.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In every respect, all partners involved, consider that quality, efficiency, innovation, flexibility and creativeness in VET programmes are the key elements to promote Lifelong Learning and social cohesion and to improve vocational and geographical mobility.

VET providers see themselves as the best ambassadors of the message that vocational education and training, active experiential learning, work based learning and individual skills development play an important role in the development of European vocational standards in Europe.

As partners in the economy, we are committed to both innovative solutions and social inclusion of disadvantaged groups. The developments of entrepreneurial skills as well as the promotion of key competences for lifelong learning are the goals we pursue.

In this respect, VET providers place particular emphasis on the following points:

1. Develop a Lifelong Learning strategy that integrates knowledge, practical skills, experience and learning outcomes

An attractive, innovative and flexible VET requires a specific educational approach, aimed at promoting the development of comprehensive knowledge and skills. The ability to organise learning and offer individualised training pathways are the specific techniques of the VET professionals. The development of this approach and its dissemination throughout Europe, require a considerable R&D commitment in the field of VET, new investments in training the trainers and more profound European cooperation. In this respect the recognition of prior learning (RPL) should be prioritized to a greater extent than exists at present.

2. Implement existing instruments that promote cooperation between education providers, labour market agencies, local authorities and social partners

VET can act as intermediary between all actors in education, labour market, enterprises and civil society. VET offers both short term solutions to prevent and provide support in crisis situations by developing and matching competences of individuals with the needs of the labour market and long term solutions aimed at restructuring and developing sectors and/or territories and promoting active citizenship and social cohesion. In particular the voice of employers, business and professional sectors/branches should be acknowledged.

This required approach by VET is not yet an established strategy at European level nor yet systematically applied in all member states. Achieving it requires a shared framework, as well as close cooperation between strategic stakeholders.

3. Secure VET as a career path as well as one of the instruments for social cohesion

VET has the potential to emerge as a powerful tool offering both a career path from basic to tertiary level, and a way to employment, integration and social cohesion. A VET-system oriented to Lifelong Learning and offering a wide range of education and training opportunities at all levels will ensure possibilities for quality employment. VET at multiple

levels will also, to a much greater extent meet the challenges Europe faces in the context of global competitiveness.

4. **Link VET with complementary initiatives and services**

VET must become a platform linked with complementary initiatives and services. The following services are essential for the quality and effectiveness of the learning and professional outcomes: analysis of professional requirements, training and professional guidance, counselling, certification and validation of skills, support in finding employment. In this context, the certification of skills, the recognition of professional qualifications based on formal, non formal and informal learning and the establishment of Europe-wide practices relating to these services require more support for this implementation.

5. **View VET as a public interest service**

The costs for VET are today covered not only by national and European funding but also by the direct investments made by companies and the sectoral training funds. The required involvement of the private sector must not, however, reduce VET solely to market interest or to a marginal entitlement of citizens. VET service must be viewed as public interest service that allow citizens to exercise their right to education and training. The EU and its Member States must therefore work together to devise and support appropriate funding models for VET by mobilising all available resources.

6. **Promote transnational mobility in VET**

The promotion of transnational mobility should not only focus on the EU, but also to and from countries outside the EU for students, young workers/apprentices and staff within VET institutions as well as for workplace VET providers.

7. **To be effective, agree an implementation timetable, systematic checks and measurable targets**

All areas highlighted aim to support the effectiveness of the provisions in the Member States linked to the strategic objectives of the Bruges Communiqué (and Council Conclusions) and to strengthen a common European framework to guide policy and legislation aimed at ensuring their implementation.

COMMITMENTS

In order to support and enhance the adoption of the suggested visions, objectives and actions we, EfVET, EUproVET, EVTA and EVBB, commit to:

- Cooperate with the European Commission, National Governments and Social Partners in implementing the Council's Conclusions, particularly regarding the development of the Copenhagen process, the "New Skills for New Jobs" and "Youth on the Move" initiatives and the Europe-wide dissemination of the results of projects and European research in the field of VET.
- Cooperate with all European networks, including social partner networks, in order to support the implementation of the Council's Conclusions and the Bruges Communiqué.
- Advise and support the Commission in practical and effective ways to achieve these goals.



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