

## EfVET President. Prof. Joaquim James Calleja, took part in the LearningConnects conversation organised by the ETF

*EfVET shares the stories of learning during lockdown from the perspective of international bodies*

**Brussels, 27 April 2020:** On Thursday 23 April 2020, EfVET President, **Prof. Joaquim James Calleja**, took part in the LearningConnects online conversation on 'How are international bodies supporting learning communities during the lockdown?', organised by the [European Training Foundation](#) (ETF) in partnership with [UNESCO-UNEVOC](#), and the [European Trade Union Committee for Education](#) (ETUCE).

The aim of LearningConnects in lockdown times conversations is to share stories on how education and training systems, businesses, schools, teachers, students and their families can adapt to the challenges of teaching and learning at a distance. Such online discussions are meant to inspire all of us, not only during the pandemic time, but also for future opportunities.

Moderated by **Ms Daria Santucci**, Communication Officer at the ETF, the conversation saw the presence of the representatives of other organisations European-wide and internationally involved in the education sector, in particular in the vocational education and training (VET and TVET systems), namely **Ms Susan Flocken**, Director at ETUCE, European Trade Union Committee for Education, and **Mr Jens Liebe**, Senior Programme Expert at UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre.

After briefly presenting each representative's organisation and their role, relevant actions taken during this emergency phase were shared with the audience. EfVET was presented as one of the leading European wide professional associations which has been created by, and for, vocational education and training providers. Its role is to feed European consultation processes and foster connections between researched business

people and practitioners in VET, bringing together 215 members from 35 EU and non-EU countries.

Mr Calleja was invited to give his view on the role of transnational cooperation in addressing demands emerged in this time of disruption, also in connection with the relevant opening of businesses towards VET. Being an association very much focused on innovation and good practices, Calleja then shared his opinion on “the possibility of having a new VET after the emergency, which might hopefully link businesses and education as a positive practice, not only with reference to technologies as it has been found so far.”

“A lesson to be learned, observed Prof. Calleja, has been that there is still a huge gap between theory and practice in the field of VET, in particular referring to the use and knowledge of technologies, not being distance teaching and learning a common methodology for teachers and students, respectively, so far.” In addition to the lack of digital skills, it has emerged that not all students, teachers and trainers have access to equipment, connectivity and effective platforms.

Other considerations consisted in “the need of not underestimating COVID-19 emergency and consequences in the next future, therefore, the need to be prepared to face a new potential crisis again in order to give students and learners the necessary instruments to gain skills and knowledge they require to conduct a normal life.”

Furthermore, EfVET President has been invited to describe the key areas of work of EfVET in contributing to continuity of consultation and feeding into pan European actions and the situation with practice based training and examples of good practices from the network of EfVET.

**Ms Susan Flocken** gave a unique and comprehensive overview of the COVID-19 crisis for ETUCE and shared with the audience the key findings, and challenges that the Unions are experiencing and recommendations to get ready for the future after the release

of Statement on tackling the COVID-19 crisis, stating that distance teaching must not widen inequalities in education.

**Mr Jens Liebe** shared the actions taken in the UNESCO's Member States to support them with Coronavirus responses in their efforts to strengthen and upgrade their TVET systems. He also spoke about the launch of the TVeT Forum: a platform for mutual support in online learning and collaboration that have become the focus of attention in an effort to ensure continuity of learning in these critical times.

The one-hour conversation saw the engagement of the audience invited to join after the interview, having the opportunity to address questions to the interviewees and making it a spontaneous and interactive discussion. ETF Policy Advisor **Ms Manuela Prina** said: "It is key to focus on educational opportunities and access across the globe and manage the already emerging inequalities. Thank you all for a very inspiring session and let's continue cooperation for now and the future."

In conclusion, a renewed interest and a real need has been observed in the future of learning, the enhanced integration of digital technology into the learning process and improving the digital competences of teachers and trainers to shape the post emergency school. This will require strong cooperation among all actors involved in shaping education and training policies but creative solutions are emerging and digital and online learning is becoming a catalyst for modernisation across education systems.

#### **More information:**

- [EfVET - European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training](#)
- [ETF - European Training Foundation](#)
- [UNESCO-UNEVOC](#)
- [ETUCE - European Trade Union Committee for Education](#)
- [Video 'International bodies: helping learning communities in lockdown'](#)