



Supporting vocational education and training in Europe:
THE BRUGES COMMUNIQUÉ

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INTRODUCTION

On 7 December 2010, European Ministers for vocational education and training (VET), the European Social Partners and the European Commission adopted the Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European cooperation in VET for 2011-2020. The Communiqué defines common objectives for 2020 and an action plan for the coming years, combining national measures with European support. This brochure introduces the context for this cooperation, the challenges to be met and the goals for the coming years.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AS A MOTOR FOR SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Europe is recovering from a severe financial crisis and unemployment rates, particularly for young people, are high. There are 76 million people in Europe with low or no qualifications. As global competition spreads, those with low or no formal qualifications are finding it harder to gain employment. While wages are typically rising for highly skilled workers, they are falling for low skilled and unskilled workers.

As well as facing competition in the global economy, Europe has an ageing society. As a result older workers need to update and broaden their skills through further training. This, alongside the

financial crisis, emphasises the need to reform European economies and societies. To support this reform, vocational training needs to be designed in ways that encourage adults to update their skills throughout their working lives.

Some 50 % of Europe's young people complete their education and enter the labour market via a vocational education and training path, going on to a wide range of jobs in both industry and services. To maintain Europe's competitive position, reforms to vocational education and training are therefore essential. Future jobs require people with high-level qualifications. In the current economic environment Europe needs to make sure that all its young people acquire the skills that help them enter the job market.

Europe also needs a flexible workforce that can respond to developments in the 'green economy', increased competition and rapid technological change.

To compete in the global market Europe has to be smarter and promote growth in industries which are sustainable and can adapt to change. To achieve this, Europe needs education and training systems to respond to the demands of the labour market and learners. Effective and relevant training offers employers the best chance to recruit skilled individuals who are able to make their business a success. It also gives individuals more opportunities for a rewarding career. In a rapidly changing world, lifelong learning has to be a priority – it is the key to employment, economic success and allowing people to participate fully in society.

For young people, vocational education and training should offer options for both employment and further study. It should help them to acquire the practical skills that are essential for many jobs and also open doors to higher-level qualifications. By providing both of these options, Europe can meet its aim of fewer than 10 % of young people leaving school early. Developing new approaches to vocational training can also help to ensure that the European goal of at least 15 % of adults participating in lifelong learning is achieved.

In order to respond to these challenges, the Ministers responsible for education and training have agreed a ten year strategy for European cooperation. This strategy, the Bruges Communiqué, aims at improving the quality and the attractiveness of vocational education and training.

THE VISION FOR 2020

The Bruges Communiqué sets out a vision for vocational education and training in the year 2020, together with a set of measures on how to get there.

Central to this vision is a vocational training system that is modern and attractive to learners and their parents. Everyone needs to have confidence in its quality and know that learners will acquire skills and knowledge which can be used immediately in an employed or self-employed role.



Vocational training includes basic skills, courses which develop expertise in specialist areas and **higher level qualifications** which are characterised by innovation and excellence. This wide range of provision allows learners to continue their studies at a higher level and university graduates to complete vocational courses which complement their knowledge with more technical and practical training. In the future, most workers should participate in **continuing training** in order to keep their skills up-to-date or acquire new ones.

By 2020, vocational studies should be **easily accessible and practical**. All vocational courses should include work-based training in business or industry. By collaborating with employers, training organisations should support learners with less interest

in academic study. This should reduce the number of people leaving school early.

Internationalisation should become an everyday feature in vocational training. Qualifications should include foreign languages, and international cooperation between institutions should encourage new approaches to teaching and learning. Students who learn in an international setting should be more ready to go on to work in that environment.

To make this vision a reality, the commitment and contribution of all stakeholders is needed. The support of training organisations and their staff, school leaders and teachers, as well as in-company trainers is crucial to implementing the changes. National, regional and local authorities have a role in reforming vocational training systems. The EU Institutions will support these reforms by developing European-wide approaches to maximise the benefits of living and working in a community with free movement of employees and businesses.

Once these changes are in place...

... **learners** will benefit from higher quality training. They will receive guidance when choosing what training to take and the career that best suits their talents. They will complete some of their studies abroad or there will be foreign learners in their classes. After obtaining their qualification, they will have a better chance of finding a job and being successful at work because their training was more relevant and practical. Once they enter the labour market, they will also benefit from flexible training options which support their ongoing learning.

... **vocational teachers** will have more opportunities to cooperate with colleagues abroad. Their working environment as well as their teaching and learning methods will be different, and they will use up-to-date learning materials which reflect the latest developments in industry and business.

... **training institutions** will find it easier to cooperate internationally, thanks to European-wide approaches, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), which make it easier for students to transfer their learning between organisations. They will also gain from having closer contact with business by having access to modern equipment as well as employing teachers and trainers who are familiar with today's working life. Finally, by providing more flexible ways to train, institutions will benefit from more learners wishing to complete their courses.

... **businesses** will be able to recruit qualified workers more easily, as training will have changed to better meet their needs. This change will encourage them to provide more opportunities for their staff and increase their commitment to workforce development. The quality of those entering the workforce will have risen because companies have contributed to and shaped the contents of training. Businesses will also be involved in delivering training through providing practical placements for learners.

European funding from the Lifelong Learning Programme (especially through the Leonardo da Vinci Programme) supports these reforms in vocational education and training. Cooperation in all these areas will bring European approaches closer together and create vocational education and training systems which are firmly built on **quality, relevance and attractiveness**.

A STRONG STARTING POINT

Since 2002 there has been significant progress in developing European-wide approaches to support vocational education and training. National authorities and social partners from 33 countries are working together to modernise vocational education and training. Together they are committed to achieving the objectives of the Bruges Communiqué as part of their support for the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020).

Earlier work by EU Institutions, national authorities and social partners, as part of this framework, has helped to improve quality and build trust. Following their joint development, national authorities are implementing European-wide initiatives which support vocational training:

- ▶ European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Connecting national qualifications frameworks, it facilitates the understanding of qualifications across countries and sectors.
 - ▶ Europass framework. A common set of documents helping people clearly present all their competences, skills and qualifications, including a popular online CV service.
 - ▶ European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). This allows students to progress towards a qualification in one country and have this achievement recognised in another.
 - ▶ European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET). This provides a consistent approach to monitoring and improving the quality of vocational training.
- ▶ Progress will depend on the continued strong commitment of all stakeholders, led by the EU Member States and the European Social Partners. The Directors-General for Vocational Training, the European Social Partners and the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training should continue to play an active role in the governance of the process, supported by the European Commission and with expert input from Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of VET, and the European Training Foundation (ETF).



The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training *for the period 2011-2020*

Communiqué of the European Ministers for Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the European Commission, meeting in Bruges on 7 December 2010 to review the strategic approach and priorities of the Copenhagen process for 2011-2020

FOREWORD

The Copenhagen Declaration of 29–30 November 2002 launched the European strategy for enhanced cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (VET), commonly referred to as the ‘Copenhagen process’. Today in 2010 on the basis of our 8 years of European cooperation, we have defined the long-term strategic objectives for the next decade (2011–2020). We have taken into account our past achievements, current and future challenges, and the underlying principles

and ideas of the Copenhagen process. An overall review of the process by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), based on a survey in the 27 Member States and Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, facilitated our work, as did a similar report on Croatia, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia by the European Training Foundation.



I. NEW IMPETUS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

CURRENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

Education and training for tomorrow's Europe

Europe is trying to recover from a severe economic and financial crisis. Unemployment rates are high – in particular amongst young people ⁽¹⁾. The crisis has emphasised the need to reform our economies and societies. Europe wants to become smarter, more sustainable and more inclusive. To achieve this we need flexible, high quality education and training systems which respond to the needs of today and tomorrow ⁽²⁾.

Labour market evolution

Today, in Europe some 76 million 25-64 year olds – roughly equivalent to the combined total populations of Italy, Hungary and Austria – have either low qualifications or no qualifications at all. Too many 18-24 year olds continue to leave education and training unqualified. Measures to prevent or remedy early school leaving are urgently required. Cedefop's projections of skills needs for the

next decade show that technological change will increase the demand for those with high and medium qualifications at the expense of low-qualified people. Even those occupations that used to require mostly low-level skills are increasingly requiring medium or even high-level qualifications. This means that people with low (or no) formal qualifications will find it more difficult to find a job in the future. There is also increasing evidence suggesting the polarization of employment with rising wages for highly skilled workers and falling wages for low- and unskilled workers.

The right skills

Today's pupils and students will still be in the beginning of their career in 2020 with at least 30 years to go in their professional lives, and some of them in occupations that do not exist today and others perhaps in occupations that are disappearing. We need to improve the capacity of VET to respond to the changing requirements of the labour market. Integrating changing labour market needs into VET provision in the long term requires a better understanding of emerging sectors and skills, and of changes to

- 1 The figures of September 2010 for the EU 27 Member States indicated a general unemployment rate of 9.6 % and a youth unemployment rate of 20.3 % (source: Eurostat).
- 2 The European Commission adopted on 9 June 2010 a communication 'A New Impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 strategy', which proposed in broad terms a future agenda for the European VET policy.

existing occupations. In cooperation with the relevant stakeholders we must regularly review occupational and education/training standards which define what is to be expected from the holder of a certificate or diploma. This means closer collaboration between stakeholders active in skills anticipation including representatives of professional sectors, social partners, relevant civil society organisations, and education and training providers. We need to adapt VET content, infrastructure and methods regularly in order to keep pace with shifts to new production technologies and work organisation.

The transition to a green economy is a mega trend which affects skill needs across many different jobs and sectors. Many of the skills needed can be found in existing occupations. Concretely, the labour market requires a balance between developing generic green skills (e.g. reducing waste, improving energy efficiency) and specific skills. Just as information and communications technology skills are essential for everybody today green skills will be important to almost every job in the future.

Ageing society

The future European labour market will be simultaneously confronted with an ageing population and shrinking cohorts of young people. As a result, adults – and in particular, older workers – will increasingly be called upon to update and broaden their skills and competences through continuing VET. This increased need for life-long learning means we should have more flexible modes of delivery, tailored training offers and well-established systems of

validation of non-formal and informal learning. The potential of information and communications technology (ICT) can be used to boost adult education and training through distance learning.

The dual objective of VET

Initial and continuing VET share the dual objective of contributing to employability and economic growth, and responding to broader societal challenges, in particular promoting social cohesion. Both should offer young people, as well as adults, attractive and challenging career opportunities, and should appeal equally to women and men, to people with high potential and to those who, for whatever reason, face the risk of exclusion from the labour market.

Quality and excellence

Given the role of VET in European societies and economies, it is crucial to ensure the sustainability and excellence of vocational education and training. If Europe is to maintain its position as the strongest exporter of industrial products in the world, it must have world class VET. In the knowledge society vocational skills and competences are just as important as academic skills and competences.

The diversity of European VET systems is an asset for mutual learning. But transparency and a common approach to quality assurance are necessary to build up mutual trust which will facilitate mobility and recognition of skills and competences between



those systems. In the decade ahead we must give high priority to quality assurance in our European cooperation in VET.

Empowering people

Not only labour markets but also societies as a whole are changing rapidly. We must empower people to adapt to new developments and manage change. This means enabling people to acquire knowledge, skills and competences that are not purely occupational. These broader competences – key competences – are important to succeed in life, and it should be possible to acquire them as well in VET as in any other form of education. Also VET has to give learners a chance to catch up, complement and build

on key competences without neglecting occupational skills. ICT skills and competences and foreign language skills, in particular, will become more and more critical in terms of getting and keeping a job and in managing everyday life.

Work-based learning is a way for people to develop their potential. The work-based component contributes substantially to developing a professional identity and can boost the self-esteem of those who might otherwise see themselves as failures. Learning on the job enables those in employment to develop their potential while maintaining their earnings. A well performing VET, which enables learning on and off-the-job on a part-time or full-time basis, can thereby also strongly contribute to social cohesion in our societies.

Internationalising VET

As players on the global education market, national VET systems need to be connected to the wider world in order to remain up-to-date and competitive. They have to be more capable of attracting learners from other European and third countries, providing them with education and training as well as making it easier to recognise their skills. Demographic change and international migration make these issues even more relevant. Although a European area of education and training is emerging, we have still not achieved our original objective of removing obstacles to mobility and we see that the mobility of learners in VET remains low. Better and targeted information provision and guidance are needed to attract more foreign learners to our VET systems.



Substantially increasing transnational mobility of VET learners and teachers, and recognising the knowledge, skills and competences they have acquired abroad, will be an important challenge for the future.

Investing in VET – a shared responsibility

Shaping VET is the shared responsibility of national governments, social partners, VET providers, teachers, trainers, and learners: all have a mutual interest in closer cooperation.

³ The following tools have been developed since 2002: Europass, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credit System for VET (ECVET) and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET).

An increased emphasis on adult learning in recent years also requires additional resources. The economic downturn should not lead to reduced investment in VET. Budgetary constraints will force us to come up with innovative solutions to secure sustainable funding for VET and to ensure that resources are efficiently allocated and equitably distributed.

IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE COPENHAGEN PROCESS

The Copenhagen process has played a crucial role in raising awareness of the importance of VET at both national and European level. Progress is most evident in the common European tools ⁽³⁾, principles and guidelines which have been developed to make qualifications more transparent, comparable and transferable, as well as to improve flexibility and quality of learning. They establish a basis to move towards a real European education and training area.

The impact of the Copenhagen process on countries' VET policies has been both quick and strong: it has triggered profound reforms, amongst others the development of national qualifications frameworks with a view to implementing the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the shift to a learning outcomes approach. By changing the perspective from an input-oriented learning process to learning outcomes, comprehensive frameworks which include general education, VET and higher education, can

help create transparent, permeable and flexible national qualifications systems.

Peer learning activities and the exchange of good practices have helped to create a sense of ownership of the process and stimulated further activities. But more and better communication is needed to involve the stakeholders: social partners, VET providers, civil society and learners.

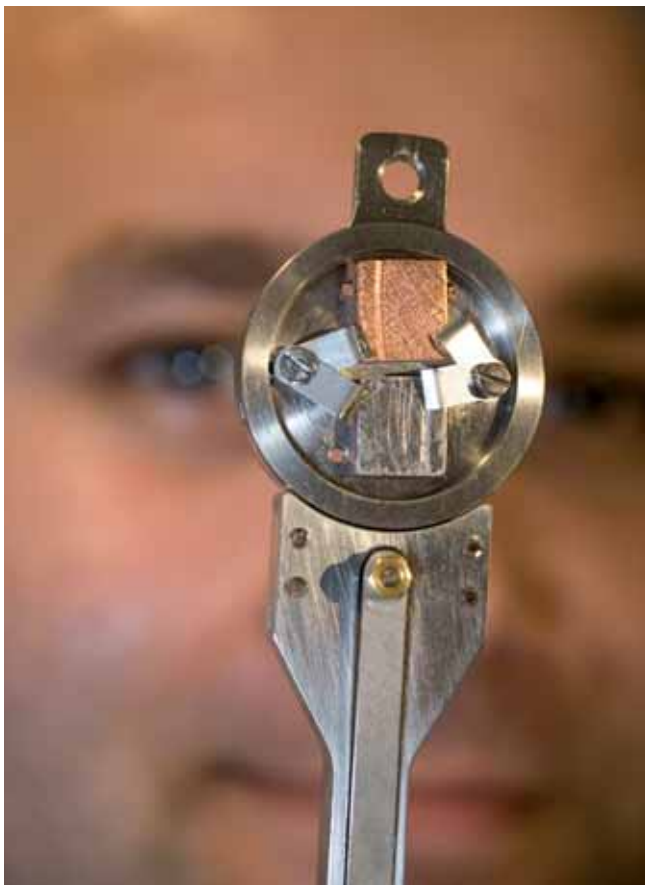
VET policies alone do not suffice to address socio-economic challenges and make mobility and lifelong learning a reality. Comprehensive approaches are required which link VET to other policies, in particular employment and social policies.

THE COPENHAGEN PROCESS IN THE WIDER EU POLICY CONTEXT

Given the evolving political context over the coming decade 2011-2020, particularly in the light of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Copenhagen Declaration of 2002 should be given fresh impetus. As the Copenhagen process is an integral part of the 'Education and Training 2020' strategic framework, the objectives in the VET field should remain consistent with the overall objectives laid down in the framework.

VET should play its part in achieving the two Europe 2020 headline targets set in the education field, namely – by 2020 – to reduce the rate of early leavers from education to less than 10%





and to increase the share of 30-34 years old having completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%.

A list of short-term deliverables has been drawn up to indicate the concrete actions which are required in order to advance towards the strategic objectives. The list of short term deliverables will also facilitate the future periodic reviews.

Taking into account the priorities and overall objectives of the above-mentioned European Strategy and framework, and respecting the principle of subsidiarity, the following is adopted:

- ▶ a global vision for VET in 2020;
- ▶ 11 strategic objectives for the period 2011-2020 based on that vision;
- ▶ 22 short-term deliverables at national level for the first 4 years (2011-2014), with indication of the support at EU level;
- ▶ general principles underlying the governance and ownership of the Copenhagen Process.

II. A GLOBAL VISION FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN 2020

By 2020, European VET systems should be more attractive, relevant, career-oriented, innovative, accessible and flexible than in 2010, and should contribute to excellence and equity in lifelong learning by providing:

- ▶ **Attractive and inclusive VET** with highly qualified teachers and trainers, innovative learning methods, high-quality infrastructure and facilities, a high labour market relevance, and pathways to further education and training.
 - ▶ **High quality initial VET (I-VET)** which learners, parents and society at large may regard as an appealing option, of the same value as general education. I-VET should equip learners with both key competences and specific vocational skills.
 - ▶ **Easily accessible and career-oriented continuing VET (C-VET)** for employees, employers, independent entrepreneurs and unemployed people, which facilitates both competence development and career changes.
 - ▶ **Flexible systems of VET, based on a learning outcomes approach**, which support flexible learning pathways, which allow permeability between the different education and training subsystems (school education, VET, higher education, adult education) and **which cater for the validation of non-formal and informal learning**, including competences acquired in the work place.
- ▶ **A European education and training area**, with transparent qualifications systems which enable the transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes, as well as the recognition of qualifications and competences, and which facilitate transnational mobility.
 - ▶ **Substantially increased opportunities for transnational mobility** of VET students and VET professionals.
 - ▶ **Easily accessible and high-quality lifelong information, guidance and counselling services**, which form a coherent network and which enable European citizens to take sound decisions and to manage their learning and professional careers beyond traditional gender profiles.



III. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE PERIOD 2011-2020, FOLLOWED BY SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES 2011-2014

IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF VET AND ENHANCING ITS ATTRACTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE

VET should have high relevance for the labour market and people's careers. In order to increase the attractiveness of VET, participating countries should pursue the following objectives and actions:

1. Making I-VET an attractive learning option

- (a) Raise the quality of I-VET (see also point 2 below), by improving the quality and competences of teachers, trainers and school leaders, introducing flexible pathways between all education levels and increasing public awareness of the possibilities which VET offers. This is of particular importance in participating countries where VET tends to be undervalued.
- (b) Encourage practical activities and the provision of high-quality information and guidance which enable young pupils in compulsory education, and their parents, to become acquainted with different vocational trades and career possibilities.
- (c) Ensure that key competences are integrated into I-VET curricula and develop appropriate means of assessment.
- (d) Organise teaching and learning activities which foster the development of career management skills in I-VET.

- (e) Give learners in I-VET access to appropriate up-to-date technical equipment, teaching materials and infrastructures. VET providers should consider sharing costs and equipment amongst themselves and in cooperation with businesses. Work-based learning in enterprises which have the relevant infrastructure should also be promoted.
- (f) Monitor the transition of VET graduates to the labour market or to further education and training, using national monitoring systems.

2. Fostering the excellence, quality and relevance of both I-VET and C-VET

Quality assurance

- (a) High quality of VET provision is a prerequisite for its attractiveness. In order to guarantee improved quality, increased transparency, mutual trust, the mobility of workers and learners, and lifelong learning, participating countries should establish quality assurance frameworks in accordance with the EQAVET Recommendation.
- (b) Participating countries should – by the end of 2015 – establish at national level a common quality assurance framework for VET providers, which also applies to associated

workplace learning and which is compatible with the EQAVET framework.

Quality of teachers, trainers and other VET professionals

- (a) Participating countries should improve initial and continuing training for teachers, trainers, mentors and counsellors by offering flexible training provision and investment. The ageing European teacher and trainer population, changing labour markets and working environments, together with the need to attract those best suited to teaching, make this objective even more critical. Traineeships for teachers and trainers in enterprises should be encouraged.
- (b) Participating countries should work together in identifying best practices and guiding principles with respect to changing competences and the profiles of VET teachers and trainers. This could be done with the support of the European Commission and Cedefop, in collaboration with its network of VET teachers and trainers.

Labour market relevance

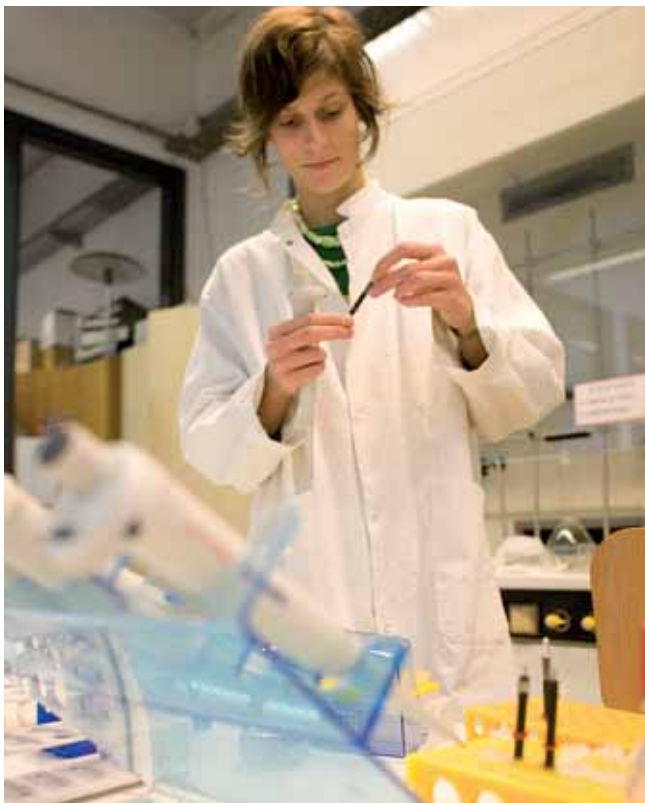
The labour market relevance of VET (both I-VET and C-VET), and the employability of VET graduates, should be enhanced through various measures:

- (a) Authorities in the participating countries – at national, regional, or local level – should create opportunities for enhanced cooperation between schools and enterprises in order to improve



teachers' knowledge of work practices on the one hand and trainers' general pedagogical skills and competences on the other.

- (b) Participating countries should promote partnerships between social partners, enterprises, education and training providers, employment services, public authorities, research organisations and other relevant stakeholders, in order to ensure a better transfer of information on labour market needs and to provide a better match between those needs and the development of knowledge, skills and competences. Employers and social partners



should endeavour to clearly define which competences and qualifications they need in both the short and the long term, and within as well as across sectors. The development of a common language ⁽⁴⁾ aimed at bridging the world of education and training on the one hand, and the world of work on the other hand, should be continued and should be consistent with other EU instruments, such as the EQF.

- (c) VET curricula should be outcome-oriented and more responsive to labour market needs. Cooperation models with companies or professional branch organisations should address this issue and provide VET institutions with feedback on both the employability and employment rates of VET graduates.
- (d) To improve the quality and relevance of VET, participating countries, and particularly VET-providers, should make use of feedback from guidance services on the transition of VET graduates to work or to further learning.
- (e) Work-based learning carried out in partnership with businesses and non-profit organisations should become a feature of all initial VET courses.
- (f) Participating countries should support the development of apprenticeship-type training and raise awareness of this.

4 In 2010 this bridging language is the objective of the project 'Taxonomy of European Skills, Competencies and Occupations (ESCO)'.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES FOR 2011-2014 CONCERNING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 1 AND 2

Actions at national level:

1. *Organise activities aimed at promoting VET attractiveness and excellence, which may include campaigns and skills competitions.*
2. *Support activities, which enable young pupils in compulsory education to become acquainted with vocational trades and career possibilities.*
3. *Take adequate measures to implement the EQAVET Recommendation and make progress towards national quality assurance frameworks for VET.*
4. *As appropriate, ensure that key competences and career management skills are adequately integrated in I-VET curricula and that they can be acquired through training opportunities in C-VET.*
5. *Governments, social partners and VET providers should make the necessary arrangements to:*
 - *maximise work-based learning, including apprenticeships, in order to contribute to increasing the number of apprentices in Europe by 2012;*
 - *create opportunities for enhanced cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises (profit and non-profit), for example through traineeships for teachers in enterprises;*
 - *provide VET institutions with feedback on the employability of VET graduates;*

6. *Pursue work on setting-up monitoring systems on transitions from learning to work.*

Support at EU level:

1. *Policy document on the role of vocational excellence for smart and sustainable growth.*
2. *Consider European support for VET promotion campaigns, including Eurobarometer on VET attractiveness.*
3. *Encourage skills competitions at European and/or global levels.*
4. *Guidance and technical support for EQAVET implementation.*
5. *Review the implementation of EQAVET at national level in 2013.*
6. *Thematic networking of Quality Assurance projects within the Leonardo da Vinci Programme.*
7. *Vademecum/study on successful work-based learning models (with input from Cedefop).*
8. *Strengthen the anticipation of skills and competences development, notably through skills forecasts (Cedefop) and by setting up European Skills Councils.*
9. *Develop a common language aimed at bridging the world of education & training and the world of work (ESCO), consistent with other EU instruments, such as the EQF.*
10. *Consider the adoption of an EU benchmark for employability on the basis of a Commission proposal.*
11. *Work on best practices and guiding principles with respect to the changing profiles of VET teachers and trainers (together with Cedefop).*



MAKING LIFELONG LEARNING AND MOBILITY A REALITY

3. Enabling flexible access to training and qualifications

With regard to Continuing VET (C-VET)

To enhance the contribution of VET towards reaching the benchmark of 15 % of adults participating in education and training by 2020, participating countries should:

- (a) Actively encourage individuals to participate, and VET-providers to increase their involvement in C-VET, with a particular focus on people facing transitions within the labour market (such as workers at risk and the unemployed) and on disadvantaged groups.
- (b) Establish an appropriate framework aimed at encouraging companies to continue to invest in human resources development and in C-VET. The decision on the right mix of incentives, rights and obligations, lies with the participating countries.
- (c) Encourage flexible training arrangements (e-learning, evening courses, training during working hours, etc.) in order to promote access to training in different life situations and to adapt to different needs. Continuing training should embrace all types of learning, also including in-company training and work-based learning, and should be equally accessible to both women and men.
- (d) Encourage training institutions and employers to collaborate, particularly in the training of the high numbers of low-skilled



workers who have at most lower-secondary education and who will benefit from approaches where basic skills are embedded in VET.

- (e) Start to develop, no later than 2015, national procedures for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, supported as appropriate by national qualifications frameworks. These procedures should focus on knowledge, skills and competences, irrespective of the context in which they have been acquired, for example broad adult learning, VET, work-experience and voluntary activities. Greater account should also be taken of knowledge, skills and competences that do not necessarily lead to full formal qualifications. Close cooperation with

other policy areas, such as youth, sport, culture, social affairs, employment, is important in this respect.

- (f) Take specific measures to enhance the participation rate in C-VET of people facing transitions within the labour market and of groups with low participation in training, such as women, the low-skilled and older workers. In particular, participating countries should seek through investment to bring the number of low-skilled people aged 25-64 years who participate in lifelong learning more into line with average participation rates for that age group.

With regard to both I-VET and C-VET

- (a) Facilitate transitions from education and training to work, and between jobs, by providing integrated guidance services (employment services and counselling services), as well as career management skills, for both young people and adults. It is crucial that the service providers involved are able easily and objectively to exchange information and to develop the quality of guidance services.
- (b) Develop or maintain post-secondary or higher VET at EQF level 5 or higher, as appropriate, and contribute to achieving the EU headline target of 40 % with tertiary or equivalent education.
- (c) Promote flexible pathways between VET, general education and higher education, and enhance permeability by strengthening the links between them. To achieve this aim, as well as greater participation in lifelong learning, participating countries should accelerate the establishment and implementation of compre-

hensive national qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes.

- (d) The Commission and the participating countries should work towards increasing coherence between the two European credit systems – ECVET and ECTS.

4. Developing a strategic approach to the internationalisation of I-VET and C-VET and promoting international mobility

- (a) Economic globalisation encourages employers, employees and independent entrepreneurs to extend their scope beyond the borders of their own countries. VET providers should support them in this process by giving an international dimension to the learning content and establishing international networks with partner institutions.
- (b) Participating countries should encourage local and regional authorities and VET providers – through incentives, funding schemes (including use of the European Structural Funds) and the dissemination of best practices – to develop strategies for cross border cooperation in VET, with the aim of fostering greater mobility of learners, teachers and trainers and other VET professionals. Participating countries should promote VET that allows, encourages and – preferably – integrates mobility periods, including work placements, abroad.
- (c) Participating countries should systematically use and promote European transparency tools such as EQF, ECVET and Europass to promote transnational mobility.

- (d) Participating countries should promote opportunities for language learning for both learners and teachers in VET, and the provision of language training adapted to the specific needs of VET, with a special emphasis on the importance of foreign languages for cross-border cooperation in VET and international mobility.



SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES FOR 2011-2014 CONCERNING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 3 AND 4

Actions at national level:

7. *In order to maximise the contribution of VET to the 'ET2020' 15% benchmark on the participation of adults in lifelong learning, review the use of incentives, rights and obligations for all stakeholders involved, and take appropriate action to encourage participation in C-VET.*
8. *Implement the EQF Recommendation:*
 - *development of comprehensive NQFs based on the learning outcomes approach. Use the NQF as a catalyst for creating more permeability between VET and higher education, for developing or maintaining VET at post-secondary or higher EQF levels, and for realising flexible learning pathways;*
 - *referencing NQF levels to EQF levels by 2012.*
9. *Develop and promote the use of procedures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning supported by EQF/NQFs and guidance.*
10. *Provide integrated (education, training, employment) guidance services closely related with labour market needs.*
11. *Progress towards ECVET implementation in line with the Recommendation, and participate in testing ECVET for mobility.*
12. *Take appropriate measures to boost mobility in VET, including:*
 - *encourage a greater number of I-VET students and VET professionals to participate in transnational mobility;*

- encourage local and regional authorities, as well as VET providers, to develop an internationalisation culture and internationalisation strategies, including cross-border mobility;
- address legal and administrative obstacles related to the transnational mobility of apprentices and trainees;
- encourage professional chambers, business organisations and other relevant organisations to support the host and sending enterprises in providing appropriate conditions for apprentices and trainees in transnational mobility;
- ensure the provision of language learning and intercultural competences in VET curricula;
- make optimal use of other EU tools (e.g. EQF, EQAVET, Europass) for enhancing the mutual recognition of qualifications and competences.

Support at EU level:

12. *Policy handbook on access to and participation in C-VET.*
13. *Guidance and technical support for EQF implementation, notably with view to applying a learning outcomes approach.*
14. *Mapping of developments of NQF by CEDEFOP and ETF.*
15. *Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2011).*
16. *Progress report on the development of lifelong guidance policies, systems and practices – 2011 (CEDEFOP, ETF and ELGPN).*
17. *Guidance and technical support for ECVET implementation.*
18. *Periodic review of ECVET implementation (together with CEDEFOP).*

19. *Thematic networking of ECVET projects within the Leonardo da Vinci programme.*
20. *Recommendation on learning mobility (2011).*
21. *Consider the adoption of an EU benchmark for VET mobility on the basis of a Commission proposal (2011).*
22. *Proposal for a quality framework for traineeships.*
23. *Promote mobility for apprentices, including by means of a support portal, within the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme/Leonardo da Vinci Programme.*
24. *Develop a European skills passport as part of Europass by 2012.*



ENHANCING CREATIVITY, INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

5. Fostering innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, as well as the use of ICT (in both I-VET and C-VET)

Creativity and innovation in VET, as well as the use of innovative learning methods, can encourage learners to stay in VET until they are qualified.

- (a) Participating countries should actively encourage VET providers to collaborate with innovative enterprises, design centres, the cultural sector and higher education institutions in forming 'knowledge partnerships'. This should help them gain valuable insight into new developments and competence needs and to

develop professional excellence and innovation. Such partnerships could also be helpful in introducing experience-based learning methods, encouraging experimentation and adapting curricula.

- (b) ICT should be used to maximise access to training and to promote active learning, as well as to develop new methods in both work- and school-based VET.
- (c) Participating countries should support initiatives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship in both I-VET and C-VET in close cooperation with employers, VET providers and national business support services. To achieve this, they should encourage the provision of appropriate funding – e.g. for teaching materials, support tools and the establishment of mini-companies by learners – and should seek to enhance cooperation at regional level.
- (d) Participating countries should support newly established and future entrepreneurs by encouraging start-ups for VET graduates and by promoting learning mobility for young entrepreneurs.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES FOR 2011-2014 **CONCERNING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5**

Actions at national level:

- 13. *Encourage partnerships for creativity and innovation (VET providers, higher education institutions, and design, art, research and innovation centres).*
- 14. *Encourage effective and innovative, quality-assured use of technology by all VET providers (including public-private networking and partnerships) supported by the necessary equipment, infrastructure and networks, with continuing improvements that reflect developments in technology and pedagogical understanding.*
- 15. *Take measures to promote entrepreneurship, e.g. by promoting the acquisition of relevant key competences, enabling practical experiences in enterprises, and involving experts from businesses.*

Support at EU level:

Set up an EU-level VET/Business Forum with a focus on the following themes:

- 25. *role of VET in the knowledge triangle;*
- 26. *transitions from VET to business: how to support VET graduates in starting up enterprises.*



PROMOTING EQUITY, SOCIAL COHESION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

6. Realising inclusive I-VET and C-VET

Participating countries should offer VET which increases people's employability (in both the short and long term), which allows them to develop quality careers, satisfactory work experience, self-confidence, professional pride and integrity and which opens up opportunities for growth in their professional and personal lives. To achieve this objective, participating countries should:

- (a) Guarantee that initial VET provides learners with both specific vocational competences and broader key competences, including transversal competences, that enable them to follow further education and training (within VET or in higher education) and to support career choices, participation in and transitions within the labour market. The knowledge, skills and competences which people acquire in VET should enable them to manage their careers and to play an active role in society.
- (b) Make sure that adult learning systems foster the acquisition and further development of key competences. This can be carried out in cooperation with VET providers, local communities, civil society organisations, etc.
- (c) Maximise the contribution of VET to reducing the percentage of early leavers from education to below 10% through a combination of both preventive and remedial measures. This can be achieved, for example, through labour market relevant VET, increased work-based learning and apprenticeships, flexible

learning pathways, effective guidance and counselling, and by learning content and methods that acknowledge young people's lifestyles and interests, while maintaining high-level quality standards for VET.

- (d) Take appropriate measures to ensure access on an equal basis, especially for individuals and groups at risk of being excluded, in particular the low-skilled and unskilled, people with special needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds, and older workers. The participation of such groups in VET should be facilitated and encouraged through financial or other means and through the



validation of non-formal and informal learning, as well as the provision of flexible pathways.

- (e) Promote active citizenship in VET, for example by encouraging partnerships between VET providers and civil society organisations or, in accordance with national legislation and practice, by promoting learner representation in VET institutions. Promotion of this kind can contribute to the validation of skills and competences acquired through voluntary activities.



SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES FOR 2011-2014 **CONCERNING STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6**

Actions at national level:

16. *Take preventive and remedial measures to maximise the contribution of VET in combating early leaving from education.*
17. *Consider specific measures aimed at raising the participation of low-skilled and other 'at risk' groups in education and training, including by developing flexible pathways in C-VET and using appropriate guidance and support services.*
18. *Use ICT to maximise access to training and to promote active learning, as well as to develop new methods in both work- and school-based VET, in order to facilitate the participation of 'at risk' groups.*
19. *Use existing monitoring systems to support the participation of 'at risk' groups in VET: see short-term deliverable 6.*

Support at EU level:

27. *Vademecum of best practices on inclusion of 'at risk' groups through a combination of work-based learning and key competences.*
28. *Council Recommendation on reducing early school leaving (2011).*



TRANSVERSAL OBJECTIVES

7. Greater involvement of VET stakeholders and greater visibility for the achievements of European cooperation in VET

Greater involvement of VET stakeholders implies greater visibility for the achievements of European cooperation in VET. The European Commission and the participating countries should therefore consider investing in clear and targeted communication to different groups of stakeholders at national and European level. In order to facilitate the use of the available EU instruments, learners and all parties involved should receive extensive and tailored information.

8. Coordinated governance of European and national instruments in the areas of transparency, recognition, quality assurance and mobility

In line with the above mentioned strategic objectives, coherent and complementary use of the various European and national instruments in the areas of transparency, recognition, quality assurance and mobility should be a high priority for the participating countries in the coming years. Coordinated governance of these instruments under the Copenhagen process and stronger synergy with the instruments and principles of the Bologna process are required.

9. Intensifying cooperation between VET policy and other relevant policy areas

Participating countries and the European Commission should intensify cooperation between VET policy and other relevant policy areas, such as employment, economic affairs, research and innovation, social affairs, youth, sport and culture in order to adhere to the Integrated Guidelines of Europe 2020 and to enhance the recognition of competences and qualifications.

10. Improving the quality and comparability of data for EU policymaking in VET

EU level policy-making in VET should be based on existing comparable data. To this end, and using the Lifelong Learning programme, Member States should collect relevant and reliable data on VET – including VET mobility – and make these available for Eurostat. Member States and the Commission should jointly agree on which data should be made available first.

11. Making good use of EU support

The European Structural Funds and the Lifelong Learning Programme should be used to support the agreed priorities for VET, including international mobility and reforms implemented by the participating countries.

SHORT-TERM DELIVERABLES FOR 2011-2014 CONCERNING THE TRANSVERSAL OBJECTIVES 7 TO 11

Actions at national level:

20. *Establish communication strategies for different stakeholder groups, focused on implementation and the added value of tools (ECVET, ECTS, referencing of NQFs to EQF, quality assurance systems in line with EQAVET).*
21. *Set up structured cooperation mechanisms between VET sector and employment services at all levels (policy and implementation), including the social partners.*
22. *Contribute to improving EU level data on I-VET students, including mobility and employability.*

Support at EU level:

29. *Support the achievement of the above objectives through the Lifelong Learning Programme and, where appropriate, the European Structural Funds.*
30. *Support peer-learning between participating countries and innovative projects.*
31. *Setting up an enhanced coordination procedure for the implementation of common European tools in the field of education and training.*
32. *European communication strategy on European transparency tools.*



33. *Develop structured cooperation with VET provider associations at EU level.*
34. *Strengthen structured cooperation between the education and training and the employment policy fields.*
35. *Improve EU level data on I-VET students, including mobility and employability.*
36. *Social partners at all levels should continue to play an active role in the Copenhagen process (governance and ownership) and contribute to the realisation of the above mentioned short-term deliverables.*
37. *Report on VET developments in Member States and partner countries.*
38. *Reinforce exchanges with enlargement and neighbourhood countries.*

IV. PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE GOVERNANCE AND OWNERSHIP OF THE COPENHAGEN PROCESS

- ▶ Member States should make a strong commitment to implementing the priorities of the Copenhagen process within the Europe 2020 national reform programmes.
- ▶ Reporting under the Copenhagen process should be incorporated into that of the 'ET 2020' strategic framework. This would provide the most efficient way of contributing to reporting on the Europe 2020 Strategy, and would increase the visibility of VET in lifelong learning.
- ▶ Cooperation in the area of VET should be intensified. The open method of coordination should continue to serve as the main mechanism for such cooperation. Peer learning and innovative projects should provide means of supporting national policy developments.
- ▶ The Directors-General for Vocational Training (DGVT), the European Social Partners and the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT) should continue to play an active role in the governance of the Copenhagen process.
- ▶ Cedefop and the ETF should continue, according to their specific mandates, to support policy development and implementation, to report on progress towards the strategic objectives and the short-term deliverables, and to provide evidence for policy-making in VET.
- ▶ VET provider organisations should be encouraged to cooperate at European level with a view to promoting the above objectives.
- ▶ Policy dialogues and exchanges of experience with our global partners can contribute to meeting present and future challenges. Exchanges and cooperation with potential candidate countries, with neighbourhood countries assisted by the ETF and with international organisations, particularly the OECD, the Council of Europe, the International Labour Organisation and UNESCO, should be strengthened. The right of participation in these activities should be ensured for all participating countries.
- ▶ A new list of short-term deliverables should be drawn up by 2014 based on the above mentioned strategic objectives.

This text has been agreed by the Ministers responsible for Vocational Education and Training of the EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom), of the EU candidate countries (Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Turkey), and of the EFTA/EEA countries (Liechtenstein, Norway). These countries are called 'participating countries' in the text. It was also agreed by the European Commission and by the following European Social Partners: ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP.



WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

The full text of the Bruges Communiqué is included in this brochure. It is also available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges_en.pdf

Further information is available for:

🕒 Europass

<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>

🕒 The European Qualifications Framework

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm

🕒 The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc50_en.htm

🕒 The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1134_en.htm

🕒 The Lifelong Learning Programme

<http://ec.europa.eu/lfp>

🕒 The Leonardo da Vinci Programme

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc82_en.htm

For information on:

🕒 The Copenhagen Process

http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc1143_en.htm

🕒 The Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)

http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm

The report, *Progress towards the common European objectives in education and training*,

(available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/report10/report_en.pdf)

analyses the performance and progress in education and training systems across Europe up to 2010.

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