

Working group II: Promoting excellence and innovation in VET: towards world class standards

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Presentations: Principles and indicators for quality in VET

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Apprenticeship: learning path in higher education

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Exploration and analysis of creativity and innovation in initial vocational education and training

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Europe needs to develop a culture of excellence in vocational education and training (VET). It needs to raise the quality of VET to compete globally and to be recognised as a world leader setting the standard for the excellence of its VET systems. This has been recognised most recently also in the Bordeaux communiqué. Comprehensive and dynamic quality assurance approaches based on learning outcomes need to be built urgently.

Countries report various initiatives from introducing centres of vocational excellence through developing occupational and educational standards to providing apprenticeship type learning in higher education. All have one common objective, to increase skills match and respond better to the new labour market demands of sectors and occupations.

The need to promote excellence and innovation in VET is even greater given the global economic crisis. Europe must avoid the temptation to reduce investment in skills and innovation in the current economic slowdown. Moreover, the crisis should be seen as an opportunity to reflect on priorities and needs, recognising that education and training are crucial to economic recovery and placing investment in skills at the top of political agendas.

Although the indicators of quality in VET have been introduced in several countries, at present, only few countries implement a coherent set of indicators to improve quality of VET. At European level, 10 quality indicators are discussed to improve the understanding about the quality of VET. Seven quality principles have also been defined to monitor the process of referencing the levels between European qualifications framework and national qualifications frameworks.

Creativity is main source of innovation which is acknowledged as a main driver of growth and wealth creation. Innovation is key to improvements in social justice and is an essential tool for addressing global challenges. The 2009 European year of creativity and innovation will raise awareness of the importance of creativity and innovation as key competencies.

All levels of education contribute to creativity and innovation focusing on different knowledge and competences. Creativity in VET means helping develop human capital with relevant generic and job specific skills. From this point of view, developing innovation and creativity in VET policies and practice is a major challenge for VET in the future.

Some open questions for discussion are:

1. How excellence in VET can be defined? How can we achieve the right balance between equity and excellence in VET?
2. Which are the relevant output indicators of quality of VET? Do they need to be set up centrally? How to balance trust and control, local, regional and central government and European needs and interests? What is the role of social partners in this process?
3. How to establish a closer and more effective link between VET and higher education? What can be expected from introducing apprenticeship type learning in higher education?
4. How can be creativity and innovation be promoted in initial VET? Are there specific conditions and requirements in VET which need to be taken into account?