

Competitiveness and Strong Vocational Qualifications

Are we replicating the past or looking to the future?

2nd Cedefop Brussels Seminar
13 December 2016, 9.30-13.00, Brussels, Belgium

General information

Organiser
In cooperation with

Cedefop
The Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU

Venue

Permanent Representation of Slovakia
107 Avenue de Cortenbergh, 1000 Brussels

Participants' profile

Brussels-based stakeholders from the Permanent Representations of Member States to the EU, European Commission, the European Parliament, European business and sector associations, trade union and employee organisations.

Working language

English

The context of the seminar

The strengthening of vocational education and training forms an important part of the New Skills Agenda for Europe launched by the Commission in 2016. Cedefop's 2nd Brussels seminar, organised in cooperation with the Slovak Presidency of the EU, addresses some of the key challenges involved in this area.

The critical role of vocational education and training

European competitiveness and welfare depends on strong vocational education and training. A steady offer of relevant and high quality vocational qualifications is of key importance for the public and the private sector to be able to deliver the services and products expected from them. Cedefop has predicted (2015) that the need for medium and high level vocational qualifications in Europe will remain strong and stable also into the next decade. But while vocational education and training will continue to play a key-role also in the future, the actual content and profile of these qualifications must be continuously updated. For this to happen, a continuous and high dialogue between education and training institutions and the labour market is required. Lack of dialogue and interaction could mean that we promote VET-qualifications for the past, not addressing the needs of the future.

Comparing vocational qualifications

Cedefop, in cooperation with UNESCO and ETF, is currently comparing 10 'similar' vocational qualifications ⁽¹⁾ in 13 European ⁽²⁾ and 13 non-European ⁽³⁾ countries. A key objective of this study is to better understand how VET qualifications are defined, described and updated and, in particular, how labour market stakeholders are involved in and contribute to this process. The study provides a detailed overview over how learning outcomes ⁽⁴⁾ and competence requirements have been defined in the different countries. The comparison thus offers a unique insight into national ambitions; demonstrating similarities as well as differences in requirements and priorities. In a second stage of the study, which is still ongoing, the 'feed-back-loop' between the worlds of education and

⁽¹⁾ For the most part located at levels equivalent to EQF 3-4, these qualifications are: *Farm Management Professional; Bricklayer; Plumber; Machine Operator (CNC); ICT Service Technician; Logistics Technician; Sales Assistant; Hotel Assistant/Receptionist; Dental Assistant; and Health Care Assistant.*

⁽²⁾ These countries are: Austria, Albania, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, FYROM, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Serbia, Spain and UK-England.

⁽³⁾ These countries are: New Zealand, Korea, the Philippines, South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Samoa, Barbados, Costa Rica and Mauritius

⁽⁴⁾ By learning outcome we understand a 'statement of what a candidate is expected to know, be able to do and understand at the completion of a learning cycle or process'.

training and work is investigated, seeking to identify how this can be improved and strengthened.

National VET qualifications in international context

Requirements to VET qualifications change continuously and rapidly. While countries need to set VET standards which reflect their national needs, international and global skills and qualifications requirements make it increasingly important to discuss and compare future strategies and priorities in this area. The Cedefop comparative study provides an interesting point of departure for this discussion and points to the following key-issues:

- VET qualifications share a number of features across national borders; they are not developed in a national vacuum.
- VET qualifications differ in important ways; for example as regards the emphasis on 'hard' versus 'soft skills' and on the way job-specific skills are balanced with transversal skills.
- The dialogue (the 'feed-back-loop') between education and training and the labour market is organised differently between countries and this influences the ability to improve the relevance and quality of qualifications.

The aim of the seminar

The aim of the seminar is to increase awareness of the overall importance of VET qualifications in Europe and to launch a debate on the way we set priorities in this area; how can education and training work better together and to what extent is it necessary to strengthen cooperation between countries, at European and international level? Cedefop and the Slovak Presidency hope that the seminar provides an opportunity to take forward this important discussion.

9:00-9:30 **Arrival and registration of participants**

9:30-9:50 **Welcome and setting the scene**

- Ivan Hromada, Head of Unit, Slovak Presidency
- Jens Bjornavold, Senior Expert, Cedefop

National vocational qualifications - differing expectations and ambitions?

9:50-10:20 • Simon Broek, Senior consultant and managing partner, Ockham Consultance IPS

10:20-10:40 • Borhene Chakroune, Chief of Section, UNESCO

10:40-11:00 • James Calleja, Director, Cedefop

11:00-11:30 **Tea/coffee break**

National qualifications in a global context – which are the challenges?

11:30-11:50 • Jenny Shackleton, World Skills

11:50-12:10 • Peter Szovics, Director at Institute of Banking Education, NBS, Slovakia

12:10-12:30 • Detlef Eckert, Director, European Commission

Questions and debate

12:30-13:00 • Q&A session moderated by Jens Bjornavold

13:00-13:30 **Lunch**