

**12TH TTNET ANNUAL CONFERENCE****"BETTER TEACHING FOR BETTER LEARNING. SUPPORTING TEACHERS MEETING
CHALLENGES OF TODAY AND TOMORROW"**

Thessaloniki, 11 and 12 February 2010

BACKGROUND NOTE**POLICY CONTEXT**

In recent years and especially at the Swedish presidency of the EU many important aspects of teachers' and trainers' professional development have been highlighted. The informal meeting of the Ministers for Education on 24/09/2009 in Göteborg stated that the motivation, skills and competences of teachers as well as the quality of school leadership are key factors in achieving high quality learning outcomes.

The Council conclusions on the professional development of teachers and school leaders on 26/11/2009 stressed the need for high quality induction, initial and continuing professional development and international exchange of teachers, trainers and leaders in education and training. The Conclusions confirm a growing understanding that good teaching and training is both an objective and a means to make vocational education and training more attractive, effective and equitable.

How to provide teachers, trainers and VET leaders in education and training with the competences needed to better support learning for better jobs and successful social inclusion? How to support them to better meet these challenges? Which are the specific areas for their professional development that require special efforts?

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

Based on latest research and on good practice examples, the Conference will explore how the Ttnet could better contribute to the strategic objective of enhancing training and professional development opportunities for teachers, trainers and VET leaders. Particular attention will be paid to the three thematic priorities of the Ttnet for 2010, mainly:

- the role and impact of mentoring in enhancing quality in the teaching/training profession;
- making further steps in the professional development of in-company trainers;
- as well as policies and practices to equip leaders for their role to create a stimulating teaching and learning environment.

Future activity lines for TTnet in the field of ‘inclusive teaching’, ‘teaching and learning outcomes’ and ‘internationalisation and mobility’ will also be explored.

Participants will formulate key messages and possible lines for action from the perspective of both policy makers and practitioners at national and European level.

The conference will bring together TTnet coordinators and members, representatives of European and international institutions, training practitioners as well as researchers.

OUTLINE OF WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP 1 - MENTORING

In November 2009 the Council agreed amongst the other things, that “... teachers need access to effective personal and professional support throughout their careers ...” and invited member states - to develop appropriate provision offering professional and personal support. Different kinds of support could be provided at different stages of teachers’ and trainers’ professional development and mentoring is an important one. The work of the thematic group on Mentoring within TTnet is in line with the Council’s call on further efforts in the field. The thematic group has already elaborated a preliminary overview of mentoring in the EU. Last year the group met several times and started preparing a Handbook on mentoring across the EU in both initial VET teacher training and in-company training.

Objectives:

- To explore developments, good practice examples and research activities both on national and European level;
- To further contribute to the outputs of the thematic working group on developing a Handbook on mentoring, summarising the experience gathered and steps made over the last months in developing the structure of the paper
- To define further steps and set deadlines for finalizing the work on Mentoring handbook

Outcomes

A number of case studies which are designed to facilitate discussion around mentoring practice are going to be presented. The aim is to elicit more information about best/useful practice to guide both practitioners and policy makers. This information will be used to further inform the Mentor Handbook.

The outcomes of the workshop on mentoring will be integrated in the final development stage of the Handbook on Mentoring, which is aimed to support policy makers and practitioners develop quality mentoring schemes and training initiatives for mentors.

An accomplished paper on mentoring is expected to be published in e-/paper format later this year, giving in this way the VET-perspective from a practitioners’ point of view of the issues of mentoring and induction.

Main conclusions and messages of the session will be presented at the plenary.

WORKSHOP 2 - LEADERSHIP

Through reforms of educational and vocational systems not only the job of teachers and trainers but also the one of school leaders and managers of training institutions changes radically. They are expected to work beyond the school borders and tasks and to meet the changing expectations of the labour market and the society as a whole. Several studies further indicate that the leaders' role is decisive for the development and innovation of the institutions as well as for the professional development and well-being of teaching and training staff.

Objectives:

- the challenges of the school context, general perception and “ideology” of leadership;
- the changing roles, competences and responsibilities of leaders in education and training with emphasis on VET;
- the role of European and national policies and stakeholders in supporting leadership for better teaching and learning.

What are the greatest demands on leadership? What kind of new leadership is required? How to develop the right skills for effective leadership? What leadership roles contribute most to improving student learning? How best to allocate and distribute leadership tasks? How to make the profession attractive to high-quality candidates? What are the specifics for VET leaders?

Outcomes:

Considering the above mentioned topics, key-note speakers and participants will reflect on the findings of recent Cedefop studies, and discuss case studies and examples of innovative approaches in sharing leadership and in leadership development programmes.

The workshop has been conceived as a preparatory activity which could lead to a working group on leadership issues within the TTnet. Cooperation will take shape at a thematic workshop later on in year 2010 and is expecting to produce a discussion paper outlining the situation regarding pre-service, in-service training and professional status of leaders, illustrated by examples of policy measures and/or their practical implementation.

The outcomes of the thematic group work on leadership are expected to support other EU activities in this field – establishing a policy network on school leadership, organisation of peer learning activities and study visits etc.

WORKSHOP3 - IN-COMPANY TRAINERS

Technological innovation, new trends in HR policies, quality in education and training, and economic turndowns affect the organisational and HR policy in companies. Somewhere in between this huge pressure, in-company trainers are assigned with the task for “optimising the staff performance”. In-company trainers should be considered key actors in lifelong learning, even though hard to reach or their work not particularly highlighted in policy and research.

Based on previous studies and good practice examples, the workshop will discuss the thematic focus of future TTnet activities on in-company trainers.

Presentations, good practice examples and discussions will help raise the following issues:

Do countries and stakeholders map roles and competences of in-service trainers? Who is accountable for the in-company trainers’ professional development? How to qualify and “accredit” in-service trainers and why – for raising the status? Do we have a “stamp” or “guarantee” of the standards to be achieved, a “quality benchmark”? What are the links between in-company trainers and the overall management and objectives of the company from the one side and the staff – from the other? What are the links to the formal educational system?

The good practice examples presented at the workshop will highlight areas for TTnet’s further work, and help define the focus for a thematic workshop to be organized in 2010.

The scarcity of quantitative and qualitative data on in-company trainers should be overcome through in-depth research and comparison. Cedefop has finalised an analysis of good practice examples on the training and professional development of in-company trainers at national level, with the contribution of TTnet members and another - on the topic of accreditation is foreseen.

Through peer learning activities, comparative analyses and small-scale projects, following suggestions from TTnet members, possible areas for development within the network include:

- Supporting networks of in-company trainers on national and international base, especially through providing online information on teachers and trainers professional development;
- promoting the validation of non-formal and informal learning for trainers;
- developing a matrix/ frame/tools for registering/certification/ accreditation of training practitioners;
- developing tools for identifying professional development needs and career planning;
- identifying trainers core competences with the opportunity to add sector specific ones;

- considering HRM policies and practices – e.g. career paths for trainers, appraisal and self-assessment;
- quality assurance mechanisms in in-company training etc.

PANEL DISCUSSION - CHALLENGING TEACHING – INCLUSION, LEARNING OUTCOMES, MOBILITY

The way forward

Challenges for teachers and trainers coming from the surrounding environment and global developments require skill upgrading in many different fields. The European Commission and the member states have underlined several important areas in Lifelong Learning linked to VET teachers, trainers and leaders for cooperation, developing indicators, research and comparative studies. In line with this, following a consultation within the TTnet on priority themes for the future, network members expressed an interest on the topics of *social inclusion; working with competence based curricula, learning outcomes and key competences; internationalisation and mobility*, starting in the year 2010 and continuing in 2011.

What do social inclusion, learning outcomes and internationalisation mean in terms of teachers training? How to consider these challenges in the teachers' and trainers professional development and practice? What impact do these topics have on teaching? Is this a call for a “new” pedagogy? What is the role of teachers and trainers in their implementation?

How to structure the work of TTnet in the future to support policy makers and professionals in the respective fields? What kind of Network outputs are we expecting to develop?