

Synthesis of the joint conference of the European Training Foundation, Cedefop and the Danish Ministry of Education

"Teachers and Trainers in Vocational Education and Training in the Future Member States"

Aalborg, 21 and 22 November 2002

Conference Objectives

This Conference was jointly organised by ETF, Cedefop and the Danish Ministry of Education in the framework of the Danish Presidency of the EU.

The objectives of the Conference were the following:

1. To identify and discuss the main challenges, priority themes and key questions of the training of VET teachers and trainers in the EU and the Future Member States (FMS);
2. To present Cedefop's TTnet network to the FMS in order to explore ways to associate them in TTnet activities as from the year 2003.
3. To show an approach to vocational teacher and training in Denmark.

Objective 1

The Conference showed that the challenges for vocational teachers and trainers in the FMS are fully in line with the main issues raised in the Future Objectives report. In this connection, the following issues emerged:

- How to retain experienced teachers and attract young people to the vocational teacher profession faced by low prestige, low salary levels, limited relation between improved competencies and promotion, low intake into vocational education? In Slovakia the average salary of a teacher is only 79% of the average salary in the economy in general. In Estonia 20% of the teachers have reached retirement age. Difficult to attract IT teachers.
- How to ensure that vocational teachers become the drivers of VET reforms and are able to implement new teaching learning processes. How to ensure that teachers are able to put the learner in the centre of the learning process? How to ensure that teachers are able to develop new core skills in students rather than mere encyclopaedic knowledge? In most countries the continuing teacher training system has not been able to ensure that teachers are equipped with new competencies.
- How to ensure that teachers have real industry experience? How to attract people in industry to the teaching profession? Can improved links between vocational schools and industry help in this regard? The new concept in Lithuania suggests obligatory work experience in industry before becoming a teacher. Estonia has introduced obligatory traineeships in industry (two months every three years) as part of continuing training.
- Initial teacher training is often provided by universities specialising in teaching general education but not vocational education. Universities maintain limited contacts to both industry and schools. Initial teacher training is criticised for being too theoretical. How to

ensure better links between theory at university and teaching practice. A number of countries uses experienced teachers to mentor new teachers.

- Lack of relevance and under-funding are key concerns in continuing teacher training. Often continuing training has little relevance to the concrete teaching situation. How can an environment be created where schools play a key role in continuing training and clearly defines demand as well as putting emphasis on school based staff development. Cyprus has introduced school based 'change agent teams' where teachers are assisted by peers. Lithuania has created a team of 'expert practitioners' to train colleagues in schools in new teaching learning methodologies, preparation of teaching learning material etc.

The Conference provided an opportunity to exchange experience and discuss around four major themes, which have been identified as **transversal priority themes for the TTnet** network, also in line with the VET Community policy in this field.

The priority themes are the following:

- Skills and Qualifications of Teachers and Trainers
- Quality of Training Systems
- ICTs and the role of Teachers and Trainers
- Teacher Career Opportunities

Common priorities and challenges identified in the four priority themes:

The majority of the FMS identified VET teachers as their main target group (compared to trainers of vocational training) and expressed a strong interest in the following issues:

- Professionalisation of VET teachers:
 - Validation of non-formal learning
 - Qualification and training standards, as a tool to shift from a teacher-oriented to a learner-oriented model.
- Attractiveness of the teachers profession and mobility
- Quality of training for VET teachers
- Integration of ICT schemes in the learning process.

Objective 2

The discussions focused on how to associate the FMS to TTnet activities as from the year 2003.

Several approaches and degrees of association were envisaged, namely:

- establishment of national networks in the FMS (i.e. the TTnet approach);
- association and active participation of the FMS in TTnet thematic working groups;
- ad hoc participation in specific activities, i.e. workshops, publications;
- exchange of information between FMS and TTnet Member States.

"Accompanying" formula between FMS and TTnet networks could also be envisaged.

Objective 3

The visit to Aalborg Technical College gave an introduction to the Danish vocational education and training system. The presentations gave an introduction to the role of both the central institute for vocational teacher training and of the school itself. In Denmark initial vocational teacher training takes place after the teacher has taken up employment and is to a large extent school based through mentoring. The visit to the College therefore gave the participants an introduction to a system quite different from their own which by and large is university based.

Conclusions and the way forward

1. The FMS expressed a strong interest in being associated with TTnet activities and especially in sharing practices in the field of teachers and trainers.
2. As of 2003, FMS will be progressively associated with TTnet activities. This process will be gradual and on a case-by-case basis, the type of association depending upon the needs, priorities and proposals of each of the FMS.
3. To assist the FMS in this process, the TTnet network will draft a *Vademecum* for the FMS on how to establish a national network, outlining the prerequisite conditions, the rationale of how a network operates, the political and financial implications, the actors to be involved, the added value it brings to its partners, the role of the network leader, the role of Cedefop.
4. The FMS will then be asked to forward their proposals on the following points:
 - the political priorities for the training of teachers and trainers in their countries, especially in the framework of the reform of their VET systems;
 - the target groups they want to concentrate upon (e.g. teachers, trainers, initial training, continuing training);
 - their expectations vis-à-vis the TTnet network;
 - their contribution to the common activities (i.e. good practices in their countries);
 - which type of association they envisage (national networks or others, see session II above).