

EU, be proud of your trainers:
supporting those who train for improving skills,
employment and competitiveness

Guiding principles on professional
development of trainers in VET



HOW TO SUPPORT TRAINERS IN ENTERPRISES IN ACQUIRING AND UPDATING THEIR COMPETENCES

1. Trainers are lifelong learners: recognise their identity and work; support their lifelong learning

Most work-based learning (WBL) is done by skilled workers who train in addition to their main work, which should be recognised. Policy action and initiatives of various players (sectoral organisations, employers' and trainers' associations) should aim at developing and encouraging their lifelong learning attitudes. Reflective practice should be encouraged. EU and national authorities should consider awareness-raising campaigns and awards to acknowledge successful training companies and their trainers.

2. Companies' support is crucial for trainers' competence development: raise awareness of benefits and get companies on board in supporting training and trainers.

Companies' involvement and participation are crucial for successful initiatives aimed at increasing apprenticeship opportunities and improving work-based learning. Policies should support companies who wish to train apprentices or develop their employees' skills.

2.1 Small and medium-sized enterprises are important players: provide targeted support.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are important players and need targeted support. SMEs depend more on external support mechanisms and SME-friendly environments. Support measures should help SMEs to overcome external and internal barriers and compensate for their limited capacity to identify and respond to their learning needs, where competence development of those who train others in the workplace can be part.



3. Trainers' competence development benefits from a systematic approach: define what trainers need, provide training and learning opportunities, recognise competences.

Countries aiming at better professionalisation of in-company trainers' and wider recognition of their work should consider a systematic approach, comprising:

- availability of qualification or competence standards;
- flexible and relevant training provision;
- opportunities to get competences validated and recognised.

3.1 Qualification or competence standards are sound reference points for trainers' professional development.

Qualification or competence standards for trainers in companies serve as sound reference points for training programmes and validation of prior learning. Regulations should set only minimum requirements to guarantee quality of training; all other options could be available as add-ons. Trainer qualifications should be linked to national qualifications frameworks (NQFs).

3.2 Trainers should benefit from varied and flexible training provision.

Trainers should have access to various flexible training programmes that provide opportunities to develop their competences, update existing ones to the required level or close competence gaps. This is especially needed if requirements are set at regulatory level. In this case, training programmes should be provided by the State or the relevant social partner. Competence development should cover all areas of competence. Respective programmes should be closer linked to trainers' actual working contexts and tasks in companies.

3.3 Validation of trainers' competences should be an integral part of any support system.

Validation of competences acquired through professional practice should be an integral part of any support system for competence development of trainers in companies. Policy action should support creating and expanding opportunities for validation and certification of trainers' prior learning and competences acquired at work as valid alternatives to formal training.



4. Supporting trainers in companies is a shared responsibility: ensure effective cooperation and coordination.

Effective cooperation and shared responsibility among all stakeholders is the main success factor to effective support for professional development of trainers in companies. The EU, national authorities, sectoral organisations, social partners, VET institutions/providers, companies and trainers themselves have a role to play. Responsibilities and actions should be clearly distributed among all. The education and training sector at national and regional levels should open up; training should be made available to companies. A coordinating body with a leadership role is crucial.

5. Competent trainers in companies matter: make them part of a broader agenda and use all available funds and programmes.

Support for in-company trainers should be part of a broader agenda and national priorities for employment and economic growth, more specifically, of lifelong learning, VET and skills development strategies, policies and reform processes. Sustainable use of available EU funds (such as the European Social Fund (ESF), Erasmus+, etc.) should be targeted at competence development of in-company trainers. The EU can provide special provisions/allocations within such programmes for training staff in companies in most critical skills and areas, for example, for apprentice tutors in SMEs.

WHY TRAINERS ARE IMPORTANT

In initial vocational education and training (IVET), trainers (tutors, instructors, mentors and teachers) contribute to raising young people's employability. They reinforce the link between education and actual working life; the stronger the link, the easier is job-seeking and job offering. In continuing VET (CVET), in-company trainers (full-time trainers, skilled workers and owners of enterprises) contribute to raising productivity and competitiveness of companies. They help newcomers integrate into the work environment and cater for updating and upgrading their co-workers' skills.



WHO CAN DO WHAT

EU and national policy-making and framework for implementation:

- take forward the guiding principles for future cooperation in VET (Bruges short-term deliverables, thematic groups, ET 2020 priorities and EU initiatives);
- support embedding trainers' competence development in national legislation and financial incentives/strategies/social partners and sectoral agreements;
- ensure competence development (and if needed further profiling) of skilled workers with training functions in national systems when introducing/improving WBL;
- set a framework for minimum standards/qualifications for VET trainers;
- establish incentives to involve and support companies in trainers' competence development;
- 'open up' formal education for training trainers and validation of their non-formal and informal learning;
- create one-stop-shop information services and nominate coordination bodies.

Provision (VET providers and companies):

- follow all steps of competence development: define training needs based on trainer profiles/standards/qualifications; ensure varied and flexible training provision; validate learning outcomes;
- build partnerships and share responsibilities for competence development curricula and training programmes for trainers;
- use commonly agreed and piloted tools: guidelines, methodological handbooks;
- introduce/improve quality assurance and validation of trainers' skills in cooperation with authorities and social partners;
- compensate for SMEs' limited capacity through networking, partnerships, training centres and alliances;
- introduce 'learning enabling functions' in companies: innovation officers, counsellors, education advisors.

Awareness raising, research and communication:

- use EU events (summits, Euroskills, European business forum, etc.) and national campaigns to nominate and award EU training companies and best VET trainers;
- make research outcomes and examples of good practice known to companies;
- provide common virtual knowledge and resource centre space (for example, EPAL platform);
- raise awareness of available opportunities for training, mobility and validation of competences;
- communicate and consult on latest developments in European principles, tools and initiatives at EU and national levels.

The guiding principles are a contribution of the European Commission, Cedefop and the thematic working group on professional development of trainers in VET to the objective set in the Bruges communiqué of collecting good practice and developing guiding principles on changing roles, competences and professional development of VET teachers and trainers (Council of the European Union; European Commission, 2010).

The guiding principles give policy pointers on how to support VET trainers in companies in developing their competences. They are addressed to education and training policy- and decision-makers, illustrated by concrete examples of practice from Member States. These can be further translated into actions for all stakeholders, depending on national situations and contexts.

The full text (with examples) is available at:
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/TWG_Guiding_principles_on_professional_development_of_trainers_in_VET_FINAL.pdf

More results from the thematic working group can be found at:
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/about-edefop/projects/vet-teachers-and-trainers/index.aspx>



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