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12TH TTNET ANNUAL CONFERENCE

BETTER TEACHING FOR BETTER LEARNING. SUPPORTING TEACHERS AND TRAINERS MEETING CHALLENGES OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

Thessaloniki, 11 and 12 February 2010

Conference Conclusions

The 12th TTnet Annual Conference (Thessaloniki, 11-12 February 2010) focused on supporting professional development of teachers and trainers in Vocational Education and Training (VET). The conference brought together representatives from TTnet networks, some of them newly appointed, EU agencies (European Training Foundation - ETF), enterprises as well as researchers and practitioners.

Conference participants reflected on TTnet thematic priorities and activities in order to better contribute to the strategic objective of enhancing training and professional development opportunities for VET teachers, trainers and leaders. How to provide teachers, trainers and leaders in VET with the competences they need to support learning for better jobs and successful social inclusion? How to support them to better meet the challenges of today and tomorrow?

The Conference objective was to address common challenges, share innovative experiences in the field of mentoring, leadership and in-company training and identify topics of common interest and areas of work for 2011.

TTNET ACHIEVEMENTS

In the last years TTnet has:

- provided a common platform for discussion and monitoring of trends and developments of the VET profession;
- contributed to reflexion and research on key priority issues (for example: Identification and validation of informal and non-formal learning for VET teachers and trainers in the TTnet Member States; Learning needs of VET teachers and trainers; Competence framework for VET professionals etc.)
- disseminated innovation and best practice (for example in the field of in-company training and professionalisation);

- contributed to the implementation of the European priorities set for VET teachers and trainers;

Forms of cooperation have been:

- cross-country thematic projects;
- studies and publications;
- peer learning activities;
- workshops and conferences.

Common priority issues which currently make the subject of the network's work have been agreed with the national networks. They are:

- Changing roles and competences of VET teachers and trainers;
- Professional development of in-company trainers;
- Updating vocational knowledge and skills;
- Mentoring in VET – developing a handbook for practitioners ;
- Leadership in VET – challenges and changing competences.

Additionally, many activities have been undertaken by the National Networks, including:

- Development of a new ISO standard for Learning Service Providers - Ireland;
- Development and/or joining other Networks (Networks of Trainers in Europe, Leonardo da Vinci Programme);
- Work on Trainer Competency Standards (Germany - two Integrated National Standards Qualifications for Trainers; Ireland – Launch of Trainer Competency Standards);
- A range of training support services and materials (Germany, Tools for Didactic Transformation; Ireland – Network Facilitators Training Workshops etc.)

TTnet network members have actively contributed to different studies/working and research papers, becoming co-authors and editors, providing good practice examples, validating results:

- Competence Framework for VET Professions (a Cedefop study, reflecting the views of TTnet, co-published with the Finish National Board of Education);
- Changing roles and competences of VET teachers and trainers;
- Handbook for Mentors – a study of TTnet under the leadership of TTnet UK;
- Good practice on Professional Development Opportunities for In-company Trainers (available at: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/15673.aspx>).

A GOOD PRACTICE WITHIN TTNET: THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

As a follow-up to the conclusions of last year's TTnet Annual Conference, thematic working groups have been established. They deal with strategic themes at both national and EU level and involve those TTnet representatives that have a strong interest and expertise in a given theme. The working groups lead to concrete outputs to be

disseminated widely (synthesis of trends and developments; recommendations, compendia of good examples of practice, working/discussion papers...).

At the 12th TTnet Annual Conference, the group work has been organised around three topics: mentoring, leadership and in-company trainers.

The thematic group on **Mentoring** has reached a quite advanced stage of work. It has elaborated a preliminary overview of mentoring in the EU countries. Work on elaborating a set of key messages to policy makers on promoting and quality assuring mentoring systems in VET has also been done. A draft outline for a Handbook on Mentoring in VET across EU in both initial VET teacher training and in-company training has been developed. Final results are expected by the end of 2010. The work on this group is in line with the EU call on further efforts in the field ⁽¹⁾.

The thematic group on **Leadership** was devoted to analysing the challenges and changing roles of leaders in education and training with emphasis on VET⁽²⁾. The session was meant to become a brainstorming for setting up the objectives of a potential thematic working group: mapping out the situation across the countries and identifying thematic areas for the work of thematic group.

The working group on **In-company trainers** discussed TTnet's main achievements in this field – professional development, accreditation of trainers, identification of core competences and creating a competence framework etc. A compilation of good practices in the field (see above) was distributed. Suggestions have been made for the group to further work in the field of comparison of trainers qualifications across Europe; formulating guidelines for a European reference certification/accreditation system; discussing the idea of a Euro Trainer Pass.

THE WAY FORWARD

Professional development of teaching professionals in VET has been put high on the EU policy agenda together with their recruitment and status in the society ⁽³⁾. Challenges like new pedagogies, competence based curricula, quality assurance, working in a multicultural and changing environment etc. attract the attention of policy makers and practitioners. Cooperation both at European and national level has been addressing all these issues over the last years.

⁽¹⁾ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Improving the Quality of Teacher Education, Brussels, 3.8.2007 (http://ec.europa.eu/education/com392_en.pdf)

⁽²⁾ Leaders are understood here as the persons in charge of VET institutions and organisations, such as vocational upper and post-secondary institutions and further education colleges or training centres providing continuing vocational education and training.

⁽³⁾ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A new impetus for European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support Europe 2020 strategy. Brussels, 9.6.2010, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/vocational-education/doc/com296_en.pdf

TTnet, supported by Cedefop, is one of the main cooperation platforms, both nations- and Europe wide, contributing to the common efforts for evolving roles and up-grading competences of VET teachers and trainers.

During the conference the way forward in this direction has been discussed and suggestions have been collected for organising the work in a way to may use the theoretical knowledge and the practical experience of the Network to support evidence-based decision making.

It has been confirmed that TTnet needs to work and contribute within small-scale projects leading to comparative analyses and practical tools to support policy makers and practitioners in implementing EU priorities in VET. Two to three 1-2 years long projects would foster the network's reflections and empower TTnet to elaborate and disseminate concrete outputs. Here a common work with EU on a higher EU level could be one of the options.

TTnet is also expected to share expertise and to provide external contractors, conducting analysis in the field of training teachers and trainers, with evidence based material. The Network could also play a validation role for finalized studies.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

By the end of the conference a common orientation for TTnet's future work has been agreed towards:

- a more strategic and output oriented work;
- a closer link to the EU level, and
- work within smaller 'experts'/'thematic' groups, following the project management cycle.

For the year 2010 the following three main themes have been confirmed: (i) the professional development of in-company trainers and accreditation processes; (ii) mentoring and (iii) VET leadership.

Further topics that are on the top of the EU teachers and trainers agenda in 2010-2011 like 'mobility' becoming part of professional development of teachers and trainers, 'inclusive teaching' and 'involving VET professionals in implementing EU principles and tools' have been presented and discussed as potential working themes for the next year.

By involving TTnet in contributing to these issues, not only the expertise of EU expert's and policy level, but also the experience of researchers and practitioners would come into consideration.

Increased cooperation with the EU Commission will also be explored so as to further enrich TTnet's contribution to the implementation of the policy priorities set at EU level for VET teachers and trainers.
