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Meeting report

Subject: Second meeting of the Thematic Working Group on professional development of VET trainers, Brussels, 7 February 2013

1. OBJECTIVES AND PARTICIPANTS

The objectives of the second meeting of the Thematic working Group (TWG) on professional development of VET trainers were to share information on the latest developments in education and training in EU and reflect on their effect on the work process and outcomes of the TWG, to review the results of the PLA organised in the Netherlands in September 2012, as well as to discuss the preparation of the next Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) and final deliverable. 21 participants from Member States and 4 international organisations/ EU bodies took part.

2. OPENING SESSION: LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN EU

Alison Crabb (DG EAC) welcomed the participants in the meeting and reflected shortly on the objectives and work done so far: the first meeting of the group (February 2012) and the PLA (September 2012).

Dana-Carmen Bachmann (DG EAC) presented the political framework of the EU Communication *[Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes](#)*, with a special focus on the accompanying document, *[Vocational education and training for better skills, growth and jobs](#)*. She underlined that the role of VET professionals with teaching/training functions has received a lot of political attention and now the time has come to intensify joint efforts at EU and Member States level to address their competence profiles and professional development in the wider framework of excellence in vocational education and training (VET). She informed about discussions underway by Member States and the Commission on making best use of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), enhancing the role of the TWGs in addressing Education and training 2020 (ET2020) policy objectives.

The following points were raised in the discussion:

- Trainers at the workplace will play one of the key roles in addressing the objectives prioritised by the Communication, such as more focus on work-based learning, increasing adult participation in lifelong learning, developing basic and transversal skills of adults, increasing the relevance of educational input to labour market needs, among others. However, VET trainers are not explicitly mentioned in the Communication. The group should work to make a strong case for their specific role and competences and illustrate the support needed to ensure the quality of work-based learning.
- In their efforts to implement country specific recommendations, Member States can benefit from peer learning which illustrates successful practices in some countries which can be adapted by others (the current promotion of apprenticeships and notably "dual systems" is one of the examples).
- There is a need for a regular flow of statistical information to monitor the dynamic environment of today's education and training and the labour market.
- The outcomes of the TWGs should be better disseminated to wider audiences. Not only should the members of the group bring back the results to their own countries, but also there should be a visible place on the Commission's website for them and other communications channels should be exploited to bring the outcomes to the attention of policy and decision makers (for example, regular communication from the TWGs to the Education Committee and to Directors General for VET).

3. INFORMATION FROM COUNTRIES

The members of the TWG shared what is new in their countries with regard to the position, competences and professional development of VET trainers. In several countries, a stronger focus on VET has been reported, especially towards supporting its dual forms: a new trend to dual VET in Spain; apprenticeship regulation in Poland; dual VET tradition continues in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands; stronger focus on VET and especially on work-based learning in Sweden with potential incentives to support the employers.

In some countries, the whole thematic area of the role and competences of VET trainers is being placed in the wider context of qualifications and competences of learners and of quality assurance processes and professional development in the working environment (Malta, Belgium). The international organisations present (ETUCE, ETUC, EUproVET) underlined the serious work done in their working groups on VET and more specifically on the training specialists, as well as on the dissemination potential of their communication channels.

In Belgium, Estonia, Finland and Germany, new programmes, courses, labels, skills charts, and certification models have been developed or are to be developed by national (VET) authorities, providers and institutes in order to support competence development of specialists providing training in the companies. Finland has developed several guides that are of high relevance to the TWG: for training of trainers; for teachers at the workplace; for workplace learning.

In Austria, the companies and the Chambers play a very active role, being in charge of apprenticeship and introducing in such a way also the company's perspective in training the specialists in addition to the educational one. A particular focus is the training of

trainers financially ensured through special subsidies. In the Czech Republic, new profiles of specialists in guidance and assessment of competences for pilot checking of the National Qualification Framework standards are being supported within a project co-funded by the ESF.

4. UPDATE ON ON-GOING WORK IN DG EAC ON TEACHING PROFESSIONS

During this session, the experience of two other TWGs working in the field of competence development of teaching staff: TWG "Teachers' Professional Development" (Paul Holdsworth) and TWG on "Quality in Adult Learning" (Carlo Scatoli, Maïke Koops) was presented to better link the work of all groups related to teaching and training professions.

The TWG on professional development of teachers developed 10 key actions for teachers' professional development, which also laid the basis for the [Accompanying document](#) to the [Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes on supporting the teaching professions for better learning outcomes](#). Some actions include defining competences required for teachers and teacher educators.

The TWG on Quality in Adult Learning has a sub-group working on the competences of staff in adult learning. One of the outputs is a checklist for ensuring quality of the adult learning staff meant for the Member States to assess their existing policies and structures.

Maria Todorova related the broader policy framework to the agreed mandate and objectives of the TWG on professional development of VET trainers. It was confirmed that while the mandate of the group remains unchanged, the Commission will ensure more coordination and coherence to the work of TWGs addressing related issues in order to maximise their impact and outcomes. As the TWGs work both to inform policy process at EU level and to support MS in addressing their needs and priorities, the country-specific recommendations are very relevant in guiding the TWGs work and should be taken into consideration when discussing the issues and developing outputs.

5. OUTCOMES OF THE PLA 'PORTRAIT OF IN-COMPANY TRAINERS', 19-20 SEPTEMBER 2012, ALKMAAR, THE NETHERLANDS, AND PREPARATION FOR THE FORTHCOMING PLAS IN 2013

a. PLA 1

Irina Jemeljanova (Cedefop) presented the main outcomes of the PLA and a draft report. The PLA aimed at taking stock of the situation with in-company trainers and requirements for their competences. The PLA report has been structured in a synthetic way to draw some conclusions and recommendations to be used by the group and to be of interest to wider audiences. The PLA has already touched on some topics that would be relevant for the second and the third PLAs.

During the exchange of views on the profile of the VET trainers, several ideas were shared:

- Policy mechanisms are needed to support continuing professional development of trainers with all interested parties contributing. A common approach (for example, at the national level, like in France) to formally acknowledging trainers' competences could be considered as an example of good practice.

- Although competences are changing in line with the dynamic business environment and technological changes, there are core competences that have been valid for many years and would belong to the general requirements for a trainer's profile.
- Some competences are a must (among them – the ones related to the core business of the company) and if agreed, a more advanced level of these could be required, as well as pedagogical competences.
- When discussing the competence set, it can be more practical to refer to the functions of the persons delivering training, not to their titles, as the titles of the training persons could differ. This may facilitate the comparison among countries.
- The status of trainers (job title, formal qualifications, etc) can be studied together with all relevant elements of their working conditions.
- In the Netherlands, as a result of budget cuts for the Centres of expertise that are currently responsible for accrediting learning companies, schools might get more direct involvement in training workplace trainers.

The following were underlined as success factors of the first PLA: excellent hosting; background materials and organisation of the PLA; practical and targeted way of approaching the topics; a social event which facilitated networking.

After the report has been finalised with the participants' feedback, all materials will be available at [Cedefop's website](#).

b. PLA 2

The second PLA will address issues related to continuing professional development of VET trainers (planned for the second half of May 2013).

Yves Magnan (representing the host, FOREM, Belgium) proposed some ideas on **topics** of common interest where his organisation has the expertise and is willing to share:

- the work towards the qualification of a trainer;
- meeting representatives of some companies to discuss continuing professional development;
- initiatives aimed at attracting people from the labour market to become trainers.

The group suggested that the PLA could also look for the link between the CPD of trainers and the formal recognition of their competences and map the spectrum of qualification – providing examples that reflect the field experience. In the preparation phase, the group will reflect on the proposed topics and prepare relevant information from their countries.

The group will maintain regular e-communication in order to keep the dynamic of the working process and ensure feedback.

c. PLA 3

The third PLA will focus on training opportunities in SMEs and relevant trainers' competences (planned for November 2013). The potential hosts, BIBB (Germany) and AFPA (France) will check opportunities to share the organisation of the PLA in a border area (Strasbourg and neighbourhood).

The following **topics** were mentioned as relevant for the group's work:

- challenges for trainers and training in SMEs, specifics of profile and functions;
- the interaction between the training and business perspective;
- the financial aspect;
- traditions and cultural elements in different countries with regard to the VET systems and the existence of a sound SMEs sector.

The group will examine and compare how the German dual system and French model of vocational training contribute to developing competences for SMEs.

The preparation for the PLAs will include reflection on the format of the final reports.

6. IDEAS FOR THE FINAL DELIVERABLE OF THE TWG

The TWG works to identify example of **good practice** and develop **guiding principles** on the changing roles, competences and professional development of trainers. As agreed in the first meeting, the guiding principles will be addressed to policy-makers at all levels, including social partners, and will concern areas where support through public policy is most needed. The group will aim at realistic guidelines backed up by already implemented practices and examples in the EU countries.

One of the main aims of the document would be to raise awareness of, to explain and promote the role of VET trainers in developing competences of the workforce.

The guiding principles should address/include the following:

- need for support to trainers from all sides with strengthened perspective of the world of work;
- raising awareness of companies of the support that trainers bring to their competitiveness and innovation by helping to address skills mismatches through training of apprentices and employees. Even in some countries with well-developed systems of training of trainers, employers are still not convinced of its benefits;
- increasing role and proportion of work-based learning and its effect on the competences and support needed by trainers;
- ways of developing the organisational culture where trainers are proud to be trainers and are acknowledged; self-identification mechanisms by trainers;
- the key role of trainers in bringing the perspective of the world of work into education and training and for the development of the professional skill and occupational identity of the student”;
- the benefits and motivation of the companies that take in apprentices, including financial incentives but not only;
- differentiated recommendations for the Member States and for other stakeholders to choose most relevant for their own situations;
- ways of ensuring and promoting formal recognition of trainers in companies and by companies;

- ways of recruiting VET teachers from good trainers (in countries where they have similar career paths and where attracting good training specialists to VET teacher's profession would be seen as strengthening the links between education and work) and/or motivating people from companies to become trainers;
- ways of validation and recognition of the competences acquired at work when training others;
- various channels of dissemination of good practices and sharing expertise, including e-platforms where produced material can be available for external users;
- examples should be drawn from the entire diverse spectrum of VET systems and workplace environments;
- mechanisms of effective cooperation between the world of work and education, with the focus on cooperation of teachers and trainers;
- list of questions/issues for reflection that can be used by policy-makers and practitioners to assess the situation in their countries, institutions and companies and learn from the existing practice;
- evidence, statements of employers and trainers to illustrate and support/question the principles.

7. NEXT STEPS

- Joining efforts, the Commission, Cedefop and the TWG will start working on key points to serve as a first set of guiding principles using as a baseline the work done so far by the group as well as previous research. These key points will be addressed in more detail, when relevant, in the forthcoming PLAs and examined and validated through virtual and plenary discussions.
- More time for group discussions should be foreseen and implemented in the future meetings of the group: 1.5 days can be considered for plenary meetings and 2.5 days for PLAs.
- Potential hosts of the PLAs will confirm their intention and propose dates; the dates will be agreed by the group.
- For PLA 2, Forem will send a short outline of the initiatives proposed to observe during the second PLA; members will send feedback.
- Virtual communication should be used more.

Next meeting of the group in Brussels is planned for September 2013.