

Thematic working group on Professional development of VET trainers

PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY

**‘Effective approaches and support to continuing professional development of trainers,
career opportunities, recognition’**

28-30 May 2013, Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium)

TECHNICAL REPORT¹

Objectives

The peer learning activity (PLA) of the [Thematic working group](#) (TWG) on Professional development of VET trainers aimed to improve the understanding of policies and practice that support the quality of training in enterprises through the development and updating of in-company trainers’ competences.

The participants reviewed and discussed:

- (a) opportunities for professional development of in-company trainers (provided by the state, sectors, professional associations to develop necessary competences (patterns, formats and content);
- (b) opportunities for validation of prior learning (competences acquired on the job) and its link to continuing professional development of in-company trainers.

Participants

The meeting was attended by 21 participants: 12 country representatives (AT, BE, CH, CZ, EE, ES, FI, FR, MT, RO, SE, TR), ETUCE, EUproVET, facilitators and managers from the hosting organisations, 2 companies (Ores and GDF SUEZ), DG EAC/Dir A and B and Cedefop.

Organisational details

The PLA took place in Louvain-La-Neuve, 28-30 May 2013. The host was FormaForm, a partnership of major VET providers in Wallonia – Le Forem, Bruxelles Formation and IFAPME.

¹ A detailed content report and conclusions of the PLA will follow

The meeting

The two and a half days' work of the professional development of VET trainers followed the agreed scheme from the plenary meeting of the TWG in February 2012: to address main aspects of developing VET trainers' competences within the broad framework of VET reforms and especially with regard to quality assurance, certification and qualification requirements and approaches. Summarised reflections from policy papers and previous research, main questions prepared in advance, and country notes and presentations provided rich background and allowed for targeted discussions. In addition, the PLA participants profited from the availability of representatives of 2 companies (Ores and GDF SUEZ) who presented the companies' perspectives on professional development of trainers. Ms Dana Bachmann from DG EAC set the policy frame and set out future options to work on the VET teachers and trainers topic at EU level, one of them being embedding it in the main priority within the VET sector – work-based learning.

The kick-off – the host's experience and reflections from the group

The host, FormaForm, a partnership between three big VET providers (Le Forem, Bruxelles Formation and IFAPME) offers training to their trainers who work with both employed and unemployed people, depending on the provider's profile. The three organisations employ several thousand part-time and full-time trainers, most of whom are skilled professionals and workers. With regard to those, the following was formulated as a challenge: how to develop and maintain pedagogical competences of the trainers knowing that most of them are professionals with no pedagogical background or title and how to ensure the update of their technical skills?

The professional development so far includes 10 modules for core competences provided by the FormaForm and 15 mostly outsourced continuous training modules.

Reflections from the group and questions for further discussion:

The group discussed the complex requirements and expectations regarding the professional development of VET trainers and came to the conclusion that there is a need for a collective answer to those requirements. National and local authorities, companies and training providers ought to synchronise their efforts. There is a need to create options for the many diverse stakeholders, currently not very well cooperating, to express their views and make clear proposals vis-à-vis policy making.

Additionally raised questions for upcoming discussions were:

- What can be done at the governmental (state) level to raise awareness in companies on the need and motivate them to prepare technical specialists for training functions and keep updating their competences?
- What are the barriers for trainers to learn and update their competences?

From experts – to trainers: how does it work in the Member States (MS)? A summary

1. Professional development and certification of trainers' competences as a part of the policy/reform process

(a) Participants in the PLA presented aspects of the professional development of VET trainers in the broader framework of VET reforms and Lifelong Learning (LLL) concept. The orientation (in some MS - ES, MT, RO, EE) or reinforced attention to work-based approaches in VET (in other MS – AT, DE, SE) requires special attention to the people with training functions and positions. What kind of competences do they need? What kind of profiles do systems need in order to underpin reforms with adequately prepared personnel?

(b) Training of trainers and their continuing professional development aiming at updating or upgrading their competences and then "labelling" (the Belgian equivalent of certifying) and certifying them is part of quality assurance approaches (FI, MT, RO, ES, SE) in VET. In several countries there are links between the recognition of skills and competences of one professional group (teachers/trainers) and levels of the National Qualification Network (NQF) – BE, MT, TR. Validation of competences, prior learning, (including non-formal), and previous experience is part of the process of certification of trainers' skills (FI, FR).

(c) In several countries pilot projects supported by ESF develop VET teacher/trainers profiles and qualifications (RO, EE) and the corresponding professional development. In Germany and France, there are several qualifications for VET/AL trainers. In several countries, there are approaches to introduce standards or at least compulsory minimum requirements ('core competences') and licensing/registration regimes.

d) Training of trainers can be successful only if it is mainly company-based. Cooperation between authorities, business and social partners (EE, AT, DE) based on social agreements gives successful results.

New developments across the countries:

- In Romania, since 2011 functions of training personnel in lifelong Learning (LLL) and occupational standards for trainers have been defined, training modules developed and

professional development is linked to accreditation and quality assurance procedures. Within ESF projects 2 qualifications for a trainer/tutor and for a trainer of trainers were created.

- In Spain within the new orientation for intensified work-based learning, a trainer's certificate linked to level 5 of NQF as well as accreditation centres for trainers are envisaged.
- In Sweden national efforts to strengthen apprenticeship and consequently to focus on training of in-company trainers have been made within national projects since 2009. Finances are increasing to support school-company partnerships through National VET councils that are supposed to train trainers. One of the challenges identified is the difficulty to reach trainers in enterprises.
- In Austria the close cooperation between companies and providers at regional/local level supported by the respective chambers and backed-up by a research institute caters for targeted and quality training provision and competence development of trainers.
- Within the Finnish Development Plan for Education and Research (2011-2016), the measures to ensure sufficient training of on-the-job instructors include: creation of a permanent funding model, alternative ways of training and nationally developed content of training. Training of trainers is a task of VET providers, with the support of the government through promotion and funding (incl. ESF). A set of guidelines and criteria for training of different types of trainers have been elaborated throughout the years.
- In France, companies train their trainers as part of the collective agreement and legal provision. However, many of them are interested in increasing the return on their mandatory investment in training (companies have to spend a certain amount of money to finance - directly or indirectly - continuing vocational training). The French approach in assigning a qualification (*'certification'*) does not distinguish between formal and non-formal ways of acquiring.
- In Malta the Ministry of Education and Employment presented an ESF application for the development of a Teacher Training Centre as published in 'An Early School Leaving Strategy for Malta: 2012 '. Training for own teachers and trainers is offered by the State VET colleges as well. New schemes of apprenticeship are in development stages. There is an intensive trend observed for involvement of business in shaping VET.
- In Estonia the new VET Act aims at raising the quality of practical teaching with teachers trained in companies; company trainers specially trained; using guest teachers for practical teaching to make co-operation between VET schools more effective. ESF funds have been used for training in-company trainers, involving business associations and creating e-tools and platforms.
- In the Czech Republic first steps to develop a qualification for trainers have been done through pilot projects and an administrative registering (licensing regime). Since 2013 the profession of a Continuing Education Lecturer exists as an official professional standard.

- In Switzerland teachers' and trainers professional development is a part of a whole VET cycle with the involvement of all relevant players at federal, canton, company and local level, strongly market-driven and WBL-oriented with variety qualifications and competence sets for trainers and (flexible) pathways for acquiring them.
- In Turkey VET reforms and modernisation projects with the support of the EU aim at improving the qualifications of the teachers (with corresponding standards and training programmes) and at strengthening the capacities of vocational and technical training institutions. The qualifications are embedded in the NQF.

2. Companies' views on supporting training and professional development of in-company trainers

The two companies present during the PLA, Ores and GDF SUEZ, shared experience on the training of their trainers, highlighting successful and new approaches, as well sharing ideas for further development:

- Companies choose to train their employees (both new recruits and existing) to ensure the skills and competences geared to the company's profile and needs. The presented companies also have to do it because the VET system does not provide a qualification which meets their specific needs. Therefore, the values of the company are trickled down to the trainers and need to be embedded in their competence development in order to make it possible to be transmitted to the company's employees. Most trainers are nominated from the skilled workers in the company and, hence, removed from the 'production floor'.
- Trainers in companies receive targeted training according to the needs of the company and the employees.
- In companies quality of training is very much measured through performance.
- Companies apply new teaching/learning methods, mix of training tools and new technologies in training, which means that their trainers need to be trained in using all of them.
- In companies trainers are very much trained as evaluators, because they are requested to provide an ongoing evaluation of their trainees.
- Internal company certificates for trainers increase their motivation.
- International networking of tutors supports learning from each other as a successful form of developing trainers' competences.
- Usage of open-sources and knowledge platforms is another form of supporting professional development of trainers and "learners".
- In-company trainers get additional training in pedagogy and communication internally, in the company.

In the follow-up discussion, attention was focused on potential cooperation models between companies, training providers/operators and authorities:

- In cases of trainers' shortages the partnership between all stakeholders can support recruitment of suitable candidates or replace leaving trainers.
- A partnership model between external training providers and companies can support career progression of in-company trainers to managerial or permanent training positions.
- Successful models of training trainers can be shared or commonly developed:
 - Trainers from training providers can be invited to "teach" in companies and companies can outsource some parts of training to providers, especially the basics.
 - Companies would appreciate if a training provider trains for them unemployed people who will be willing to take-up training duties in the company.
 - The existing models can be supported by developing tools such as contracts of shared training etc.
 - Cross-border cooperation is also welcomed by the companies because of their international business activities.
 - The balance between the short-term needs of the companies ('we need trainers and employees with relevant skills now!') and the long-term perspectives of the education and training system need to be addressed. Here branch and sector organisations can play the role of intermediate actors.

Key results of the PLA

- Following a presentation of the host organisation and relevant contributions from the participants, the TWG **commented on the milestones for developing models and approaches** for professional development and certification of VET trainers. Identifying national legislations and strategies and sectoral arrangements; barriers and success factors; key-stakeholders to be involved has been perceived as a good starting point for reflections on the country specific situation.
- The group identified several **approaches** for supporting professional development of trainers that can be considered as good examples:
 - (a) elaborating pilot models for competence development and certification of trainers based on the united efforts of main training operators (for example, FormaForm in Belgium) in cooperation with the formal education system and business and based on the lessons learnt from pilot projects;
 - (b) elaborating non-compulsory guidelines for the main stakeholders involved in training the trainers, using the existing experience (for example, guides from Finland);

(c) VET/sector councils are in charge of training trainers. More finances and targeted support to this function of the branch organisations and chambers can increase the quality of the training.

(d) Updating curricula can be used as a tool for fostering the updating of professional competences of VET trainers as well. This approach would work only if it is not developed and implemented in a strict bureaucratic mode, but in close cooperation with the business.

In all approaches critical factors for success were identified, such as providing flexible forms of training; addressing the needs and demonstrating benefits of trainers' training to trainers, their employers and regional/national economies at large; close cooperation between authorities, VET providers and companies.

It was agreed to take a closer look at these examples by providing a summary in English of selected documents across the countries in order to support peer learning beyond the event.

- The group shared knowledge on the **training programme coverage** for VET trainers. It was concluded that in most of the countries this encompasses technical, pedagogical, transversal and company-related skills. The huge variety of approaches and models at national, local, sector, company and learning provider's level in terms of duration, forms, financial incentives, institutions in charge of professional development of VET trainers and formalisation of final results (certification or qualification as a trainer) was addressed.
- The participants welcomed the **introduction of the company perspective** (presented by two companies) in the discussion, which put the spotlight on developing and adapting solutions for effective training in the companies and bringing training to the company. It was concluded that at national level authorities, regional and branch organisations, training providers and companies should be supported to find the format and win-win solutions for all relevant stakeholders to be involved in the process. It was proposed that persons in charge of training in companies with successful models should be invited for further work on the topic during the third PLA.
- The group offered critical feedback on the **efficiency, quality criteria and measurable effects of trainers' training**. The opportunity to introduce the topics of the benefits and returns on investment (ROI) for trainers and companies was highly appreciated and it was decided to address this topic in the background material for next PLA on training needs in SMEs (summarising the research material and conclusions gathered already at Cedefop).
- The group supported a further **clearer distinction between trainers' profiles**. Concerns were raised regarding the different titles of one and the same training function or – the other way round - the different sets of competences and responsibilities of one and the same title across the countries. There would be different expectations and requirements as well as training needs for several groups of trainers in enterprises: for example, regular and ad-hoc tutors of apprentices, full-time and part-time trainers, etc. Further work on the topic of VET trainers could explicitly address competences and professional development for certain VET profiles.
- The TWG welcomed the **link between the training and certification process for trainers and the usage of European tools and instruments** and particularly relating the certification process to the respective NQF levels; the usage of the existing validation systems/principles for recognition of competences acquired through previous or non-formal learning and work experience, the embedding of the quality criteria for trainers' professional development within quality assurance schemes, etc.

- The group reviewed examples from countries where projects within the **LLP and Structural Funds have been used for piloting models** for teachers and trainers' professional development and qualification/certification. The core issue that needs to be addressed is the sustainability and mainstreaming of these efforts (for example, training of trainers in Estonia lasted only during the project and then stopped. At the same time, in Finland that also relied on ESF funding to develop tools, the government is looking for a permanent funding option for such activities). Further opportunities within the next programming period 2014-2020, presented to the participants of the PLA were welcomed.