



**Policy learning forum  
Professional development of teachers and trainers –  
a guarantee of quality in VET**

**Thessaloniki (Greece), 21-22 November 2016**

**Summary of the ‘open space’ discussions**

The Policy Learning Forum (PLF) brought together participants who represented national, regional and local authorities, teacher professional associations, employer organisations, teacher unions and other stakeholders. All the participants engaged in lively discussions exchanging and sharing their experience in policy and practice as regards teachers and trainers professional development, initial and continuing (CPD).

14 approaches and initiatives on professional development of teachers and trainers from 13 countries were presented in a series of ‘[lightning talks](#)’, ranging from design and implementation of reforms through social partners’ initiatives to partnerships and school leadership.

Following the ‘open space technology’ <sup>(1)</sup> method, the participants then selected and discussed the issues of most concern to their national contexts in 12 groups in total.

The overall theme for the discussions was:

**How to establish a systemic approach to teachers and trainers’ professional development and cooperation to support it?**

**How to make sure the teachers and trainers’ professional development has an impact on teaching practice?**

First, we present some common issues identified across the groups and then the key points from each group.

- The most important issue or need that came across most discussions was [crossing the barriers](#) between the world of education (teachers) and the world of work (trainers). This refers more generally to VET and more specifically to teachers in VET schools and centres and trainers in companies (referred in the text as in-company trainers). VET teachers and in-company trainers are often considered apart, as two

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<sup>(1)</sup> The Open space is an alternative method of organising meetings which encourages participants to take on roles that they would not normally adopt. It is a highly democratic and self-managing meeting methodology. It is self-organising, where people participate in building the agenda, present the issues they care about, moderate the workshops and report on them. The Open space is a methodological tool that enables self-organizing groups of all sizes to deal with hugely complex issues, such as teachers and trainers professional development is!, in a very short period of time. More information can be found at: [http://www.openspaceworld.com/users\\_guide.htm](http://www.openspaceworld.com/users_guide.htm)

distinct groups of VET professionals so strengthening partnerships and networking between them is necessary to ensure the quality of the learning outcomes for students who learn in two or more venues. Close and active collaboration of teachers and trainers as [agents of trust](#) can contribute to establishing trust between the two worlds, often missing in the current systems. In the same vein, bridging the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge and experience as well as exchanging experiences among professionals is considered a prerequisite for teachers and trainers personal growth.

- The lack of teachers who are competent in modern technological and production processes and the outdated equipment in VET schools still remains a challenge in many countries. There is an obvious need for closer links of teachers to industry and technological developments, hence, some countries look for ways [for teachers to go to companies, to learn in companies](#). It is not easy to implement (time, companies willing to do so on top of taking students), but it is possible if mutual benefits are made prominent or communicated – teachers learn and train trainers or work with and supervise their students, etc. Teachers need to be trained regularly in companies while professionals from companies can teach in VET schools, possibly together with VET teachers - it can be a joint effort. Developing training skills helps teachers improve their level of professionalism and expertise in the lifelong learning perspective.
- The [agreed need for regulation](#) is confronted with the question what and how much needs to be regulated in order not to be counter-productive or dis-incentivising; simultaneously, it is agreed that flexibility is a must. This relates to teacher training, requirements for trainers, curricula, national standards to be acquired. How to balance the two? In any aspect, there should be a core component (possibly, mandatory for all) and a flexible/adjustable component (for example, part of national curriculum that can be adjusted to the local needs provides opportunities for teachers and trainers to [cooperate and develop together](#)). Such an approach can also facilitate balancing the top-down and bottom-up approaches.
- There seems to be a common understanding (belief) that teachers should take main responsibility for quality of learning in companies, providing also [support to trainers/tutors](#). If countries plan to take this approach, they need to think of ensuring that teachers are allocated time for doing so and have tools. In some countries, teachers have the task of coordinating WBL or even such position (coordinator of WBL).
- Not only pedagogical competences are of importance but also [technical/vocational ones](#). When teachers and trainers have access to adequate professional development, their technical and pedagogical skills reach high standards. Similarly, career progression should give incentives for further (existing) qualifications. When teachers are motivated and incentivised they assume responsibility for their learning. Investing in one's own competences is very important but there should be

a reflection on the following: What in the teachers/trainers' work stimulates ongoing training? What are the incentives? The stimulating factors? The wage? Career advancement? What are the possibilities offered for teachers? For trainers?

The Guiding principles on professional development of trainers in VET (2014) called for varied and flexible training provision as part of systematic approach to professional development of trainers. Trainers should have access to varied and 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 relevant social partner. Competence development should cover all areas of competence. CPD programmes should be closer linked to real working contexts and tasks of trainers in companies.

Cedefop suggests:

European Commission and Cedefop (2014). Guiding principles on professional development of trainers in vocational education and training.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/guiding-principles-professional-development-trainers-vet>

- The [role of employers](#) and [need for their active participation](#) is seen as crucial. Employers in countries like Estonia and Latvia have a leading role in designing occupational standards and national curricula. They can also be involved in validating learning outcomes (LO). The role and amount of activities of teacher unions have also been stressed.

With regard to the application of learning outcomes, it is a question of aligning learning outcomes statements with teaching and learning. Learning outcomes assist teachers in identifying and combining teaching methods, they help orient teaching, select methods and facilitate the learning process. Their implementation depends on this clear link being established between the LO statements and the teaching/learning process.

Cedefop suggests:

Cedefop (2016). Application of learning outcomes approaches across Europe. A comparative study.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3074>

- School leadership is of vital importance. The idea of ownership was also discussed both in the working groups and in the panel; 'if people don't own the change, it cannot happen'. There is a need to strengthen instructional leadership as schools can make a difference; schools articulate change processes - a model of cooperation at different levels (system level/provider level) is necessary. School leaders also

facilitate that the schools open up to their communities and local actors, becoming agents of lifelong learning.

- The use of ICT should be further examined and taken forward to more complex and advanced solutions of support. For example, showcasing what is going on in remote places/countries and catching a glimpse of initiatives and good practices through digital technology can make a difference. Virtual networking, using video to capture practices-projects run by local actors can serve a driver of policy and an instrument for policy implementation.
- **It is very clear that countries are at different stages of development and progress towards WBL and apprenticeship, and even VET in general; hence, things cannot be taken for granted as existing or solved. Peer learning is/remains a powerful EU method of exchanging knowledge and experience and possibly speed up the process of development, avoiding re-inventing the notorious wheel.**

The following are the ideas and key messages from the small groups.

### Group 1

How to combine a top-down systemic approach with multiple bottom-up initiatives?

Element	Systemic	Experimental	Feedback
Needs analysis	Profile (branch), Robust analysis, Scientific + social partnership	Matching to individuals + institutions	Conference de consensus, Institut Jacotot
Entitlement	Minimum? Advising level	Sector, profile, institution, donor	
<b>Recognition</b>			
Qualification, licensing	Minimum Legal	Wrap around Masters' Professional qualification	
<b>Regulation, governance</b>			
Standards	Framework H+S	Profile by profile Develop standards as warranted Inter-professional learning	
<b>Examples:</b>			
Estonia			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occupational standards for VET teachers at EQF levels 5, 6, 7 → qualification requirements for VET teachers.</li> </ul>			
Switzerland			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broad systemic guidelines to encourage development. But: take care to detail rules in time.</li> </ul>			

### Group 2

Establishing standards of competence, framework

- Systemic → CPD should be an integral part of the strategic and operational planning process of VET providers at national, regional and local levels.
- The above process would build on the establishment of a professional development framework that will identify the core competences required of teachers and trainers for effective delivery of work-based learning VET programmes.
- Focus:
  - professional (as per the specific expertise that a teacher or trainer has qualified for and developed as per their own career progression) and the
  - pedagogic expertise they must have for practice as a teacher or trainer in VET.

- Process: Establishment of a CPD strategic and operational planning framework would enable VET providers identify the skills requirements of teachers and trainers and put in place the necessary infrastructure and financial resources required to address priorities as identified.
- Establishment of a professional development pathway that focuses on the on-going development of the pedagogic competences of VET teachers and trainers. This could potentially identify progression opportunities through the EQF levels as follows:
  - foundation -Level 5;
  - advance – Level 7;
  - expert – Level 8.
- The establishment of a professional body for VET teachers and trainers should be considered. This body would support the CPD of its members and assist in the development of a culture of cooperation and productive engagement with all stakeholders in VET.
- The establishment of a competence framework that identifies the national standards of pedagogic and professional competences for VET teachers and trainers will enable providers, national, regional and local authorities to benchmark their existing practice and develop in line with best practice internationally.
- The continued use of the phrase ‘teachers and trainers’ helps to reinforce the continued believe that they are more different than alike. In order to move towards a more shared understanding that all individuals that engage in the delivery of VET programmes face similar challenges and in this context the use of the all-encompassing term ‘VET practitioner’ can be considered.

### Group 3

#### Key messages:

- Institutional (formal structures) mechanism (platform) at national level with a clear mandate – where policies and practice on CPD meet and where every stakeholder is heard:
  - stakeholders - means ANY (school, employer, etc);
  - policies (both initial and continuing training for teachers and trainers);
  - flexible approach for trainers.
- (More) decentralised approach to CPD (up to VET provider, up to school and individual level) with more trust and autonomy for CPD content choice and development:
  - teachers needs analysis prior to action;
  - preserving independence of teacher.
- Promoting employers’ social responsibility via ‘employers’ ambassadors’ – employers loyal (dedicated) to the education system BUT as a two-way commitment with policy-makers and VET providers respecting employers’ voice:
  - bringing in research community and higher education institutions;
  - putting the employers in the spotlight.

### Examples:

- Romania - education and labour market (LM) partnership

Based on occupational standards, IVET training standards are designed by experts (education and LM) and validated by the sectoral committees. Company representatives are members within school administrative council, making decisions:

- local curriculum;
- practical training;
- practical test for certification.

- Estonia – OSKA system

Labour and skills analysis for planning, funding in education, teacher training, etc.

- Estonia, Latvia

Employers have a leading role in designing occupational standards and awarding bodies.

Employers representatives are on school boards/councils.

Employers are involved in designing national/school curricula.

- Iceland (Lightning talk)

The Teachers council on CPD consists of Ministries, teachers associations, occupational councils in VET and universities.

### Group 4

How to establish trust between teachers and trainers? Are there common values? Do they have a common training?

- Authorities – teachers –trainers collaborate to ensure learning for (young?) students and adults;
- teachers ↔ trainers – changing the role towards each other;
- equal standards for teachers and trainers;
- training should be specific and tailor-made for specific groups;
  - identification of teachers and trainers' needs;
  - identification of companies' needs;
  - teachers and trainers need to understand what is professional competence and how to analyse it;
  - teachers and trainers have to build remediation;
  - teachers and trainers need to develop evaluation elements;
  - teachers and trainers have to respect the competences of each other.

General objectives:

- prescription by authorities
  - equality in all the territory;
  - organisation of curricula;
  - education and training quality;
- trust.

### Examples:

Croatia

- Teachers monitor the practical training of students → cooperation of teachers and trainers in organisation of practical training and in students' achievements →

prescribed by law, included in weekly workload of teachers.

The Regulations on standards of work of teachers in secondary school institutions prescribe the standard of work of teachers for each subject in secondary schools and other activities arising from the nature and the scope of educational work. The prescribed standard for teacher of practical training in the school is 28 hours per week. The remaining 12 hours are reserved for the other activities arising from the nature and the scope of educational work. According to the mentioned Regulations, if the practical training or exercises are performed out of secondary school institutions (in other legal entities, in craft, etc.), the standard of teacher of practical training which organize, monitor the realisation of the programme, provides a pedagogical and methodological help to craftsmen and participate in the making implementation plans and programmes of practical training is 25% of the total number of hours of practical training in the specific educational programme per week and per classroom, within the mentioned week standard of teachers of practical training.

Switzerland

- In-company training = immersion in productive work → not so much pedagogical training needed → course provided by sector branch. Trainers have more pedagogical training → work-oriented courses, reflection.

## Group 5

How to relate teaching engineering subjects and at the same time be informed about new technologies? Relate learning process with LO and find best practice to involve employers in validating these LO?

Good practice (Cyprus):

- Teachers of engineering subjects have to be trained regularly in industry (e.g. a day a week to update their knowledge working in companies);
- invited professionals from industry to teach together with VET teachers laboratory (practical) subjects in the labs and workshops of VET schools;
- involved employers, chambers and others formulate together the curricula of engineering subjects, which have to be based on LO;
- the employers have to take part in the process of validating the LO;
- VET school labs must be fully equipped with the involvement of professional bodies and financial contribution by enterprises in order to be in line with the industry standards; make sure that there is best possible use of equipment (e.g. joint use by schools and enterprises, training conducted at the workplace);
- general subjects must fulfil the requirements of each specialisation of VET programmes, e.g. Maths as applied in engineering;
- commitment of all stakeholders to achieve quality culture;
- give the chance (motivation) to VET teachers to acquire additional vocational qualifications needed.

## Examples:

Germany

- More than two-thirds of young people in the dual system receive their initial VET (IVET) in SMEs. But often, SMEs do not have the capacity to provide the full range of training. To assist them in doing so, the Vocational Training Act or the Crafts and

Trades Regulation Code provide for inter-company support. Inter-company vocational training centres (*überbetriebliche Berufsbildungsstätten*, ÜBS) support companies by providing complementary training to the in-company one, keeping training in line with the technological, environmental, economic and societal developments, ensuring quality of IVET through employing qualified trainers and cooperation between the learning venues. Inter-company centres support SMEs in terms of costs, competition and time resources needed to work with apprentices (European Commission, Cedefop (2014). Guiding principles on professional development of trainers in vocational education and training. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/guiding-principles-professional-development-trainers-vet>).

## Group 6

How to support professional development of mentors and tutors in SMEs?

How to include SMEs in the strategic (systemic) approach at sectoral, regional, national levels?

- SMEs are key players in the arena of apprenticeship and WBL.
- The role of the EU:
  - develop a growth model for inclusion of/cooperation with SMEs: national and regional situations require different solutions in different stages;
  - international approach – motivation and learning in more universal (than national education systems);
    - international perspective can be translated easily to local situations.
- Growth model (different stages and situations):
  - start from the perspective of SMEs;
  - infrastructure needed: network of providers, SMEs, other stakeholders (region, sector);
  - intermediary bodies responsible for practical arrangements of SMEs have to be established (by employers, unions);
  - discuss, develop, invest in:
    - skills development of student (WBL);
    - professionalisation of teachers;
    - professionalisation of in-company trainers/mentors;
  - example instructors: develop a video about motivational successful trainers.

## Group 7

Integrate WBL and school-based learning? What 'boundary crossing' practices foster integration and cooperation (at different levels)? Approaches how to break the barriers between schools and employers. Accreditation and recognition of certification of VET professionals (teachers, trainers, tutors).

Good practice:

- Professional trainer keeps in touch with companies – mediator, tutor, inspector;
- teachers must go to companies to have practical knowledge and skills;
- companies are invited to schools at different occasions;
- teachers and trainers provide special guidance for 'problem learners';
- provide good guidance/orientation before starting VET: choose the right programme;

- teachers ensure quality by cooperating with companies, feedback for school → update programme;
- teachers and trainers – peer learning;
- teachers and trainers develop (regional) parts of curriculum together (within national standards);
- teachers who coordinate between school and company as a special task
  - institutional,
  - relationship,
- license companies to train/license trainers;
- monitor quality of training → self-assessment;
- ensure resources to encourage voluntary cooperation → rewarding initiatives;
- logbooks, e-portfolios of VET students inform teachers and trainers about the other learning context;
- get ‘credits’ for cooperation and direct contact with companies (instead of taking a PD course).

### Examples:

#### Romania

- Pilot training programme for teachers and in-company tutors:
  - development of LDC – Development of local curriculum: school response to local LM demands; design and content is made by teacher and representatives of companies; designed as modules considering IVET; duration – five weeks in grades 9 and 10 of secondary school, 10 weeks in grade 11;
  - practical training contract and pedagogical annexes;
  - correlation of approaching LO (Ed) and practice to achieve competences, attitudes, knowledge and skills.
- Training of in-company tutors:
  - legal framework – VET strategy 2016-20;
  - 1 300 tutors trained from 325 companies;
  - together we build bridges – practical training in VET;
  - pilot training course multiplied at national level.

#### Germany

- Ordinance for in-company trainer.

#### Ireland

- ECVET mobility – collaboration of teachers or teacher and trainer – QUAKE.

#### Italy

- Teacher and trainer cooperation

According to the new regulation reforming both the school system and the apprenticeship I (based on job contract), a company tutor is required. Together with the school/VET teacher, the tutor is in charge of the success of the training experience.

## Group 8

The use of IT – online platform; forum; social networking

- The idea was to create a platform for any stakeholder in the context of VET. This platform, with different access and rights, depending on the user, could provide

communication and relations at the national level and maybe further at the international level. The platform could be expanded with content in direct relation, teacher – student.

- E-Courses, tutorials, online exercises are a few possibilities of content. Employees and employers could have access to a database to see if there is any possibility to find a job, or to recruit.
- Some countries already use this kind of communication.

#### Examples:

Germany

- [https://www.foraus.de/html/foraus\\_index.php](https://www.foraus.de/html/foraus_index.php)

#### Group 9

How can trade unions of apprentices take part in the process?

- The key message is that such cooperation should be defined by law.
- It is necessary to decide:
  - priorities,
  - organisational framework,
  - budgets.

Stakeholder → organisation;

Learners → TU of company;

Teachers → TU of teachers;

Society → government;

Employers → employer organisation

All these take part in a council (national, regional, local).

#### Group 10

Main features of the systemic approach. What does it mean? How systematic should the 'systemic approach' be?

- Initial teacher training:
  - it should contain a core systemic component, based on pedagogy;
  - initial training and (later) qualifications should be tied to career paths and progression;
  - accreditation of prior learning is important to attract professional trade practitioners to teaching as long as it gives proof of various skills;
  - pedagogical training is a must, ideally.
- Continuing training and development:
  - some elements of structure and systemic approach are needed; e.g. in collective agreements, there should be guidelines on CPD and training and working life/industry exposure;
  - career progression should give incentives for acquiring further qualifications;
  - CPD must be based on the individual's needs in agreement with the institution;
  - systemic approaches to CPD may be counterproductive; flexibility is a must;
  - there should be better use of teachers' time, less 'non-teaching tasks', more time for professional training and flexibility to pursue courses.

Question: should VET teachers have Master degree in Pedagogy?

Conclusion: no need for MA in Pedagogy but a minimum level of qualification (Level 5 or 6) is recommended.

### Group 11

School should be open to anybody in the region in the LLL context:

- to address social and education problems to take low-skilled on board;
- to address various target groups (including persons with higher education) to obtain a labour market VET qualification;
- a 'one stop shop' at regional level as an integrated approach also to earlier guidance;
- andragogy methods to work with adults;
- financial and other incentives for VET providers to provide training to adults.

#### Examples:

Latvia

- different educational programmes (qualifications) are offered (full time, part time, distance learning), which can ensure flexible approach to learning of adults;
- recognition of non-formal learning.

### Group 12

Who should be responsible for the learning process (as a whole)?

- in the end, the learning process should lead to a qualification;
- the role of a trainer is more of a supervisor;
- the quality of the workplace;
- company-based courses → quality;
- industry responsibility;
- narrow field of tasks – in some workplaces;
- workplaces are different.

Of course, learners should also take responsibility but teachers should ensure that it happens.

#### Examples:

Finland

- Currently, one of the key projects of the government is the New Teacher Education Development Programme (TEPD). The Teacher Education Forum (including VET) was appointed to reform teacher education at the beginning of 2016. The work continues till end of 2018. <http://okm.fi/osaaminenjakoulutus/?lang=en>

Estonia

- the responsibility for the learning process lies with the VET institution and is regulated. Tri-lateral contracts between VET institution, learner and company.