



Questions & Answers

Session 3

What do we make out of the Riga findings?

Question addressed to Nino Buic, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education

Question 1

What activities did you implement to promote the VET skills and raise the attractiveness of VET?

Answer

When looking into the issue of attractiveness of VET in Croatia we speak, not about raising the numbers in VET (since we have 70% of secondary level education population in VET) but improving the image of VET in society.

One of the approaches we used was modernisation of national skills competitions system and using it to promote VET excellence and attractiveness.

Following more than 20 years of experience of skills VET competition, we developed a new model of competitions that reflects examples of good practice such as EuroSkills and WorldSkills competitions.

In March 2019, the Agency for VET and Adult Education organized the *WorldSkills Croatia* national skills competition in VET at 15.000 m² of the Zagreb Fair, making it biggest education event in Croatia and skills competition in this part of Europe.

During two competition days, over 580 VET students competed in 43 skills. Accompanied by 400 mentors and evaluated by 210 assessment committee members, VET students demonstrated excellence in their respective skills to more than 10,000 national and international visitors.

The competition allowed VET schools and students to network with employers and thus increase graduates' chances for employment, employers' recruitment of top graduates and foster closer cooperation between VET schools and businesses. Main goal was raising the attractiveness and visibility of VET. Further goal was to present VET as a possible education pathway and encouraging enrolment in VET to primary school pupils. For this purpose, we arranged more than 50 buses, which brought primary school pupils from the entire country to the competition. Besides observing VET student competitions and new technologies, visitors were offered various activities, including a Try-a-Skill activity and thus personally experience skills through simple and entertaining practical tasks. Finally, the national employment service offered career guidance and counselling to primary school students.

Follow-up of the event included nationwide media campaign (printed and digital, Tv, radio, etc.) which promoted the visibility of VET in the society.

All these efforts showed results, since cooperation between providers and companies is continuing beyond the event and there are stories of employment opportunities offered to competitors, commitment of employer to support these types of events in the future, increase in VET enrolment of VET providers that were active in the event, etc.

We were underway with preparations for even larger event this year. Unfortunately, Covid-19 crisis forced us to cancel it. But we are hopefully planning for event next year.

Questions addressed to George Kostakis, Cedefop

Question 2

Much progress in the further development of apprenticeship and WBL will depend upon support addressing SMEs, micro-enterprises. What does your evaluation of the Riga MTDs show us in that regard?

For SME's training a young individual can put a lot of strain on resources (mostly time) and the quality of tutoring can be too low to meet required standards put up by the social partners. Can you comment on this and maybe point to countries or regions that can be regarded as Best Practice

Answer

SMEs account for 85% of new jobs created in the last five years. They provide vocational training to our young people and they represent everything that is good in our economy. So it is important that they are supported to continue providing apprenticeship places. There was evidence in countries of good practices to boost the involvement of SMEs in work-based learning and apprenticeship. In some, SMEs were provided with toolkits (guidelines and manuals) and they took part in training workshops. Apprenticeship advisors were trained to provide companies with administrative assistance and apprenticeship support services. Employers used shared apprenticeship, where apprentices move between different employers. Databases of SMEs interested in apprenticeships were created to support schools' and learners' search for placements.

Question 3

Can you please specify what do you mean by closer integration between IVET and CVET?

Answer

We have seen that countries where IVET and CVET are integrated and coordinated follow a more 'age neutral' approach to learning. Training offered to young people in IVET is also available to adults. We also see examples where work-based learning elements are well integrated in CVET. This results in establishing effective lifelong learning systems and boosts adult participation in learning that remains well below the ambition set by EU for 2020.

Question 4

Do you see reasons why not many actions have happened in MTD4 - only two pages in the report. It seems strange to me. Perhaps not enough responses came from CVET?

Answer

Perhaps, the number of pages is not the best indicator. Many policy actions on key competences covered a group (several or even all key competences) at the same time. You are correct that we clearly see more actions in IVET than in CVET. In addition to policy reporting, Cedefop has conducted a detailed analysis on three key competences - digital, languages and literacy in VET - coming out this summer with more research details.

Question 5

Learning outcomes are clearly a useful, essential and successful approach, linked to qualifications. On the other side skills intelligence is developing. Do those two can be bridged or linked?

Answer

The learning outcomes approach can contribute to narrowing the gap between the world of education and that of work. They provide a common language allowing different stakeholders in education and training, as well as the labour market and society at large, to clarify skills needs and to respond to these in a relevant way. Writing learning outcomes requires schools and universities to reflect more systematically on the relevance of their programmes and qualifications to the world of work. The different uses of the learning outcomes approach can also lead to more substantial and intensive communication between the two worlds. However, the capacity of employers to express their skills needs from education in a way that is easily understandable for educators, the level of their motivation and engagement, and also their willingness and capacity to use learning outcomes when hiring candidates, still remains as a concern. Thus, the definition of learning outcomes requires systematic reflection on the use of labour market intelligence and how this will be balanced with the needs of the education and training system and of teachers, to support education, training and learning.

Question 6

For MTD 2 only monitoring is mentioned but not evaluation in the QA feedback loops. Why is this?

Answer

The Riga conclusions in 2015 called the Member States *'to establish coherent systems for data collection and analysis and mechanisms to feed back the results of the monitoring to adapt VET provision'*. Cedefop's analysis shows that countries have made a big progress since 2015 to improve the quality and relevance of VET by developing graduate tracking mechanisms and anticipating training needs. However there is still room for improvement in using data to establish continuous information and feedback loops in IVET and especially in CVET. Some of challenges that countries reported include the obstacles posed by data protection regulations, the cost of collecting data, and the capacity needed at system level to interpret and use these data in short cycles to inform VET.

Questions addressed to Georgios Zisimos, ETF

Question 7

When you say that candidate countries have taken measures to support an MTD, what do you mean?

Answer

Candidate countries have used a variety of measures to respond to the commitment they have taken via the Riga process. More often these measures are in the form of strategies or policy papers. In most candidate countries, much of the implementation starts with pilot projects which are often donor driven. We also saw an increased number of legislative proposals.

Question 8

Could you please explain how was the reporting of progress in candidate countries done?

Answer

Thank you. The reporting cycle started with the definition of the baselines for each MTD followed by an ex-ante impact assessment on identifying the priorities, apprenticeship was identified as a key priority. Followed by an annual reporting exercise using a common questionnaire to both member states and candidate countries. An interim report was presented in 2017 and now we have the final report based on information we collected until 2019. For the candidate countries information from Torino Process was also used.

Question addressed to Georgios Zisimos, ETF and Georgios Kostakis, Cedefop

Question 9

What are your recommendations for stronger social partner involvement in curricula building in shared responsibility? Who is lagging behind - governments or social partners?

Answer

The way the question is formulated implies that there is a fault in one or another side. When we talk about cooperation the approach should be to identify those areas that develop the environment for government and social partners to come together. SO we should be talking about enablers and not whose fault is it. There is element of capacity to make social dialogue a reality. There is also the element of trust and in countries with long tradition of social dialogue it is expected that despite the differences the two sides will come together and discuss. Especially when it comes to key competences, this is a political area where it is often linked with issues of identity, learning outcomes, what is needed for the development of students as individuals, as part of society as future workers and therefore these issues need to be discussed by both sides. And we need to create the right environment for this dialogue to happen

In addition stakeholders need to be provided with timely information to inform their dialogue and decision making process in relation to VET. This includes using data from graduate

tracking mechanisms and solid methods of anticipating training needs to renew qualifications, to review curricula and inform VET provision.

Session 4

Looking ahead: challenges and opportunities for VET in the next decade

Question addressed to Mara Brugia, Cedefop and Anastasia Fetsi, ETF

Question 10

CVET is so diverse. If it is called to answer first of all short-term needs, will it not lead to 'ready-made', very 'narrow' qualifications in terms of learning outcomes? How to balance between very targeted offers and CVET offers leading to extensive qualification profile?

Answer

CVET is very diverse.

It can be targeted to short-term needs as well as to long-term needs.

It can be undertaken in connection with achieving a formal qualification and, more often, to meeting specific needs of upskilling, reskilling, career development, etc. not necessarily for the purpose of obtaining a formal qualification.

This is one of the reasons why building up CVET systems is a tremendous challenge in most EU national contexts.

Session 6

Skills agenda and new EU policy on vocational education and training

Questions addressed to Manuela Geleng, European Commission

Question 11

What do you expect from social partners on European and national level?

Answer

Social partners have a very important role to play. In the Skills agenda the European Commission focuses on adults, on the working age population in particular and would like to see social partners very much engaged in the process. As social partners have put skills as one of the six priorities for the period 2019-21 there is an agreement on the importance of this priority and hope that social partners will be a key player in the Pact for Skills that the European Commission is embarking upon.

Question 12

The proposal for a Council Recommendation on VET refers to a target that at least 3 out of 5 VET learners should benefit from on the job training. Can you please provide more details on this?

Answer

The European Commission considers this very important as in the past. If we want young people to be ready for a job we need to provide them with the opportunity to be in a working environment and experience the reality of a company.

Question 13

How will Osnabruck be connected to the Skills Agenda

Answer

The Skills agenda sets the policy vision for upskilling and reskilling adults and stresses the importance of lifelong learning. The Osnabruck declaration will set up for VET the future objectives and commitment of countries that will guide us in the future to achieve a future proof VET. I hope that the Osnabruck process will give us the opportunity to discuss what the best way to achieve this is.

Session 7

Panel discussion: The way forward

Question addressed to Peter Thiele, Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Question 14

In your intervention you referred to the idea of European vocational profiles. Can you please explain what is meant by this idea?

Answer

The idea of European qualification profiles is element of the new Commission proposals in the Skills Agenda/VET Recommendation. They are not clearly defined so far. From my understanding, such profiles - if set top down as a European standard - would be critical due to subsidiarity and also critical for different technical reasons. An interesting discussion could be, whether they were just developed as a transparency tool - for example by only describing the common biggest denominator of different existing national qualifications in EU countries (for an example car mechatronic).

Question addressed to Barbara Dorn, Confederation of German Employers' Associations, Chairperson of Cedefop Management Board

Question 15

Can you please explain how employers will use VET to help recovery in the post COVID19 period?

Answer

Shortage of skilled labour was the strongest brake on growth before the corona crisis and that will be the case again one or maximum two years from now. The better we train and qualify our staff during the crisis - especially during short-time work - the better our enterprises will recover and economy will return to the growth path. Digital upgrading is a particular focus.