Making excellence inclusive: towards a new Cedefop survey of VET teachers and trainers

Online webinar
3 February
Summary of outcomes

Cedefop organised the webinar ‘Making excellence inclusive: towards a new Cedefop survey of VET teachers and trainers’ to launch a feasibility study for a survey of vocational education and training (VET) teachers, principals, in-company trainers and learners, aiming to serve the long-term EU strategy for green, digital, inclusive and fair economies. Over 80 participants, including European policy-makers, social partners, invited experts and Cedefop Management Board members, took part in the webinar and discussed all aspects of the survey.

The webinar aimed to:
- reflect on the added value and scope of a new European survey on VET principals, teachers, learners and in-company trainers;
- identify research and data gaps to support evidence-based policy making;
- seek for potential synergies with existing surveys for teachers and trainers.

Participants discussed existing research and data gaps, as well as challenges that VET teachers and in-company trainers in Europe face in:
- promoting excellence in VET and preparing learners for professional and personal success;
- supporting learners at risk including marginalised learners and creating inclusive learning and working environments;
- working in digital environments also imposed by COVID-19 and making use of digital advancements (e.g. virtual reality, artificial intelligence, etc.) in teaching, learning and assessment processes.

Introductory speeches

There were four introductory speeches:
Jürgen Siebel – Executive Director, Cedefop
Chiara Riondino – Head of Unit E3 DG EMPL, European Commission
Michael Teutsch – Head of Unit Schools and Multilingualism, DGEAC
Agnes Roman – Senior policy coordinator, ETUCE

In his opening remarks, Cedefop Executive Director Jürgen Siebel underlined the importance of IVET, as it decides, to a large extent, on the successful work life and labour market integration. Cedefop initiates this feasibility study to collect data from schools and workplaces by surveying the four target populations (school principals, teachers, in-company trainers and learners), combining thus providers in and customers of IVET in a comprehensive approach. Mr Siebel stressed that the study would provide insights from the field and help to understand strengths, weaknesses
and needs in IVET, adding that Cedefop’s new feasibility study aims at building a robust evidence base for innovative and efficient policy-making at national, regional, local and school level.

Head of Unit E3 DG EMPL, European Commission Chiara Riondino agreed that the feasibility study is of high importance noting that the role and continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers and trainers in a rapidly changing society is crucial and there is a need to gather more evidence to support policy making in IVET. The European Commission is looking forward to working with Cedefop on the study and use the results to better implement the new EU policy actions. Self-assessment tool SELFIE was briefly presented.

Head of Unit Schools and Multilingualism, DGEAC, Michael Teutsch underlined the importance of the topic. Mr Teutsch pointed out that in the Communication for the European Education Area teachers and trainers are given a very strong emphasis adding that the continuity between IVET and CVET and continuity and flexibility between general education and VET should be taken into account.

Mr Teutsch briefly presented ongoing projects:
- **Self-assessment tool SELFIE** for teachers.
- **Peer-learning** on national career frameworks for teachers (including the mobility of teachers moving from general to vocational education).
- **New idea of Erasmus Teacher Academies** that should bring together stakeholders from different areas. The new phase of Erasmus programme has been launched providing plenty of opportunities for staff to be mobile and work together on various projects.
- **Active eTwinning** community currently looking at how digital education can work (open for both general and vocational education). Big common challenges identified include digital, sustainable and inclusive education. Mr Teutsch invited the participants/networks to join this community in order to have exchanges on those topics and make the teachers’ career more attractive.

ETUCE Senior policy coordinator Agnes Roman stressed that the students need support for quality, inclusive vocational education. Focus on digital transitions on the labour market and in education is needed. One problem that was pointed out was the student/teacher ratio in vocational education, which needs to be decreased. Several projects conducted on IVET and continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers have shown that initial preparation of teachers and trainers is a problem. Another challenge is making the profession more attractive for young and talented teachers – this is difficult to achieve given the high level of workload and burnout, working conditions and salaries.

ETUCE with EFEE (European Federation of Education Employers) is focusing on improving the situation via social dialogue. This project should contribute to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights to ensure an inclusive high level, high quality education for the students for the best learning outcomes but also to ensure initial and CPD for VET teachers that is accessible to all of them.

ETUCE hopes that the outcome of the project will contribute to important policy developments at the EU level.
Cedefop work on VET teachers and trainers and feasibility study overview

Cedefop experts in charge of Cedefop’s project, Irene Psifidou and Daniel Scheuregger presented an overview of the feasibility study discussing Cedefop’s work in the field of teachers and trainers professional development and the survey’s motivation and scope.

Within the EU policy context and European policy cooperation programmes in education and training and in particular with regards to enhanced cooperation in VET, Cedefop has played an important role in supporting the European Commission, Member States and social partners in designing and implementing the EU policy agenda through evidence-based policy making for VET teachers and trainers’ continuous professional development. The work of Cedefop in this area can be summarised by the following functions:

- monitoring developments under the Riga conclusions and the new Osnabrück Declaration in the Member States and providing evidence and data, such as related publications and thematic country reports;
• providing technical papers and guiding principles collaborating closely with the European Commission;

• organising conferences and policy learning fora to facilitate peer learning;

• supporting the ET2020 Working Groups on VET: Teachers and trainers (2016-18); Innovation and digitalisation (2018-20), as well as the Schools working group (2018-2020): developing tools and guidelines for: a) supporting VET teachers and trainers to timely reach dropouts and early leavers from education and training and help them reintegrate back into it, and b) to more effectively support at-risk learners so that they remain in education and training. Cedefop’s VET toolkit for tackling early leaving (www.cedefop.europa.eu/TEL-toolkit) provides VET practitioners with reflection and evaluation tools as well as a set of intervention approaches and good practices to enable them support effectively young people at risk. Cedefop aims to continue developing online tools and expanding its focus and work to other vulnerable groups, including NEETs and low-skilled adults. Through such resources, Cedefop will offer additional support to VET teachers and trainers in preventing early leaving, increasing youth employment and implementing pathways for upskilling.

Cedefop’s work on teachers and trainers is consolidated through this new initiative for a survey in IVET key populations. The motivation behind this new project is the lack of comparable data on IVET. Despite the existing data collection initiatives, there is no so far systematic survey of initial VET populations. To close this gap and collect evidence to inform policy-making, four target populations in IVET will be surveyed: school principals, teachers, in-company trainers and learners, getting insights into all levels (VET systems, institutions, learning and working environments) and monitoring developments and changes. The goal is to assess the feasibility for launching a pan-European survey of these populations.

The study will address ISCED level 3 classified VET and assuming that initial VET in all countries at least partly takes place in schools will allow a) to establish an overall strategy for surveying initial VET populations via schools; and b) to increase the rate of successful contacts for all four target groups allowing to conduct interviews with a manageable resource consumption. The aim for the next two years is to test the possibility of this approach for all population of interest, to assess its cost effectiveness, and to test if data provide coherent information across countries.
Keynote speeches

There were two keynote speeches, addressing the different missions of VET, on the following topics:

- **A systemic focus in VET on emotions and agency for inclusion**, Dr Paul Downes – Institute of Education Dublin City University, Ireland
- **Promoting excellence, working with artificial intelligence in digital environments**, Dr Wayne Holmes – UCL Knowledge Lab, University College London, UK

Paul Downes discussed the circumstances that determine inclusivity in VET and how the survey can help improve them, how to develop inclusive systems for IVET in light of two key aspects/foundational pillars in VET – emotion and agency, including individual learning plans. He referred to Cedefop’s VET toolkit for tackling early leaving and the structural indicators developed for its reflection tool for policy makers. He talked about the value of creating an inclusive learning and working environment, focusing on emotional support, involving the entire community and creating a supportive organisational culture to prevent early leaving from education and training. Comprehensive support to young people with complex needs was flagged as crucial.
Communication skills, social and emotional skills as well as relational and cultural competences of VET teachers and trainers, such as conflict resolution, bullying prevention and diversity awareness, are a key element for inclusiveness in IVET.

Learner agency and teachers’ and trainers’ capacity to build learners’ agency are the two overarching themes. AI tools are only good for as long as they are used pedagogically and facilitate students’ active learning. The role of the educator is to ensure that students develop active learning skills: this is a key part for inclusion. Further integration of IVET with universities, regarding both inclusion and artificial intelligence (AI) should be sought.

Wayne Holmes spoke about working with artificial intelligence (AI) in digital environments in VET. He stressed the importance of incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) to VET. AI can be a tool to promote excellence, he noted, however, if not approached in the right way, it could be at the expense of excellence. Three elements were flagged as main takeaways: 1) AI has a huge potential but there are also huge challenges. 2) AI can support VET, but possibly at the expense of excellence (e.g. regarding good pedagogy and student agency). 3) We need to both inform and learn from teachers and trainers to enable tomorrow’s AI for VET to be excellent.
Linking and integrating the implementation of AI into already established structures in the VET systems to adapt new technologies might be possible, but only if focus is specifically placed on this. An example of use of AI in the context of VET could be the intelligent tutoring systems. Numerous tools have been developed at universities. There is empiric evidence, but evidence for effectiveness for training rather than evidence on how the tools can be used and what is the impact on teachers and students. One of the benefits of AI is that it reveals previously hidden challenges when trying to automate something. Automation is possible but only if the VET community steps in and teachers and trainers explain what they need the tools to do, rather than companies offering tools to use for a context that needs to be changed to fit the tool.
Polls on key topics

To engage participants and collect their views in an interactive way, two polls were conducted during the webinar. In the first one, participants were given ten topics and were asked to rank the three most important ones to be covered in the forthcoming survey on IVET. The top three topics chosen by participants were as follows:

1) Pedagogy and didactics applied by teachers and in-company trainers
2) Attractiveness of IVET for learners
3) Qualifications and working experience of teachers and in-company trainers

In the second poll, participants were asked to indicate any additional topic they consider important, which was not covered by the first poll. The result of this poll was a word cloud, which revealed the following as key topics: CPD, well-being, inclusion, validation, pedagogy, quality, digital (pedagogy/inclusion).
Reaction from discussants and open discussion

Nine discussants from LLLP, EAEA, OBESSU, EIVET, EURASHE, EVBB, EUproVET, EVTA and the European Parents’ Association were invited to provide statements on the topics that should be addressed in Cedefop’s forthcoming study according to their experience and from their organisations’ point of view. The main points raised were the following:

*Brikena Xhomaqi, Director, LLLP:*

- The study could focus on: 1) how to assess and 2) how to address the well-being of teachers and trainers, 3) how it affects the performance of learners, dynamics, and environment.
- The cooperation and help from other staff in the schools and education institutions and different stakeholders that are surrounding the schools play a key role. All the burden should not be put on the shoulders of teachers.
- The role of teachers changes with digitalisation. Teacher is a facilitator who gives opportunity for learners to share knowledge.
- Teachers need more support in learner-centred approach with the focus on how to change pedagogy into focusing more on the learners’ needs and more on the learners’ diversity in the classroom.
- Inclusion and excellence, diversity and equity are the key elements that change the dynamics in the classroom. This requires extra capacities and skills for a teacher to be able to manage the classroom.

*Gina Ebner, Secretary General, EAEA*

- Starting with the learner and what and how we learn, one approach to learning is to look at the four pillars of education: learning to be, learning to know, learning to do and learning to live together. Generally, VET is seen as *learning to do* and general education is *learning to know.*
- There are two key points: the roles as learners and the roles as citizens and what VET teachers and trainers can achieve for both. Citizenship and democracy are extremely important for the VET sector and teachers and trainers to foster.
- Suggestion to focus on how democracy and citizenship can be fostered and what VET trainers and teachers need to do to achieve that.

*Bicca Olin, Board member, OBESSU*

- Seconded comments made by the previous discussants.
- Emphasis should be placed on inclusive excellence and well-being.
- It is important to keep in mind that decision-making occurs at local level. The results of the survey should reach decision makers at grassroot level. Students, learners and former learners, recent graduates can be a resource and key partners in order to influence these local opportunities, to reach out to these local providers (e.g. companies) but also to city officials and other stakeholders that influence the system.
• The next steps should be finding the mechanisms to implement the research results at local level.

Arja Flinkman, Vice President, EfVET

• From a methodological point of view, the study is reliable and concretely contributing to the high-level education policies.
• Identification of skills that will be needed in the future is necessary to determine the role of VET in reskilling and upskilling. This is a defining factor of VET excellence and inclusiveness.
• Flexibility and national ability to integrate non-formal and informal learning and micro credentials together with the local and regional companies, into formal education in VET, is key to tackling future challenges.

Alicia-Leonor Sauli-Miklavčič, Board member, EURASHE

• In both, VET and professional higher education, there is a substantial part of the curricula that is work-based learning. Once this system or structure is well established, there is a lot of benefits for all stakeholders (skill trends, competence trends, feedback on the students’ progress).
• The results of the survey should translate into action at institutional level.

Margarida Segard, Vice President EVBB

• The activity carried out is very important to increase call to action, to achieve political results and important to create the links with what is happening at EU and member state level.
• The importance of governance level was stressed. At governance level, AI can offer solutions to reduce the administrative burden for teachers. AI can offer support for teachers in the classroom but to other services as well - tracking, skills observation, anticipation, innovation process, efficiency process. Tackling both, governance and teacher level, might make it easier to see the results and skills achievements, employment achievements, civil society achievements.
• Suggestion to expand the survey to all school actors and include also the middle management, not only the principals.

Matti Isokallio, EUproVET

• VET teachers are multi-focus experts. Their autonomy is important and an interesting issue to focus on in the survey.
• Not all VET graduates will go into working life immediately, part of them will go into higher education.
• The choice of countries for the study is excellent as they are very different when it comes to VET education. A comparison could be included at VET provider level, e.g., teacher level, regional or governmental goals for vocational education and training, the structure, governmental or regional decisions, governmental goals for VET and how well these goals are achieved.
**Fabio Veneri, EFTA**

- Current challenges are linked to the concept of excellence and inclusion. On the one hand, promoting excellence within VET is keeping the programmes constantly updated according to didactics based on skills, implementing organisation innovation and constant updating of staff. On the other hand, promoting inclusion within our training courses has to do with the same fundamental elements: teaching based on skills that takes into account flexible training modules, staff attentive to the needs of students, the ability to contact the work in an inclusive logic and of course the use of available and accessible technology.
- EFTA works to facilitate relationship between stakeholders in the field of VET in order to enable them to share knowledge and practices on how to shape the training for the future.
- EFTA supports the study, which takes these elements into account and will certainly support the knowledge and development of these constantly evolving sectors.

**Arja Krauchenberg, Project Coordinator, European Parents’ Association**

- Parents are an indirect target group of the survey (e.g. teachers, trainers, principals may be parents themselves; learners may need to have their parents’ consent when starting IVET/apprenticeship, etc.).
- We need to be careful about the different education systems in different countries.
- The level of engagement of teachers and trainers in the education, training and teaching is a very important point. How well they feel plays an essential role in how they get their message across and how well their students and pupils feel in being accepted, encouraged and supported in their learning. That is something that parents would be interested to find out.
- It would be interesting to find out the actual cooperation between in-company trainers and the schools and the teachers. Parents would be interested in finding out about the pedagogical training that in-company trainers receive.
- Mobily for teachers, trainers and learners: peer-learning and by peer-exchange are important.
- *Vocational Skills Week* is an excellent forum for exchange but exchange takes place among already excellent schools. We need to bring other schools in the circle - the ones who are struggling and do not know how to go about it. It would be interesting to find out how teachers, trainers and principals see these possibilities, how well they are informed about the possibilities, how much time they think they would be engaged in this kind of exchange.
Surveying principals, teachers, in-company trainers and learners. Implementing a VET survey from a European perspective. Cedefop's feasibility study: practical implementation in six pilot countries

Six pilot countries are involved in testing the survey concept approach: Austria, Croatia, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Spain. The Ipsos/PPMI research team contracted by Cedefop and represented by Andrew Cleary, Milda Venckute and Donatas Pocius gave an overview of the feasibility study and its objectives and described the envisaged survey concept.

The presenters explained that the survey will be conducted in schools, which will facilitate access to all target groups. Data collection will be via online interviews, however a mode test will be undertaken with in-company trainers, contrasting the online approach with video calls, given uncertainties on the best approach to research this group. Development work will be undertaken to refine the target group definitions and sampling approach, to develop and test the questionnaires, and of the fieldwork approach. The development will culminate in the six-country pilot test, which will allow a direct assessment of feasibility to be made on a heterogeneous group of countries, with extrapolation to a wider EU survey then considered.
Panel discussion – Participants’ experiences

During this session, panellists briefly presented their projects and shared challenges they encountered. Although the projects were heterogenous, the challenges were cross-cutting: incompleteness and coverage of data, comparability of data across countries, incoherence, liaising with authorities and institutions in the countries. Several panellists mentioned that to implement the data collection, proper identification of target groups is needed.

Ralph Hippe – SELFIE for work-based learning tool, JRC
Alessandro Brolpito – SELFIE for work-based learning tool, ETF

- One of the challenges was involving in-company trainers. They got involved through schools and that worked fairly well.
- The work was also affected by Covid-19. Advice: plan safely and realistically. Starting with robust reporting and be ready to make full-on in implementation.
- Online survey implementation has worked very well.
Shinyoung Jeon and Rodrigo Torres – VET team on ‘Teachers and leaders in VET’, OECD

- The project aimed not to collect data but draw policy recommendations based on existing data.
- The first problem was definitions of VET teachers. Two definitions to cover data on teachers as widely as possible were used. One with VET teacher defined in International occupational qualifications ISCO 232. The other definition is based on programme of orientation or type of institutions. That is teachers in VET programmes or schools as used in UNESCO, OECD, Eurostat data.
- Another challenge is that detailed data in VET teacher industry experience, qualification and training pathways is lacking.
- One of the goals of the report was to show how the pedagogy was changing and what type of pedagogy is being used in VET. Unfortunately, there is not much information available. Thankfully, researchers had early access to the SELFIE tool, that was informative and helpful. Unfortunately, there are many aspects of the use of technology that need to be covered through specific survey or even through survey form. Topics that might be covered: type of technologies currently used, how it is used and with what purpose.
- With regards to VET leaders, information was lacking. PISA and TALIS data from limited number of countries was used. There is not much of information on what industry the VET institutions are working with and there is a lot of variability regarding the work-based learning opportunities.
- The fact that work-based leaning schemes are different is an important challenge to tackle, as VET teachers seem to have different roles in different education systems in different countries.

Karine Tremblay – TALIS, Teaching and Learning International survey, OECD

- One of the challenges was defining the policy interest/focus and the VET teachers and target population accordingly.
- Conclusions/recommendations for Cedefop’s study:
  o Ensuring synergies with EAG/INES/NESLI/UOE data collections to reach a common understanding on this definition.
  o Exploring the need for subject-specific questions in VET fields and find ways to ask so for varied subject areas (generic vs. subject-specific questions).
o Ensuring synergies with TALIS questions (or other surveys) whenever possible so that countries are able to contrast/compare the situation of their VET teachers relative to the overall teacher population on issues of common relevance.

o Exploring response rates in VET sector (not only schools, but on in-company trainers).

o Linking teachers and their students in the most meaningful way (school vs. classroom level) and managing related anxieties (data privacy, use for accountability?).

**Sonia Piedrafita Tremosa – Eurydice/OECD teachers’ & school heads’ salaries data collection**

- One of the challenges was missing data. For the statutory salaries, the main comparability issue is different understanding of fully qualified teacher.
- Another challenge was comparability of data (poor quality of data posing challenges to comparability across countries, comparability in time, in terms of population covered). For example, no data on the actual percentage of the salary range for some countries; missing data especially in the breakdowns by age and gender.

**Bruce Golding – INES-NESLI/OECD Teachers’ working time survey**

- First challenge was coverage, mostly due to differences in how the institutions are arranged.
- Second challenge was categorisation (diversity of VET programmes). Questions on how we present data for vocational programmes that are in total comparable and how we aggregate data together and make reasonable comparisons.
- The plan is to develop a survey to learn more about these issues and how to resolve them.
Open discussion

The open discussion focused around the following points:

- Regarding the comparability of data:
  - the great advantage of doing data collections repeatedly would be refinement. We find that over time we get better comparability by process of collecting the data and then reporting it in a standardised way. It is a process of improvement and harmonisation of data - mutual change of design and countries' decisions on how to collect and report data;
  - general data availability and comparability is lacking in many aspects not only VET teachers and leaders, but students and outcomes and there are many different attempts to overcome and improve current limitations. There is an effort to use all available data to help the policy makers, practitioners, VET school teachers and leaders.

- Regarding the combination of survey data with other sources, it is meaningful, but combining data sets, will be confronted with problems mentioned by the participants (e.g. incomparability of definitions and variables in source data). When you combine data, it has to be harmonised before linkage to allow for useful results.
Conclusion and next steps

Summing up the outcomes of the webinar, Irene Psifidou said that a solid ground for the survey was built. The aim of the webinar was to raise awareness and bring together key actors concerned for the future survey and that objective was fulfilled.

Cedefop Deputy Director Mara Brugia said that the survey would be the main pillar of Cedefop’s work on IVET in the coming years. With this survey, Cedefop aims to contribute to the objectives set out in the new EU policy framework, by offering support to teachers and trainers who have a ‘game changing’ role in moving towards economies and societies that are not only green, digital and competitive but also inclusive, fair and resilient.

The webinar was organised by Irene Psifidou, Coordinator of VET for youth team, with the support of Daniel Scheuregger, expert, Anthie Kyriakopoulou, assistant, and Alexandra Farazouli, trainee, at the Department for learning and employability headed by Antonio Ranieri.