

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Education and vocational training  
Vocational training and adult education; Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ENLARGED ACVT BUREAU**

**25 FEBRUARY 2014**

**1. Opening**

Mr António Silva Mendes, Director for Education and Vocational Training, welcomed the participants to this "enlarged ACVT bureau" and informed the meeting about the latest development in VET policy (European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), upcoming Cedefop conference on matching demand and offer of support on the EAfA, VET internationalization mapping etc.)

Following the Member States rotation principle, the current composition for this group is: **Lithuania, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg** together with ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, Cedefop and ETF. In addition Belgian (NL) DGVT and ACVT members participated, to assist the Bureau in the 2015 Bruges VET review, building on their experience with the adoption of the Bruges communiqué.

The meeting was chaired by Ms Dana Bachmann, Head of Unit for Vocational training and adult education.

ETUC raised the point of the ACVT nominations of social partners' representatives and asked if Croatia communicated their representatives (which was confirmed by COM). They thanked the Commission for the cooperation on the topic.

**2. ET 2020 Review and 2015 Bruges VET Review**

The Chair introduced the objectives of the meeting on this item of the agenda which aimed to have a constructive exchange on how to finalise the background document for DGVT and how to structure discussions in the DGVT meeting to allow for active participation and input to these agenda items.

Mr Youri Devuyst, from Unit EAC/A1, Education and training in Europe2020 governance, gave a presentation on the ET2020 mid-term stocktaking, whose main objective was to prepare the 2015 ET2020 Joint Report. At the same time it coincided with the review of the Europe 2020 strategy and the preparation of the education and training agenda of the new Commission.

The ET2020 mid-term stocktaking aimed at being a forward looking exercise based on several contributing elements: National reports (deadline June 2014) discussions in ET2020 bodies (like EQF, DGVT, DGschool etc) Also Social partners will be invited in

2014 to a meeting with the Commission, while other stakeholders will provide their input through the Education and training Forum of 9-10 October 2014. An independent interim evaluation is taking place (results will be available in September) as well as a comparative study of good practices of open method of coordination in other policy areas.

He provided an overview of the roadmap of the stocktaking and the questions proposed for discussion at the DG meetings, as per the document sent to the Bureau.

The Belgian representatives underlined the importance of streamlining the different reporting needs for different purposes to avoid double work for MS. They referred to the recently adopted Council conclusions and welcomed the reflection foreseen by the Council on investing in education and its economic and social impact. They asked if this topic will be included in the ET2020 Joint report. In addition, in their views it was crucial to plan meetings with the Education Ministers in the roadmap to ensure ownership by Member States; commitment at Ministerial level is needed to ensure support in the short and medium term for reforms endeavours.

The Greek delegate announced that there will be a Ministerial debate on the investments in education and training during the Italian Presidency in the second half of 2014<sup>1</sup>.

In response to a question by the Belgian representatives regarding the role of Cedefop's report reviewing progress towards the objectives of the Bruges Communiqué, Youri Devuyst underlined the effort of the Commission services to avoid double reporting and not to duplicate the work done by Cedefop and Refernet. About a political commitment, he, as well as the Chair, pointed out that the Joint ET2020 report will be adopted by the Council in 2015 following discussions in the Education Committee, and this will call for MS engagement on the objectives. Cedefop is also planning a high level conference. The 2015 VET review will be firmly anchored in the ET2020 stocktaking and therefore adopted at the same time; a new Communiqué, still to be confirmed, under the Latvian Presidency might be adopted.

Several clarifications were requested by participants on the role of Social Partners, the role of the ET2020 Working groups newly established and the comparative study on alternatives to the open method of coordination and how to adapt them to the Education and training reality.

Youri Devuyst underlined the importance of the contribution of Social partners to the ET2020 monitoring: their grass-root experience could provide ideas on the future (based on the lessons learned in the past). He considered that since the ET2020 WG work had just started to meet it was too soon to ask for their opinion. Nevertheless, the external evaluation would consult the members of the groups already concluded in the past and ask for their input. He explained also that about the study on alternative types of cooperation, the evaluator had been asked to look at various different coordination methods, open or not, in other EU fields with or without subsidiarity, or in third countries, in order to see what could be adaptable to the EU Education context.

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<sup>1</sup> The Chair clarified that CRELL and OECD were cooperating on this topic with the Commission and a study had been undertaken on analysing efficiency and effectiveness of educational systems based on PIAAC and PISA. The preliminary results will be available for the planned Ministerial meeting. The WG on indicators and benchmarks is also exploring what data would be available.

The second part of this point of the agenda was focused on the discussion on the 2015 VET Review.

Jan Varchola, Unit EAC/B2 Vocational training and adult education, introduced the 2015 VET review based on the note sent to the Bureau members before the meeting. He briefly explained the overall context of the Review, referring to the importance of strategic link to Europe 2020 strategy and ET 2020 (as explained by Youri Devuyst). He presented the methodological approach in the note (progress on short-term deliverables assessed based on Cedefop's 2012 interim report, urgency of short-term deliverables, the "evaluation matrix" as well as an idea of clustering the existing short-term deliverables).

For the emerging issues he outlined the importance of developing key competences of VET learners alongside to the focus on work-based learning elements in VET programmes and the need to critically look at the current deliverables related to the attractiveness. As for the area of CVET, a focus may be put on SMEs, potential of ECVET in CVET modularisation and the importance of development of higher VET. He highlighted the needs to strategically link VET to economic development and innovation policies, to promote new partnerships for innovation and smart growth as well as entrepreneurship in a wider sense (as ability to implement ideas and turn them into practical projects). More synergies should be sought for by integrating CVET, adult learning and active labour market policy measures in reaching out to the groups at risk. In this sense, monitoring of VET outcomes is crucial to effectively target these policies.

Ms Lore Schmidt gave a presentation of the preliminary findings of the Cedefop monitoring of VET policies based on interviews with DGVT members and focus groups with ACVT members, both government representatives and National Social partners. The governmental participants provided good contributions while less input was received from the Social partners, in particular about their own initiatives. (By the day of the meeting no input had been received by any interest groups from RO, BG, SI, SK, IS at all).

The Bruges communiqué has steered definition and development of policy reform, notably on aspects such system reforms, work based learning and apprenticeships, NQF developments, attractiveness and quality. Social partners' role had improved in several countries but was often still limited to consultations. At the same time, there were often different understandings of the meaning of entrepreneurship, with some social partners considering it only as self-employment and not as an attitude and mind set also good for employees. Interviewees showed that reforms had focused more on IVET despite the acknowledgement of the importance of CVET.

The Communiqué had inspired a structured approach on VET reform for some countries but there were different views as regards the future discussion on the scope of the new short term deliverables, alternatively as very focused priorities limited in number, or on the contrary a longer list of deliverables from which every country can choose depending on national priorities / challenges.

DGVT and ACVT representatives had mentioned issues that could inspire reflection for new themes for possible STDs (for period 2015-2017): teachers and trainers, labour market intelligence for fighting unemployment by increased cooperation with the world of work. Some commented on continuing the work already done, as reforms need time, without a need to start new initiatives.

Information on progress in achieving the STDs collected through Cedefop's ReferNet (questionnaires to inform on measures and stage of development) had just been received and were being analysed by Cedefop.

On the side of the candidate countries, Shawn Mendes from the ETF, explained that they were undertaking the same steps (focus groups and questionnaires) as it was done for the MS. Issues raised were very similar to those of Member States as explained by Cedefop. He stressed the fact that candidate countries are becoming more and more engaged in VET reforms in order to provide the skills for the job market. Additionally, he announced they were holding a training seminar with DGVT and ACVT members from the candidate countries in May.

The Belgian representatives proposed to start reflecting, as done in 2010, at the 11 strategic objectives first, in their opinion still very relevant; they expressed concerns about the possibility of letting Member States choose their own short term deliverables from a future established list. According to them, there should be a European focus on the deliverables. They asked also how the DGVT discussions will feed into the 2015 VET review and how the outcome will be compiled. They stressed the importance of creating a continuum between the different meetings and organizing a Ministerial meeting on the progress report of the VET review.

The Chair explained that during the DGVT there will be presentations to introduce the discussions in smaller groups which will then be reporting back in plenary and then, from these exchanges, the proposals for the main future deliverables will be extracted.

The Greek Delegate highlighted that the situation was different now compared to when the Copenhagen process started and also when the Bruges Communiqué was adopted, particularly given the economic and social situation in the EU.

ETUC suggested that future topics of STDs could be employability, quality standards, role of Social partners, and funding (in terms of both efficiency of investments as well as cost-sharing in VET). She invited Cedefop and ETF to liaise with EU Social partners in case they wished to collect further information and welcomed the suggestion mentioned by Cedefop to place a greater focus on teachers and trainers.

The Lithuanian delegate considered the first question for discussion at DGVT too broad and it was agreed to re-phrase it.

Robert Plummer, from BUSINESSEUROPE, underlined the importance to highlight the link to Europe 2020. He considered the time and context for the review was right, that the strategic objectives could be kept, but the STDs should be more targeted. He suggested VET attractiveness and employability were particularly important.

The Belgian Delegation, referring to the comment of the Greek delegate, recalled that a renewal of the Copenhagen process had been undertaken every 2 years and that a critical assessment of the overall Copenhagen process was made in 2010 when preparing the Bruges Communiqué. This has led to definition of a global vision for VET linked to the 4 strategic areas of ET2020. For the note, they proposed minor corrections to a clustering figure (adding the short term deliverables on EQF and validation of non formal and informal learning) and proposed to regularly update the road map which was submitted to the ACVT of last December because this was a very effective way of building coherence between the rotating Presidencies involved. They also advised to avoid confusion on terms such as basic skills, transversal skills and refer to the key competences framework.

In addition to Sector Skills Alliances, a reference to Sector Skills Councils should be made wherein the different roles of these two initiatives are explained.

Helen Hoffmann, from UEAPME proposed, as topics for future STDs employability, and highlighting better the role of higher VET in achieving the EU tertiary attainment (and equivalent) headline target, including in the note. They welcomed the focus on SMEs in CVET, which implied the whole cycle starting from identification of skills needs, design of training curricula, mobilisation of funds and validation and recognition of skills (incl. qualifications). In the note, she also asked to explicitly refer to the Chambers of Skilled Crafts and Chambers of Commerce as economic players.

Some discussions touched upon also the importance of MOOCS and open education resources development and ICT use, for example for technical simulations in schools. It was suggested to explore what would be relevant for the VET sector, without neglecting the aspect of quality assurance and validation.

The Chair asked to send further comments on the 2015 VET review within one week. It was agreed that based on the discussions, the Commission would prepare an updated note for the DGVT with revised questions for debate, including updated roadmap on the Review process as well as a reminder on the links with the ET2020 mid-term review as presented in the note for the last ACVT meeting in December 2013.

### **3. Events under the current and the future presidencies (DGVT meetings and conferences)**

The Greek Presidency introduced the agenda of DGVT meeting covering a comprehensive set of topics, looking into new developments under the Alliance for Apprenticeships, the 2015 VET review with first orientation debate for future priorities, providing feed-back to the ET2020 mid-term stocktaking and the ongoing public consultation on EASQ.

The presidency VET conference will be a high level policy event, focusing on how to address skills mismatches covering work based learning, re-skilling and up-skilling. Presentation of projects and workshops were foreseen.

ETUC welcomed the youth employment and work based learning topics in the DGVT. Belgium stressed the need of broadening discussion on apprenticeships to all forms of work-based learning.

The Italian representative informed the meeting of the main VET events of their Presidency:

- DGVT : 13-14 October DGVT starting with intervention by Italian Ministry and presentations by the Commission, possible peer reviews and finally discussion on the future priorities in the framework of the 2015 VET review.
- VET conference : 14-15 October, back-to-back with DGVT jointly with DG EAC and EMPL bringing together stakeholders from DGVT and ESF Committee to discuss inter alia the educational aspects of the youth guarantee, work based learning, validation of competences acquired in different learning settings and the role of volunteering as non-formal learning.
- ERASMUS+ on 18 November (tbc) maybe in Milan (to promote the future EXPO) 1 day meeting on the focus on mobility pathways.
- Council meetings: 11-12 December 2014 respectively for EPSCO and EYC Council where Italian Ministers will attend both events making the link stronger between the two fields.

The Latvian Presidency gave a first outlook of their priorities relating to career guidance for 21st century skills, lifelong learning (to link with the different types of skills, basic, transversal ones), inclusion, growth and sustainability. They will have more info by Mid 2014.

The Luxemburgish Presidency communicated that they were working still on their priorities.

The Chair reminded that some flexibility in the future Presidency should be kept to allow for inclusion of future Commission policy developments linked to the results of ET2020 and EASQ. She also invited the Social partners to inform the Commission services well in advance if they foresaw to have studies or interesting projects which could be considered for DGVT or Conferences on the themes of future Presidencies.

#### **4. ACVT meeting on 2-3 June 2014**

The Chair introduced the draft agenda. A follow up from previous meetings was foreseen on PIAAC and PISA, showcasing Social Partners examples. Also on the results of the Teachers and trainers WG, contribution by Social Partners with concrete examples would be useful. It was proposed that Social partners would present jointly selected best practices.

ETUC asked clarifications about Opening up education and the Standardization initiative by DG ENTR which were not on the agenda and about entrepreneurship which had been already presented in a previous meeting and was foreseen on the agenda. She also suggested to focus more on discussions on CSRs of the European Semester on VET, the implementation of the European Alliance for Apprenticeship and on youth unemployment.

UEAPME suggested to add information about the conferences on apprenticeships of last February including the presentations made on evaluating criteria for apprenticeships.

The Belgian representatives asked details on the information point on ESL in VET and if the work of DG ENTR on standardization would be expected to have an impact on education.

The Chair explained that entrepreneurship was only foreseen as an information point providing the conclusions of the thematic working group completed in 2013 and that under early leaving and VET, an update will be provided on Cedefop's ongoing work and the results of the TWG on ESL published at the end of 2013. Note was taken of the suggestions by UEAPME on the EAfA. She suggested to discuss the other proposed topics in December, including Opening up education, in order to have more time to analyse the VET implications. She would follow up with more clarifications on the DG ENTR initiative on Standardization<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> DG ENTR has met on 2 April the European Associations of VET providers and ETUC together with DG EAC. DG ENTR work with VET stakeholders will continue – additional information could be provided in one of the next ACVT meetings, once further developments will be made.

On early leaving and VET, Mara Brugia from Cedefop recalled they had published, in December 2013, a 'briefing note' about the role of VET in addressing early leaving from education and training; a study being carried out over 3 years aims at quantifying the phenomenon in VET (because comparable statistics in the EU are not yet available) and will identify/assess policy measures that countries are implementing in this field. A workshop on 3-4 June would be also organized on the topic in which experts from Member States will participate.

#### **5. Closing**

Next meeting of the enlarged ACVT bureau should take place in September 2014, date tbc.

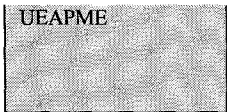
## ANNEX

## ACVT EXTENDED BUREAU - Brussels, 25 February 2014 Presence list

Ctry	Name	Organisation	Address	Telephone	Email
BE	<b>Ms Micheline SCHEYS *</b>	Flemish Department of Education and Training	Koning Albert II-laan 15 B-1210 Brussel	32 (2) 553.95.63	<a href="mailto:micheline.scheys@ond.vlaanderen.be">micheline.scheys@ond.vlaanderen.be</a>
BE	<b>Mr Wilfried BOOMGAERT *</b>	Flemish Department of Education and Training	Koning Albert II-laan 15 B-1210 Brussel	32 (2) 553 95 81	<a href="mailto:wilfried.boomgaert@ond.vlaanderen.be">wilfried.boomgaert@ond.vlaanderen.be</a>
EL	<b>Ms Athina PLESSA PAPADAKI*</b>	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS Andrea Papandreou 37 151 80 Amarusio		Tel: +30 210 34 3631 FAX: +30 210 34 42473	<a href="mailto:eudir@minedu.gov.gr">eudir@minedu.gov.gr</a>
IT ACVT	<b>Ms Valentina CURZI *</b> (replaced by <b>Germana Viglietta</b> from the <b>Permanent Representation</b> )	Ministry of Labour and Social Policies	Via Fornovo, 8 I-00192 Roma	39 06 46834044	<a href="mailto:vcurzi@lavoro.gov.it">vcurzi@lavoro.gov.it</a>
LT ACVT	<b>Ms Aleksandra SOKOLOVA *</b>	Deputy Head of the Vocational Education & Guidance Division Ministry of Education & Science	A. Volano Str. 2/7 LT-01516 Vilnius	370 5 219 12 40	<a href="mailto:aleksandra.sokolova@smm.lt">aleksandra.sokolova@smm.lt</a>



LV	<b>Ms Ilze BULIGINA *</b>	Senior Administrator Ministry of Education & Science	Valnu iela 2 LV – 1050 RIGA	371 (670) 47762	<a href="mailto:ilze.buligina@izm.gov.lv">ilze.buligina@izm.gov.lv</a>
LU ACVT DGVT	Antonio De Carolis <b>replaced by Ms Evelyne BECKER *</b>	Directeur à la Formation Professionnelle Attachée d'administration	Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle 29 rue Aldringen L-2926 Luxembourg	00 352 2478 5230 00 352 24775116	<a href="mailto:antonio.decarolis@men.luevelyne.becker@men.lu">antonio.decarolis@men.luevelyne.becker@men.lu</a>
ETF	<b>Mr Shawn MENDES *</b>	European Training Foundation	VILLA Gualino Villa Gualino Viale Settimio Severo 65 I-10133 TORINO		<a href="mailto:shaw.mendes@etf.europa.eu">shaw.mendes@etf.europa.eu</a>
CEDEFOP	<b>Ms Eleonora SCHMID *</b>	CEDEFOP	GR-57001 Thessaloniki	30 2310 490 027	<a href="mailto:lore.schmid@cedefop.europa.eu">lore.schmid@cedefop.europa.eu</a>
CEDEFOP	<b>Mr Mara BRUGIA *</b>	CEDEFOP	GR-57001 Thessaloniki		<a href="mailto:mara.brugia@cedefop.europa.eu">mara.brugia@cedefop.europa.eu</a>
CES/ETUC	<b>Ms Agnes ROMAN *</b>	Conseillère ETUC/CES	Bld du Roi Albert II, 5 B-1210 Brussels	32 2 224 0649	<a href="mailto:aroman@etuc.org">aroman@etuc.org</a>
BUSINESSEUROPE	<b>Mr Robert PLUMMER *</b>	Adviser, Social Affairs Businesseurope (The Confederation of European Business)	Avenue de Cortenbergh 168 B-1000 Brussels	32 2 237 6575	<a href="mailto:r.plummer@businesseurope.eu">r.plummer@businesseurope.eu</a>



**Ms Helen  
HOFFMANN \***

Adviser for Social Affairs  
UEAPME

rue Jacques de  
Lalaing 4  
B-1040 Brussels

32 2 230  
7599

[h.hoffmann@ueapme.com](mailto:h.hoffmann@ueapme.com)