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**Director**

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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON VOCATIONAL TRAINING**  
**MEETING OF 15-16 JUNE 2011**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair (Hélène Clark) welcomed the members of the Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT).

She recalled that this was the first meeting since the adoption of the Bruges Communiqué in December 2010 to which the ACVT had contributed substantially. The Bruges Communiqué established strategic objectives for European cooperation in VET for the decade 2011-2020. It also contained 22 deliverables for the national level for the period 2011-2014, as well as support measures at EU level.

**2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The Chair stated that the agenda item on the planned LLL Communication foreseen under item 6 was cancelled.

A Commission presentation of the "Europe 2020 June package" adopted on 7 June, including a Communication and Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs) was added to the agenda.

The amended agenda was adopted.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of 8 October were adopted without changes.

**4. EUROPE 2020 JUNE PACKAGE**

The Commission Communication "Concluding the first European semester of economic policy coordination: Guidance for national policies in 2011-2012" was distributed.

The Chair gave the floor to Fiorella Perotto (DG EAC/A.1) to report about the "Europe 2020 June package" which was adopted on 7 June.

Ms. Perotto explained that the European semester was a new working method to ensure that collective discussions on key priorities took place at EU level before national decisions were taken. The Communication contained several references to education, in particular the headline targets and matching skills to labour needs and investment. Member States were explicitly invited to preserve and prioritise growth-friendly items such as investment in education as part of their budgetary consolidation strategies. Country Specific Recommendations on education had been adopted for 15 Member States.

The Chair recalled that 6 Member States had received specific recommendations on VET.

The **trade unions group's representative**, Hermann Nehls, expressed doubts that the trend of aligning education and training to the needs of the labour market would be the right solution as labour market needs were changing frequently. For education and training (E&T) a long-term perspective was needed.

The Chair replied that linking E&T to the labour market did not mean that only short-term measures were considered. She added that what counted was that the spending was done efficiently.

## 5. GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING OF THE COPENHAGEN PROCESS

The Chair recalled that the positive experience of the working group on the Bruges review led to the setting up of a new WG – the "Copenhagen process WG". The aim of the WG was to support the implementation and monitoring of the Bruges deliverables and to prepare DGVT meetings. At the last DGVT meeting it was agreed that the Copenhagen process WG was to be enlarged to include five Member State representatives as well as the European Social Partners.

João Delgado (DG EAC/B.4) presented the note on the "Mandate of the Copenhagen process WG" and the "Reflection note on monitoring and reporting 2011-2014".

The **employers group**, represented by Susanne Müller, approved of both documents. She welcomed the composition of the Copenhagen process WG and the European semester themes. In the table "Proposed semester themes and their relation to short-term deliverables", she noted that the short-term deliverable 10 of the Bruges Communiqué (LLL Guidance) was missing. The government group made the same remark and asked for an explanation.

The **government group**, represented by the Hungarian Presidency, suggested widening the Copenhagen WG to the upcoming Presidency trio, i.e. 6 instead of 5 Member States to provide an opportunity for more Member States to be active in the Copenhagen governance. The group invited the Commission to explain the "follow-up" of progress made in Member States in the achievement of the short term deliverables. The idea of "thematic snapshots" was welcomed by the group provided that this did not mean additional reporting. The majority of the group was sceptical about the idea of "scoreboards" and requested a clarification from the Commission. The Italian government representative stressed that in terms of reporting, the Copenhagen process should not be seen in isolation but in the wider context of the ET 2020 strategic framework and Europe 2020.

The **trade unions group** queried the "one theme per semester" approach and underlined that the themes should be dealt with on an on-going basis. The group also enquired whether the social partners would be involved in the Copenhagen process WG.

### **Conclusions by the Chair**

- "Follow-up progress on the short-term deliverables": Through the Bruges Communiqué the governments and social partners have committed themselves to implementing 22 short-term deliverables. The idea behind such "follow-up" was to find out where each Member State stands without adding extra reporting requirements.
- "Scoreboard covering the 22 deliverables": Cedefop is discussing how to improve their resources, in particular Refernet for which a revamping is planned. The idea is to use Refernet correspondents more efficiently.
- "One theme per European semester": The Chair agreed that some flexibility would be necessary, but underlined that a structured and thematic follow-up was equally important.
- "Inviting the future presidency trio to join the Copenhagen process WG": It was agreed that the Copenhagen process WG would include the previous, the current and the three future presidencies.
- In reply to the Italian government member, the Chair explained that the High Level Group under the Polish presidency would address the ET 2020 strategic framework and its links with Europe 2020. The Commission would come back to this point in the near future.

João Delgado added that the Polish presidency would deal with the missing short-term deliverable 10 (LLL guidance issue).

## **6. ORIENTATIONS FOR ACTIVITIES RELATED TO VET EXCELLENCE, ATTRACTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE**

### **a) Results of the Hungarian Presidency conference on “Increasing attractiveness and excellence of VET through quality and efficiency”**

Zsófia Lux presented the outcomes of the conference.

### **b) Planned VET-Business forum and VET excellence policy document**

Ján Varchola (DG EAC/B.4) presented the point.

The **trade unions group** supported the VET excellence approach and recognized the need for higher qualifications to reflect the reality of labour market requirements. The VET excellence policy document should state that VET qualifications could also include EQF levels 6-8. (This point was supported by both the government and employers group). The group suggested mentioning social partners in the context of the VET-Business forum. The Danish trade unions representative stressed that the VET excellence document had overlooked work-based training.

The **government group** welcomed the VET-Business forum as contributing to growth and the EU 2020 strategy. However, too much focus was put on the education system to the detriment of companies and social partners who had a significant role in VET. The group agreed with the creation of national and regional partnerships and asked for funding opportunities. Euroskills was considered as popular for promoting VET excellence. Skills

competitions were considered costly events and some Member States asked whether the EU support for such events could be increased.

The **employers group** suggested considering also a sector approach for VET qualifications. Regarding the VET-Business forum, it was important to involve the right actors such as company representatives from SMEs and the crafts sector. The Polish representative from the crafts association suggested addressing the dual training system at the VET-Business forum.

### **Conclusions by the Chair**

- The EU Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020 was in preparation and it remained to be seen how much funding would be allocated to structural funds. Excellence and equity would be considered as relevant themes for funding.
- The wording "post-secondary VET or higher VET at EQF levels 5 or higher" used in the VET excellence document was a direct quote from the Bruges Communiqué and therefore could not be changed.
- Funds from the ESF are available to organise skills competitions.
- The ACVT should submit suggestions for company or trade unions representatives and/or themes to be dealt with at the VET-Business forum in writing.

### **c) Thematic working group on trainers in VET**

Eleonore Schmid from Cedefop presented this new group which would be working on issues related to VET trainers in a workplace context.

The **government group** suggested including VET teachers in the planned work.

The **employers group** welcomed the idea to set up a separate group for trainers and expressed a preference to limit the working group's remit to trainers from the regulated area as it would be difficult to set requirements for the private training sector. Experts should come from the labour market and not be nominated by the ministries.

The **trade unions group** supported the development of a "competence framework for trainers" and standards to apply to both the regulated and non-regulated area.

### **Conclusions by the Chair**

- The definition of trainers should not be too specific and a distinction between teachers and trainers was needed as separate working groups existed for each.
- The working group should decide on the remit of its work, including the type of trainers to focus on.
- As stated in the Bruges communiqué, the working group should go beyond the exchange of good practice and aim at developing "guiding principles".
- Nominations for the working group had been submitted but more experts from the ground were needed.

## **7. ACTIONS RELATED TO MOBILITY, EMPLOYABILITY AND CVET**

### **a) Council Recommendation on promoting the learning mobility of young people**

Simon Roy from DG EAC/C.1 presented the Council Recommendation.

The three groups supported the initiative.

The **trade unions group** underlined that mobility could impact negatively on the receiving country and the local labour market. In this regard the representative from Cyprus mentioned Erasmus and Leonardo trainees who were replacing workers in Cypriot restaurants.

### **b) Results of a preparatory study for a framework to facilitate transnational mobility for placements in enterprises**

João Delgado presented the results of the study.

The **employers group** welcomed the idea to look into the legal and administrative obstacles to mobility. The group agreed that a checklist might be useful but cautioned against more regulations. The groups' representative, represented by Helena Strigard, enquired whether the social partners would be invited to the expert workshop.

The **trade unions group** underlined the need for quality standards. According to a trade unions study, many people were forced into traineeships so as to get a chance to become employed.

The **government group** expressed concerns about the wording "framework" and suggested that the main challenge for mobility lay in the national jurisdictions e.g. social security, taxation, liability insurance etc. Consequently, if the framework meant to be a checklist, this would not remove barriers. However, if the intention of the Commission was to harmonize social security systems or setting up a legal framework, the group was sceptical about it. Member States would also like to see a better coordination between DG EAC and DG Employment in this field.

João Delgado agreed that overcoming legal obstacles to facilitate traineeships was important but also ensuring an approach against "fake" traineeships. Employers and employees would be invited to the expert workshop.

The Chair added that it would be helpful in particular for SMEs to be better informed about the conditions for taking on trainees.

### **c) Mobility and employability benchmarks**

Richard Deiss from DG EAC/A.4 presented the "Commission Staff Working Document on the development of benchmarks on education for employability and on learning mobility".

#### Employability benchmark

The **employers group** welcomed the employment benchmark, while recalling that in Germany for example 40% of VET graduates did not take up the jobs they were trained for. As a consequence, education should be more general and prepare for jobs in several sectors. UEAPME asked about the relation between the EQAVET indicators 5 and 6 and the employability indicator.

The **trade unions group** regretted that the main focus was put on the labour market and the needs of employers. Education and training should also be seen as an "independent" value. The quality of the first job did not always correlate with the quality of the training received.

The majority of the **government group** was not in favour of the proposed employability benchmark, mainly for methodological reasons. Countries were sceptical about what was going to be measured and whether the benchmark could also provide answers on the quality of VET programmes.

The German government representative did not see any added value of such a benchmark as employability was difficult to measure and was dependent on the national context. He also wondered why the issue had not been discussed before with the ACVT. The Austrian representative suggested considering a "transition" benchmark.

Richard Deiss conceded that the benchmark would not be perfect, given the difficulties of measuring employability. The Labour Force Survey would be the key source for the statistical base, but additional indicators might also be used

### **Conclusions by the Chair**

- The Chair recalled that the Council requested a benchmark on employability and that the benchmark had been discussed with Member States in the Education Committee. The discussion in the ACVT was important input for further development. Employability also meant the quality of the curriculum and quality assurance systems were therefore needed.
- Agreed with the Austrian government representative on "transition". The benchmark would give information about the possibilities to get a job after education and could help young people to evaluate the usefulness of their training.
- Confirmed that there is a link between EQAVET and the employability benchmark.

### Mobility benchmark

While recognizing that the benchmark was ambitious, UEAPME strongly supported it.

The **government group** questioned where one should set the mobility benchmark but also how to set it. Some countries missed an agreed baseline. The group suggested that the proposed benchmark of 10 % was far too high and therefore not realistic. The group suggested fixing the benchmark, once the budget for the next E&T programme had been agreed. The benchmark should not be limited to initial VET (IVET) but also include continuing VET. The importance of the quality of mobility was also stressed. The group regretted that there was no reference to ECVET in the staff working document.

The German government representative suggested that measuring mobility depended on the starting point, i.e. whether the benchmark measures the entrants to IVET at a given point in time or a whole cohort during a period of time. A German study on mobility in VET confirmed a mobility level of 3%. Therefore, a realistic benchmark for Germany would be between 5-6%. If the benchmark was set too high, it would be ignored. This message would also be communicated to the members of the Education Committee. In the current economic situation, financing was an important consideration. The Dutch and Austrian government representatives expressed similar concerns.

### **Conclusions by the Chair**

- The Chair was satisfied that employers and government representatives support the principle of a mobility benchmark.
- Insufficient data is a problem and work to improve the knowledge base, notably the data of the Labour Force Survey, is needed.
- Referring to the benchmark set for higher education (20%), the Chair remarked that this benchmark had triggered an increase in mobility in higher education at national level. Similarly, in the upcoming budgetary discussion it would be useful to be able to

underline the policy priority on mobility in order to positively influence the funding allocated to mobility.

## **7. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

João Delgado chaired the meeting from this point on.

### **a) Annual progress report 2010/2011**

Richard Deiss presented the "Commission Staff Working Document on Progress towards the common European objectives in education and training".

### **b) European Skills passport (ESP)**

Pedro Chaves from EAC/A.1 presented this point. An information note was sent in advance explaining the main features of the ESP which was part of the existing Europass framework.

The **trade unions group** referred to an ambitious schedule and stated that no reference to qualifications was made.

The **employers group** generally welcomed the tool, but asked for more clarification on the added value of the ESP. For example, what was the relation between the latter and the suggested "professional card", the "Youth on the move" card and the Directive on regulated professions? What was the link between ESCO, ECTS and ECVET? The group re-iterated its call for an overview from the Commission of European tools in the area.

The **government group** asked whether in the case of the ESP, a shift in paradigm had occurred since we were talking about skills and competences and not qualifications. Some countries cautioned against introducing new tools, arguing that this would confuse the end-user and would not facilitate the original aim of increasing transparency.

Pedro Chavez replied that the initiative was in tune with the EQF and ECVET. The skills passport would help to make skills, including those acquired informally, more visible. The added value included the recording of skills and competences developed through work experience, traineeships and volunteering, either at home or abroad. The professional card concerned only those workers in regulated professions and was issued by governments.

### **c) EQF, EQAVET and ECVET update**

Carlo Scatoli from EAC/A.1 presented recent developments on the EQF, including a new EQF portal which provides the results of the national process for relating national qualifications levels to the levels of the EQF. The website can be found at [http://www.elearningeuropa.info/fr/directory/European-Qualifications-Framework-\(EQF\)-portal-](http://www.elearningeuropa.info/fr/directory/European-Qualifications-Framework-(EQF)-portal-)

Sophie Weisswange and Erik Hess (DG EAC/B.4) presented the latest state of play on EQAVET and ECVET respectively.

### **d) Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving (ESL)**

Susanne Conze from EAC/B.2 presented the Council Recommendation to reduce early school leaving.

The French governmental representative informed participants about an upcoming contact seminar dedicated to LLL projects targeting ESL planned for November in Amiens.

## **10. UPCOMING PRESIDENCY EVENTS**

Piotr Bartosiak (Ministry of National Education) gave a presentation on events of the Polish presidency.

The Chair then closed the meeting. The next meeting is provisionally scheduled for 14 November.