



Advisory Committee on Vocational Training

Opinion on THE FUTURE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING POST 2020

3 December 2018

Employment
Social Affairs
and Inclusion

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The Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, established by the Council Decision 63/266/EEC, has the task of assisting the Commission in implementing a Community vocational training policy. Its Opinion on the future of Vocational education and training post 2020 is addressed to the European Commission, and reflects the views of the Committee. The Commission cannot be held responsible for any use made of the information contained therein.

Introduction

Making the European Union competitive, cohesive and resilient in the future means **investing in people**; in their education and training, their skills, their creativity, and their capacity to innovate. The world of work is evolving at a brisk pace. Changing and increasing skills demands, coupled with economic, demographic and technological developments are posing considerable challenges as well as providing opportunities for innovative responses

from VET systems. VET has a key role in providing people with the initial skills and qualifications to enter the labour market and supporting their upskilling and reskilling in a lifelong perspective to enable them to successfully manage career transitions. Moreover, VET provides a strong contribution to personal development in work and life and fosters democratic citizenship and European values.

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1. The policy context and implications on VET

Structural changes induced by **rapid technological developments**, such as digitalisation, automation, robotics or artificial intelligence, and evolving consumer demands will continue to speed up the process of new jobs being created and others changing or even disappearing as well as trigger dynamic changes in skills requirements. Furthermore, mitigation of effects of **climate change** requires appropriate technological developments (such as new environmental friendly technologies, sustainable energy consumption and production) and policy responses – including relevant vocational skills. This comes on top of economic cycles, which always have an impact on skills needs. However, not all sectors will be affected to the same extent. **Globalisation and global value chains** bring about decisions on where the production of goods and services is located, and as such define what skills are needed in different regions of the globe. **New business models**, such as those based on the "shared economy", are impacting upon the traditional forms of **work organisation, employer – employee relations and skills development**. There is a shared interest and responsibility of public authorities, employers and employees to contribute to skills development leading to successful enterprises and appropriately skilled workforce.

Demographic changes and migration are among the greatest challenges in Europe, with an impact on the supply of skilled labour, their diversity, the structure of jobs, intensity of skills shortages and provision of VET. Skills development strategies in a given country will also need to take into account migration and integration policies and employers' human resources and training practices towards young and adults, including foreign / cross-border workers or third-country nationals. The labour market integration of refugees and economic migrants could be part of the EU's approach to tackling skills mismatch. Efforts to identify, assess and validate skills, and recognise foreign qualifications should be stepped up to this effect.

The global reform agenda defined under the **Sustainable Development Goals**, including its ethical principles, has an impact on VET systems, provision and content.

The **political attention to the importance of**

investing in people is vital in making sure that modernisation efforts are implemented in the required speed and scope. It is necessary to **integrate education and training policies into forward looking economic, competitiveness and innovation** policies to manage structural changes. This will need to be well reflected in the **structure of public budgets**. Indeed, through strengthened cooperation between Member States, social partners and education and training providers, future education and training policies and skills governance systems need to be even more closely linked to other public policies and modernisation strategies, backed by adequate levels of public and private investments at different levels. Social partners have a key role in supporting transition and career paths between sectors. The different funding sources and financing mechanisms (e.g. training funds) should be adequately designed and implemented to maximise positive impact.

With a view to the above-mentioned challenges, it is expected that in the future, VET would continue to balance **stability** and a certain degree of **flexibility** allowing for a response to labour market developments. The challenge of **skills shortages as well as the lack of basic skills** is contrasted by a forecasted demand for more medium and higher skills in Europe. This situation will become more acute in a number of EU countries by 2025. VET, together with the overall education and training systems and other policy domains, will need to address this challenge and support the competitiveness and innovation of European economies. More investments are needed in the development of **skills anticipation mechanisms and foresight methods** including at sector and technological levels in view of understanding the specific impact of changes within sectors and occupations and using this information to inform VET governance in view of updating curricula accordingly and providing individuals with the possibility to make informed learning and career choices.

VET will continue to prepare **young people** for entering and successfully and sustainably participating in the labour market. At the same time, VET will need to respond to increasing needs for **upskilling and reskilling of the adult population at all levels, according to their**

identified skills needs, including the socially disadvantaged as well as high potentials (e.g. migrants, refugees, low-skilled and unemployed, inactive groups, including women), so as to

enable them to stay and/or (re-)enter the labour market and to move freely and in a self-determined manner through their educational and professional careers.

2. Defining a shared vision of future-fit VET systems for 2030

Since 2010, governments and social partners have worked together to take forward the objectives agreed under the Bruges Communiqué. In particular, they have progressed in making initial VET more relevant to labour market needs notably through focusing on work-based learning, apprenticeships, professional development of teachers and trainers and quality assurance. However, the quality of and participation in VET systems varies across Member States (see Annex for more details on the state of play of VET in Europe).

Since the aftermath of the youth unemployment crisis, reforms in initial VET are well embedded in the national reform programmes. In parallel, increasingly more focus is put on the need to support adults' upskilling and reskilling through continuing VET. Through its particular reference to right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning, as well as the right to receive support for job search, training and requalification, the European Pillar of Social Rights sets a strong basis for striking the right balance between initial and continuing VET.

The Bruges Communiqué sets a vision for an EU VET policy agenda up to 2020 (with streamlined priorities in the 2015 Riga Conclusions). Already in 2017, work has started to shape the vision for a post 2020 VET policy framework, to be linked to the successor of ET2020 framework and the setup of the European Education Area. As a result of various consultations with stakeholders, the following emerging trends in VET have been identified:

- VET is expected to reposition itself within the future mix of a strong foundation of basic skills, generic, soft, transversal and professional competences. It should prove its ability to prepare people not only for existing jobs, but also – for future employment and job creation. VET is expected to continue fostering democratic citizenship and European values.

- Evidence from Cedefop shows¹ that with the growing weight of VET specific content in parallel with key competences, learning provision is expected to become more hybrid – in terms of blurring borders in institutional profile, target group, curricula and learning environment between VET and general education, between IVET, higher VET and CVET, between VET and higher education.
- The link between initial and continuous VET and labour market is expected to change from a one-way to two-way avenue. In view of developments on the labour market mentioned above, increasingly lifelong development of employees will prove to be a necessity. This implicates that the current policy focus on publicly financed initial VET will have to have a broader approach where providers increasingly offer training courses for adult workers ('CVET'). Therefore, we need demand-driven, practice-oriented, flexible and responsive VET policies and frameworks.
- Emerging new technologies and work organisation formats are expected to be captured faster through skills anticipation systems and translated to VET provision in terms of needed skills, curricula and qualifications. VET systems are expected to develop 'fast response' mechanisms of both stable quality assured core qualifications/skills pathways and flexible formats of adding new or higher-level skills, requiring strong governance involving social partners, both employers and trade unions.
- VET would need to combine and balance a process-oriented, input and supply driven

¹ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/changing-nature-and-role-vocational-education-and-training-vet-europe>

model with a result and outcome-oriented approach, in view of meeting expectations of learners in terms of adequate skills, of employers in terms of skills needs and productivity gains and of society in view of a contribution to growth and social cohesion.

- Governance in VET is expected to move towards a shared system with the participation of main stakeholders and implemented at national, regional, local, institutional and sector level. The involvement of social partners as well as stakeholders such as providers and VET learners in the development, implementation and governance of VET policies should be further strengthened.
- The way in which people are taught and learn will continue to evolve with the introduction of new, technology-based, educational tools and programmes.
- There is a need to significantly increase the links to innovation and efficiency in VET.

- Strong VET systems contribute to the competitiveness, innovation and growth of the European Union.

At the same time, it should also be acknowledged that although Europe is facing the same overall challenges, the challenges in the area of VET are not necessarily the same across the continent. Some countries experience an increase in VET enrolments and a positive image of VET, while others struggle with the attractiveness of VET and experience a decrease in interest to follow a vocational pathway. Also, VET-systems are very diverse across Europe. Some countries have school-based systems, other have dual systems or a combination of both. This diversity also requires that solutions are well adapted to the specific context of each country.

The following section sets a vision of the ACVT for a future VET policy, which should be part of the future agenda for education and training.

A vision for the future Vocational Education and Training by 2030

Excellent, inclusive and lifelong VET

European VET systems by 2030 should aim to deliver excellent and inclusive education and training that offer opportunities for both economic and social cohesion, support competitiveness and growth and smart, inclusive and sustainable development, and foster democratic citizenship and European values - thus helping all individuals to develop their full potential in a lifelong learning continuum. They are defined by three core elements:

- They foster acquisition of skills, competences and qualifications which ensure employability, adaptability, personal development and active citizenship of individuals
- They provide accessible, attractive, valued and innovative quality assured provision for all
- They are integrated, responsive, diversified and quality assured and they are underpinned by governance, funding and guidance which foster excellence, inclusion, effectiveness and shared responsibility

The vision can be achieved based on enhanced partnership between VET and the world of work and through pursuing the objectives listed below. In pursuing these, it is important to ensure continuity with the existing EU vocational

education and training and social and employment policies, including Council Recommendations or other policy documents and initiatives (see point 2 in the Annex).

A. Skills, competences and qualifications for employability, adaptability, personal development and active citizenship

- VET provision should embed a) stable core and b) flexible elements in order to provide learners with the skills and transversal competences that are needed on the labour market and in the society and that will empower them to lead a self-determined professional life and master numerous career transitions as well as active citizenship. Learners need to have a strong foundation of proficiency in basic skills (literacy, numeracy, digital) and other key competences. All these skills and key competences, including entrepreneurial skills, critical thinking as well as career management skills should be further developed through VET.
- In parallel, VET has an important role to play in fostering the employability of learners and the productivity, competitiveness and innovation potential of European companies. Therefore, it is important to further enhance the labour market relevance of VET curricula, including through a learning outcomes-based approach, including practical and on-the-job training.

B. Accessible, attractive, valued and innovative quality assured provision for all

- VET should be delivered by highly qualified teachers and experienced trainers who are supported through initial and continuing professional development (including digital skills and innovative teaching methods) in view of delivering high quality learning outcomes. Efforts should be targeted at increasing the attractiveness of teachers and trainers professions to ensure a sufficient number of qualified teachers and trainers.
- VET needs to be learner-centred, provide flexible and modular opportunities for learning, including mobility opportunities, and allow progression aiming at achieving maximum completion rates. The provision should be based on an appropriate/different mix of modern learning environments, including work-based learning and technology supported learning, pedagogies and tools as well as access to state of the art

infrastructure.

- VET needs to support smart and sustainable growth, by expanding interdisciplinary learning and by offering innovative provision that fosters learners' creativity and is responsive to the new priorities presented by an evolving economic landscape in the context of the fourth industrial revolution.
- It is necessary to promote VET as an attractive and high quality pathway for jobs and for life. Attractiveness can be achieved in particular through fostering excellence and permeability of training pathways and it should be well communicated through promotion activities / campaigns involving all VET stakeholders and successful VET graduates as role models. Potential learners should have access to a clear and user friendly information on the training offer at national and regional level. Guidance and orientation, in particular towards learners and families, play an important role in the promotion of VET pathways.
- VET systems need to ensure effective and gender-balanced access, attractiveness and training opportunities for all, taking into account the needs and the situation of learners and the skills and qualifications required on the labour market. Thus, VET is aligned with the aims of the first principle of the European Pillar for Social Rights and is beneficial for everyone, irrespective of their socio-economic background, existing skills set or career/job status. It can enable people to be active members of society and productive and successful workers.
- VET needs to offer high quality education and training and be promoted at all levels including at higher levels as part of higher education and higher VET (to be seen on equal footing).
- VET needs to be career-long and transparent, supported by arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning, recognition of prior learning and quality and effective guidance services and should foster permeability and access to well-established progression routes.

C. Integrated, responsive, diversified and quality assured systems with governance, funding and guidance which foster excellence, inclusion and effectiveness

- VET systems need to be:
 - designed in a lifelong learning perspective integrating initial and continuing VET catering for both young and adults;
 - part of the overall national E&T and skills governance systems and linked with employment and social policies at local, regional, national and European level;
 - integrated into forward looking economic and innovation strategies and systems at local, regional, national and European level to proactively co-shape innovation and growth;
 - based on strong quality assurance mechanisms and effective feedback loops that enable the timely adaptation of curricula to evolving labour market needs and underpinned by transparency instruments.
- VET governance and provision need to be informed by skills anticipation and assessments and graduate tracking systems in order to support learners to obtain vocational skills that respond to dynamic developments in the society and labour market, notably digitalisation, automation/robotics, the transition to green economies and sustainable development.
- VET systems need to be better adaptable to the rapidly evolving socio-economic environment, more demand-driven and open in terms of forms of provision, notably through internationalisation strategies, more transnational mobility experience, new forms of digital learning, blended learning, modules for re- an up-skilling that are offered and diversity of providers.
- VET systems need to be based on effective governance at all levels which involves all relevant stakeholders, particularly social partners, and ensures effective and equitable social dialogue between the trade unions and employers, taking into account national industrial relations systems and education and training practices. Such a multi-actor and multi-layer governance should be reflected

also in the financing mechanisms.

- VET systems should provide an appropriate degree of autonomy for VET providers according to national systems as well as sustainable funding which supports the realisation of this vision.
- The increasing importance of up- and re-skilling of adults in a lifelong learning perspective should also be reflected in the balance between investments in and funding for I-VET and C-VET.
- Training entitlements and other measures ensure effective access to training for all.
- VET excellence² should be encouraged, supported, promoted and rewarded.

² VET excellence can be characterised by a holistic approach in which VET:

- is an integrative part of skills ecosystems, contributing to national and regional development, innovation, and smart specialisation strategies;
- is part of knowledge triangles, working closely with other education and training sectors, the scientific community, and business;
- enables learners to acquire vocational and key competences through high-quality provision that is underpinned by quality assurance, builds innovative forms of partnerships with the world of work, and is supported by the continuous professional development of teaching and training staff, innovative pedagogies, and internationalisation strategies.

3. EU cooperation in VET

European cooperation in VET was explicitly included in Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Today it is anchored in the Treaty of Lisbon which calls for the Union to implement "a vocational training policy" (Article 166 TFEU), while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content and organisation of vocational training (principle of subsidiarity). Since 2002, this policy has evolved under the framework of the Copenhagen process while being firmly embedded in the ET 2020 framework (see Annex for more details). In addition, structural reforms in VET are being supported through the European Social Fund. International cooperation, including mobility of VET learners and staff, is being financed through the Erasmus+ programme.

The overall governance of European Union cooperation in VET is structured around the meetings of the Directors General for Vocational Education and Training, giving the policy steer, and the formal Advisory Committee on Vocational Training whose role is to advise the Commission in implementing a Community vocational training policy. In addition, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) supports development of European VET policies and contributes to their implementation underpinned by its research, analyses and information on VET systems, policies and practice, skill needs and demands in the EU. The European Training Foundation (ETF) contributes, in the context of EU external relations policies, to human capital development, defined as work that contributes to the lifelong development of individuals' skills and competences through the improvement of vocational education and training systems.

3.1. EU VET cooperation in the post 2020 period

The Advisory Committee on Vocational Training invites the Commission to:

1. Work towards the **adoption of a new Communiqué** that will define the vision for VET 2030, taking into account this Opinion, and will be endorsed by the **Ministers in**

charge of VET, European Social Partners and the Commission.

2. Prepare a **Commission proposal to streamline and consolidate the EU VET policy framework, governance and existing EU instruments.**

On the basis of the Communiqué, this proposal would define and operationalise the **VET modernisation agenda** for the next decade through

- a. Informing and supporting **reforms to be carried out at the national level** according to national circumstances as outlined in the Vision on page 6 of this Opinion;
- b. Providing the **EU-level support** needed for their implementation and fostering establishment of European VET culture which is result-oriented and supports Member States in setting goals and developing methods to assess their attainment.

3.2. Main elements to be considered in a possible future Commission proposal on a EU VET policy framework

The proposal should be developed taking into account the evidence, such as relevant evaluation reports, CEDEFOP and ETF findings and expertise and in close consultation with stakeholders, in particular ACVT as a tripartite forum involving social partners which play an active role and have direct knowledge and experience of both labour and training markets. The proposal should also take into account views of stakeholders and end-users, including VET learners, VET providers and employers. The proposal could take a form of an overarching **Council Recommendation on VET** to contribute to the wider strategic goals of the Union in the context of:

- successors of the Europe 2020 and ET2020 agendas,
- Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States
- the Union response to the Sustainable Development Goals,

- the further implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights,
- the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.

In this proposal, the Commission could include the following elements:

1. The **overarching vision for European VET policy** taking into account this opinion and encouraging Member States and social partners to work together to enhance access to and quality of vocational education and training, while including also learners and VET providers.
2. The Commission should organise a **reflection with experts from the ACVT** as regards the potential for **streamlining existing VET instruments** and accelerate the ongoing discussions in order to come up with timely proposals. These discussions should also be carried out in close cooperation with the EQF and Europass Advisory Groups. These should be developed taking into account existing evaluations, studies and stakeholder's views in relation to the different instruments and the interaction between them and an overarching analysis of these.
3. Proposals to simplify the **VET governance at EU level notably through increased effectiveness and efficiency of structures supporting the implementation of EU instruments in the field of VET**. The overall VET governance could be centred around two existing stakeholder platforms which would provide strategic guidance and be proactively engaged in activities:
 - a. The Advisory Committee on Vocational Training, as the formal tripartite advisory body,
 - b. Directors General for Vocational Education and Training as the forum for senior policy makers to set the strategic orientations in the field of VET.
4. Call on **Cedefop and ETF** to continue to contribute to the development of Union VET policies and their implementation through their research, analyses and information on VET systems, policies and practice, skill needs and demands in the EU, and pursue cooperation with relevant international

organisations, such as ILO, OECD, UNESCO.

5. A **clear and light monitoring framework** against a *set of indicators* or as part of the overall benchmarks on education and training (e.g. benchmark on mobility in VET, and possible future benchmarks in the area of VET) to enhance transparency and support mutual trust among Member States, while fully respecting economic, social and cultures differences and various traditions in countries' education and training systems. Such framework should provide a real added value to the Member States.
6. **Define the EU level support** in a way that ensures the necessary continuity of successful policy initiatives, strengthens mutual learning activities as a tool to help implementing various Council Recommendations and links to the available financial support through the future Erasmus and ESF+ programme. The activities should support delivery of the vision set for the future VET policy framework, and should focus on areas with greatest EU added value. In particular, these initiatives should aim at facilitating access to effective and quality vocational education and training while respecting the diversity and flexibility of systems and of industrial relations practices. EU initiatives should build upon the European Pillar of Social Rights and reinforce, as appropriate, initiatives such as European Vocational Skills Week, Platforms of Centres of Vocational Excellence, Support Services and mutual learning for VET, European Alliance for Apprenticeships (in line with the Council Recommendation on Quality and Effective Framework for Apprenticeship), Mobility and Internationalisation in VET (see Annex for more details).
7. **Social dialogue** should be a key element in the process of the preparation and implementation of this initiative. Social partners, in particular, at sectoral level, play an active role and have direct knowledge and experience of both labour and training markets. The initiative would encourage Member States and social partners to work on a tripartite and bipartite basis to enhance access to and quality of vocational education and training, in accordance with the national circumstances.

Annex

1. The current state of VET in Europe

Main statistical data on VET

Vocational Education and Training is one of two key pathways for young people to enter the labour market. On average 50 % of young Europeans participate in initial VET (at upper secondary level). However, the EU average masks significant differences, ranging from participation rates of 73 % to less than 15 %. Around one third of young adults enter the labour market directly after completing an upper-secondary VET activity; another 20% continue into tertiary education.

Following a VET pathway opens up good perspectives on the labour market: at a time when 40% of European employers cannot find people with the right skills to fill their vacancies, 80% of VET graduates find their first long-term job within six months of finishing their studies. Furthermore, evidence shows that 60-70 % of apprentices move directly into a job following their apprenticeship, and in some cases, this increases to 90 %.

The VET pathway also provides for a competitive salary – young people with a vocational qualification earn 25.1% more than those with only a low level of education and 16.5 % more than those with a medium level qualification of a general orientation. In some countries the salaries of those with a VET qualification are even comparable to the salaries of those who have a university degree.

VET plays a key role also in the continuing professional development of adults. The percentage of EU-28 companies that had provided any type of continuing vocational training in the previous year is increasing systematically (from 49.7% in 2005 to 60% in 2015) with the biggest increase registered among small companies (~11pp). In non-vocational training we can observe the opposite trend (EU-28). In 2005, 50% of companies had offered non-vocational training in the previous year and in 2015 only 39.9% - a decrease of 10.1pp. The biggest decrease was registered among small companies (~11pp). Regarding job-related non-formal training the latest data show that on average 27.5% of adults (25-64) participated in this form of learning in the 12-month period prior to the survey³. In the case of employed people in companies in 2015, 40.8% of them participated in job related training⁴.

Key findings of the Cedefop/ETF report on developments under Riga in 2015-17

However, VET's role and standing, its value and benefits are closely linked to the individual country context. This is also evident from countries' joint work on VET since the launch of Copenhagen process in 2002 and the report on developments under Riga in 2015-17.⁵ Countries did not start from the same point. For some countries, the work on VET is part of a natural evolution others need to strengthen VET's role and its relevance. This applies for both, member states and candidate countries. While their policy actions may look rather similar, purpose, speed and progress vary, as they need to suit their contexts.

The continuity in the policy framework and its 2020 objectives is reflected in countries' developments. These developments also respond to ad-hoc challenges, for instance in countries that were faced with large numbers of third country nationals arriving in the context of the refugee crisis. Overall, with small variations, participating countries had selected apprenticeships and work-based learning as the top priority under Riga followed by access to VET and qualifications for all; teacher and trainer training; key competences and quality and feedback loops followed to lesser extent.

³ Adult Education Survey 2011 There is still not estimated data for EU-28 for 2016. Data from EE, HR and FR are missing. Country comparison is also difficult as in all cases there is a break in the data.

⁴ Continuing vocational training in enterprises 2015

⁵ Cedefop and ETF(2018) Better European cooperation in VET: one process, many stops

The main developments on the five medium-term deliverables from the report can be summarised as follows:

- The high attention paid to making apprenticeships and work-based learning attractive for learners and employers has been a strong common trend among all participating countries. Most actions focused on apprenticeships at secondary level, either preparing the grounds, legal frameworks or updating rules and principles and qualification structures. Countries with mainly school-based VET have worked to expand learning opportunities in enterprises.
- As regards countries' work on quality assurance for VET, candidate countries focused on quality assurance approaches at system and provider level, making use of the EQAVET framework, while the EU-28+ developed their approaches further. All worked to strengthen skills anticipation and feedback loops. Despite improvements, systematic use of outcome indicators and graduate tracking still seem to be weak spots.
- As regards enhancing access to VET and qualifications, common features include structural changes to make VET pathways more flexible, broaden access to VET and improve progression opportunities to higher education. However, coordinated strategic approaches have not yet been frequent. Actions focused on youth and, in the EU-28, on improving training opportunities for the low-skilled, unemployed and newly arrived migrants. While guidance services and tools have been stepped up, comprehensive approaches remain an area for improvement. Countries have also reinforced their work on validating non-formally and informally acquired skills and recognition of qualifications or prior formal learning.
- To offer the right blend of skills to all learners countries have been working to strengthening key competences in learning-outcomes based IVET curricula. In most cases they have focused on language and digital skills, but references to soft competences were scarce and information on actions related mainly to VET for young people.
- Work on professional development of teachers and trainers focused on VET-school staff. Several countries face the challenge of an ageing teaching staff and future shortages. Hence, attention was more on improving status and career opportunities to make the profession more attractive and improving initial training. With apprenticeships and other forms of in-company learning being expanded, countries have been working to enable placements in companies for teachers; in some training of trainers is moving to the fore.

As regards the broader dimension of VET systems and policies, the report confirmed some earlier trends:

- Borderlines between VET for youths and adults, initial and continuing training are becoming less clear cut.
- EU funds, in the EU-28 mainly the ESF and, increasingly, Erasmus+, have been used to support the work on the Riga deliverables. In most candidate countries, both the EU pre-accession assistance instrument (IPA) and international donor organisations (including bilateral donors) have been highly associated with VET systems reform.
- Member States, and candidate countries to a lesser degree, have reported stakeholder involvement for each action whereby trade union involvement and activities are less evident in the information provided, than those of employers and their interest groups.
- The Riga deliverables and the EU-level framework have helped to reinforce cooperation across borders. Political commitment and ownership have been the ingredients for significant action. These ingredients have given cooperation in VET its distinctive identity and, in several countries, helped to keep it on the policy agenda
- As is evident from developments in apprenticeships and work-based learning, collaborative approaches across borders and EU-level policy packages, with initiatives in various policy domains, may help sustain efforts. The upskilling pathway recommendation, the recommendation on graduate tracking and the revision of the key competence framework may help boost developments in their focus areas.

Trends identified in the CEDEFOP study on the Changing role and nature of VET

Learning from past developments, the CEDEFOP study on the Changing role and nature of VET highlights some trends paving the way towards VET in the future⁶:

- VET provisions are becoming increasingly diverse. Countries with school-based VET are strengthening apprenticeships and vice versa. Work-based elements are given high priority and visibility in all VET forms. At the same time boundaries between school-workplace and vocational-general are becoming less clear cut, pointing to hybrid models. Vocationally-oriented higher education is becoming more visible and gaining in importance
- Countries are reducing the number of qualifications they award while broadening their scope, as they put more emphasis on social and transversal skills and competences.
- VET's re-orientation towards learning outcomes and competences potentially allows for a more learner centred approach.
- More flexibility in the time and place of learning and increased acceptance of prior learning opens up VET to broader groups of young and adult learners.
- As skills-intelligence systems are becoming stronger, they highlight the need for reviewing and renewing skills and matching them more effectively to jobs.

2. European cooperation in VET

The EU VET policy vision up to 2020 is set in the Bruges Communiqué and Riga Conclusions and is firmly embedded in the ET 2020 framework. This vision has further evolved through the adoption of:

- a number of Council Recommendations (EQF, EQAVET, ECVET, Validation) and Europass Decision
- the 2016 New Skills Agenda for Europe with the objective to make VET a first choice,
- the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017
- more recently, Council Recommendations on Upskilling Pathways, Tracking Graduates and European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeship;

The EU level cooperation in the field of VET so far has been mainly delivered through four types of activities supported, where applicable, by funding from Erasmus+ and ESF:

1. **Activities to support the implementation of Council Recommendations** organised notably through specific stakeholders' groups and underpinned by targeted funding and mutual learning (networks, users' groups, dedicated calls for proposals);
2. **Policy initiatives in the area of VET:** notably the European Alliance for Apprenticeship and the European Vocational Skills Week;
3. **Mutual learning activities:** notably ET 2020 working groups, peer reviews and other peer learning activities (including Cedefop and ETF events);
4. **Monitoring of progress:** notably Cedefop and ETF VET policy monitoring, ET Monitor, ET 2020 benchmarks or IVET Mobility Scoreboard.

⁶ Cedefop (2018). The changing nature and role of VET
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/changing-nature-and-role-vocational-education-and-training-vet-europe>

3. Main EU programmes supporting VET

Erasmus+

The Erasmus+ Programme has an (initial) overall indicative financial envelope of 14.774 billion EUR. Of these, almost €3 Billion are assigned to VET over the period 2014-2020. Every year around 130.000 VET learners and 20.000 VET staff benefit from mobility actions. In addition, almost 500 VET projects are financed under Strategic partnerships every year under Erasmus+. The programme also finances other activities relevant such as Sector Skills Alliances (including sectoral Blueprint) or targeted calls for policy reform.

The European Social Fund (ESF)

The ESF is an important financial lever for VET. The 2013 ESF Regulation mentions that “the ESF should (...) promote equal access to good quality education, invest in vocational education and training, improve the labour market relevance of education and training systems and enhance life-long learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning pathways.”

For the programming period 2014-2020, the ESF has a thematic objective (TO 10) entitled “investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and life-long learning” which assigns €6,8 Billion for “Improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems, facilitating the transition from education to work, and strengthening vocational education and training systems and their quality, including through mechanisms for skills anticipation, adaptation of curricula and the establishment and development of work-based learning systems, including dual learning systems and apprenticeship schemes”.

4. Proposed EU level initiatives for the post-2020 period

The European level initiatives to support national VET modernization should ensure continuity with current political commitments within the Bruges Communiqué and Riga Conclusions and relevant Council Recommendations and Decisions:

- Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 April 2018 on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass),
- Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning,
- Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning,
- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET),
- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET),
- Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning,
- Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults,
- Council Recommendation of 20 November 2017 on tracking graduates, and
- Council Recommendation of 15 March 2018 on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships.

THE FUTURE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING POST 2020

The future European level initiatives could include:

INITIATIVE	AIM	FUNDING
European Vocational Skills Week	<p>Improvements of the image and attractiveness, promotion of benefits of VET to wide public and reward excellence</p> <p>Building up a strong VET community, fostering partnerships and commitments</p> <p>Promotion of EU VET policy agenda, including objectives such as quality assurance, flexibility, excellence, social inclusion, international dimension</p>	<p>ESF+</p> <p>Erasmus</p>
Platforms of Centres of Vocational Excellence	<p>Promotion of a strategic role of VET in supporting economic development, innovation, competitiveness and inclusion, development of EU common VET content and open education resources in VET; linking up transnational sectoral/thematic focus with local/regional dimension; linking IVET and CVET</p>	<p>Erasmus</p> <p>ERDF</p> <p>InvestEU</p> <p>ESF+</p>
Support Services and mutual learning for VET	<p>Provision of peer counselling and capacity building to VET stakeholders in the EU through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apprenticeships support services (implementation of EFQEA), - Future Reform Delivery Tool - Technical assistance on VET excellence in smart specialisation strategies, in cooperation with JRC, - Mutual learning activities and production of policy guidance on quality assurance (EQAVET) and flexibility in VET, graduate tracking, enhancing access and availability of continuing VET for adults for upskilling and reskilling, guidance, teachers and trainers, skills anticipation and other topics including with the support of Cedefop (country reviews, mutual learning events) and ETF - Capacity building of VET providers / institutions at system and provider levels 	<p>Erasmus</p>
European Alliance for Apprenticeships	<p>Strengthening the Alliance by expanding its outreach and mobilising stakeholders to increase the supply, the quality, the image of apprenticeships.</p>	<p>Erasmus</p>
Mobility and internationalisation in VET	<p>Reinforce support for mobility of VET learners and staff through the future Erasmus programme, as well as the institutional capacity of all actors involved in VET mobility. Support the further development of international partnerships in VET</p>	<p>Erasmus</p>