

Good Vocational Education and Training in Europe

Common Objectives of the Unions4VET Project

The vocational orientation of young individuals also equals their orientation in life and, at the same time, vocational education and training also stands for personal development. It is key to decent work *and* participation in society. Co-determination, involvement and shared responsibility are essential elements of vocational education and training. Trade unions therefore are an equal partner in national and European vocational education dialogues. Consequently, the following considerations are meant as a plea for a holistic consideration of education and training, an appeal for a European vocational education and training dialogue.

1. The focus is on the trainee. It is a matter of supporting and promoting the trainee's competences. Only when young individuals are offered good education and training, a decent wage and good career perspectives will they be willing to engage in vocational education and training.
2. On the issue of vocational education and training, we as trade unions are primarily concerned with our responsibility for the young individuals. A youth unemployment rate of 22% in Europe means approx. 6 million individual lives. It means that member states, employers and trade unions must take action together. A lost generation would be an shameful indictment for Europe.
3. Education and training must make an essential contribution towards bringing democracy to life. As a centre of industry in the world, Europe depends not only on its economic and technological success but also on the continuity and further development of its socially oriented democracy and the rule of law.
4. Vocational education and training is more than the skills needed to adapt to a job. It is not sufficient to have an acquired skill for living and working in these times or finding decent work. What we need is a basic structure, a broadly-based understanding. Any vocational education and training intended to contribute to social development is part and parcel of comprehensive personality development.



5. Only broadly based, sound vocational education and training will ensure companies getting highly qualified staff and will offer good labour market perspectives for the young individuals. As a learning venue, companies are thus an indispensable element of modern vocational education and training. Any occupation has to be learned in practice - under the realistic conditions of working life. As a result, the dual nature of vocational education and training is a fundamental principle of any vocational education and training system.
6. Modern vocational education and training teaches an occupation and not only the skills needed at a specific place of work or training. It teaches a curriculum going beyond any narrow specialisation. In their field of occupation, trainees shall develop an eye for the big picture, recognise connections and be in a position to largely shape them independently.
7. It is necessary to have companies employing qualified trainers and this is also true for a good interaction between vocational education and training facilities and companies as well as between unions and employers. Companies must also be prepared to pay their trainees a training allowance.
8. Vocational education and training facilities must ensure that the specific lessons taught in the companies will become generally applicable learning. Due to the growing specialisation in many companies, their increasing focus on core activities, an increasing number of them can only teach a mere excerpt from the broad spectrum of a job description.
9. For the unions, trainees are accepted members of the workforce. Works councils and staff representation bodies as well as the representative committees of young workers and trainees advocate the trainees' rights. Trade unions also stand up for trainees in their collective bargaining.
10. Decent education and training in Europe needs regulated tools. They include the duration of training for a specific occupation, cooperation between companies and vocational education and training facilities and the legal status of trainees. The involvement of the social partners, vocational education and training facilities and the science community in a vocational education and training dialogue is indispensable for the acceptance and attractiveness of modern vocational education and training systems.

The Unions4VET project was initiated with financial support by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung). The participating unions will strengthen vocational education and training and agree on education and training pathways. The

project addresses appropriate forms of learning, a broadly based vocational education, a holistic concept of vocational education and training involving companies, vocational education and training facilities as well as universities.

The Unions4VET project promotes the European vocational education and training dialogue with the social partners and participates in already existing and planned initiatives. Unions4VET creates networks, develops pilot projects with the countries involved, promotes their cooperation and trains unionists to become vocational education and training experts.

Annex

Good education and training in Europe needs regulated tools!

Criteria for the structure of modern vocational education and training

Duration of training to learn an occupation The average duration of training to learn an occupation varies between three and four years. The initiation and familiarity with an occupation is associated with acquiring the competences and skills defined in the associated job description as well as developing a professional identity.

Vocational training as a basis for further training and development Technological and economic change as well as the processes of corporate organisational development require specific, job-related forms of further and continuous training. A sound initial training for an occupation creates the required basis for such a development.

Cooperation between learning venues The cooperation between learning venues, a fundamental principle of dual vocational education and training, is based on the understanding that any occupation must be learned as a hands-on experience. A *reflected work experience* is an essential basis for occupational learning and development and requires extensive *company-based and systematic work experience* (training) amounting to at least 50% of the total training period. It must be rooted in a vocational education and training curriculum involving more than one training venue.

The legal status of trainees In their training companies, trainees have the contractually agreed status of future specialists. So they are not students doing an internship but employees to whom the specific rules concerning vocational education and training shall apply.

Cost-benefit ratio of company-based vocational training All relevant studies on the training costs and training benefits in company-based vocational education and training programmes show that a

training of 3 to 4 years can be designed as a cost-covering venture. *The trend shows that the training benefit increases with a higher quality of training.* Company-based vocational training as an element of dual education and training thus represents a self-financing system.

Management of the vocational education and training system

Vocational education and training systems are characterised by a plurality-based management system whose participants primarily represent the competent government agencies for education, industry and the labour market as well as the social partners.

A uniform set of rules (Vocational Education and Training Act) It is necessary to regulate the entire initial vocational education and training unless it is taught at university. This fact determines all important issues in connection with vocational training. This regulation starts with the development of training contracts, determines the vocational education and training conditions, the rights and duties of trainees, the rights and duties of training companies and, above all, it regulates how occupations are created and designed.

Integration of the social partners, vocational education and training facilities and the science community in the vocational education and training dialogue: A coordinated, plurality-based management of vocational education and training ensures that the players are involved in line with their expertise and interests in the vocational education and training dialogue on the national, regional/intermediate and local levels. This is especially true for specialists delegated by the social partners, vocational education schools as well as vocational education researchers.

Regulatory processes create a balance between the widely diverging interests of the players involved Job descriptions, vocational training regulations and education and training curricula are the result of empirically determined qualification requirements as well as the normative specifications derived from education and training objectives. A compromise is struck between a company's specific interest in "tailor-made" qualifications, the sector-specific interest in a broadly based job description and the individual's interest in opportunities for occupational development. The various interests and their underlying political orientations are integrated in these regulatory processes.