WORKSHOP BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

Vocational Education and Training

Following the economic and financial crisis in 2008 international policy makers and governments across Europe started to put vocational education and training (VET) high on their agendas, as its potentials include meeting the skills demands of the fast-changing labour market, reducing skills mismatch, and providing efficient and cost-effective training. There have been numerous reforms in the sector on national and EU level in the recent years, resulting for example in the integration of VET into formal education and training systems, more centralised control of standard setting and the introduction of competence-based approaches.[1] The recognition and validation of skills acquired outside of the formal education system is now an integral part of VET in many countries.[2]

Following the demands of the European cross-sectoral social partners, the European Alliance for Apprenticeship (EAfA) was created in 2013 as a platform which seeks to improve the quality, accessibility and reputation of apprenticeships across Europe, and to promote the mobility of apprentices. Several teacher trade unions - individually or jointly with other unions - committed to the goals of the EAfA from the EU and non-EU countries (the Czech R., Ireland, Lithuania, Finland, France, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, UK) with the focus of raising awareness about quality and fair apprenticeship within which teachers and trainers have an active role.

In 2015 the EU ministers responsible for vocational education and training, the European Commission and the European-level cross-sectoral social partners endorsed the «Riga Conclusions», which provided a set of 5 priorities to improve VET for the period of 2015-2020. The 5th priority of the Riga Conclusions aims to "Introduce sys-

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1   European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2017): The changing nature and role of European vocational education and training in Europe. Volume 3: The responsiveness of European VET systems to external change (1995-2015). Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union
2   Ibid.

tematic approaches to, and opportunities for, initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school and work based settings.»[3] The VET policy of the EU is translated and discussed within the European Training Foundation with its member countries, therefore impacting VET systems beyond the border of the EU[4].

Nevertheless, the VET sector does not have the best reputation as it is often perceived as a possibility for low-performing students, or an alternative for dropping out. The VET sector also suffers from low attractiveness of teachers and trainers within which the competition with the industry probably plays a role, as private business can provide higher salaries to potential teachers and trainers of professional subjects. Nevertheless, there also is a general problem with the attractiveness of the teaching profession. TALIS 2018[5] shows that only 26% of teachers feel valued by society, with female and longer serving colleagues being even less likely to feel so. The results also show that 61% of teachers are unsatisfied with their salary, and 34% are unsatisfied with their employment conditions. Many teachers also report a high level of stress, mostly related to excessive workload.

The research of the CEDEFOP[6] shows a very diverse picture of initial training of VET teachers and trainers, depending also a lot on whether they work in school-based settings or in companies (mostly the case for trainers).[7] Staying up to date on industry developments seems crucial in this sector for the teachers and trainers.[8] This was also highlighted in the ETUCE policy paper developed by VET experts of ETUCE member organisations and adopted in 2012.This might also be a way to improve the overall quality and reputation of the VET-sector and improve teacher satisfaction. Although there is not much data on the continuous professional development (CPD) needs of vocational teachers and trainers, the TALIS 2018 gives a good insight into the CPD needs of lower secondary teachers in general. According to this, the teachers the most in need of professional training (green bar in the below table) on are those teaching students with special needs, ICT skills for teaching, teaching in multicultural and multilingual environment, student behaviour and classroom management, and teaching cross-curricular skills.

Figure I.5.6. **Participation in professional development for teachers and need for it**

Results based on responses of lower secondary teachers (OECD average-31)
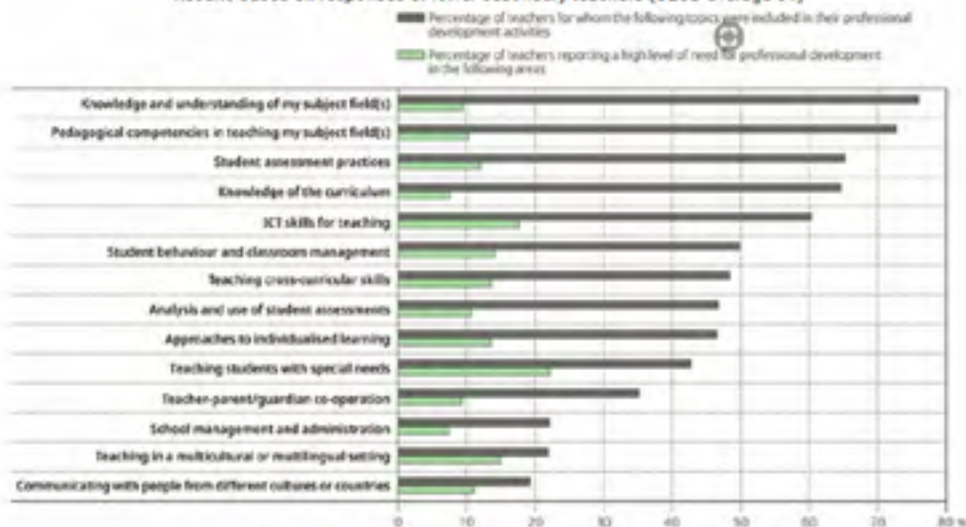
3   https://www.izm.gov.lv/images/RigaConclusions_2015.pdf
4   ETF Partner Countries: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan
5   OECD (2020), TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II): Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/19cf08df-en.
6   European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)
7   European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2016): Briefing Note: Professional Development for VET Teachers and Trainers.
8   C. Rawkins (2019): A Global Overview of TVET Teaching and Training: Current Issues, Trends and Recommendations. International Labour Organization and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

The COVID-19 crisis made the insufficiency of ICT training, as well as training for students with special needs, disadvantaged students, and teaching in multicultural settings even more apparent.[9] Regarding ICT training, only 60% of teachers received professional development in ICT in the year preceding the survey, while 18% reported a high need for development in this area.

Provision of good quality and fair apprenticeship to the VET students, ensuring their placement in company-based practical learning, ensuring that they have work and training contracts, salary and quality assessment were the demands of ETUC supported by ETUCE in relation to setting up a European Framework of Quality and Effective Apprenticeship by the education ministers of the EU countries in 2018. Among the 14 quality criteria the 3rd one defines Pedagogical support to be provided by the governments: "In-company trainers should be designated and tasked to cooperate closely with vocational education and training institutions and teachers to provide guidance to apprentices and to ensure mutual and regular feed-back. Teachers, trainers and mentors, especially in micro-, small and medium-sized companies, should be supported to update their skills, knowledge and competences in order to train apprentices according to the latest teaching and training methods and labour market needs." However, apprenticeship needs to be based on a balanced cooperation and dialogue between VET institutions and companies. According to recent research the quality of teaching and training (TT) is a joint responsibility of the VET institutions and the companies in Austria, Croatia, Czech R., Germany, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.[10]

The VET sector was the most hit by the COVID-19 crisis as it was not possible to continue apprenticeship within companies in many sectors and replace it via digital practical learning. In essential sectors (heath care, food) the apprentices stayed in the companies but many of them were exposed to everyday risk of contamination and continued their apprenticeship under apprenticeship allowance only. In cases where continuing practical learning was not possible, there is a high risk that VET students would drop out without obtaining their leaving certificate.

Therefore, the Workshop aims at exchanging around the following questions:

·   **How to support VET teachers and trainers in the different countries in order to meet the needs of the constantly changing societal and economic environment, especially following the COVID-19 crisis?**

·   **What are the experiences of education trade unions in improving the status of VET sector and its teachers and trainers?**

·   **What should be the response of education trade unions to the increasing demands on VET teachers and trainers and the number of reforms in the whole VET sector?**
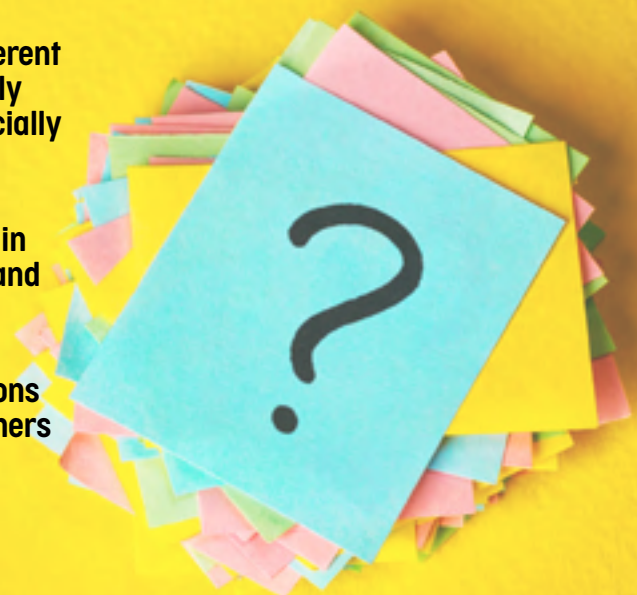
9   OECD (2020), TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II): Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/19cf08df-en.
10   S.D. Broek, M. Cino Pagliarello, R. de Vreede-Van Noort, P. Vroonhof (2017): Teachers and trainers in work-based learning/apprenticeships: Mapping of models and practices. Final report. Panteia: Research to progress.