Main challenges and trends in VET in the EU

Links between VET and higher education

Erasmus+ HEREs Seminar
10/03/2015 Istanbul

Jan VARCHOLA
Vocational training & Adult education
European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
Content

- Context of VET in Europe
- Main challenges of VET in the EU
- VET modernisation agenda in the EU
- Current and future policy priorities in VET
- Links between VET and higher education
Features of VET systems in the EU

- Initial VET – typically at upper secondary level age 15/16-15/19 – around 50% of young people in VET

- CVET – labour market oriented training for adult population

- Governance structure with involvement of social partners (employers, trade unions) in different bodies (committees, councils, etc.)

- School-based and work-based systems (depending on a structure of economy)

- Usually well-developed network of VET providers

- Efforts to fulfil dual objective of responding to the needs of economy but also personal development of individuals
Students enrolled in vocational upper secondary education, 2012, as a % of all students enrolled in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3)
Main challenges

- Great differences between VET systems across EU countries (with very well developed ones in DE, AT, DK, NL)

- Low attractiveness – VET often regarded as a second choice option of young people

- Quality and relevance to labour market needs – skills shortages

- Low share of work-based learning – involvement of companies in provision of training

- Early leaving from VET

- Low levels (compared to higher education) of international mobility
Bruges Communiqué – "the EU 2020 VET agenda"

- Part of overall structural reforms under the Europe 2020 framework
- Vision, strategic objectives, short-term deliverables

VET by 2020:
- High quality initial VET
- Flexible systems of VET based on a learning outcomes approach which cater for validation of non-formal and informal learning
- European education and training area with transparent qualifications systems
- Substantially increased opportunities for transnational mobility in VET
- Attractive and inclusive VET
- Easily accessible and high-quality lifelong information, guidance and counselling services
- Easily accessible and career-oriented continuing VET

- VET high on policy agenda – contribution to decrease (youth) unemployment

- Europe 2020 country specific recommendations 2014 (22 Member States)
Current policy priorities

 ✓ Dual systems + other work based learning (European Alliance for Apprenticeships)

 ✓ Quality and labour market relevance (including quality assurance, teachers and trainers, balance between short-term needs of economy and long-term adaptability of individuals)

 ✓ Efficient governance (involvement of social partners and cooperation partnerships between VET providers and companies)

 ✓ Emerging trends – excellence of VET (links to economic development and innovation strategies, new types of partnerships, higher VET, innovative use of ICT, new funding models)

 Increase attractiveness of VET
Future policy priorities – 2015 - 2020

1. Work-based learning

2. Quality assurance in VET and feedback loops to both I and CVET

3. Access to training and qualifications through both I and CVET

4. Strengthening key competences in both I and CVET

5. Professional development of VET teachers and trainers
VET and HE – policy context

- The Bruges Communiqué - Member States to develop or maintain post-secondary or higher VET at EQF level 5 or higher and to contribute to achieving the EU headline target of 40% with tertiary or equivalent education.

- Promote flexible pathways between VET, general education and higher education and enhance permeability by strengthening the links between them.

- Member States as part of efforts to build excellence in VET.
VET and HE - Excellence agenda

- Aligning VET with regional/local economic development / innovation policies
- Permeability and development of higher VET to respond to emerging skills shortages
- Strengthening partnerships and networks between companies, VET providers and higher education institutions (new types of partnerships)
- Innovative use of ICT (OER, ICT based simulations)
- Entrepreneurship
'Higher VET' – features and trends

- Very dynamic field of E&T (industry), but still rather a grey zone / trends of "academisation" and "vocationalisation"

- In general, very good labour market outcomes (employability, transitions, wages)

- Differences across countries of what is considered as higher VET (content, providers, types of programmes, funding schemes, interest of policy makers and labour market demand)

- No clear definition and place in national qualifications landscape (post-secondary VET, short-cycle programmes, professional higher education, professional bachelors programmes, higher VET, dual higher education, etc.)

- No clear links to institutions - Providers vary from traditional universities, universities of applied sciences, companies, upper secondary VET schools; and may be public or private institutions.
Demand for this type of learning is often driven by industry and business needs in specific sectors, often facing skills shortages or emerging skills requirements.

Work-based learning, dual learning, applied research projects are usually a very strong element of this type of learning.

Governments can have control over this field of education and training mainly through accreditation processes for higher education and funding as well as development of national qualifications framework.
Lifelong learning - VET at higher qualification levels contributes to permeability in E&T systems as it is very often a bridge to higher education or a natural progression pathway for vocational secondary graduates.

Continuing training pathway for adult workers and non-traditional students who return to training in order to update and increase their skills.

Social inclusion and equity - providing a pathway for students from a lower socio-economic background, "higher VET" can play the role of a social lift, giving a chance to young people who would probably not progress to more academic studies.
Thank you for your attention!

More information