

"Vocational Education and Training in Europe – Perspectives for the Young Generation"

Memorandum on Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training in Europe Berlin, 10-11 December 2012

Many EU Member States are facing enormous economic and social challenges. Youth unemployment stands at almost 50 per cent in some Member States. An alarmingly large number of young people in Europe leave school without formal qualifications. This problem group now accounts for a good 14 per cent of young people in Europe. It is important that these young people should be offered good new prospects for high-quality vocational qualifications and employment.

Work based, dual or alternance-based training is the focus of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), the European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and the European Copenhagen process in vocational education and training. The Member States of the European Union have agreed specific targets with a view to promoting training and employability. These include efforts to ensure that at least 82% of graduates from education and training programmes are gainfully employed by 2020, and that young people are offered good jobs or further training, an apprenticeship or an internship within four months of leaving school. Dual or work based training is explicitly mentioned as a central element of educational modernization.

At the Ministerial Conference in Berlin on 10 and 11 December 2012, the ministers responsible for vocational education and training stressed the necessity of increasing cooperation and launching effective and sustainable cooperative activities to encourage and where appropriate establish dual forms of work based vocational education and training in the partner countries. At the same time, these activities will support the implementation of the agreed European objectives.

We, the Ministers

1. Intend to contribute to a reduction in youth unemployment and to the improvement of transition to qualified employment as well as to enhanced competitiveness through efforts to apply, on top of other policies, dual or work based training, on a pilot basis.
2. Agree that dual or work based training should be examined so as to become of model of vocational education and training systems in Europe.
3. Support efforts to increase the attractiveness and quality of vocational education and training.
4. Share the view that mobility in vocational education and training contributes considerably to the development of a European labour market and education area and is of benefit to national education systems
5. Share the view that efforts to modernize vocational education and training with the aim of fostering work based or dual training should be supported by new forms of cooperation between the stakeholders involved.
6. Agree that the involvement of the social partners and industrial players is indispensable for good vocational education and training that is relevant to the labour market.

7. Share the view that transborder cooperation and peer learning are important for modernizing the national vocational education and training systems under the European strategy for lifelong learning.
8. Consider our initiative an essential contribution to the establishment and implementation of a European Alliance for Apprenticeships which was announced by the European Commission as a follow-up to the Memorandum.
9. Agree that we will focus our efforts in coming years on five central fields of action:
 - Increasing the attractiveness and quality of vocational education and training
 - Involving the social partners and the private sector as responsible players in vocational education and training
 - Supporting each other in the modernization of vocational education and training
 - Increasing mobility in vocational education and training as a contribution to the development of a European labour market and education area
 - Linking efforts to existing European cooperation in the field of vocational education and training and making use of EU programmes and structures
10. Agree that we will implement the following activities and objectives from 2013:
 - Establishing at least 30 beacon projects with the aim of creating regional training networks between enterprises and chambers in the partner countries over the next two years.
 - Provision of up to 10 million euros by the German side to finance German partners in beacon projects which establish partnerships and collaborative training networks between chambers and enterprises in the partner countries.
 - Considering co-funding by the partner countries to support their own partners in beacon projects, if national funds are available.
 - Developing the EURES network into a European apprentice placement scheme and reinforcing the "Your first EURES Job" programme according to national budget availability.
 - Realizing at least ten study visits in the fields of action of the Memorandum in 2013/2014.
 - Using the new European education programme and ESF funds for cooperation from 2014 to implement the Memorandum.
 - Increasing the number of participants to an annual 2000 people, if feasible, from the partner countries, mainly for longer qualification periods in Germany (including teaching staff) for example-under European programmes.
 - Initiating Leonardo da Vinci partnership or innovation transfer projects (through contact seminars with the partner countries).
 - Establishing a pool of vocational education and training experts in all countries including a coordinator in each case.
 - Setting up a joint, long-term cooperation platform to ensure the further development of cooperation and review the progress made under this Memorandum.

The undersigned

For the

Federal Ministry of Education and Research of the Federal Republic of Germany

Prof. Dr. Annette Schavan

Minister

For the

Ministry of Education and Science of the Portuguese Republic

Prof. Dr. Nuno Crato

Minister

For the

Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports of the Hellenic Republic

Prof. Dr. Theodoros Papatheodorou

Deputy Minister

For the

Ministry of Education, Culture & Sport of the Spanish Kingdom

Fernando Benzo Sáinz

Under State Secretary

For the
Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia

Inga Vanaga
Parliamentary Secretary

For the
Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic

Dr. Dusan Caplovic
Minister

For the
Ministry of Education of the Italian Republic

Elena Ugolini
State Secretary

Annex:

Fields of cooperation

At the education summit, the Ministers agreed to strengthen cooperation on the modernization of vocational education and training in Europe. Joint activities and measures will be developed in the following five fields in order to achieve this goal:

Fields of action:

1. Establishing vocational education and training as an attractive, high-quality career preparation scheme based on labour market needs
2. Involving the social partners and the private sector as responsible players in vocational education and training
3. Supporting each other in the modernization of vocational education and training
4. Increasing mobility in vocational education and training as a contribution to the development of a European labour market and education area
5. Linking efforts to existing European cooperation in the field of vocational education and training and making use of EU programmes and structures

1. Establishing vocational education and training as an attractive, high-quality career preparation scheme based on labour market needs

Qualified vocational education and training which is recognized by society offers good prospects for employment. However, vocational education and training suffers from a bad image in many European countries. It is often associated with semi-skilled jobs and special programmes for people with learning difficulties and low achievers. Measures to improve the quality and image of vocational education and training are therefore of prior importance in order to increase the attractiveness of vocational education and training for young people and the private sector.

Possible objectives and measures for implementing the Memorandum:

- a. Enhancing the acceptance of vocational education and training by highlighting the career prospects offered by occupations for which education and training is provided under dual programmes
- b. Implementing measures to improve opportunities for transfer between educational pathways
- c. Creating options for consecutive careers by linking vocational education and training to further, advanced training
- d. Launching information campaigns and measures to promote vocational education and training that address the target groups of young people, parents and enterprises
- e. Winning enterprises' support for work based training by demonstrating the economic value of company-based training

- f. Introducing career orientation phases in schools at an early stage, providing practical insights as a regular supplement to school education
- g. Refocusing career counselling to support the introduction of dual vocational education and training.

2. Involving the social partners and the private sector as responsible players in vocational education and training

The skills acquired during vocational education and training involving extended practical periods in enterprises are particularly well suited to meeting the requirements of the labour market. The simulation of work practice in a school context cannot substitute for programmes which combine learning at school with actual involvement in company operations. Training on the job in real work environments means that changes in company requirements and technological innovations become part of vocational education and training. Great efforts must therefore be made to encourage enterprises to engage in training.

Possible objectives and measures for implementing the Memorandum:

- a. Discussing new funding models on the basis of existing funding models for vocational education and training with all partners involved in company-based training
- b. Introducing extended practice periods in enterprises to supplement training in schools
- c. Testing practice periods as outcome-oriented and work-related training elements with the aim of enhancing links between schools and enterprises as places of learning
- d. Enhancing enterprises willingness to provide training and increasing their involvement by introducing collaborative training models
- e. Supporting business and chamber organizations in entering into long-term bilateral partnership arrangements
- f. Initiating an exchange of experience about tried and tested instruments which provide support during training and meet the needs of the training market with a view to strengthening company-based training
- g. Establishing national, regional and sectoral training pacts between the private sector, policy makers and the social partners
- h. Promoting regional and sectoral potential analyses to monitor economic and labour market developments
- i. Establishing chambers of commerce abroad and business organizations as relevant partners in vocational education and training
- j. Setting up regional vocational education and training committees involving all relevant local stakeholders in school and company training

3. Supporting the modernization of vocational education and training

Different forms of company-based and work based vocational education and training can already be found in Europe today. Further developments towards dual training programmes include exchanges of experience about governance and careful joint consideration of new forms of

cooperation in order to ensure that training is better directed towards the needs of the labour market.

Possible objectives and measures for implementing the Memorandum:

- a. Providing the legal and contractual basis (including vocational education and training legislation and training contracts) in a gradual approach under a medium-term strategy
- b. Defining the role of national vocational education and training institutes, qualification authorities and sector skills councils in order to ensure an efficient modernization process
- c. Defining standards (occupational, training and examination standards, validation standards) for training programmes that teach relevant skills and are recognized by experts and society
- d. Developing qualification schemes for vocational education and training staff
- e. Supporting mutual coaching of specialist and managerial staff
- f. Promoting cooperation between national vocational education and training institutes or qualification authorities
- g. Initiating bilateral beacon projects on selected topics

4. Increasing mobility in vocational education and training, contributing to the development of a European labour market and education area

Mobility during training enables young people to improve their prospects in private and working life. It helps reduce imbalances on the labour markets and meet skills requirements. A workforce with international skills improves the prospects and opportunities for individual enterprises in a globalizing world.

The participating countries aim to significantly increase the number of young people who spend learning periods in enterprises abroad.

Possible objectives and measures for implementing the Memorandum:

- a. Agreeing extended exchange periods of between 3 and 12 months and the development of supporting structures for trainees
- b. Developing and using EURES as an instrument for the transborder matching of training places
- c. Initiating supporting structures and bilateral training networks for the long-term planning and coordination of exchanges
- d. Ensuring and recognizing the award of double qualifications where extended periods of training are spent abroad
- e. Applying the ECVET under exchange programmes to facilitate the accreditation of prior learning in the partner countries
- f. Supporting bilateral exchange projects for training instructors and vocational school teachers
- g. Motivating umbrella organizations and professional associations to assume responsibility for the organization of sectoral exchanges

5. Linking efforts to European cooperation in the field of vocational education and training, making use of EU programmes and structures

The promotion of dual training is a central goal in European cooperation. The European Union is making available extensive financial resources (European Social Fund, ESF) and its Lifelong Learning Programme is an instrument for encouraging mobility and cooperation in vocational education and training. We must take advantage of these instruments to achieve our common goals.

Possible objectives and measures for implementing the Memorandum:

- a. Future ESF programmes of the participating countries will take account of the Ministers' Initiative.
- b. Establishing a European Peer Learning Forum with all relevant partners
- c. Recommending that the European Commission provide support for mobility advisers in all participating countries in 2013 (similar to the support for Bologna and ECVET experts)
- d. Supporting the establishment of a thematic network of national agencies under the Lifelong Learning Programme or its follow-up programme
- e. Exchanging information about relevant calls for proposals, particularly concerning the development of dual structures and the use of mobility support.