



Brussels, 15 December 2017

SUMMARY REPORT ACVT MEETING OF 6-7 DECEMBER 2017

The tripartite Advisory Committee on VET (ACVT) met on 6-7 December to discuss, inter alia, the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, the Commission proposal for a Quality framework for apprenticeships. The Committee also discussed the future of VET and ESCO, the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations.

1. New Skills Agenda for Europe

A state of play was provided by the Chair on the implementation of the **Skills Agenda**.

Following presentations by Estonia and Austria Governmental members, the ACVT shared in a 'world café' style national progress on implementing the Upskilling Pathways Recommendation, based on four questions (target groups, provision, funding, governance).

Because of the limited time allowed for the discussions, participants were not able to exchange in as much detail as they wished the rich information being provided by each country.

First highlights from the discussions pointed to the urgency felt by most countries to tackle the low skills challenge, including by aligning their existing policies and measures with the Council Recommendation; most countries believed they had some provision on which to build. Data collection was seen as a challenge for identifying target groups. Cooperation mechanisms were being set up but more need was felt for synergies across different Ministries and more outreach. Some countries, including the ones presenting their approaches felt that their existing measures were very much aligned to the key concepts of Upskilling Pathways.

The Commission will explore how to organise effective mutual learning in the future and allow more exchanges among countries, taking into account all the views expressed (more time, more open questions, more case studies) and ACVT Bureau will discuss the preparations for future Committees, as usual.

Follow up:

- ***Evaluation of the exercise and suggestions for improvements to be discussed in the Bureau meeting of February 2018***
- ***Report from the world café to be included in the minutes of the ACVT meeting.***

2. Update on Apprenticeships

The Commission introduced its proposal for a Council recommendation for a European framework for quality and effective apprenticeships as well as the state of play of the European Alliance for apprenticeships and the foreseen support services.

Some Governmental members regretted the narrow focus on apprenticeships, asked for clarifications regarding the legal basis, wished to keep quality assurance and graduate tracking elements separate. They called for avoiding the challenges experienced with the Quality Framework on Traineeships and asked to be kept informed of the debate in the Council during the BG Presidency.

Trade unions expressed some concerns on cost sharing and some practices which could be perceived as undermining national practices. They welcomed the focus on apprenticeships and asked to deliver a better framework compared to the one on traineeships.

Employers welcomed the proposal that balanced between learners and companies' needs and foresaw the involvement of social partners in the governance. They considered the framework was general enough to allow

implementation according to the national specificities.

All interest groups asked that the bench-learning process of the planned Apprenticeships Support Services be discussed with the ACVT.

Commission clarified the issue of legal basis and focus on apprenticeships as well as reminded the Committee of the clear commitment made by the BG Presidency to ensure cooperation between the SQWP and the EDU Committee.

Follow up:

- ***Bench-learning and progress with the set-up of the Apprenticeships Support Services to be discussed in the next ACVT meeting***
- ***Update ACVT on the progress of negotiations in the Council during BG Presidency***

3. Looking at the future of VET

The Commission provided an overview of the main preparatory work that would support reflections on the future of VET policy framework, taking into account also the recent proposals discussed with the High level Group for the ET 2020 revisions and the proposed roadmap. These included the Riga Monitoring report, the Cedefop's project on the Changing role and nature of VET and two Commission studies (study on impact of mobility on learners, institutions and VET providers and a study on ECVET and EQAVET). Reflections on the future would be ongoing during the upcoming BG and AT Presidencies. An ACVT Opinion to be adopted at its December 2018 meeting will provide further input to this process, in line with the mandate of the ACVT to provide the Commission with opinions on questions of general importance or of principle concerning vocational training. The draft opinion would be prepared with the Bureau and discussed both at the June and December meetings in 2018.

As the full interim report on Riga deliverables was distributed to ACVT only few days before the meeting, written comments could be made within 2 weeks (until 21 December)

Cedefop and ETF presented the Riga Interim Report. For EU Member States (+Iceland and Norway) the MTD that had received most attention was the one on WBL, apprenticeships, while on MTD2 (quality) and MTD4 (key competences) less follow up could be detected. Actions supporting more permeability and flexibility are being developed according to MTD3, in particular for young people, and there is a trend to blurring boundaries between I-VET and C-VET. Concerning MTD5 (teachers and trainers) the most common trends were legislative pilot projects and involvement of social partners, while measures to make careers more attractive were less frequent.

For Candidate Countries, the Riga deliverables had given new impetus to VET reforms. Actions had been taken to address skills mismatches: new legislation, closer involvement of employers, launching data collection systems on transitions and employability of VET graduates, shift towards learning outcomes and first steps had been made to enhance the opportunities for WBL/apprenticeships.

ETUC asked Cedefop and ETF to clarify the sources of information in the report, in particular concerning data on the involvement of trade unions. Employers asked to ensure the report also reflects results obtained at country level, not only the actions undertaken.

Cedefop provided for the second time an input from their ongoing research project on the Changing Nature and Role of VET. They reported on the impact of the overall economic and societal trends on VET at upper secondary level such as broadening of VET curricula, consolidation of qualifications structures or the need to balance specific skills with transversal / key competences. The findings also pointed to a rather stable participation rates in upper secondary VET contrary to the overall impression of falling enrolments. VET might potentially move more towards services sector in the future. Some Governmental and Employers members were concerned that the picture was too positive while decline in enrolments in Initial VET is happening and should be captured by the study.

Follow up:

- ***Provisional Roadmap up to 2019, taking into account also the wider context (e.g. ET 2020 revision, new MFF proposals) to be sent to ACVT before end of the year***
- ***Written Comments on Riga interim report to be submitted by 21 December concerning Member States : lore.schmid@cedefop.europa.eu; concerning Candidate Countries: Georgios.Zisimos@etf.europa.eu***

- ***ACVT Bureau starts working on a draft ACVT opinion, at its next meeting***

4. Annual Growth Survey and Skills benchmark

The Commission provided an overview of the Annual Growth Survey (which invited to renew efforts for increase investment in skills and inclusive education and training, both initial and continuing) and explained that the principles of the Social Pillar and Upskilling Pathways Recommendation were being included in the Employment Guidelines. The Commission also updated on the progress of preparing the skills benchmarking methodology, done in consultation with the relevant parties from the policy domains of employment as well as education and training.

Follow up:

- ***Keep ACVT meeting informed about skills benchmarking exercise***

5. European Vocational Skills week

The Commission provided an overview of the results of the Vocational Skills week just concluded. There was high level participation in the Brussels meetings and events were happening mostly at national, local level; good participation of youngsters was welcome, as well as a very high social media presence.

The possible format and target for the 2018 edition were presented (5-9 November in Austria): more links with national Skills competition, raise prestige of awards, working closer with MS. The week would unfold with national events on 5 November and DGVT meeting on 6-7 November. On 7-8 November, a conference on the Cedefop project 'The changing role of VET' with parallel sessions and one afternoon with two parallel events one on EAfA and one on skilling for the future world of work would take place. A closing ceremony would be scheduled for 9 November.

ACVT participants congratulated the Commission for the work done and asked to be involved in the discussions the long term vision of the Week as well as the topics for future editions. Members also asked for the development of a long term strategic vision on how to tap into the impressive outreach and reviewing the concept and methodology of the awards.

Follow up:

- ***Inform in writing ACVT about the outline of the next edition and discuss in the next ACVT meeting***

6. ESCO

The Commission provided an update on the latest developments in ESCO, focusing on the upcoming work to underpin further discussion and next steps on the Qualifications Pillar, whose development is still at an initial stage. Members raised several issues, regarding in particular communication on ESCO, which needs to focus more on providing concrete examples of the different practical use cases. They also pointed out that the Qualifications Pillar needs further discussion to better delineate its uses and functions. Overall, stakeholder workshops and other opportunities for discussion and feedback would be appreciated. The Commission confirmed that most of these issues are already foreseen to be tackled in the coming months, for example through further discussion in the ESCO Member States' Working Group. The Commission referred also to the upcoming call for members of the ESCO Maintenance Committee.

7. BG presidency events

The Directors General for Vocational Education and Training will meet in Sofia on 23-24 April focusing on Riga Priority n°2 (quality assurance, graduate tracking and feedback loops) and on the future of VET. The DGVT meeting will be followed by a Conference on VET as first choice (24-25 April). The main topics of the Presidency will be bringing digital skills and competences to all levels of education and training, the adoption of the new mandates of the Working Groups in the European framework for Education and Training 2018-2020, the revision of the Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning and the European Framework for quality and effective apprenticeships.