



Concept Note

Vocational Education and Training in European Development Cooperation

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Employment, Social Inclusion, Migration*

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Introduction

Vocational Education and Training (VET)¹ refers to 'learning pathways which aim to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly in the labour market'² for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

High-quality vocational education and training systems that have a strong work-based learning element facilitate young people's transition to work and can contribute to reducing unemployment and supporting economic development. VET is also a powerful means of empowering people to develop their full capabilities, enabling them to seize social and employment opportunities, and increasing the productivity of both workers and enterprises. Better education and training is also necessary for (although it does not guarantee) decent work and socially sustainable, fair growth.

VET and skills policies include formal, non-formal and informal vocational learning, workplace and work-based learning, and other learning opportunities in the formal and informal economies. These policies support a life-long learning approach to economic growth, and good employment and social objectives.

This paper is written by DEVCO B3 and sets out the concepts that underlie the preparation of VET reforms and other VET-related projects by EU Delegations or teams within the European Commission.

I. What is VET?

The DG EAC/DG EMPL definition of the term as used within the EU, and in line with the Cedefop definition above, is a broad concept that covers different types and levels of vocational training.

Vocational training and learning can be formal, non-formal or informal, and can take place in education and training institutions, at the work place, within informal and traditional apprenticeships and in everyday life. However, the newer term 'Vocational Training and Skills Development' is often preferred, to highlight a move away from a school-focused approach. VET includes non-formal skills development programs which may be delivered in the workplace and which do not lead to formal qualifications.

UNESCO and other international organisations prefer to use the term TVET ('technical and vocational education and training'). There is no significant difference between the two expressions, although using the word 'technical' is linked to the historical use of this term in the UK and other English-speaking countries, to highlight the difference between 'engineering' and 'manual' tasks.

In this paper, both VET and TVET refer to educational programmes that involve the study of technologies and sciences in addition to general education, and that are supported by acquiring awareness, knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. There are different forms of VET, depending on the objective and mode of delivery. Examples include Initial Vocational Education and Training, which includes apprenticeships, and Continuing

¹ In this paper, the term VET is used, rather than Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), to reflect the phrasing used in EU policy messages.

² Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), European Training Thesaurus <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/20031.aspx>

Vocational Education and Training, which includes work-based and work-placed learning.

II. Setting the scene

Over the last 50 years, the importance placed on technical and vocational skills in national and international development agendas fell significantly, followed by a gradual recovery. During the 1960s and 1970s, in developing countries, technical and vocational training was seen as a way 'to provide more options for students, which could enable them to continue on to higher education in their schooling, but also provide them with some understanding of an occupational skill, to improve their chances for employment'.³ In the 1980s, due to the perceived high rate of return on investment in general education, donors reduced their support for vocational education and training. Throughout the 1990s, the international policy debate on education focused on foundational education, although skills training, apprenticeships and formal VET programs were included as components of an expanded vision of foundational education.⁴

By the mid-2000s, there was growing recognition of the fact that universal primary education cannot be viewed in a vacuum, but requires coherent pathways to further education and to skills for employment and self-employment. An international consensus was reached on the need for a holistic, integrated, inter-sectoral approach to education and vocational training.

Meanwhile, following the March 2000 European Council meeting in Lisbon,⁵ the European Union moved towards a life-long learning approach, to support a successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society. EU education and training systems have been changed to adapt to new patterns of learning, living and working, as part of a strategy combining EU competitiveness and social cohesion.

Since then, VET policy has been increasingly focused on making better links between VET and labour markets, strengthening the relevance of VET and improving and updating skills. It has also repeatedly highlighted the need for businesses and education and training providers to share responsibility for training the workplace (through defining curricula, hosting and training interns and apprentices, participating in exam boards, etc).

The Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report 2012⁶ highlighted the urgent need to invest in young people's skills, and showed that young people need the foundational skills taught at primary and early secondary school to find good jobs.

The G20 Training Strategy⁷ was developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in partnership with other international organisations, in particular UNESCO and

³ UNESCO, Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012, The role of Skills Development in overcoming social disadvantage. <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/gmr2012-ED-EFA-MRT-PI-04.pdf>

⁴ World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), Jomtien (Thailand), 1990.

⁵ <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/MemorandumEng.pdf>

⁶ UNESCO, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012, Youth and skills: Putting education to work, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/2012-skills/>

⁷ ILO – G20, A Skilled Workforce for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth, 2010, <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/306072>

OECD, based on the PIAAC⁸ survey analysing the level and distribution of skills among adult populations. It articulates why a skills strategy is needed, outlines a conceptual framework, and brings together the essential building blocks of a strong training strategy.

These documents set out the policy framework for developing a suitably skilled workforce.

III. The EU policy framework

Vocational education and training has been an essential part of EU policy since the very beginnings of the European Community.⁹ The EU has a supporting role in education and training policies. Member States are in charge of their own education and training systems, but they cooperate within the EU to achieve common goals.

Since the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000¹⁰, EU education and training policies have focused on growth and jobs.

VET's contribution to facing the challenges identified in the Lisbon Agenda was formalised in the Copenhagen Process, launched on 30 November 2002. This aimed to improve the quality of vocational training and encourage more people to make wider use of vocational learning opportunities as part of a life-long learning approach. Its most significant outcome has been the adoption of a European qualifications framework for life-long learning, linked to and supported by other initiatives to improve comparability, such as the European VET credit system and the Europass portfolio, and quality assurance, such as the European quality assurance framework for VET.

Almost all EU countries have set up national qualification frameworks and quality assurance systems. Significant reforms have been undertaken to better recognise non-formal and informal learning, enhance the flexibility of pathways for life-long skills development, and improve the efficiency and equity in education and training systems. Links between VET policy and the labour market have been strengthened, with a greater focus on learning outcomes,¹¹ on which curriculum design, teaching, assessment, and learning environments should be based.

The global economic crisis has brought new challenges. To respond, the European Council adopted the Europe 2020 strategy in June 2010. The linked 2010 Bruges Communiqué¹² set out shared objectives for 2020 and an action plan for the coming

⁸ <http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/>

⁹ While vocational training was identified as an area of Community action in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, education was formally recognised as an area of European Union competency in the Maastricht Treaty which established the European Community in 1992.

¹⁰ Presidency conclusions, Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March 2000, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm

¹¹ Learning outcomes set out what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of a course of learning.

¹² The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020, Communiqué of the European Ministers for Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the European Commission, meeting in Bruges on 7 December 2010 to review the strategic approach and priorities of the Copenhagen process for 2011-2020, http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/brugescom_en.pdf.

years, combining national measures with European support for VET. VET is identified as a driver for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training¹³ notes that, in a rapidly changing world, life-long learning needs to be a priority — it is the key to employment, economic success and allowing people to participate fully in society.

This position was reflected in the Communication entitled 'New Skills for New Jobs: anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs',¹⁴ which highlights the value of upgrading skills 'for equity, since the low-skilled are more vulnerable in the labour market and can be hit first by the crisis'. It further states that 'upgrading skills is not just a luxury for the highly qualified in high-tech jobs: it is a necessity for all'.

The Communication on a new impetus for European VET cooperation to support the Europe 2020 strategy¹⁵ adds to this, by stating that 'EU policy on VET should be a subject for further policy dialogue and mutual learning with the international community, including both third-countries and relevant international organisations'.

IV. VET and skills for employment in European development cooperation – main actors

In developing countries, a number of significant factors have created urgent demand for new forms of skills development to meet economic and social needs. These factors include globalisation, the youth bulge and technological change. VET needs to do more than just provide learners with knowledge and skills for specific jobs. It needs to be demand-driven, learner-centred, inclusive, accessible, and flexible.

The Communication entitled 'Increasing the Impact of Development Policy: An Agenda for Change'¹⁶ discusses the importance of providing the workforce, particularly young people, with skills that respond to labour market needs. It argues that the EU should support vocational training for employability, saying 'the EU should enhance its support for quality education to give young people the knowledge and skills to be active members of an evolving society. 2012 was a turning point for VET stakeholders across the world. Multilateral organisations engaged in discussions with governments, social partners and civil society on adapting — or transforming — VET to meet the changing expectations of a fast-changing world. A defining moment in these discussions was the 3rd World TVET Congress in Shanghai.¹⁷ The resulting Shanghai Consensus identified seven action areas to address challenges in VET:

- relevance;
- access;
- qualifications;
- governance and partnership;
- diversification of financing;

¹³ Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020), http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/general_framework/ef0016_en.htm

¹⁴ COM(2008) 868 final

¹⁵ COM(2010) 296 final

¹⁶ COM(2011) 637

¹⁷

http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/docs/Shanghai_Consensus.pdf.

- evidence; and
- advocacy.

Transforming VET systems requires sustained, focused and coordinated action involving all the VET sub-sectors. This integrated and system-wide approach is echoed in many of the other reports currently being discussed by the VET community, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Skills strategy and the ILO World of Work report.

This is the key principle underlying the work of the European Training Foundation (ETF), an important actor in supporting international dimensions of EU VET policy and priorities and improving cooperation between donors and stakeholders.

The ETF is a specialist EU agency based in Turin. It was established in 1990¹⁸ to provide aid, including training, to Central and Eastern Europe, to support the process of economic and social reform. In 1998, ETF activities were extended to countries and territories in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership¹⁹ and then to:

- Albania;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Croatia;
- the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; and
- the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.²⁰

As of 2008, the ETF's remit²¹ is to contribute to improving human capital development as part of EU external relations policy. Today, the ETF provides capacity-building and technical support to 29 countries in the Southern and Eastern European Neighborhood, the Western Balkans, Turkey and Central Asia. Its purpose is to drive sustainable development, through vocational education and training, with a particular focus on improving competitiveness and social cohesion. In its partner countries, the ETF works with governmental institutions, the business community, social partners, and other civil society organisations. At international level, it works with relevant international organisations and donors, exchanging information and lessons learned in the field of assistance.

Between 2010 and 2012, the ETF initiated the Torino Process, a biennial evidence-based analysis of skills policies in partner countries, looking at:

- achievements to date;
- remaining challenges;
- priorities for the next period.

The Torino process aims to empower countries and reinforce national institutions so that they can autonomously implement VET and skills development. To do this, the

¹⁸ Council Regulation (EEC) No 1360/90 of 7 May 1990 establishing a European Training Foundation, OJ L 131, 23.5.1990, p. 1

¹⁹ OJ L 189, 30.7.1996, p. 1. Regulation repealed by Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006.

²⁰ Regulation (EC) No 2666/2000 on assistance for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, OJ L 306, 7.12.2000, p. 1

²¹ REGULATION (EC) No 1339/2008 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 16 December 2008 establishing a European Training Foundation, OJ L 354, 31.12.2008, p. 82

ETF advocates a holistic approach to policy analysis and policy making, and the development of an integrated VET vision.

A large number of international donors, including individual EU Member States, also provide technical assistance to support VET development in partner countries. One of the largest global actors in the VET sector is the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), which offers services for sustainable development and supports partners at local, regional, national and international level in designing strategies and meeting their policy goals.

Other bilateral donors, such as Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the UK Department for International Development (DFID), are also active in VET provision and technical assistance.

Despite the high quality of the services offered by these agencies, they need to be coordinated, in order to avoid the fragmentation of aid, policy incoherence, inefficient use of resources, and an unnecessary administrative burden on host countries. As set out in the Paris declaration,²² donors should work together whenever possible to ensure that support is harmonised and transparent, and that aid flows are more predictable.

V. Main challenges

VET needs to equip people with the skills that will enable them to get good jobs in the modern world, and to face the key challenges posed by globalisation, the informal economy and, in the shorter term, recovery from the global crisis. Within this global picture, the economies of individual countries require tailor-made solutions. Reform strategies must be realistic and reflect countries' different starting points, national traditions, and economic realities.

Nevertheless, some weaknesses and challenges are common:

Informal economy. The informal economy is growing in all sectors. It plays an important role in creating jobs for young people, including in developing countries and especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, developing the right skills and adapting VET to the particular circumstances of the informal sector are often neglected.²³ Reforming skills development should focus on the requirements of the informal sector.

Rapid changes in labour market needs. VET often does not adequately prepare young people for work or for the fast-changing nature of modern economies. This is especially noticeable in European Neighbourhood countries, where the formal VET system is still strongly supply-driven. Private sector contributions are growing only slowly, due to a lack of trust between public and private institutions and limited discussion between the public and private sector on identifying skills needs.

Rapid urbanisation, rural exodus and slums. By 2020, 50% of the population in developing countries is expected to live in towns and cities. By 2015, 23 cities are expected to have a population of over 10 million; 19 of them are in developing countries.²⁴ The urban poor are a rapidly growing population, and has been under-

²² The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>

²³ World Bank, Improving Skills Development in the Informal Sector <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/content/book/9780821399682>

²⁴ Source: UN Habitat, Urbanisation, facts and figures, <http://www.unhabitat.org/cdrom/docs/wuf1.pdf>

served by both governments and NGOs. People living in slums recognise VET as an important potential way out of poverty, vulnerability, and poor living conditions. Slum populations are not, however, represented in policy making policy or educational planning, and there are no realistic estimates of the numbers of people living in slums and needing education and training.

Changing patterns of migration in developing regions. South-South migration, particularly in Africa, has a considerable effect on VET and should be considered in the EU's development policy.²⁵ Current estimates²⁶ indicate that 50% of migrants from developing countries go to other developing countries. Recognition of skills and qualifications should be improved and better information should be provided in order to improve matching between job seekers and vacancies.

Environmental change and skills for a low-carbon economy. Environmental change is an increasingly significant driver of demand for labor and skills supply, across all sectors and in all countries. The move to a low-carbon economy is best seen as a special case of structural change that will inevitably alter sectorial and occupational structures. Best use of the transition to a greener economy can only be made by developing the skills, knowledge and competences required by resource-efficient processes and technologies²⁷, and by creating new models for managing natural resources. VET policy should help countries to meet the challenges and opportunities that this transition presents and provide the skills needed for sustainable development.²⁸

Fragmented and low-capacity governance structures. Governance methods and models have a significant impact on the overall performance of education and training policies, influencing the way they are formulated and implemented. Actions and debates that target the development of good governance are needed now. Sub-national regions and local actors, social partners and civil society organisations should be more involved in shaping education and training policies. The EU and partner countries should take action to increase the role of regional actors and ensure multi-level participation in policy-making.

Some successful steps have already been taken towards reform, with positive effects on modernising VET systems.

In the Southern Neighbourhood, the Arab Awakening led to profound societal changes in the region, many of which are still ongoing. The discrepancy between expectation and policy performance on skills development is made more difficult by long-standing weaknesses in the region's education and training systems, and in its labour markets.

²⁵ 'The EU should support the decent work agenda, social protection schemes and floors and encourage policies to facilitate regional labour mobility. The EU will support targeted efforts to fully exploit the interrelationship between migration, mobility and employment', Agenda for change, 2011.

²⁶ World Bank working paper n. 102 (2007), Sout-South migration and remittances, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1110315015165/SouthSouthMigrationandRemittances.pdf>.

²⁷ Cedefop, Green Skills and Environmental Awareness in VET, (2012) http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/5524_en.pdf

²⁸ For more information, see the work of the Working Group on Greening VET and Skills Development: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/genericdocument/wcms_182353.pdf

Countries share a need to improve access to VET, increase its quality, and better align it with labour market needs.

- *In Egypt, the national authority for quality assurance and accreditation in education set up criteria to accredit schools. A twinning project has been launched to share best practice in technical and vocational training, and prepare educational institutions for accreditation.*

In the Western Balkans, where the private sector is disconnected from VET and entrepreneurship education is still weak, the ETF's involvement under the Torino Process has had positive effects on modernising VET and improving governance methods and models.

- *Moldova's implementation of its VET strategy between 2009 and 2012 was assessed under the 2012 Torino Process. Following this, the Moldovan authorities are working to improve recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and to create sector-specific skills councils. This work is supported by recent efforts to strengthen institutional capacity and improve links between VET and the labour market.*

In sub-Saharan Africa, most countries are experiencing an unprecedented demographic youth bulge. Although job growth was strong during the decade preceding the global economic crisis, it was not enough to absorb the growing labour force. Existing private and public employment capacity is small, and there is only a limited increase in paid jobs. In this situation, holistic VET programmes can play a major role. They combine technical and entrepreneurial skills acquired in the workplace and in informal/traditional apprenticeship with elements of self-development and business tools.

- *In Niger, institutional training reform aims to increase income for artisans, apprentices and micro-entrepreneurs, and to facilitate micro-entrepreneurs taking up income-generating activities that provide qualifications through flexible modular training and entrepreneurship skills.*

In post-conflict situations, countries are often left without even the most basic infrastructure and services. Inclusive job creation contributes to a well-functioning state and generates growth. In these cases, priority is given to providing short-cycle skills training, labour-focused intensive schemes and support to the private sector to develop demand-driven vocational training and restore relations between the public and private sectors.

- *In the Ivory Coast, various initiatives have been launched as part of the reform process. They include setting up training and social inclusion measures for ex-soldiers, revising the contents of training courses, building infrastructure for vocational training, and measures to update skills and knowledge for human resources professionals (teachers, trainers and VET managers).*

In export-oriented developing countries (especially in South-Eastern Asia), sectors with the potential to increase exports and contribute to economic diversification should be supported to ensure growth and decent employment. VET reforms should therefore bring VET more into line with national economic development strategies, and have a strong sectoral focus, including export and industrial policies. This will help to improve the qualifications of the workforce and maximise the employment potential of trade policies.

- *In Bangladesh, an effective and flexible VET system, developed with EU support, allows more people to acquire employable skills and earn income through wage-earning jobs or self-employment. Stronger links have been created between formal VET and non-formal skills development, following the adoption of a*

national qualification framework, skills standards, competence-based training and a quality assurance mechanism.

VI. Guiding principles

In light of these commitments and challenges, future EU development cooperation strategies should take into account the following principles, bearing in mind country-specific differences, as there is no one-size-fits-all solution. In the face of significant economic and societal changes, VET can enable shared responses to challenges, bridging together the worlds of education and work. VET should be made a more attractive and high-quality option, so that it provides young people with the right skills to find a suitable, decent job, and adults with an opportunity to update their skills throughout their working life and prevent skills obsolescence. Supporting the creation of reliable, flexible and cost-effective systems is a key challenge for EU cooperation with developing countries. Some core principles may be useful for policy makers, to help ensure the relevance, internal quality and efficiency of VET and thereby improve social/economic efficiency.

Quality and provision of VET

Developing National Qualifications Frameworks accordingly with specific features of VET systems. Qualifications frameworks classify qualifications in a hierarchy of levels, depending on their complexity and features. These frameworks aim to bring coherence and clarity to qualifications systems, so that qualifications can be easily compared by individuals, employers and institutions. Almost all modern vocational qualifications are expressed in learning outcomes, which are statements of the knowledge, skills and competences a learner is expected to acquire in order to obtain a qualification.

Improvement of practical training for teachers, trainers, tutors and mentors. These changing roles require new skills, new curriculum design, new quality assurance measures, and new management and administrative tasks. They should nurture creative, innovative and entrepreneurial thinking in students. New work-based learning methods of tutoring and learning should be developed to help students and apprentices reflect on their own learning and work performance.

Promoting the acquisition of key competences in VET. Skills development relates not only to technical or job-specific skills, but also to a whole range of key competences and soft or transferable skills and competences²⁹. As highlighted by the OECD in its PIAAC survey,³⁰ 'individuals with poor literacy and numeracy skills are more likely to find themselves at risk of economic disadvantage and unemployment'.

²⁹ In the EU, key competences include communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competences and basic competences in sciences and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression (Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for life-long learning), OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10–18. Transferable/transversal/soft skills refers to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed to be critically important to success in today's world.

³⁰ OECD Skills Outlook 2013 First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills [http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/Skills%20volume%201%20\(eng\)--full%20v12--eBook%20\(04%2011%202013\).pdf](http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/Skills%20volume%201%20(eng)--full%20v12--eBook%20(04%2011%202013).pdf)

VET should include literacy and numeracy skills, in case there are gaps in a learner's education, allowing them to adapt quickly to changes in processes and products.

Improving informal apprenticeships. Informal apprenticeship refers to the system by which a young apprentice acquires the skills for a trade or craft in a micro or small enterprise learning and working side by side with an experienced practitioner³¹. An improved apprenticeship will lead to better working conditions for apprentices, train master craftsmen, set skills standards and improve quality assurance. It would create opportunities to improve skills provision in the informal economy and create more productive, decent jobs. Practices in informal apprenticeship can differ between localities and trades. Some of the system's decent work deficits are due to "bad rules" currently in place, such as strong gender segregation along occupational lines. Others result from a lack of enforcement of the training agreement³². Apprenticeships must take ILO Convention No 182, on the worst forms of child labour,³³ into account. Regulations should therefore be introduced on traditional and informal apprenticeships, in order to set limits on the number of years that training can last, and the daily and weekly working hours for apprentices.³⁴

Relevance

Strengthening labour market information systems and developing career guidance and counselling services to reduce skills mismatch. Skills mismatch can be reduced through better management and more transparent information. Providing reliable, impartial careers guidance and reducing skills mismatch requires reliable, accessible data and regularly updated sources of information, to identify emerging occupations and areas of skills shortages, and current or potential areas of skills oversupply and redundancy. National private and public agencies, including national employment services, should be strengthened to better link labour supply and demand.

Anticipating skills needs. Making a good match between the skills supplied by public and private training authorities and institutions and those needed by the productive sector requires the anticipation of skills needs. Identifying future skills requirements and integrating this information into planning for VET provision is a process involving many different bodies and stakeholders, including employers. Reliable labour market information helps support it. Before choosing to fund VET activities in developing countries, the EU should encourage better anticipation of skills gaps and more comprehensive information on future skills and jobs requirements. VET schemes should use innovative methods of prospective analysis and must take into account the fact that 'every national system of early identification of skill needs has its

³¹ ILO, http://ilo.org/skills/projects/WCMS_158771/lang--en/index.htm.

³² Norrag news n.46(2011), Upgrading Informal Apprenticeship - Challenges and Achievements, <http://www.norrag.org/en/publications/norrag-news/online-version/towards-a-new-global-world-of-skills-development-tvets-turn-to-make-its-mark/detail/upgrading-informal-apprenticeship-challenges-and-achievements.html>.

³³ Convention concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour adopted by the Conference at ILO eighty-seventh session, Geneva, 17 June 1999.

³⁴ UNESCO (2012), Youth and Skills, Putting Education to Work. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012. Paris: UNESCO; Walther, Richard (2012), Building Skills in the Informal Sector. Background paper for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012, UNESCO.

internal logic which corresponds to the country's system of education and training, legal and institutional environment, economic situation [...] culture and mentality.³⁵

Improving governance and cooperation between the public and private sectors in designing VET curricula and targeting VET provision for job creation. Skills policies should support VET providers in building curricula, while helping employers make better use of the skills available to them and helping workers to acquire the right skills. Effective skills development policies for decent work need all stakeholders to work together on:

- anticipating future skills needs;
- identifying gaps between current labour demand and training provision;
- responding to these skills needs by adjusting the content and provision of education and training; and
- monitoring results.³⁶

High-quality VET with good links to the labour market is essential for encouraging inclusive and sustainable growth and enabling countries to diversify their economies and provide decent work. The VET modernisation process begins with developing a clear picture of the private sector in a country, focused on sectors with a high employment potential, such as manufacturing or tourism, and aligning VET policy with national economic development plans. Sector skills councils give social partners a strong voice in developing occupational standards and training programs, which is necessary to ensure demand-driven and growth-oriented VET.

Social/economic aspects

Providing skills development schemes to increase the education and training of actors in the informal economy. DEVCO commissioned a study on skills development in the informal economy in order to better define what role it could play in VET for people living and working in the informal economy.³⁷ The study notes that there are no skills development schemes for 80% of underqualified young people seeking jobs or working in the informal sector. Nor are there schemes to train the master craftsmen and entrepreneurs who train the vast majority of young people, except in countries that have invested in reforming traditional apprenticeships. Future European Commission initiatives should help increase the education and training levels of informal economy actors, and thus help them move more easily away from subsistence activity into growth sectors and entrepreneurial development.

Developing methods and tools for recognition and certification of skills and competences in various contexts. The knowledge, skills and aptitude of a workforce are major factors in innovation, productivity and competitiveness. Any institutional reform framework must consider recognition and certification of competences acquired in formal and non-formal contexts as key to lifelong learning and mobility. A viable, sustainable and credible system of skills recognition and certification empowers people and makes them aware of their own changing potential. It makes knowledge and skills clearer and more comparable, enabling people to move up in their career or change careers more easily.

³⁵ Cedefop – Systems for anticipation of skill needs in the EU Member States, 2008, http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/WORKINGPAPER01_OCT2008.PDF

³⁶ From the Human Resource Development G20 Development Working Group, Saint Petersburg, October 2013.

³⁷ Richard Walther, *Etude sur le développement des compétences dans l'économie informelle*, Contrat No DCI-EDUC/2012/308-818, February 2013.

Providing VET as near to learners as possible, in their own communities and with support through ICT facilities wherever appropriate. VET should be more accessible and inclusive, with participation of the working poor, people living in remote areas and people with disabilities. However, good quality training is often expensive and non-inclusive. Access to VET could be supported and encouraged by information and guidance services on training opportunities and by linked social protection schemes. In some cases, offering services, such as meals, clothes or childcare, could help facilitate access to training for people who need support during their learning time. ICT offers great potential for reaching remote and isolated populations in cost-effective ways. The use of radio and mobile phones in education is a promising way of reaching disadvantaged youth. 'Round-the-clock' and 'on-the-move' access to learning services – including using media and open educational resources – enables everyone to use their learning time to best advantage, wherever they may physically be at a given moment.

Improving the status of VET. Countries, businesses and individuals all see skills development as strategic, and consequently they seek to improve investment in skills. Nevertheless, in several countries, VET is still considered as a 'second choice' option. Hence, appropriate action should be taken to promote vocational training to young people and parents, and in the school system, in order to combat the stigma around it.

VII. Towards the future: new strategies for new challenges

In Pittsburgh in September 2009³⁸, G20 leaders³⁹ called for quality jobs to be at the heart of strategies for recovering from the global crisis, and encouraged structural reforms to create more inclusive labor markets, active labor market policies, and quality education and training programs.

Since then, G20 countries have identified skills development as a strategic objective and are stepping up their investment in skills, focusing on equipping their workforces with the skills required both for the jobs of today and those of tomorrow. The Human Resources Development Pillar of the G20 Multi-Year Action Plan on Development and the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report are working to clarify the concepts of VET and skills development.

The Saint Petersburg Declaration (October 2013) renewed the G20's commitment to promoting development for all, in line with the 2012 Shanghai Consensus. It stated that 'supporting strong, sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth and narrowing the development gap remain critical to our overall objective for jobs and growth.'

The Inter-Agency Group on a TVET glossary and key indicators,⁴⁰ UNESCO's work on global TVET trends and issues, and the results of the first round of the OECD PIAAC

³⁸ G20 Leaders Statement: The Pittsburgh Summit, 24-25 September 2009, <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2009/2009communique0925.html#growth>.

³⁹ The Group of Twenty Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (also known as the G-20, G20, and Group of Twenty) is a group of finance ministers and central bank governors from 20 major economies: 19 countries plus the European Union, which is represented by the President of the European Council and by the European Central Bank.

⁴⁰ See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002200/220048e.pdf> and [http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/E112211E42995263C12579EA002EF821/\\$file/Report%20on%20indicators%20April%202012.pdf](http://www.etf.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/E112211E42995263C12579EA002EF821/$file/Report%20on%20indicators%20April%202012.pdf)

Survey of Adult Skills) have all led to greater conceptual clarification and a joint definition of skills. The central message emerging is that what people know, and what they do with what they know, have a major impact on their life chances.⁴¹

The May 2013 Torino Declaration, part of the Torino Process, focuses on present and future demand for skills, and supports a shared, long-term vision of working with VET providers and businesses to develop and use relevant skills for better quality jobs for young people and adults.

These international processes should be brought together and combined, and political commitment needs to be transformed into concrete actions. The discussion on the global development agenda beyond 2015 presents an opportunity to advance this integration process and include the concepts of inclusive, equitable, sustained and sustainable economic growth.

EU development cooperation programmes that provide financial assistance will have to address major VET reform and the modernisation of VET systems, either in countries where VET is a sector of focus in and of itself, or where it is a cross-cutting issue across other sectors. In the last 10 years, VET interventions funded through bilateral cooperation have mainly focused on:

- policies and systems;
- TVET access to target groups;
- active labour market policy and measures;
- the informal economy; and
- social inclusion.

The post-2015 agenda will prioritise encouraging full and productive employment, decent work, and quality education and training for all. In particular, the forthcoming programme on global public goods and challenges (GPGC) will seek to support sustainable economic, social and environmental development in an integrated and holistic way, and will support inclusive sustainable development. Within GPGC, the programme for employment, skills, social protection and social inclusion will focus on supporting high levels of productive and decent employment, including through vocational education and training. It will particularly focus on youth, and include support for skills development and vocational education and training, taking into account the informal economy and the Decent Work Agenda.

VET and social and human development will therefore be addressed in an integrated and comprehensive manner, taking into account the principles of equality and equity and the overarching objective of sustainable development.

DEVCO B3 (Employment, Social Inclusion, Migration) – in cooperation with B4 (Education, Health, Research, Culture) – provides support and expertise on request, and is available for remote and on-the-premises advice on VET initiatives.

A knowledge-sharing platform, Capacity4dev,⁴² is also available, to share your experiences, best practice and thoughts with other professionals, stakeholders and donors.

Through these, DEVCO intends to make sure that its VET interventions continue to be relevant, effective and of high quality.

⁴¹ [http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/Skills%20volume%201%20\(eng\)--full%20v12--eBook%20\(04%2011%202013\).pdf](http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/Skills%20volume%201%20(eng)--full%20v12--eBook%20(04%2011%202013).pdf)

⁴² <http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/>

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