



**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training



CEDEFOP COMMUNITY OF LEARNING PROVIDERS

## **Sharing knowledge for VET future quality**

Community scope and achievements



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# Foreword and Acknowledgments

Modern insights in policy formation have shown that a broader involvement of stakeholders is essential for development and effective implementation. In addition in our current fast-changing times, the ways VET research and policy recommendations are formulated and implemented will have to change to less time consuming modes.

VET providers had always been key actors at the level of practical implementation. But their involvement in the development of VET policies has become possible due to the increased organisation and cooperation of VET provider associations at European level. Following the establishment of a working group created by DG EMPL in 2015 as a Platform for European Associations of VET providers Cedefop in agreement with the EU Commission invited VET provider associations to set up together a VET Community of Practice. This was meant to add to their cooperation, discuss their work and disseminate useful results to the broader audience of VET providers.

This short publication presents the main outcomes of the work of the Cedefop Community of learning providers between 2017 and 2019. This is taking place a year earlier than foreseen by its mandate (2017-20), thanks to its members' strong commitment.

The Community is based on reciprocity and mutual voluntary work. It set three working groups, all focusing on providers' priorities and having them as point of entry: Learning providers and the challenge of technology enhanced learning; Learning providers and EU mobility; and Learning providers and migration. The mandate of the groups was to define practical guidelines for them and to formulate suggestions to the EU Commission. The Community, after two years of joint work is already in a position to confirm the added value of this exercise.

This publication, and the one including the three full reports that will be made available later in 2020, is the Community's contribution to the largely endorsed ET2020 goal to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training <sup>(1)</sup>. The members of the three working groups are convinced that building strong communities of practice in VET and networking between them are important measures to enhance VET image at national and EU levels, providing direct insight into VET realities and evidence of what is working at grass root level.

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(<sup>1</sup>) Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A52009XG0528%2801%29>

Cedefop is pleased to have been instrumental in bringing together the skills and experience of the experts who have been part of this initiative and supports their further efforts in helping shape VET for current and future needs.

As already pointed out, the Community is the result of its members' commitment and hard work during 2017-19. Cedefop wishes to thank all members figuring on the Annexes for their multiple contributions and in particular René van Schalkwijk, EUproVET former president and senior advisor, Jon Harding, EfVET Steering Committee member and Horst Dreimann, EVBB General Secretary, who chaired the three thematic WGs under the Centre's coordination by Tina Bertzeletou. Cedefop wishes to acknowledge also Ivan Toscano's and Achilles Kameas' specific contribution in drafting chapter 5 of the present publication. Finally Cedefop wishes to thank VET4EU2 and the DG EMPL officials involved for their wholeheartedly support to this experimental join initiative.

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## CHAPTER 1.

# Introduction

European policy in vocational education and training (VET) has a history dating back to 1957 and to the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community. Traditionally, stakeholder involvement in European VET policy has relied much on national social partner and Member State participation in the Advisory Committee on Vocational Education and Training (ACVT), the only legal body to advise the EU Commission on VET. The same multiple partner approach applies also to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (Cedefop) established in 1975. Cedefop is the agency for research and policy implementation support in VET at EU level <sup>(2)</sup>.

Modern insights in policy formation showed that broader involvement of stakeholders is essential for development and effective implementation. The involvement of providers became possible in 2010 due to the increased organisation and cooperation of VET provider associations at European level. Since their involvement in developing the Bruges communiqué on VET there has been a slowly growing involvement of VET providers in EU policy development in the area. In 2015 this was formalised and became a structural consultation process with the EU Commission/DG EMPL. A platform for European associations of VET providers was established, comprising six European associations active in VET, higher VET and higher education (EfVET, EVBB, EUproVET, EVTA, EURASHE and EUCEN) and the two European VET related agencies, Cedefop and ETF.

As of 2017, the six associations decided to cooperate even more closely: they signed a memorandum of understanding and founded the expert group for European associations of VET providers (VET4EU2). They reinforced their cooperation and consultation function and produced a position paper on future developments in education and training in which they underline the need for joint efforts and multi-dimensional approaches across all levels of education <sup>(3)</sup>.

The importance of actively involving VET providers was also recognised by Cedefop. With a strong strategic focus and a self-critical approach, establishing

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<sup>(2)</sup> Its new mandate, in force since 20 February 2019, confirms Cedefop development over time and its role at the interface of education and training and the labour market.

<sup>(3)</sup> <http://evbb.eu/blog/2018/11/30/position-paper-on-european-union-policy-after-2020-on-vocational-and-educational-training/>

an active community of VET practitioners was considered crucial to the future of VET. In the present fast-changing times, the ways VET research and policy recommendations are formulated will have to change too; the use of expert networks and surveys for research and policy making is already considered time consuming and might not be affordable in the near future. Study reports would increasingly not reach practitioners and actors in the field, failing to inform policy decisions and implementation.

Against this background, and in agreement with the EU Commission, Cedefop invited the above six associations to set up together a VET community of practice. This was meant to add to their cooperation, discuss their work and disseminate useful results to the broader audience of VET providers. The Community is set up on a voluntary basis and serves as channel and locus for cooperation between Cedefop and VET providers, in cooperation with DG EMPL and VET4EU2.

The roles of the platform and the Community of learning providers are meant to be complementary: the platform provides strategic guidance and feeds into general EU Commission policy whereas the Community produces concrete practical guidance for practitioners, identifies good practice and makes use of European programmes, activities and outcomes on selected themes. The Community is grounded at practitioner level, privileging the demand-side and promoting practical applications.

The Community is working through information sharing and expert cooperation, starting with participants' experience and know-how and Cedefop's own work. The working method favours face-to-face debate but a broad online community platform could be set up. The community of practice has a strong brokerage function and operates in full respect of institution diversity, priorities and approaches. It was decided to work between 2017 and 2020 on three subjects of priority to VET providers and also to experiment with the idea of building up such a community of practice. The community's work-programme 2017-20 comprises the following three subjects:

- (a) learning providers and the challenge of technology-enhanced learning (TEL): improving teachers' and trainers' e-skills;
- (b) learning providers and EU mobility: reinforcing learning attractiveness and employability;
- (c) learning providers and migration: empowerment and integration through learning.

The subjects were selected because of their policy relevance and the urgent need to respond to challenges. For technology-enhanced learning the urgency lies in the need to make education meet changes in the world of work and

education caused by the use of new technologies, so preventing a new social divide as consequence. Mobility becomes a priority when looking at the increased Erasmus+ budget to support it and at mobility's huge success as driver for education, intercultural understanding and personal growth through international cooperation. Finally, migration has become an urgent issue; the most recent migration waves have created the huge challenge for the EU to integrate the newly arrived third country nationals (TCN) into European society, culture and employment.

Three working groups (WGs) were formed around these three subjects from experts mostly nominated by the VET provider associations. In the light of their experience in working together during the last two years, the Community members are convinced that building strong communities of practice in VET and networking between them are important measures for improving VET's image at national and EU levels, while providing direct insight into VET realities and evidence of what is really working at grass root level.

The Community's rationale and work methods are presented in the introduction to this publication; the composition of its three WGs is provided in the annex. Chapter 1 refers to the preconditions and necessary steps to consolidate and further develop the Community, which is now at an experimental phase, into an EU-wide VET community of practice. The remaining three chapters (2, 3 and 4) contain the WGs' most important conclusions and suggestions per theme. The WG full reports will be published in one volume in 2020. Many contributions and cases of good practice have been gathered and analysed which figure in the main body of the full reports and/or in their annexes, offering an insight into the wealth of examples and ideas the Community and its members are happy to share with interested readers.



## CHAPTER 2.

# VET community of practice as driver for higher quality and development

It is indisputable that our society is changing fast, affecting education and training which have to change and adapt alongside. New learning environments and learning provisions are being developed, demanding that learning providers and teachers reconsider their role as agents of learning, and broaden their mission by addressing employability, inclusion and socialisation; they must also elaborate appropriate teaching and learning approaches, pedagogies and competences. The 21st century societal expectation for rapid and efficient delivery of general and specific knowledge, skills and competences obliges learning providers, teachers and trainers to perform differently and to seek more cooperation and synergies with education stakeholders and professionals. Platforms, mostly online, are being used for discussion and communication and (small-scale) partnerships and (topical) networks are being formed. But when discussants share similar goals and the same or complementary professional backgrounds, deal with large-scale problems and wish to produce results at European level, they should form communities of practice (CoPs), which are characterised by longer term perspectives and commitment than platforms.

Since 2017, Cedefop and VET4EU2 have been experimenting with the creation of such a VET community of practice at European level. The idea is to invite to the VET CoP all professional practitioners who, in any capacity and role, for the benefit of their students and learners and society at large, aim to improve the quality of teaching and the output of learning in relation to their education goals and the students' personal investment in reaching them. These professionals will achieve didactical and pedagogical goals, solve issues of organisational and professional development and produce new policies and frameworks through constructive dialogue involving knowledge and constant expertise sharing.

The CoP was established with a double objective: to define quality guidelines on three themes of high priority for learning providers and – based on its rich experience from two years of collaborative functioning – to reflect on the

CoP's added value and preconditions to render it successful and sustainable <sup>(4)</sup>. Succinct presentations of the conclusions reached per theme and related suggestions are provided in the following chapters of this publication.

In this second chapter we focus on our second objective by answering the question 'Why is a community of practice necessary today and what makes it a driver for higher quality in VET at European level?'. Insight is provided into several requirements for communities of practice to be effective and sustainable. Proposals are based on the common conclusions and suggestions by the three working groups, which, although not exhaustive, can suggest 'the way ahead', highlighting the VET CoP's potential organisational structure and areas for work and cooperation.

It is generally accepted that despite technological progress – or even because of it – teachers and trainers remain central to developing not only human but also social and cultural capital and identity. Efficient ways to support them in better fulfilling their multiple roles and tasks must be developed and implemented at a greater than before pace.

Communities of practice can share, learn and disseminate practical evidence on what works effectively in VET delivery, so raising the quality of VET provision. Communities have the potential to increase enormously the collection, analysis and diffusion of the wealth of existing effective practices, as demonstrated by our community experience in the last two years.

In a sector characterised by openness and cooperation on advances in technology and digitalisation, the lack of a Community of Practice accessible to all restricts the possibilities of dissemination and shared learning. The quality and effectiveness of VET could be much higher if such experiences could be shared more easily <sup>(5)</sup>. For example, the Good teaching practices competition and Inventory of good practices compiled by the Open Education Europa portal in 2015 <sup>(6)</sup> revealed a high number of innovative VET teachers and trainers across Europe willing to invest the extra effort to share their practices and lessons

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(4) In order to fulfil its first objective the CoP set up three working groups of around 15 members, experts in the themes under consideration: TEL, learning mobility and migrants' integration and empowerment through learning. Each working group has produced a report on the outcomes of its work to be published in 2020.

(5) [http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2016-2018/et-2020-group-mandates\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2016-2018/et-2020-group-mandates_en.pdf)

(6) <http://web.archive.org/web/20160115063707/http://www.openeducationeuropa.eu:80/en/good-practices>

learned with their peers; they are hindered not by a language barrier but by the absence of an EU-wide community and tools. Learning providers have to understand the emerging VET landscape and the potential of new technologies, become aware of the need to establish synergies at European level and to invest in the development of staff competences. They have to deal with organisational transformation if they want to sustain their business and increase the impact of their offer. Teachers and providers are two of the three key actors; the other being institutions, researchers and policy makers at national and European levels. These have an important contribution to make by collecting and processing data, designing and implementing VET policies that are relevant and inclusive.

On the basis of the above considerations, we propose to establish an EU-wide community of practice in the VET sector and support the implementation of initial tasks, including the development of an online platform. An incremental approach could be adopted, starting by mapping and inviting existing communities in individual Member States or in different areas and topics.

One important requirement in harvesting this wealth of VET practitioner experience and good practice is attention to the language factor. We should bear in mind that not all learning providers, teachers and trainers are fluent enough in English to participate actively in CoPs working in English. However, translating all contributions on all subjects in all Member State languages is too costly and not necessary. Consequently, for off- and online elements of an EU-wide VET community of practice to become effective, a cooperation agreement is needed for selecting, translating and uploading practices of interest; an online platform with assorted tools would greatly help collaboration and exchange between members of the community. This type of approach should not exclude other forms of contact and cooperation among VET CoP members, such as face-to-face meetings; on the contrary, it would help them become more focused and efficient. We strongly suggest that the initial development of an EU-wide CoP and its online platform is funded by the EU with the active involvement of learning providers, teachers and trainers in its design, implementation, assessment and adjustment phases. For learning providers, teachers and trainers, participation in such a CoP could be a significant incentive to form smaller topical groups, in order to exchange and introduce innovative pedagogic processes and tools.

From experience, there are several areas of shared interest a CoP in VET could treat, including staff mobility; this is becoming an important tool for staff to keep up with VET developments and to experience their implementation in real time in classrooms and workshops. But to profit from staff mobility it should be linked to a set of supportive measures combining, for instance, the provision of

language courses (including professional and technical terminology) with professional training and study visits (as foreseen for student long-term mobility under Erasmus+). It is also important to research the role of mobility in raising staff intercultural awareness for contending with groups of learners from different socio-cultural backgrounds and origin. Mobility should also form part of teachers' and trainers' continuous professional development (CPD) and be included in their career portfolios. The VET CoP, and especially the teaching staff as mobility stakeholders, should be included in the discussions on mobility. An appropriate budget structure should be devised where greater funding flexibility is requested.

The VET CoP would also greatly serve professional development and lifelong learning among VET managers, teachers and trainers as a permanent tool providing a learning environment appropriate to professionals. Equipping VET managers and teachers with 21st century skills and competences like leadership, creativity and innovation, collaboration, communication, lifelong learning, information management and flexibility, can be supported through active participation in the VET CoP; members will interact on the issues that are directly connected to their professional development and advancement.

Teacher, trainer and educator lifelong professional development must be guaranteed and embedded in their occupational description in order to equip them with necessary skills; these include better interaction with third country nationals (trauma recognition, anti-racism training and methods, coaching), while intercultural awareness and dialogue should be part of all VET provider curricula since we are living in multicultural societies. This shifting in teachers' roles must be taken into account and reflected in teacher initial training and further education. This holistic approach to educator professional preparation also draws on the potential of informal and non-formal learning, fosters pedagogy for interaction and social learning, and becomes the only way to cope with new forms of learning.

In this way, teachers, trainers and VET staff will enhance their skills and competences with new 'modern' ones that are multi-dimensional in combining cognitive, pedagogical and affective dimensions and include digital, 21st century, multi-cultural and life competences, taking into account the relevant EU competence frameworks.

We are living in the digital era and this requires us, VET educators, to build and further enhance our digital skills and competences, a challenge underestimated until now. If we really want to meet the challenges of the digital age and make education for the future fit to respond to the increasing social and international challenges, and to avoid also a digital and social divide, huge investment is needed in the professional engagement and development of

teachers, trainers and VET staff that the proposed CoP can support. As our work has shown, VET teachers and trainers need to develop, in addition to the generic DigCompEdu <sup>(7)</sup> competences, a learner-centric pedagogical mind-set in order to apply those learning methods that would allow their students to understand and recreate knowledge and apply it to their work as needed. Only then could we reap the benefits technology is offering and make education more effective, productive and personalised.

Learning providers, teachers and trainers cannot be left alone to face such profound changes; the challenges they represent cannot be answered by the professionals alone. This is the common conclusion of our three working groups.

Every VET institution, be it at European, national, regional or local level, needs a strategic action plan to ensure continuous change, innovation and the development of an inclusive learning culture. This will require decision makers to discuss with the VET CoP, especially policy makers and VET managers, on the direction of change that the VET sector should take. Strong policy support and vast training and upskilling programmes for leaders in VET and adult education are necessary. Leaders could then initiate the necessary organisational restructuring and aid staff capacity development by encouraging and by participating in mobility, peer learning and best practice exchange where basic, new technological and transversal skills are combined with orientation, guidance and intercultural skills. Their participation can be both physical and virtual in the context of VET CoP.

Learning providers can greatly contribute to dealing with the contemporary real need to integrate third country nationals (TCN), once sensitised on its importance. They can complement their staff with coaches and work in close cooperation with intercultural mediators, orientation and guidance experts in order to improve TCN professional development and access to labour market including through more effective validation of skills and competences.

Learning providers should, in turn, be supported by adequate funding corresponding to political priorities. For instance, they should be able to rely on adequate funds for TCN socio-professional integration, while national and EU key policy makers should ensure sustainable funding sources for their integration policies. The same applies to the necessary investment in technological equipment to make efficient use of new technologies in education and work.

Such efforts from learning providers could be supported by providing, in the context of the Erasmus+ programme, the possibility of organising joint international training courses for leaders and management, for example between

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(7) [http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC107466/pdf\\_digcomedu\\_a4\\_final.pdf](http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC107466/pdf_digcomedu_a4_final.pdf)

five partner learning institutions. The option for organising joint study visits should be reintroduced but in a more focused way to highlight the issues for policy priorities in a certain programme period.

## Key conclusions and messages

- (a) There is a pressing need and important requirement to establish a VET CoP, which will participate in all VET policy planning and implementation, and to support its initial development with seed funding. The members of the VET CoP will discuss the issues that affect them and come up with suggestions for continuous development of VET quality. Where appropriate, development and funding of an online platform and other tools should be suggested.
- (b) Teachers and trainers are key actors in the VET CoP and support for their continuous professional development should become a top priority, in a context of continuous change characterised by strong technological and social challenges.
- (c) Alignment of policy priorities along EU, national, regional and institutional lines should be improved so that their implementation at grass roots level can meet the expectations they generate. Following this, learning providers and managers should take the initiative to align their institutions to policy objectives and EU frameworks.
- (d) Professional development of learning providers, teachers and trainers should include the development of new roles, the adoption of learner-centric pedagogic approaches and intercultural awareness, the development of 21st century and coaching skills, and the acquisition of digital skills and agility.
- (e) Erasmus + should focus more on staff mobility linked to the EU policy objectives including study visits and facilitating participation in the VET CoP activities.

## CHAPTER 3.

# Working group 1: Learning providers and the challenge of TEL: enhancing teachers' and trainers' e-skills (WG1)

Technology has been a constant in learning and humankind evolution. From the discovery of writing, to book printing and the use of film and television, education has always developed with and alongside technology. More recently, new technologies have been integrated into the educational process through the use of computers. We are now standing on the brink of the next wave of changes with the development of digitalisation, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, nanotechnology and the internet of things (IoT) virtual reality.

Technological developments in VET have always posed two challenges:

- (a) how to ensure that students will be prepared for the use of new technology in their work;
- (b) how to use technology as a means of increasing the productivity and quality of the education/learning processes.

WG1 decided to focus on the second challenge, while realising that it also helps meet, at least partially, the first.

### 3.1. Why technology-enhanced learning requires teacher and trainer involvement

Evolving technological trends are expected to lead to a new division of labour between humans, machines and algorithms. This work transformation will be the result of two parallel processes:

- (a) the decline of redundant or automated tasks and roles;
- (b) the emergence of new jobs and roles.

According to a WEF report <sup>(8)</sup> these two factors lead to a positive balance for jobs globally. However, job frameworks will also need to be reorganised and redrawn through the reskilling and upskilling of the workforce. This means that

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<sup>(8)</sup> E. WEF report: <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2018>

future as well as present generations of VET learners -and thus of teachers and trainers should be equipped with the corresponding technological competences.

There is considerable literature and recommendations on the need to upgrade teachers' and trainers' skills to allow a more generalised and systematic use of TEL in VET provision. The future required competences for students and citizens have been recently described in digital literacy frameworks, such as the EU Digital competence framework for citizens (DigComp 2.1) <sup>(9)</sup> and UNESCO's Digital literacy global framework (DLGF) <sup>(10)</sup> .

The EU 2018 Digital education action plan <sup>(11)</sup> foresees several actions to assist EU Member States in meeting the challenges and opportunities of education in the digital era, organised under three areas of priority. The first two are directly linked to teaching/learning:

- (a) making better use of digital technology for teaching and learning;
- (b) developing digital competences and skills.

The European reference framework of key competences for lifelong learning <sup>(12)</sup> defines eight key competences, including digital competence and personal, social and 'learning to learn' competences.

WG1 considers it vital to encourage and support digital pedagogies rather than simply the use of ICT tools and technologies. The group believes it will not be effective just to insert technology by substitution into present curricula or learning approaches. There are several international, national and professional frameworks on teachers' digital and ICT skills.

WG1 considers DigCompEdu to be, at present, the most appropriate framework since it is specially conceived for assessing and developing teachers' TEL skills in VET and Adult Education. Our belief is that VET teachers and trainers should be helped to self-assess and constantly develop their digital competences. The key to success in this process is motivation. This means teaching staff should consider the acquisition of their future e-skills as a professional developmental journey rather than as measure remediating a lack of quality in their profession.

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<sup>(9)</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomp/digital-competence-framework>

<sup>(10)</sup> <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/ip51-global-framework-reference-digital-literacy-skills-2018-en.pdf>

<sup>(11)</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604\(01\)&rid=7](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&rid=7)

<sup>(12)</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal->



VET educators must be stimulated to accept positively and begin the journey to build and further enhance their digital competences. This requires an effort that has been underestimated until now. If we want to answer to the challenges of the digital age and avoid a digital and social divide, a huge investment is needed in the professional engagement and development of teachers and trainers in order to reap the benefits technology is offering for making education more effective, more productive and more personalised.

### 3.2. Action speaks louder than words

In many documents the need to stimulate technology-enhanced learning is confirmed. Currently there is a wealth of observations confirming that more effective action targeted to teaching staff is needed.

Cedefop's briefing note *Professional development for VET teachers and trainers* underlines that 'while VET teacher and trainer professional development has been on the EU education policy agenda for many years, it has not been sufficiently visible in the national policies' <sup>(13)</sup>.

The OECD report *Supporting teacher professionalism*, notes that professional development increases teachers' professionalism and satisfaction, especially in schools with higher proportions of socio-economically disadvantaged students <sup>(14)</sup>.

One of the draft key messages of the working group on digital skills and competences (2016-18) <sup>(15)</sup> is that 'the holistic, organisational approach to digital change has been identified as a key driver for the development of digital education' and it is vital to move towards more digitally confident and capable institutions. TEL has to become the central part of planning for innovation and change in terms of pedagogies, infrastructure and institutional strategy.

Encouraging the development at school level of an organisational climate positive to digital technologies is crucial, and there is great need to introduce and support school leaders in developing digital teaching and an appropriate learning mind-set.

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<sup>(13)</sup> <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/9112>

<sup>(14)</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/teacher-professionalism\\_5jm3xgskpc40-en](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/teacher-professionalism_5jm3xgskpc40-en)

<sup>(15)</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2016-2018/et-2020-group-mandates\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2016-2018/et-2020-group-mandates_en.pdf)

In TEL environments, teachers have to play more roles than in the past in addition to the generic DigCompEdu <sup>(16)</sup> competences. VET teachers and trainers need to develop a learner-centric pedagogical mind-set in order to apply those learning methods that would allow their students to understand and recreate knowledge and apply it to their work as needed. This shifting in teachers' roles must be taken into account and reflected in the curricula of teacher initial training and further education.

The *Good teaching practices competition and inventory of good practices* compiled by the Open Education Europa portal in 2015 <sup>(17)</sup> revealed a surprising high number of innovative VET teachers and trainers across Europe willing to invest the extra effort to share with their peers their practices and lessons, even those learned in a foreign language. However, the lack of a community of practice accessible to all restricts the possibilities of dissemination and joint learning <sup>(18)</sup>.

### 3.3. How to realise a quantum leap in technology-enhanced learning

If we want to protect our societies and the European Union from a new social and economic divide, with new 'digital haves' and 'digital have-nots', we are compelled to act now.

Current EU policies focus mainly either on achieving a digital single market, by promoting the effective use of digital facilities across Europe <sup>(19)</sup>, or on bridging the digital skills gap in the labour market <sup>(20)</sup>. However important these might be, they can also increase the existing digital or technological divide affecting all strands and activities in our society. If we consider the difficulties Member States still face in their efforts to lower the percentages of national illiteracy and lack of numeracy, the enormous numbers of people who are or will become digitally or technologically illiterate cannot but alarm us. We should

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<sup>(16)</sup>[http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC107466/pdf\\_digcomedu\\_a4\\_final.pdf](http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC107466/pdf_digcomedu_a4_final.pdf)

<sup>(17)</sup><http://web.archive.org/web/20160115063707/http://www.openeducationeuropa.eu:80/en/good-practices>

<sup>(18)</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2016-2018/et-2020-group-mandates\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2016-2018/et-2020-group-mandates_en.pdf)

<sup>(19)</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/>

<sup>(20)</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/sites/digital-agenda/files/digital\\_skills\\_and\\_jobs\\_coalition\\_members\\_charter\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/sites/digital-agenda/files/digital_skills_and_jobs_coalition_members_charter_0.pdf)

realise that, in the light of the challenges ahead, insufficient structural effective attention has been paid so far to the much needed education quantum leap; the importance such a quantum leap for VET has also not been sufficiently addressed. In EU Commission Digital education action plan 2018, the importance of digital education is only mentioned for higher and general education.

WG1 is also convinced that realising a community of practice for teachers and trainers, supported by an online platform, is a necessary but not sufficient instrument to speed up innovation and change. It is necessary because the traditional policy process – starting with practical experience and leading to research, and from research findings and dissemination to policy and then to implementation – takes a too long. We no longer have the time.

## Suggestions

- (a) First, a TEL strategy encompassing all levels of the education cycle and specifying TEL-related responsibilities should be defined. It would be utopic to think that such transformations can happen only at grass roots level, without transformations at policy level and especially in the public sector. This new era, marked by rapid technology advancement, innovation and digital transformation, is demanding new approaches.
- (b) Each government should introduce (for example through ministries of education, national VET or other high level educational institutions) an education innovation department as a mandatory part of the institution. Such departments would guide and support the grass roots level in digital and innovation transformation in an interactive way. It is important that these departments are staffed by people experienced both in working at grass roots level in colleges and in technology-enhanced teaching and learning.
- (c) Every institution, at European, national, regional or VET provider levels, needs a strategic action plan to ensure ongoing change innovation and the development of a learning culture. This will need a profound agreement on the direction of change the institution will take. The ambitions set out in the Digital skills and job coalition charter <sup>(21)</sup> and the Education digital action plan <sup>(22)</sup> launched by the EU Commission are good starting points. However, initiatives, actions and funding should be more aligned to such ambitions

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<sup>(21)</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-skills-jobs-coalition>

<sup>(22)</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/specific-actions-digital-education-action-plan>

- and to VET. Progress will have to be supported by the EU and considered a critical performance indicator by the European semester process.
- (d) Strong policy support and vast training and upskilling programmes for school leaders, teachers and trainers are necessary, including restructuring teachers' initial education and CPD programmes.
  - (e) TEL pioneering teachers can be empowered by bringing them to the spotlight in a constructive manner, e.g. through the organisation of TEL awards and webinar series to share their innovative experiences and inspire peer learning and the creation of virtual communities of good TEL practitioners.
  - (f) An EU-wide benchmark of educators' digital competences could further enhance the use of TEL in VET and facilitate the implementation of an upskilling policy targeting VET teachers and trainers. Strengthening teacher and trainer TEL knowledge and skills is a prerequisite to any policy of improving the use of TEL in schools and VET.
  - (g) VET teachers and trainers should not be left isolated in their development planning. They should have opportunities to engage socially and learn from each other and collaborate with peers in knowledge networks and in their virtual and local communities of practice (CoPs).
  - (h) An investment should be made to develop platform software for online communities of practice to be used both at national and at European levels. A similar action for VET to the one foreseen in the Education digital action plan would be necessary <sup>(23)</sup>: 'Create a Europe-wide platform for digital higher education and enhanced cooperation. The new platform, supported by Erasmus+, will serve as a one-stop-shop and offer: online learning, blended mobility, virtual campuses and exchange of best practices among higher education institutions at all levels'. It is essential to apply this to VET also.
  - (i) On a more general level, we propose to make the support to developing technology-enhanced learning, a strategic priority in EU funding. This could be done by earmarking part of the increase in the Erasmus+ budget to project and mobility activities for technology-enhanced development and exchange. Funding for research and innovation could be also directed to the development of VET (education) and of new pedagogical and didactical approaches to prevent TEL being used as just another tool within existing curricula.

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<sup>(23)</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/specific-actions-digital-education-action-plan>

- (j) WG1 stresses that nothing is more frustrating in developing technology-enhanced learning than the lack of financial resources to invest in the technology needed. European and national funding strategies can be best aligned to support both the necessary education and upskilling of teachers and trainers as well as to create the financial instruments to invest in the necessary technology.

## CHAPTER 4.

# Working-group 2: Learning providers and the EU mobility: reinforcing VET attractiveness through staff engagement (WG2)

### 4.1. Introduction

Staff mobility for learning purposes in VET is becoming an important component of policies relating to teachers and trainers. Learning mobility is considered a powerful learning experience, during which an individual moves from his/her everyday context, and has to open up and adapt to new learning contexts and approaches. It is a great way to develop social, intercultural and interpersonal competences for life, and to promote a sense of common European belonging. There are three key mobility actors in learning mobility: teachers and trainers, VET providers/institutions, and industry/firms. Each has particular interests in learning mobility and is confronted with his restricting and facilitating factors that condition participation. These factors are of different nature and level but their simultaneous presence in many mobility cases has an effect on the learning mobility experience, so they need to be analysed. WG2 looked at those aspects that may hinder mobility to define the issues at stake and suggest practical guidelines to overcoming them and to increasing staff mobility.

Thirteen years after the quality charter for mobility was adopted, it is important to take stock on its implementation and identify ways to do things even better.

### 4.2. Current situation: the three VET mobility actors and their challenges and opportunities

#### 4.2.1. Key actor 1: VET staff

For VET staff, learning mobility is an important means to develop one's employability, for the following reasons:

- (a) through mobility teachers/trainers may acquire:
  - improved competences, linked to their professional profiles;
  - broader understanding of practices, policies and systems in education, training or youth across countries;

- increased capacity to trigger changes in terms of modernisation and international openings within their education organisations;
  - greater understanding of interconnections between formal and non-formal education, vocational training and the labour market respectively;
  - better quality of their work and activities in favour of students, trainees, apprentices, pupils, adult learners, young people and volunteers;
  - greater understanding and responsiveness to social, linguistic and cultural diversity;
  - increased ability to address the needs of the disadvantaged;
  - increased support for and promotion of mobility activities for learners;
  - increased opportunities for professional and career development;
  - improved foreign language competences;
  - increased motivation and satisfaction in their daily work;
- (b) when we know the positive impact of learning mobility on personal development, social inclusion and civic participation, turning learning mobility from an exception into a rule at all levels of education and for all education actors should become a shared objective to be pursued collectively. This presupposes that financial, institutional and personal barriers to mobility should be addressed and overcome;
- (c) among the financial aspects related to mobility the amount of grants (travel and subsistence expenses), and the too low rates in some Member States, make teachers feel not comfortable abroad causing extra stress to managers. The low rate of funding is a great demotivating factor for VET managers across Europe;
- (d) mobility depends considerably on the mobility culture of the sending and receiving organisations; if it is embraced (not imposed) by management, it can work.
- (e) the personal mind-set and attitude are conditioning all other mobility related issues.

WG2 findings show that the following three factors prevent staff from participating in mobility abroad:

- (a) low language skills prevent many VET staff from taking part in job shadowing and teaching assignments abroad, which are the two options of activities foreseen under KA1 VET staff mobility projects;
- (b) most teachers and schools prefer study visits of few days to job shadowing;

- (c) there is high demand for training activities for staff that VET providers are obliged at present to apply under the key actor 1 (KA1) school education, competing thus with larger numbers of applicants.

#### **4.2.2. Key actor 2: VET-providers and institutions**

In contrast with HE, in which virtual mobility is already a reality, supported by ICT and technology-enhanced learning environments (TEL), mobility in VET remains mainly physical and depends on factors such as local trade union policy and the recognition (or most often the absence of recognition) of mobility experiences in collective agreements and contracts.

At management level, it was difficult in the past for VET professionals to understand mobility's added value; VET top management, confronted with urgent needs, often tended to consider mobility as either additional financial revenue, a marketing tool or an obligatory institutional requirement imposed by the ministry. However, due to growing internationalisation of society and work with managers, perceptions and attitudes are changing and mobility's advantages are valued and sought after.

In relation to institutions, mobility should be considered under the perspectives of the sending and hosting/receiving institution which may face similar but not identical challenges.

For the sending organisation, staff mobility is mainly a question of money and timetabling. VET mobility is of limited duration, ranging from a few days to one to two weeks as the upper limit because a longer period is practically impossible. The longer the mobility, the more work problems teachers and other personnel within the sending institution have to face.

For the receiving organisation, preparing for mobility means making arrangements for visitors; interesting and reasonable tasks, with a reasonable work or shadowing plan, avoid putting an extra burden on visiting staff and those taking care of them. For the host or receiving organisation, the largest part of KA1 projects for staff take place in VET schools, where the visiting groups of teachers get acquainted with the training system and methodology of the receiving country.

Currently VET providers are becoming more supportive of staff mobility and several are using a 'buddy' approach to encourage staff participation. In this they pair up staff to support incoming and outgoing mobility with the help of 'staff ambassadors', who have participated in mobility and found the experience fruitful for both their personal and skill set development.

The biggest problem teachers and managers face is communication at the receiving organisation abroad, be it a partner VET institution or a company. To



solve this, the international coordinators of large sending institutions try to form larger groups of teachers and provide them with an interpreter, usually a teacher of English. However, sending several staff members for more than a week abroad usually causes a timetable collapse, which brings managers back to their former attitude of not being completely in favour of international mobility.

Issues of organisation, procedures and/or involvement lead back to the importance mobility abroad has in the overall development strategy of the VET institution/organisation concerned. If the strategy is there, it is easier to implement the necessary processes.

Quality in learning mobility is certainly funding-dependent but it is also more than that; sending and hosting organisations, families and halls of residence, have a strong role to play in making the best out of such experiences.

WG2 concludes that we can never overestimate the importance of the school- to-school approach, not only for job shadowing but also for sharing social partners (the companies, with which they collaborate on a regular basis). This direct collaboration is a great tool for internationalisation and Europeanisation, not only in education but in sharing cultural values as well. The impact of transnational mobility on the institutions involved should also be considered in terms of their exposure to innovation, to EU education and training policies, to networking with foreign schools, further internationalisation/Europeanisation of curricula and to their greater institutional visibility at EU level.

It is important to maintain and further develop the school-to-school approach to transnational learning mobility, which offers both learning and empowerment. The approach of forming consortia of VET schools for mobility applications is efficient and creditable having existed in many countries for many years; it enables VET schools to participate in several mobility initiatives and ensures greater variety of learners/staffs benefiting from international experience. . To maintain and develop it further, corresponding funding should be dedicated to it and appropriate modalities defined. This would also motivate VET managers who would not want otherwise to waste staff energy on receiving foreign teachers more than once.

#### **4.2.3. Key actor 3: companies**

It is still difficult to organise a placement for teachers in companies related to their subject. Companies are often reluctant to host VET teachers and trainers. Reasons can include the absence, or the insufficient mastery, of a shared language among visiting staff and hosting firm (English in most cases). This can be a 'cause and effect' problem creating further obstacles to mobility. Often firms do not have time to be with foreign staff for more than a couple of hours; in most

cases they only have time to speak about the VET learners they are hosting and assess them, and validate related documents. It is not easy for trainers at shop floor level to understand and fill in the Europass mobility docs as required. However, as VET staff usually goes to the same places as their VET learners, they can help with European documentation, monitor and assess their students while taking the opportunity of learning good practices in practical VET.

A problem for VET staff mobility itself is that it is not easy at all to find enterprises willing to share their good practices concerning apprenticeship, tutoring and mentoring at shop floor level. However, mentalities are changing at firm level, too; in Lithuania for instance, the Confederation of Industrialists is active in staff mobility although, when it comes to VET staff placements abroad, more effort is needed.

Another recurrent problem is linked to mobility's short duration which limits staff presence in hosting firms to one or two weeks; this is a very short period for companies to invest time and effort in their presence. In comparison, students get a mobility grant and do their practical training in firms and fields they are studying much easier than their teachers (thanks also to providers' close cooperation with social partners in industries and chambers). In contrast, staff (teachers and trainers) placements in companies are few and the existing few positive cases constitute the exception to the rule rather than normal practice.

### 4.3. Conclusions

WG2 concludes that with the world of education evolving fast, worldwide collaboration through both physical and virtual mobility will become a must. Although the impact of mobility varies between countries as a result of institutional and cultural differences, WG2 believes that teacher and trainer learning mobility will become a fundamental component of the 21st century VET sector in Europe.

Reflection is needed on the specific quality-related dimensions of mobility, such as standards and guidelines and on their implementation in order to learn from their application and consider whether to develop quality standards to cover mobility of VET teachers.

Since transnational learning mobility contributes to the further Europeanisation of education and training, reflection should include the factors supporting the quality of cooperation among European learning providers.

In view of management's hesitation in sending staff abroad, learning mobility needs to become part of the institution's developmental strategy, supporting the recognition of staff mobility experience abroad. Even in the absence of formal

recognition, the outcomes of the mobility experience (in terms of learning outcomes and/or skills and competences development) should be recorded in the career profile of participating staff. The use of 'open badges' leads to this and it could be further promoted.

#### 4.4. Suggestions for mobility for today and tomorrow

WG2 would like to suggest further investigating the importance of mobility for:

- (a) learning about oneself and situating oneself in relation to 'the other';
- (b) improving mutual understanding, tolerance and acceptance of 'the other' or 'the different', combating prejudice, xenophobia and social exclusion;
- (c) promoting the idea of European citizenship in addition to people's national identity.

As well as a physical mobility experience, where staff spends time abroad, mobility covers also peer collaboration at a distance, through the internet. This is virtual mobility, which means that staff does not have to travel. Nowadays, virtual activities enable colleges to offer many staff an international experience.

Through various social media, SKYPE, electronic learning platforms, staff are encouraged to use foreign languages to communicate with their peers, to learn about other education cultures, and become informed about the differences between vocational studies in different Member States. A virtual experience often sparks a serious interest in physical mobility such as a work placement abroad. All the knowledge, skills and competences gained as a result of virtual and physical experiences will give staff a better insight into the other's teaching approach and content.

Teachers develop a very open attitude as a result of working with international partners. Research shows that mobility makes teachers more flexible and their teaching more contemporary, challenging and exciting. As further support for teaching staff, the following measures should be adopted:

- (a) include mobility for digital skills acquisition among the criteria for teacher/trainer CPD;
- (b) encourage teachers/trainers to develop self-assessment tools for assessing their mobility experience;
- (c) involve teachers/trainers in defining together with their institution which competences can be developed at home and which abroad;
- (d) pay attention to the acquisition of the following four mobility-related competences: intercultural understanding, communication skills and skills for innovation and creativity.

An important precondition is that physical and/or virtual mobility are embedded into the education programmes of the partner organisations. Working internationally should not be considered extra work: on the contrary, it should be part of the primary process within the schools' strategic aims and objectives.

At VET policy level, simplifying and mainstreaming EU transparency tools will further boost learning mobility to the benefit of all, students and learners included.

## CHAPTER 5.

# Working-group 3: Learning providers and migration: empowerment and integration through learning (WG3)

### 5.1. Introduction

Despite the provisions made in the 2016 EU action plan, the planning and implementation of policies for third country nationals (TCN) integration is fragmented at both European and national levels. Integration through learning has not been yet sufficiently spread in all education sectors at all levels, the number of people concerned, including migrants and refugees, is still limited and, as a result, TCNs are more at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to host-country nationals, even when they are in employment.

Because the integration of TCN through learning is a complex and multifaceted issue, WG3 investigated the role that learning providers can play in TCN empowerment and integration. Despite the importance of the issue, learning providers are not fully participating in the EU platforms and networks that are working to develop coherent and effective integration policies, although they have the capacity to lead the process with a potential European added value. WG3 focused on VET providers and their accumulated experiences, challenges, lessons learned and good practices leading to TCN holistic integration through learning.

WG3 investigated the role of learning providers not only from an organisational perspective, but also by examining the needs of TCN as recipients of learning services and the requirements from the broader context in which learning providers operate. WG3 considered the role of learning providers in respect of two core (professional and social integration) and two horizontal (ICT and integration of women) aspects.

In order to provide TCN and hosting societies with the opportunity to improve both sociocultural and professional integration, learning providers should offer training courses combining digital and entrepreneurial competences that are based on EU competence frameworks. These would offer TCN the opportunity to be trained as ICT professionals or digital entrepreneurs, develop their citizenship competences and self-esteem, and contribute to the development of the hosting society. Whatever qualifications will be obtained after completing such courses

must be recognised across European Union countries and organisations, thus ensuring mobility of qualified TCN.

Among all the services offered by learning providers, the role of validation is paramount for successful TCN entrepreneurship and integration into the labour market. The effectiveness of validation mechanisms depends on the ability to tailor learning provisions to TCN needs, on the ability of learning providers to target and validate non-formal and informal competences together with a multi-stakeholder network, and on their capacity to frame validation in a broader set of integrated services. Learning providers are called on today to give a more effective and active contribution in order to put in place a multi-sectoral strategy, adopting an evidence-based approach, building on good practices and lessons learned and acting in partnership with other actors with different and complementary capacities. To this end, learning providers have to understand fully their role, act in partnership and jointly develop a holistic and shared approach at European level, which should take into consideration the economic, social, cultural and professional dimensions of TCN integration.

## 5.2. TCN as recipients of learning

The professional and sociocultural integration of TCN require a holistic approach that would consider not only their educational needs and professional development, but also their personal situation, their social and cultural background and origins, their awareness and knowledge of the hosting country and the services available to them. The diversity of VET provisions should reflect the diversity of TCN and identify flexible pathways according to their learning needs that will make them the focus and will support them in achieving realistic objectives, according to their characteristics and situation. VET providers and stakeholders who take part in the learning process must put in place specific processes / mechanisms and instruments / tools specially tailored to TCN needs.

Because such needs are also affected by issues related to culture and language, supporting future professional and social integration, it is more efficient to combine preparatory sessions leading to VET with training for integration; one is reinforcing the other and less time is needed than when they take place consecutively. Guidance must be provided by coaches to those young migrants who are minors and live unaccompanied or separated from their family, as they need tailored policy measures and continuous support.

Validation mechanisms currently in place seem to be neither tailored to TCN needs, nor relevant for their professional integration and access to the labour market. Significant differences among Member States and VET providers,

regarding processes, tools and methods of validation, still hamper the transparency, mutual recognition and effectiveness of validation outcomes across Europe.

The efficacy of TCN validation processes and mechanisms depends on achieving the right balance between highly structured processes and less structured assessment and recognition mechanisms. VET providers should adopt innovative practices in assessing TCN competences, to make the whole process more accessible to them and more self-explanatory. In this way TCN skills and competences can be assessed and documented without requiring them to speak the language or to cope with bureaucratic procedures and terminology. ICT provides tools to detect TCN capabilities and to match their skills with those demanded by the local labour market, as well as to raise their awareness and active participation in the labour market. A balanced mix between self-assessment tools and external evaluation has proved effective in increasing the relevance of the validation process to TCN background when attempting to recognise and validate non-formal and informal competences.

Socio-cultural integration of TCNs has to be fully mainstreamed throughout their process, since the active participation of migrants and refugees in the labour market and, more generally, in public life is vital for ensuring social cohesion in the host country and increasing the ability of migrants to function as autonomous, productive and successful, self-confident citizens.

## Suggestions

- (a) Validation should be combined with a comprehensive set of integrated services aiming at facilitating TCN socio-professional integration and better labour market access, including: vocational orientation and accompanying measures, pre-vocational measures, guidance and job integration pathways, support to self-employment and business start-up.
- (b) Validation mechanisms should be more flexible and relevant to TCN background and learning experience, considering and validating their prior learning, non-formal and informal competences, expectations and potential; VET providers should endorse a balanced mix between self-assessment tools and external evaluation, such as the skills portfolio and observation of practical work-based learning.

- (c) The use of ICT tools, to support learning, self-assessment and guidance should be fostered to assess TCN skills better and match their professional profiles with market demands.

### 5.3. VET organisations as providers of learning services

The endorsement of a holistic approach to TCN professional and socio-cultural integration through learning requires learning providers to redesign their VET provisions significantly. They must focus on TCN potential and skills development, rather on their education level or age, to develop not only technical and work-bound competences, but also 'capabilities' that may let them play an active role in their local, national and global context.

As a first step, VET provider awareness must be raised and their understanding of the role played by learning must be enhanced within more comprehensive integration that encompasses every meaningful aspect of the lifelong learning process, the recognition and valorisation of competences, the quality and dignity of work. VET has the potential to contribute to achieving the goals set by the Europe 2020 strategy as a tool for better matching skills and labour demand, supporting mobility across sectors and countries and fighting social exclusion. Learning providers have to implement organisational development to align their structures and learning offer to the role they are asked to play.

At the same time, teachers and other staff are often confronted with situations that go far beyond their job description and professional skills; they usually become the facilitators of TCN integration, guide individuals through validation and accompany them in learning to express themselves and articulate their needs, and to acquire the fundamentals of the hosting culture and language. In order to manage multi-cultural classrooms and successfully carry out coaching, teachers need to acquire the necessary competences and be equipped with related lesson materials. Digital and transversal competences, language fluency and multi-cultural class management still remain fundamental requirements for the staff of learning providers. The provision of continuous capacity building opportunities will allow VET staff to be in contact with peers and other professionals (orientation and guidance experts, market actors and key actors responsible for matching training offer and market demand) increasing the effectiveness of their work on TCN validation, professional and social integration.



## Suggestions

- (a) Learning providers are encouraged to complement their staff with coaches and to work in close cooperation with intercultural mediators, orientation and guidance experts to improve the effectiveness of validation and, more generally, of migrants' professional development and access to labour market.
- (b) Learning providers should secure adequate funds for TCN socio-professional integration, while national and EU key policy makers should provide sustainable funding sources for their integration policies.
- (c) The organisational restructuring and staff capacity development of VET providers, should be promoted by encouraging mobility, peer learning and best practice exchange, combining basic and transversal skills with orientation, guidance and intercultural skills.
- (d) Lifelong professional development of teachers, trainers and educators must be guaranteed and embedded in their occupation description, in order to equip them with the skills necessary for better interacting with TCN (e.g. trauma recognition; anti-racism training and methods, coaching); intercultural awareness and dialogue should be part of VET provider curricula.

### 5.4. Policy makers and broader context

VET providers operate within broader business and social environments, while their actions are regulated and affected by local, national and European laws and policies.

The effectiveness of measures and services aiming to support TCN integration through learning also rely on the possibility to frame them into a coherent, relevant, comprehensive and agreed European framework for their holistic integration (meaning educational, professional, sociocultural and economic). Learning providers are called on to advocate for, and to take action on, increasing the impact and relevance of learning as a means to support TCN integration, in three different contexts: the key policy actors, both at European and national levels; the stakeholders taking part in the TCN integration process, including businesses; and European society as a whole.

In the policy context, learning providers should advocate for the adoption of a European framework for TCN holistic integration, which should be based on the results achieved and the best practices implemented so far; the aim is to strengthen their active involvement into the setting up of effective integration

services through learning. Their awareness must be raised and their capacities built in order to act in partnership, to understand their role fully and to take action through comprehensive integration strategies.

The EU skills profile tool for third country nationals, developed by the Commission, together with the tools and platforms developed in the framework 2016 EU action plan for the holistic integration of TCN, are helping move a step forward towards aligning the quality of national standards and measures. However, there is a further need to align and tailor provisions of existing EU frameworks and tools to TCN needs, profile and background and to let all existing tools be linked and interoperate in a coherent framework. The outputs produced by the different tools used under the proposed holistic perspective must be exchangeable, to facilitate seamless connections between the several stages and actors taking part in the professional and sociocultural integration of TCNs. Learning providers should help bring policy closer to practice and cooperate in the building up of a toolbox for TCN holistic integration.

The case studies and practices analysed confirmed that one effective and flexible way to integrate TCN in training, employment and society in general is to organise the whole process with the active participation of VET and higher education providers, employment authorities, cities, municipalities, market actors and organisations of third sector. A closer link between learning providers, business and market actors could also aid professional integration through promoting self-employment and business start-ups as a means of TCN access to the labour market; migrant entrepreneurs may require particular support to face any additional problems, in order to better cope with integration-related issues like language and trust and better understanding of the local entrepreneurial culture. VET providers are encouraged to build up 'start-up platforms'; these are particularly helpful as they encourage migrants to become entrepreneurs, boosting their potential and self-confidence. Because validation should not be applied independently of socio-cultural integration and personal development, TCN successful integration depends on the capacity of learning providers to link their actions with multi-level interventions in different areas; the key question is how to make integrated joined up services (including provisions to support TCN professional and sociocultural integration) a reality in the different EU countries.

Because VET providers often find themselves acting as socio-cultural mediators, there is need to recognise intercultural mediators as distinct professionals in Europe and also to equip other professional categories with intercultural mediation competences. VET providers should cooperate with intercultural mediators in training migrants and assist them in further developing

their formal and non-formal skills and competences, by advocating for EU-wide accreditation for non-formal VET for intercultural mediators aligned with NQFs.

In terms of social context, successful practices showed that learning providers, together with partner civil society organisations, TCN and other associations can contribute to raising civil society and local community awareness of the importance and the added value of effective integration processes, and empowering TCN to become active citizens. VET providers are encouraged in their practices to mainstream non-formal and informal learning approaches which promote the empowerment and active involvement of local communities and TCN in the integration processes: arts, sports and other intercultural activities, as examples, will help TCN express themselves, become more self-confident and engaged while promoting systematic interaction with local hosting communities.

Particular attention must also be paid by learning providers in designing interventions targeted to women, a group at greater risk of marginalisation and isolation among their countrymen, by promoting their socialisation, training and employment as key to their empowerment and self-determination.

## Suggestions

- (a) Based on the 2016 EU action plan for the integration of TCNs, an EU-wide framework on TCN social and professional integration should be developed to align processes and tools (including a European validation framework of digital competences) across Member States with the active involvement of learning providers.
- (b) Existing EU and national frameworks, guidelines and tools (such as ECVET) should be tailored to address TCN needs and background and integrated in an EU-wide toolbox that should link outputs produced by the different tools and aid connections between the several stages and actors involved in TCN holistic integration.
- (c) EU policy actors have to foster the development of multi-stakeholder private/public partnerships (civil society organisations / VET providers / key policy actors / socio-cultural mediators, business actors) to help give TCN better access to labour market, empowerment and social inclusion.
- (d) Intercultural mediators should be recognised as distinct professionals across Europe. VET providers should advocate for training for intercultural mediation that should be aligned with NQFs and accredited at EU-level.

- (e) VET providers should work in close cooperation with civil society organisations to raise local community awareness of the importance and added value of effective integration processes and to guide and inform newly arrived TCN on learning and sociocultural opportunities with particular attention to fostering women's empowerment.

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Composition of WG1 on technology-enhanced learning

Chair: Mr. René van Schalkwijk (EUproVET, The Netherlands)

Members:

Mr Gilberto Collinassi (EVTA, ENAIP, Italy)

Mr David Corke ( EUproVET, AOC expert, United Kingdom)

Mr Tibor Dori (EfVET, Euro-contact Business School, Hungary)

Mrs Friederike Sözen ( EVBB, Austrian Chamber of Commerce, Austria)

Mrs Adrijana Hodak ( EUproVET, School Centre Nova Gorica, Slovenia)

Mr Marko Kemppinen ( EUprovet, Satakunda Educational Federation, Finland)

Mrs Natasa Kristan ( EUproVET, School Centre Kranj, Slovenia)

Mrs Virginie Lassalle (EVTA, AFPA, France)

Mr Szopa Marek (EVBB, Polish Chamber of Training Companies, Poland)

Mr Stylianos Mystakidis (Center for Vocational Education and Training, University of Patras, Greece)

Mrs Alicia Leonor Sauli- Miklavcic (EURASHE board member, Technical School Centre Maribor, Slovenia)

Mr Stefano Tirati ( EfVET board member, LearningDigital.EU, Italy)

Mrs Lucillia Santos (EUCEN board member, University of Lisbon, Portugal until January 1st 2019)

## Annex 2: Composition of WG2 on staff learning mobility

Chair: Mr Jon Harding (EfVET steering committee, Bridgwater & Taunton College, UK)

Members:

Mrs Sylvie Bonichon (EURASHE-CHAIN5 steering group, France)

Mr Louis Aquilina (EfVET, MCAST Director, Malta)

Mr Alfredo Garmendia (EfVET, San Viator Head of International Dept., Spain)

Mrs Inge Jakobsen (EfVET, Koege Business College international coordinator and lecturer, Denmark)

Mr Andrea Lombardi (EfVET, Uniser, Italy)

Mrs Christine Mertens (EVBB, Liege Science Park Director, Belgium)

Mrs Helena Mikkola (EUproVET, City of Turku International Affairs Manager, Finland)

Mr Iker Orueta (EfVET, Education & Mobility Co-Director, Spain)

Mrs Ana Ribeiro (EfVET, EPA Head of Teaching, Portugal)

Mrs Margarida Segard (EVBB Vice President, ISQ, Portugal)

Mr Raimo Sivonen (SAJO ry, Principal, Finland)

Mrs Konstancja Szymura (EfVET, Aviva General Manager, Poland)

Mrs Rasa Zygmantaitė (former EfVET, Lithuania)

Mr Guy Tchibozo (Expert, CEDEFOP, associated)

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## Annex 3: Composition of WG3 on migration empowerment and integration through learning

Chair: Mr Horst Dreimann (EVBB Secretary General, Belgium)

Members:

Mr Atabarut Tamer (EUCEN, Director BULLC, Bogazici University, Turkey)

Mrs Baeyens Johanna (EURASHE, Senior expert, Belgium)

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