

# The future of VET Post 2020

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF WELL-FUNCTIONING VET SYSTEMS FOR INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS

A highly skilled workforce is the basis for an international competitive European industry. However, today, the existing skills gap<sup>1</sup> is a cause of reduced competitiveness of companies in the tech & industry sector and can have a negative effect on employment. Responsive, well-functioning Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems are key to address and overcome these skills shortages and to help companies to cope with the major technological changes. Delivering the right (digital) skills in line with companies needs is, therefore, crucial for the manufacturing industries to remain competitive and to continue to provide quality jobs.

Indeed, ambitious VET policies are essential for companies of all sizes, from large multinational groups to Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs), and for workers to keep up with the skills development that is required for the tech & industry sector to remain strong, innovative, competitive and sustainable.

For this reason, Ceemet and its member organisations welcome and seek to contribute to the debate on the future of VET. Ceemet has, in fact, long been advocating for first-class VET strategies to support the Metal, Engineering and Technology-based industries (MET) in thriving and adapting to the fast-evolving highly digitalised world of today.

As employers, representing the biggest manufacturing industry in Europe, we are convinced that a good education policy including excellent VET, that meets the labour market needs, is also key to an effective and sustainable social policy. Therefore, we would like to actively shape the future of VET by emphasizing the following key messages:

We need to **increase both the visibility and attractiveness of VET** as a first-class training choice that leads to quality employment in the tech industries by ensuring excellence, permeability and improved career guidance & counselling.

Excellent Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) establishes a basis for Continuous Vocational Education and Training (CVET) which is more and more required by the ever faster changing technologies.

### ABOUT Ceemet

Ceemet represents the metal, engineering and technology-based industry employers in Europe, covering sectors such as metal goods, mechanical engineering, electronics, ICT, vehicle and transport manufacturing.

Member organisations represent 200,000 companies in Europe, providing over 17 million direct and 35 million indirect jobs.

Ceemet is a recognised European social partner at the industrial sector level, promoting global competitiveness for European industry through consultation and social dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup> Skills gap refers to both the mismatch between the skills provided and the skills needed and the shortage of skilled workers

## Making VET – a first class training choice

In order to ensure that VET is perceived as a **first-class training choice** that leads to quality employment, our first priority should be to consistently provide excellent VET programmes. To this end, Ceemet welcomes the increased social partner involvement in the development, implementation and governance of VET policies all over Europe. VET with a strong component of work-based learning is key to helping overcome the current skills shortages that are occurring within the MET industries. VET programmes across all sectors need to be labour market-relevant, flexible and regularly updated to meet the skills needs of the digital transition on the work floor.

## Reinforcing cooperation between industry and VET providers

Successful national dual VET systems show that the participation of the industry & employers, amongst others, in the design and delivery of VET courses is an essential quality element of VET as it ensures its labour-market relevance. We therefore believe that **cooperation between industry and VET providers has to be reinforced as a means to improve VET quality as well as its** visibility and attractiveness.

The most effective level to deal with these issues is the regional and local level, where increasing cooperation between industry/businesses and VET providers & schools and directly interacting with the existing workforce, young people, parents and teachers has a direct impact. This applies in particular to VET schools who need to be flexible, closely linked to industry and appropriately equipped both financially as well as in terms of personal resources.

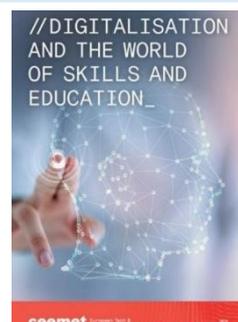
## Supporting well-functioning VET systems at national and European level

Well-functioning VET systems can only flourish with **supportive policies at national and European level, developed together with industry to reflect labour market needs**. Indeed, industry has an important role to play in anticipating and communicating what is the current skills gap and what the future employment/skills needs will be. The involvement of social partners in policy development in this area is key for VET to meet the skills demand of the labour market.

Even though education and training policies remain a national competence, European level initiatives have a role to play when facilitating policy cooperation (including fostering the exchange of best practices) and encouraging the modernisation and greater uptake of VET, for example.

## Delivering soft skills

In addition to up to date content and expertise, VET has to deliver a number of transversal and soft skills which are essential in a globalized and digitalised world of work. Check our recently published “*Digitalisation and Skills report*” for more detailed information on which skills are needed to make the digital transformation a success. To this end, VET programmes should be flexible enough to rise to the aforementioned challenges.



## Ceemet IS

Constantly striving to developing quality VET through the exchange of good examples/best practices, including via gathering trends around VET systems across Europe that we share with EU policy makers, other stakeholders etc.

## POLICYMAKERS SHOULD

- 1) Consult industry to take informed decisions
- 2) Encourage the exchange of best practices
- 3) Support easier access to EU-funded projects for right skilling schemes
- 4) Support career guidance & counselling at an early age
- 5) Involve social partners in the policy development & delivery of VET

### *Fostering permeability*

As employers, we believe that VET and higher education should each be valued as a first-class training choice and not be played off against each other. VET can be attractive for everyone, provided that the permeability between different educational pathways is fostered. Therefore, to enhance access to VET, ties between VET, higher education and continuous training and vice versa need to be created and promoted. Ideally, it should be possible to more freely combine studies from different (VET) programmes and courses from different educational levels. **Fostering permeability between VET, general and higher education** will make it easier for students to move between systems and will increase the attractiveness of VET.

### *Facilitating customised learning*

We are slowly moving from a one-size-fits-all, standardised approach to learning towards more customised learning pathways. Customised learning can help VET students develop their innate talents and capabilities. While previously a costly form of learning, the increase of digital tools has lowered the cost for individualization significantly and it is now a real option. A better recognition of skills gained through life and work experience is also relevant. To this end, we believe that systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning need to be flexible and effective.

### *Improving career guidance and counselling at an early age*

In order to motivate young people to choose VET as a starting point for their professional career, proper counselling at an early age is essential. Ceemet advocates for practice-oriented and easily accessible educational and vocational career guidance that is free from gender stereotypes involving both schools and industry. Career advisors, school counsellors and teachers as well as parents need to be aware of the varied career development opportunities in VET.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTH IVET AND CVET**

Excellent IVET that provides young people with the skills and competences required by companies is key to ensure the future of industry and Europe's competitiveness and prosperity. IVET is thus a crucial vehicle for ensuring a highly skilled workforce.

One of the most important factors to bringing IVET closer to labour market needs is the promotion of excellence at all levels. IVET does not have parity with academic education and is still regarded as a second-choice learning pathway. For this reason, highly motivated students with the necessary key competences often avoid taking this path. Ensuring excellence of IVET will help to improving its image and attractiveness and lead, thus, to a change in the mindset amongst students, teachers, parents, etc.

However, the reduction of the "half-life" of knowledge is driven primarily by ever-shorter innovation cycles and the speed of technological development. Digitalisation, in particular, increases the need for continuous work-based training. Improving the digital skills of the existing workforce in line with the

### **EXCELLENT IVET**

Establishes a basis for CVET as well as for Lifelong learning which is more and more required by the rapid technological changes that are impacting the industry.

needs of the company is thus a major challenge. This is why – in addition to excellent IVET – CVET is a central instrument for securing a skilled workforce and staying competitive. As employers, we know from experience that those training offers, which are workplace-oriented and done on the job, are most effective. Ceemet therefore calls for flexible and practice-oriented continuous training opportunities that meet the needs of companies.

Maintaining one's individual employability in a changing world of work is gaining more and more importance. Therefore, Lifelong Learning (LLL) has to become the norm for everyone. Employers and employees are equally challenged here. Groups of employees who usually participate less in CVET should be encouraged to do so by expanding the variety of training offers and their means of delivery (for example through digital support). Employers largely recognise the importance of continuing training and are the biggest contributors to adult learning, accounting for roughly 50% of all spending.”

In this line, the EU should allocate more targeted funding<sup>2</sup> for right skilling initiatives and training schemes in particular for SMEs, as well as for adapting educational and training systems to digitalisation. EU funds should also be made accessible more easily and less bureaucratic.

#### ⇒ **The future of VET Post 2020 : The European Tech & Industry Employers' vision**

VET systems in Europe should:

- 1) Guarantee excellence by ensuring that VET programmes are demand-led, practice-oriented, flexible and responsive;
- 2) Be characterised by reinforced cooperation between industry and VET providers
- 3) Foster the permeability between different educational pathways, including VET and speed up the transition to customized learning in order to increase its attractiveness;
- 4) Be promoted by easily accessible educational and vocational career guidance that is free from gender stereotypes involving (VET) schools, including teachers, and industry.
- 5) Guarantee excellent IVET and support CVET

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<sup>2</sup> The proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 has been issued on 2 May 2018. Based on the MFF regulation, between 29 May 2018 and 4 June 2018, the Commission issued different proposals for *detailed sector-specific legislation*; - on the various spending programmes that are currently being discussed by the EP and the Council under the ordinary legislative procedure