

## CEEMET RESPONSE

### EUROPEAN COMMISSION COMMUNICATION ON 'A NEW IMPETUS FOR EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN VET TO SUPPORT THE EUROPE 2020 STRATEGY' COM (2010)296

CEEMET welcomes the overall positive messages regarding VET included in the communication on “**A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 Strategy**”. While the European Commission acknowledges the role it can play in facilitating cooperation and encouraging modernisation and greater uptake of VET (both iVET and CVET), it also rightly underlines that this role is mainly to support and supplement the work of national governments and stakeholders.

We support a majority of the key actions proposed in the communication. However we believe that there is **too much emphasis on VET as a tool for social inclusion** in the proposed approach.

Education should be a means to empower children and adults alike to become independent and active participants in the transformation of their societies. Like any other part of education, VET has a role to play in society, but it is by focusing on its “educative qualities” that this aim can be achieved - not by making of VET a social policy instrument.

**Thus, the future for VET is to be a first choice education path providing high quality education and employability to all. Only if excellent, will VET contribute to equity.**

Therefore we would like to outline the following priorities that in our opinion should be promoted in the cooperation in VET.

#### EXCELLENCE IN iVET and CVET

We consider that **initial VET and continuous VET must be dealt with separately**. They address to a large extent different publics with different needs and different constraints. A common objective cannot be achieved by identical means for both types of VET. To make iVET and CVET high quality education paths, we believe that the following priorities should be set for further cooperation at European level:

➤ **Priority for iVET: promote excellence**

The promotion of excellence in iVET at all levels is of pivotal importance. iVET does not currently have parity with general education or ‘academic’ education, and is still often regarded as second-choice education. For this reason, highly-motivated students with the necessary key competences too often avoid taking this path. Both schools and companies must become better ambassadors for careers in the metal, engineering and technology-based sector to attract more young people into iVET and into working in this sector. However the success of these efforts also rests on a supportive environment and therefore it is crucial that policy makers consider attracting more people to iVET an objective for education policy.

Industry is working hard to improve the image and quality of iVET, through a variety of projects and initiatives. In this context, it is also a strong advocate of well-functioning career guidance, as well as

increasing opportunities for pupils in iVET by **improving the permeability** between iVET and higher education so that iVET is considered a real alternative for young people – both those who want to go directly from school to work as well as those who want to go into higher-level education.

Further, excellence in iVET will encourage companies to strengthen cooperation and improved cooperation will lead to a better matching of skills and a boosting of iVET.

While vocational education and training should undoubtedly promote equity, priority must be given to promoting excellence. This must be a joint effort by all stakeholders at all levels in order to successfully change the iVET ‘mindset’ of students, teachers, parents and policy makers alike.

#### ➤ **Priorities for CVET: a shared commitment**

The Metal, engineering and technology-based industry invest in many ways in the personnel’s competences, skills and knowledge development including investments in education and training. Continuous education and training of the workforce is an important factor in the competitiveness of the European metal sector as well as in the employability of the individual worker. While employers have an important role to play in employment-related education and training, it is for individuals to ensure their employability and own career development and to look for opportunities for lifelong learning. Lifelong learning cannot be imposed and needs to become a mindset.

CVET provides an opportunity for individuals to retrain as well as further their competencies throughout their working life, and it can also be a means of attracting those who are on the periphery of the workforce. As continued VET has to have a clear impact to the up-skilling of the workforce necessary to maintain competitiveness, the quality, flexibility and attractiveness of VET systems in Europe must be heightened.

### **RELEVANCE TO LABOUR MARKET NEEDS THROUGH COOPERATION**

- For young people in iVET and for many employers, there is a large gap between learning in school and the world of work. To bridge this gap, keep up with ever-changing technologies and facilitate school leavers’ transition into the world of work, the integration of practical and theoretical subjects must be increased and VET systems made more adaptable.
- Long-term cooperation between VET education and companies must be promoted allowing natural communication of labour market needs and networking by VET students, teachers, skilled workers and employers.

Anticipation of skills is useful but more important is the ability of education systems to adapt to changes in labour market needs. Forward planning tools can at best provide indications on future developments. At European level, it will be necessary to evaluate whether the development of a common system of classification of skills, competences and occupations and related tools really can bring the added value needed to boost the European competitiveness.

### **TRANSPARENCY AND MOBILITY**

European instruments such as EQF, ECVET and Europass will be of little use for companies and students if their development is not accompanied by a real shift towards learning outcomes of education and training systems, from the design of qualifications to their assessment and validation.

- Learning outcomes are the common language on which all efforts should focus and which systematic use should be promoted.

For companies to maintain and increase their competitiveness, it is essential to have highly skilled, committed and adaptable personnel. Against this background, CEEMET considers that “learning mobility” can be a useful tool contributing to:

- The preparation for mobility of workers which can, notably, contribute to temper the effects of skills shortages and the demographic trends of an ageing workforce – mobile students are more likely to be mobile workers.
- The development of important soft skills (language, culture, adaptability) which are important in a globalised, technologically fast-paced industry and are crucial to strengthening the future employability and personal development of young people.

To promote mobility, “studying abroad” has to be made a *real* option and readily available. Recognition, financing and visibility are key in promoting and motivating young people to be mobile. The specific situation facing apprentices regarding mobility - in particular in the dual system - needs to be acknowledged. These issues primarily have to be addressed by governments within the national education systems.

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