



## **Memorandum of Understanding**

### **Stronger Cooperation and Integration of European Associations of Providers of Vocational Education and Training**

Since 2009 European Associations of Providers (EVBB, EfVET, EUproVET and EVTA) have been working together to enhance and promote the expertise of providers of Vocational Education and Training at the European policy level. The first activity was a joint statement on the EU Bruges declaration on Vocational Education and Training. This was based on the realisation that EU policy has a large impact on national policies and on providers and learners in VET. It led to the awareness that policy development needs the active engagement of those at the grass root level. Schools, Colleges and training institutions and training in companies is where policy must become not only an intention but a reality. Without providers involvement in policy development the impact, outcomes and results that are necessary for a stronger and higher quality VET will not be realized. This is the case at EU level, at national level and even at regional or institutional level.

On the part of the EU commission this was recognised and since then the involvement in policy development and listening to the people at the level of schools and colleges has been growing.

The four associations issued policy statements like the Bruges statement (2010), the Frankfurt declaration (2012), the Barcelona declaration (2014) and the statement on the EU Riga declaration on VET (2015).

Since 2009 the associations are actively involved in working groups and conferences, and participate in advisory groups. The strengthened cooperation with the EU commission has led to an enhanced involvement by higher vocational education. EURASHE was involved in EUproVET at an earlier stage in order to strengthen the link between VET and Higher Education. For this same reason eucen and EURASHE both joined the expert group of providers of Vocational Education and Training at the initiative of the EU commission. This groups meets quite often with the EU commission. This is based on a mandate of activities that are being carried out in the framework of EU policy development and implementation.

This closer cooperation over the years led to a larger mutual involvement of the respective associations. All this was realized in the spirit of the EU that cooperative action and collaboration has more effect than individual activities. Also in the realization that we have more in common than at first hand seemed to be the case. It finally resulted in 2014 in an agreement to work together under the abbreviation VET4EU2. The abbreviation refers to the 4 networks that are mainly working in secondary VET (EVBB, EfVET, EUproVET and EVTA) and the two networks that work primarily in Higher Professional and Academic Education (EURASHE, eucen). The abbreviation is pronounced 'VET for you too', thus indicating that VET is an honourable and first class educational route for all. It also refers to the route from VET to Higher Education which should be considered as an equal route next to the more academic pathway of general secondary education.

The cooperation between the associations has been increasingly constructive. This can be seen in joint projects, cooperation in conferences, joint policy statements, and an agreed distribution of tasks for the work in policy working groups. Therefore, it was agreed to follow and strengthen this path of cooperation that has been started already many years ago. So, we are now building on the building blocks that we have laid in the years before.

With the present memorandum, we aim to further strengthen our cooperation in policy involvement at the European level. Each of the associations will work in close collaboration with their member institutions. It is recognised that each association has an individual mission, members, background and history. This seems self-evident in the case of the difference between higher and secondary professional/vocational education. EURASHE and eucen on the one hand and EfVET, EVBB, EUproVET and EVTA on the other hand. But we meet on issues like continuing education, lifelong learning, permeability from VET to higher education and the link through level 5 programs and qualifications.

Also for the four associations in secondary VET it is true that there are differences in origin and priorities but we meet in the need to recognise the importance of VET for learners constructive

talent development and in the importance of VET for both the labour market and personal development. This requires an equitable position of VET in the educational system providing initial, dual and continuing education that benefits both the learner and the companies they (will) work for. VET is increasingly important for both social and economic development, for the young the adults and those that aim for vocational excellence

It is not our aim to merge as associations, but to strengthen our cooperation where we have common insights for positive policy development that will be effective for learners, teachers and trainers, and companies and society. These insights originate at the level where Vocational Educational and Training takes place, meaning in schools, colleges training institutions and companies that provide for Vocational Education and Training.

### **Statements**

The undersigned associations agree to the following statements for strengthening their cooperation:

- 1.1. The associations will strengthen their cooperation to achieve their respective missions, the development of EU policies that strengthen the quality and equitable position of VET in educational systems and EU policy proposal, to achieve the goals and outcomes that have been set out in notably the Barcelona declaration by VET4EU2 and the RIGA declaration and the mandate of the expert group of VET providers (annex 1, 2 and 3). This stronger cooperation should not result in extra financial obligations and administrative burdens in accounting.
- 1.2. The associations will aim not to merge but to establish a formal legal umbrella for cooperation that will facilitate their intended cooperation and, increase access to calls and increase the eligibility to delegate experts in policy development activities by the EU.
- 1.3. The associations commit themselves to strengthen mutual information exchange on developments, events and activities of each association and to facilitate cooperation and networking between their members including granting access to each other's events at membership conditions of the organizing association.
- 1.4. The associations will actively try and enter into joint projects (e+) or platforms that will contribute to strengthened cooperation and will actively involve or invite each other and each other's members to contribute where relevant
- 1.5. The associations will form a joint pool of experts that can be of assistance in policy development and formulating joint policy statements and the representation of VET4EU2. The associations ensure that their experts in this network are experienced experts in the field that have knowledge of the aims and policy statements of the VET4EU2 associations.
- 1.6. The associations will develop a joint website to facilitate their cooperation and communicate with each other members. A link to this website will be on the homepage of the website of each individual association.
- 1.7. The associations aim to increase VET providers representation from all the EU countries and will stimulate capacity building for VET grass root representation in all EU countries. The growth of representation will be through membership of the most appropriate organisation. There will be no competition for memberships.
- 1.8. The associations will actively try and engage sectoral European VET associations within the efforts of VET4EU2.
- 1.9. The associations will realize an adequate and representational delegation in policy development working groups at EU level. Delegation will consider an equitable representation of all associations and the available expertise in time and quality of any association.
- 1.10. The responsibility for this cooperation will be with the appointed representatives of boards of the six associations.
- 1.11. The cooperation within VET4EU2 does not lay constraints on individual actions of the individual associations in the field of attention. This memorandum does indicate a preferred channel for policy representation. This means that it is also possible to agree on joint positions on issues that are particularly interest for one or a minority of associations.
- 1.12. This memorandum has been agreed to by the boards of each association.
- 1.13. Any conflicts resulting from this memorandum will be resolved within a joint meeting of the representatives of the associations as mentioned in 1.10, and it can be part of an annual meeting of the associations.

Signed the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2017 in Brussels

Mr. Thiemo Fojkar

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**President of EVBB - European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training**

Mr. Santiago García Gutiérrez

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**President of EfVET - European forum for Vocational Education and Training**

Mr. Christophe Donon

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**President of EVTA - European Vocational Training Association**

Mr.

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**President of EURASHE - European Association of Institutions in Higher Education**

Ms. Françoise de Viron

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**President of eucen - european universities continuing education network**

Mr. René van Schalkwijk

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**President of EUpVET - European Providers of Vocational Education and Trainers**

## Annex 1

### The Barcelona Declaration July 2014

On the 10th of July 2014, in Barcelona (Spain), the European networks EfVET, eucen, EUproVET, EURASHE, EVBB and EVTA (VET4EU2) have declared to continue and to intensify their cooperation.

In their 'Bruges Joint Declaration' from December 7, 2010 these European networks made clear that they are willing to support the European Commission by actively contributing to the realization of the Bruges communique and the goals of the EU2020-strategy for a 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth'.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is crucial to achieve the 2020 Strategy goals, based on knowledge and innovation, to create an inclusive society with employment for all and to reach a real competitive and sustainable economy.

Hence, they will coordinate and combine their activities for the coming years:

- to contribute to the development of an all-embracing strategy for lifelong learning, including advancement from and permeability between Vocational Education and Training and Higher (Professional and Academic) Education;
- to improve cooperation between companies, social partners, vocational training providers, and public institutions in VET and H(P)E;
- to enhance the use of the best VET educational practices across European countries with the realization of considerable country to country differences;
- to develop VET as a core educational and practical tool to encourage social participation and social cohesion;
- to foster transnational and national mobility;
- to ensure Europe-wide standards for Quality Assurance in VET using EFQM and EQAVET approaches;
- to advice on the more practical implementation and stronger integration of European instruments for VET like Europass, EQF, ECVET, EQAVET to improve and or supplement national educational instruments in order to facilitate educational and employment mobility across countries. Also, to extend these instruments where relevant, for qualifications at level 5 of the EQF, like Higher Vocational Education and Training (HVET) and Short Cycle Higher Education (SCHE);
- to foster flexibility in provision of VET and Higher (Professional) Education, and in transfer between those sectors, using procedures for recognition of prior learning in continuous and adult education;
- to promote the use of modular training and independently usable educational units in VET education to integrate initial and continued VET programs and to implement them in educational institutions;
- to promote the use of learning outcomes in validating and recognizing educational levels of achievement;
- to cooperate in developing work-based learning for young adults;
- to promote cross-country cooperation between leaders and management of VET institutions thus enhancing awareness of the importance of these developments at school and institutional level, and also in a regional setting.

Thus, these European networks convene to foster their cooperation, which grew in the last four years, in order to achieve common European goals concerning VET and HE improvements in Europe.

The European networks contribute their competences and experiences to these European objectives and they present themselves as competent partners for the European Commission and other European institutions, networks and associations in the field of VET, HE and employment.

The networks commit themselves to regular semi-annual meetings and to objectives of a work program to realize consequently the Bruges Joint Declaration and the European goals for VET ET2020. They are going to contribute to the development of the policy goals for the next period, to be seen as input for the RIGA declaration. They will disseminate policy relevant information to their members.

## **Annex 2**

### **VET4EU2 Declaration on the medium-term deliverables of the Riga Conclusions**

#### **Preamble**

We, the European Associations of VET providers EfVET, eucen, EUproVET, EVBB and EVTA (participants of the platform 'VET4EU2') welcome the new medium-term deliverables of the Riga Conclusions presented by the Latvian EU Presidency on 22 June 2015. We reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the Bruges Communiqué and express our support and commitment to contribute to the realisation of the new medium-term deliverables. In particular, we welcome the strong focus on partnerships with relevant stakeholders and sectors, including companies, VET providers (public or private) and higher education institutions.

VET4EU2 is very pleased and hopeful about the new focus on VET in EU strategic policies. The medium-term deliverables give direction to the EU VET policy agenda and determine key areas for modernising VET systems and form important pathways along which participating countries can raise the quality of VET, ensure a good connection between VET and the labour market, support inclusive and sustainable growth and ensure the development of lifelong learning and permeability of VET towards higher education.

Recognition of the national responsibility for education and training is combined with European indicators for the direction of national educational systems. This joint commitment will strengthen the efforts of participating countries and Europe as a whole to enhance both social inclusion through employment and economic competitiveness in a global arena. We, the partners of the VET4EU2 platform, commit ourselves to cooperate constructively with the European Commission and help to implement the medium-term deliverables, using our networks to create support at national and grassroots level.

#### **VET4EU2: involvement of VET providers**

The associations of the VET4EU2 platform work together to improve the quality of I-VET and C-VET in Europe and the permeability of VET to higher education. The joint declaration of EfVET, EUproVET, EVBB and EVTA about the Bruges Communiqué in 2010 was the first formal initiative to collaborate in the field of EU VET policy development. The organisations elaborated and intensified their cooperation with organisations (eucen and EURASHE) that also operated in the field of C-VET and/or higher education. This resulted in the Frankfurt Declaration in 2012 and in the Barcelona Declaration in 2014.

In recent years, the VET providers have actively contributed to EU VET policy development by participating in experts and working groups on VET at European level, conferences and formal and informal dialogue with the European Commission. The cooperation is based on the vision that the implementation of European and national policy measures will become successful at grassroots level if VET providers associations join forces and are actively involved at all stages. Therefore, VET4EU2 looks forward to further develop the cooperation between the platform partners and with the European Commission in order to achieve the objectives of the Copenhagen process in general, and the Riga Conclusions in particular.

#### **Recommendations**

VET4EU2 recommends to the actors who are responsible for cooperation in and development of VET at national and European level, to pay special attention to the points below to promote effective implementation of the deliverables.

#### **I. Governance principles for effective implementation of medium-term deliverables 2015-2020**

##### **From policy into practice, ensuring testing, monitoring and peer learning**

Translating EU VET policy into taking concrete steps to realise objectives at national and grassroots is a key challenge. It requires involvement of end-users from the very first phase of policy development. VET4EU2 stresses the importance of an integrative approach to improve

the quality VET, which may require involvement of different stakeholders at different stages, including on testing and monitoring. All VET providers' leaders, trainers and teachers, trainees and students and companies must benefit noticeably from EU measures and activities, by their own standards and needs. Peer learning is a key instrument to increase impact at local level and visibility of EU support.

Recommendations:

- Define key actors for change for each topic and participating country and include them in policy development and implementation processes. For example: national innovation platforms may help to integrate VET measures into national or regional innovation schemes.
- Stimulate involvement of VET providers associations in the discussion on the formulation, implementation and monitoring of VET relevant country specific recommendations issued in the framework of the European Semester, including round tables, conferences, bilateral or multilateral cooperation.
- Stimulate involvement of EU institutions in national implementation activities about the medium- term deliverables, such as round tables, conferences, bilateral or multilateral cooperation.
- Include VET providers in peer learning outside Erasmus+, alongside public authorities.

## **II. Thematic recommendations**

### **Diversity in work-based learning (deliverable 1)**

Most VET stakeholders at European and national level are now well aware of the crucial importance of work-based learning in VET systems and programmes. Because of the diversity in national situations and VET systems, tailor made measures and approaches are required. VET4EU2 emphasises the need for local and national solutions, which can only be reached by involving all stakeholders and promote cooperation between authorities, VET providers and industry. Moreover, it is critical to include all types of employers in the development of work-based learning schemes: corporate businesses, SME's and non-profit organisations, including public authorities. Special attention should be paid to monitor the implementation of work-based learning measures – to learn from successes and failures and to improve the systems – and to further develop links with European quality tools such as EQAVET.

Recommendations:

- Intensify campaigns to sensitise and commit business stakeholders to take on learning responsibilities.
- Include SME's providing apprenticeships in apprenticeship networks, as key actors of employment, innovation and entrepreneurship. Their participation can be enhanced through representatives of regional and sectoral networks.
- Integrate work-based learning in quality assurance tools and systems at all levels.
- Stimulate integrative peer learning communities (involving all stakeholders) to exchange information and experiences throughout the implementation process.

### **Quality assurance: quality breeds quality (deliverable 2)**

Further development of quality assurance mechanisms in VET is a key issue for VET providers. It will work as a leverage to improve work-based learning, excellence and social inclusion, if certain conditions are met.

An integrative approach, adaptation to new developments and focus on peer learning are measures that will help to strengthen national and local quality assurance systems.

Recommendations:

- Stimulate peer learning: identify forerunners, stimulate exchange/dissemination of good practices, including practices in the Higher Education sector. Extend peer learning to other international mechanisms such as ISO and EFQM.
- Stimulate the recognition of European quality assurance mechanisms at international level.

- Integrate essential EU and national goals in key areas such as work-based learning, employability, learning outcomes, triple helix cooperation and a focus on disadvantaged target groups into EU quality assurance systems.
- Develop new quality goals and indicators to promote sustainable (green and smart) training for employment, including work-based learning actions.

### **Permeability, continued and higher VET (deliverable 3)**

Permeability towards higher VET and university is increasingly identified as a key factor to develop career perspectives and increase employability. There is a growing need for more cooperation and alignment between initial VET, continuous VET and higher education, to raise qualification levels and design effective and sustainable lifelong learning schemes.

New effective policies can only be developed when VET and higher education networks and policymakers join forces at EU, national and regional level. VET4EU2 provides a platform for dialogue with stakeholders such as EURASHE and eucen to address this issue and strengthen cooperation.

VET4EU2 regards EQF as a key instrument to support transparency and recognition and enhance permeability. To optimise further development, some issues need to be addressed. Among these are the systematic low appreciation of VET in many NQF systems, the international recognition of the EQF system beyond Europe and aligning the NQF values of VET in participating countries.

Recommendations:

- Intensify the integrated dialogue with all stakeholders in order to improve smooth transitions from VET to Higher Education, both in initial education programmes and lifelong learning.
- Continue to stimulate cooperation between VET and Higher Education networks on topics of common interest.
- Facilitate a study into the positioning of VET in NQF systems in comparison to general education and use results to improve NQF systems.
- Speed up national actions to align NQF – and subsequent regional and Sectoral qualification schemes - with EQF through country specific recommendations.

### **Focus on social inclusion (deliverables 3 and 4)**

Research and experience show that disadvantaged groups, including unemployed, under-skilled NEETS and migrants, face the most persistent problems in the labor market. They need to be addressed and coached as individual students, trainees, workers and citizens, aimed at their integration in the labor market as well as affirming self-esteem, up-skilling and social support.

Medium-term deliverables 3 and 4 - enhancing access to VET and strengthening key competences – offer starting points to align VET policy measures with employment and social inclusion policies.

Recommendations:

- Create partnerships between VET and social inclusion stakeholders at EU level, and join their networks.
- Promote social impact evaluations, support orientation, counselling and skills enhancing (counselling coaching, prior learning assessment tools to enhance experience and individual knowledge and abilities).
- Integrate new migrants and refugees in this approach.
- Ensure a strong alignment between short term employment objectives and long term employability objectives.

### **Teachers in the frontline (deliverable 5)**

The successful implementation of the medium-term deliverables will not be possible without the instrumental and effective involvement of teacher, trainers and mentors. They must be equipped with the necessary competence to cope with the multiple challenges ahead, both in their areas of expertise and with respect to their pedagogical skills.

#### Recommendations:

- Facilitate peer learning activities for teachers at regional, national and European level.
- Create incentives for teachers to work in industry, and for industry trainers and mentors to work at VET institutions.
- Teachers, trainers and mentors should not only be trained in academic and technical skills, but also in social and counselling skills.
- Stimulate international mobility of teachers to increase vocational and pedagogical excellence.

#### **Contributions of VET providers**

VET4EU2 is looking forward to help achieve the medium-term deliverables and support the recommended actions mentioned in this declaration. The participating organizations will continue to develop the dialogue on all issues and stimulate their members to participate in EU dialogue, spread awareness about the medium-term deliverables and ensuing policies, contribute to peer learning and identify forerunners in the areas addressed in the medium-term deliverables. In particular, they are committed to:

- Participate in expert and working groups that are related to and have impact on VET topics, such as skills for labor market, innovation, social impact and social inclusion.
- Provide access to research institutions involved in VET innovation, in order to enhance participation in policy development and implementation.
- Use their contacts with national, regional and sectoral networks to support the participation of SMEs engaged in training and work-based learning.
- Strive to engage their regional and national networks in activities such as expert groups, conferences, projects and research.
- Stimulate their networks to provide integrated actions for the social inclusion target groups and cooperate with national authorities.
- Work with the European Commission to develop and strengthen EU social inclusion and employment policies by taking into account the VET perspective, on topics such as early school leaving, adult education and opening up VET pathways for people with psychological or physical limitations, with a disadvantaged position in the labor market.
- Continue to stimulate members to actively participate in EQAVET networks and meetings and address these issues therein.
- Stimulate exchange of good practices between the VET and higher education sectors through their networks.
- Stimulate members to actively participate in the development of NQF systems.
- Support research on NQF systems by providing information about national situations.
- Stimulate members to participate in European and national discussions on permeability and lifelong learning.
- Promote the establishment of testing spaces at EU and national/regional level in order to identify realistic solutions for the challenges described in the Riga Conclusions.
- Promote and create European events open to institutional, public and private stakeholders in order to share and monitor mid-term deliverables, to share the concrete results reached at local/regional/national level and to bring out new ideas for achieving other goals.

### Annex 3

#### EXPERT GROUP : Platform of European Associations of VET providers

Mandate 2017-2020 - list of areas of cooperation  
(indicative and not limited to these items exclusively)

AREAS FOR COOPERATION	INDICATIVE TIMELINE
Cooperation with the European Commission on the organization European Vocational Skills Weeks: organization of award(s), workshops, mobilization of members at country level, particularly through linking national (grass root) events to the EU level ones.	For every edition of the Week
The creation of a wider European network of VET providers through increased membership of present EU VET associations and national capacity building (CHAIN5). Representativeness of national VET providers in EU discussions forums: links between EU and national VET stakeholders.	2017-2018
Contributing to the reflection on the post-2020 VET modernization agenda as well as the EU Funding programs (also promoting best practices projects).	2017-2020
Creating links between Ministries, social partners and VET providers at national level (national ACVT members and national members of the VET provider's associations to create or improve linkages from EU to national levels of policy development in VET).	2017- 2018
Cooperation with European social partners including sectoral ones (ETUCE and EFEE), public employment services, students' associations, parents' associations, other EU Institutions etc.	On an on-going basis
Higher VET, permeability between VET and HE and the development of a viable and connected EQF level 5 link between VET and HE.	2017-2020
European instruments and tools for transparency (ECVET, EQAVET, learning outcomes); contributing to the development of instruments that are implementable at national and providers' level; contributing to evaluating existing tools as fit for purpose in practice.	2017-2018
VET and social inclusion; cooperation with CSR Europe in creating partnerships with businesses; increasing linkages at national level; providing good practices on VET and social inclusion.	2017-2018
Cooperation in CEDEFOP initiatives (projects, studies, events).	on an on-going basis
Creating EU wide communities of practice on technology enhanced learning, mobility and migration issues in VET together with CEDEFOP.	2017- 2019
Input to events organized by the Commission (conferences, EAfA events, working groups, etc.).	on an on- going basis
Build partnerships on continuous vocational education and training / adult learning	2017-2020
Dissemination of EU policies and tools, in particular concerning the Riga medium term deliverables, and other VET initiatives (Quality Framework for Apprenticeships, ErasmusPro, Graduate tracking, etc.).	on an on- going basis

On 23 June 2017, participants could comment and provide ideas on how to work in the above areas and what results could be envisaged.