

## **Workshops on VET Teachers and Trainers: Key Actors to Make Lifelong Learning a Reality in Europe**

### **Regional-specific background paper country cluster 1: VET Teachers and Trainers in IRELAND, MALTA, The NETHERLANDS, ROMANIA and the UK**

#### ***Overview of the VET systems***

The countries in the present cluster have certain commonalities as regards the overall economic and working culture and the associated model of education for the world of work. Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands and the UK have relatively open economies with only little formal regulations concerning the qualification for the world of work. VET institutions in these are fairly independent with an increased emphasis on CVET and lifelong learning so that the lines between initial and continuing learning, adult education and VET are not sharply differentiated. Romania, being a transformation country, is an exception with a different tradition and presents the contrasting country in this cluster.

The VET system in England, Scotland and Ireland is largely unregulated and practice based, taking place at the workplace. VET policy promotes a liberal market-driven model as concerns skills and training. This supply-side driven approach gives large degrees of autonomy to VET institutions, which as providers are responsible for the economic as well as social output of the programmes they offer (i.e. in terms of compensatory education, special needs and immigrant integration for example). Recently, stronger emphasis is being placed on establishing sectoral arrangements and introducing some sectoral standards in the area of VET.

Similarly, the Netherlands has for some years been associated with the UK system especially through the dynamics of reforms in the systems including the movement towards large regionally organised vocational colleges and the emphasis on outcomes based training. Also the relations between labour markets and qualifications in the Netherlands and UK are similar. With its colonial past, Malta's education sector draws its main guidance from the British educational system and after three years of secondary schooling, students can opt to transfer into trade school which is a system which leads to employment or to further technical education and training through various apprenticeship schemes. In all those countries we find an increased emphasis on CVET and lifelong learning so that the lines between initial and continuing learning, adult education and VET are no longer sharply differentiated.

Obviously, Romania does not share the same historical, economic and educational connections as the other countries in this group, but is a carrier of a different, contrasting model. Romania more recently has brought its VET system in line with European standards. For example, a new law for the introduction of the dual system has been passed and a transparent national qualification system been introduced. With its initiative to establish a network of career counselling centres and efforts to come to terms with gaps between the availability of professional training and labour market needs.

#### **Ireland**

In Ireland there is no single system for training young people. There are a number of different learning pathways in VET, namely school-based qualifications (Post Leaving Certificates, PLC), apprenticeship, sectoral training in areas like tourism and catering, Training Courses for young job seekers, the Youth reach programme for early school leavers, and

higher vocational education and training. In 1999 a new Qualifications (Education and Training) Act was enacted, which established the National Qualifications Authority for Ireland and the two awarding bodies FETAC and HETAC. The standards for qualifications are defined by the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), which comprises ten levels. The framework is based on learning outcomes that are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

### **the Netherlands**

In the Netherlands vocational education and training is part of the secondary school system. There is a track of pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO) at the lower secondary level and a track of vocational secondary education (MBO) at the upper secondary level. The qualifications offered by the MBO programme range across various levels from basic or assistant to professional or middle management level. The admission requirements vary according to the targeted level. Approximately 700 vocational qualifications are available through secondary vocational education. The proportion of practical training varies between 20% and 60%. However, there is also a version of secondary vocational education where practical training takes more than 60%. The courses are completed consecutively by partial certificates. Upon completion of all partial qualifications of a course a diploma is awarded.

### **Malta**

In Malta the situation is characterised by a set of training opportunities and forms of certification with no structure and no unified recognition. However, in the meantime the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework has been announced. Vocational education at the upper secondary level consists of school-based programmes offered by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), and apprenticeship programmes offered by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) in collaboration with the MCAST and the industry. Apprenticeship programmes concentrate on vocational qualifications for craftsmen and technicians.

### **Romania**

In Romania, training in (state-owned) enterprises was a familiar phenomenon before 1990, but almost completely abandoned in the course of the transformation from a command economy to a market economy. It was only after the educational reforms at the turn of the millennium that cooperation between vocational schools and enterprises began to be established anew. However, there is still a dominance of school-based VET as the new law on apprenticeship training that came into force in 2006 has not brought about any significant effect yet.

### **United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom, following the devolution of powers from the central government to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, does not have a single system of education and training. In addition, there is a strong tradition of 'voluntarism' that keeps decisions on workplace training and human resource development in the hands of the employers. Qualifications are organised by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Within the UK, pre-employment initial vocational education and training (IVET) may be undertaken at secondary school, or at a Further Education (FE) college, or with other training providers. There are two forms of IVET: (1) General vocational education is undertaken either at school (for those aged up to 18) or at a FE college (for those aged 16+). Successful completion may lead to direct employment or to further training, within a FE college or with another training provider. (2) Programmes of specific training are undertaken at FE college and allow entry to a particular trade or profession (such as hairdressing, construction trades, accountancy, etc.). This form of VET is a blend both of

initial training (IVET: meeting pre-entry requirements) and continuing training (CVET: providing the recognised vocational qualification for practice within a particular trade or profession).

### ***Specific issues related to VET teachers and trainers***

Given the relatively low level of regulation in most of the countries in this cluster it is no surprise that VET teachers and trainers often do not have a professional identity defined by specific VET related qualification requirements. VET teachers often are part of a comprehensive teachers' profession that includes both general and vocational education. Trainers often do not form a specific professional group since specific qualification requirements largely do not exist.

In Ireland, for instance, there is no mandatory qualification for trainers, except for certain sectors where health and safety regulations play an important part. In-company trainers in Ireland have access to a similar range of qualifications as in the UK, although there is less post-graduate provision in universities in terms of Master's level qualifications. Trainers who seek qualifications can apply to the IITD, which is the Irish representative of the European Training and Development Federation, or the UK-based Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). The IIPD offers a *Certificate in Training and Development* and a *Trainer Skills Certificate* and has also launched a BA in Training and Development in cooperation with the National College of Ireland in Dublin. Teachers at secondary level usually hold a *Bachelor degree* in their specialist subject and complete a one-year *Higher Diploma in Education*.

In Malta VET teachers, being secondary level teachers, must have a university degree and an additional postgraduate diploma for teaching. Teachers may be asked to attend in-service training annually. Besides, teachers have to attend three after-school sessions devoted to school, staff and curriculum development. As from October 2007, newly appointed teachers have to follow a two-year mentoring period. The key difference between VET teachers and VET trainers in Malta lies in the extent of pedagogical training, and in the public status and recognition that they enjoy. VET teachers - as well as learning facilitators - belong to a publicly recognised profession, represented by a strong trade union which also functions as a professional association. They have a code of conduct, and entry into the profession is regulated, with the requirements specified in advance. The knowledge and competence base of VET teachers and learning facilitators has been codified in teacher training programmes, and is also evident in the criteria that are used to evaluate teacher performance (e.g. during supervised teaching practice).

Trainers, on the other hand, do not belong to a 'profession' as such. There are no clearly defined entry routes, no career progression paths, and no established set of standards or codes of conduct. Their interests are not upheld by a specialised union, and an association as well as a network targeting trainers has only recently been set up. There are important differences between general subject and VET teachers in a VET setting in Malta. Most of these differences related to the pedagogical profile of the two categories of teachers, as well as to the training routes they have followed.

In Dutch secondary education there is a distinction between grade one and grade two teachers. Grade two teachers may teach only the first three years of the general education programmes, but all years of pre-vocational and vocational secondary education. Grade one teachers, by contrast, may teach all levels of lower and upper secondary education. Grade two teachers hold a teaching qualification from higher professional education (HBO), which can be obtained from special universities of professional education. Qualific-

ations for grade one teachers are available at HBO institutions and universities. In vocational secondary education there is also the possibility to appoint teachers who have an HBO qualification in other subjects than education, provided that they have an additional certificate of competence in teaching.

In Romania lower and upper secondary school teachers are trained in long-term higher education, four to five years, depending on the subject they will teach. Higher education teachers must hold a graduation diploma of long-term higher education as well as a diploma of doctoral studies. As regards trainers in enterprises there are as yet no specific requirements in terms of formal qualification. Enterprises often choose experienced workers for in-house training activities. Usually in-company trainers have completed a trainers' training programme offered by the teacher training departments at universities.

In the UK vocational education and training is provided by different types of institutions so that there is also some variety concerning the qualifications of VET teachers and trainers. All teachers in secondary schools, including those teaching vocational subjects, must hold the recognised teaching qualification of a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Entry requirements include the holding of a degree in the subject to be taught. The PGCE is obtained via a one-year period of training, based at a Higher Education Institution (HEI) that includes practical teaching experience supported by education studies. Following certification, and a satisfactory year of probation on first appointment, the successful trainee is awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Vocational teachers in FE colleges may be appointed without a teaching qualification. Their vocational/trade qualifications, plus substantial experience in their specialist area has been, and continues to be, the requirements for appointment to a teaching post in further education. There is also a significant amount of in-house training by employers, which is carried out by in-company trainers who either work for an employer organisation as full-time trainers or for a single company, typically as part-time trainers. These in-company trainers are not required to have a particular qualification, but often hold training certificates such as those provided by the CIPD (see above).

*Sources: country reports from EUROTRAINER, EURYDICE and ReferNet*