

Draft minutes of the meeting of the SEEVET Net

Belgrade, 19th September 2016

Hotel M, Bulevar oslobođenja 56 a, Belgrade

The meeting was opened by the Chair of the SEEVET NET, Ms Dragana Graonić, after which the participants were welcomed by the representative of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Mr. Dragan Marinčić, coordinator for VET and adult education, who expressed his wishes for successful cooperation and working day on behalf of the Minister, Mr. Mladen Šarčević.

Ms Šarić, the ERI SEE Director and facilitator of the meeting, explained the methodology of the day, and reminded the participants of the main conclusions of previous SEEVET Net meetings held in 2014 and 2015. She stressed the importance of developing further the regional cooperation in the area of VET and the need to jointly reach a decision on which priority area to focus on in the future work of the SEEVET Net, which would ideally imply the implementation of a joint project. She also presented the main idea of this meeting – to develop the framework of the potential future project, which would at this point of time be based on brainstorming activities and agreement on main guidelines, and be then further elaborated during the second workshop planned by the end of 2016.

The main challenges recognized during the previous meetings of the SEEVET Net, held in 2014 and 2015, were:

- concept of work-based learning (and improvement of legal framework that defines it)
- raising awareness of WBL/promotion of work based learning in business sector and cooperation mechanisms
- financial incentives
- quality assurance ensuring apprenticeship on a systemic, and not individual, level
- work on joint occupational standards.

After reminding the participants of the main challenges identified so far, Ms Šarić asked the participants to decide which priorities they believe should be covered by the future project to be developed.

After short consultations, members of the SEEVET Net presented their preferences. After brief analysis by Ms Šarić and Ms Graonić, it was concluded that the majority of regional interests is focused on:

- Raising awareness of the importance of the workbased learning/promotion of the workbased learning among the business sector and cooperation mechanisms.
- Development of joint occupational standards

It was decided that the future joint regional project should focus on these two priority fields.

KulturKontakt Austria reported about the conference „Forming a Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning“. The conference was organised in the framework of the Berlin Process, a political initiative at the level of heads of state to promote the EU integration process of the Western Balkans

countries. In the Berlin Process supporting high quality VET with a focus on strengthening WBL has been identified as a priority. Austria hosted the conference „Forming a Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning“ with the aim of bringing together stakeholders from the private and public sector. Main focus was on discussing how the two sides can join forces more effectively in order to promote labour market relevant, high quality, socially inclusive VET (cf. Joint Statement). The Western Balkans Alliance provides ERI SEE with a political umbrella for future joint activities in the field of WBL. The importance of including also the private sector already in the planning of a joint project and then in the implementation of the project was underlined.

The ETF presented its activities in the framework of the Torino Process and the support of the implementation of the 5 deliverables identified in the Riga conclusion. Out of the 5 deliverables one is to strengthen WBL. All countries in the Western Balkans have identified this deliverable as top priority for support by ETF. This shows the political commitment in each of the countries for strengthening the scope and quality of WBL. ETF has conducted an impact study on current WBL approaches in the partner countries. Based on this study, national projects will support the partner countries in the field of WBL.

The participants were then divided into three groups: the first working group was discussing the Rationale of the theme – why is it important for the region, what problems this theme tackles and what can be expected with the joint work; the second on the activities which could be included in the project; and the third one about the partners to be included in the project.

The participants were also reminded that the conclusions of the three working groups are not binding at this point of time, but are rather seen as a set of guidelines in which direction the project would further go. Conclusions of the working groups will serve as the basis for the development of the potential future project proposal, as guidelines. The project is yet to be clearly defined, and the funding still needs to be found. In the future phases, clear activities, roles, responsibilities, funding, risks, impact will be elaborated. It is important that in this process also partners from the private sector are already involved.

Conclusions of the working groups.

The working group 1, dealing with the rationale, concluded:

All countries in the region face the problem of including employers in VET, in workbased learning. It is important to get employers to participate in VET and in various types of WBL, since VET systems should answer to different labour market needs (both to the needs for some specific sectors or industries which are fast developing at some moment, but also to the needs of small and medium enterprises), for short and also long term periods prospects, being implementable to well-developed economical regions and also to less developed once.

The problems recognized by this group is that, apart from employers not understanding or recognizing their role in VET and WBL, there is also the lack of coordination (between the responsibilities of ministries – schools – employers' associations – employers – parents and pupils). There is a lack of understanding, lack of communication, lack of motivation, shifting of responsibilities, and different actors are blaming one another for young people not being employable.

To tackle these problems, it is important to reach as many employers as possible, to make them aware of their responsibilities in the training of the employees that will cater for the needs of the business sector and thus enable progress in economy but also in society in general.

The working group 2, Activities, concluded:

Purpose of the activities within this potential project proposal is to raise awareness on the importance of WBL among stakeholders, enhance communication and co-operation among them, and to develop jointly with the private sector occupational standards of joint interest for the region.

Target groups: employers, chambers of economy, associations of employers and employees, VET providers, line ministries, VET agencies/centres

Activities to be included in this potential project proposal can be divided into 2 action strands:

First strand of actions, dealing with raising awareness on WBL and more active involvement of stakeholders in it, can be divided into three phases:

1st phase:

Identify priorities – 1 or 2 VET sectors: Analyze the current state of play and survey the needs; Analyze the existing WBL models and select suitable models for various situations through:

- Creating the methodology of the research
- Gathering the existing data to be found in available reports, analysis, recommendations
- Creating the questionnaire about the needs of the defined economic sectors
- Defining issues/obstacles/bottlenecks that prevent the introduction of the work-based learning in the identified priority sectors
- Involving employers in this questionnaire
- Creation of conclusions and recommendations
- Defining good practices
- Defining action plan – combination of regional and national approach and at national level taking into account the different levels of co-operation: national, regional, local

2nd phase:

Implementation of recommendations (regional and national)

3rd phase:

Dissemination of results through:

- Regional and national conferences, peer learning activities, reports, brochures, guidelines etc.; with targeted approach for various target groups
- Creation of on-line platform with data sources on WBL in the region

2nd strand of action is dealing more specifically with the occupational standards:

Creation of occupational standards through:

- Selecting 1-3 occupations, from the sectors identified in the first strand of activities, which are of common interest to all countries of the region
- Gathering workgroups for the development of a new occupational standard or analyze the existing ones, modifying to national needs if needed
- Involving employers and social partners in the creation of these occupational standards – reviewing existing and new formats of employers involvement in this process

Conclusions of the workgroup 3 – Partners:

Partners relevant for this project are:

- Ministries
- Social partners – chambers of commerce, business and business associations, trade unions
- Schools and other VET providers
- Parents and students

Risks for the inclusion of partners:

- they do not recognize or want to assume their responsibilities
- not enough places for the training of students – demand is higher than supply
- lack of cooperation mechanisms between schools and businesses
- companies do not see their interest, benefit, motives to be more included in the education sector

What is needed is to increase awareness among each of the relevant stakeholders on their roles and responsibilities in the provision of WBL so that each part does their work.

Concluding remarks:

- participants are invited to comment on these draft minutes of the meeting within 7days from receiving the minutes
- next workshop to be held in the week between 5 – 9th December 2016 (this is the week dedicated to VET, marked by ETF in ETF countries)
- proposed location: Sarajevo
- ERI SEE to deliver a more concrete proposal for the workshop regarding both logistics and content/thematic details
- participants are also asked to reflect upon and to define the sectors relevant for their countries that would be dealt with in the process of development of joint occupational standards and joint promotion of WBL
- the participants are asked to contact their Chambers of Commerce and invite them to the next working meeting of SEE VET Net and to identify from the point of view of the Chambers economic sectors most relevant for regional co-operation
- ERI SEE will also be in contact with the Western Balkans Chamber Investment Forum to nominate interested representatives