



Western Balkans Alliance for Work-based Learning:

**Towards regionally-based standards of occupations**

**TO REGOS**

**1<sup>st</sup> Project Management Meeting**

**Minutes**

Belgrade, 88 Rooms, Takovska 49

16 May 2019

Minutes taken by:

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Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)

The 1st project management meeting was attended by 26 number of participants, representatives of VET Agencies, Chambers of Commerce and a Ministry from the region (for detailed information please see the Annex 1). The goal of the meeting was to clarify any remaining issues regarding the implementation of regionally- and nationally-based activities, to clarify obligations defined by the project, to reach an agreement on roles and responsibilities, to discuss financial issues, to reach an agreement and nomination of National Coordination Points, and to sign the Cooperation agreements or make the pre-conditions for its signing.

#### Ad 1.

The 1st Project Management Meeting was opened by Ms Tina Šarić, who in the introductory part referred to the conclusions of the day before (Meeting for the fine-tuning of the Common regional framework for the development of regionally based standards of occupations). What was agreed was as follows:

- ◆ In the implementation of regional activities and definition of regionally based standards of occupations, national procedures and regulations respected.
- ◆ National input will be prepared on the template agreed, in English, collected by the representative of VET Centres/Agencies participating in national workshops/events with business representatives.
- ◆ The template used is going to be composed of
  - group assignments/key assignments/activities;
  - instructions/explanation on the potential/suggested group assignments, with flexibility in deciding whether to use those potential/suggested group assignments or not (each economy will have the possibility to decide whether to specify the group assignments according to the suggested ones, or according to their own national identification).
- ◆ Six national inputs will be collected and discussed among representatives of VET Centres/Agencies (first via e-mail and then 1 meeting in person). This will be a preparatory activity for the regional meeting on the regionally based standard of occupations.
- ◆ During the regional meeting: consolidation of 6 national inputs by VET Centre/Agency representatives will be achieved, with consultations with an external expert on methodology.
- ◆ The end results will be a proposal for the regional meeting, on the basis of national inputs, with the list of open questions
- ◆ The regional meeting for the development of regionally based standards of occupations will be composed of:
  - 2 representatives of business sector per country/economy
  - 1/2 representative of VET Centre/Agency per country/economy. Recommendation is that the National Coordination Person is included in the activity so that he/she can compile the basis, together with the other person from the VET Agency (an occupational standards expert)
  - External moderator + ERI SEE Secretariat
- ◆ It is planned to have 1 preparatory meeting and 1 regional meeting per occupational standard for consolidation and finalization.

- ◆ Selection criteria for representatives of business sector for regional meetings will include:
  - Active participation, willingness to cooperate
  - Availability
  - Representatives of companies active in the region is a plus
  - 1 representative from a small/medium company and 1 from a large company

## Ad 2. About the project

Ms Ivana Živadinović, the Overall Project Coordinator, informed the participants about the wider strategic context in which the project is taking place (SEE 2020 Strategy, Berlin Process, UN Sustainable Development Goals, ADA strategy), as well as the activities and expected results and deliverables of the project.

The participants objected to using the term ‘translation of adopted standards of occupations into standards of qualifications’, as the term translation does not reflect the complexity of the process and gives a wrong impression. The term to be used instead is ‘design’ or ‘transposition’.

## Ad 3. Implementation structure

The participants were presented the structure of the project management and roles the partners have in the implementation of the project.

The roles of National coordination points were emphasized as crucial to the successful implementation of the project.

The role of business experts is also crucial for the realization of the project goals and deliverables. It was concluded that:

- ◆ Business experts will be selected following the national procedures (in all of the economies the business experts are selected by the VET Agencies in close cooperation and consultations with the Chambers of Commerce who are providing their input. The selection is based on a number of set criteria)
- ◆ The VET Centres will decide on the involvement of business sector representatives, finalize their internal national procedures (make a formal decision on the appointment of the business sector representatives), and send the copy of the formal decision (or in other official way) to inform ERI SEE Secretariat on the selected business experts
- ◆ On the basis of the official information provided by the VET Centres, ERI SEE Secretariat will sign contracts with the business experts for their services.

The importance of including external experts for the issues of gender equality, sustainability and social inclusion were stressed. Participants from Albania commented their good cooperation with external experts on these issues and offered their assistance to the ERI SEE Secretariat in related matters.

#### Ad 4. Distribution of tasks

The planned activities and timeline were presented to the participants, as well as respective responsibilities. The participants agreed to their responsibilities.

The timeline of events was discussed.

The idea of the kick-off conference was briefly presented to the participants, and they were informed about the potential content (information about the project, methodology, similar projects happening on the subject in EU, launch of the WBA 4 WBL platform), as well as the desired target groups: representatives of ministries of education, labour, economy, employers unions, relevant national agencies etc. The participants were asked to reflect upon the composition of their national delegations (up to 10 participants) and deliver the information to the ERI SEE Secretariat, which will then officially invite the proposed participants to the event. ERI SEE will be in charge of the organization of the event.

The time of the event is agreed to be 11 July 2019, while the location of the event is to be either Skopje or Belgrade, depending on the approximation of costs and favourable prices.

The participants also agreed on the timeline for further events regarding development of regionally-based standards of occupations.

The first occupation to be dealt with is tourist and catering technician.

The first national meetings collecting input from the business experts are to be held from September till mid-November. The preparatory activities (selection of business experts, surveys...) can start in the period before July, depending on national possibilities and obligations. The number of experts, their expected fees (either per expert or the cost of experts per occupation, depending on the way in which experts are usually paid in each economy), their number shall be sent by the VET centres in coordination with Chambers of Commerce following the meeting. Expected fees and the cost of experts per occupation shall be calculated based on the rates normally applied in the economy.

The preparatory meeting for collecting, analysing and harmonizing input received from 6 economies is to be held mid-November (15th – 22nd November). It is going to gather VET representatives (1-2 per economy, depending on the areas of expertise, and it should include the national coordination points) and an external moderator/expert assisting the harmonization of the input.

The regional meeting is to be held in the first week of December (2nd – 6th December). It should then combine those VET representatives participating in the preparatory meeting (1-2 per economy) and business sector representatives – 2 per economy) to agree on the final content of the regionally-based standard of occupation. The regional meeting should be held in the first week of December, possibly in Podgorica. After the harmonization of the input, the VET centres follow their national verification procedures, to be held in January.

After the discussion, it was concluded that the second project management meeting, which was originally planned to be held back-to-back to the Kick-off conference, should be held as a back-to-back event to the regional

meeting for the development of the first occupational standard. It was concluded that there is no point in organizing an additional project management meeting so close to this one in Belgrade, already in July, as the first activities will in fact start only in September so there will be no need for this project management meeting in July.

During the 2nd project management meeting in December, the sequence of next set of occupational standards, and timing of the regional event, will be agreed. The participants expressed the possibility of have joint working groups or parallel activities leading to the development of national input for regionally-based standards of occupations (instead of chronological ordering).

#### **Ad 5. 30th KulturKontakt Austria anniversary**

Ms Monika Mott announced the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of KulturKontakt and invited participants to a meeting that will be organised in Vienna, Austria on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2019. The meeting will be focused around the Digital Economy 2.0: the integration of digital skills in curriculum in correlation standards of occupations, standards of qualifications and what does it all mean for teaching and learning. The celebration dinner is planned for 18<sup>th</sup> of November. Institutions will receive an official invitation and relevant information in due time.

#### **Ad 6. Financial issues**

The issue of payments to the VET Centres (for the purpose of organizing national events) was discussed. All of the VET centres stated that the reception of the funding from an external source is either impossible or very difficult and timely to arrange.

It was concluded that the VET centres will be in charge of organizing the events – collecting offers, making logistical arrangements, contacting the suppliers etc. – but that the final invoices will be submitted to the ERI SEE Secretariat for actual payments. For the purpose of monitoring and reporting on costs, ERI SEE will provide the VET centres with the adequate forms, which will contain information about the expected costs and types of costs and actual costs incurred. The VET centres will be in charge of collecting offers and invoices from the suppliers, checking and classifying them, and submitting them to the ERI SEE for approval and payments.

Eligible costs include travel costs for national participants from outside of the city of the event (bus or train tickets), accommodation costs for national participants, catering, technical equipment, printing of material, and other related costs. It was agreed that national activities will be organized in cooperation between VET Centres and Chambers of Commerce and the use of venues free of charge (in the Chambers' or VET Centres' premises) is highly appreciated.

The issue of bank charges for international payments was also raised. Ms Monika Mott suggested that, as it is not feasible to transfer the small amounts of money that are in sum lower than corresponding bank charges (i.e. to cover experts local bus/train tickets), each expert could submit an invoice indicating the amount for expert's fee plus the amount for transport. This system would imply one transfer from ERI SEE and allow the reduction of funds spent on bank charges. It was concluded that the costs should be grouped and collected for several events, if possible, so that the smallest number of transactions possible is made.

The issue of payments to the NCPs for education was raised. It was agreed that the payments will be made directly to the NCPs. The NCPs should submit their official appointment by their institutions prior to the signature of the agreement between ERI SEE Secretariat and themselves.

The issue of payments to the NCPs for business will follow the same logic as the payments to the NCPs for education.

The payments to the external experts will be done by the ERI SEE Secretariat on the basis of the copyright agreement. The travel costs for external experts will be included in the copyright agreement and will be paid after the realization of the activities (due to the high bank charges).

#### **Ad 7. Reporting obligations**

The participants were presented the reporting schedule and their submission deadlines:

Submission deadlines for NCPs defined by the Cooperation Agreement:

- ◆ 14th October 2019 for the first interim report
- ◆ 14th of April 2020 for the first annual progress report
- ◆ 14th October 2020 for the second interim report
- ◆ 14th of Jun 2021 for final report.

The participants agreed on the deadlines to be respected from their side so that ERI SEE Secretariat has adequate amounts of time to consolidate national inputs and prepare reports for ADA.

ERI SEE Secretariat also committed itself to submit to the participants the reporting templates within 2 months.

#### **Ad 8. Cooperation Agreement**

The participants were presented the content of the cooperation agreements that concluded all that was already stated – obligations, timeframe, financing, partners' obligations and reporting.

Based on the newly reached agreements regarding payments for national events, the proposed template of Cooperation agreement for education needs to be adjusted, after which the final version will be sent to VET centres for signatures.

As for the Chambers of Commerce, since the cooperation agreement for them includes no payment arrangements, and therefore no changes were needed to be made, the agreement was ready for signing. The agreement was signed by North Macedonian representative, whereas the Kosovo\* and Bosnian and Herzegovinian representatives took the agreements with them for signature (signed by the ERI SEE Secretariat).



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#### **Ad 9. Timetable of activities**

The timetable of activities was discussed within discussion point no. 4 Distribution of tasks.

#### **Ad 10. Visibility**

The participants were informed about the guidelines for the visibility of the Austrian Development Cooperation. They presented the templates for the PowerPoint presentations, agendas, minutes, signature lists (respecting the Data protection regulations) and other relevant documents.

#### **Ad 11. Closing remarks**

A short wrap-up on the agreements reached was presented (regarding the timeline of activities, ways of payments, and first up-coming activities). The participants were reminded to appoint the National Coordination Points as soon as possible (if they hadn't done it already) and the Secretariat announced sending of the minutes as soon as possible. The Secretariat will also officially contact the VET Centres and Chambers for the suggestion of persons to be invited to the Kick-off conference.

\* This designation is without prejudice to position on status and is in line with UNCSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.