

Social Partners and VET, CVT, TVET, LLL

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Who are they?

- Social partners are trade unions and the employers or their representative organisations that are engaged in social dialogue.
- Freedom of association, independence and representativeness are important quality attributes of a social partner organization.
- Social partners need a mandate from their members to be engaged in policy issues, to negotiate and to make binding agreements on behalf of their members. They also need to have a control over members so that they will apply or obey results from negotiations, e.g. applying a collective agreement at work places.

Five tasks of social partners

In VET in Europe

- **Social dialogue** – development of policies, structures and provision of VET, including qualifications and training methods.
- **Collective bargaining** – funding of training, training at work places, in companies.
- **Anticipation of skill needs** in sector or skill councils or other multi-stakeholder bodies
- **Provision of training** – social partners and companies have their own training centres, apprenticeship and on the job training; examination and validation of informal and non-formal learning.
- **Guidance services** for members including awareness rising.

of social partners involvement in VET

- They represent interests of labour market. After all present and future enterprises and employees are the major customers and beneficiaries of VET.
- VET is the sector of education that is most closely linked to world of work.
- The task of employers and trade unions is to ensure that VET meets the needs of labour market.
- The task of a government is to see that long term objectives of education or VET policy in a country are as well taken into consideration.

Funding of training

Social partners contribution can be

- Collective training funds based on levies on payroll, e.g. in Italy.
- Apprenticeships and trainees in companies. German employers contribute more than 55 bln € p.a.
- Provision of in-house training for the staff.

Do social partners participate at policymaking?

- In setting of priorities and developing new initiatives to meet the needs of labour market and people?
- Are they contributing to real policymaking or is their role only formal participation without real influence.
- Analysis should take into consideration both participation in formal bodies and informal ways of influencing (lobbying).

- Major components of the governance of VET systems are institutional settings, funding mechanisms and quality assurance, from the highest national level to practical level of provision of training at institutions, schools or enterprises.
- National VET councils, political or technical working groups established by national authorities, sector or skills councils, school boards or advisory bodies at school level provide institutional settings for involvement of social partners.
- The real role and influence of different bodies depends on their tasks and powers including linkage to funding mechanisms.



European trade unions and employers

- “Framework of Actions for the Lifelong Development of Competencies and Qualifications” in February 2002

In addition to social dialogue...

- each enterprise making the development of its employees' competencies crucial for its success;
- each employee making her/his own competencies development crucial for the management of her/his working life;
- the State and local communities fostering learning opportunities in the interest of competitiveness and social cohesion.

Between working life and VET

- Social partners can participate in and support decision making at different levels.
- Play a role in matching demand and supply of training by developing occupational standards, curricula and qualifications.
- Contribute to structural reforms including systems of governance, networks of training institutions and quality assurance of VET.
- There is some national evidence of the impact of social dialogue on training participation; employees in unionised workforces seem to benefit more from training activities. The proportion of agreements on continuing training increases with the size of the company.

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