



MINISTERUL EDUCAȚIEI ȘI
CERCETĂRII ȘTIINȚIFICE



NATIONAL CENTRE FOR TVET
DEVELOPMENT

REPORT

International conference “Work-Based Learning: Challenges and Opportunities” Bucharest, 19-20 October 2015



1. Introduction

Building a knowledge-based society requires the involvement of the vocational education and training system (VET) in the implementation of the lifelong learning concept. It is essential that **vocational education training should promote a positive attitude towards learning** among direct beneficiaries, **should ensure the quality** of the education and training provision as well as its **relevance for the learner's skills, knowledge and needs**.

2. European Context

Although at European level the organisation of the vocational education and training systems and the contents of the study programmes are the responsibility of each Member State, pursuant to the subsidiarity principle, many European initiatives in this field have been launched starting with the year 2000, based on the political cooperation between Member States.

The political mandate for vocational education and training was defined under the Copenhagen Process, launched with the Copenhagen Declaration in 2002 and updated through the Maastricht Communiqué in 2004, the Helsinki Communiqué in 2006, the Bordeaux Communiqué in 2008, and the Bruges Communiqué in 2010.

The Bruges Communiqué reiterates that, at European level, investment in human capital is essential, while vocational education and training is a significant component of lifelong learning. Therefore, European strategies and policies should take into account the modernisation of the education and training system to enable young people to acquire knowledge, skills and competences which are relevant for employment, but also for lifelong learning. One of the main **priorities established by this communiqué is the need to develop training programmes with a significant work-based learning component**.

The communication "Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes" of 2012 mentions that the European education and training systems "*cannot provide adequate employability skills and do not cooperate properly with businesses or employers to bring education closer to workplace reality. This skills mismatch is a growing concern for the competitiveness of the European economy*". In this context, the communication appreciates that **work-based learning**, through adequate training programmes, through internships or apprenticeship schemes, is a **European priority** and highlights the **need for joint efforts and increased investment to support national initiatives in the field**, especially in those countries where experience with such programmes is limited.

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships of 2013 **promotes measures to increase youth employment** (introduce apprenticeship schemes/strengthen existing apprenticeship schemes).

The conclusions from Riga in 2015 propose a new set of medium-term results for the period of 2015-2020, one of them being **to promote all types of work-based learning**, with a focus on apprenticeship schemes, by involving social partners, companies, VET providers, chambers of commerce and by fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

3. National Context

Initial training in Romania was restructured to ensure better match with the labour market needs and coherence with continuing training. Starting with the academic year 2012-2013, vocational education was restructured to include a significant work-based learning component.

Currently, vocational education provides the following alternatives:

- **720-hour practical training internships**, organised for students who graduated 10th grade, high school education;

- **Vocational education programmes with minimum 3-year duration** organised for students who graduated 8th grade (according to GEO 49/2014).

For vocational education, **the initial training provision may be delivered only by those schools which concluded framework agreements with employers/public institutions** for a period at least equal to the training programme duration under the respective pathway; these framework agreements are the basis for the individual training contract concluded with the students.

In its current structure, vocational education and training largely responds to the challenges posed by the adaptation of training programmes to labour market requirements. However, mention should be made that, **currently, there are not enough partnerships between companies and vocational education and training schools**, mainly due to the legal framework which does not provide sufficient incentives for companies to be willing to conclude partnerships with VET schools and provide work-based training places for students and to the poor economic activity in certain areas of Romania. More such partnerships and more employer involvement in all stages of training programme development and delivery are crucial to improve the quality of training.

In this context, the National Centre for TVET Development (NCTVETD) developed and implements the project “Development of apprenticeship learning in IVET in Romania (DAL-IVET)”, whose overall objective is “to strengthen work-based learning in IVET through apprenticeship programmes”.

Under this project, NCTVETD, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, organised the international conference ***Challenges and opportunities for work-based learning***, in order to identify the key factors in the successful implementation of education and training programmes with a significant work-based component.

4. Objectives of the Conference

- To present European and national initiatives in the development and implementation of training programmes with a significant work-based component.
- To identify key challenges in ensuring the success of training programmes with a significant work-based component, in terms of attractiveness for students, but also of involvement of employers and other stakeholders and to determine action lines to respond to these challenges.
- To contribute to improving cooperation between all stakeholders, to ensure increased participation and enhanced quality and relevance of training programmes with a significant work-based component.

5. Participants

At **European** level, representatives of:

- European Commission
- European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)
- European Training Foundation (ETF)
- Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany
- Ministry of Education, Baden Wurtemberg
- Ministry of Education, Austria
- Ministry of Education, Republic of Moldova
- National authorities involved in the development and implementation of training programmes with a significant work-based component in EU countries

At **national** level, representatives of:

- Ministry of Education and Scientific Research
- Ministry of labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly
- National Qualifications Authority
- National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training
- NCTVETD
- Social partners

At **regional and local levels**, representatives of:

- Universities
- School inspectorates
- VET schools
- Social partners

6. Presentations and debates

6.1. Opening Speeches

The conference was opened by Mr. Sorin Mihai CÎMPEANU, Minister of Education and Scientific Research. The minister's speech indicated that the **reconfiguration of vocational education pathways and strengthening partnerships with employers determined**, in the past academic year, a **significant increase in the number of students enrolled in vocational education**.

The increased student interest in vocational education was due to stronger company involvement in providing practical training places for students, as more than 5,500 companies, from SMEs to big companies were actively involved in student training during the past year.

The Minister highlighted that the **education and training system is still facing social and economic challenges**, therefore there is a **need for continuing development and updating of policies and strategies in the field, as well as for the implementation of concrete measures**, including measures to introduce dual training programmes in the initial VET in Romania. This should be achieved through **consultation with companies**, and proper funding and co-funding conditions, to achieve the objectives established.

The Minister mentioned that the partnership under the project *Development of apprenticeship learning in IVET in Romania (DALIVET)* and the involvement of companies, schools, authorities and decision-makers should generate expected outcomes at European level, which aim at creating a more flexible training system, at training tutors involved in work-based learning, at strengthening the link between school and employers and at increasing the attractiveness of vocational education and training, so that "vocational education and training should no longer be regarded as the pathway of failure". In the Minister's opinion, teachers, parents and other factors have had a significant contribution to this reality, therefore **mentality change is crucial**.

The Minister of Education from the Republic of Moldova, Mrs. Corina FUSU, began her speech by expressing her belief that **education can contribute and change perceptions on what is happening in the world**, and is the real path to modernisation and the respect for European values and rules in the Republic of Moldova.

Among the **priorities of her mandate**, the Minister indicated the following:

- **To promote Romanian language** as the official language in the Republic of Moldova. The Ministry of Education is implementing the project "Romanian language – from official language of the Republic of Moldova to language of communication"

- **To increase the prestige of the teacher** as many values were lost or became obsolete during this transition period. In the Minister's opinion, the role of the teacher is crucial, as they shape personalities with dignity and identity self-awareness, personalities who are aware of their past, accept their present and build their future.
- **Development of Vocational Education and Training**

Minister Corina FUSU appreciated that the education system in the Republic of Moldova is undergoing profound transformations, with the approval of the Education Code and with significant reforms implemented in all fields: pre-school, pre-university, vocational and dual education, higher education and scientific research.

As the development of vocational education and training is a priority in Romania as well, **the Minister of Education of the Republic of Moldova launched the idea of cooperation to improve vocational education and training, dual education, to develop joint curriculum for various study disciplines, partnerships for the development of scientific research, setting up branches of Romanian universities** in the Republic of Moldova, as well as setting up in Romania branches of prestigious universities from the Republic of Moldova.

Mrs. Ligia DECA, State Counsellor for the Department of Education and Research of the Presidential Administration indicated the **special concern of the Romanian state, of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research to rebuild the prestige of work-based learning and to ensure it holds the position it deserves**. The Conference debates are relevant in the context of the recently approved Lifelong Learning Strategy and of the public debate on the Strategy for vocational education and training in Romania.

According to European documents, in order to prosper in a global economy, our continent depends on the knowledge and skills of the population of all European countries. In the opinion of Mrs. Ligia DECA, Romania is a significant state of the European Union, as number of citizens, therefore **the impact of our education system will be significant, both at national and European levels**.

Mrs. Ligia DECA mentioned that vocational training has developed due to an increased capacity of economic sectors to cooperate with the education systems, but also due to cooperation with other countries, by learning from existing good practice examples.

Given that only 1.7% of the adults aged 25 – 64 years in Romania participated in lifelong learning activities, compared the European average of 9%, **lifelong learning is an opportunity we cannot miss in order to cover the gap generated by population ageing, workforce migration, functional illiteracy, and low birth rate**.

In these conditions, Mrs. Ligia DECA highlighted that Romania can no longer afford to lose human potential, not to develop existing human potential, and participation in lifelong learning programmes and, implicitly, in work-based learning are key solutions. **It is imperative to remedy the communication issues between employers, employees and vocational education and training providers** who act independently from one another.

In the opinion of Mrs. Ligia DECA **the state authorities have the obligation to encourage existing initiatives and successful projects, and to mediate communication between all public and private actors** to find viable, fair and above all sustainable solutions for lifelong learning and, implicitly, for work-based learning.

6.2. Plenary Presentations, Debates and Workshops

Monday, 19 October 2015

Mrs. Gabriela Liliana PETRE, Director of the National Centre for TVET Development presented various aspects related to *Work-based learning in European and national contexts*.

The concept of work-based learning is defined both in European and national documents, therefore the presentation noted the most significant aspects of the various approaches.

Mrs Gabriela Liliana PETRE mentioned the actors involved in work-based learning: authorities (policy-makers, decision-makers), social partners, schools/universities/ training providers, companies, teachers/trainers, tutors in companies, students/ learners.

The presentation highlighted **the potential of work-based learning, which is beneficial both for the individual, the company and the society**, as:

- **It reduces youth unemployment risks**
- **It provides better transition from school to work**
- **It meets immediate employers' needs** in terms of skills and qualifications
- **It may contribute to reducing school dropout rates**

Regarding the perceptions on work-based learning, Mrs. Gabriela Liliana PETRE indicated that **vocational education is regarded in Romania as a second option** in the student career pathway choice, as it is considered to provide poor career opportunities and access to higher education/qualification levels.

Dual vocational education and training is a new option in the choice of an education and training route, introduced in December 2014 (GEO 94). The particularities of the dual education and training system are as follows:

- Access at 16 years old, upon completion of compulsory education
- Shared costs and responsibilities between school and company
- 1/3 school-based learning, 2/3 company-based learning
- The student has the employee status

Strategic objectives for 2015 – 2020 in the field of vocational education and training:

- **To improve the relevance** of VET system for the labour market
- **To increase participation** and to **facilitate access** to training programmes
- **To improve the quality** of training
- **To develop innovation and national and international cooperation** in the field of vocational education and training

Mrs. Gabriela Liliana PETRE noted that work-based learning is a challenge from various perspectives:

- **Involvement:** companies, training providers and learners are the main official actors (contract-based) in work-based learning (accreditation, costs, responsibilities, resources, available places);
- **Quality:** coherence of training and learning outcomes, quality of training according to standards (on education and training). By the Bruges Communiqué (2010) – Member States agreed to establish at national level a common quality assurance framework for VET providers, which also applies to associated workplace learning by the end of 2015;
- **Cooperation** between learning environments: learner progress monitoring, exchange of information between training provider and company, available human resources, mutual trust;
- **Learner support:** personalised support, limited capacity of fast adaptation to environment with different rules and procedures, low motivation/interest in learning during work activities.

Mrs. Felicia Ioana S•NDULESCU, Inspector, Project Manager, National Centre for TVET Development, presented information of the project “*Development of apprenticeship learning in IVET in Romania (DALIVET)*”.

The presentation included general information on the project, such as:

- *Programme:* ERASMUS +
- *Action:* KA3 – Support for Policy Reform
- *Project title:* Development of apprenticeship learning in IVET in Romania

- *Project acronym: DALIVET*
- *Beneficiary: Centrul Național de Dezvoltare a Învățământului Profesional și Tehnic (National Centre for TVET Development), Romania*
- *Partner: Landesakademie für Fortbildung und Personalentwicklung an Schulen (LÄÖR), Esslingen, Germany*
- *Implementation period: 01.11.2014 – 31.10.2016*
- *Budget: EUR 254,215.95 (EUR 190,661.96 EU-grant; EUR 63,553.99 co-financing)*

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen work-based learning in IVET through apprenticeship/dual programmes.

The specific objectives of the project, as indicated in the presentation:

SO1: To develop the basis of a legal framework for introducing apprenticeship programmes in IVET

SO2: To improve the skills and competences of the teachers, trainers and tutors involved in work-based learning, through a pilot training programme

SO3: To increase the involvement of the key actors involved in work-based learning

SO4: To raise awareness among stakeholders on the benefits of work-based learning programmes for reducing youth unemployment and increasing economic competitiveness.

The main deliverables of the project:

- **Feasibility study** “*Terms of reference for introducing apprenticeship/dual programmes in initial education and training in Romania*”;
- **Master plan** to implement the recommendations included in the feasibility study;
- **Development in partnership of a pilot teacher training programme** for VET teachers and tutors.

Mrs. Felicia Ioana ȘINDULESCU detailed the goal of the feasibility study, its objectives and the conclusions which might underpin the future development of work-based learning in Romania.

Panel – Debate: Work-based Learning – European Practices

Moderator: • erban IOSIFESCU, President, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (ARACIP)

Guests:

Peter THIELE, Director, Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany

Franz GRAMLINGER, Director, National Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Education and Training in Austria (ARQA VET)

James CALLEJA, Director, CEDEFOP

In his contribution, Mr. James CALLEJA, Director of CEDEFOP, emphasized that training programmes with a significant work-based component hold a crucial role in ensuring the match between labour market demand and initial training supply. He also highlighted that some **key elements for the success of these programmes are the need to create a clear regulatory framework and to change society perceptions** that this educational pathway is less attractive than the academic pathway. Mr. James CALLEJA stressed **the decisive role of schools and teachers in the success of these programmes**; the task of those who coordinate the education and training system is to enhance trust in education institutions. Another important aspect mentioned by the CEDEFOP Director in his intervention targeted the good practice in various European countries to create Sector Skills Councils, including representatives of chambers of commerce, employers and trade unions, structures which facilitate the **dialogue between these key actors**. Mr. James CALLEJA also raised the **issue of SMEs** which are willing to participate in these training programmes, but do not have the necessary institutional capacity and which need solutions that work (for example, joining

available resources, promoting public-private partnerships). Regarding the credibility of certificates, he emphasized **the need to ensure proper assessment, performed by other teams than those providing student training.**

Mr. Peter THIELE, starting from the assertion that **dual learning is one of the key elements of the economic success in Germany**, highlighted the fact that, in Germany, this pathway enjoys a positive perception. Qualifications provided in the dual system in Germany include fields such as IT, social research and in other countries they also include higher education qualifications. Some of the **key success factors** for this pathway in Germany are **clear regulations and the fact that the state transferred significant decision-making powers and accountability to the private sectors**: the Chambers of Commerce are involved both in monitoring work-based learning in companies and in graduate certification. Mr. Peter THIELE indicated that the dual system is beneficial for all stakeholders involved: **apprentices** – who benefit from relevant training and upon training completion receive a nationally recognized certificate enabling them to find jobs, **companies** – ensure their necessary workforce and the **state**, who benefits from the positive economic consequences and shares the costs of these training programmes with the representatives of the economy (about 50%). Mr. Peter THIELE also mentioned the **problem dual learning is currently facing in Germany**, namely the fact that **not all students** who are willing to enrol in these programmes have the **necessary prerequisites**, therefore they need transition measures, and the **decrease, in the past years, of the attractiveness of dual education in favour of academic education**, which allows faster access to higher education. Also, dual education depends to a great extent on the economy, and during recession period there are fewer chances to be able to conclude an apprenticeship contract. Another important aspect is that the company tutor is a role model in his/her profession, has significant professional experience and is skilled as a trainer. To conclude his contribution, Mr. Peter THIELE stressed the fact that **integrating dual learning in an education and training system is a complex process, which takes at least 10 years and may only succeed through converging efforts of all stakeholders.**

Mr. Franz GRAMLINGER delivered a brief presentation of the education and training system in Austria, with a focus on how dual education is integrated in the system. Among success factors, he mentioned the **involvement of social partners in all stages of dual education development: from training programme design to training delivery and graduate certification.** Mr. Franz GRAMLINGER also mentioned the importance of ensuring the involvement of social partners. **What should be avoided in the development of the system is the limitation of training only to work-based training, the development of the training system only based on the company needs at the moment, the fragmentation of qualifications/occupations, the uneven involvement of partners and the idea that the dual system may only be developed through the financial contribution of companies.**

Workshops

The first day of the Conference included 3 workshops which allowed participants to discuss and share experiences and viewpoints on the topics proposed.

Workshop 1 focused on: ***Work-based learning: challenges for the education and training system***

Moderator: Dana Carmen STROIE, Head of Training Programmes and Quality Assurance Unit, National Centre for TVET Development

Rapporteur: Camelia Carmen GHEbU, Inspector, National Centre for TVET Development

The discussion and the plenary report highlighted that the elements of the vocational education and training system which required adaptation to enable the introduction of a dual initial training pathway were related to:

- I. **WBL integration in the vocational education and training system**
 - **Defining the specific features of the dual training system**, in initial training versus work-based apprenticeship, to avoid overlaps;
 - There is a need for **more flexible training routes**, without overlaps, for better adaptation to the employers' and labour market needs;
 - **Finalisation of the National Qualifications Register (NQR)** and its operationalisation to respond to the labour market needs will be regulating factors of the qualification level (according to the National Qualifications Framework – NQF) acquired through training in the dual system; it is not constructive to establish a priori level 3 NQF for dual training;
 - **CVT**: those who want to access the labour market may benefit from **short-term training programmes** to improve their qualifications;
 - Introducing in the initial training a programme for students who graduated lower secondary education and do not have the prerequisites to follow a training programme related to certain qualifications they want to acquire was not considered constructive, in the context of gradual introduction in the system of interim assessments which should generate measures to support students for remedial or improvement purposes;
 - **Dual training programmes duration may differ** from one qualification to another, based on the complexity of that qualification;
 - The decision on the type of training profile should be made based on a **minimum standard for access to a certain training sub-system**;
 - Opportunities upon completion of a dual training programme: employment or further study for a higher qualification;
- II. **Information, promotion, career guidance, increased attractiveness**
 - **Informing school counsellors** on the existence and particularities of the dual training system;
 - **Informing/counselling secondary education students**: visits to companies, information on qualifications and occupations;
 - 70% of students' options are influenced by parents, therefore **parents should be informed** on the initial training routes and on the career opportunities they provide;
 - There is a need for **joint national information campaigns** implemented with the support and involvement of companies;
 - **Better promotion of the website “Alege-ă drumul!” (Choose your Pathway!),** appreciated as valuable, but insufficiently accessed;
- III. **Quality Assurance in education and training and qualification certification**
 - There is a need for a **quality assurance system for the work-based learning component** in companies;
 - **The approach** for quality assurance in work-based learning may be **different, based on the company experience** in the field of training;
 - **Smaller employers should be supported** to strengthen their capacity to quality assure work-based learning programmes;
 - Certification quality is influenced by the definition of **assessment standards**, by the assessment structure and types of tests;
 - Certification quality may be ensured by introducing “intermediate examinations” halfway the training period;
- IV. **Initial training system governance**
 - **Legal provisions** in the field should indicate the necessary resources (physical, human resources) to provide work-based learning;

- **Subsequent legislation should be developed and harmonised;**
- **Regulations in the field should be corroborated with subsequent legal provisions;**
- **Establishing the type of training contracts:** company-beneficiary, school-company;
- **Provision of incentives for the beneficiaries** of work-based learning programmes who may continue/give up, depending on the behaviour, attitude of the training beneficiary.

Workshop 2 focused on: ***Work-based learning: challenges for the labour market and the economy***

Moderator: Florin P• S• TOIU, President of the Institute for Development Policies

Rapporteur: Felicia Ioana S• NDULESCU, Inspector, Project Manager, National Centre for TVET Development

The discussions highlighted the following aspects related to the involvement of the labour market and the economy in the introduction of a dual initial training system:

- I. **The type of contract** for work-based learning – training contract or labour contract
 - The training contract is the option preferred by employers, instead of the labour contract. This contract should be specifically regulated, it should stipulate the rights and the obligations of all parties involved (company, training provider and trainee/student);
- II. **Student age** for access to the dual training system
 - Students should be entitled to choose the option of the dual training system upon completion of grade 8, when they are 14 years old
- III. **Human resources:** the tutor, in the employer's perspective
 - The tutor should maintain permanent contact with the training provider to define together the work tasks allocated to the trainee/student;
 - The tutor should be fully or partly relieved of work tasks when ensuring trainee/student practical training;
 - The tutor should have pedagogical skills to deliver trainee/student practical training;
 - Tutor certification as a person who delivers trainee/student practical training.
- IV. **Quality assurance for work-based learning** in the employer's perspective – establishing the legal framework for work-based learning in companies
 - Certain requirements for quality assurance for work-based learning should be met – building an accreditation mechanism for work-based learning places;
 - Some employers believe there should be a department in charge with the management of trainee/student work-based learning activities – this is possible with large companies with many employees, who may accept many trainees/students.
 - **SMEs – capacity of involvement** in work-based learning: small economic operators cannot be strongly involved in student work-based learning;
 - Tax facilities/incentives should be granted to increase the number of SMEs willing to accept trainees/students for training;
- V. **Work-based learning marketing** in the employer's perspective
 - After the legal framework on the dual training system is finalised, it will be necessary to make all efforts to promote this education option among students, and especially among parents, and employers' involvement in this promotion activities is crucial e.

VI. **Micro-governance** – involvement of employers' associations/Chambers of Commerce and Industry

- Employers' associations have vast experience in project development and believe they might be actively involved in the management of dual training programmes, in partnerships;
- The Chamber of Commerce and Industry is willing to participate actively in the management of dual training programmes.

The participants in this workshop concluded on the importance of the following aspects:

- **Fast adaptation of education to employers' requirements**, given the fast changes in the labour market
- **Use of the outcomes of projects implemented by employers' associations, authorities**
- **Continuing training of human resources** from schools and companies who train trainees/students
- **Strengthening the capacity to design human resources development policies**

Workshop 3 focused on: ***Work-based learning: challenges for training providers***

Moderator: Ildiko PATAKI, Regional Coordinator, National Centre for TVET Development

Rapporteur: Olivia Maria JIDVEIAN, Expert, National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training

The discussions in this workshop focused on aspects related to the involvement of training providers in the initial training pathway using the dual system:

I. **Local governance and the relevance of agreements** concluded between school and WBL provider;

II. **Organisation of training programme** between partners – school-economic operator;

III. **Cooperation between teachers and tutors**

IV. **Quality assurance** from school perspective and employer's perspective;

V. **Student career guidance**;

VI. **Work-based learning marketing** – from school perspective

VII. **Financing programmes** with a significant work-based learning component

Tuesday, 20 October 2015

Plenary presentations

Mrs. Gabriela Liliana PETRE, Director, National Centre for TVET Development presented aspects related to the *Governance of work-based learning programmes*.

From this perspective, she described 4 categories of elements which might define the governance of work-based learning programmes, namely:

1. **Clear regulatory framework on the roles in the organization and delivery of work-based learning programmes**, defining:
 - Responsibilities, rights and obligations of the parties
 - Learner's statute
 - Remuneration or other benefits for the learner
 - The type of contract concluded between the parties involved
2. **National regulatory framework** on responsibilities regarding:
 - Development of qualification standards
 - Development of curriculum and education plans
 - Quality assurance

- Financing and the use of financing
- 3. **Social partners involvement** at national level to
 - Identify future skills
 - Regular update/review of qualification standards
 - Governance structures reflecting the distribution of roles and responsibilities
- 4. **Facilitating company involvement**
 - Encouraging employers (cost-benefit rate)
 - Fostering job creation for trainees
 - Consideration for SMEs particularities: low number of employees, limited resources, lack of experience

Workshops

Workshop 1 focused on: **Sectoral relevance of work-based learning**

Moderator: Zoica VL• DUB, Deputy Director, National Centre for TVET Development

Rapporteur: Elena LASLU, President, Association of Sector Committees

The conclusions of the debates were as follows:

- **There is insufficient involvement of sector committees in the educational sector**, although their involvement is very important in order to:
 - Conduct medium- and long-term forecasts of qualification needs;
 - Define qualifications delivered by the vocational education and training system (VET);
 - Correlate the occupations described by COR – and VET qualifications;
 - Identify the specific competences included in VET qualifications;
 - Increase the attractiveness of VET qualifications, including by discouraging unskilled work;
 - Support SMEs in their intention to support the education system, considering their particularities (low number of employees, limited physical and human resources, etc.);
 - Develop the necessary instruments to create jobs, considering the labour market supply and demand;
- The cooperation between the Sectoral Committee for Environmental Protection and NCTVETD is a good practice example, but it should be improved in the future.
- **Qualifications should be developed with a view to providing a balance between specific professional skills and lifelong learning skills**, social skills, civic skills, sustainable development skills, entrepreneurial skills, etc.;
- **Quality assurance in training** requires active involvement of sectoral committees through their appointed representatives;
- Work-based learning is multi-faceted, therefore **each relevant actor involved in this activity should have a clearly defined role**;
- Work-based learning is essential, but there should be some **flexibility in terms of learning contents, learning place and learning modes**;
- **There should be Training Centres at the level of sector committees**, to provide opportunities to acquire those skills which students cannot acquire in school or in the company providing practical training;
- **Entrepreneurial skills should be introduced** in all qualifications;
- The need for **legal stability** – the lack of a medium- and long-term strategy of sector committees is the consequence of the numerous legislation amendments.

Another conclusion of the workshop was that the various models of work-based learning implemented in different countries proved efficient, but we need to develop a Romanian model, based on the local context and existing traditions.

Workshop 2 focused on: ***Territorial relevance of work-based learning***

Moderator: Florin M•RGINEAN, Regional Coordinator, National Centre for TVET Development

Rapporteur: Felicia Ioana S•NDULESCU, Inspector, Project Manager, National Centre for TVET Development

The discussions highlighted the following aspects:

- **The mechanisms for matching training demand and supply might be improved** in the perspective of work-based learning by:
 - **Involvement of more relevant structures** in the working groups of the Local Committees for Local Partnership Development (LCLPD), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania (CCIR), Directorate for Agriculture, other relevant companies;
 - **Investigation of employers' needs to substantiate the education offer** for vocational education – solved up to 90% because the requests of certain SMEs may not be fully solved due to the small number of places requested;
- **Factors supporting the match between demand and supply** at territorial level:
 - **Permanent communication between companies and training providers;**
 - **Inclusion of training needs indicated by companies in the strategic documents:** Local Education Action Plan (LEAP) Regional Education Action Plan (REAP);
 - **Adequate counselling of secondary education students** to choose a career pathway.
- **Legal instability** and repeated amendment of regulations in the education system **has an impact on company involvement**, and students' and parents' willingness to consider vocational education.
- **Existence of training solutions at territorial level** for want of work-based learning opportunities: local solutions were identified, which led to closer cooperation between schools and economic agents. These initiatives led to investments in school laboratories, but the capacity to employ graduates is still low.
- **Identification of support solutions for students who want training for a qualification for which there are no local work-based learning opportunities;** per capita funding should be transferable from one county to another to provide students with the opportunity to study for the qualification desired.

Workshop 3 focused on: ***International cooperation in the field of work-based learning***

Moderator: Gabriela Liliana PETRE, Director CNDIPT

Rapporteur: Ioana MERA, Expert, National Agency for Community Programmes in the Field of Education and Vocational Training

This workshop covered the wide topic of international cooperation in the field of work-based learning. The workshop included representatives of the Romanian Presidential Administration, German Ministry of Education and Research, Federal Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Baden-Württemberg, National Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Education and Training of Austria, CEDEFPOP, European Commission - DG Employment,

Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Training Foundation, State Academy for In-Service Training and Human Resources Development of Baden-Württemberg, University of Craiova, NCTVETD and ANPCDEFP.

The discussions focused on:

- **Methods to tackle work-based learning in transnational cooperation**, so as it should become a sustainability element at social and economic levels. Participants mentioned centralised and decentralised financing sources, funds (EAA, Operational Programmes, Erasmus+) which may be accessed by decision-making institutions involved in such processes, with a focus on how international cooperation should be approached in this fields, so that it should provide real and sustainable impact on the vocational education and training system.
- **General framework of dual education in the context of international cooperation**: how the dual system works, how such a system can be sustainable from the perspective of economic agents involved, how to build a mechanism to support dual education based on the approach chosen to implement it.

The discussions placed the implementation of the dual work-based learning system in national, European and global context. Under the aegis of EAA, Germany and 5 other countries are developing a toolkit to support developments in other countries willing to introduce the dual education system.

The Director of CEDEFOP appreciated the importance of defining some general principles on the implementation of the dual education system, but he stressed the fact that **the experience of more advanced countries in this field should be adapted** to the specific context of the country seeking to implement this system. He also mentioned that **there is a huge difference between the reality at macro- and micro levels and that, in a first stage, developments in the field should start with a top-down approach**, but, **when implemented at system level, bottom-up support** is crucial. For successful introduction of the dual education system in a country, **all stakeholders involved should cooperate** – from students, to parents, companies and governance. Another aspect to consider consists in the **challenges posed by SMEs involvement** in work-base learning, **since they generally lack the “learning culture”**, therefore they need support.

The Director of ETF emphasized that, despite the general perception that there is only one option that works for the **training system with a significant work-based component**, in reality **there are more possible solutions, adapted to the regional or sectoral specificity**. It is essential **to gain teachers’ trust** in this vocational education and training pathway and the **support of chambers and commerce and industry, of trade unions** from industry and education. Another important aspect highlighted was that, **in order to maintain its credibility, a vocational education and training system needs stability**, as permanent changes bring major disadvantages.

The members of the group emphasized the need to take into account the global socio-political context, indicating that **this type of education might become an instrument for the integration of migrants and refugees** in the countries of destination – a topical international cooperation project.

Considering all opinions and ideas presented by the participants in the workshop, the conclusion of the discussions was that **there is no predefined option which would work in all countries interested in implementing work-based learning, and finding the right option for each country is not achievable without international cooperation and experiments**. For Romania to identify the best option and to initiate efficient international cooperation in this field there is a need for consistency at the level of decision-makers.

Plenary presentation

Mrs. Corina FUSU, Ministry of Education, Republic of Moldova, delivered a presentation on *Vocational Education in the Republic of Moldova: reform priorities on work-based learning*".

The Minister mentioned that the implementation of education reforms in the Republic of Moldova was supported by a regulatory framework including:

- Strategy for the development of vocational education and training in the Republic of Moldova for the period 2013-20120
- The Education Code of the Republic of Moldova
- Financing Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the European Union
- Action Plan to restructure the network of VET schools for the period 2015 – 2020

The Strategy for the development of vocational education and training in the Republic of Moldova includes 6 specific objectives:

- **To restructure vocational education** at two levels: secondary and post-secondary education;
- **To ensure competence-based vocational education and training** and its match to the labour market requirements, so as to increase employment by 10%;
- **To enhance the quality of vocational education** by more efficient use of financial means and by implementing the Quality Assurance System so that, by 2017, there should be an operational entity for institutional authorisation and accreditation;
- **To provide scientific, curricular and methodological support for vocational education and training** so that, by 2020, the curriculum should 100% aligned with the National Qualifications Framework;
- **To increase the quality of the teaching staff** through initial and continuing teacher training in vocational education and training so that, by 2020, all teachers should be trained according to the National Framework;
- **To increase attractiveness and improve access** to vocational education and training so that the number of students should increase by 10% until 2020.

The intention is to implement **career guidance and counselling activities for students** in academic and vocational education by **creating a tracer system** for vocational education and training graduates, by promoting new occupations and professions which should anticipate the changes in the economy of the Republic of Moldova, **by ensuring social protection of students with disabilities** who study in the vocational education and training system, **by promoting entrepreneurship, IT and foreign languages courses.**

At the end of her contribution, Minister Corina FUSU expressed openness for continuing cooperation between Romania and the Republic of Moldova for the development of vocational education and training, which, in her opinion, is important for supporting the economic growth of her country.

Panel - debate: Work-based learning opportunities

Moderator:

Drago_ PÎSLARU, PhD, Manager General, Gea Strategy&Consulting SA

Guests:

^tefania POPP, Director, Junior Achievement Romania

R•zvan OR•• ANU, Executive Director, Institute for Popular Studies

Mihail MARCU, President, Romanian Business Leaders Foundation

Mariana KNIESNER, Vice-President, National Trade Union Bloc

R•zvan Ionuc TEODORESCU, Rector, USAMV Bucharest

In her intervention, Mrs. ^tefania POPP emphasized that the development of vocational education and training in Romania should consider three aspects:

- **Mentality**, likely most difficult to change, as currently vocational education and training does not enjoy a positive perception by society;
- **Fast socio-economic dynamics**;
- **Public-private cooperation**: although there are currently many memoranda signed for such partnerships, most of them do not lead to concrete actions.

Mr. R•zvan OR••ANU highlighted the **need to build the system starting from grassroots**. He also mentioned that public institutions react slowly to change and that Romania does not have enough specialists in educational policies.

Mr. Mihai MARCU appreciated that Romanian schools do not develop students' life skills. He also mentioned that it is important to **build on the genetic qualities of the Romanian people (for example, creativity)** and emphasized that in Romania learning an occupation is perceived as shameful, a very wrong perception which should be changed. Another mention was the mentality that job seekers should not be employed for a period longer than 6 months, so as not to lose the unemployment benefit.

In her intervention, Mrs. Mariana KNIESNER mentioned that **more than 25% of the Romanian unemployed are young** and that there is a national project "*Youth Guarantees*" targeting young people under 24 years without a baccalaureate diploma, who are offered initial training, training and apprenticeship internships and entrepreneurial skills training. She also mentioned that **one major demotivating issue for young job seekers is the very low salary offered to young people who just start a career and the reluctance of companies to employ them, which encourages informal employment**.

Mr. R•zvan Ionu• TEODORESCU emphasized **young people's need for role models and the need to promote graduate career success stories**. Some young people have no inner motivation to study; most often this is generated by a subjective context which is not strong enough to lead them to success.

7. Conclusions

The conclusions of the conference were presented by:

James CALLEJA, Director, CEDEFOP

Sigve BJORSTAD, Policy Officer, European Commission – DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Madlen ^ERBAN, Director, European Training Foundation

Gabriela Liliana PETRE, Director, National Centre for TVET Development

Mr. James CALLEJA, Director of CEDEFOP, opened the conclusion session by mentioning that in those countries where work-based learning was implemented successfully, it brings about mentality and cultural changes. **Work-based learning is an umbrella concept which covers various types of training, whose implementation should be performed differently in each country, based on the particularities and specific context of that particular country**. When designing work-based learning systems, **the focus should be the final beneficiary of this type of systems**. For Romania, where the early school dropout rate is 17% we should ask ourselves: how many of the 17% will we manage to recover, to bring back to school by implementing such a system? **As 56% of the population lives in**

rural areas, we should consider the impact of the work-based learning system on the rural population, in order to produce beneficial changes.

As there are models developed at European level, it is desirable that the “adoption” of a work-based learning system should take such models into account, but should “adapt” them to the national context. In the opinion of Mr. James CALLEJA there are **4 key elements** in the implementation of work-based learning:

1. Systematic collection of relevant statistical data on unemployment rates, available jobs, number of persons who may start a work-based learning programme, considering that the purpose of this system is to foster employability.

2. Policies, legal framework, regulations and funding mechanisms in place

3. Coordination, cooperation, and communication between all stakeholders in order to develop a work-based learning system. Mr. CALLEJA appreciated it is essential to build mutual trust between all parties involved in work-based learning, for the purpose of sharing both responsibilities and costs.

4. Attracting employers, social partners who should promote such initiatives.

Regardless of the type of work-based learning system we are going to design, we should take into account that the beneficiaries’ needs are of outmost importance.

Mr. Sigve BJORSTAD, Policy Officer, European Commission – DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion highlighted the idea that **work-based learning leads to increased employability, increased competitiveness, increased inclusion,** and it improves the skills of the participants in the system. For a successful implementation of this system, we need to involve social partners and economic agents, chambers of commerce and industry, education and training providers.

The European Alliance for Apprenticeships was launched in 2013 and it mobilised 31 EU Member States, EFTA and EU candidate countries. The Alliance is open to all countries willing to find the most appropriate way of implementing work-based learning, considering the national context and specificity.

Mr. Sigve BJORSTAD mentioned the **development, at European level, of a set of tools which can be used for work-based learning,** a platform to promote various approaches of countries implementing/using this system.

Mrs. Madlen ERBAN, Director of European Training Foundation, provided a perspective larger than the European Union, as **all European developments have a common baseline, which is what Europe planned: the Global Europe.**

As work-based learning means we may accept practical training, internships, apprenticeship, types of training used in vocational education and training in Romania.

Work-based learning is a way of acquiring knowledge, skills and competences and it should not be perceived as a replacement of learning in the wider context of vocational education and training.

Mrs. Erban emphasized that work-based learning is necessary not only for strictly economic reasons, but this type of training **fosters the development of entrepreneurial thinking, the increase of competitiveness, the capacity to learn at the workplace and it leads to good social integration.**

In Mrs. Madlen ERBAN's perspective, work-based learning in its various alternatives, including apprenticeship, may lead either to short- or long-term benefits. Thus, in a stable and mature economy, apprenticeship enables short-term socio-economic integration, and the apprentices who follow such programmes acquire basic skills. **Vocational education and training should not limit their goals to the immediate present, but should build the prerequisites to develop the capacity to adapt to hardly predictable or unpredictable changes, which may lead to long-term career success.**

Regarding governance of work-based learning, Mrs. Madlen • ERBAN emphasized that **it is easier to implement this system where there is a culture of dialogue and partnership**, as opposed to situations where governments tend to impose by law partnership and dialogue.

In the opinion of Mrs. Madlen • ERBAN **there is a need for cooperation and partnership at local, sectoral and central levels**. What happens at national level should be the regulatory and action framework for what should happen at local level, where we should see innovation, initiative and outcomes which should be further promoted.

In the end of her intervention, Mrs. Madlen • ERBAN indicated that the **topic of work-based learning could be launched for debate by countries of the Danube macro-region**.

Mrs. Gabriela Liliana PETRE, Director of the National Centre for TVET Development emphasized that the **initiative to promote green competences launched within the Danube macro-region could be linked to the work-based learning concept**, a context which would allow us to capitalise both on Romanian experience and on the experience of other countries in the region. Beyond cross-border cooperation, in the context of globalisation, **national cooperation is equally important**, not only in defining work-based learning policies, but also in the implementation process. In this context, **it is not sufficient to define roles and responsibilities, they should also be owned and another essential aspect is to identify the most adequate implementation model**.

In the opinion of Mrs. Gabriela Liliana PETRE a **sectoral approach** would be efficient to identify what is actually relevant for each sector of activity in the implementation of a work-based learning system. The strategies, forecasts and surveys developed by sectors would provide the vocational education and training system valuable information on the particularities and qualification needs of each sector and would inform coherent policies at system level. This approach would enable us to consider the relevance for the beneficiaries, for their interests and needs, starting from the relevance of the work-based learning.

In the opinion of Mrs. Gabriela Liliana PETRE **quality assurance is essential, both at system level** – when defining qualifications, certification of competences, standards, **but also at provider level**, namely the company providing places for work-based learning.

The key aspects for the successful implementation of a work-based learning system: **relevance, student participation and access, quality, cooperation and innovation** are included in the Romanian Strategy for vocational education and training for the period of 2015-2020, currently pending approval.