



**JOINT STATEMENT**

**Adopted at the WORKSHOP “FOSTERING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING TOWARDS LABOUR MARKET NEEDS”**

**Skopje, 5-6 June 2007**

*The TAIEX Workshop on “Fostering Vocational Education and Training towards Labour Market Needs”, organized in close cooperation with the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia\* and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, was held in Skopje.*

*For the first time around 70 representatives from Parliaments, Ministries of Education, National Vocational Education and Training Centers, Chambers of Commerce, Employment Agencies and other relevant stakeholders in the area of VET coming from Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Macedonia\*, Romania and Turkey, welcomed by Mr. Ljubisa Georgievski, President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia\*, gathered at the premises of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia\* and exchanged their experiences and best practices regarding Vocational Education and Training policy development and reform as well as its implementation and enforcement in their countries. Representatives from international institutions and bodies such as the ETF, CEDEFOP, UNESCO-UNEVOC, ERI SEE, the Stability Pact and by bi-lateral donors participated as well as speakers in the event.*

Bearing in mind:

- The key role played by education for the socio-economic development and growth of every country and for its evolution towards a knowledge-based economy
- The need to tackle the significant rates of youth unemployment
- The importance of building an efficient and innovative VET system that is more responsive to the demands of the labour market
- The Lisbon agenda and strategy as well as the Copenhagen and Bologna processes and the European Qualifications Framework
- The closer interest and the more active role played by the Education and Employment Parliamentary Committees in the national HRD strategies in order to pursue the national objectives in education and employment

\* Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: provisional code that does not affect the definite denomination of the country to be attributed after the conclusion of the negotiations currently taking place in the United Nations



- The significant role of regional cooperation as defined by the EU on the path to European integration

Further to the fruitful exchange of experiences and best practices, the participants:

- Commit themselves to further broaden their relations with each other and to cooperate more closely in the field of vocational education and training policy reforms.
- Call for an increase of the role of Parliaments and Legislative Councils, also through the cooperation with the newly established Focal Point/Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in Bulgaria.
- Advocate for the promotion, facilitation and support to Twinning programmes between Parliamentary Committees dealing with Education and Employment within the region and between SEE Parliaments and European Parliaments, with particular regard to the new EU Member States, which could report on their transformation experiences. Twinning should also be organised between social partners within the region and with European counterparts and/or other relevant parties.
- Call for a systematic engagement of Parliaments in policy drafting on HRD as a political priority in all countries of the region and in promoting regional cooperation
- Call for an efficient use of parliamentary oversight mechanisms in the process of education and employment reforms.
- Welcome more regular meetings for an exchange of expertise and know-how between their countries and pledge for the further involvement of the remaining countries of South Eastern Europe, namely Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and UNMIK Kosovo. In this context, the participants acknowledged the intention of holding a similar workshop for the aforementioned countries, which is planned to take place in October 2007. The theme of this seminar should be "Enhancing employability through VET policies and reforms in IPA countries" and should also involve Parliamentary Committees on Education and Employment as well as representatives from the Parliamentary Committees on



- Budget and Finance. Their involvement would have also the objective to develop a common understanding across all parties of the political spectrum on how education, employment and labour market policies can be mutually reinforced.
- Agree to organize in one of the countries of the region a workshop on one common policy area of interest, thus contributing to the broadening of regional dialogue and to the fostering of a culture of cooperation on education and employment policies.
- Call for the organization of an inter-parliamentary conference in one of the countries of the region, supported by ETF, CEDEFOP, ERI-SEE, the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, relevant Parliamentary Committees of EU Member States along with other interested parties. The main aim would be to pave the way for the establishment of a regional inter-parliamentary agenda and a benchmarking system for the potential EU candidate countries and a selected number of education policy areas. Participants should follow and report the developments in the aforementioned areas in the period 2010-2015.
- Give support to the creation of a regional cooperation network for vocational education and training. To this end, participants welcome regular meetings in order to evaluate the ongoing progress and discuss about future needs and priorities.
- Encourage the governments and the relevant institutions in the region to pursue their reform efforts in VET, by adopting the following measures, in accordance with the recommendations set in Lisbon, Copenhagen, Maastricht and Helsinki:
  - a) to actively support the establishment of National Qualification Frameworks in each country.
  - b) to create frameworks to increase the Quality Assurance in VET.
  - c) to fully involve the other institutions and stakeholders, also including the social partners, in the development of VET. Social partners' capacity in HRD should be improved through nationally-based seminars aimed at promoting the use of common instruments, references and principles to support the reform and development of VET systems (e.g. quality assurance, transparency, qualification standards, curricula development, teachers' training, career guidance, validation of non-formal training etc.); joint seminars will be possibly organized together with the CEDEFOP and EUROFOUND linking the EU networks to the new IPA region networks.



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- d) to commit themselves to implement lifelong learning as a base for the strategy for the development of VET.
- e) to support the "learning by doing" principle by strengthening the links between VET schools and the business sector through increased opportunities for stages, internships, apprenticeships and other forms of practical work experience.
- f) to promote scholarships and exchange of students at regional and European level.
- Advocate for the further advancement of VET as a priority and part of the EU agenda.
- Welcome the interest expressed by the European Commission, DG Enlargement Institution Building Unit TAIEX which could financially support such events in cooperation with the Stability Pact, ETF, CEDEFOP, UNESCO-UNEVOC. To this end, the use of best practices and experiences in the implementation of VET policies of EU Member States, in particular new member states, such as Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria is considered of great value.

Skopje, 6 June 2007