



FLEXIBILITY IN VOCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION – LEVEL 4 AND HIGHER

Here some ingredients for shaping more flexible learning pathways, connecting VET and HE (as part of a 'column for professional education').

1. There is a need for more possibilities for people (regardless of age) after completing a level 4 programme (the minimum entry requirement to higher education Institutions) to get a degree at levels 5 and higher.
2. In general, there is a need to investigate routes that will allow youngsters having a level 4 VET qualification to enter HE with as less as possible thresholds, directly or after taking bridging courses (no more than 1 year). This means that a VET programme should have specific modules to prepare students for HE - and that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must be aware of these students as possible 'clients'. HEIs delivering professional higher education can offer those bridging courses - in collaboration with and support from VET institutions. A flexible first semester or year can facilitate the transition from level 4 VET to HE.
3. Good practices within the EU and third countries of flexible learning pathways for VET students transferring to HE could be exploited and adapted to the needs of individual Member States.

It should be proposed to the DG EAC for VET/AE to make this the main subject of a VET Business Forum, having in mind that employers are involved in VET programmes. Also the success of 'practical instruments' like apprenticeships, internships, projects as part of those programmes are depending of the input of 'players' on the labour market.

As input for the Forum, the Associations are offering to prepare a draft document, with concrete ideas for 'The Column of Professional Education in 2020'.

4. Closer cooperation between institutions offering Higher Vocational Education and Training (HVET) and Short Cycle Higher Education (SCHE) is imperative according to the outcomes of the CEDEFOP study on the role of level 5 in countries having a NQF. This means that transfer from HVET to SCHE and from HVET or SCHE to Bachelor's programmes (or other qualifications at level 6 of the EQF) can be more and more effective and attractive if a clear and coherent credit transfer system is in place.
5. The Associations can work together to bring together all parties involved to reach a mutually agreed on methodology and the instruments to be used towards accomplishing this very important task.
6. An impetus must be given for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. All Members States have agreed to have at National level by January 2018, a mechanism for the recognition and transferring of Learning Outcomes acquired via non-formal and informal learning routes. The collaboration of all parties involved in HE, VET, HVET and SCHE, is imperative to facilitate successful and timely implementation of the mechanism for the recognition and transferring of LOs via informal and formal education. Quality Assurance issues, level of the LOs, Certification, Validation of providers are some of the key elements to address and agree on. The necessary instruments and tools are already available, (NQF, EQF, ECTS, ECVET, QA, etcetera) so there is no need to reinvent the wheel just to find ways to implement them and putting them into use.
7. A flexible learning pathway can provide the opportunity to the learner at any time and moments to decide about the next step, when, how and why.