

## **EFEE-ETUCE JOINT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON Lifelong Learning for All: Social Partners in Education promoting quality and inclusive VET to enhance lifelong learning for all (2019-2021)**

### BACKGROUND

The European Sectoral Social Partners in Education, EFEE (European Federation of Education Employers) and ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education) are strongly committed to improving the attractiveness and image of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. VET is a vital part of the education sector therefore significant measures need to be taken to increase its role in engaging with students, adult learners, and parents. Green and digital transition of the economy and society as well as the Covid-19 pandemic have had great impact on all education institutions, VET learners, teachers, trainers and school leaders. Thus, it has never been more important to ensure the access to quality and inclusive education for people from all backgrounds.

Following the Joint Pledge of [EFEE and ETUCE to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships \(2015\)](#) and the [Joint ETUCE and EFEE Statement on improving Vocational Education and Training in Europe \(23 November 2017\)](#), the work programmes of the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Partners in Education (ESSDE) identified a list of agreed priorities to work on improving the VET sector as joint working environment of the employees and employers in the sector. Particularly in light of the [ESSDE Work Programme 2020-2021](#), EFEE and ETUCE aimed to implement these priorities through the “Lifelong Learning for All: Social Partners in Education promoting quality and inclusive VET to enhance lifelong learning for all” project (2019-2021). The project furthermore contributed to the implementation of recent key EU priorities which underline the role of the social partners in designing, governing and implementing VET reforms. These EU policies are:

- European Pillar of Social Rights (2017), and [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan \(2021\)](#), and European Commission’s [“A strong social Europe for just transitions” \(COM\(2020\)14\)](#).
- European Education Area laid down within the [Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-2030\)](#).
- [Osnabrück Declaration on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies \(2020\)](#).
- [Council Recommendation on vocational education and training \(VET\) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience \(2020\)](#) and [European Skills Agenda \(2020\)](#).

- [Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships \(2018\)](#)

To this extent the education social partners play an active role in transforming VET institutions to become a supportive working environment for all education personnel and learners of all ages. In addition, with this project, EFEE and ETUCE focused on lifelong learning for vulnerable groups which has not been thoroughly addressed in EU policies. Against this background, the social partners in education not only wish to raise awareness on the importance of lifelong learning within VET but also to encourage and promote a better learning culture and a more positive attitude towards learning for all.

The project scope consisted of five Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) and two interactive thematic webinars, which provided opportunities for the project partners to exchange best practices, experiences and challenges on this topic. The PLAs were organised in the Netherlands, Slovenia, Portugal, Finland and Germany and provided more insight into the VET systems of each respective country. In addition to the PLAs, interactive thematic webinars addressed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the VET sector and highlighted some key issues that were exacerbated by this European health crisis. The following joint recommendations are a direct reflection of the lessons learned through these project activities. A more detailed description of the project outcomes, including practical examples that underline the joint recommendations, can be found in the final project report.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

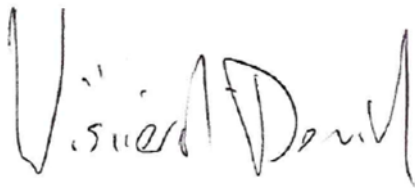
As social partners in education representing both education employers and education workers, EFEE and ETUCE call upon the **EU institutions, the EU Member States, national, regional and local decision-makers** to

1. Promote fair and sustainable **partnerships** between VET institutions, companies and social partners in order to create more and high-quality apprenticeships and work-based learning for all learners;
2. Improve the **quality** of VET institutions to enhance good learning environments for students and supportive work environments for teachers, trainers, school leaders and other education personnel in relation to digital and green transition of VET institutions and in light of the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Develop innovative and flexible learning pathways that increase positive incentives to participate in VET and adult learning and increase the responsiveness of vocational education and training systems to **meet the needs of learners** and the society and to ensure smooth transitions from school to work and occupational progression for every individual.
4. Support the access of VET teachers, trainers, other education personnel and school leaders to quality and inclusive initial education and continuous **professional development**, upskilling and reskilling especially on professional technical skills in order to co-align with the needs of learners, the labour market and quality work. Professional development needs to be included in necessary reforms which are co-designed with the social partners.
5. Guarantee the involvement of **education sector social partners** in the development of high quality VET, apprenticeships and work-based learning schemes and ensure effective and meaningful social dialogue with the social partners in the education sector which needs to be reinstated in many EU countries during and following the COVID- 19 crisis.
6. Ensure **democratic school governance** with the involvement of all relevant school actors (learners, teachers, trainers, school leaders, education personnel, parents, etc).
7. Ensure that all **students and learners**, regardless of **their socio-economic background**, have access to high-quality and inclusive vocational education and training that is an attractive learning option which is free of gender and social stereotypes, and provide effective support to the most vulnerable groups, in particular migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, unemployed youth and adults as well as early school leavers,
8. Promote further and sustainable **investment** for quality, inclusiveness, attractiveness, innovation and excellence in the VET systems especially for technical developments of VET institutions. In addition, bring targeted investments to ensure decent and supportive working environment for teachers, trainers, school leaders, and other education personnel to promote quality and inclusive teaching.

9. Increase the **attractiveness of the profession** of the VET teachers, adult learning educators, VET trainers, school leaders and other education personnel by improving recruitment processes, ensuring their retention and decent working conditions, and by promoting stable employment in the sector.
10. Promote and assure the **international cooperation** and **mobility** of students, teachers, trainers, and school leaders as part of their lifelong learning.
11. Facilitate meaningful and sustainable cooperation between different European, national, and regional/local **educational social partners and other stakeholders** in vocational education and training and lifelong learning which can take place in various formats.

These recommendations have been adopted by the ESSDE Plenary on 15 December 2021.

Brussels, 15 December 2021.



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