

# Vocational Education and Training

Its potential for economic, personal and social development in Europe.

*Presentation to EfVET/BVE-Raad conference "VET<sup>\*</sup> for the future"*

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*EfVET: The European Forum of Vocational Education and Training*

<http://www.efvet.org>

\* VET = Vocational Education and Training



## Summary and Conclusions

### ***Participation and focus***

- Currently about 50% of youngsters participate in VET. For economic and social reasons participation should increase to about 70%
- Investment in skills for middle and lower range jobs is at least as important as investment in high level skills.
- The agenda for Life Long Learning should be pursued on national and European level.

### ***Institutional change***

- Institutions should move towards service institutions in a local and regional setting, delivering life long learning services.
- This would mean:
  - *Greater regional autonomy and valid structures for regional cooperation.*
  - *Organisation of active counter forces on local and regional level (clients, ombudsman, stakeholders) – demand articulation*
  - *Learning organisations*
  - *Focused public accountability (public information and quality-methods)*

### ***Competences and qualifications***

- Effective, real and valid competences have to be developed at regional or even local level.
- Qualification structures on national and European levels are useful as points of reference for validating such competences and codify them in Europass documents.
- Basic skills are crucial. However they explain only half of the wage differences. Employability needs a 'wider' form of human capital, defined as the characteristics that allow a person to build, manage and deploy his or her skills.

### ***Public Image and Brand***

- The public image of VET has to be improved. Conditions include: individualised pathways and links, clarity of information, visibility of investment in quality assurance, consistency and recognition.
- A clearer brand and better European statistics are needed.

### ***Good public governance***

- The open method of coordination is a promising way of learning good governance with hybrid responsibilities of the state and local, regional and global stakeholders.
- Conditions include:
  - *Knowledge alliances of professionals and stakeholders*
  - *Investment in diversity, variety and innovative practices (room for experimentation)*
  - *Organisation of active counter forces on local and regional level (clients, ombudsman, stakeholders) – demand articulation and learning organisations*
  - *Focused public accountability (public information and quality-methods)*
  - *Integrated, sober and selective inspection.*

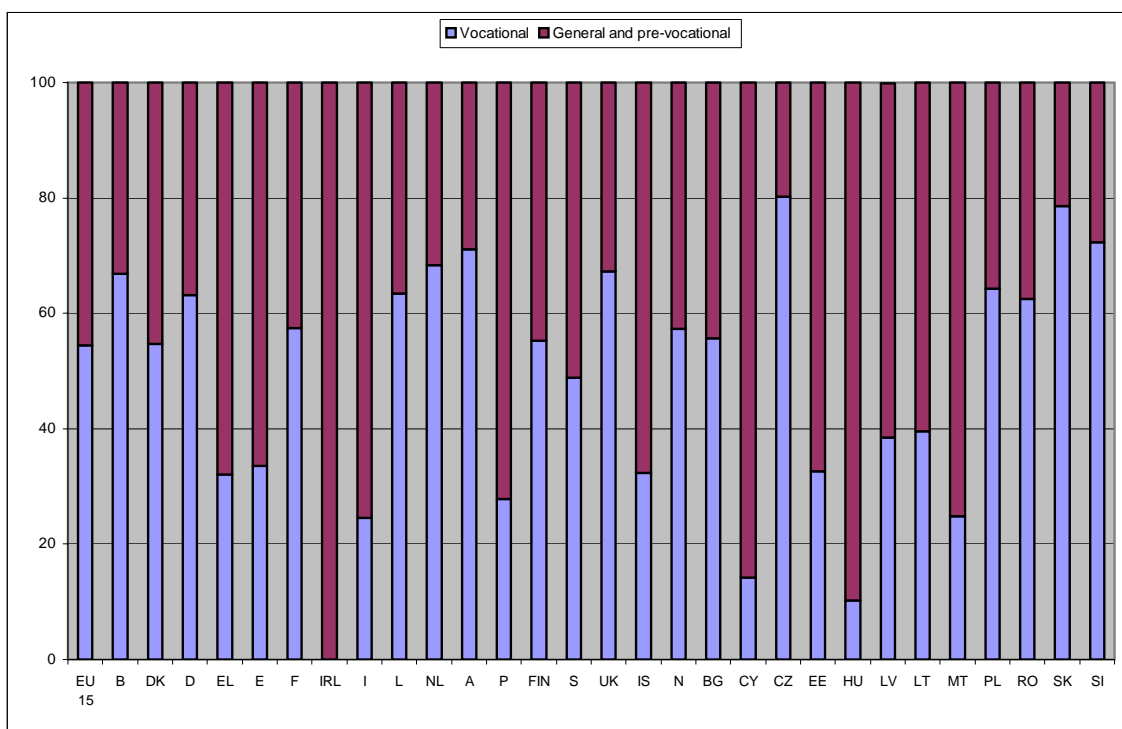


# 1 More students in VET than in General education

A larger proportion of students enrol in the vocational stream rather than in general upper secondary education (54 against 46% in the EU as a whole – Figure 1).

There are notable differences between countries: More than two thirds of students are in the vocational stream in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia and the UK. In contrast, more than two thirds are in general education in the southern EU countries as well as Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland and Malta. In Ireland, all students are enrolled in the general stream because there is no vocational stream in schools at that level.

Figure 1. Distribution of upper secondary (ISCED 3) students in general and vocational streams, 1999/2000 (%)



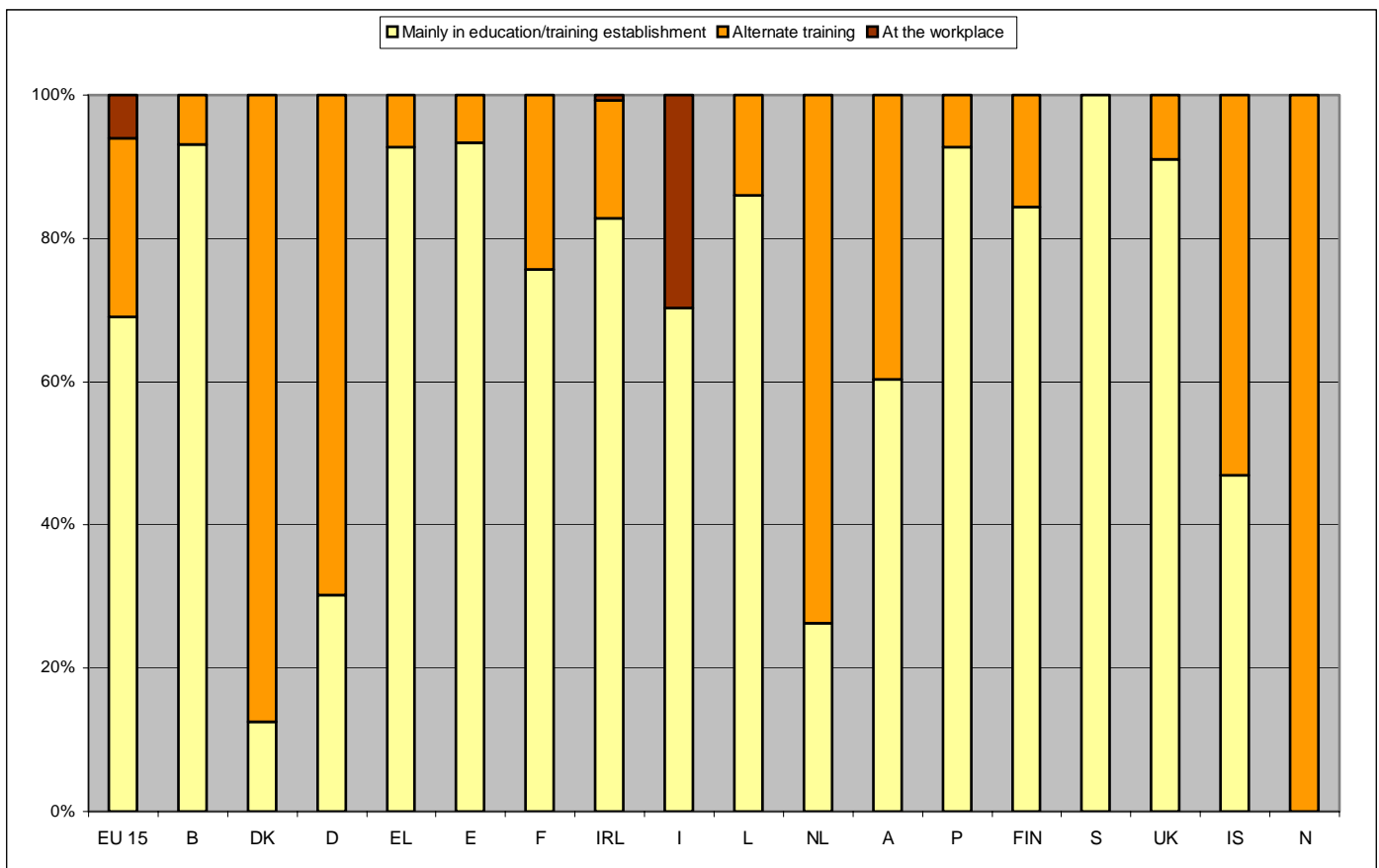
Copied from Cedefop (2003): Key figures on vocational education and training. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2003.



## 2 Most participants in VET programmes mainly attend an education and training establishment

Contact with the work environment during education and training may help young people's transition onto the labour market. In EU Member States, on average, more than two thirds of participants in VET programmes mainly attend an education/ training establishment (Figure 2).

Figure 6. Distribution of participants in VET programmes by place of tuition, 1997/98 (%)

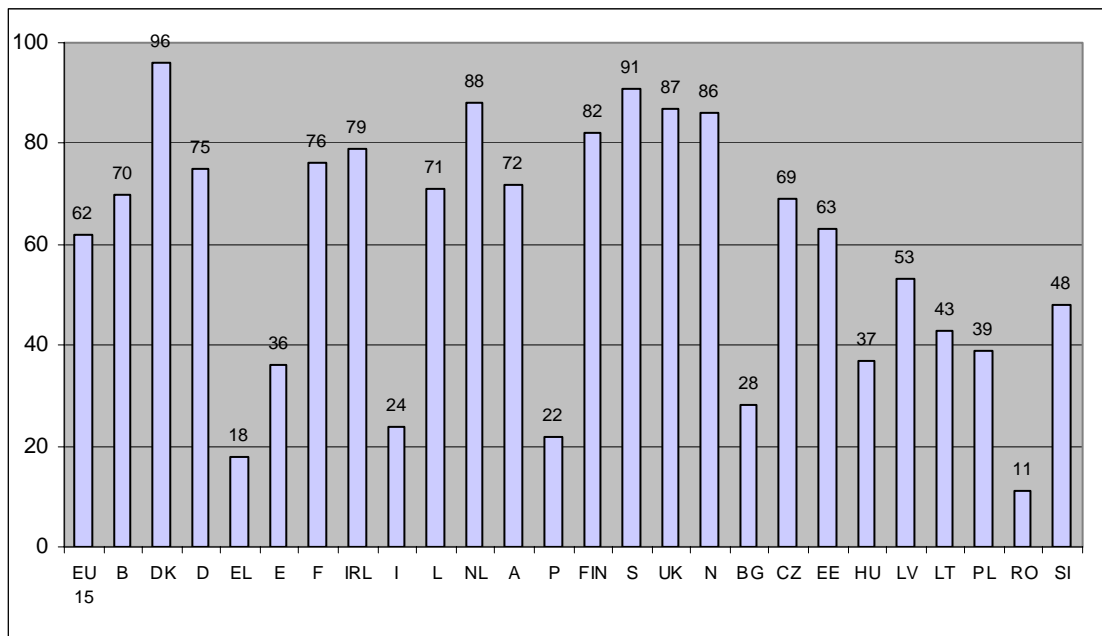


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### 3 Continuing vocational education and training

On average, 62% of enterprises in the EU provided continuing vocational training. (Fig 3)

Figure 3. Enterprises providing CVT as a percentage of all enterprises, 1999



Source: Eurostat, CVTS2

Copied from Cedefop (2003): Key figures on vocational education and training. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2003.

#### 3.1 Need to increase training for Small and Medium sized enterprises

In all countries, the percentages of enterprises offering Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) are higher in medium-sized than in small enterprises and higher still in large enterprises. (Fig 3)

Figure 3. Enterprises providing CVT as a percentage of all enterprises, by class size, 1999

	EU 15
10-49 employees	56
50-249 employees	81
250 employees and more	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>

Source: Eurostat, CVTS2

Copied from Cedefop (2003): Key figures on vocational education and training. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2003.

These data underline the need to improve training for Small and Medium sized enterprises. However, this will require special formats.

#### 3.2 European enterprises invest between 0.5% and 3.6% of labour costs in CVT courses

Total expenditure\* as a percentage of labour costs of all enterprises in 1999 ranges from 0.5% in Romania to 3.6% in the United Kingdom. Percentages are generally higher in the "old" EU-



countries (2.3% on average) than in the “new” EU countries. Direct costs of CVT courses as a percentage of labour costs vary between 0.3% in Romania and 2.8% in the United Kingdom.

\*Total expenditure on CVT courses is the sum of direct costs, staff time costs and the balance of contributions to national or regional training funds and receipts from national or other training arrangements.



#### **4 Recent achievements of VET institutions**

European institutions for vocational and technical education go through a constant process of restructuring and quality improvement. Typical issues have been:

- Larger scale of institutions in order to make Vocational Education and Training (VET) more cost-effective and allow a better fit to the diversity of students and societal demands;
- Professional management, including quality management;
- Development of qualification structures in the light of better connection of VET and work in business, government and industry; This includes recently addressing new and transferable skills to meet the demands of new occupational roles for the future;
- Efforts to ensure a minimum qualification and/or work for all young people, including re-engaging non-traditional learners;
- Efforts to implement ICT as part of working and learning environment.
- An increasing number of institutions are making efforts to ensure that people take responsibility for their own learning.
- Efforts towards “Competency based” learning

## 5 Learning for the future of Europe

The emerging network society has drastic consequences for educational structures and practices, e.g:

- The role of informal and non-formal modes of learning will increase
- Traditional skills and personal and social abilities will intertwine.
- The model of initial schooling will shift to Lifelong Learning.
- Institutions will transform their focus from production of courses and diplomas to delivering services for individuals, businesses and communities





## 6 The wider concept of Human Capital and key competences

Investment in human capital is now seen as central to the development of advanced economies and democratic societies. The Education Policy Analysis 2002 of the OECD has explored what Human Capital may mean in the modern economies. Productive capacities and characteristics (like carpentry skills, physical strength, creativity, communication ability) can be thought of as basic “skills”. Such skills account for **less than half of the wage differences** in OECD countries. Part of the remainder may be explained by a ‘wider’ form of human capital, defined as the characteristics that allow a person to build, manage and deploy his or her skills.

### *Wider human capital*

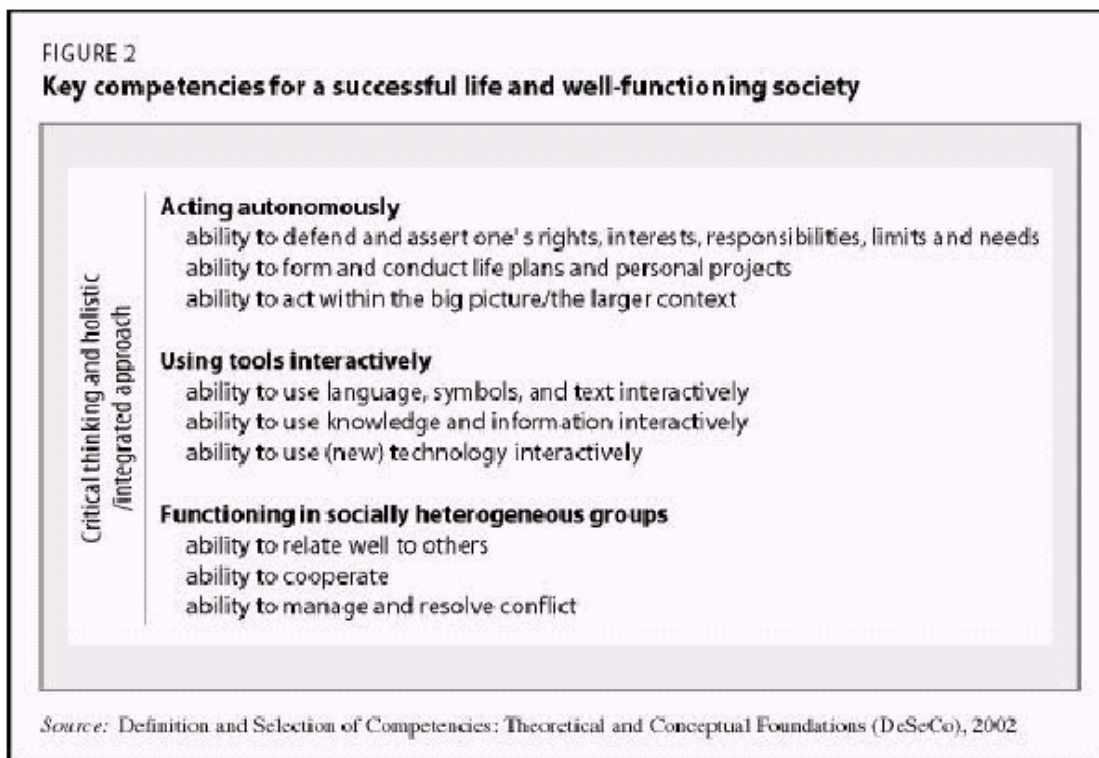
1. The ability to learn, to identify one’s learning needs and to manage one’s learning activity.
2. Career planning, job search skills, and the ability to blend working and personal objectives.
3. Personal characteristics (like trustworthiness and motivation)

Source: OECD (2002) *Education policy Analysis 2002*. Chapter 5: Rethinking human capital OECD, Paris

The DeSeCo project (Definition and Selection of Competencies) suggests three key competencies for a successful life and well functioning society:

- Acting autonomously
- Using tools interactively
- ✓ Functioning in socially heterogeneous groups

A specification is given in the figure below.



Source: DESECO (2002): Definition and selection of competencies: theoretical and conceptual foundations; Strategy paper on key competencies an overarching frame of reference for an assessment and research program; Revised draft- september 13, 2002; ines/smg/2002/2/2. Oecd, Paris.



## 7 Public knowledge about VET

### VET is hardly known by the general public and newspapers spend 1% on VET

60% of public does not know what a VET institution is, only 1/3 of public knows that 60% of the workforce has been educated by VET, only 1% of newspaper articles on education covers VET. Most articles are about primary education, general secondary education and tertiary education. This is apparently at odds with the number of students following VET and with their appreciation:

### Appreciation of VET is high, but parents do not know.

86% of those who are aware of VET thinks that VET is good education that leads to good jobs; 90% appreciates the combination of learning and working; 70% agrees that VET from 18 – 65 ensures employability. 36 % thinks that VET is a good preparation for higher vocational education and universities; 47% of students agree. However **Only 29% of parents with children in general secondary education think so.**

Source: Wartenbergh-Cras, Froukje, Gerrit Frieze & Nico van Kessel (2002)

### Negative Signalling of VET

The general public and indeed politicians seem to hold negative images of VET as follows:

Secondary and Higher General education:	VET:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Quick learner, cheap to accommodate to jobs and new tasks</li> <li>✓ Clever, they can manage for themselves</li> <li>✓ First choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Slow learners, difficult to accommodate to new tasks</li> <li>✓ Problem, they need help</li> <li>✓ Learning in VET is second or third choice</li> <li>✓ VET – what's that?</li> </ul>

However, research in Australia has revealed a more mixed picture with negative and positive perceptions of VET:

### VET Perceptions (Australia)

<p><b>Negative perceptions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economy class, cheap</li> <li>• Dirt under the fingernails</li> <li>• Doesn't lead to the best careers</li> <li>• University is harder but better</li> <li>• Too easy - no-one fails</li> <li>• Too hard to navigate</li> <li>• Society's problems come to VET</li> <li>• Lousy brand</li> <li>• Under-promises</li> </ul>	<p><b>Positive perceptions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good value for money</li> <li>• Practical, applied, useful</li> <li>• Direct paths to jobs and career change</li> <li>• VET is a great stepping stone</li> <li>• Really flexible</li> <li>• Qualifications at many levels</li> <li>• Accessible and equitable</li> <li>• Great product</li> <li>• Over-delivers</li> </ul>
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## 7.1 Branding VET

Key concepts for a strong brand of VET are:

- Pathways and links
- Clarity of information
- Visibility of investment in quality, assurance, consistency and recognition

### **Valuing VET: Core elements**

Mary Dickie developed a set of important criteria that the general public would value:

**Five Core Shifts** (Mary Dickie)

- VET gives you freedom - to manage your own investment in learning, your career path, the skills challenge - equipping you for the future
- VET reflects the real world - real world skills, changing work, career trends and economic developments
- VET leads to valuable, desirable and valued qualifications - diverse range, different levels
- VET is a first class option, the right choice at the right time
- VET leads to careers - not just jobs - helps you manage a range of career paths and seize opportunities

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## 8 Good Public Governance

### **National governance is increasingly difficult; current “solutions” have serious drawbacks**

Education has been growing as a result of state-intervention and planning, without any doubt. However, because of the quantitative and qualitative growth of professionals, it is increasingly difficult for governments to govern. This is even more the case because central planning and control are too slow and too standardised to accommodate the pace of change, the increased complexity of society and thus local/regional differentiation and globalisation. Most countries try either *privatisation* or *separation between policy making and implementation*. Both “solutions” have serious draw-backs including:

- Destruction of knowledge
- dictatorship of the mean (consensus)
- the illusion of the autonomous client
- disappearance of discourse
- Pile of inspection and control

### **Hybrid systems have a better chance of surviving the network society**

*Hybrid systems* with negotiated checks and balances have a better chance of surviving in a network society. However, European policy making arrangements only allow either measures taken under the responsibility of individual states or arrangements for private organisations. This hinders the development of hybrid responsibilities. The Open method of coordination may be a promising way to overcome this difficulty and indeed “learn for good public governance”.

### **Checks and balances**

Elements to foster checks and balances may include:

- Knowledge alliances of professionals and stakeholders
- Investment in diversity, variety and innovative practices (room for experimentation)
- Organisation of active counter forces on local and regional level (clients, ombudsman, stakeholders) – demand articulation and learning organisations
- Focused public accountability (public information and quality-methods)
- Integrated, sober and selective inspection



## 9 Conclusions

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