

## PRIORITY FOR ACTION N°3

### Skills provision should ease labour market transition, support job creation and reinforce inclusion

This recommendation means to address the challenges related to the quality, efficiency and resilience of the skills provision to support job creation, economic growth and reinforce inclusion.

The transition from school to work is often painful and long for graduates in the SEMED region owing to gaps between education and training supply and labour market needs and the lack of appropriate support and effective labour market measures. Data suggests that the difficult transition is among the main factors behind the large number of NEETs and the persistent unemployment in the region. However, VET programmes can be effective in ensuring a smooth and successful transition to the labour market. In nearly all countries for which there is data available, employment rates tend to be higher among young adults who graduated from VET than among those who pursued an upper secondary general programme as their highest level of educational attainment.

To ease the transition from school to work and also from work to work, the ETF recommends, in addition to the expansion and adaptation of active labour market policies and programmes, the reinforcement of career guidance services, WBL and digital skills as well as adult education that further supports professional mobility and transition throughout an individual's whole life.

#### 3.1 Create the conditions for a lifelong career guidance system

Developing appropriate career guidance and counselling systems for all levels and types of education, including in curricula, education and training centres and PESs, is a key factor in helping young people to choose their studies and career paths in rapidly changing labour markets and socioeconomic environments. In increasingly uncertain times, educational, training and employment choices are no longer made once in a lifetime. Individuals face several critical transitions over the course of their lives, and these are becoming more frequent, disruptive and complex, and less predictable.

There is a need for a review, an expansion and better coordination of career guidance services in SEMED countries. This should aim to progressively develop a national lifelong guidance system, including adult support services, with a particular focus on gender-specific issues in order to facilitate women's entry into the labour market, as well as entry for refugees, migrants and other vulnerable groups. More concretely, there is a strong recommendation to strengthen the role of guidance in the school curriculum ('career education') prior to and within VET; to further foster the transition from VET school to work as opposed to higher education, where the demand is generally higher; and to give students more opportunities to learn about and explore the world of work and different occupations before choosing VET fields or branches.

## 3.2 Regulate and extend WBL for more effective and faster transition

Many countries are witnessing a shift from supply-driven to demand-driven approaches. The demand-driven approach in vocational training is often explored at the macro level and is associated with the perspectives of employers and labour markets. WBL is the most appropriate way not only to increase the employability of graduates but also to enhance the necessary partnership with the private sector and make it concrete. Well-developed WBL will also solve the permanent challenges of outdated equipment, optimise the use of infrastructure and substantially support VET public financing, as part of the training is hosted by companies.

The initiatives developed so far in SEMED countries, such as the dual-system programme and apprenticeship initiatives, need to be jointly reviewed with employers' associations and chambers of commerce in order to better adapt them to the need of enterprises, which are mainly SMEs. The same goes for the related legislation, which should aim to further enlarge, foster and institutionalise WBL and make it more flexible and adapted to the needs of SMEs in particular.

In addition, the development of WBL implies the reinforcement of capacity and the establishment of clear roles for school management and teachers to promote and implement this mode of training. Greater autonomy for schools would certainly facilitate and optimise this process.

## 3.3 Key competences notably on digitalisation and entrepreneurial learning

According to the UNIDO-ETF study 2020, the health crisis has not changed the perception of what core skills are needed, but has strengthened the trend towards digitalisation. The skills that companies identify they need in the future are no different from those they required before COVID-19. ICT skills and their application, in particular in e-commerce and marketing, and also transversal skills such as design thinking, creativity, analytical capabilities and multitasking, remain the greatest concerns for companies looking towards the future. The survey confirms that companies now see these skills as more necessary than ever for their future work.

In the SEMED region, the initial focus should be on entrepreneurship and digitalisation as per the urgent needs for economic growth and competitiveness and for responding to the implications of COVID-19. The European Entrepreneurship Competence (EntreComp) and digitalisation (DigComp) Frameworks can be regarded as examples and a support for the work, as they are ready-to-use frameworks incorporating universal concepts that fit different contexts.

SEMED countries should promote the exchange of best practice and peer-learning activities on innovative policy reforms for VET excellence, including on entrepreneurship and digitalisation challenges and the linkage of IVET and CVET qualification offers as attractive career pathways.

### Questions for the working group:

1. *Do you consider this priority relevant for the region? Do you think this priority is also applicable in the context of your own country?*
2. *Based on the recommendations provided, which action do you consider most relevant and appropriate to implement at regional level: (Please precise under which form: Regional projects, Networks, CoP, Peer learning etc.)*
3. *Do you have a good practice in your country, to share with other participants, on the implementation of one or more actions in the area of Career guidance, key competences or WBL?*