

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN MACEDONIA

Education and training is a key component of Europe 2020 and plays a fundamental role in supporting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe.

Vocational education and training (VET) holds a priority place as contributor to human capital development, to economic growth, to reduction of unemployment, to better employment and social cohesion in the Republic of Macedonia. Such demands on VET policy show no sign of abating as the economic crisis persists and challenges the world and all our policies. The system of vocational education and training shall meet the needs of the individual citizens and skills demand of the labour market - now and in the future.

At a time when demand for new skills is growing as never before, VET ought to encourage innovation, competitiveness, new partnerships, and prepare citizens for employment in the domestic and global labour markets.

The European dimension in vocational education and training in the Republic of Macedonia is translated through development of key competencies, the application of quality criteria, enhanced transparency of the system, networks for cooperation and high-quality teachers and trainers.

Reforms in vocational education and training intend to strengthen lifelong learning, to make mobility a reality, to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of education and training. Moreover, VET shall promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship.

Macedonian vocational education and training

The Macedonian vocational education and training as a system has been under enormous pressure for modernisation in the last decades. In addition to economic and political globalisation, technological innovations brought about fast changes in the types of jobs and content of work in the national economy, with permanent changes in the demand for qualifications and new skills; the open market caused expansion of the opportunities for successful transition to work both on a national and on an international level, and the

complexity of the demand for new skills at the labour market strongly determine the structure, organisation and content of vocational education and training.

Table 1 Graduated students in Macedonia in regular upper secondary schools, 2013/2014

	Pupils, total		Full-time pupils		Part-time pupils	
	all	female	all	female	All	Female
General gymnasium	9.159	4.968	8.966	4.888	193	80
Vocational training	14.448	5.986	12.323	5.323	2.156	663
Arts	289	146	283	144	6	2
TOTAL	23.936	11.100	21.581	10.355	2.355	745

	Pupils, total		Full-time pupils		Part-time pupils	
	all	female	all	female	All	Female
General gymnasium	38,26%	44,76%	41,55%	47,20%	8,20%	10,74%
Vocational training	60,53%	53,93%	57,14%	51,41%	91,55%	88,99%
Arts	1,21%	1,32%	1,31%	1,39%	0,25%	0,27%
TOTAL	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

Source: Different statistical publication, State Statistical office of the Republic of Macedonia - Skopje

The current system of vocational education and training in the country demonstrates both systemic and programmatic shortcomings. A huge number of persons without qualifications, problems in the relevance of syllabi and curricula, VET which is unattractive to youth and adults, poor collaboration between education institutions and the business sector, the need for new profiles and skills for continuation of education and/or successful transition to the labour market and euro-integration processes highlight the need for modernisation of the country' VET.

Analyses show weaknesses in the development of syllabi and defining of profiles in VET due to the lack of a quality analysis of the labour market and its needs. The relevance of the profiles produced by the VET system for the labour market and types of competences

graduates possess and their applicability in an environment of technologies are key challenges facing VET.

The current set-up of the VET system does not allow for fast and timely reaction to the changes in the demand for new profiles and skills. The absence of quick procedures for changes in the syllabi and curricula, introduction of new and deletion of unnecessary profiles, and mechanisms for forecasting the needs of the labour market are “bottlenecks” in the functioning of the VET system.

In this sense, the research identified need for changing the procedures for syllabus and curriculum innovation and amendment. They are said to be slow and long, adversely affecting the possibility for the curricula to timely respond to the changing demands for skills of the labour market. The current procedures hamper quick reaction of VET to the developments in the business sector and achievement of a higher degree of relevance.

Four key for strengthening the vocational education in Macedonia

Four key areas for strengthening the role of vocational education and training in Macedonia are:

1. Achieving social cohesion in the country and preventing social exclusion of youth and adults which is due to lack of qualifications and skills for achieving participation in the labour force and improvement of quality of life in general!
2. Raising public awareness on the opportunities it offers, building diverse and flexible pathways for learning and professional guidance in a lifelong learning context, and development of key competences for lifelong learning!
2. Raising public awareness on the opportunities it offers, building diverse and flexible pathways for learning and professional guidance in a lifelong learning context, and development of key competences for lifelong learning!
4. Strengthening and innovating the mechanisms for good governance, utilisation of resources, the capacities and accountability in the future VET system and the social dialogue.

Conclusion:

In its efforts to resolve some of the problems of the country and to create a strong and functional, not only national but also European “architecture”, the VET system faces a most serious challenge in having to respond to questions such as: how should it be designed, what mechanisms should it have at its disposal, and which goals should it strive to achieve in order to prepare youth and adults for all changes and challenges they face and will face throughout their lives?

Education today, unlike in the past, is required to achieve two basis goals: the first one is based on global values and supports the main developments characteristic of the contemporary globalised world, namely collaboration, compatibility, competitiveness, integration, etc., and the second one is based on the national culture and values and supports the resolution of national problems and development issues. It must do so with consistent respect for the principles of solidarity and social justice and through combining efficiency, adaptability and creativity.

Moreover, VET does not only contribute to individual development through educational achievement, but at the same time also to enhanced labour market opportunities for the learners and greater competitiveness of the economy. VET innovation and reform is addressed within this socio-economic context.