



European Economic and Social Committee

Going local event on

EWSA im Fokus: Für eine attraktivere berufliche Aus- und Weiterbildung

Tuesday, 13 September 2011, 11:00-13:00

Vertretung der Europäischen Kommission in Deutschland

Europäisches Haus, Unter den Linden 78, 10117 Berlin

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The EESC is currently preparing an own-initiative opinion on *the Post-secondary Vocational Education and Training as an Attractive Alternative to Higher Education*. In this context a hearing took place on 12 July 2011, where the representatives of the European Commission, European Training Foundation, CEDEFOP as well as social partners the views on the development of VET. Experts from Germany and the Czech Republic presented the VET systems in their countries.

The EESC is currently preparing an own-initiative opinion on the Post-secondary Vocational Education and Training as an Attractive Alternative to Higher Education. It aims to clarify empirically how post-secondary vocational education and training (VET) can have an added value in terms of labour market, learning outcomes, opening new educational pathways and social mobility in the EU. The opinion explores how the role of post-secondary vocational education and training can be enhanced to realise its potential as a high-quality alternative to the higher education pathway, respecting the diversity of approaches and ensuring the permeability among them.

Forecasts of future skills needs in the EU show an increasing demand for a labour force with medium and high level qualifications which puts pressure on upgrading current VET systems in Member States. Policy debates and reforms aimed at improving flexible post-secondary VET pathways have become even more timely and necessary. The recent Communication of the European Commission on "A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 Strategy" confirms that "VET should become an attractive learning option with high relevance to labour market needs and pathways to tertiary education".

The ability to be competitive and innovative requires a steady supply of medium and high skills to address the current and future needs of the economy. This creates a pressing need for stronger "vocational elements" in tertiary education and encouraging youth to choose VET as their educational pathway. Access to VET should also be assured for everyone who wishes to update and up-skill competencies, acquire new skills to broaden the portfolio of skills, regardless of educational level and at the best suitable moment of career. Flexible learning pathways and closer connections between the various learning types and learning environments should be established for this purpose (such as school education, higher education, vocational education, workplace learning etc.).