

The European “Training of Trainers Network” TTnet and its German section “TTnet Germany”

► The quality of general and vocational education systems depends to a large degree on the quality of teaching staff. Europe needs a pool of competent, motivated and committed VET staff who are capable of mastering challenges of ever-increasing complexity.

This article presents the European network TT-Net: the “Training of Trainers Network. TTnet is a network set up and moderated by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, Cedefop, and aimed at teaching and training staff in vocational education. Taking the structure and activities of this network as a starting point, the article presents key functions of its European and national-level networks and some perspectives on their work.



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Plurality and European diversity – double the challenge

In 1998 the European Community “Training of Trainers Network” – TTnet – was founded. Contrary to the impression given by its succinct title, TTnet is not concerned solely with problems relating to the training and professional development of trainers. In fact, it specifically targets the full spectrum of teaching and training staff in vocational education, i.e. teachers, tutors, trainers and human resources officers. It has no desire to narrow its focus, the breadth of which is the only way to do justice to European diversity, to the highly divergent configurations of vocational education, and to the work of VET staff.

This orientation towards an all-encompassing target group is ambitious but consciously invests in the idea of a unified “community of practice” formed by all who work together in vocational education. Ultimately, vocational learning is accomplished through the joint efforts of many people in different roles and structures.

The plurality of this concept, together with European diversity, is the double challenge to which the network must rise in all its work.

TTnet envisages itself first and foremost as a pan-European forum in which key actors and decision-makers in the vocational sector can engage in discussion and dialogue on practices, methods, knowledge and expertise focused on key training, skills and professional development issues for all staff involved in vocational education. It operates on two levels: the European Community level, and the national level in each of the countries with a constituent network. Its overall orientation is taken from the policy objectives formulated at Community level and their implications on training practices for VET staff in the member states.

The TTnet network at European level

At Community level, TTnet is coordinated by Cedefop.¹ By virtue of the partnerships it has established, today the European Training of Trainers Network pools the resources and skills of over 350 members in 20 national networks.

Cedefop assists the EU Commission in promoting and developing vocational education and training. Its principal tasks include:

- Documenting, processing and analysing data,
- Contributing to the development and coordination of research,
- Evaluating and disseminating useful information,
- Encouraging and supporting coordinated Community approaches to VET issues, and providing forums for a broad and diverse group of stakeholders.

In keeping with the remit of Cedefop, TTnet gears its Community-level activities towards creating added value for the EU. In the last few years, contributing to the implementation of European Union policy for teachers and trainers has become an increasingly important focus for all actors involved in TTnet.

Contribution of the TTnet networks to the Lisbon and Copenhagen Process

In the year 2000, the European Council which convened in Lisbon set itself the objective of making the EU the most competitive and dynamic economic area in the world. Commensurate with the key function of education in growth, employment and social cohesion, the Barcelona European Council of 2002 called for European education and training systems to become a worldwide quality reference by 2010. It endorsed the “Education and Training 2010” joint work programme which specifies that member states should develop coherent and comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning.

Specifically, the programme provides for measures in the following areas:

- Identifying the skills required by teachers and trainers;
- Establishing the necessary conditions to support teachers and trainers appropriately (including initial vocational training and in-service training structures);
- Addressing the problems surrounding recruitment (attractiveness, flexible pathways into the profession from other careers).

The European Commission set up a working group on “Improving the education of teachers and trainers”. In their interim report on the measures under the programme,² the Council and the Commission underlined the urgency of re-

forms and the central importance of the motivation and quality of teachers and trainers. Accordingly, in 2005 the Commission worked with experts nominated by the member states to produce “Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications”. These were approved at a Testing Conference held in June 2005.

But since the Maastricht Study, if not before, the view persists that in most countries, the professional development of VET teachers is still a question to which no answer or satisfactory response has been formulated.

In 2006 a special “Focus group for VET teachers and trainers” was established, of which TTnet is a member, to provide more targeted support for staff in the vocational sector.

Earlier studies by TTnet on the role of teachers and trainers in quality assurance were incorporated into the proposals for Commission recommendations on the quality of teacher training. To support national strategies for quality assurance in vocational education, TTnet put forward recommendations for political decision-makers, guidelines for training institutions and a charter for trainers as life-long learners.

In the course of two projects, “PROFF – Professionalisation of VET teachers for the future” and “Identification and validation of non-formal learning for VET teachers and trainers”, recommendations have been developed for VET practice and policy in the EU and its member states.

In the framework of the consultation between TTnet and the EU Commission, in which 13 countries – including Germany – are taking part, the “Defining VET professions” project is currently exploring the possibilities of a competence framework for vocational teacher and trainer professional profiles, linked to an EQF.³ Among other objectives,

TTnet, which now consists of 20 national networks, was set up by Cedefop in 1998 as a European forum for key actors and decision-makers with responsibility for teachers and trainers in the vocational sector.

TTnet promotes the sharing, development and dissemination of knowledge on key issues in the training and professional development of vocational teaching and training staff.

TTnet does not provide training itself, but aims to stimulate discussion, create synergies and develop innovative strategic concepts.

Through its transnational European forums, projects and studies, TTnet makes an important contribution to the European reference framework for teachers and trainers, and is also involved in the Commission's technical working groups on vocational education and training.

TTnet works on three levels: the national, transnational and European Community level. At Community level, TTnet provides logistical and academic support to the national networks, stages workshops and annual conferences, organises projects on specific themes and transversal studies.

At transnational level, groups of TTnet member countries work together on projects addressing themes of special interest to them.

the initiative aims to create transparency and better understanding of the competences and qualifications of trainers and vocational school teachers, as well as a possible joint reference framework for (recognised) qualifications and competences to support the professional development of vocational sector trainers and teachers.

The national networks

In terms of the conception of TTnet, the national networks are intended to be representative national forums composed of the actors involved in the training and upgrading of vocational teaching and training staff. The members include political decision-makers, associations, the social partners, public authorities, training organisations, enterprises, research institutions and experts, universities and documentation centres.

National coordinators have a dual function. On the one hand, they form the interface with the EU-level of the network and pass on findings which could be relevant to transversal themes. On the other hand, at national level their role is to monitor and promote discussion of developments on priority issues for teachers and trainers in their country, and to identify, evaluate and disseminate innovative methods and solutions.

The principal methods used are workshops, seminars and expert conferences. Additionally, at European level, the work involves organising and instigating thematic projects and transversal studies, and collecting and disseminating examples of good practice. Within the network, the actors and experts reach agreement on how to tackle key themes in the training of vocational teaching and training staff. They develop problem-solving approaches and strategic concepts.

The network community acts as a source of advisory expertise for cooperation initiatives between different partners on the training of vocational teachers and trainers. An internal survey of national TTnet networks resulted in the following findings:⁴ Most national networks are balanced in their composition, but greater participation from the private sector would be desirable. The priorities for most national networks revolve around the development of competence standards for

vocational teachers and trainers, efforts to raise qualification levels, recognition of informal learning and quality assurance for teaching staff, support for training staff in SMEs, and the role of trainers in continuing education and lifelong learning.

It is hoped that the presence of policy experts and top-level national organisations in the network will ensure linkages with national strategies. Often, however, higher value is attached to indirect influence via the European level/Cedefop than direct influence through the national network. In general, the national TTnet networks see themselves in a bridging role between IVET and CVET practice and political decision-makers.

Problematic areas for many TTnet networks are their (very) limited resources for network activities, and achieving the desired outreach to the wider community of teachers and trainers. In general the coordinator carries the major part of the load.

TTnet Germany – TTnetDE

At the end of 2005, Germany became a member with its own network, “TTnetDE – Network for innovation in the training of teachers and trainers in vocational education and training”. The national coordinator is based at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB).

The German section of the Training of Trainers network, TTnet Germany (*TTnet Deutschland*, TTnetDE) was officially launched by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training and Cedefop on 3.11.2005 at the Agora Conference on “New challenges for teachers and trainers in VET” in Berlin. This event was also attended by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, the German Employers’ Organisation for Vocational Training (KWB), the German Federation of Trade Unions (DGB), and the national associations of vocational school teachers, Bundesverband der Lehrerinnen und Lehrer an beruflichen Schulen (BLBS) and vocational trainers, Bundesverband Deutscher Berufsausbilder (BDBA).

Alongside the European themes at Community level, the key national issues to be taken up by TTnet Germany are the problems faced by staff in cooperating between two learning venues under the dual system, and the new training needs arising from innovative training regulations, with a particular focus on process-oriented vocational training and new forms of examinations. An especially important aspect, and this applies to almost every TTnet network in Europe, is the issue of teacher and trainer participation in innovative developments in CVET and lifelong learning in Germany. It has become apparent, however, that European issues tend to dominate the current debate. The reori-

Notes

- 1 Cedefop: *Centre Européen pour le Développement de la Formation Professionnelle (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)*. Cedefop aims to assist political decision-makers and practitioners at the European Commission, in the member states and in social partner organisations throughout Europe to make well-founded decisions on questions of vocational education and training policy. Further information at: www.cedefop.europa.eu/
- 2 *Joint Interim Report of the Council and the Commission, Council document 6905/04 of March 2004*
- 3 For further details, see: www.bibb.de/ttnet (in German)
- 4 8th TTnet Annual Conference, Thessaloniki, 8 and 9 December 2005, *Taking stock of TTnet achievements and future developments*, Workshop Paper, Anne de Bliignières, University Paris Dauphine: *Main outcomes of the survey among the TTnet Networks*
- 5 Cf. Schlottau, W.: *Ausbildungspersonal – von der Eignung zur Professionalisierung (Training staff – from aptitude to professionalisation)*. In: BWP 34 (2005) 6, pp. 32–35 (in German)

entation towards employment-oriented bachelor's and master's degrees under the Bologna Process and the resulting impacts upon teacher training are giving rise to considerable uncertainty. Discussions about a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and a German national qualifications framework (NQF) are also taking place intensively in relation to vocational teaching and training staff.

Germany's relatively recent (renewed) membership of the "Training of Trainers network" may partly explain the limited knowledge in Germany of TTnet's European quality references for teaching and training staff, for e-learning and for the recognition of informally acquired competences, and the fact that these have been overlooked or even discussed in adverse terms. By the same token, specifically "German" aspects have not been incorporated into developments at European level.⁵ Over and above the official programmes, TTnetDE is increasingly becoming involved in bilateral and multinational cooperation, e.g. with Denmark, France and Belgium.

Summary and outlook

TTnet can be characterised by highlighting some of its salient features:

Among its objectives:

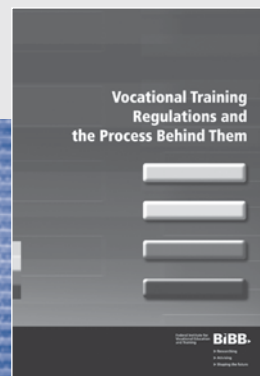
To initiate and promote innovation for the purposes of quality improvement and assurance;
To Europeanise the national debate and prepare the way for a European policy framework.

Among its structures:

The conception of the network is very ambitious. The networks are meant to extend vertically from political decision-makers and top-level national organisations to committed front-line practitioners, and horizontally to encompass the widest diversity of public and private sector actors. The actual composition is not always satisfactory, and the same can be said regarding the agreement of practical and political-strategic orientations. At national level the network has a very much more pronounced focus on vocational practice. Here, above all, national vocational education initiatives could be brought to fruition even without reference to the Community context. An equally crucial aspect (again, not without its problems) is the network's insistence on an all-inclusive perspective, encompassing teaching and training staff in different types of learning venue and different contexts.

Contexts do differ, governed by the different characterising principles of national vocational education and training systems – be they (public) school-based, dual, or

market led. It depends on the dominant location of vocational training within the education system and the labour market how strongly the aspects of lifelong learning and continuing education and their respective institutions (France, Spain, Italy, Belgium) are represented. Whilst on the one hand the experience drawn from this source must be contextualised, on the other hand there are opportunities for transnational innovation-transfer in respect of Germany's need for greater crossover between initial vocational training and continuing vocational education and training. ■



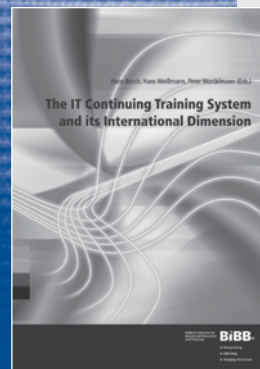
Vocational Training Regulations and the Process Behind Them

The German government uses laws and regulations to regulate the legal framework for vocational training in the "dual" vocational training system. Legal provisions that outline the aims and content of and examination requirements for in-company training are training regulations.

The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training prepares the content of training regulations for the government.

This brochure contains information about the process involved in developing training regulations and offers an overview of materials and aids that BIBB can provide for implementing training regulations in day-to-day practice.

BIBB 2006, ISBN 3-88555-792-4, 33 pages, free of charge, Order from Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB) D-53142 Bonn, e-mail: vertrieb@bibb.de



Hans Borch, Hans Weißmann, Peter Wordeleimann (Ed.)

The IT Continuing Training System and its International Dimension

This volume examines the IT continuing training system and uses comparisons with the French, Danish and Dutch systems. A presentation is provided of the various activities of EU institutions, specialist associations and organisations dealing with IT continuing training at a European level. This results in the identification of pertinent points relating to current vocational policy debate centring on "enhanced competence orientation", "certification of informal learning" and "institutionalisation of lifelong learning". Will the future bring competition between vocational education and training and higher education or will there be a greater level of permeability? What is the value of national qualifications within Europe?

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