

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO VET REFORM PROGRAMME



From Vranje to Subotica, from Zajecar to Novi Pazar, the last few months have seen a flurry of activity under the CARDS project, as more and more schools get further involved in the Reform of VET across Serbia. An extensive programme of trainings and dissemination meetings has brought together teachers, school directors, employers and local community representatives from all over the country. And as we speak and listen to each other, one thing is becoming clear above all others - VET Reform is a success! Those schools currently involved are showing positive results for all involved. Students enjoy their studies more, and their performance, attendance and behaviour is improved. Teachers get to work in more effective and innovative ways, and as a result increase their professionalism. Employers benefit from young people who really can perform effectively at work, and who have the skills, knowledge and attitudes which prepare them for the future. These are exciting and rewarding times for Vocational Education and Training in Serbia, and we should all be proud of our many achievements!

Given the above, we might be tempted to ease up on our efforts, after all what more is left to do? The answer (as I'm sure you may already suspect!) is that there is still a long

way to go. Whilst many schools are involved in the benefits of the Reform, they still only cover 10% of the school population. Our challenge then is clear - to ensure that all young people benefit from a relevant and effective education. What is also clear is how we are to meet this challenge - to involve all schools and sectors of the economy. This may seem a daunting task, but in reality much of the preparatory work has already been done. We have an effective system for development of modern curricula, a long track record of training school staff for successful implementation, and are establishing mechanisms with the Ministry of Education and their Pedagogical Advisors for monitoring and quality assurance.

Following the work of the past 5 years, VET Reform is now ready for perhaps its most important phase. We have a clear view of what needs doing and why, what we now need to do is to accelerate dissemination. With 80,000 young people entering VET schools each year, our decisions and actions can profoundly affect the lives of so many. We should all therefore redouble our efforts, and dedicate ourselves to ensuring that they get the best education we can offer. Our work is just beginning!

Trevor Cook
Team Leader

Additional Support to VET Reform



EUROPEAN WAY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Since September 2008 VET Reform Programme, as well as all other financial and economic assistance programmes to reforms in Serbia, are under the authority of the Delegation of the European Commission. **Mr Pierre Dybman, Head of Sector I, Operations of the Delegation of the European Commission**, has had several months to get to know more about the Project and summarise his first impressions about the VET reform in Serbia.

The scope of interventions is huge, with many issues being tackled during the last five years, yet the inherited programme is well implemented - it is progressing in a way that creates space for further development. We are pleased with the achieved results - says Mr. Dybman. - Different reports show that we are on the right track with regards to the VET reform. We should all be aware that system-level changes are the most difficult to implement, and these remain a challenge for us.

European Union has invested in the VET reform almost 20 million euros in the last five years. Why was it decided to invest in vocational education?

In the past statistics have unveiled a strange feature - in Serbia the biggest percentage of unemployed is not among less educated people, but among those having completed secondary education.

ness for EU accession, thus diminishing unemployment, and creating a skilled workforce and a well developed VET system that includes adult education. The EU has recognised VET reform as an optimal tool to achieve these goals. Investments in VET are, as such, direct investments in the economy by investing in flexible, qualified workers on whom the economy in the future will be based.

How satisfied are you with the results achieved so far within the Programme? Have the invested resources been used in the proper way?

Just think about the numbers! 99 pilot schools, over 4000 trained teachers, pilots recognised as something useful... The project has achieved excellent results on the ground. I am particularly pleased with the dissemination of results that is reflecting the great interest of VET schools into pilot projects. The awareness of the VET schools of the reform process is at an all-time high, and I am glad to hear that the interest in our activities is so wide-spread within the VET schools, their management and students. Schools are satisfied with pilots, as are employers who hire students.

How important is it for Serbia (aspiring towards EU membership) to have VET reform implemented quickly and effectively?

Taking into account the Lisbon agenda and the idea of having the European workforce a skillful and competitive one, we should recognise that the VET reform is an important precondition for Serbian



accession. The whole idea of the European Union is based on equality of all members, and Serbia has to reach European standards in all areas. It is not easy - the gap of 10 or 15 years is not easy to overcome quickly, but the pace of this reforms could be significantly accelerated by the implementation of the future projects in this field, and we rely also on the commitment of the Ministry of Education in this respect.

Will and if so, in what way the support to the VET be given in the years to come?

Yes, through the IPA funds. The EC Delegation together with the Ministry of Education has taken the initiative to launch as soon as possible the IPA 2007 Support to VET project, worth 4 million euros. It is an ambitious project, and aims at a broad and thorough VET system reform. We expect that through this new project, MoE will start to implement pilots into the entire VET system, which will be a huge step forward. The EU has provided funds for projects - opportunities are created and they are numerous, now it is up to the Ministry of Education to use them wisely.



It clearly demonstrated that the VET curricula did not always provide students with the skills necessary for the labour market. The ultimate goal of EU assistance is to contribute to Serbian readi-

MENTORS AND ASSOCIATES

The fourth seminar for Pedagogical Advisors from 15 Regional School Departments of the Ministry of Education was organised in Belgrade in the middle of December. The Pedagogical Advisors that are to monitor the work of pilot classes in vocational schools attended the seminar.

According to the law, monitoring and evaluation are carried out by the Institute for the Improvement of Education and Pedagogical Advisors. In order to have the Pedagogical Advisors prepared to monitor the curricula completely different from classical ones, the VET Reform Programme organised training courses for them during Phase II. Introductory seminars were informative - the Advisors became familiar with the method in which curricula and occupational standards were developed, with outcome-based curricula and their implementation through which students acquire necessary competencies. After this, they were informed about the ways in which teachers independently prepare teaching materials as well as with the instructions they received for assessing outcomes in vocational education. When the Pedagogical Advisors received all the information, they were given the task - to develop, on their own, the Protocol for monitoring pilots.

"The Protocols define indicators and ways of monitoring implementation of pilot curricula which enables uniformity of approach of Pedagogical Advisors in the process of monitoring and brings planning of educational process in focus", says Lise Wichmann, Expert in Curriculum Development and Implementation who has been working with the Pedagogical Advisors from the very

beginning of the training. At the last meeting we received feedback on the Protocol and its application in the schools visited by the Advisors. It was planned that the final version of the Protocol should be made by February and afterwards sent to the Ministry of Education for adoption.

The Protocol defines what should be taken as sources and evidence for the levels of accomplishment of indicators - data from pedagogical documentation and records, information obtained during conversation with teachers, during lessons - theory, practice or exercises, through conversation or questionnaires with students, etc.

The first reports of the Pedagogical Advisors on the work in the pilot schools are positive, especially regarding the quality of teachers' work and participation of students in lessons. On the other hand, the teachers are also satisfied with the cooperation established in the past months with the Pedagogical Advisors who, now being acquainted with new methods of work, can completely fulfil their roles of mentors and associates.



REGIONAL DISSEMINATION MEETINGS

"How can we apply for pilots?", "What criteria do we have to meet in order to get pilots?" - these were the two most commonly asked questions during the regional dissemination meetings organised by the VET Reform Programme in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.



During October and November 12 meetings were held, and representatives of schools which haven't been included in the Programme so far, of local self-governments and social partners were invited. The aim was to present the results achieved

so far to the participants, and to talk about these results from the point of view of economy, students and teachers and institutions involved in the reform process.

The participants were mostly interested in their colleagues' presentations - directors and teachers from the pilot schools in which pilot curricula have already been implemented - who were openly talking about their experiences with the pilot curricula and the reform in the past years.

"It was not easy at the beginning. The resistance from the colleagues' side was very strong. We worked hard, but now we see that we have gained so much and that all this efforts has paid off. Students gladly enter the pilot classes that once were unattractive profiles, they attend lessons more regularly than they used to, have better marks and the teachers are more motivated to work. If you have an opportunity, my advice is certainly to try to get a pilot", said Ljiljana Brašovan, the director of Mechanical School at the meeting in Pančevo.



One of the criteria for getting a pilot, as the representative of the Ministry of Education stated, is that the staff in the schools applying for pilots have to attend training courses for pilot curricula implementation. Even though 76 schools, instead of 60 originally planned, have been included in this phase of the VET Reform Programme, it was still offered to all the schools that participated in the meetings to take part in the training courses that will be organised in summer 2009.

WELCOME TO ADULT EDUCATION!

By establishing Regional Training Centres (RTCs) for continuous adult education at five secondary vocational schools in Serbia the VET Reform Programme covered part of the system and practice of adult education. The work on establishing RTCs as specialised teaching and organisational units for vocational education, qualifying and adult training started in November 2003 - since then the RTCs have been working in unbroken continuity.

It is quite understandable that priorities have been changing during these five years depending on the stages of the RTCs' development. At the beginning the emphasis was on training courses for teachers and school management for different segments of work related to adult training courses delivery and work with adult participants, gaining the right to additional activities for adult education, labour market needs analysis and development of outcomebased modules for short training courses for adults, preparation of school premises for adult participants, social partnership development and 'sale' and delivery of first training courses.

Regional Training Centres for Adults were formed at five VET schools: Building and Construction School 'Neimar' in Nis, Second Technical School in Kragujevac, Technical School in Bor, Chemistry, Technology and Agricultural School 'Uros Predic' in Zrenjanin and Technical School 'New Belgrade' in Belgrade.

During VET Reform Programme - Phase II the RTCs started delivering a larger number of training courses for adults, not as a periodical activity, but as a continuous activity. Training courses delivered determined a new series of priorities in the work with the RTCs among which are: training courses certification, monitoring participants during and after training courses, RTCs networking, making connections between the RTCs and other secondary vocational schools in Serbia for partner training delivery, introduction of quality system in the work of the RTCs etc.

Significant support to the schools within which the RTCs were established was given on September 22, 2006 when the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia gave consent to these schools for carrying out additional activities related to work with adults. Additional activities include: training and professional development of staff for organisation and delivery of training courses for adults, development and distribution of teaching materials for adult training courses, evaluation of knowledge and skills acquired within programmes for which the school was accredited by the relevant organization, delivery of forthcoming training courses for adults, needs analysis for skills and training courses, development of modular programmes, career counselling and career guidance, promotion of continuous adult education, development of social partnership concept and direct organisation and partner delivery of training courses from other sectors.

During the ongoing phase of the VET Reform Programme the RTCs have been working, among other things, on the development of organisational culture, further development of the RTCs through implementation of the so-called 'small projects', time



management (due to the increased scope of work for teachers who work with students during regular lessons as well as with adult participants while delivering training courses), setting up the system of continuous monitoring of participants upon the completion of training courses and introducing pilot adult courses.

What is really important for secondary vocational schools in Serbia is that they also can, depending on the sector, take part in partner delivery of adult training courses with the RTCs, both in pilot training courses and other training courses. Taking into consideration the broadness of adult education there is enough space for numerous institutions to enrich adult education in our country by giving their training offers, thus making it more available to potential participants.

From the beginning of their work up to now the RTCs have delivered around **139 training courses with approximately 2540 participants**. What is really important for the RTCs at this moment is that by the end 2008 they should introduce 40 pilot adult training courses of national importance. Pilot status is one more way of turning the RTCs' project activities into system activities.

Aleksandra Pejatovic

Educational Fair in Novi Sad

The most beautiful flower arrangements, carved boxes, modern multipurpose shelves, Tesla's egg, colourful marbles, a variety of delicacies, favourite songs written in an unusual alphabet, visitors' portraits - a real diversity of colours could be seen at the stand of the VET Reform Programme. Those taking a closer look realised that hard work was actually taking place here, just like in school, followed by laughter, but also by the suggestions the teachers were giving to the students - participants, but also to the visitors.

During the three days at the International Educational Fair 'Pathways', held in Novi Sad December 4 - December 6, five pilot schools - Technical School and Polytechnical School from Subotica, Technical School 'Drvoart' from Belgrade, Food Processing and Forestry School from Sremska Mitrovica and Secondary School 'Svetozar Miletic' from Novi Sad - presented themselves at the stand of the Programme.

As in previous years, the idea was that students and teachers - those who have the most important role in the reform - present reform activities and new pilot profiles. During the three days over 6,000 visitors of 'Pathways' had the opportunity to see the stand of the Programme. As expected, people from Novi Sad expressed the greatest interest in the presentations of Secondary School 'Svetozar Miletic' whose students and teachers patiently gave answers to all the questions of future secondary school students and their parents about pilot curricula and methods of work in pilot classes.



Completion of School Building Works

During the past two years VET Reform Programme supported implementation of 'School Upgrading Project' within which under a loan of the European Investment Bank eight new schools were being built in Serbia. Within the Project 7 school buildings have been completed so far (5 elementary and 2 secondary schools), and it is expected that the construction works of the eighth school in Novi Pazar will be completed by the middle of March 2009. As the representatives of the Ministry of Education stated, the schools should also be fully equipped by the beginning of the new school year waiting readily for students.



New elementary schools are built in Subotica, Novi Sad, Stara Pazova, Zemun and Smederevo.

New Group of Schools (C8) Formed

After regional dissemination meetings 7 schools have made requests to the VET Reform Programme to be included in the training courses. That is why, along with the existing groups of schools, Group C8 has been formed. The same instructions as those given to the schools included in the project from the very beginning, from June 2008, apply to these schools.

More information about the dates of training courses will be available on the Programme website (www.vetserbia.edu.rs) at the beginning of 2009.



Three medical schools are built in Kraljevo, Vranje and Novi Pazar.

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