



Department  
for Education

**Consultation Response Form**

**Consultation closing date: 30 June 2014**  
**Your comments must reach us by that date**

## **REVIEW OF THE BALANCE OF COMPETENCES**

### **CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S REVIEW OF THE BALANCE OF COMPETENCES BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE EUROPEAN UNION**

### **EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND YOUTH**

**If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>**

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

<b>Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.</b>	
Reason for confidentiality:	

Name: Geoffrey Scaplehorn	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	√
Name of Organisation (if applicable): European Forum for Vocational Education and Training (EfVET)	
Address: c/o Beechwood Farm, Grangehill Road, Tydd St Giles, Wisbech Cambridgeshire, PE13 5NP	

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUESTIONS**

### **General Issues**

1 Does EU action, as opposed to national government action, in the areas of education and vocational training generally benefit or disadvantage the UK? Can you point us to any published evidence or analysis in support of your view?

Comments: EU action in the areas of vocational education and training has been extremely beneficial to the UK. Unfortunately in recent years the government ministers have not participated sufficiently actively in the Education Councils, therefore having negligible influence on the development of policies and initiatives. The Copenhagen Process

#### **The Bruges Communiqué**

##### **2011-2020 objectives**

**Several strategic objectives to be achieved by 2020 are defined. Each of them is accompanied by short-term deliverables (2011-2014) to be pursued at national level, together with details of the support provided by the European Union (EU) to achieve them. Six strategic objectives have been identified, namely:**

- making initial VET an attractive learning option. In the short term, national authorities are requested to promote the attractiveness of VET, but also to support activities which enable students to become acquainted with the different vocational trades and career possibilities available.
- fostering the excellence, quality and relevance of VET to the labour market. Between 2011 and 2014, progress must be made in establishing [national quality assurance frameworks](#). Cooperation between VET institutions and enterprises must also be strengthened, particularly by organising traineeships for teachers in enterprises. VET institutions should receive feedback on the employability of their graduates.
- enabling flexible access to training and qualifications. At national level and in the short term, it will be necessary to review the use of incentives for participating in VET and the

rights and obligations of the stakeholders involved. National authorities should also take appropriate measures to encourage participation in continuing VET. Referencing between the levels of the [European Qualifications Framework](#) and those of the national frameworks should be established by 2012.

- encouraging international mobility in VET. To do so, Member States should specifically encourage students and professionals to participate in a mobility programme, and also encourage local and regional authorities and VET institutions to develop internationalisation strategies. Language learning should be integrated into curricula.
- promoting innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, and the use of new technologies. At national level, partnerships between VET institutions, higher education establishments, and design, art, research and innovation centres should be encouraged. VET institutions should be provided with the necessary equipment in terms of new technologies. Promoting practical experience should also encourage entrepreneurship.
- making VET accessible to all, in particular by improving its contribution to tackling early school leaving. The participation of low-skilled and other 'at risk' groups should be encouraged through the use of appropriate guidance and support services, new technologies, and existing monitoring systems.

**The Council also defines four transversal objectives:**

- increasing the involvement of VET stakeholders and making the results obtained through European cooperation better known;
- coordinating the governance of European and national instruments in the areas of transparency, recognition, quality assurance and mobility;
- intensifying cooperation between VET policy and other relevant policy areas;
- improving the quality and comparability of data for EU policy-making in VET; making good use of EU support.

## **Rethinking Education**

There needs to be a much stronger focus on developing **transversal skills and basic skills** at all levels. This applies especially to entrepreneurial and IT skills.

- A new **benchmark on foreign language learning**: by 2020, at least 50% of 15 year olds should have knowledge of a first foreign language (up from 42% today) and at least 75% should study a second foreign language (61% today).
- Investment is needed to build **world-class vocational education and training systems** and increase levels of work-based learning.
- Member States need to **improve the recognition** of qualifications and skills, including those gained outside of the formal education and training system.
- **Technology**, in particular the internet, must be fully exploited. Schools, universities and vocational and training institutions must increase access to education via open educational resources.
- These reforms must be supported by well-trained, motivated and entrepreneurial **teachers**.
- Funding needs to be targeted to maximise the return on investment. Debate at both national and EU level is needed on **funding for education** - especially in vocational education and higher education.

- A **partnership approach** is critical. Both public and private funding is necessary to boost innovation and increase cross-fertilisation between academia and business.

EfVET was consulted on the drafting of the Bruges Communiqué and provided evidence of the need for the main priorities. EfVET also was consulted on the drafting of Rethinking Education series of documents

The current UK Government has done so little to promote these policies and documents within the UK.

2 Are there any specific EU activities in the areas of education and training that you consider particularly beneficial or particularly disadvantageous to the UK?

Comments: Most beneficial to the UK are the following

The European Qualification Framework to which the UK Qualification Credit Framework (QCF) was referenced in 2010 is a major initiative to speed up the real recognition of qualifications across Europe. The QCF developed systems of Learning Outcomes for all curriculum areas and qualifications with credit points for units of learning. In fact with a few other countries, the UK influenced the European Commission to establish the EQF Monitoring Group and encourage all EU States to establish National Qualifications Frameworks and then present to the EQF Monitoring Group a strategy to reference the National Qualifications Frameworks to the EQF. Hitherto some 26 European States have referenced their NQFs to the EQF and all countries will complete this process by early 2015.

**I represent Civil Society on the EQF Advisory Group.**

ECVET is another initiative which is being developed to benefit the mobility of employees and students.

EQAVET describes Quality Assurance criteria (influenced by the UK QA structures) and is to create a common Quality Assurance standards for VET and other education sectors.

Again, unfortunately the current government has done little to promote these positive initiatives developed by the European Union.

Until the Conference organised in Birmingham in February 2014, the UK National Coordinating Points (NCPs – financed by the European Commission) so again few in the VET world and beyond know anything of these positive initiatives.

3 Do you think the EU, as opposed to national government, should do more or less in relation to education and training? If so, where and why?

Comments: The EU is leading in the development of VET as most Member States regard VET as having a quality status as a sector of education and training. Unfortunately the current UK governments had condemned proven quality VET qualifications. In England, in particular, the misguided obsession to force all to achieve a high grade in GCSEs has led to the withdrawal of some 3500 VET qualifications from the list, which attract “performance points” in schools and a reduction in funding for many VET qualifications in the Further Education sector. The Tech Levels suggested to replace them are slow in development and will not attract candidates in sufficient numbers or be competitive with VET qualifications in other EU states.

4 What other areas of EU competence or activity have an impact on education and training in your sector and how?

Comments:  
The EU funding programmes, previous to ERASMUS+ have led to the development of excellent learning resources in all VET areas and enabled teachers and education leaders to exchange experience and expertise.  
Through the Leonardo VETPRO Mobility programme, many UK teachers have been exposed to different teaching and learning methodologies in most EU states.

5 What challenges or opportunities are there for the UK in further EU action on education?

Comments:

The UK needs to develop processes and procedures to achieve **in full** the strategic objectives of the Bruges Communiqué.

Also work on the wide implementation of the “Rethinking Education” proposals in order to bring the quality of UK VET up to the standards widespread throughout the EU.

6 What international bodies or arrangements other than the EU are important to education and training in the UK? How does your experience of dealing with them compare with the EU's activity in this sphere?

Comments:

I have worked with the Council of Europe

I have also spent seven years, linking FE colleges in the East Midlands with VET institutions in Chongqing and Sichuan in China. There are obviously aspects of VET in which the UK and China can share experience and expertise, but not at the expense of contacts with the EU which are much easier to forge and develop than with more distant countries.

### The Programmes

7 For the specific programmes which are funded and managed via the EU (such as Erasmus or Leonardo), what are the benefits or disadvantages of having EU rather than national responsibility and funding for these activities?

Comments: The benefits of partnership in EU programmes is far more beneficial than working in the UK regional or national areas. Exchanging expertise and experiences with other VET cultures is invaluable. As important is the challenge of explaining and describing the current UK VET structure and learning methodologies to a colleague in another country and perhaps reflecting seriously on the effectiveness of those existing systems which could be enhanced with ideas drawn from another country's systems.

Of course with the recent reduction in UK project funding and the closure of VET development agencies, the finance which the EU offers is an obvious substitute.

8 Can you point to evidence which shows that language learning has improved through participation in the programmes?

Comments:

I cannot honestly say that UK participants in mobility projects have gained much improvement in foreign language competence.

With the removal of "performance points" allocated to NVQ Languages in schools, there is a drastic decline in students continuing with language learning as achievement of quality grades in GCSE for many is totally unrealistic and so many are giving up languages completely and being encouraged to improve their English and Mathematics!

Language learning in Further Education Colleges has virtually disappeared! This lack of competence in languages continues to act as a barrier to VET students to participate in European mobility, but more importantly making them less qualified for future employment than their counterparts in other European countries. Report after report in the UK illustrates the language crisis in the UK – most importantly that the UK is losing as much as £21 billion per annum because UK export companies do not have the appropriate linguistic skills in their employees.

9 How would you describe the costs and benefits to your organisation of participating in the programmes?



Comments:

Obviously VET colleges gain from EU funding, although the funds obtained do not always cover all costs and require some subsidisation from College income. Also the varying rates of exchange of the Euro can affect the amount of any surplus achieved.

#### Policy Coordination

10 Have you noticed any change in EU activity or emphasis since the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon and the introduction of Europe 2020, and, if so, where has this manifested itself and in what ways? Have these changes been helpful or unhelpful?

Comments:

As above, the Bruges Communiqué and the “Rethinking Education” proposals illustrate the developments of emphasis since the Treaty of Lisbon.

11 Is it appropriate that Europe 2020 focusses on early school leaving and the completion of tertiary education?

Comments:

These are two priorities for achievement in many European states where NEETs are a big challenge. There is an urgent need to make course more relevant to the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In the UK we are assured that there is a significant reduction in the number of NEETs in recent times, but there remains much to do in this regard.

As important is the need to enhance the reputation of VET throughout the UK.

12 Has the adoption of EU education policy frameworks or Council Recommendations had any impact on your sector?

Comments:

Little because the awareness and understanding of the EU initiatives has not been disseminated widely throughout the UK VET sector. The expanded document which accompanies this review consultation should have been circulated throughout the UK to inform all citizens of these important EU developments

13 How does policy cooperation on education in the EU compare with other organisations, for example the OECD?

Comments: This cooperation with the EU should be and is far more valuable and essential than that with the OECD.  
In fact the OECD is watching developments in Europe very closely.  
There are many global countries and regional consortia of countries developing National Qualification Frameworks comprising qualifications based on the Learning Outcomes concept.  
Already some countries (Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong) have expressed intentions to negotiate the referencing of their Frameworks to the European Qualification Framework, thus facilitating mobility of labour throughout the globe.  
Other countries will increasingly wish to replicate these actions.

14 Can you point to examples of reform in national policy which have resulted from EU co-operation in education and training?

Comments:

Only in referencing the QCF to the EQF, although the current government are considering revising the QCF!

15 How would you assess the costs and benefits to policy makers of participation in education policy cooperation at EU level?

Comments: Highly valuable to policy maker sin the UK if they would temper their arrogance and accept that there are many positive developments emerging from EU cooperation.

## **YOUTH QUESTIONS**

### **General Issues**

16 What evidence is there that EU action in the area of Youth benefits or disadvantages the UK?

Comments:

17 Do you think the EU should do more, or less, in relation to Youth, and why?

Comments:

18 Do you think the EU focuses on the right aims and priorities in the Youth field?

Comments:

19 Have you noticed any change in EU activity or emphasis since the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon and the introduction of Europe 2020, and, if so, where has this manifested itself and in what ways? Have these changes been helpful or unhelpful?

Comments:

20 Has the adoption of the Structured Dialogue had any impact on your sector?

Comments:

21 What other areas of EU competence or activity have an impact on your sector and how?

Comments:

22 What international bodies or arrangements are important to your sector beyond the EU?

Comments:

23 Has the EU had an impact on young people's opportunities to have a voice in policy and decision making, or on organisations' work to involve young people in shaping services?

Comments:

24 Has the EU had an impact on young people's social inclusion in the UK?

Comments:

### Youth Programmes

25 What are the benefits or disadvantages of having EU rather than national funding for activities under the Youth Programme?



Comments:

26 What do you think about the criteria and conditions set by the EU for applying for and receiving funding?

Comments:

27 What do you think about the aims and activities of Erasmus+ in comparison to the Youth in Action programme?

Comments:

28 Any other comments?

Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

**Please acknowledge this reply.**

X

E-mail address for acknowledgement:scaplehorn@scaplehorn.eu

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
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All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- departments should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Aileen Shaw, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: [aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 30 June 2014

Send by post to:

International Education Division, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

Send by e-mail to: [BalanceofCompetence.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:BalanceofCompetence.consultation@education.gsi.gov.uk).