

Agreement on VET between the Social Partners in Albania

Social Partners in Albania, consisting of:

The **Government of Albania**, represented by:

- **Ministry of Education and Sciences**
- **Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities**

Hereafter: **government delegation**

Employers Organisations, represented by:

- **Confederation of Employers Councils**
- **SME Confederation**
- **Construction Association**

Hereafter: **employers' delegation**

Trade Unions, represented by:

- **Union of Independent Trade Unions of Albania**
- **Trade Union Confederation of Albania**

Hereafter: **unions' delegation**

Have agreed upon the initial considerations, outline, responsibilities, governing structure and actions for the development of Vocational Education and Training in Albania.

Considerations

Social Partners have taken into consideration:

- That education and training are an important element of the backbone for the development of Albania's economy
- That Albania is facing challenges in becoming competitive on European and global markets
- That Albania's current economic developments, in terms of
 - National Income
 - The level of unemployment
 - The participation rate on the labour market
 - The level of Foreign Direct Investments

are reasons for concern

- That these concerns have increased due to the (threat of a) world economic crisis
- That this challenge calls for all social partners to unite their efforts where reasonably possible
- That these efforts should firstly be directed towards structural strengthening of the economic conditions
- That the development of human resources is an essential condition for economic competitiveness and attractiveness, of which vocational training and education is a crucial element
- That Social Partners therefore have agreed to jointly start the process of further renewal and development of Vocational Education and Training (VET)
- That Social Partners in this respect have identified their responsibilities, taking into account the current economic challenges
- That Social Partners have identified the areas and actions to be undertaken in VET, contributing to the structural strengthening of Albania's economic position.

Outline of a renewed VET system

The main goal of Social Partners is to establish systems, resources and services for VET that meet the needs of the labour market and serve the ambitions for economic development.

This joint ambition is firmly funded in the matching and complementary interest positions of the different delegations:

The **Government delegation's** main interests in social partnership are related to:

- Conditions for effective economic development and employment growth
- Assuring quality of the VET system in involving business life.
- Creating commitment for VET policies with operational cooperation in return.

The **Employers delegation's** main interests in this level are:

- Access to the connection between (internationally) competitive businesses and education. (system level)
- Upgrading the conditions for business development by better-qualified staff (operational level).

The **Unions delegation's** main interests in this involvement are:

- Upgrading competitiveness offers better conditions for sustainable employment – counteracts unemployment.
- More qualified workers that strengthen the capacities of enterprises and provide better conditions for collective bargaining.

Based on the above-described ambition and their interest positions, the delegations will build a new future for their involvement and cooperation in VET.

Social Partners are aware that success can only be accomplished if the focus of the partnership is set on the **outputs of the VET system**:

- How many people with what qualifications in vocational education in which regions does the market need?
- What is the level of replacement vacancies and what labour market trends are relevant for VET?
- What kind of vocational trainings for how many people in which regions does the market need?
- Where are what skills shortages and/or demands?
- How many apprenticeships in what educational programmes are necessary? What can the market offer?

Furthermore the partnership entails a general commitment finding agreement on necessary **provisions** for the system:

- What kinds of stimulation measures are necessary? (For instance: targeted Funds for VET, tax exemptions, subsidised labour, allowances, campaigns)
- What kinds of infrastructural measures are necessary? (Cooperation VET-providers, NES, LM surveys, support employers)

Social Partners will also consider **Cross related** issues:

- Will Life Long Learning issues also be given attention in policies related to collective bargaining agreements?
- Could research to the possibilities and function of – private financed - sector funds for employability be considered?

Social Partners all agree that systems providing answers to the questions related to the VET outputs should come available and that it should be build up from the sector -, regional -, local -, enterprise – and school/centre levels to the national level.

In this respect labour market information and labour market analyses are an essential instrument to identify the outputs. Social Partners, specifically the government and the employers' delegations, have agreed to jointly develop these analysis, where possible making use of the National Employment Service.

Responsibilities of social partners

Social Partners have agreed upon the set of joint responsibilities for the social partnership on national, sector, regional and school/centre level.

Social partners see the necessity to introduce and recognise economic sectors and sector involvement in VET. This is a challenge since tripartite social partnership on sector level does not exist in Albania. It is also an opportunity because European experiences indicate that sector level

involvement is most functional in a responsive VET contributing to Albania's competitiveness.

Social Partners also agree that – within the policies framework on national level – regional / sector / local levels should be able to make their decisions about the use of capacity and funds. This could lead to decentralisation of responsibilities and budget to the regional/sector levels.

Social Partners have identified the following responsibilities on **national level**:

- VET related policies:
 - The function of VET in increasing competitiveness of businesses
 - (Increasing) responsiveness of the VET system to market needs
 - Links with employment policy
 - Links with economic policies and economic development
 - Incorporating policies related to the Attraction Foreign Direct Investments
- Guidance and development of the VET system:
 - Developing the national level of education (education standards)
 - International recognition
 - Framework for Skills Needs Analyses system & procedures
 - Albanian Qualification Framework
 - Assessment procedures
 - Links with Occupational Standards
 - Framework for Curricula Development system
 - Systems for Labour Market Analyses (linked with the labour market information system)
 - Governing structure of VET

Responsibilities of **sector levels** would be mostly related to:

- Occupational Standards
- Skills needs and gaps analyses
- Curriculum development
- Training arrangements and facilities
- Qualification standards and (organisation) of examination

Responsibilities on the **regional and VET school/centre levels** are much more related to operational aspects:

- Involvement of the partners, in particular the employers in contributing to labour market analyses

- Identifying trends in the areas of technology, product development and market in their meaning for future demand
- Translating labour market analyses to needs for educational and training programmes.
- Considering the practical role of VET in dealing with unemployment, participation and upgrading informal businesses to the formal sector.
- Practical Public-Private-Partnerships in training needs and programmes.

Partners are aware that, in order to deal with these responsibilities, systems and infrastructure will have to be made ready and / or tailored.

Social Partners have agreed that the Albanian Qualification Framework serves as the basis for the VET system; the guiding principles of the AQF are:

The AQF will organise Albanian qualifications in a structure of eight levels aligned to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This will make it easier for Albanian citizens with education and training qualifications to gain employment in other countries. It will also assist Albanian companies with qualified employees to win international contracts.

All qualifications will be subject to a quality checking process before being registered in the AQF. This will ensure that qualifications are up-to-date, relevant to the needs of the labour market and in line with international standards. It will also ensure that social partners and other relevant stakeholders are involved in the development of standards and qualifications.

All assessment leading to the award of AQF qualifications will be subject to external quality assurance. This will ensure the consistent application of national standards and promote public confidence in the quality and reliability of qualifications.

All education and training institutions offering AQF qualifications will be subject to some form of accreditation or academic audit to ensure that they meet certain minimum standards in respect of physical and human resources, systems and procedures. This will eliminate unacceptable differences in quality across the country.

Finally, the AQF will develop learning pathways and systems of credit accumulation and transfer which will make it easier for people to progress in education and training to the highest level of which they are capable. It will make the education and training system more flexible and encourage adult learning.

AQF Principles

The validation of qualifications (or “accreditation of programmes”)¹ for inclusion in the AQF, institutional accreditation, the quality assurance of

¹ A qualification is achieved when a competent body determines that an individual's learning has reached a specified standard of knowledge, skills and wider competences and this applies in all sectors. In this sense the Matura, the different cycles of qualifications in higher education and the qualifications achieved in vocational contexts are all qualifications. However the processes used in general and higher education focus as much on the learning programme which will lead to this outcome and the term “programme” is used to describe this focus. The validation of qualifications and the accreditation of programmes are similar processes and share a core set of criteria which are central to the AQF.

assessment for qualifications and the awarding of qualifications in the AQF will be carried out according to principles agreed between the AQF Council and the main implementation institutions for all qualifications in the AQF.

The main implementation institutions working within these general principles will set procedures for the main AQF functions. The actual approaches taken to each of the three functions for each of the categories of qualification may vary according to the sector and type of qualification (see below). The AQF Unit will monitor this work.

For qualifications (and programmes), the principles will ensure that the needs of society and the economy are met and that qualifications and programmes are designed in ways that ensure that learners can achieve qualifications regardless of the place, pace and mode of learning.

For assessment, the principles will secure the flexibility required by the AQF, including principles for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and arrangements for candidates with particular needs.

For the awarding of qualifications and the issue of certificates, the principles will secure the quality of the process and content of AQF-based qualifications and certificates.

AQF Functions

- Accreditation of institutions and organisations to deliver programmes leading to AQF qualifications and assess candidates (institutional accreditation);
- Development, validation and maintenance of standards and qualifications and their registration in the framework
- Quality assurance of the assessment of candidates;
- Certification of successful candidates;
- Overall management and quality assurance of the Framework.

Beyond the AQF

Though the AQF is an important step in the development process for VET reform, most of the operational instruments and infrastructure are not yet available. In particular the following issues need further development:

On the level of **information**:

- Establishment and special surveys
- Demographic and Labour Market statistics
- Sector Skills plans

On the level of **systems**:

- VET needs

- Occupational Standards
- Curriculum Standards
- Recognition of Prior Learning
- Assessment policies and procedures
- Procedures for certification

On the level of **infrastructure**:

- Cooperation between the different tripartite levels and the relevant public institutions
- The cooperation between the VET Agency and the NES
- The cooperation between national VET institutions, NES and INSTAT
- Cooperation and coordination between the VET council, the regional VET advisory committees, the sector VET advisory committees and the VET school and VET centre boards
- The cooperation between the VET Agency, the VET schools and the VET centres
- The cooperation between VET providers and Employment Offices
- The tasks, role of – and cooperation and distinction between - VET schools and VET centres

Structure of the partnership

As indicated before, Social Partners see a need to consider four levels of social partnership:

On the level of **VET schools and VET centres**:

- Operational cooperation between employers and institutions regarding vacancies, apprenticeships, assessment and training
- Employers' organisations and Trade unions being a member of the school board and centre board

On **regional level** Social Partners forming regional advisory committees, mainly identifying regional trends and needs and assuring application of VET (QA) instruments

On **sector level** Social Partners, in particular delegations of employers and workers, identifying labour market trends and sector skills needs and gaps and developing Sector Skills Plans, including curriculum development and occupational and qualification standards.

The **national level**, the National VET Council and the National Labour Council, being overall responsible for VET policies, strategy and the development of systems, including quality assurance.

For the purpose of this agreement Social Partners will pay specific attention to the further development of the national level (as identified). Furthermore,

Social Partners will consider the development of social partnership on regional and sector levels.

In order to do so, Social Partners have agreed to create 2 pilots with social partnership on sector level and 3 pilots with social partnership on regional level.

Social Partners have agreed upon the following criteria to identify the pilots:

- The sector pilots will be identified firstly
- The sector pilots will have to be prospective in terms of capacity for employment growth and/or recovery
- Sector pilots will be well organised in terms of organised employers, thus communication between the governing levels of the employers organisation and individual employers can be established swiftly.
- The regional levels to be identified will have an important share of employment in the identified sectors
- Regions are prospective in terms of employment growth and/or recovery.
- Active regional and local authorities

Applying these criteria has led to the following pilot sectors and regions:

Sectors:

- Construction
- Tourism

Regions:

- Shkodra
- Elbasani
- Vlora

The pilots are expected to start on 1 October 2009, the coming months will be used to accomplish the necessary preparations.

The pilot phase will last from 1 October 2009 until 31 December 2011, with half yearly evaluations and monitoring.

Actions and future agenda

Social Partners have agreed to undertake the following actions:

Category	Action	Who	When
1. VET related actions combating unemployment, minimal entailing:	Identifying prospective occupations in the pilot sectors	Employers organisations in pilot sectors	Before 31 March 2010
	Scanning existing collective bargaining agreements on employability issues	Employers organisations and trade unions	Before 31 March 2010
	Developing	Employers	Before 31

Category	Action	Who	When
	employability paragraphs for future collective bargaining agreements	organisations and trade unions	March 2010
	Developing an action plan for trainings, apprenticeship programmes and (temporary) employment with use of the VET system	Social Partners on national level	before 31 March 2010
2. Systems to measure needed VET outputs:	Labour Market Information System, including Labour Market Survey	Design of systems: NES and Statistical Office; approved by Social Partners on national level	Initial design: July 2010; piloting phase until December 2011
	Labour Market Analyses	Design of systems: NES and Statistical Office; approved by Social Partners on national level	Initial design: July 2010; piloting phase until December 2011
	Occupational Standards System	Design of systems: NES and Statistical Office; approved by Social Partners on national level	Initial design: July 2010; piloting phase until December 2011
	Sector Skills Plans, including gaps and needs analyses	Design of systems: NES and Statistical Office; approved by Social Partners on national level	Initial design: July 2010; piloting phase until December 2011
	Apprenticeship planning	Design of systems: NES and	Initial design: July 2010;

Category	Action	Who	When
		Statistical Office; approved by Social Partners on national level	piloting phase until December 2011
3. Provisions for the VET system	Targeted (tripartite) Funds for VET; tentative discussion between Social Partners on national level	Social Partners on national level	Before January 2010
	Tax exemptions for apprenticeship programmes; tentative discussion between Social Partners on national level	Social Partners on national level	Before January 2012
	Campaign for VET promotion; tentative discussion between Social Partners on national level	Social Partners on national level	Before July 2010
4. Life Long Learning as point of attention in policies related to collective bargaining	Existing collective bargaining agreements to be scanned on LLL arrangements and policies to be developed	Employers organisations and Trade unions	Before collective bargaining season 2011
5. VET policies linked to the national Albanian economic and employment policies	Advice of Social Partners to be considered in governments national policies in this respect.	Social Partners on national level	Before December 2011
6. Albanian Qualification Framework	Parliamentary adoption of the AQF	Government delegation	Before December 2009
7. Other VET related systems	Curricula development standards and system	Designed by CARDS project, approved by Social Partners on national level	Before December 2009
	Recognition of prior learning	Designed by CARDS project, approved by Social	Before December 2009

Category	Action	Who	When
		Partners on national level	
	Final assessment and certification procedures	Designed by CARDS project, approved by Social Partners on national level	Before December 2009
8. Infrastructure for VET	The tasks, role of – and cooperation and distinction between - VET schools and VET centres	Initiated by respective bodies and institutions, directed by Social Partners on national level	Before December 2010
	The cooperation between VET institutions and Employment Offices	Initiated by respective bodies and institutions, directed by Social Partners on national level	Before December 2009
	The cooperation between VET, NES and Statistical Office	Initiated by respective bodies and institutions, directed by Social Partners on national level	Before December 2009
	The cooperation between the VET Agency, the VET schools and the VET centres	Initiated by respective bodies and institutions, directed by Social Partners on national level	Before December 2009
	The cooperation between the VET Agency and the NES	Initiated by respective bodies and institutions, directed by Social Partners on national level	Before December 2009

Category	Action	Who	When
	Cooperation and coordination between the VET council, the regional VET advisory committees, the sector VET advisory committees and the VET school and VET centre boards	Initiated by respective bodies and institutions, directed by Social Partners on national level	Before July 2010
	Cooperation between the different tripartite levels and the relevant public institutions	Initiated by respective bodies and institutions, directed by Social Partners on national level	Before July 2010

Agreed and signed on 21 May 2009

The representatives of Social Partners in VET Albania:

The **Government delegation**, represented by:

- **Ministry of Education and Sciences**
- **Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities**

Employers delegation, represented by:

- **Confederation of Employers Councils**
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