

Final Resolution

“New Skills for New Schools: Education & Training and Work”

Adopted at the OBESSU General Assembly, Copenhagen, 19th-20th May
2012

From the 11. to the 15. of December 2011 the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) gathered its members in Oslo for a convention on the topic of Vocational Education and Training (VET), with a special emphasis on the structure of the VET system and the existing support systems.

We, as school student representatives, see this as an integral part of school student representation and the social dimension of the school environment. We believe that a broad consensus on the matters of Vocational Education and Training is needed and therefore we have concluded the following:

Vocational Education and Training

Vocational Education and Training (VET) should in essence provide school students with: a specific hands-on knowledge within the selected course of choice, the skills and qualifications to use their knowledge in a practical sense and assure that the individual has the qualifications to take on the career of his or her choice.

We, the school student representatives of Europe, are concerned about the low social status of VET and the fact that in many countries VET is seen as less important than academic education. VET school students are often considered to be less likely to do well in academic studies or that they come from a lower socio-economic background than academic school students. We want to correct these preconceptions.

During the convention, OBESSU launched a campaign on the matters of Vocational Education and Training. This will focus on VET as an integral part of all upper secondary school student representation; and on how to correct the social discrimination towards VET and VET school students, thus making sure that VET school students are properly represented in their education both in schools and out in the labour market. We want to raise awareness of Vocational Education and Training and increase the value of VET and VET school students.

The quality of VET includes up to date equipment and information, quality of apprenticeship and qualified teachers.

Therefore we demand:

- That decision-making in VET schools should be independent from any actors of the labour market, in particular when it comes to the curricula;

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- That VET school students should have language and social studies. Alternative pedagogical methods should be considered;
 - Free education that includes materials, facilities, transportation and health care, without any consequences;
 - Safe educational environment and materials;
 - Enough adequate study places in VET schools;
 - Quality education provided by adequate number of qualified teachers;
 - VET students should be heard in all decision making processes concerning them, on their terms;
 - That the importance of VET should be recognised;
 - That VET and academic school students must be viewed as equals and have equal rights;
 - That School Student Unions must include VET school students more and give them more responsibilities.

49 **Apprenticeships**

50 When talking about Vocational Education and Training one must not forget that apprenticeships
51 are also a big part of that discussion. In order to finish their VET studies, school students need
52 to go out into the labour market to get the experience and the skills needed in order to gain the
53 qualifications to work in the field of their choice. Therefore we see apprenticeships as integral
54 part of all VET studies.

55 When school students are out in the labour market during their apprenticeships it can often be
56 forgotten that they are still school students and should have the same rights and protection as
57 those still within the formal institutions.

58 OBESSU strongly believes that a set of conditions must be ensured to all VET school students.

59 By setting a clear list of conditions we can prevent the school students for (possibly) being
60 exploited as cheap labour for the companies' benefit, often in bad working conditions in a
61 discriminative environment.

62 The valuable experiences they receive during their apprenticeships are vital for their future
63 work and the society. So quality apprenticeships must be ensured to all VET school students.

64 Therefore we demand:

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- That there are enough positions provided for any school student who wants to do apprenticeships;
 - That all school students must be given educationally relevant work at the place of the apprenticeship term;
 - That the apprentice has to be tutored both by the school and the work place to ensure that they and the apprentice are in good co-operation. The tutor must monitor the work and make sure the school student does not lose motivation;

- 72 • That the work conditions and the rights of the apprentice should be
73 regulated in a contract signed by all parties;
- 74 • That health and safety risks regarding the apprentice must be considered at the
75 workplace and the school, and that relevant social protection must be provided;
- 76 • That equal payment must be guaranteed without it undermining the educational value
77 of the apprenticeship;
- 78 • That the material and equipment needed at the workplace must be provided, for free, by
79 the work place;
- 80 • That the length and tasks of the apprenticeship have to correspond to specific learning
81 objectives. Time spent at school and the workplace have to be balanced;
- 82 • That after the apprenticeship, a standardised certificate must be given to the apprentice
83 that states the competences acquired.

84 **Representation of VET school students and relations with the labour** 85 **market**

86 Education and training are processes of lifelong and life-wide learning, as well as inalienable
87 human rights for the achievement of cultural and social emancipation and fulfilment. Being a
88 cornerstone of everyone's life, it is necessary to emphasise the value of the cultural and
89 formative aim of education. It needs to be avoided to consider it merely as a tool for social
90 selection with the specific aim of creating a workforce.

91 At the same time it is fundamental to promote a fruitful relationship between schools and the
92 labour market. Education should never passively adapt to current labour market trends but, on
93 the contrary, it should be a space to foster and experience active citizenship and promote a
94 rights-based society for tomorrow's worker.

95 Thus, it becomes crucial to define a clearer and more structured cooperation between the
96 labour market and education. School student representation covers both secondary school
97 students within the formal education institutions as well as apprenticeships, thus making it
98 important to look at the connection between the school students and the trade unions.

99 All mentioned actors together are able to provide a wider perspective and constructive inputs
100 for the development of academic and Vocational Education and Training.

101 Therefore we demand:

- 102 • That, at all times and at all levels, school student representatives should have
103 communication with the state, the trade unions and the teacher unions about the
104 student needs and the current labour market trends;
- 105 • That by any means the cultural and formative value of education should be preserved;
- 106 • That during the apprenticeship the school student representative bodies should have an
107 interactive dialogue with the involved trade unions;
- 108 • That school students undertaking an apprenticeship as part of their education are still
109 considered school students and should therefore be represented by the school student
110 representative bodies as well.

111 **New School System Structures**

112 As secondary education can lead to higher education, it is important to assess the structure of
113 the school system and to guarantee that there is a clear link between the two education stages:
114 upper secondary and higher education. Upper secondary education must be able to provide
115 students with the tools and the knowledge needed for further studies. The current division
116 between vocational and academic education should not be seen as a barrier for critical
117 assessment of the challenges and possibilities of a combined educational system. Both VET and
118 academic students' access to higher education should be guaranteed.

119 Guidance is a key factor in the school students' decision making process. As young people make
120 choices concerning their future and possible further studies, it is of utmost importance that
121 schools provide them with sufficient information about their options and that school students
122 are given a hands on experience of different opportunities.

123 Therefore we demand:

- 124 • That in every level of the education system there must be one counsellor for the school
125 students' private matters and one to guide them in matters relating to their education.
126 Counsellors must be properly educated;
- 127 • That school students should have the possibility to visit different types of educational
128 institutions before deciding on their possible further education;
- 129 • That objective material on the differences between educational institutions should be
130 provided on national level focusing on teaching methods and focus points;
- 131 • That regular counselling must be combined with peer-to-peer counselling;
- 132 • That a combined VET and academic education should be available, and it should co-
133 exists with academic and VET schools;
- 134 • That school students socio-economic background must not affect their access to higher
135 education;
- 136 • That if school students want to change from VET to academic education the state should
137 give the necessary additional education to be able to get accepted to university;
- 138 • That school students' qualifications should be recognised throughout Europe.

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140 The demands mentioned above were made with utmost concern about the situation surrounding
141 VET. We, the school student representatives of Europe, believe that only by taking these points
142 into consideration can a change for the better be possible. We urge school students around
143 Europe to take a stand and Claim Their Voice.