

## **Hungarian Presidency key note speech**

**on AGORA Conference:**

**„A bridge to the future, European VET policy 2002 to 2010”**

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**Sándor Czomba – State Secretary, Ministry for National Economy, Hungary**

(cca. 10 minutes)

*Dear Lady-Commissioner, Dear Chair,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great honour for me to represent the Hungarian presidency at this conference with such distinguished speakers and participants.

I would like to thank the CEDEFOP for organizing a conference which brings together high-level actors of the field of vocational education and training, so that we can exchange information about the ways to progress in this area based on the results of the Copenhagen Process, and about the concrete steps to be taken in this respect in order to improve European VET.

Practically in all of the member states the subject of vocational education and training is high on the agenda of our governments' programme. This leads us to conclude that it is difficult to close the VET development process because economy and as a result society continue to change.

Outcomes of the period of 2002-2010 are listed in detail in the Bruges Communiqué accepted by the Council and the member states in December of 2010. Instead of reporting on these, I would rather mention some Hungarian developments that – just inspired by the Copenhagen Process – have been implemented at a rather rapid pace. Results of these developments are not yet conclusive, the state of play is too diverse at this point in time. Therefore, German dual-type conversion of the VET system has been taken on the agenda, currently there are debates on how to implement it in details.

Let us see, in sequence the most important developments of the last eight years, among them several financed by EU grants:

1. By 2006 the National Register of Vocational Qualifications was restructured into a modular and competence-based version, from which we had the expectation – among others – to raise the transparency of training, to give chance to continue interrupted studies in the direction of the already launched training direction, to adopt somebody into training without the necessary school achievement, if his or her competences gained during work had made the individual able for the course – especially in the case of lower levels of ISCED. This system theoretically makes vocational part-qualifications suitable to be built on each other, but in the case of state-financed school-system initial training it is practically mandatory to obtain the full-qualification. Advantages of this reclassification have proved to emerge in adult learning: presently already 60% of the qualifications carried out on the basis of the Register are part-qualifications gained by adults.
2. Also with the support of EU grants the so called regionally integrated vocational training centers have also been established. There are not “green-field” investments, but rather strengthening the cooperation between training institutions offering similar training, mainly vocational and vocational secondary schools, their purchasing equipment, machines, accessories, some constructional renovation, etc. We have basically taken Dutch model as starting point. Efficiency and efficacy of our model needs further continuous evaluation.
3. It was also inevitable to set up regional development and training boards as the vocational schools and vocational secondary schools sometimes offer qualifications, naturally state-financed ones, that are not highly sought after on the labour market. Well, these 7 boards (as Hungary has 7 regions) are entitled to decide the number of students for the 9<sup>th</sup> class and the directions of their training. Furthermore they have decisive role in allocating different grants for development. These boards are generally of 25 members, the employers have majority in the boards. For me the boards seem necessary and with a certain refocusing suitable for further supporting work, moreover having some importance in our adult learning system as well.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I have listed only 3 efforts that have brought mixed successes. But I must state one thing: Europe is in a more difficult situation than it was at the beginning of the '2000-ies when the Lisbon Strategy was announced. In our days the symptoms of ageing, climate change, in several countries the immigration, namely the challenges caused by them are far more severe than were earlier. These symptoms will have hard and inevitable effects on social and economic processes. Consequently we may not stop our developments in our areas; we cannot stop searching for the most optimal solutions, neither for a moment.

May I note: my country does not face special challenges connected to immigration, but must solve those presented by our significant Roma minority. This is why we welcome certain committees of the European Parliament who a positive standpoint on the framework of an EU Roma Strategy being built just under the Hungarian Presidency. Roma children take part in a high ratio in training at vocational schools, much to our regret with a rather high early school leaving rate. Thus in this area our challenges are very high, where education and training plays a significant but in itself not satisfactory role.

Personally myself as Hungarian Minister of State for Employment Policy, I am directly in charge of vocational training and adult education – mainly what regards the shaping of the governance and basic system of these two sectors.

So, let me tell you a little bit more about these two important sectors in respect of the Presidency programmes.

Under a common organizational preparation with European Commission the final conference on the adult learning action plan had taken place in Budapest between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of March. At the conference the Budapest Priorities have been formed aligning 3 main objectives. They are interesting and worth studying:

- Modernizing adult learning systems
- “One Step Up”: Enhancing adult competences
- Adult learning as mean for a Cohesive, Pluralist Society.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of May another conference is scheduled in Budapest – to complete the Meeting of Directors General for Vocational Education and Training – where we together try to reply the question of making vocational training and the skilled worker career itself more attractive for youngsters.

Coming nearer to employment policy and related issues, let me tell you some points on the “New Skills and Jobs” flagship initiative target that simultaneously serves inclusive growth. From this programme which is the closest to employment policy and VET, our primary expectations are:

- The quality of work and the working conditions should be improved
- More jobs should be created
- Active labour market policies should receive a stronger support in the framework of the lifelong learning.

Objectives of the Bruges Communiqué indicate a relevant route. But the implementation of objectives, the processes and procedures, the decision-making and the motivation of stakeholders mean targets for governments that require a longer time and large efforts. If the implementation was simple, probably we would not take part on this conference, we would not be here in order to build the bridge to the future together, with a common European cooperation.

*Dear Colleagues,*

Our common goal is: equipping the European citizens better for the labour-market, securing for them a better quality of life and for creating an inclusive European society and smart growth.

I would like to wish you success for today's discussion.