

**Subject: Minutes of the 31st General Assembly meeting
Brussels (Belgium) 26-27 November 2009**

From: General Secretariat

To: General Assembly Members

The General Assembly of the European Vocational Training Association (EVTA) held its 31st meeting in Brussels on 26-27 November 2009. A list of attendees is provided in **annex I** and a list of external attendees is provided in **annex II**.

Summary of the meeting:

The meeting is divided into two parts. The first day is taken up with a detailed presentation of the results obtained since the beginning of our triennial working programme initiated in Turin. This presentation is followed by a debate involving on the one hand people from outside the network, former members or groups interested in becoming members, project partners etc and, on the other hand, high level technical and political guests from the upcoming Belgian presidency of the Council and from DG Education and Culture from the Commission. The debate is a lively one and has some very specific conclusions on how to follow up on our programme.

The second day is taken up with the more formal aspects of the General Assembly and an internal debate on defining a mandate for the Executive Committee in order to make the reinforcement and expansion activities for our network more specific.

Decisions taken:

Several important decisions were taken and will affect the work we do over the coming months:

- the subjects of restructuring and green jobs are and will continue to be a central component of our work;
- EVTA shall continue to test European tools such as ECVET;
- the work must take into account the opinions of other types of key player such as businesses, social partners, sectors and SMEs more so than at present;
- greater attention is going to be given to the handicapped;
- a study shall be carried out on the feasibility of having an EVTA quality label within the framework of learner mobility;
- EVTA will offer support during the preparations for the Belgian presidency of the Council through documents and/or presence of professional training in debates on employment;
- EVTA shall participate in the Commission's consultation on EU 2020;
- the Executive Committee was given a mandate to propose a system for reinforcing and expanding the network at the next General Assembly meeting.

Summary of the debate:

1. The welcome is given by Ulla Engström, chairing the meeting in the absence of Donal Sands. The General Assembly proceeds to introduce the external guests.
2. Presentation by the organisation IRIS from Sweden, an external guest at this meeting. They are a unique group in Sweden; their core activities consist of producing and selling

products to people with cognitive handicaps, primarily blind people. They specialise in education and, with 300 employees, are a strictly commercial enterprise.

3. Presentation on the work of the Ministry for Education, Social Promotion and Distance Learning in the French Community of Belgium. Social promotion is aimed at all people aged 18 or over. The vast majority of the public seeks to find or hold down a job. 180,000 people are trained in social promotion each year.
4. Presentation of the non-profit organisation GSEVEE, from Greece, a confederation of social partners. It comprises six training organisations within six networks. Their objective is to provide training that is designed for employers, employees and teachers.
5. The minutes of the General Assembly held in Amersfoort are approved (AG/09/11)
6. The agenda is adopted (AG/09/12).
7. Presentation of the specific results obtained since the work was launched in June 2008 in Turin (AG/09/13):
 - The new EVTA website was launched on 20 November. The Executive Committee had asked to make the association's work more streamlined and accessible. The website provides access to information on EVTA and serves as a link for useful information available on other websites. It is our shop window and is therefore marketing material as well as a working tool.
 - The working group focusing on restructuring reached the following outcomes:
 - a. Highly detailed and constantly changing information sheets on "green" jobs, skills for the future (summaries of Commission documents), the crisis in the car sector and certain specific target groups. All of these documents are available on the website.
 - b. A place and recognition at institutional level for the practical expertise of its members on the subject of restructuring, which is justification for an invitation to the restructuring forums organised by DG Employment and Social Affairs. Members are invited to participate in the national forums being held between now and June 2010.
 - c. Two major European projects. Going Local ended on 25 November with a conference being held which saw active participation from several members of the network, the director in charge of the European Social Fund and a representative from the Committee of the Regions (where the conference was held). Restructuring Toolbox is a substantial project aimed at local politicians and will come to an end in January 2010. It is being heavily backed by the Commission.
 - d. The work on guidelines and the transfer of skills is underway.
 - Comments from the assembly on this work:

- a. The most important topics for the organisations in the immediate future are anticipating and reacting to restructuring on the one hand and green jobs on the other hand. “Green” jobs must be interpreted in the broader sense, i.e. incorporating ecological and energetic concerns into existing training.
 - b. EVTA must be able to bridge the gap: there are policies in place on how to react during restructuring, but broader and more active provisions must be put forward for before and after restructuring.
 - c. The debate on restructuring should involve small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as well as employers and social partners.
 - d. It has been suggested that thought be given to introducing a right to training for all citizens and not only for people with difficulties. In the same vein, professional technical training and continuous education for adults must remain absolute priorities.
 - e. In the debate on green jobs, several changes will be made and will offer new opportunities to people with a low level of qualifications. AFPA is currently conducting a study and will provide us with this document.
 - f. Particular attention must be granted to handicapped people, given the importance of offering services and products to all and also to bringing in tools that are developed for the handicapped but which could be useful to everyone.
 - g. These strengths should allow directors of organisations to have a greater overall impact on the European institutions.
- The working group focusing on certification and qualifications reached the following outcomes:
 - a. Strong consensus, a group comprising ten members of EVTA. A partnership has existed since September between the organisations that have solid experience of mobility but problems still arise with regard to certification when returning.
 - b. A working method that looks at national and local contexts rather than common principles.
 - c. A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) which allowed recommendations to be drafted.
 - d. Several European projects which work in synergy and feed into each other. They all concern the implementation of ECVET (credit transfer).
 - Comments from the assembly on this work:

- a. The results are precise and can be used straight away by members of the network. There needs to be some good marketing at European level but also at national and local levels.
 - b. The sector-based approach is crucial as sectors have no boundary lines. It is also important to ensure that employers are involved in the work.
 - c. The invitations issued by Lernia and the Région Centre to discuss these results showed the effectiveness of the group's results. Other requests from organisations will be supported in the same way.
 - d. Each organisation may appoint a contact person within the group for the work on qualifications. How the person's profile is determined may also be a product that can be "sold" to the Commission.
 - e. The group carries out analyses one at a time; it is important for the organisations to work more closely with their experts attending the working group in order to follow the progress.
 - f. If EVTA manages to become a point of reference in Europe for ECVET, it is a strong argument for the members with regard to their market.
- The working group focusing on the skills approach reached the following outcomes:
 - a. The group focused on the quality of the course and use of mobility in learning processes.
 - b. The tool Certicom works well and allows high quality training to be provided within different sectors.
 - c. The group makes the ENQAF (quality assurance) tools more tangible which are highly abstract at European level.
 - d. The mobility portal provides all of the necessary information. This unique approach is useful for all concerned.
 - e. The work carried out by the group on quality assurance is recognised by the European institutions and EVTA receives invitations to discuss results at the conferences they organise.
 - Comments from the assembly on this work:
 - a. The General Secretariat may install the Certicom system in all organisations which request it.
 - b. It would be worthwhile for members to use the mobility portal as a single entry point, the information is more readily accessible there than on the Commission's websites. It would be useful to know how many clicks are made on this page.

- c. The next step for the group could be to look into “learning outcomes” and the question of how to attain them in a training process.
8. Debate on professional training now and in the future, followed by contributions from the future Belgian presidency of the Council and the Commission’s DG Education and Culture.
9. The first statement is given by two representatives from the cabinet of Ms Milquet, the Belgian Minister for Employment. Belgium will hold the Council presidency from July to December 2010. If EVTA wishes to have an important position in these meetings, it must start one year in advance. Preparing for this statement led to one important observation: professional training is used in employment and is a component of life long learning (LLL).
10. Presentation on preparations for the Belgian presidency, questions and debate. The Ministry for Employment is placing the emphasis on the programme for the presidency trio Spain-Belgium-Hungary. It is interesting to note the extent to which the vision is shared between the three countries. Employment will be key during the presidency, because of the culmination of various factors given that the job crisis will extend beyond the economic crisis and the revision of the Lisbon Strategy. It will no doubt be in place under the Spanish presidency and Belgium will therefore have a more precise framework within which to adopt guidelines. There are two challenges to address: the challenges of demographics and the environment. Employment will have an active role to play in both as they could be two pools for employment: white jobs (services linked to the ageing of the population) and green jobs. Within the framework of the European Employment Strategy (EES), the hope is to set a quantified objective to reach. The idea would be to have some conclusions on green jobs, and even a specific guideline on green jobs, adopted by the ministers by the end of the Belgian presidency. The aspect of skills and training is crucial. The Spanish presidency is set to concentrate on “new skills for new jobs”. The idea with green jobs is not to concentrate on green sectors but rather to turn all sectors green within a voluntary vision.
11. Another important event for employment will be a high level conference on the question of professional mobility: quality transitions. Until now the emphasis has been placed more on flexibility rather than security. The aim is therefore to develop career quality indicators.
12. With regard to the handicapped, the fourth edition of the Equality Summit will be taking place which will be addressing the question of discrimination, especially within employment. Lastly, one other important challenge will be to develop a better flow between education and training.
13. To the question of the position that a network such as ours can occupy in the presidency, the answer is that civil society has an important role to play in preparing for the presidency. A closed seminar will be held by foreign affairs and EVTA may register an interest in being present at the seminar. The Minister for Employment may also invite

EVTA to participate in a support committee in order to see how we have worked on common subjects and to voice this opinion at the conferences that have been organised.

14. Regarding a sustainable employment policy and qualifications and the role of professional training, an important issue is the downgrading of jobs. During the course of the work, a strong emphasis has been placed on social dialogue and the Commission's initiatives in setting up sector-based committees. Coordination between education and employment is in the process of being improved.
15. As far as the links between national certification bodies and employment are concerned, there is a request to harmonise employment and immigration policies. The second employment ministers' meeting for the Union for the Mediterranean will be held under the Belgian presidency and it will head in the same direction at the Commission's "map and match" (see statement by the representative from the Commission's DG Employment during our General Assembly in Amersfoort).
16. With regard to demographic challenges, social protection and retirement, the question mainly concerns the cabinet for social affairs. It is the question of white jobs that is important for employment as they are often low-skilled jobs and there is heavy segregation. There is also the question of active ageing, improving working conditions and access to training for older people.
17. The trend of bringing professional training closer together with employment is being led by the European bodies more so than the States. The Spanish presidency in particular intends to launch this process in a more supported way.
18. In the light of several points of contact between the programmes of the Belgian presidency and the network, EVTA is committed to being involved in the preparatory work, especially on the subjects of restructuring and green jobs. As key players working in the field of professional training, thought could be given to making a specific contribution.
19. Presentation by Mr Joao Delgado, head of unit for professional training (Leonardo da Vinci programme) in the Directorate General for Education and Culture in the European Commission.
20. Mr Delgado is interested in working with EVTA and all stakeholders in professional training. Our network has an active role and could do even more, the Commission is calling upon these contacts and for greater participation.
21. What stage has the Commission's agenda reached? The most important factor is the Copenhagen process, which in 2002 set the objectives for 2010, seeing that the Lisbon strategy was not making sufficient progress. Four priorities were set: the European dimension to professional training, especially through mobility; the transparency of different instruments; recognition of skills and qualifications; quality assurance. Some very important results must be pointed out: Europass as an instrument for the transparency of results, EQF which is currently taking shape and the last two, signed in

June, ECVET and EQAF. These results are very precise and now that we are approaching 2010, it is time to set the next objectives.

22. The Commission is changing at the moment, a new treaty has been put in place and along with it, a new strategy for 2020. A consultation is underway, it is open, but EVTA was recently invited to participate in it and provide an opinion on professional training. The spring European Council will officially adopt EU 2020, taking this consultation into account.

23. The Bruges conference will take place in December 2010 where the ministers will be meeting (as they did in Maastricht in 2004, Helsinki in 2006 and Bordeaux in 2008). The challenge there is to map out a strategy for professional training. The key messages are the following four cornerstones:

- Training must not be seen in isolation, it is a part of education which promotes life long learning. People must have the opportunity to make the decisions that are right for them. Continuous education plays a role which is set to become more important for ageing populations.
- There should be more partnerships between social partners, professional training providers and employers.
- There must be a combination of fairness and excellence, preventing and combating social exclusion.
- The role of key skills is crucial, especially learning how to learn.

24. EVTA is committed to participating in this consultation.

25. On the question of the little importance granted to training the trainers and job development, the answer is that they are key players and we will discuss them in detail and in a very clear way.

26. There are questions about the lack of a common framework for professional training in Europe and the difficulties linked to the differences in development and quality. There is a proposal for systemic coherence of professional training for the whole of Europe and in every country. What are the possible developments and how can they be supported? The answer is that there are two completely different levels between initial training and professional training. There are more people in initial professional training than in advanced training. The majority of trainers are not professional trainers, the crisis has had a big role to play and people are both teaching and learning; they must be able to teach and learn. The major enterprises in Europe provide a great deal of in-house training, given by internal staff members. Instead of 50 year olds entering early retirement, they are offered the chance to become trainers. In the future, with “learn to learn”, every single person will have to teach and learn. There is also more and more “reverse learning” where younger people teach older people new techniques and technologies. Things are changing rapidly and everyone will have to participate in this

movement. Given that it is not possible to halt globalisation, it must be taken as a development factor.

27. There is one question about creation and innovation. How can an innovation system be developed? Who are the learning facilitators? Key skills must be included no longer only at managerial level but from primary school through to post-university programmes. In order to ensure that learning and education allow citizens to become adults, greater cooperation is needed between the different DGs (research, education, employment). This coordination already exists partially because people in positions of responsibility have moved from DG to DG within the Commission. The most important thing for young people today is to acquire “soft skills” that allow for individual development.
28. Regarding the mobility that occurs primarily from the East to the West of Europe, it was stressed that the largest mobility movements are currently towards China and India.
29. Concerning the importance given to SMEs and VSEs (very small enterprises) which make up the largest share of enterprises and therefore are a large market for employment, what programmes are there within these structures for promoting professional training? And what is there for sectors? The answer is a complex one given that today these structures are struggling. At European level, tools have been investigated and put in place. In particular, a platform is being prepared with the chambers of commerce to develop learning within enterprise. As far as the 2020 programme is concerned, we must not only be asking what Europe can do for us but we also should be asking what we can do for Europe. EVTA is an ideal partner for assisting and supporting the Lisbon agenda and the sector-based approach is very important. The new LdV programme is financing the sectors enormously. One issue in particular is the testing of instruments such as ECVET.
30. A permanent open call and the simplification of LdV or Grundvig forms are not feasible for the Commission alone without providing them with users, and fraud control is rather complex.
31. The proposal to include ECVET and EQAF in the learning experience as a quality guarantee is very interesting, even if the very broader implementation of these tools is going to require several years. It could perhaps become an obligation to use them at a certain point. The problem is that the national and regional authorities do not understand the added value of these instruments.
32. Today it is difficult to use European funds better, fraud can be controlled but there is no way of checking that the money is being put to good use. It is difficult to convince people of the interest in investing in training. It is an investment, especially in the case of restructuring.
33. Conclusions of the debate:
 - Our subjects have been well-selected, they reflect the reality for organisations today and they correspond with the European agenda.

- EVTA has proven to be an essential key player for professional training in Europe.
- The most important subjects at the moment include mobility (geographical and professional), restructuring, green jobs and the use of European tools.
- Enterprises, social partners and SMEs, who are underrepresented in our debates at present, all rank among the important speaking partners in professional training.
- The network's member organisations now have substantial elements to integrate the European dimension into more of their work.
- The objective from now on will be maintain the high level that we are renowned for, especially by continuing to make new attempts in the field and to offer specific results that can be used directly by our members.
- The idea of having a quality label provided by EVTA within the framework of the work carried out on ECVET is moving along and a precise proposal will be made at the next General Assembly.

34. Reinforcing and extending the network (AG/09/14).

35. The messages received from people from outside the network who participated in the discussion are very positive. Former members are interested in coming back, new organisations wish to participate in our work.

36. EVTA must continue to develop and reflect the changes going on within professional training in Europe. The core activities of EVTA, however, have been clearly defined and must not be changed.

37. Euroqualification started as a consortium of public organisations; key players who were unique in their countries. This stage lasted until 1996. The second period was the association: members make a commitment and take charge of the common structure whilst covering the running costs. The idea that brings the members together is that of working together. This period was during the early stages of regionalisation and therefore saw the departure of the first organisations which no longer matched the profile of the other members. The third stage is the network. The organisation has an increasing amount of contact with other organisations, other networks. The fourth step, for the future, is the community: things are changing in professional training but public service remains essential. A balance must be struck between the hard core deciding the fundamental approaches and integrating other key players who must not call this foundation into question. All of the work done since the creation of Euroqualification is capitalised upon today and consolidates the network.

38. A working document has been drafted by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee requests a mandate from the General Assembly on clear instructions for dealing specifically with the questions surrounding reinforcing the existing network and how to expand it. A document is needed to be able to respond quickly and clearly to the

requests for membership or cooperation that we receive. The proposal consists of setting up a committee of three people, general secretariat, Executive Committee and General Assembly, who can respond to requests quickly. With or without us, the world is changing, we have to equip ourselves with the means to keep up with it.

39. The Euranec network, presented in Turin, is a network of European regions which work among themselves and with EVTA. The network is stable but needs support. Stronger cooperation between the two networks may be very productive and this is something that the Executive Committee will consider. One other possible form of cooperation has to do with schools for social promotion.
40. We must remain cautious with the profile of the cooperation, there has to be several levels and types of cooperation in order to reflect the reality of the current members. One other important point to monitor is to ensure that as many Member States are represented as possible.
41. If the Executive Committee has a set of criteria for deciding upon certain forms of cooperation, the General Assembly must remain the body of approval.
42. A proposal for criteria and a validation system will be submitted by the Executive Committee at the next General Assembly. This proposal will attempt to conform with the current statutes given that some amendments may be made through the internal regulatory procedure. Selling the service to other organisations will be covered by this document.
43. It is of the utmost important to ensure that members still agree strongly on the core activities of EVTA.
44. A grant for partners for European projects (AG/09/15).
45. At the request of Infrep, a grant for projects has been set up. The scheme consists of finding partners for priority European projects among the network's members.
46. The planned form will be put online in order to facilitate the research work and the system will be supported by the general secretariat.
47. Examination of the financial dossier (AG/09/16).
48. The financial situation at the end of September 2009 shows a correct result. The situation is slightly imbalanced in expenditure as opposed to receipts but the situation will be rectified by the end of the year.
49. The revised budget for 2009 is a budget that has been adapted to take into account the expenditure and receipts during the first nine months. The budget has increased: more receipts, more expenditure, especially thanks to European projects.
50. The 2010 budget has been drawn up in order to provide the general secretariat with an overview and it is balanced. It must be pointed out that when speaking about projects and activities, one part is associated with using our reserves as it was decided that they

have to be used in order to carry out activities rather than be spent on running the organisation. The largest share comes from European projects. As promised, a substantial decrease in salaries has been seen as well as an increase in mission costs associated with projects. The budget is realistic and feasible.

51. The situation as of 30 September is approved. The 2010 budget is adopted.

52. Date and location of the next General Assembly meeting.

53. Imelsa proposed to host the June 2010 General Assembly in Valencia during Spain's presidency of the Council.

54. The date will be sent out following consultation with the President and Imelsa's directors.

Annex I: list of present, excused and absent members

Organisation	Status	Present, Excused, Absent
AFPA	Full member	Excused
AIKE	Full member	Present
Bruxelles Formation	Associated member	Absent
Centres of expertise – KCH	Full member	Present
Centres of expertise – Kenwerk	Full member	Present
Centres of expertise – Ecabo	Full member	Excused
ENAIIP	Full member	Present
Eurokt-Akadémia	Full member	Present
FAS	Full member	Present
Forem	Associated member	Present
HRDA	Full member	Excused
Imelsa	Full member	Present
Infrep	Associated member	Excused
Lernia	Full member	Present
LLMTA	Full member	Absent
OAED	Full member	Present
Région Centre	Associated member	Present
VDAB	Associated member	Present (represented by Le Forem)
EVTA President – Sands	Full member	Excused
EVTA Vice-President – Engström	Co-opted member	Present
EVTA Vice-President – Destival	Full member	Excused
EVTA Treasurer – Jovaisa	Full member	Absent
EVTA General Secretariat	/	Present

Annex II: list of external guests present

Organisation	Representative
Artes (Italy)	Lilia Infelise
Minister Simonet's cabinet (Belgium)	André Yves
Ministre Milquet's cabinet (Belgium)	Laurence Weerts
	Sophie Lenoble
European Commission	Joao Delgado
Gabinete de Recolocacion Industrial (Spain)	Bernadette Bergsma de Paz
GSEVEE (Greece)	Basilis Siomadis
Internationaler-Bund (Germany)	Peter Backfisch
Iris Holding AB (Sweden)	Marlene Terkowsky
	Kathrine Engman
Salar (Sweden)	Mats Söderberg
Valencia Fundacion (Spain)	Miguel Mares