

DECENTRALISING
VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION
AND TRAINING
IN UKRAINE

**MOMENTUM
FOR ACTION**

GREEN PAPER ON DECENTRALISING VET IN UKRAINE

The new Green Paper is an initiative of the European Training Foundation (ETF) on decentralising VET in Ukraine. It is a milestone towards action developed in close cooperation with stakeholders across the entire vocational education and training (VET) system, involving both regional and national actors as well as experts from the ETF. It draws on evidence and consultations from the ETF's Torino Process analysis in the whole country, in depth focus groups in five pilot regions and the results of two working groups led by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The ETF's Torino Process is a policy analysis of VET systems in the ETF's 29 partner countries. Its objective is twofold: to acquire up to date knowledge about the policies and their results in a country; and to strengthen the ownership, participation and evidence-base of policy making to improve the performance of policies. In Ukraine, the 2016 Torino Process involved all regions, the city of Kiev and the country as a whole. A total of 25 reports document the status of VET and priorities for the future.

Momentum for action: decentralising VET in Ukraine is the result of the ETF's policy advice to the Ministry of Education and Science on decentralising VET effectively. The outcomes build on work done with five pilot regions: the City of Kiev, Vinnitsa, Lviv, Rivne and Dnepropetrovsk. This advice covers key challenges and proposed solutions with the aim of improving the draft VET law currently under discussion. It also seeks to set priorities and a work-plan to ensure stakeholder participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency in the process of decentralising VET.

The Green Paper lays out the challenges facing VET decentralisation in Ukraine. It provides options for improving the draft VET law and outlines the main tasks ahead requiring leadership at state, regional or school level. These are prerequisites for successful transition to an effective and relevant decentralised VET system in the country.

A quality VET system is relevant to the success of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union. Cooperation in the field of VET is specifically encouraged under the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

TOWARDS ACTION THROUGH VISION

Creating a formal vision for the VET system in Ukraine is the primary role of the state with the involvement of all the stakeholder ministries: education and science, the economy, social policy, finance and regional development, as well as sectoral ministries such as transport, tourism, agriculture, ICT and defence. In addition, the systematic involvement of the social partners, employer representatives in particular is essential. They all have a strategic interest in a sound VET system. One solution is to create an inter-ministerial platform for dialogue on VET reform. In moving towards a decentralised system, many issues will need to be discussed and coordinated at state level. The platform could be set up for five years, during which the bulk of the decentralisation will happen.

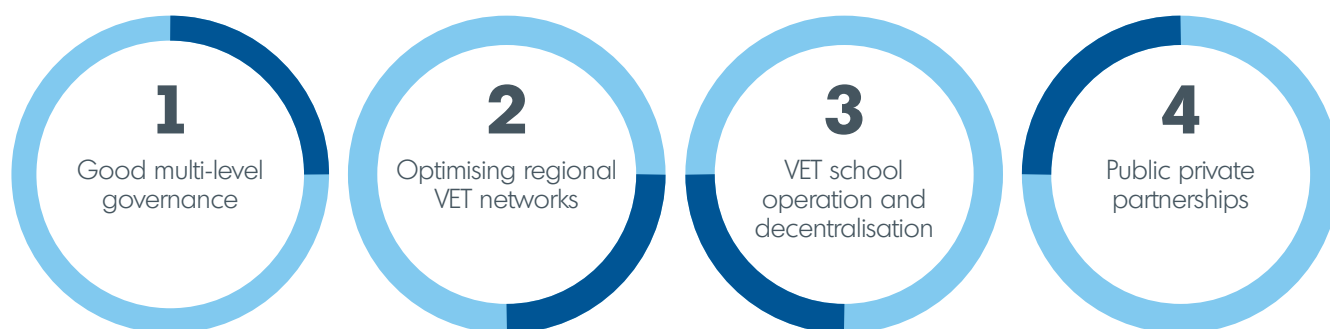
The platform could also oversee the implementation of a roadmap of actions to make decentralisation happen. This could include ensuring that legislation is passed in a timely manner, that the ministries concerned systematically resolve challenges that arise as well as piloting new policy tools such as foresight for decision-making.

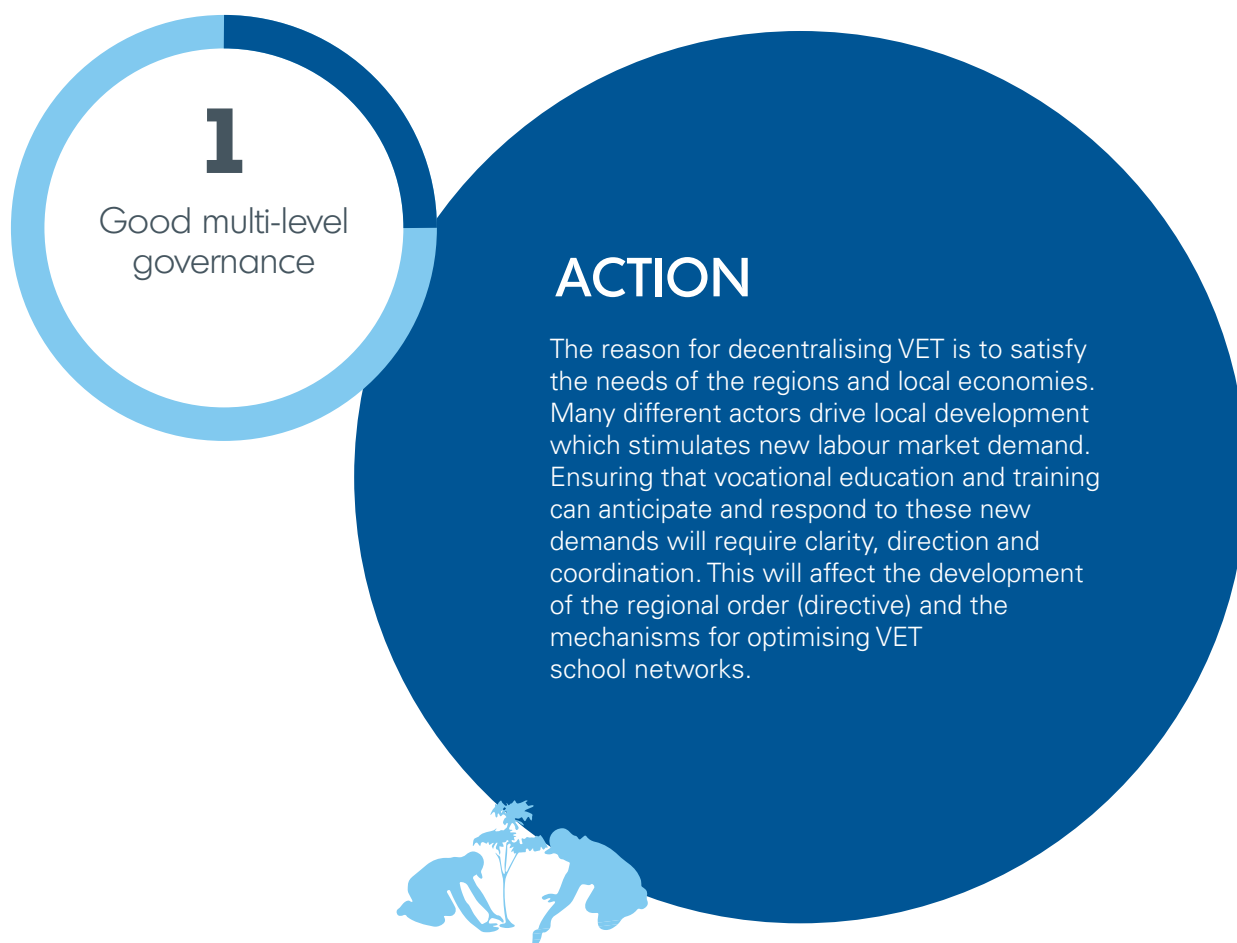
This high-level vision will need to be further developed at regional level, with regional VET strategies to complement regional development strategies. Regional VET networks need to be adapted to regional specificities and growth plans. These structures could build upon the regional platforms set up to support the 2016 round of the Torino Process.

It should be emphasised that decentralisation is not a simple transfer of power from the state to lower levels of governance. It is a complex redistribution of roles and responsibilities to appropriate levels of governance and involves adapting old mechanisms for rule setting, decision making, financing while creating new ones for VET policy coordination. This challenging task will require careful preparation owing to the size of Ukraine and its regional and local divisions (oblasts, rayons and amalgamated gromadas).

Carry out a review of institutional arrangements, is an obvious solution that could be accompanied by developing a framework for VET governance and financing. This will provide a basis for developing an analytical framework for VET decentralisation setting out who does what, when and how. It is also important to identify issues in the last version of the draft VET law that need further clarification and discussion and require improved legal texts or guidance for interpretation.

KEY AREAS FOR ACTION





ISSUES

The role of decision-making powers at national, regional, local and school levels in steering VET policies is unclear.

The Ukrainian VET system plays an important social role. However, the current system of student stipends is unsustainable. The Ministry of Social Policy should assume many of the VET system's current social responsibilities. A new vision for the social role of VET in Ukraine should be created based on modern concepts of accessibility and inclusiveness providing equitable access to education, employment and lifelong learning for all citizens, regardless of age or ability.

There are choices to be made between alternative models for VET financing, which have consequences for the regional order, optimising VET networks and enabling regions to use VET as a tool for growth. A good system of governance would ensure that schools are adequately funded, able to adapt to the changing needs of the labour market and support growth and development, while the main responsibility for financing lies with the regions.

At present the VET system is fragmented with funding coming from regional capital city budgets as well as from regional budgets. This means some schools are adequately funded and others chronically under-funded. There is an urgent need to work further on VET funding system in particular in terms of engaging with the Ministry of Finance.

Lifelong learning should drive the institutional arrangements underpinning the new decentralised education system considering VET and higher education as part of a single system aimed at personal and human capital development. Continuing vocational training, the development of a national qualifications framework in line with decentralised VET and the inclusion of key competences in renewed VET curricula are all essential steps in developing a lifelong learning logic in the country.

The role of local authorities, and in particular regional VET councils in VET governance is key. The draft VET law gives regional VET councils certain powers, but the right allocation and balance of both advisory and management functions still needs to be reached in order to facilitate the decentralisation of VET.



SOLUTIONS

Reviewing institutional arrangements and developing an analytical framework for VET decentralisation would go a long way to addressing these problems, in particular by providing a clear basis for dialogue involving all major stakeholders.

The national and regional orders are not the most effective mechanisms for facilitating access to and financing of VET schools. A modern anticipative approach would enable teachers to develop new programmes and respond to the needs of growth plans and entrepreneurial development. Ukraine has recently been involved in capacity building initiatives, such as the Eastern Europe Partnership Platform and there is scope to build a new system around a labour market observatory, skills foresight and quantitative forecasting methodologies.



2

Optimising regional VET networks

ACTION

Regional VET networks are key to the decentralisation of the VET system and many questions relating to governance and optimisation should be considered in this perspective.



ISSUES

At present school buildings and land belong to the state, while the schools are administered by the region. Better governance could be achieved by transferring the ownership of buildings and land to the region. This would improve administration and help deal with the issue of unused or unnecessary buildings.

Regional networks could be improved by merging current schools or creating new ones. The draft VET law could include a clear decision making process for this. It could go even further by clarifying the role of regional VET councils, stipulating how VET schools should be classified and new networks aligned with the needs of the regional economy. Furthermore, it could set out how school budgets, staffing and enrolment should be organised.

SOLUTIONS

Regional guidelines for optimising VET networks building towards a national vision for VET and regional development would facilitate transition to a decentralised VET system. A region-by-region or city-by-city approach to property ownership would help alleviate problems of VET budget transfer.

The concept of VET centres of excellence as an institutional mechanism could help optimise VET school networks based on an initial merger strategy to create hubs for collaboration with industry and opportunities for public-private partnerships. Further developing management by principle outlined in the new law, introducing performance indicators as well as modernising VET school names and nomenclature could facilitate informed decision-making on network restructuring and improve the image and reputation of the system.

3

VET school
operation and
decentralisation

ACTION

VET school autonomy is a form of management that gives schools decision making power over issues such as human resources, curricula and finance. This gives an important role to the VET school council which represents the interests of the VET community, employers, parent associations and civil society. With power comes accountability.

ISSUES

The autonomy of school directors is often limited by regional staffing quotas which determine the maximum number of staff they can employ. Employing more staff is considered a breach of budget discipline, while employing fewer is a tactic often used to increase staff salaries with obvious consequences for the quality of provision. At the same time, it is difficult to dismiss staff, but equally difficult to hire owing to low salaries. If school directors are to be held accountable for results, then they must have the tools and conditions to manage their schools, and this needs to be further clarified in the draft VET law.

There is currently no viable financing model for VET, which adds to the dilemma over this issue, which is something the new legislation could deal with better. In general, there is no link between school financing and local growth and development strategies. VET school directors are not allowed to charge fees for services or raise funds by being more responsive to the needs of the local labour market. There is no clarity about how schools will finance the development of new courses needed to fuel regional growth, pay for modern equipment or encourage bright new talent to enter the profession.



SOLUTIONS

The performance of school management could be improved by replacing the existing staff schedule and introducing new practices such as performance measurement tools, quality assurance and self-assessment practices.

4

Public private partnerships

ACTION

The draft VET law explicitly refers to public-private partnership as a key component of the new VET system. Ukraine already has experience in this area, particularly in the construction and metallurgy sectors. They usually take the form of social partnership based on councils and elected collectives. Another form is sponsorship, which has provided a useful interface with the shadow economy, which remains a significant source of employment. Challenges exist in relation to new administrative units such as the amalgamated gromadas, which at present do not see their role in labour market development. An evaluation of past experience with public-private partnerships would give a clearer picture of the benefits, good practice and areas for improvement.



ISSUES

Although in the draft VET law great importance is given to public-private partnerships, it provides little guidance on how to put them into practice and the draft law therefore needs to be improved in this respect. The current legal and financial framework does not facilitate public-private partnerships, which could provide new sources of finance for the VET sector.

Public-private partnerships can be practical mechanisms for sharing resources such as equipment, laboratories and workshops, as well as developing new VET programmes, on-the-job training and regional and sectoral development. Technical issues should be examined and initiatives launched to put such partnerships into practice.



SOLUTIONS

Public-private partnerships are not just about employers, they can also involve professional bodies, business associations and industry federations. There is a clear momentum to revive social dialogue in VET while improving the existing council system. An initiative to build upon these traditions is required to develop a strategic framework for VET public-private partnerships by involving the social partners at all levels in strong cooperation with regional VET councils. In this context, improving the negotiation skills of public and private actors is essential.





SUGGESTED ACTIONS TO DELIVER AN AGREED ROADMAP FOR DECENTRALISING VET

One should think of decentralisation as a process that will unfold over a period of about five years. During this time there is a need for good communication, not just towards other ministries, regional powers, school heads and teachers, but towards companies, parents and students. The actions to be undertaken may include the following:



DRAFTING AND COMMUNICATION

New VET law based on consultation completed.

Communication cell with a dedicated team established.



CREATE A SHARED SENSE OF PURPOSE

Initial 1-2 page “VET Vision” paper created and disseminated by the MoES.

Departments for VET and HE, plus the Ministry of Labour, invited to further develop the vision in terms of lifelong learning.

“VET Vision” discussed with regional and city authorities, sectoral ministries and the Ministry for Social Affairs.

Ministry contributions to “VET Vision” integrated into a “National Vision for VET Reform”.



THE FIRST MAJOR GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Inter-Ministerial Working Group on VET Decentralisation and Reform created.

ESTABLISH A REGIONAL GOVERNANCE MECHANISM

The executive role of regional VET Councils defined, developed and enabled.

SUPPORT VET SERVICE MODERNISATION

A strategic framework for PPP, a national apprenticeship system and a new career guidance framework developed.

VET innovation pilot projects implemented.

THE SECOND MAJOR GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Review of Institutional Arrangements carried out.

Analytical model for VET financing developed.

Analytical model for VET decentralisation elaborated and published.

ESTABLISH A NATIONAL EXECUTIVE AGENCY/ SUPERVISORY BODY

National Executive Agency established.

ADDRESSING VET SCHOOL GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Functioning of VET schools in the new decentralised system clarified.

