

OBESSU reaction to the Riga Conclusions 2015

On the 22nd of June the Ministers in charge of Vocational Education and Training met in Riga in the framework of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union to discuss and agree upon a new set of medium-term deliverables 2015-2020 in line with the ET 2020 strategy and the Bruges Communiqué, in order to readapt them to a fast-changing scenario and to the EU Commission's agenda on growth and jobs.

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions – OBESSU was glad to be involved and taken into account for the whole process of review of the Bruges deliverables and of creation of these conclusions. We welcome the European Commission's effort to involve learners into shaping educational paths towards a more student-centred education. We also welcome the references made in deliverable 3 and in the overall text concerning the removal of every barrier of recognition, access and mobility and we are glad to see that also Member States are taking step forwards towards the formal recognition of the equality among different educational paths. Nevertheless, we wish to express our critical opinion on the Riga Conclusions.

First and foremost we are sure that learners could have been referred to as such and not as workforce. Of course workforce is what each student will be but it also diminish the dignity of our education, as an academic student was a student and VET one was a generic workforce. This critique we wish to extend also to the overall concept of "adapting VET to the demands of the labour market". We, as OBESSU, agree that VET is one of the keys to solve youth unemployment, but there is a strong need to, on the one hand, make sure that the demands of the labour market are not short-sighted and are adaptable to a fast changing world; on the other hand OBESSU strongly demands that the labour market never influences directly the shaping of curricula but gives advices as external experts to schools and VET providers in a process that also involves students, teachers, trade unions and parents.

Moreover, with reference to the sentence "and look for alternative ways of funding and partnership to meet five medium-term deliverables" we are worried that this could refer to a too influential role of the private sector in education. OBESSU values the diversification of funding but wishes to underline that education is not a good to trade on the international arena, and that, thus diversifying funding, we call on the Member States to invest and allocate more resources on education and particularly on VET.

OBESSU is also glad that a stronger attention to key competences is paid in this document. Nevertheless, we wish to underline that not only literacy key competences are necessary for

a student to be such at 360°. OBESSU believes that transversal skills are to be considered as a core part of the key competences and never left aside, as we as students wish to also be and become active informed citizens.

Overall, OBESSU welcomes this new document in the VET panorama, with all the critiques to be made and the possible improvements. We, as a European platform, call for Member States to work closely with school student unions just like the EU Commission does with OBESSU. We also call for the Ministers to implement and promote the “European charter on quality internships and apprenticeships” by the European Youth Forum and strongly supported by OBESSU; we believe that this document could be beneficial for reaching goals of deliverables 1 and 2 and would give a strong position to VET as an attractive option when choosing an educational path.