



UNIP-Europe
Working conference

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Introduction

This working document provides the basis for launching the European activities of the international UNIP network (United network for innovations and professionalisation in TVET teacher education) that works in close collaboration with the UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre.

The first section of this working document outlines the starting points for launching the European activities of the UNIP network after the founding event of the international UNIP network in Hangzhou, China, in November 2004. (See the documentation of the founding event and the basic information on the network on the UNIP home page www.unip-net.org.)

The second section tries to clarify the relations between the international measures to consolidate the UNIP network at a global level and the 'regional' measures to adjust the UNIP agenda to the current European context. **The third section** presents the regional founding activities to be started and the initial steps to be taken in 2006. **The fourth section** indicates the milestones to be reached and the results to be achieved by the end of 2006.

1. The starting points for the international and European activities the UNIP network

1.1. Starting points for the international activities of the UNIP network

The international UNIP network was launched at the concluding session of the International meeting on innovation and excellence in TVET teacher education in Hangzhou, China in November 2004. The meeting had agreed on a common framework for promoting Masters Programmes in TVET teacher education and to launch a process that creates a related professional community. As the initial step the participants constituted the international UNIP network to promote follow-up activities in different global regions and to create a basis for a proper professional and scientific community based on the joint conclusions.

In this context it is worthwhile to note that the preconditions for launching follow-up activities vary to a great extent in different global regions. In the Asian region it has been rather unproblematic to use the Hangzhou framework as a guideline for developing Masters Programmes that are based on Vocational Disciplines and on related expertise in Vocational Pedagogy. In the European context the follow-up activities have to be related to a conceptual diversity and to different institutional settings. Therefore, there is a need to create a common ground for dialogue, exchanges, transitional measures and common piloting. In some other global regions there is a need to reach the initial phase of networking between dispersed experts and programmes

1.2. Starting points for the European activities of the UNIP network

In the European context the following boundary conditions are to be considered as starting points for the regional follow-up of the Hangzhou conference:

- 1) The current cultural and institutional diversity provides severe conceptual barriers for a common European discussion on the Hangzhou framework. The national models for TVET teacher education have different assumptions on the importance of pedagogy, subject disciplines or expertise in vocational/professional areas of specialisation.
- 2) The European framework process in Higher Education (the Bologna process) is promoting unified structures for all universities and Higher Education institutions (the Bachelor-Master structure). In this context the European TVET teacher education provisions are looking for different strategic alliances to adjust themselves to the emerging European Higher Education Area.
- 3) The European cooperation programmes (in particular the new integrated programme for educational cooperation for the period 2007-2013) will provide new opportunities for Research & Development initiatives that draw upon the Hangzhou conclusions and link the TVET teacher education to the Bologna process. However, in the transition from older to newer programmes the year 2006 is a transitional year with limited possibilities to acquire funding for new initiatives.

2. Preconditions for the work of the UNIP network at international and European level

2.1. Preconditions for the work of UNIP at the international level

In the light of the above it is possible to see the need for the following kinds of international activities of the UNIP network for bringing together the work in different global regions:

- a) **Support for the development of Masters Programmes in TVET teacher education** by promoting stock-taking and exchanges on curriculum development, research activities and on trans-national cooperation in this context.
- b) **Support for the development of 'regional' network structures** and cooperation patterns in different global regions.
- c) **Preparation of the organisational model for a new international association** based on the regional activities and on the related working group in the Hangzhou meeting.
- d) **Preparation of a focused international follow-up conference in 2007** to take further the debate and the developmental work that was started by the Hangzhou meeting.

2.2. Preconditions for the work of UNIP at the European level

Regarding the European landscape of networks and professional communities it is worthwhile to note the following developments in European TVET-related umbrella networks:

- i) The VETNET network of the *European Educational Research Association* (EERA) has become a common umbrella network for **European TVET research communities**. Thus, the VETNET programme in the annual *European Conference in Educational Research* (ECER) has become the central networking event for European TVET researchers. Yet, there are different views to what extent the umbrella network should support activities that link TVET research to education of TVET professionals.

- ii) The *Association of Teacher Educators in Europe* (ATEE) has become the provider of the main European **forum for teacher educators**. The ATEE conference programme includes specific sessions for TVET teacher education and for the role of research as support for teacher education. However, there has been a similar consolidation of a TVET-oriented ‘community within the umbrella community’ as is the case with VETNET and EERA.

Therefore, it is essential to note that the UNIP agenda is in many respects characterised by boundary-crossing features that create new kinds of interfaces between **TVET research, teacher education** and **promotion of professionalisation** in working life. Therefore it is essential to emphasise the following aspects if and inasmuch UNIP activities are to be linked to the above mentioned umbrella networks:

- 1) The UNIP activities build bridges between curriculum development for TVET teacher education (and related post-graduate studies) and TVET research. The critical issue here is that the UNIP approach incorporates vocational disciplines, vocational pedagogy and research-related competences into the education of TVET professionals.
- 2) The UNIP activities build bridges between TVET teacher education and continuing professional development of HRD professionals in working life. The critical issue here is that the UNIP approach links learning within vocational/professional areas to broader organisational and work process-oriented contexts.

In general it is essential for the UNIP network to become involved in the umbrella communities. Yet, it is necessary to develop specific UNIP activities that promote European knowledge development on the basis of the Hangzhou conclusions.

3. Specific UNIP activities to be undertaken in the European context

In the founding phase of the UNIP network the regional activities will be launched by a European initiative group that constitutes itself in a regional conference and elects an executive board. The task of the board is to develop the organisational patterns for membership, participation and management of the regional activities. As specific activities to be undertaken in the European context it is possible to indicate the following ones:

1. **Conceptual mapping:** The first area of activity is the conceptual mapping of different patterns for developing TVET teacher education and related advanced (Master-level and post-graduate studies). The mapping activities should lead to a broader understanding on the possibilities to implement the Hangzhou framework (by introducing Vocational Disciplines and Vocational Pedagogy) or to use it as a support for transitional steps (introduction of sectoral and pedagogic interest areas). The mapping activities should also lead to a deeper understanding on the prospects for cross-cultural cooperation. In this respect the mapping activities should promote focused insights into professionalisation, sectoral specialisation and into development of mutually supporting partnership relations.
2. **Policy monitoring:** The second area of activity is the joint policy monitoring concerning the implementation of European policies in research and in the fields of education and training. The monitoring activities should produce information that helps European TVET professionals to address TVET-related issues for European research cooperation (e.g. for the 7th Framework Programme of Research), for educational cooperation opportunities (e.g. in the context of the Bologna process) and for other action contexts in which it is possible to address the importance of TVET for European educational culture (e.g. the

discussion on TVET-PISA). The monitoring activities should lead to joint initiatives that strengthen the public visibility of TVET on European cooperation agendas.

3. **Co-participation:** The third area of activity is the preparation of UNIP-related sessions to the main conferences of ATEE and VETNET or UNIP-oriented contributions to the electronic communication platforms of the umbrella networks. These contributions should make transparent the bridging role of the UNIP network between knowledge development and knowledge utilisation. Moreover, they should promote broader understanding on the UNIP agenda among TVET researchers (without other disciplinary backgrounds) and teacher educators (with a focus on other areas of education).
4. **European cooperation:** The fourth area of activity is the preparation of the grounds for broader European cooperation. On the one hand this includes bilateral or multilateral agreements on trans-national mobility (e.g. the Erasmus exchange contacts). On the other hand this includes the multi-lateral proposals for projects to be funded under the respective European cooperation programme (e.g. Erasmus or Leonardo da Vinci). The European cooperation activities should upgrade the cooperation in selected areas of research and in related curriculum development activities.
5. **Involvement of TVET professionals in broader international and inter-cultural cooperation activities:** The fourth area of activity brings together a broad range of activities in the context of which TVET professionals have a role in promoting international cooperation and/or intercultural understanding. For the UNIP network it is essential to address the issue 'intercultural understanding' in the context of vocational and work-related learning environments and with an emphasis on integration and social inclusion. Equally, for the UNIP network it is important to make transparent the work of TVET professionals in the context of major developmental cooperation projects. For UNIP-Europe it is essential to promote dialogue and mutual exchanges between such activities and to raise awareness on the integrative potentials of vocational and work-related learning.
6. **Organisational consolidation:** The fifth area of activity is the creation of specific organisational structures and patterns for the European initiative group of the UNIP network and to prepare the grounds for regularisation of the activities as a part of the international professional community. In this respect the crucial step is the collaborative preparation of the next working conference by the elected regional board.
7. **The public web-presence of UNIP-Europe:** The sixth area of activity is the maintenance of an active and public web presence that covers all above mentioned areas of activity. The board of the UNIP-Europe will prepare a basic information page on the European activities to be attached to the UNIP website and explore the possibilities for more active electronic communication that supports the emerging activities. Regarding the monitoring activities cooperation will be developed with the VETNET network and the utilisation of the VETNET blog pages for European VET dialogue. Regarding the preparation of European cooperation activities, specific solutions will be sought for supporting trans-national exchanges and joint research & development projects.

4. Milestones and expected results by 2007

To some extent the milestones and the expected results have to be linked to the parallel shaping of the international activities of the UNIP network and to the related timeline. Regarding the specific European activities it is possible to indicate the following milestones and expected results:

1. **Cooperation with the VETNET network:** Regarding the main event of the VETNET network, the ECER 2006, in September in Geneva, it has not been possible to make proposals on specific UNIP-related events that would have a well-prepared research-oriented focus. Yet, in the light of the above outlined Policy monitoring and European cooperation activities the board of the UNIP-Europe should prepare a proposal for the VETNET board on joint concerns of the European TVET-related research communities and professional communities and to be communicated to the European Commission.
2. **Co-participation in the events of ATEE and shaping of UNIP-supported sessions:** The board will explore the possibilities to organise UNIP-supported sessions in **the ATEE annual conference** (in Ljubljana 21.10.-25.10.2006). The theme of the ATEE conference is “Co-operative partnerships in teacher education”. Representatives of the ATEE Council have welcomed the prospect that the UNIP network would take an active role in supporting the preparation of proposals for the ATEE section (RDC) on Vocational Education and Training.
3. **Preparation of joint project proposals for the new EU programmes (2007-2013):** The board will monitor the launch of the new programmes and disseminate information that helps the preparation of proposals. The co-participation in the above mentioned events (notably the ATEE meetings) will be used to support the preparation of new proposals.
4. **Preparation of the next working conference of UNIP-Europe:** The board will immediately start the preparation of the next European working conference and coordinate the planning vis-à-vis the plan to organise an international conference of the UNIP network in 2007 and vis-à-vis the possibilities to cooperate with ATEE and VETNET.