

SCENARIOS REPORT - POLAND

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Methodology and course of the workshop	3
3. Determinants of the functioning of dual VET in Poland.....	4
4. Factors influencing the functioning of VET in the future	8
5. Proposed scenarios of strengthening the role of social partners.....	11

1. Introduction

This document discusses the results of the online workshops that the Foundation Institute of Public Affairs organised with representatives of social partners on 6 December 2021 as part of the project ‘INVOLVE - Involving social partners in dual VET governance: exploring the contribution of social partners in the design, renewal and implementation of dual VET’. The aim of the project is an in-depth analysis of the functioning of the vocational education and training system (hereinafter: VET system), with particular emphasis on vocational education in a dual scheme, including the role of social partners in its governance and reforms¹. The project covers four countries: Greece, Spain, Poland and Portugal, where in recent years reforms have been conducted to renew and strengthen dual vocational education.

Additionally, an important objective of the project is to develop scenarios to strengthen the involvement of social partners in the functioning of dual VET. In recent years, specific solutions have been developed (e.g. the possibility for business organisations to influence the taught content, creating the Integrated Qualifications System which organises all qualifications at the national level) or improved (e.g. introducing a new classification of VET occupations, new structure of occupations based on division into qualifications, a new standard of describing qualifications) in Poland to involve various stakeholders in the co-governing of the VET system. Particularly noteworthy is the possibility of influencing the content of education, among others, by proposing new occupations for the classification of occupations in vocational education, as well as changes in the core curricula. Business/employer organisations experiencing the need to introduce a new profession to the educational offer of professional schools, gained the opportunity to apply to the minister responsible for a given sector to supplement the VET classification of professions with this occupation. The ministry does this by proposing an amendment to the regulation on core curricula, while the business organisation proposes the desired educational content. It can count on support in the field of educational methodology from public institutions, in particular from the Education Development Centre (ORE). Then, public consultations of the draft amendment are conducted, during which opinions can be sent to the ministry by representative national and industry social dialogue organisations and other stakeholders (business and employer organisations, trade unions, economic self-government organisations, representatives of local self-government). There are also many years of tradition of participation in practical training, in a dual formula, craft companies, supported by organisations representing them - both at the local level (craft guilds) and at the regional level (craft chambers). Still, the involvement of social partners is far from satisfactory. Many representatives of social dialogue organisations do not know about the possibilities offered by the existing solutions. Meanwhile, their inclusion in these mechanisms could significantly facilitate the improvement of the quality of VET and its adaptation to the needs of the current labour market, in view of the numerous challenges faced by the Polish economy.

2. Methodology and course of the workshop

In line with the main assumptions of the project, the development of scenarios was based on the deliberative scenario methodology, inspired by the solutions suggested by Cedefop². The aim was to develop together, in a group of stakeholders, possible strategies to strengthen the role of social partners in the governance of the VET system. The focus was on the lower levels of the system functioning (technical-strategic, technical operational³), as improvement at these levels was

¹ The report for Poland from the desk research analysis is available from: https://involveproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/INVOLVE_deskresearch.-Poland.pdf, and fieldwork report can be downloaded from: <https://involveproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Fieldwork-report-Poland.pdf>

² Leney, T., Coles, M., Grollman, P. & Vilu, R. (2004). *Scenarios toolkit. Cedefop dossier series 8*.

³ In the INVOLVE project, for the purposes of analyses, three levels of the system functioning were distinguished: 1) political-strategic, including decision-making processes at the highest level, influencing the general direction of the system development and requiring political legitimization, 2) technical-strategic, including also decision-making

considered the most realistic and feasible. In the case of the political and strategic level, the political will of key public policy makers and a fundamental reconstruction of the tripartite social dialogue institutions at the national level would be necessary. Therefore, the focus was on the prospect of improving the participation of social partners in relation to specific, already operating mechanisms, especially at the sectoral level, i.e.:

- Proposing and involvement in developing new VET occupations,
- Proposing changes to core curricula,
- Proposing examination tasks,
- Promotion and information activities on the abovementioned possibilities
- Promotion and information activities on companies' involvement in dual VET.

The workshop participants (15 in total) were representatives of:

- employer organisations: Polish Craft Association, Association of Steel Industry Employers, Association of International Road Carriers in Poland, Polish Federation of Food Producers, Federation of Apparel & Textiles Industry Employers,
- trade unions: Trade Union 'Builders', Metalworkers Secretariat of NSZZ 'Solidarność', National Road Transport Section of NSZZ 'Solidarność', Metalworkers and Metallurgists Trade Unions Federation in Poland,
- public institutions supporting the vocational education system: Ministry of Education and Science, Institute of Sustainable Technologies, Centre for Social Partnership 'Dialogue'.

Before the meeting, they were provided with brief information on the topics of the discussion, the objectives of the meeting and the justification for the need to strengthen social dialogue in the analysed area (including the main determinants of the functioning of vocational education in Poland, analysed later in this report). Descriptions of desired scenarios for enhancing dialogue were also provided.

During the workshop, there was a presentation prepared by a researcher of the Institute of Public Affairs, during which the main factors influencing the functioning of the VET system and the challenges faced by this segment of education were presented once again. One more presentation preceded the actual discussion sessions on the scenarios of strengthening the role of social partners and the strategies for their implementation. It was delivered by a representative of the employer organisation Association of International Road Carriers in Poland, which in recent years has successfully restored the occupation important for the sector represented by it to the classification of VET occupations. The presentation contained the history of the inclusion of the profession and activities undertaken by the organisation, from identifying the demand for the profession to activities aimed at promoting it and maintaining its popularity among students and parents.

3. Determinants of the functioning of dual VET in Poland

In line with Cedefop's methodological proposal⁴, the main trends identified in various areas of the economy and society, which may affect the vocational education system in Poland or, on the contrary, be influenced by its efficiency and quality, will be presented below.

processes at the highest level, but based on expertise; and 3) technical operational, relating to the routine operation of the system and policy implementation on the ground.

⁴ Ríhová, H. et al (2016): *Developing skills foresights, scenarios and forecasts*. European Training Foundation, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, International Labour Office.

Demographic and social change

Aging of the population

For more than two decades, Polish society has been aging rapidly, as fertility rates have fallen, the number of inhabitants of the country representing lower age groups has decreased, and the number of people in productive and post-productive age is growing. In the years 2003-2020, the number of people in the 15-19 age group, i.e. participating in post-primary education, including vocational schools, decreased from 3.1 to 1.8 million. In the same period, the group of 20-24, i.e. including post-primary school graduates, dropped from 3.3 to 2 million. Forecasts suggest a slight increase in the number of people in these years until 2030, and then a further decrease to 1.7 and 1.9 million, respectively, for both groups in 2035 and 1.6 and 1.7 million in 2040. The number of people of working age will decrease for the benefit of the population in retirement age, with a simultaneous steady decline in the number of people from the lowest age groups. This means a constant increase in the age dependency, the risk of significant deficits in the workforce, and a growing generation gap in companies, especially in the case of sectors and jobs considered unattractive by learning youth.

Economic emigration

After the European Union accession in 2004, there was a phenomenon of mass economic emigration to the countries of Western Europe, especially to the UK, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands. The number of people temporarily staying in the territory of EU countries has been growing systematically until 2017, when it reached the level of 2.1 million people⁵. Initially, the most numerous group of economic migrants were young people aged 20-29, while recently the most frequent emigrants were representatives of the 30-39 age group. In the following years, there was a decrease in the number of economic emigrants to less than 1.9 million in 2020 (EU + the UK), caused by such factors as the improvement of the labour market situation in Poland, Great Britain's exit from the European Union or the Covid-19 pandemic. However, at the end of 2021, the number of people declaring an intention to leave the country for work during the next year increased significantly - almost twice as compared to September 2018, and on average for a longer period (6 months vs. 3 months) than earlier. The respondents were also more often than in previous editions of the study strongly determined to take such a step⁶.

Economic immigration

Significant labour force shortages caused by negative demographic trends and economic emigration are compensated by immigration, mainly from Ukraine and other Eastern European countries, and more and more often also from non-European countries, especially in South Asia. Currently, according to the data of Statistics Poland, about 1 million only Ukrainian citizens reside legally and work in Poland, after simplified procedures for temporary stay and employment of residents of selected Eastern European countries were introduced in previous years. The presence of numerous workers from countries with lower social and employment standards can pose a challenge for domestic workers - especially in the lower segments of the labour market - as immigrants are ready to accept less favourable employment conditions and lower wages.

Economy and technology

Fast economic growth and increased demand for employee

After the economic slowdown in 2008-2012, which was relatively mild in Poland compared to other European Union countries, there was a several-year period of rapid economic growth and a radical improvement in the situation on the labour market. At the same time, the unemployment rate remained at an elevated level, especially among young people, throughout the entire period

⁵ Statistics Poland (2021). *Information on the size and directions of temporary emigration from Poland in the years 2004-2020. Signaling Information*, Warsaw.

⁶ Zawadzka D., Borkowska G., Jaworowska B. (2021). *Migracje zarobkowe Polaków. Edycja X. Listopad 2021 [Economic Migrations of Poles, Edition X, November 2021]*, Gi Group.

of the political transformation and in the following years, reaching around 20% in certain periods. The registered unemployment rate, after reaching over 14% at the beginning of 2013, systematically decreased to slightly more than 5% at the end of 2019⁷. The restrictions and the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic only temporarily and slightly increased this indicator, which in the second half of 2021 did not exceed 6%. The unemployment rate as measured by the Labour Force Survey methodology was even lower, reaching 3% in the third quarter of 2021.

As a consequence, companies in numerous sectors have begun to report significant labour shortages and difficulties in recruiting qualified employees in the last few years. According to the Statics Poland (GUS) data, the highest number of vacancies at the end of 2020 was recorded in the following sectors: manufacturing (21.2 thousand), trade and repair of motor vehicles (approx. 12 thousand), construction (approx. 9 thousand) as well as transport and warehouse management (approx. 8 thousand)⁸. However, these data do not fully reflect the shortages of employees experienced by Polish companies. For example, a representative of an organisation from the transport industry present at the workshop mentioned the missing over 100,000 employees, which companies compensate by employing people from beyond the eastern border of the country.

Almost half of all vacancies at the end of 2020 were jobs for vocational school graduates: industrial workers and craftsmen, machine and equipment operators and assemblers, as well as technicians and representatives of other middle-level personnel.

Labour market

Mismatch between the competences of vocational school graduates and the needs of companies

Even in the period of much higher unemployment than today, companies experienced significant problems with recruiting employees representing vocational education professions. A specific paradox of the Polish labour market was indicated, consisting in the coexistence of significant unemployment among people with vocational education (approx. 700 thousand people in 2015) and problems with recruitment for this type of jobs⁹. Even today, with a very low unemployment rate, unsuccessful jobseekers account for a greater proportion of those with vocational education than among those with tertiary education. This is despite the widespread belief that too many people in Poland obtain a university degree. The problem is, therefore, the low quality of education in vocational schools, caused by their collapse in the 1990s and the mass resignation from this field of education by more talented youth¹⁰. A particular problem is the relatively low prevalence of dual education and the weakness of practical training, based in many cases on short-term apprenticeships at the end of the entire education cycle¹¹.

Education and training

Unfavourable image of vocational schools

Persisting for years an unfavourable image of vocational schools, perceived by young people as schools of further choice, without such a great chance for professional success as tertiary education, constitutes a significant obstacle to the development of vocational education. The interviews with school headmasters clearly show that young people who obtained worse learning outcomes at the primary school stage are much more likely to go to vocational schools - especially first-stage sectoral schools. Their students are also often burdened with an unfavourable social background (addictions, problems with the law), which is an additional challenge for employers

⁷ Statistics Poland data.

⁸ Statistics Poland (2021). *Popyt na pracę w IV kwartale 2020 r. Informacje sygnałowe [Demand for Labour in the first quarter of 2020. Signal information]*, Warsaw 2021.

⁹ Kabaj M. (2016). *The main barriers in implementation of dual vocational education system in Poland*, 'Social Policy' 2016 no. 9, p. 15-23. Available from: <https://www.ipiss.com.pl/psnumery/510m>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

who want to enrol students for practical training. A kind of self-fulfilling prophecy mechanism is at work here: the expected low quality of education causes a negative selection of primary school graduates, even despite the growing public awareness of the usefulness of many vocational education professions. The crisis of basic vocational schools (replaced as a result of the 2017 reform with sectoral schools) is evidenced by the decrease in the number of their students from 561 thousand in the 1999/2000 school year to just 190 thousand in the 2014/15 school year. Recently, there has been a slight increase in their number already in first-stage sectoral schools, which in the 2020/21 school year amounted to 202 thousand¹².

The attitudes of students and their parents towards vocational education are changing gradually, but it is a slow process. It was assumed to be accelerated by the changes described below in the structure of vocational education. It is especially about introducing two-stage sectoral schools enabling further education, even at a tertiary level, in place of the ill-reputed basic vocational schools. An important factor of change, as discussed later in this report, would be the reform of the educational counselling system, which has still not been fully implemented to a satisfactory degree.

Changes in the legal framework for the functioning of VET

Since 2012, a number of significant legislative changes have been introduced regarding the functioning of vocational education. It was, among others:

- Introducing a new classification of VET occupations, and then of so-called sectoral education occupations, as well as a new structure of professions based on the division into qualifications and a new, more modern core curricula; providing sectoral organisations with an opportunity to influence the structure of occupations classification and the content of education (including core curricula) - see Scenario 1 later in this report.
- Introducing a new standard for describing qualifications using the description of learning outcomes; introduction of the Integrated Qualifications System (ZSK), creating a coherent framework for all qualifications educated both within the public education system and by private entities, in line with the European Qualifications Framework.
- Changes in the structure of vocational education: liquidation of basic vocational schools, introduction of two-stage sectoral programmes/schools ensuring the possibility of obtaining a diploma in technical professions and approaching the matriculation examination after completing the second stage; extending the duration of study in technical secondary schools from four to five years.
- Increasing the compulsory length of practical vocational training, introducing the term ‘dual education’ into the content of legal acts, strictly defining the already existing schemes of dual education and introducing one new scheme which is student internship().
- Introducing additional incentives for vocational schools to cooperate with local employers, and even the obligation to do so in some cases (e.g. introducing a new occupation to the school's portfolio).
- Introducing an additional reimbursement of the costs of remunerating juvenile workers (the most common form of dual education in Poland) in education in occupations assessed as prospective by the ministry of education.

At the same time, stakeholders interviewed as part of the INVOLVE project and participating in the workshops pointed to the disadvantages of the introduced legal changes. The point is that they were not always thought out and implemented sufficiently carefully and there was a lack of consistency in taking subsequent decisions, which sometimes brings unexpected adverse effects. The problem is also the lack of certain important measures by the government - for example, the amount paid to employers as part of the practical training cost reimbursement has remained the same for many years.

¹² Statistics Poland data for the area ‘education and upbringing’ for different years.

Social dialogue

The weakness of social dialogue in Poland

Undoubtedly, the above-described shortcomings in the sphere of legal regulations result, at least in part, from the weaknesses of social dialogue regarding the shape of VET. Social dialogue in Poland is generally considered weak, which is manifested, among others, by a low coverage of collective bargaining, conducted mainly at the company level, or a low level of unionisation of employees¹³. At the national level, there are no tripartite bodies specifically dedicated to VET or even to the entire education system. Dialogue on the analysed area takes place on an ad hoc basis within problem teams of the Social Dialogue Council dealing with public services or economic and labour market policy, mainly when introducing major system changes is planned. Most often, however, the interactions of stakeholders with the government side are limited to issuing opinions on draft legal acts. This does not provide optimal conditions for an open debate on the shape of VET in Poland.

Growing pressure of social partners on changes in the area of VET

In recent years, under the influence of, among others, the above-mentioned trends in the economy and in the labour market, the pressure of some social partners on the government has grown in terms of the need for urgent reforms of the VET system, so that it could cope with the task of supplying the labour market with suitably qualified graduates. An expression of these aspirations was the *Resolution No. 48 of the employees and employers of the Social Dialogue Council of September 22, 2017 on the recommendation of changes in the education system in the area of vocational training*, which contained a number of proposals for changes. The most far-reaching of them was the establishment of the Vocational Education Development Fund, co-managed by employers' organisations and trade unions. However, this postulate has not yet been implemented.

4. Factors influencing the functioning of VET in the future

In this part of the report, potential factors that may affect the future of dual VET will be indicated, hence the need to take them into account when developing scenarios for increasing the involvement of social partners in co-governing VET. These factors were classified into the four dimensions suggested by Cedefop¹⁴.

Economy and employment

Persistence or further increase in labour shortages

In the light of macroeconomic forecasts, the deficit of qualified employees should be expected to remain at the current level or even increase further, including in particular middle-level technical personnel, machine and device operators and skilled workers. Forecasts of the demand for qualifications show a significant increase in the demand for employees by 2030 in sectors such as accommodation and catering services, manufacturing of wood and wooden products, activities in the field of architecture and engineering, and manufacturing of electronic and optical equipment¹⁵, in which there are a significant number of jobs related to with VET occupations. There will also be new professions in connection with the processes described below, such as green transformation or the automation and digitisation of production processes.

¹³ Cf. *ETUI National Industrial Relations Country Profiles – Poland*, available from: www.worker-participation.eu/National-Industrial-Relations/Countries/Poland

¹⁴ Leney, T., Coles, M., Grollman, P. & Vilu, R. (2004). *Scenarios toolkit*. Cedefop dossier series 8.

¹⁵ *Cedefop Skills Forecast – Poland*, available from: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/skills-forecast>.

Technological change

Green transformation, low-carbon economy

In the coming years, the Polish economy will face a very difficult challenge related to the move away from coal-based energy. It is a big problem, both economic and social, causing a lively political debate and discussion among social partners. Poland is one of the European Union countries whose electricity industry is based to the greatest extent on the combustion of fossil fuels¹⁶. In order to implement the assumptions of the European Green Deal, intensive investments will be required, both in terms of infrastructure and in the area of the structure of competences and qualifications of employees. New green professions will emerge and the demand for labour in the existing ones will increase. This will require further changes in the structure of vocational education occupations and taught content, and thus will foster the involvement of social partners who can provide up-to-date knowledge on the demand for specific competences. Other EU public policies, such as the biodiversity strategy, will also have an impact in this area.

Automation and digitisation

In parallel with the above changes, the automation and digitisation of production processes will be progressively further advanced in numerous industries resulting from the fourth industrial revolution. Therefore, the demand for specific competences within individual technical professions will increase, as well as the general requirements for digital skills in connection with the provision of work in any occupation and industry (horizontal competences). This process is already well advanced due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the use of remote communication means by numerous employees performing off-site duties. On the other hand, the stakeholder representatives who were interviewed under the INVOLVE project were deeply convinced of the necessity to conduct practical vocational training in a dual formula, so that it would be possible to provide students with contact with the most modern technologies (hardware, computer software) currently used in the economy. The growing demand for competences in the field of new technologies should therefore direct the attention of, among others, social partners for this variant of vocational education.

Society

Improving awareness of the usefulness of VET

Despite the negative image of vocational schools - especially sectoral programmes - the awareness of young people and their parents about the usefulness of vocational education should continue to improve, especially in the face of the excess of graduates of humanities from universities in the labour market. Much will depend, however, on further actions of public policy makers in the field of improving the system of educational and vocational counselling for primary school students, which should be assessed as insufficiently effective so far. Further information and promotion activities will also be necessary (here the role of social partners is possible, more on that in Scenario 2). The success of the concept of second-stage sectoral schools, which will be finished by the first graduates in the next school year, will also be important. The analysis of the fate of these people will be possible in a few years thanks to the common system of tracking graduates, for which the Educational Research Institute (IBE) is responsible.

Government policy and social dialogue

Uncertain future

The area related to the creation of public policies and social dialogue at the national level remains the largest unknown among the factors influencing the future of dual VET. Among the respondents to the INVOLVE project, opinion occurred that now, also in the face of the challenges

¹⁶ Cf. Eurostat data.

related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the discussion on this form of vocational education has lost its relevance, after some revival, which took place in the middle of the previous decade and resulted in significant legislative changes mentioned above. In order for them to be continued, the determination of stakeholders in convincing the government as to the importance of further changes in the face of economic problems (e.g. inflation) or in the sphere of other public policies (health, energy) will be needed.

5. Proposed scenarios of strengthening the role of social partners

In this part, scenarios for strengthening the role of social partners in co-governing the VET system will be presented, along with strategies for their implementation, which were discussed during the workshops on December 6, 2021.

Scenario 1. Increasing the involvement of social partners in shaping the educational offer of vocational schools

- Proposing new occupations for the classification of VET professions
- Participation in the development of core curricula and sample VET programmes
- Participation in the development of examination tasks

Justification:

Workshop participants representing employer organisations assessed that the level of knowledge among entrepreneurs about the possibilities of engaging in shaping the educational offer of vocational schools is very low. At the same time, in recent years, mechanisms for such involvement have been introduced or improved, giving, in particular, organisations representing employers the opportunity to join:

- Proposing new occupations to the classification of VET occupations, updated on an ongoing basis by the Ministry of Education and Science. In short, the process of adding a new occupation is initiated by submitting an application to the ministry responsible for the sector that the occupation will represent (e.g. Ministry of Infrastructure in the case of the occupation of a driver mechanic)¹⁷. Then the relevant expert institutions (as a rule - the Education Development Center [ORE], in cooperation with scientific institutes relevant to a given sector) prepare the core curriculum. The ministry responsible for the industry sends a request to the Ministry of Education and Science to add the educational content prepared in such a way to the regulation on core curricula. The Ministry of Education and Science presents a draft core curriculum for public consultations, in which all relevant organisations (business / employers organisations, trade unions, economic self-government organisations, local self-government organisations etc.) can present their opinion.
In addition, it is possible to participate in the creation of sectoral qualifications frameworks, which provide a detailed specification of the Polish Qualifications Framework in terms of the demand for competences and qualifications in a given sector.
- Development and updating of core curricula for sectoral VET occupations. The process is in principle analogous to that described in the point above, but only a draft modification of the core curriculum of an already existing occupation is submitted instead of submitting addition of the core curriculum of a new occupation. Social partners can make their substantive contribution to the content of the core curricula, based on the diagnosis of the need for specific competences and job specifications related to the profession. Again, support in the field of educational methodology is provided by institutions such as the Centre for the Development of Education with support of scientific institutes such as the Institute of Sustainable Technologies belonging to the Łukasiewicz Research Network.
- Preparation of examination tasks (tasks to be performed during the examination by candidates for professional qualification in order to confirm the learning outcomes). Within the framework of a project being implemented, the Central Examination Commission engages enterprises in creating the so-called ‘task banks’ (databases ultimately containing over 80,000 exam tasks). There is a role for individual companies

¹⁷ A total of 32 sectors have been distinguished and assigned to different ministries.

in both developing and reviewing assignments, as well as methodological training for the entrepreneurs involved.

Workshop participants representing the social partners mostly agreed that mechanisms enabling stakeholders to influence the educational offer of vocational schools are generally well structured and enable them to get involved. In principle, a very wide range of stakeholders (including various social organisations, trade unions, and even natural persons - experts) may be involved in the public consultation process regarding the inclusion or modification of a new profession. A possible problem, reported by some interviewees in the interviews, may be a certain lengthy process of introducing a new profession, which, however, results from the necessity of, among others, careful preparation of the description of the profession, development of the core curricula, as well as the requirement for conducting public consultations.

In the opinion of social partners, their role may be played in two basic areas. The first is involvement in the mechanisms described above, by initiating (here the role belongs primarily to employer organisations) the process of including a new occupation, updating the curriculum of an occupation already present in the classification of VET occupations, or developing tasks that can be used during vocational exams. The second task is to disseminate knowledge about these mechanisms among the widest possible spectrum of sectoral organisations that may contribute to the improvement of the educational offer of the VET system in Poland.

In the process of adding a new profession or updating its core curriculum, employer organisations have the greatest ability to provide knowledge about the competency gaps experienced by companies and job specifications for which representatives of the given occupations can be recruited. The role of trade unions is more limited, but it can also be important. By showing their support, trade unions can strengthen the position of employer organisations vis-à-vis public authorities. In addition, their mission should be to provide knowledge about the problems experienced on the labour market by representatives of specific professions, what competency gaps hinder their professional development and reduce employment opportunities - and therefore, how the taught content should be constructed in order to remedy these problems as much as possible.

At the stage of work on creating a specific profession or educational content, the role of public supporting institutions is important. They provide knowledge in the field of education methodology and the requirements resulting from the provisions of the education law. This role in Poland is played by, among others, the Education Development Centre (ORE) and some scientific institutes belonging to the Łukasiewicz Research Network (e.g. the Institute for Sustainable Technologies).

An important task of the social partners is to give opinions on new professions and qualifications in the course of public consultations, as well as the core curricula and other content of education.

Proposed strategy to increase the involvement of social partners

At the current stage of implementation and dissemination of the analysed solutions, it is crucial to **promote them among potential stakeholders** of vocational education. In the opinion of social partners, including workshop participants, the awareness of entrepreneurs regarding the possibility of influencing the shape of vocational education remains far from sufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to **inform the broadest possible range of companies potentially interested in shaping the content of education about the existing solutions**. Those individual companies or smaller sectoral organisations that do not have sufficient resources to be able to use them should be informed about the possibilities of **influencing also at the local level the content of the education programs of specific schools**. The scope of the content of the core curricula enables far-reaching supplementation with content useful from the perspective of a given enterprise, especially in the case of curricula taught in sectoral schools (in technical secondary schools the core curricula are much more extensive), which many entrepreneurs are not aware of.

In the opinion of the participants, **information activities regarding all possibilities to influence educational content** introduced in recent years, which they mentioned, could be either of a routine nature - leaflets and other information materials, messages on the websites of sectoral organisations, activity in social media - or take the form of more complex initiatives: information campaigns, training cycles and seminars, including those organised in cooperation with institutions supporting the vocational education system and conducting social dialogue in the country. Although no specific declarations were made during the workshop, it should be indicated that larger sectoral organisations, and even pick-level national employer organisations and national-level trade union organisations/federations could be responsible for information and promotion activities conducted on a larger scale, while small, local or sectoral social dialogue organisations could be involved in 'routine' activities. Public institutions supporting the vocational education system and the development of social dialogue in Poland, such as the Education Development Center, Educational Research Institute, Center for Social Partnership "Dialog" or institutes belonging to the Łukasiewicz Research Network, should play an important role in designing information campaigns and producing materials useful in conducting information activities (e.g. in the form of guidelines for social partners, infographics for publishing on the Internet and printed materials).

Scenario 2. Increasing the involvement of social partners in supporting companies providing practical training

Justification:

The participants agreed that there are objective factors that make it difficult for companies to engage in vocational education, including the dual scheme, and thus - indirectly - limit the interest of social partners in co-governing the VET system. Some of these factors have already been discussed in earlier parts of this report. They include, among others:

- Negative image of vocational schools which results in specificity of people educated in them (young people with lower educational results, often with a negative social background, with a high tendency to drop out of education).
- An unsatisfactory, not valorised for a long time amount of reimbursement of the juvenile workers employment costs, additionally subject to conditions that may not be met (e.g. failure to complete the full cycle of education by a student - apprentice).
- Complicated, extensive and incomprehensible education law and its variability over time - making it difficult to join dual education, especially for small companies that do not have their own financial and accounting services.

What seems to be a real action to be implemented is again the **dissemination of knowledge** among entrepreneurs about the **benefits** of joining dual vocational education, and then - the **rules** on which they can participate in it, and the **providing support by social partners to companies at the technical operational level** of the VET system. In the opinion of the workshop participants, it is necessary to disseminate even basic knowledge, because for many companies dual education is a foreign issue.

Proposed strategy to increase the involvement of social partners

In order to implement the above scenario, it was postulated, among others:

- Disseminating **knowledge about the benefits** resulting both for companies directly involved in dual education and for other entities from the same industry, in the form of an influx of graduates well prepared to practice their occupation. In the long run, dual training contributes to the reduction and spreading over time of the costs of recruiting and training employees, making the process more predictable.

- Disseminating **knowledge about various variants of dual education**, the principles on which it is based, and support in the scope of decisions regarding the adoption of a specific variant depending on the needs and resources of a given company.
- Disseminating knowledge about the **specificity of educational regulations**, the obligations arising from them on the side of the entrepreneur, as well as the opportunities that are offered, e.g. in the field of adapting the content of education to the specific needs of the company.
- **Support in the field of procedures** (e.g. reimbursement of costs, tax deductions), providing information on public institutions supporting companies involved in dual VET.
- Conducting **information and promotion activities** aimed at primary school students and their parents, aimed at creating a positive image of VET, its usefulness as well as the opportunities and prospects it creates for students.
- Engaging in activities related to **educational and vocational counselling**, cooperation with counsellors employed by schools and psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, providing knowledge about the specificity of individual professions and industries, support in organising open days in enterprises, craft guilds and other local business organisations.

As in the case of Scenario 1 implementation strategy, all information activities should be conducted with the use of the widest possible range of tools - both routine and in the form of comprehensive projects and information campaigns. It is recommended to search for external sources of financing these activities, including resources from the European Union structural funds. Activities, as in the case of Scenario 1, should be carried out by sectoral organisations, and it would be desirable to involve national-level employer organisations and trade union federations/organisations which have the largest resources and expertise at their disposal. Social partners should also be supported in this field by public institutions such as the Center for the Development of Education and the Educational Research Institute, or the Sector Skills Alliances existing in some parts of the country which are local or regional initiatives of sectoral organisations involved in the development of sectoral VET.