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CONFERENCE

GREEN PERSPECTIVES

OF ECONOMIC AND EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

Belgrade, 9-10 June 2022



Vocational Education to Follow Economy's Green Transition

"Green Competences" are not only needed in the so-called green sectors of the economy but should be integrated into every occupation. They are necessary, both for sustainable economic growth and for social progress and development, the participants of the conference "Green Perspectives of Economic and Education Development", which was held within the German Development Cooperation project "Dialogue on Employment Creation, Initiative and Dual Education" (DECIDE) organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (MoESTD) and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH*, agreed.

After welcome speeches by **Christian Schilling**, Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Federal Republic of Germany to Belgrade, and **Gabrijela Grujić**, Assistant Minister at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, participants had the opportunity to hear presentations by prominent experts in the field of green economy, employment and vocational education.



Christian Schilling's address at the opening of the conference



Opening speech by Gabriela Grujić

Although there is no universally accepted definition, green skills are the competencies needed by the workforce in all sectors and at all levels to help adapt products, services and processes in transformation due to climate change and environmental requirements and regulations.

Conference participants agree that vocational education, due to its strong links with the labour market, plays a key role in training participants, both students in initial vocational education and adults who are already on the labour market, building the competencies needed for the transition to a sustainable society and economy.

Speaking about guidelines for creating and establishing vocational education for sustainable development, **Barbara Hemkes** (German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training/BiBB) pointed out that in that process it is necessary to integrate "green competences" into curricula and legislation. She also emphasised that for the successful implementation of vocational education for sustainable development, measures such as capacity building within companies, training of lecturers, cooperation between schools and companies, as well as regional networking are important.

Dr Klaus-Dieter Mertineit (Institute for Sustainable TVET and Management Services) emphasised the importance of vocational education in creating a sustainable economy and society. Vocational education should continue to be oriented to the needs of the economy, but by dealing with new technological developments and respecting economic and structural changes when it comes to the modernization of educational profiles. The central elements of the "greening" of vocational education are the diversity of places for learning, additional qualification of teaching staff, as well as cooperation between vocational schools and companies.



Positive Impact of Green Transition on Employment

Tim Schreiber from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion recalled the predictions that the green transition will have an overall positive impact on employment, if accompanying public policies are developed and implemented. He pointed out that it is important for the green transition to be fair and inclusive, which implies that as many people as possible master the knowledge and skills needed for this transition.

Jovan Protić from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) emphasised the necessity that "green" jobs contain all the elements of dignified work, and that the implementation of the green transition requires the rule of law and the protection of property rights, for example in areas such as waste management. He said that a "just transition" requires clearly formulated policies for the transition to a green economy and quality social dialogue.



Address by Jovan Protić from the International Labour Organisation

Striving for an educational system focused on sustainable development is one of the specific strategic goals in the Strategy for the Development of Education and Training in the Republic of Serbia until 2030. This was also the topic of the first panel of the conference called **Green Agenda in Vocational Education**, which presented the results of the analysis of the *Green Transition in the Economy and its Effects on the Education System in Serbia*¹. In a survey in which 26 companies in the dual education system participated, the largest percentage of respondents declared that knowledge should be improved in secondary schools, primarily in the area of waste reduction and management (85%), followed by renewable energy sources (80%), energy efficiency (73%), water conservation (58%), circular economy (50%) and regulatory framework and environmental standards (50%). Based on the overall results of the survey, it was concluded that it is necessary to improve the coherence of public policies of all sectors, to build institutional capacities for assessments and forecasts of global trends in areas such as green transition and digitalization, and to raise general awareness of sustainability issues related to the production and consumption of goods and service.

The panellists agreed that vocational education should contribute to increasing awareness of the strengthening of the green agenda, whose principles have already been integrated into teaching and learning programmes in Serbia through newly developed and modernised qualification standards.

¹ The analysis for the needs of the DECIDE project was done by Professor Sanja Filipović, PhD.



It was pointed out that Serbia is awaiting a process of intensive harmonisation with the principles of the Green Agenda, especially if it is taken into account that in 2020 Serbia signed the so-called Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the countries of the Western Balkans, which recognizes the “European Green Deal”, which represents a new strategy for the growth of the European Union as a modern, climate-neutral and competitive economy that relies on the efficient use of resources.

The speakers also referred to the Resolution on the new strategic framework in the field of education and training until 2030, which was adopted by the European Union in 2021 and which unequivocally shows that the green and digital transition, through socially just transformation, is the main focus EU for the next decade, so it should be the same for Serbia as a candidate country.

Quality Work-Based Learning Increases Employment Prospects

The second day of the conference started with the **Dual Education in Serbia** panel, and what was highlighted as the biggest achievement so far is the fact that work-based learning is precisely regulated today and that there is a continuous interest of students in dual education. In the 2021/2022 school year, 150 secondary vocational schools implemented at least one of the 54 dual educational profiles, which were attended by over 10,000 students. School principals pointed out that cooperation with employers only improves over time, which enables students quality work-based learning, and later increases the prospects for employment, which is certainly one of the biggest benefits of dual education.

When it comes to challenges, the harmonisation of what students learn in school and companies, licensing of instructors and ensuring the quality of work-based learning stood out. In addition, business representatives believe that increasing the number of hours that students spend in companies should be considered.



Working atmosphere at the conference

Regional Training Centres – Support to City and Entire Country

As part of the third panel, **Concept of School as a Regional Training Centre**, a dialogue was initiated regarding the establishment of regional training centres in Serbia, which are part of the strategic goals of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development. By establishing them, conditions are created for effective training of students and adult trainees on modern equipment. Also, the goal of each regional centre is to, both in the short and long term, support the economic development of the city in which it is located, as well as the entire country. In this sense, regional centres in Serbia should become an important resource for professional education as well as for bridging the lack of qualified labour in areas where there is a deficit of competent personnel.

The assessment of the panellists is that the regional centres will have a positive effect on the overall socio-economic development of the city and its immediate surroundings, which is also the experience of the principals of school centres from Slovenia. They presented their business models and specifics, stating that their centres are also very active in applying for and implementing various projects and programmes financed by EU funds.

Recognition of Prior Learning – an Alternative Route to Qualifications

Participants in the final panel of the conference dealt with the topic of establishing a system of **recognition of prior learning** (RPL). This procedure gives the opportunity to adults who for various reasons did not complete their education, to assess and recognize the knowledge and skills acquired through training, life and work experience, and to obtain an official document of acquired competences, or a certificate confirming the acquired qualification, for such recognised knowledge. The qualification obtained through this procedure is equated on the labour market with the qualification obtained through formal education, which for many will mean greater employment opportunities, better working conditions and higher earnings.



Participants of the final panel dedicated to the establishment of the system of recognition of prior learning (RPL)

The panellists pointed out that the current systemic activities in this area are aimed at increasing the number of procedures carried out by publicly recognised organisers of adult education activities (PROAEA), approving the status of PROAEA for RPL, developing methods and instruments, as well as monitoring and continuously improving the quality of the RPL procedure. Special attention is paid to the training of professionals involved in RPL, including school staff.

The MoESTD, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs, the National Employment Service and the Institute for the Improvement of Education and Training, decided to pilot RPL procedure for the following qualifications: baker, cook, butcher, carpenter, fashion tailor, armourer-concrete worker, facade mason, operator of construction machinery and carpenter. So far, three schools have been verified for the RPL procedure, the Subotica Polytechnic School, the Vlasotince Technical School and the Drvoart Technical School from Belgrade, for a total of 10 programmes.

It was also concluded that a functional RPL system will have a positive effect on the relatively unfavourable educational structure of the population in Serbia, according to which one third of the population over 15 years of age has no qualifications for the labour market.

More detailed information about the conference,
panels and presentations of the main speakers is available on the website of [DECIDE project](https://www.decideprojekat.org).

German Development Cooperation project
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