

Second National Stakeholders Conference on International Cooperation in Vocational and Professional Education and Training (IC-VPET)

IC-VPET Opportunities – Priorities, Paths and Perspectives

In mid-September, over 100 representatives from the fields of education, foreign trade, development cooperation, foreign relations and migration met in Biel for the second National Stakeholder Conference on International Cooperation in Vocational and Professional Education and Training (IC-VPET). Conference highlights included an animated film on IC-VPET, numerous presentations and workshop discussions from the various areas as well as a club discussion.



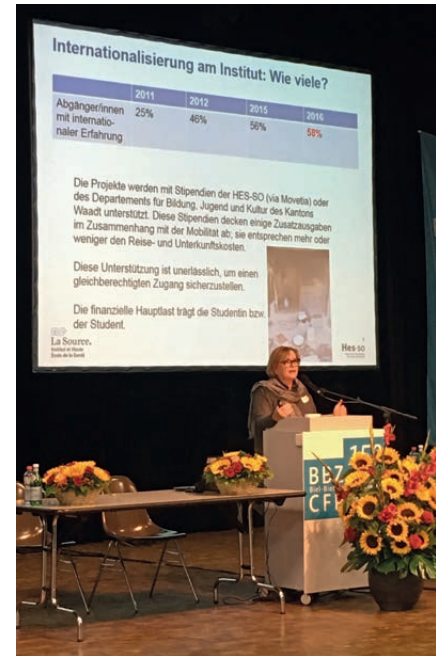
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In his opening speech, SERI Deputy Director Josef Widmer stated the following: 'IC-VPET activities pursued by the Confederation are intended to promote vocational and professional education and training in an international context. These activities focus on strengthening skills formation systems, fostering economic growth and/or reducing income disparities. The measures may therefore differ from one context to another, as may the definition of labour market-oriented skills formation. However, the objective always remains the same: skills formation systems should support the economy and society in certain contexts.'

The priorities of the federal agencies involved – namely the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Directorate of Political Affairs of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) – have each adopted different, but complementary, approaches and instruments to promote IC-VPET activities. The recently produced animated film on federal IC-VPET activities provides an illustrative

overview (see 'Additional information' below).

Considerable interest was shown in the presentation given by Dr Ute Clement, Vice President of the University of Kassel (D) and Professor of Vocational and Business Education at the Institute for Vocational Education and Training at the University of Kassel. In response to the question of how IC-VPET can make a difference, she concluded that it is a worthwhile endeavour that pays long-term dividends in all cases. IC-VPET has the potential to broaden our horizons on a professional, linguistic, social, cultural and



business policy level. Ultimately, the positive effects of these efforts on society should not be underestimated.

IC-VPET activities are worthwhile from both a private- and public-sector perspective. Marilena Della Casa, head of Human Resources at Reichle & de Massari (R&M), explained why her company chose to participate in the Domino vocational educa-

tion and training project. R&M is one of 62 companies that support Bulgaria's reform of the vocational education and training system, which Switzerland supports as part of its EU enlargement contribution.

The Source Healthcare College in Lausanne, which is part of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland (HES-SO), is pursuing a differ-

ent focus. Madeleine Baumann, Dean of the International Relations Department, stressed the importance of promoting exchange and mobility for students in the health sector. More and more students want to expand their intercultural and professional competences so that they can practice their profession in a networked world.



The event ended with a plenary panel discussion. Various actors involved in Swiss development cooperation activities in partner countries discussed IC-VPET opportunities and challenges. The motivations for the various activities and approaches pursued may differ, but there is always a common denominator: through conscious modesty and intercultural understanding, IC-VPET is able to build

bridges, promote flexibility and create prospects for everyone concerned.

In the afternoon, various workshops and a networking café facilitated in-depth discussion of the following topics: 'Inter-institutional cooperation', 'imparting expertise in the area of skill formation', 'exchange and mobility' and 'various IC-VPET projects'.

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