

CONCEPT

ON SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN THE FIELD OF PRELIMINARY (CRAFTSMANSHIP) AND MIDDLE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

FOREWORD

This concept presents the strategic issues regarding the development of social partnership in the sphere of preliminary and middle vocational education (hereafter – VET), and proposes solutions deriving from the interests of all parties. It is aimed at promoting the formation of tripartite consensus on the cooperation between RA government, employers and Trade Unions and the institutional composition of social partnership.

The establishment of social partnership in the sphere of VET is a global issue. It considers the interests of all groups of society and therefore, claims a widely-ranged public discussion, the results of which should be coordinated by RA government, employers and trade unions.

The concept is directed to the establishment of social partnership in the sphere of VET, and will contribute social partners to having equal access and responsibility to the reforms taking place in the sphere of vocational education. This will result in increasing the credit of the system of VET and the competitiveness of graduates of training institutions, and in protecting the interests in labour market, which in its turn will lead to the overcoming of poverty and the socio-economic development of the country.

After the adoption of the concept, a number of legal acts will be developed, which will identify the levels of social partnership, the scope of their activities, the rights and obligations.

The reforms, implemented in the VET system since 1999, comprised the strategic, conceptual and legislative aspects, also including some specific actions targeted to the reorganisation and updating of facilities of individual educational institutions, the introduction of module curricula and the improvement of quality, with the aim of matching the VET supply and the labour market requirements. Although a significant progress is registered, that issue remains unsolved till now. The graduates of the VET system do not completely meet the requirements of labour market and aren't sufficiently competitive. Every year 8 thousands young people graduate from the VET institutions, but often their education only partially meets the quality requirements of employers. At the same time, the VET graduates do not acquire necessary skills and knowledge to ensure their self-employment in the conditions of growing demand in the rapidly developing sectors of economy.

One of the possible solutions to the above issue can be the establishment of social partnership in the sphere of VET. As a result, on only Ministries but also employers and trade unions will be involved in the VET system governing thus forming relevant substructures, National Council of VET Development, the mission of which will be identification of the actual needs of labour market, modernisation of the educational programmes and the ways of their implementation, introductions of new mechanisms of funding and etc. All the above can be achieved through the principle of a long-term tripartite cooperation, reviewing and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of social partners.

In the Law “On Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education” and in the “Strategy of Preliminary and Middle Vocational Education and Training in Armenia” the principle of social partnership is prioritised for the development of the VET sector, are central pre-conditions for the establishment of social partnership and its further development.

Each party of social partnership today perceives and prioritises the effectiveness of such cooperation. The employers are surely motivated in playing more active role in the sphere of VET, on the other hand the trade unions began to highlight their role and significance in ensuring the enhancement of cooperation with the Government and employers. RA Government intends to show consistent political support to this form of social cooperation. Finally, employers recognise the qualifications and skills of the specialists in labour market, provide appropriate jobs for them and their well-being. The involvement of social partners in the system of VET is necessary also in rendering information, knowledge and consultation, providing practical training for students.

1. THE PRINCIPLES AND LEVELS OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN THE VET AND EMPLOYMENT SECTORS IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

The following is considered as a basis for defining the issues and main principles of social partnership in the VET sectors of Armenia: the relevant international experience; the existing conditions

and traditions in the Republic of Armenia, as well as the legal acts, concept papers, development programmes.

The main principles of Social Partnership in the field of VET are:

- 1) Equal rights of parties;
- 2) Freedom of collective negotiations;
- 3) Consideration and respect for the interests of parties;
- 4) Authorisation of the representatives of parties;
- 5) Freedom to choose issues for consideration;
- 6) Assuming obligations voluntarily;
- 7) Undertaking realistic obligations;
- 8) Adhering to the requirements of the labour legislation and other statutory legal acts by parties and their representatives.

The parties of the social partnership in the field of VET are:

- RA Government;
- Organisations representing employers/business people;
- Trade Unions.

In the field of VET the following 4 level of social partnership are defined:

- National
- Local (institutional).
- Sectoral
- Regional

2. THE ROLES AND INSTITUTIONAL COMPOSITION OF SOCIAL PARTNERS

1. On the national level, the social partnership is realised within the framework of the National Council for Development of Vocational Education and Training (NCVD), established by the Decision of the RA Prime-Minister N 1012-A, 11 December 2008.

The objectives of NCVD are:

- 1) Discuss and submit recommendations on VET Strategy, development programmes and other documents related to VET sector policy;
- 2) Discuss and submit recommendations on requirements to the planning and content of preliminary professional (craftsmanship) and middle professional education for the economy of Armenia, as well as on requirements and terms for specialists and their preparation

- 3) Discuss and submit recommendations targeted to the improvement of VET in Armenia.

The NCVD is a tripartite advisory body, the main objective of which is to provide advice on the development of VET in the Republic of Armenia to the authorised state administration body of that sector.

The NCVD provides advice on the state policy, strategy and directions of development of the VET sector; proposes establishment of bodies dealing with social partnership implemented on sectoral, regional and institutional levels.

The NCVD has 21 members, and it includes an equal number of members nominated by parties recognised as social partners.

The representatives of the following institutions may be invited to participate in the sessions of the NCVD with the right of an advisory vote: governmental stakeholder agencies; “State Employment Service” Agency of the Staff of the RA Ministry of Labour and Social Issues; the “National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development” (NCVETD) institution of the National Institute of Education; Association of Directors of State and Non-state Preliminary and Secondary Vocational Education Institutions of Armenia; Non-Governmental Organisations. Other individuals can be invited to NCVETD sessions, as may be necessary.

2. In order to ensure social partnership on the institutional level, collegial governance bodies – Governing Boards (VETGB) are established in VET institutions.

The functions of VETGBs are:

- 1) Presenting the current situation and future trends in the local market;
- 2) Preparing data for the mid-term expenditure framework of the sector in question;
- 3) Presenting data for the justification of the Development Programme of the given institution;
- 4) Providing information on the procedure and approaches of budgetary financing;
- 5) Submitting proposals aimed at the best use of the means related to students benefits;
- 6) Submitting proposals aimed at bringing the classifiers of professions and qualifications into conformity with the labour market;
- 7) Putting forward issues that are of central importance for the system and require legislative regulation;
- 8) Presenting the peculiarities of the application of relevant Government decisions;
- 9) Submitting proposals regarding the improvement of the social and labour/working conditions of students and workers;
- 10) Raising issues arising from the reality on the ground for the policy implemented in the field of vocational education;

- 11) Providing advice on the legal acts regulating the VET and Employment sectors.
- 12) At least once a year, presenting the trends and prospects of the development of relevant sectors as well as the demands of employers;
- 13) Support to the organisation of the practical training and career development of students;
- 14) Regularly providing advice on the further strategic development of the institution;
- 15) Providing advice on the continuous improvement of the quality and adequacy of the education and training provided by the institution;
- 16) Contributing to the improvement of the educational facilities of the institution;
- 17) Support to the professional development of teachers and tutors;
- 18) Participation in the designing of the Development Programmes of the institution;
- 19) Raising awareness on working safety and protection issues for relevant occupations (specialties), providing up-to-date methodological materials and literature.
- 20) Ensuring awareness, providing training and consultancy on RA Labour Code.

The individual compositions of VETGBs are approved by the authorised state governing body. VETGBs include up to 20 members and their membership consists of individuals nominated by parties recognised as social partners in the VET sector as well as individuals representing the teaching staff and the student body of the given institutions (organisation).

The membership in VETIBs is as follows:

- 1) Teacher/lecturer,
- 2) Student,
- 3) Government,
- 4) Authorised governing body,
- 5) Employers,
- 6) Trade Unions.

The seats reserved for the Authorised governing body are allocated to the representatives of relevant territorial administration or local self-government bodies.

The term of the Board is 5 academic years.

The Board:

- 1) submits recommendations on the main directions of the Institution's activities to the Authorized State Governance Body;
- 2) in accordance with the procedures established by the Founder decides on the profit management directions of the Institution;
- 3) approves its standing orders;

- 4) elects the Chair, Deputy Chair(s), and the Secretary of the Board;
- 5) Examines and approves the Director's reports,
- 6) Examines the institution's accountancy and other reports;
- 7) in accordance with the "Order of Formation of the Preliminary Professional (Craftsmanship) Education Provider Institution's Board" and "Order of Formation of the Middle Professional Education Provider Institution's Board" approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, organises and implements the election of the Institution's Director;
- 8) approves the regulations on the college inner activities, if nothing else is prescribed by the founder's decision;
- 9) approves the regulations of the college units, inner disciplinary and other rules if nothing else is prescribed by the founder's decision;
- 10) discusses the Institution's annual draft budget;
- 11) approves the Institution's Development Programmes;
- 12) discusses and submits the Draft Charter of the Institution as well as the recommendations on amendments to it to the Founder's approval;
- 13) sets the fees for one student in agreement with the authorized state body;
- 14) discusses and makes recommendations on the candidates of Chairs of the final attestation committees;
- 15) discusses the drafts of curricula and subject programmes of the Institution;
- 16) carries out other duties established by law.

3. Sectoral and regional levels

Taking into consideration the relatively small territory and limited resources of Armenia, structures (temporary or permanent sectoral (regional) councils or committees) of Social Partnership on sectoral and regional levels are established only to tackle issues specifically pertaining to a sector of economy or a region (RA marz), in case if it is necessary to establish cooperation between the social partners, based on the proposal of the NCVD.

3. FURTHER ACTIONS

As a result of the analysis of the RA VET sector and the legislation regulating social partnership issues, it has been revealed that it is necessary to make changes in a number of laws and other legal acts, thereby creating a favourable legal foundation for efficient and equal rights social partnership and ensuring developments that are in tune with international approaches.