

Programme Of Vocational Education and Training Reforms for 2012-2016

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 2012-2016 Vocational Education and Training Reforms Programme (hereafter the Programme) has been developed based on the Presidential Decree No NH-37-N, dated February 7, 2007 “On Approving the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia”, the provisions of the GoA Decree No 1207-N dated October, 30, 2008 “On Approving the Sustainable Development Programme”, and in compliance with the strategic approaches and priorities of the RA Law No HO-246 “On Approving the National Education Development Plan for 2011-2015”, dated June 23, 2011 Development of Education.

2. The Programme is also based on the “RA Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education and Training Strategy”, as well as on the results achieved by the projects implemented within the budget support programme of the European Union Sectoral Policy Support Programme Action Plan for 2007 and 2009, namely the “Sectoral Policy Support Programme under the 2007 Action Plan targeted at Poverty Reduction through VET Sector reforms implementation” and the Programme on Vocational Education Trainings Reforms Continuation and Employment Concept Development, phase 2.

3. The programme is targeted to ensure gradual development and dissemination of the Vocational Education and Training (hereafter VET) sector achievements and the experience of the 12 Regional Multifunctional Colleges, outlining the main directions of the reforms.

II. VET SECTOR SITUATION CHARACTERISTICS

4. In the current stage of the social-economic development of the Republic of Armenia the quality vocational education and training has a crucial role and the provision and availability of such is one of the most important factors to support the social-economic development and mitigate the poverty and inequality.

5. The reforms of the recent years allowed solving a number of issues existing in the system, stabilising the situation and creating prerequisites for further development. An essential step in the VET reforms implementation was the adoption of the Law on Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education, No HO-164-N, dated July 8, 2005. It regulates the principles of state policy of the Republic of Armenia, organisational and financial grounds, as well as rights and responsibilities of legal and physical persons in the system of Preliminary and Middle Vocational Education.

6. The current reform in the sector of Preliminary (craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education is targeted at improvement of the vocational education quality improvement, and capacity building of training relevant professionals in compliance with the labour market demand and European standards.

7. In the scope of Sectoral Policy Support Programmes (SPSP) for 2007 and 2009 the reforms have mainly been implemented in the direction of elaboration and introduction of standards and modular curricula of the professions of Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education, training of the teaching personnel, modernisation of educational-methodological materials, enrichment and refurbishment of the material-technical base, as well as improvement of building conditions of the educational institutions.

8. In 2010-2011 academic year there were 104 educational institutions implementing the preliminary (craftsmanship) and middle vocational education programmes, of which 25 were offering preliminary (craftsmanship) education and 79 – middle vocational education. The total number of students for that period counts for about 36,500.

9. Besides, there were 21 private middle vocational educational institutions in the republic, with about 1,600 student population.

10. The number of pedagogical staff involved in the middle vocational education is 3,358, of which 81% are permanent (full time) staff and 86.9% have higher education. Only 0.9% of the pedagogical staff has scientific degrees and 0.2% have academic titles. The student/teacher ratio in this system is 9.24.

11. There are 156 professions taught in RA VET system. There are 100 state educational standards developed for craftsmanship and middle vocational education sector.

12. To guide the reforms started within the scope of SPSP in 2008 there was established the National Council for Vocational Education and Training Development (VET Council), which has equal representation of RA Government, Employers and Trade Unions. The VET Council is a social partnership institutional structure on national level and during its operations has adopted a number of important decisions for the VET system.

13. With the purpose of democratisation of educational institutions and sustainability of the social partnership on the local level in 2009 in the educational institutions there were established collegial management bodies – Boards, that are composed of representatives of the state, employers, trade unions, pedagogical staff and students. The Board members regularly participate in trainings related to the management issues.

14. In 2007-2011 about 3,000 Directors, Deputy Directors and teachers have been trained with the purpose of strengthening of pedagogical and management staff of the preliminary and middle vocational education institutions. Trainings have been implemented in the format of monitoring and counselling, based on the Action plan, questionnaire and support materials elaborated in advance.

15. Approximately 28.4% of the state expenditures planned for professional education programmes are directed at middle vocational education. There is a steady tendency of growth of state financing in the middle vocational education system traced on annual basis and it is conditioned by the current reforms in the system, including the poverty reduction target of the latter.

16. The RA Government Decree No 332-N dated March 31, 2011 approved the RA National Qualification Framework (QNF) and the Decree No 1230-A dated August 2011 approved the Schedule of activities aimed at introduction and operation of the NQF; according to that schedule it is planned to implement a range of contextual changes in the VET system, too.

17. Within the scope of EU budget support to Armenia in 2010 was approved and is currently implemented the “Vocational Education Training Reforms Continuation and Employment Concept Development- 2” the main goal of which is to ensure the continuation of VET reforms.

18. This programme is targeted at progressive, international standards oriented development of the VET sector through the expansion of results and experience within the scope of projects implemented with the EU budget support to Armenia. Reforms implemented in Preliminary and Middle Vocational Education sector are oriented at integration into the European education area.

III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE VET SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

19. At the current stage, the strategic goal of the education system development is, accepting the contemporary challenges, to record such problem solution and progress outcomes that would move up education and knowledge rating.

20. The VET sector development policy is aimed at promoting the qualities supporting the growth and development of individual cognition and appreciation; preparation of the professionals competitive in labour market; development of transparent, accountable and democratic education system anchored at universal values, which would become an example to follow and a favourable environment for the formation and development of personal values.

21. Given the socio-economic development and large scale investments projects running in Armenia the provision of relevant work force, as well as the development of small and medium enterprises sets forth new challenges and requirements for the preliminary and middle vocational education system. The demand for professionals with preliminary and middle vocational education is growing on annual basis, especially in the service provision, social and economic sectors.

22. VET sector development is conditioned by the following factors:

- 1) Social-economic development trends;
- 2) Scientific-technical fast changes happening in the world,
- 3) Formation of the labour market demand;
- 4) Provision of access to education for the youth from rural areas;
- 5) Efficient utilisation of capacities and resources.

23. One of the most significant objectives of the VET sector is the education quality enhancement, providing the effective operation of the system and the rights of the citizens to get education relevant to their aspirations and capabilities in equal conditions.

24. The main objectives of the VET sector development are:

- 1) Elaboration of investment policy encouraging the exceptional achievement-oriented programmes;
- 2) Reform leading capacity strengthening;
- 3) Increase transparency and direct accountability to the public;
- 4) Improvement of the education content and standards;
- 5) Capacity building of the teaching and management staff;

- 6) Institutional reforms of the system;
- 7) Expansion of participation in international networks;
- 8) Bringing the educational programmes in line with the social-economic development requirements;
- 9) Development and introduction of short-term training programmes.
- 10) Involvement of the vocational education institutions in the organisation and implementation of adult learning and education.

25. The formation of comprehensive social partnership in VET sector, involvement and active participation of employers in governance functions will support the efficient implementation of VET sector reforms and its further development; particularly fast respond to the requirements of certain sectors of growing economy.

26. There is also need for effective international collaboration development mechanisms to establish connections with the similar educational institutions abroad. This kind of collaboration allows comparing and improving the results achieved bringing those in compliance with international standards.

IV. MAIN DIRECTIONS OF REFORMS

27. Implementation of VET sector reforms demands essential increase in VET management system efficiency, development of the potential of the management units and the teaching staff, modernise the VET content by providing the compliance of the latter to modern requirements.

28. Providing the gradual development and dissemination of the achievements already recorded in VET sector, the 2012-2016 reforms will be implemented in the following directions:

- 1) Integration of the VET system into the European vocational education area,
- 2) Increase of VET system management efficiency;
- 3) Upgrading VET reputation and image;
- 4) Expansion of social partnership in VET sector.

29. Main reform directions in VET system in 2012-2016 involve the following activities:

- 1) Introduction of the national qualifications framework for VET;
- 2) Introduction of credit system in VET sector;
- 3) Study of the VET sector reform experience of the European countries ;
- 4) Application of Copenhagen process principles in Armenia;
- 5) Ensure of access to VET institutions for the persons with special education needs;
- 6) Continuous strengthening of the human resource capacities of VET system through administrative staff, teaching staff and management Board member trainings;
- 7) Establishment of Career Centres in VET institutions;
- 8) Organisation of awareness raising campaigns on VET;
- 9) Expansion of cooperation with the employers in the process of vocational education and training organisation and implementation;
- 10) Development of the partnership with employers in VET system.

V. THE PRINCIPLES OF VET REFORM IMPLEMENTATION

30. VET sector reforms will be implemented in compliance with the 2012-2016 Activity Schedule based on the given programme.

31. Programme implementation will be conditioned by dissemination of the results and current practices of the twelve Regional Multifunctional Colleges, as well as by the provision of consistent development.

32. One of the most important conditions is the political support and the effective reform implementation guidance. The establishment of social partnership is also considered to be important for the VET sector development, particularly for putting the VET supply and local labour market demands in compliance.

33. With this purpose the dissemination of the practices and results of the twelve Multifunctional colleges will support the reorganisation of the VET institutions in all Marzes of Armenia into the ones meeting the international quality standards.

34. VET reforms will be driven by substantial content changes of the sector, improvement of legal framework, provision of improved education services and professional orientation service, introduction of mechanisms for assessment of prior learning outcomes, as well as creation of educational-material base and necessary conditions.

35. An important role in successful implementation of VET reforms on the level of provision and management of education services play the pedagogical and administrative staff of the educational institutions. Their capacities will be improved through training and the creation of social guarantees will help to raise the reputation and the level of involvement of the teaching staff.

36. Thus, the reform of the VET system will be implemented through the identification and development of model centres on the one hand and the creation of similar centres – on the other hand. They will assume the leading and promoting role in the reforms implementation process. To provide the balanced development of the education system the policy of creating “centres of excellence” in all Marzes of Armenia needs to be applied. To ensure the utmost impact of those Centres it is necessary to support their inter-relationships as with each other so with foreign institutions.

37. The activities planned in 2012-2016 Action Plan schedule will be implemented through separate programmes, which will be introduced in the RA State Midterm Expenditure Framework and the State Budget. The programmes will be developed and implemented by the state international and non-governmental organisations, as well as with the active involvement of social partners. All the programmes implemented by the beneficiaries and in line with VET sector development goals will be involved in the Programme List.

VI. EXPECTED RESULTS

38. The major results expected as outcome of VET sector 2012-2016 reforms are:

- 1) Compatibility of the VET National Qualifications Framework with the European Qualification Framework.
- 2) Credit system based VET education;
- 3) Raising the awareness on the VET sector international developments;
- 4) Compliance of the VET sector regulating legislation with the Copenhagen process principles;
- 5) Raising the level of accessibility of VET system for the people with special education needs;

- 6) Raising the efficiency of the organisation and implementation, as well as management of education;
- 7) 12 Regional Colleges provide career development advisory and other services;
- 8) Higher level of awareness on VET sector among the public;
- 9) Organisation of practical educational and industrial internship at the employers'.
- 10) Development of educational methodological materials and recommendations with the involvement of employers' representatives.

SCHEDULE
OF 2012-2016 VET REFORMS PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

| Main directions | Activities | Expected Results | Achievements indicators | Timeline |
|---|---|--|---|-----------------|
| 1. Integration of RA Vocational education and training system into European vocational education area | 1.1 Introduction of the VET National Qualifications framework | Compatibility of the National Qualifications Framework with the European Qualifications framework | Approved VET qualifications per VET occupation | 2012-2013 |
| | 1.2 Introduction of credit system into VET sector | Implementation of credit system in VET education | Introduced and operating credit system | 2013-2016 |
| | 1.3 study of the experience of European countries in VET sector reforms | Raise of awareness of international developments in the VET sector | VET Information management operating system | 2012-2016 |
| | 1.4 application of Copenhagen process principles in Armenia | Bringing the VET sector regulating legislation in compliance with the Copenhagen process principles | Revised legal acts and/or New legal acts adopted | 2012-2016 |
| | 1.5 Provision of VET institutions accessibility for the persons with special education needs. | Increase of level of accessibility of the VET institutions for the persons with special education needs. | Relevant conditions available in VET sector | 2013-2016 |
| 2. Raise the VET system management efficiency | 2.1 Continuous capacity building of human resources of VET system, including the trainings of administrative and pedagogical staff and Management Board members of the VET institutions | Increase of the organisation and implementation of the education process, as well as the effectiveness of management | Approved training programs and schedule. Number of trained professionals 1000/year. | 2012-2016 |
| | 2.2 Creation of Career Centres in VET | 12 Regional Colleges provide counselling | Operating Professional orientation and Career | 2013-2016 |

| Main directions | Activities | Expected Results | Achievements indicators | Timeline |
|---|---|--|---|-----------|
| | institutions | sufficient for career development and provide other services | Centres | |
| 3. Raise of reputation and prestige of VET system | 3.1. Organisation of VET sector related public information campaigns | High level of awareness of the VET sector among the public/in society | Public campaigns organised and implemented in the following directions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV and Radio programs, • Development of Promo commercials, video materials and putting those on air • Development and distribution of informational materials | 2012-2016 |
| 4. Development/s trengthening of social partnership in VET sector | 4.1 Expansion of collaboration with the employers in the process vocational education and training organisation | Organisation of training and industrial internships at the Employers' sites | Trainings and industrial internships is organised at the Employers sites | 2013-2016 |
| | 4.2 Expansion of VET system partnership with the Employers | Elaboration of educational methodological materials and references with the involvement of Employers | Developed educational methodological materials, such as National Education Standards, Modular programs, Manuals, Guidelines etc. | 2012-2016 |

