

# PROPOSAL OF THE CONFEDERATION OF HUNGARIAN EMPLOYERS AND INDUSTRIALISTS:

## VET strategy in a knowledge-based, innovative society

Tinkering with the existing system is not enough to meet the new challenges. We therefore propose a complex solution based on positive incentives for families, employers and those working in educational institutions.

We are geared towards the modernised German dual vocational training system, which is valid until 2030. Our aim is to attract young people to VET who meet the growing expectations of companies and where the status of the employee is the decisive factor for employment and apprenticeship training.

### 1. Introduction of an optional preparatory year in primary education

At primary level, consideration should be given to introducing a preparatory year between kindergarten and the first year of primary school (of the parents' choice), which is expected to have further positive benefits.

### 2. Introduction of a basic skills test at the end of primary school

The prerequisite for graduating from primary school is participation in a nationally standardised test of basic skills, in which the level of basic reading, writing, comprehension and arithmetic skills is assessed. The basic skills test is intended to ensure that only those who are not functionally illiterate and fulfil the minimum requirements are admitted to vocational schools, secondary vocational schools and grammar schools. The test also measures and evaluates the performance of teachers and schools, thus providing important information on the effectiveness of their work.

The first important milestone for the measurement and assessment of nationally standardised basic skills and competences should be at the end of the fourth year of primary school. In light of the findings, each school should draw up a development plan to further address inequalities and disadvantages among students, utilising the full range of educational development tools.

### 3. Organisation of bridging programmes to prepare for VET

Those who do not pass the basic skills test should not be allowed to enter the vocational training phase and should be offered one- or two-year bridging programmes to prepare them for VET. The aim is to acquire the basic skills to be able to pass the repeated basic skills test, as well as to begin basic vocational training and socialisation for work and to prepare for the start of VET.

The task of the one-year vocational preparation programme is to prepare students for obtaining a vocational qualification through vocational orientation and basic vocational training in parallel to consolidating and catching up on basic skills. They will then have the opportunity to enter the dual system at vocational grammar schools or secondary vocational schools. And the new co-operative model should be made possible in the basic vocational training phase. In this way, as many students as possible can be involved in work-based learning at company training centres.

The main aim of the two-year vocational preparation programmes is to motivate students with multiple disadvantages and/or mild disabilities and help them to overcome school failure by ensuring that lifestyle competences and basic skills are developed to such an extent that students emerge from functional illiteracy and are then prepared for vocational training and admission to vocational school through basic vocational training.

### 4. Raising the compulsory school age to 18 years

With the possibility of basic education after kindergarten and the introduction of a three-year secondary vocational school, the time for completing secondary education will be extended to the age of 18. This is not about reintroducing the age limit, but about adapting to the new changes in the school structure.

### 5. The role of vocational and career counselling, professional aptitude and career marketing

Among the best practices, we recommend the nationwide implementation of the career counselling software package in Székesfehérvár.

We propose the nationwide introduction of a vocational aptitude test for applicants to vocational schools and vocational grammar schools, which takes into account the results of the basic skills test before leaving primary school and the expectations and standards set out in the vocational examination requirements.

6. It is of particular importance that the knowledge acquired in vocational grammar schools enables graduates to gain access to higher education at least to the same extent as if they had completed a normal grammar school.

The aim is to re-establish vocational education and training based on the school-leaving exam, restore motivation for higher vocational education, recognise prior learning in the form of credits and strengthen the attractiveness of VET and the transition to the world of work. Vocational grammar schools must once again give young people the opportunity to go on to higher education by offering a full school-leaving certificate.

7. An important new element is a scholarship and an apprenticeship allowance, adjusted to the current minimum wage and provided jointly by the state and employers.

The state scholarship system should be based on the principle of a general monthly average scholarship amounting to 40% of the net minimum wage for vocational school students and 60% for students in vocational grammar schools.

The apprenticeship allowance should be raised to at least 60% of the current minimum wage for vocational school students and at least 40% for students in vocational grammar schools. This amount would be paid by the business entities from their own funds, so that these expenses would be regarded as non-taxable benefits.

8. Enhancing the employment status as a decisive factor in apprenticeship training, for students in vocational schools and vocational grammar schools

The employment status of students in vocational schools and vocational grammar schools should be strengthened. Students can be admitted to the vocational training institution after signing the apprenticeship contract.

#### 9. Responsibility of business entities

In order to increase the motivation of companies participating in the programme, we propose changing the apprenticeship training so that they can pay the salaries of the teachers, the legally prescribed allowances and the necessary equipment from the apprenticeship levy. The average salary of teachers should be three times the minimum wage. We recommend ensuring the financing of teachers' salaries in companies with at least 5 trainees and promoting the employment of additional teachers in accordance with the legally stipulated group size.

10. The establishment of high-tech centres has become inevitable as rapid technological advances have limited the availability of cutting-edge, expensive or unique machinery and equipment for a growing number of jobs. These centres would be responsible for certifying and issuing skills portfolios, partial qualifications and vocational qualifications as well as for the recognition of non-formal and informal knowledge.

#### 11. Establishment of independent examination and competence centres

The output- and performance-oriented regulation, assessment and measurement of examination performance requires that the final professional examination boards work based on a set of criteria independent of the teachers. The main aim is to ensure that the apprenticeship certificate has real value. It seems sensible for the inter-company technology and knowledge equivalence centres to also function as regional examination centres, which should also play a major role in the nationwide standardised master craftsman training and examination.

#### 12. Establishment of Dual Training Councils

Dual Training Councils and Offices need to be established to manage, monitor and ensure the quality of vocational training tasks related to apprenticeship training in companies.

#### 13. Introduction of a performance-based funding system for vocational training centres

There are currently 44 vocational training centres with a capacity utilisation between 50 and 60% due to the well-known demographic changes and declining interest in VET. Vocational schools should be developed into training centres with complex tasks based on the German model.

#### 14. We propose the establishment of a Research Institute for Vocational Training Development and Adult Education

It would be responsible for analysing and adapting scientific VET research, international best practice and implementing pilot programmes to ensure that government decisions and legislative changes in VET are based on facts and evidence. An important task would be to carry out empirical studies that could serve as a basis for monitoring the skills needs of the labour market. The results could be used to identify trends in the development and change of jobs as well as fundamental changes in the structure of training and education and to measure the satisfaction of companies with young skilled workers. In addition to international research, an important task would be to prepare and implement international vocational competitions and to organise and implement the “National Vocational Skills Competition” (OSZTV) and the “Outstanding Vocational Student” (SZKTV) competition within a uniform framework.

#### 15. Recruiting teachers is important

A one-month summer training programme (a kind of summer internship) should be introduced every year for teachers who give theoretical and practical lessons in schools. As part of their compulsory teacher training, they could take part in accredited further training

courses embedded in the work processes of state-of-the-art technology companies, for which they would be granted credits.

Participation in this type of training should be given greater weight in the evaluation and certification of teachers every five years.

In teacher training, we propose the introduction of a professional aptitude test as an admission requirement.

**Key elements of our proposal package:**

- Introduction of an optional preparatory year in primary education
- Introduction of a basic skills test (at the end of fourth grade and at the end of primary school)
- Bridging programmes to prepare for VET
- Raising the compulsory school age to 18 years
- The role of vocational and career counselling, professional aptitude and career marketing
- Access from a vocational grammar school to higher education
- State scholarship programme,
- Apprenticeship allowance,
- Employment status of students,
- Responsibility of business entities,
- Establishment of high-tech centres,
- Establishment of independent examination and competence centres,
- Establishment of Dual Training Councils,
- Introduction of a performance-based funding system for vocational training centres
- Establishment of a Research Institute for Vocational Training Development and Adult Education
- Recruiting teachers