

**Workshop and Call for Papers for the
5th Crossing Boundaries Conference 2023 on**
(Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania, 25 – 26 May 2023)

**Increasing Work-Based Learning in School-Based Systems:
Broadening the Governance of Vocational Education and Training
in Central and Eastern European Countries**

We are inviting interested researchers, particularly junior researchers (advanced PhDs, Postdocs), to conduct and present their research on the increase of work-based learning in school-based VET system in Central and Eastern European Countries. Successful applicants will present their papers at the 5th Crossing Boundaries in Lithuania and participate in workshop activities such as keynote speeches and field visits. Junior researchers' accommodation and travelling expenses linked to the conference will be covered up to 700 EUR.

Workshop topic

Policymakers consider increasing the proportion of work-based learning elements in school-based education tracks a key policy tool to achieve economic (higher production, competitiveness), social (education, inclusion, combating youth unemployment), and individual (labour market skills, education-to-employment transition) objectives.¹ As a consequence, over the last years, various European policy initiatives (e.g., Bruges communiqué in 2010, Riga conclusions in 2015, European Skills Agenda 2020, European Alliance for Apprenticeships), educational reforms (e.g., curricula reforms, legislative reforms) and pilot projects have been launched. They aim at increasing the availability and quality of work-based learning experience at upper-secondary and tertiary level, primarily within vocational education and training (VET) programs.

¹ Cedefop. (2021). *The role of work-based learning in VET and tertiary education: evidence from the 2016 EU labour force survey*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Cedefop research paper; No 80.

European Commission. (2017). *Business cooperating with vocational education training providers for quality skills and attractive futures*. Brussels. Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

ILO. (2019). *A framework for quality apprenticeships*. (Report IV(1)). Geneva. International Labour Organisation.

OECD. (2010). *Learning for Jobs*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

UNESCO. (2012). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012. Youth and Skills. Putting education to work*. Paris: UNESCO.

Winterton, J. & Turner, J.J. (2019). Preparing graduates for work readiness: An overview and agenda. *Education+Training*, 61 (5), 536–551.

Countries in Central and Eastern Europe have been particularly active in launching reforms and initiatives to facilitate work-based learning elements in their predominantly state-led and school-based VET systems.² While during socialist times work-based learning predominantly took place in local state enterprises, this connection between school-based and work-based learning environments declined after the 1990s. However, over the last years, new initiatives and elements have been introduced to revive this connection. These elements include among others strengthening social dialogue in educational policy-making processes to organise these learning phases, introducing competence-based curricula, or adopting dual VET laws. A common driver of these reforms is that these countries are, to different degrees, faced with similar structural challenges and developments (e.g., skills mismatches, weak economic competitiveness, deindustrialisation and the rise of the service and knowledge economy, emigration of skilled workforce, population degrowth, youth unemployment, deepening process of EU integration). Today, there is a significant variation in the types of work-based learning taking place, ranging from informal company visits and job shadowing, internships and traineeships to apprenticeships and dual-study programmes.

From a governance perspective, we know that introducing work-based learning phases is highly cooperation-intensive and requires the balancing of competing interests and logics. For example,

- a) *businesses* of different size, with different resources and different skills requirements, need to provide work-based learning opportunities that are potentially costly and do not guarantee a return on investment,
- b) *employer organisations* need to provide services to their members to facilitate work-based learning and organise their interests within the education system and social dialogue processes,
- c) the *state* must balance between keeping the education system attractive to employers interested in strong candidates to train at their premises and at the same time keeping it socially inclusive,
- d) incumbent *decision-makers* and *political parties* need to be committed to implementing the necessary reforms,
- e) *VET school staff* (e.g., teachers and directors) must support the shift from classroom-based learning to work-based environments,
- f) *trade unions* and *parents* must agree that learners in work-based settings receive lower wages than regular workers to create incentives for firms to cooperate, and
- g) *students* and their *parents* must see work-based education programs as an attractive option next to purely school-based and academic education.

Against this background, we call for research contributions to help us better understand a) how education systems and policies are designed, b) educational institutions and institutional settings are transformed, and/or c) how actors and stakeholders can contribute to overcoming and balancing these logics and interests. The contributions can be made within different

²In the present context in particular Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

disciplines that deal with education and work-based learning, including political science, business administration, economics, sociology, and education sciences.

Overall, we aim to feature contributions on different countries in Central and Eastern Europe, namely Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. They can examine different aspects of changing education governance due to the integration of work-based learning elements, such as regulating, financing, organising, providing, designing the content of, examining, qualifying, monitoring, and promoting VET. Research proposals may focus both on theoretical or empirical questions, applying qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.

Application procedure and timeline

We invite interested researchers to send their abstracts of 500–1000 words (in PDF-format), clearly outlining the focus and the structure of the proposed paper, as well as their contact details and a short academic biography to **crossing.boundaries@vetnetsite.org** until **31 August 2022**. As stated, submissions from junior researchers are particularly welcome! Successful applicants are requested to then submit the first draft of their research papers until **23 December 2022**. The abstracts and research papers will be assessed based on their significance for theory, practice, or policy in VET governance, their theoretical framework, the clarity of research questions, the research design and method(s), and the overall quality.

In a first step, we will collect and evaluate abstracts. Based on these, successful applicants will be invited to discuss the first drafts of their papers during an online workshop at the beginning of 2023. In a third step, the revised papers will be presented during the 5th Crossing Boundaries Conference, held at the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas in the last week of May 2023. In a last step, depending on the direction of the papers, a collaboration with an education or regionally focussed scientific journal will be established to publish a special issue. The language of publication is English.

Successful applicants will be notified by 30 September 2022. The deadline and number of words for completed papers will be determined with the publishing journal. For any further questions and information please do not hesitate to contact linda.wanklin@unisg.ch.