

**INFORMAL OECD MINISTERIAL MEETING ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, COPENHAGEN 22 – 23 JANUARY 2007.**

**CHAired BY BERTEL HAARDER, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND ECCLESIASTICAL AFFAIRS, DENMARK**

**CHAIR'S SUMMARY**

Fifteen Ministers from OECD countries met for an informal discussion on vocational education and training (VET). In opening presentations, Marc Tucker, of the United States, underlined the necessity for OECD countries to make a step improvement in labour force skills to meet global competition – particularly by developing creative, team-working and design skills. OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría also argued for a blurring of boundaries between general and vocational education so that all could experience some vocational training. I argued that we now need to substantially improve OECD statistics on VET, to match the range of data available in other sectors of education.

In discussion we:

- identified the need to challenge the apparent priority given to high status tertiary education rather than vocational training, and agreed on the need for increased flexibility in VET systems, allowing people to change routes, and to especially to move upwards into tertiary education.
- recognized the challenge of persuading employers to provide a sufficient number of good quality apprenticeship places. Underlining the importance of the social partners in this and every other aspect of VET, we agreed on the need to look carefully at the costs and benefits to different parties of apprenticeship arrangements. More radically we considered the option of apprenticeships *for all*, including for example, those in tertiary education.
- identified good quality and up-to-date qualification frameworks, alongside arrangements for the recognition of prior learning as a very important policy tool, and noted the important work of the European Union in this area;
- noted the need to upgrade the skills of those providing VET training with better standards for trainers, recognizing the balance between national standards, and responsiveness to local and sectoral requirements;
- underlined the need for VET systems to provide stronger support to help disadvantaged groups, including some migrant groups, minorities and those with disabilities and learning difficulties in entering the labour market. Strong basic education and skills for all must underpin this role.
- identified the need to improve our information base to evaluate the performance of our VET systems and institutions. At international level we looked forward to the launch of the new OECD survey of adult skills (PIAAC), better OECD data comparing countries, and strong examples of effective VET systems against which to benchmark performance. The idea of 'PISA for VET' remains attractive to some of us, although clearly a very challenging option.

The OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría and European Commissioner Jan Figel underlined their mutual commitment to co-operate closely on all these issues in the future.