



United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

215 EX/8

Executive Board

Two hundred and fifteenth session

PARIS, 31 August 2022
Original: English

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

OUTCOMES OF THE FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE CREATION OF A NETWORK OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

SUMMARY

In accordance with 212 EX/Decision 7, the Director-General submits to the Executive Board the results of a study examining the feasibility of creating a network of vocational education institutions under the coordination of the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training and the existing functioning of the UNEVOC Network.

The final and administrative implications of this document are covered in document 41 C/5.

Decision required: paragraph 18.



I. Background

1. At its 212th session in October 2021, the UNESCO Executive Board invited the Director-General to “prepare a feasibility study to be submitted to [the Executive Board] at its 215th session on the creation of a network of vocational education institutions under the coordination of the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC), as part of the elaboration of the new strategy for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) after 2021, in order to reinforce the UNEVOC network with a view to exchanging best practices, and to promote the quality and prestige of vocational education”.¹

2. Launched in 1993, the UNEVOC Network is UNESCO’s global platform of institutions that specialize in TVET. The mission of the Network and its members, called UNEVOC Centres, is to contribute to improving the standards, quality, and accessibility of TVET in their respective countries and globally. This is achieved through knowledge sharing, cooperation, and mutual assistance. As of July 2022, the UNEVOC Network consists of 228 UNEVOC Centres in 149 UNESCO Member States. UNEVOC Centres represent four types of institutions: (1) ministries responsible for TVET; (2) national bodies and regulators; (3) TVET providers at the secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels, including TVET schools, vocational training centres, technical colleges, and polytechnics; and 4) research institutions. The Network is coordinated by UNESCO-UNEVOC, based in Bonn, Germany. UNEVOC Centres are the main beneficiaries of UNESCO-UNEVOC’s work, as outlined in its current Medium-Term Strategy.² The process and requirements for joining the Network are described in the *Handbook for the UNEVOC Network*.³

3. Current Network members are listed in the online UNEVOC Network directory.⁴ At present, the 228 UNEVOC Centres are distributed evenly across the four categories of Network members: research institutes (53), national bodies and regulators (65), ministries responsible for TVET (63), and TVET providers (48). The activities of the Network are financed primarily through voluntary contributions by the Federal Government of Germany.

II. Objectives and methodology of the study

4. Following the decision of the Executive Board, UNESCO commissioned an independent study to explore the feasibility of creating a new network of vocational education institutions under the coordination of UNESCO-UNEVOC, taking into account the perspectives of its members and key partners. The study included: (i) a review of the current structure and functioning of the UNEVOC Network; (ii) an assessment of the need and feasibility of setting up a separate network of vocational education institutions, consisting of the TVET providers that are already members of the Network, as well as additional member institutions; and (iii) a review of alternative options to meet the specific needs of vocational education institutions within the existing UNEVOC Network.

5. The study used the following methods: a review of key documents about the UNEVOC Network; two online surveys, one targeting all UNESCO National Commissions, and one targeting all members of the UNEVOC Network; and a series of consultations in the form of interviews or focus group discussions with different stakeholder groups. The groups included global or regional partner organizations actively working on TVET and skills development (ILO, European Commission, European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, European Training Foundation, and

¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 2021. ‘Decisions Adopted by the Executive Board at its 212th Session’. 212 EX/Decisions. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379585>.

² UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. 2020. *UNESCO-UNEVOC Medium-Term Strategy for 2021-2023: Strengthening TVET Capacities and Cooperation in the Member States*. Bonn: UNESCO-UNEVOC. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375156>.

³ UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. 2022. *Handbook for the UNEVOC Network*. Bonn: UNESCO-UNEVOC. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380460>.

⁴ UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. 2022. ‘Explore the UNEVOC Network’. UNESCO-UNEVOC. <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/Explore+the+UNEVOC+Network>.

Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)); key donors for UNESCO-UNEVOC programmes (German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)); selected UNEVOC Centres across all regions; and relevant UNESCO and UNESCO-UNEVOC staff.

6. In total, 40 National Commissions responded to the survey: 11 from Africa; 5 from the Arab States; 6 from Asia and the Pacific; 15 from Europe, CIS, and North America; and 3 from Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, 78 UNEVOC Centres completed the survey: 15 Centres from Africa; 5 from the Arab states; 24 from Asia and the Pacific; 20 from Europe, CIS, and North America; and 14 from Latin America and the Caribbean.

III. Key findings of the feasibility study

7. The study sheds light on how UNEVOC Centres interact with TVET providers outside the Network. 84% of the responding Centres indicated that they regularly interact with TVET providers that are not UNEVOC Network members. Multiple UNEVOC Centres have a mandate to coordinate TVET providers in their countries and this helps UNESCO-UNEVOC and its partners to reach out to TVET providers that are not part of the Network.⁵

8. In their assessment of aspects of the UNEVOC Network that could be strengthened, both UNEVOC Centres and National Commissions tend to value deepening existing relationships and partnerships, strengthening global and regional level cooperation, and adopting more innovative approaches for cooperation. National Commissions tend to be slightly more in favour of expansion of the Network across the four member categories than UNEVOC Centres, especially for TVET providers. Consultations with other key stakeholders confirmed these findings, while pointing out the need to engage more with less active Centres, strengthen cooperation among TVET institutions of the same type, and establish links to other networks and associations of TVET providers.

9. According to the study, for UNEVOC Centres and National Commissions, the main benefits of the Network are networking opportunities (91% and 86%, respectively); access to innovative ideas and best practices (84% and 76%); and opportunities for professionalization and learning (79% and 76%). The prestige offered by the Network was mentioned less frequently as a benefit (49% and 27%). In relation to the networking aspect, respondents value the fact that the UNEVOC Network is global and allows UNEVOC Centres to reach TVET institutions from other parts of the world. On sharing of expertise, knowledge, and good practices, it was pointed out that the UNEVOC Network acts as a think tank that offers emerging ideas, solutions, models, tools, and frameworks for TVET providers.

10. In total, only 12% of responding UNEVOC Centres and National Commissions consider it desirable to create an additional network that targets vocational education institutions.

11. The study identified the following potential benefits of an additional network for vocational education institutions, while finding that these benefits can also be obtained by strengthening the existing UNEVOC Network:

- (i) A greater number of TVET providers, especially those at the secondary level of education, could benefit from an additional network;
- (ii) An additional network would offer an opportunity to focus more on the teaching and learning process and might have a more direct impact on how TVET is delivered to learners;

⁵ Such Centres include, for instance: CICAN of Canada, CONIF of Brazil, TAFE Directors Australia, and National Training Agencies in the Caribbean.

- (iii) An additional network of vocational education institutions would facilitate international cooperation among institutions with similar missions, visions, and values.

12. The study also identified potential disadvantages of an additional network:

- (i) A second network would mean unnecessary duplication of parts of the existing UNEVOC Network, which already covers the category of TVET providers;
- (ii) Managing two parallel networks with a similar structure and objectives would be inefficient and weaken the support that can be provided to current UNEVOC Centres. The current level of engagement is built on the trust and long-standing strong relations established between UNEVOC Centres and UNESCO-UNEVOC. Diluting this focus through the addition of another network would have a negative impact on the quality of collaboration;
- (iii) The cost of managing an additional network is prohibitive and not possible with the existing human and financial resources of UNESCO-UNEVOC.

13. Considering the disadvantages of an additional network, and the fact that there is little support for another network among key stakeholders, the study proposes alternative solutions aimed at strengthening and scaling up actions targeting vocational education institutions within the UNEVOC Network, including:

- (i) Invite selected UNEVOC Centres to act as hubs for mobilisation, coordination, and dissemination of information that bring together the different types of TVET institutions at national and international levels, including TVET providers. This is already the case with the UNEVOC Network Coaction Initiative and similar UNESCO-UNEVOC projects;
- (ii) Establish closer linkages with existing networks, associations, and initiatives to expand the outreach of the UNEVOC Network. This includes enhanced engagement with national, regional and global TVET institutions through the expanded and modernised online UNESCO-UNEVOC TVET community platform;
- (iii) Further strengthen regional networking and encourage more activity and engagement of regional hubs to stimulate cooperation of TVET providers. This includes supporting TVET providers, and institutions with limited capacity for international cooperation, by pairing them with stronger institutions within the UNEVOC Network;
- (iv) Strengthen the UNEVOC Network through project-related activities, including deepened collaboration on specific topics that are a priority for TVET providers and other TVET institutions.

14. UNESCO-UNEVOC requires more human and financial resources to fulfil its strategic mandate of promoting international cooperation and solidarity in TVET. Its capacity should be strengthened to scale up its activities within UNESCO's Strategy for TVET, in coordination with Member States and key organizations active in the field of TVET, including members of the Inter-Agency Group on TVET.

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

15. The main conclusion of the feasibility study is that the potential benefits of an additional network of vocational education institutions can be achieved by strengthening the existing UNEVOC Network and are outweighed by significant drawbacks linked to the establishment of an additional network. It is not considered feasible or desirable to establish a separate network of TVET providers.

16. The study finds that the UNEVOC Network provides a unique added value, bringing together diverse stakeholders in TVET and offering opportunities for constructive engagement by its members with TVET providers that are not members of the UNEVOC Network. The UNEVOC Network would benefit from deepening of existing relations and strengthened cooperation, combined with a gradual

expansion and increased outreach to non-UNEVOC Centres. The UNEVOC Network can also be reinforced through improved visibility and communication.

17. Reinforcing the UNEVOC Network requires additional resources. Instead of creating an additional network that duplicates many of the functions of the existing UNEVOC Network, it would be more efficient and effective to invest in the current Network, so that it can engage more with TVET providers and other UNEVOC Centres.

V. Proposed draft decision

18. The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 212 EX/Decision 7,
2. Takes note of the findings and conclusions of the feasibility study contained in document 215 EX/8;
3. Expresses its appreciation for the activities of the UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC) and the UNEVOC network;
4. Requests the Director-General to continue to seek ways to strengthen and scale up actions targeting vocational education institutions within the UNEVOC network as outlined in paragraph 13 of document 215 EX/8;
5. Welcomes Member States' efforts to provide voluntary contributions to UNESCO-UNEVOC, so that it can provide better support to the UNEVOC network and its members, including vocational education institutions.