



# Focus: Vocational Education and Training

## Vocational education and training on the rise

In Article 26, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 stipulates that everyone has the right to education. Elementary and fundamental education must be provided free of charge and primary education shall also be compulsory. It also requires that vocational education and training has been generally made available.

Education is not just a universal human right; it is also a fundamental development goal. As an essential factor for poverty reduction and sustainable development, it contributes to the social, economic, political and cultural development of individuals and society as a whole. Well-trained people meet the needs for skilled labour and are prepared for the requirements of an increasingly globalised economy.

Vocational education and training (VET) in particular aims at creating opportunities for productive employment and providing access to adequately paid work, which enable people to lead a self-determined life. It also helps to implement the right to work.<sup>1</sup> Education is also seen by most as a major catalyst. A focussed and coherent vocational education and training policy can make a significant contribution to gender equity and job creation as well as to health and environmental improvements.

Since the end of the 80s, promoting VET was given low attention in international development cooperation. Among other things, its relatively lower priority is attributed to the concentration of the donor community on primary school education. As a consequence of the conception and implementation of the six goals in the action programme, Education for All<sup>2</sup>, and the resultant two educational Millennium Development Goals<sup>3</sup> the secondary and tertiary education sectors have been neglected.

For some years now, however, there has been renewed interest in secondary and tertiary education. This demand results from the outcomes of primary education, which has placed heavier pressure on secondary educational systems, because a growing number of primary school-leavers are entering the labour market directly or need further training. The steady growth of the informal sector (e.g. in Africa) is also coming to the attention of international education-policy debate. In some countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, about 70 per cent of non-farm employees are engaged in the informal sector. The International Labour

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<sup>1</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23

<sup>2</sup> At the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 as part of the action programme under the leadership of UNESCO, 164 countries undertook to implement six defined education goals by 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education; Goal 3/sub-goal 5: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels no later than 2015

Organization (ILO) estimates their number worldwide at about 1.53 billion.<sup>4</sup> Improving their qualification would in any case contribute to private-sector development in developing countries. International consensus has therefore been reached again on the need to substantially improve the supply of education at secondary school level. The concern here is not only with general secondary education, but increasingly with vocational education and training in both the formal and non-formal context as well as various forms of skills development.

There is a need for training courses that cater for the increasingly dynamic world of work (technological change, more diverse market requirements, needs of the informal sector). “Skills development” entails imparting qualifications and competencies to enable trainees to (quickly) gain and continuously upgrade employable skills. In development cooperation, “skills development” are frequently used in non-formal education and besides VET measures also comprise basic education skills, such as reading, writing and arithmetic.

Keener interest in post-primary education can also be attributed to UNESCO<sup>5</sup>, which sees VET as crucial for achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals: Particularly in the long term, it is VET institutions in industrialised and developing countries that impart to young people the abilities needed for their attainment. A country needs people who can co-shape and support its general development with their professional qualifications.

## International trends and challenges

Relevant thematic events and conferences<sup>6</sup> contribute to closer exchange on aspects of vocational education and training and skills development. The need for VET promotion is increasingly voiced by partner countries and placed on the discussion agenda. Current donor strategies<sup>7</sup> and developing country plans reflect this trend. Some of the challenges under international discussion will be outlined in the following:

### Status and economic relevance of VET

A problem with establishing and expanding vocational education and training is its unfavourable reputation in developing countries. Its often poor quality is a major contributory factor to its status as the (educational) choice of last resort. International discussion is seeking ways to remove this stigma and promote VET as an alternative to academic education. Improving the quality of training and enhancing its relevance to the labour market will help bring about the necessary change of attitude.

This relevance can be ensured by suitably aligning courses with needs and linking them closely with labour-market demand. This therefore calls for greater cooperation with the private sector. Private

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<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills. Putting education to work

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO-UNEVOC and InWent: International Round Table on the Changing World of Work: The Coming Back of TVET on the International Development Agenda, 2008

<sup>6</sup> For example, in February 2012 in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) organised the conference, “Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for sustainable development in Africa”: How to design and implement effective education and training systems, with over 1,000 participants.

<sup>7</sup> The new World Bank strategy for the education sector to 2020 entitled, “Learning for All: Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development”, also includes skills development and other aspects of vocational education and training.

business and industry should be involved in assessing needs, defining occupational profiles, developing curricula, setting up VET centres and financing continued (in-service) training. Stepping up on-the-job training will, for example, help improve quality. Also under discussion is cooperation and liaising contacts with enterprises in donor countries.

Little account is taken of the informal sector in relation to the vocational education and training. The number of people working in this sector is steadily increasing, but most are badly trained or untrained.<sup>8</sup> There is a need here for innovative approaches to raise the standard of training so as to afford them employment opportunities. For example, VET courses could prepare them for a (self-employed) activity in this sector and include informal learning methods, drawing on available traditional forms of training, by older people in crafts, for instance.

## Approaches in VET promotion

The vocational training concepts and strategies in the national traditions of respective donors are also apparent in their development cooperation:

- Francophone development cooperation accords distinct precedence to general educational elements. Criticism is levelled at the absence of technical, handicraft and practical abilities as educational goals. Where these key qualifications are lacking, training is often of little relevance to the world of work.
- Anglophone development cooperation, however, takes a very pragmatic approach, which concentrates on imparting competencies (competency-based approach) and very narrowly defined technical skills – in the view of critics.
- German-speaking development cooperation traditionally adopts the dual approach, which means concerted in-company and school training. Vocational education and training are conceived as a comprehensive education strategy that also includes socialisation processes, for example.

Various donor countries today also differ in the status they accord VET and often persist in their traditional bias. There is still a need to discuss whether and how donors' successful vocational training schemes can and/or should be transferred to partner countries.

There is international agreement today that confining efforts solely to formal VET is too short-sighted, because especially in developing countries this excludes marginalised sections of the population, particularly impoverished regions and groups and people outside the formal school system. Holistic education approaches should avoid this by increasingly seeking to encompass all areas<sup>9</sup> and forms of education<sup>10</sup> when designing VET courses.

Connections, transitions and cross-over possibilities between the individual areas and facilities of secondary education and between secondary and post-secondary levels need to be expanded and the individual systems organised to be more permeable. The aim is to ease the strict demarcation between vocational and general secondary education/training with the trend towards a multi-sectoral approach focussing on skills development. The idea is to enhance the attractiveness of VET by raising mobility within the educational system. This holds both for the transition from secondary to tertiary education and non-formal to formal training. With a view to lifelong learning, a holistic education approach will introduce horizontal and vertical mobility into vocational education and training.

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8 UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills. Putting education to work

9 E.g. vocational education and training, general secondary education and skills development

10 E.g. at government level via the formal system but also by means of non-formal courses and through private providers via municipal or civic organisations.

Systemic support for partner countries (whole-of-system, macro level) is seen as key for developing more modern and needs-based VET systems. This includes, for example, setting government norms and quality standards. As vocational education and training as such traverses sectors and involves different actors, institutions and disciplines, work at the systemic level poses great challenges for both local partners and donors: Who should be supported? Where are funds allocated? Who has the lead at national level and how can sectoral reform involve all major players?

Also under intensive discussion is the question of who should and/or may provide VET. Besides the government, alternative providers, such as private companies or non-governmental organisations, also have their place as they ensure the necessary diversification. The above-mentioned linkage with and involvement of business and industry, however, entails an enormous dichotomy, particularly in development policy (e.g. competition versus social model, market-aligned versus student-centred teaching and learning) that is also apparent in international discussions.<sup>11</sup>

## **Access to vocational education and training**

Access to educational services is a central concern of development cooperation. Particularly severely affected are disadvantaged sections of the population, such as (ethnic) minorities, people living in rural or urban poverty and conflict and crisis regions, women and girls, working children and persons with disabilities. This is exacerbated by the frequently high costs for VET, the lack of “mother-tongue-based”<sup>12</sup> teaching and the traditional role allocation. The issue of inclusive education is also under discussion in this context. There are also efforts to take greater account of persons with disabilities<sup>13</sup> in planning vocational education and training projects. Due to social stigmatisation and discrimination, most persons with disabilities in developing countries currently have almost no access to (vocational) training/educational measures and remain largely excluded from the labour market.

## **VET in ADC**

Education is a priority of Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and contributes to implementing the (human) right to education. It is also cited as a prime goal in the Federal Development Cooperation Act (EZA-G, Section 2). Since the beginnings of ADC, higher education and vocational education and training have therefore numbered among its priorities.

On annual average, between 10 and 15 per cent of the budget for bilateral programmes and projects is assigned to education, about 60 per cent of which for the tertiary and some 25 per cent for the secondary tiers. In partner countries, these projects/programmes contribute to establishing efficient and flexible educational systems geared to local needs that view skills development as a lifelong necessity deserving of appropriate support. This lifelong learning approach can be seen as the lynchpin linking the different levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) and forms of education (formal and non-formal).

## **Principles and quality criteria**

Austrian Development Cooperation always sees vocational education and training in relation to the economy and labour-market needs. VET promotion in partner countries therefore aims at affording people access to adequately paid work and prospects for productive employment. Setting up and

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<sup>11</sup> Jacinto, 2009

<sup>12</sup> UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Why and how Africa should invest in African languages and multilingual education, 2010

<sup>13</sup> Lusaka Declaration 2010

strengthening modern national vocational education and training systems is indispensable for this. School and out-of-school educational measures for imparting occupational skills and knowledge are particularly important for marginalized population groups and regions. Special account is therefore paid to this aspect in Austrian Development Cooperation.

### **International requirements**

Besides international frames of reference clearly pertaining to education, such as Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, ADC adheres to the principles of the Paris Declaration and the outcomes of subsequent meetings.<sup>14</sup> Management for results and mutual accountability make up the major pillars.

### **Consultation, harmonisation and donor coordination**

At local level, representatives of Austrian Development Cooperation cooperate closely with other bilateral donors, multilateral organisations, implementing agencies, sectoral bodies and the European Union. Programmes and projects are aligned with each other or carried out jointly. In our partner countries where VET is promoted as a priority, as in Burkina Faso, Albania or Moldova, Austrian representatives are actively engaged in policy dialogue.

### **Alignment with partner country strategies**

The national education policies and reform plans, local and regional development plans and the poverty reduction strategies of partner countries set out the parameters for every intervention. With a view to the European integration of some partner countries, the strategies and policies of the European Union also play a role. Projects and programmes are conceived and planned in close collaboration with partner governments in keeping with their strategies and their implementation is supported in the best possible way. This calls for exchange with official representatives, but also the involvement of relevant stakeholders, such as business and industry, representative bodies, special interest groups or civil society.

### **Ownership**

The long-term sustainable success of programmes and projects depends on partner ownership. This is why institutions, authorities, other possible partners in the education segment and target groups are involved in needs assessment, planning and implementation and are expected to bear (co-) responsibility for projects and programmes in keeping with their function.

### **Poverty reduction**

All interventions in the vocational education and training sector are committed to poverty reduction as a fundamental goal of Austrian Development Cooperation. The question of access to school and out-of-school facilities plays a major role in this connection.

### **Inclusion**

In keeping with the human-rights-based approach and the holistic approach of inclusive education<sup>15</sup>, ADC pays attention to giving marginalised and disadvantaged groups access to VET. Of central importance here are minorities, people from regions particularly affected by poverty, persons with disa-

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<sup>14</sup> Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005); Accra Agenda for Action (2008); Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011)

<sup>15</sup> UNESCO, Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education, 2009

bilities, but also sections of the population (not minorities but often majorities) still deprived of access to the formal system due to language barriers, for instance.

### **Gender equality**

The Millennium Development Goals and EFA goals address the unequal treatment of women and girls, but this persistent discrimination is also underscored with detailed figures from the annual reviews in the EFA Global Monitoring Reports. Enabling women and girls to gain access to education is therefore a concern of Austrian Development Cooperation.

### **Geographical focus**

Educational activities are conducted in particularly impoverished regions.

### **Accounting for all system levels**

As Austrian Development Cooperation helps set up and strengthen modern national VET systems, its programmes and projects should ideally take into account all levels of the system (macro, meso and micro level). It supports local partners in devising, planning and implementing reform programmes and strengthens the requisite capacities. This means promoting both institutional and individual capacities. Capacity development<sup>16</sup> is therefore also a strategic approach in ADC VET projects/programmes.

### **Whole-of-system (macro level)**

Developing an efficient and flexible educational system geared to local needs often poses a challenge for governments in partner countries. Austrian Development Cooperation therefore supports the competent ministries in carrying out reforms (e.g. setting up or reorganising accreditation agencies, consistent government legislation, development of pilot curricula).

### **Place of learning (meso level)**

To be able to provide needs-based education and training, training centres such as schools and/or enterprises must have the requisite resources (financial, organisational and personnel). Projects and programmes whose fields of activity are mainly located at meso and micro level should not disregard the macro level, however, as measures such as the development of pilot curricula and their accreditation are of course also aimed at bringing about changes in the system as a whole.

### **Training/Lessons (micro level)**

Education and training based on an integral (holistic) education strategy is centred on the trainee (student-centred), with the emphasis on learning instead of teaching. It is important to tailor teaching methods and contents to the target group. An adequate quality of teaching should also be assured and all relevant groups given access to training.

### **Institutionalising project measures – transferal to the system**

Project measures are most likely to be sustainable if they address all three systemic levels and are transferred to and institutionalised in the existing system. We shall illustrate this with the example of the sub-aspect of curricula development/adaptation:

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<sup>16</sup> Capacity development is defined as an endogenous change process through which individuals, organisations and society obtain, strengthen, and maintain the capabilities to successfully manage their affairs.

- Business and industry and the labour market indicate the demand for the respective occupational profile.
- Government decision-makers and/or training providers respond to this demand and instigate the development or adaptation of an appropriate curriculum and its accreditation.
- School authorities, municipalities and ministries but also business and industry provide the general resources for training (e.g. well-trained teaching staff, properly equipped training centres and adequate teaching material).
- The training is aligned with and administered to international quality standards (contents, didactics, methodology, etc.) to meet local requirements.
- The training qualification (certificate, diploma, etc.) is valid nationwide and ideally also recognised in other countries.
- Graduates find adequate employment, as their skills and knowledge are in demand on the labour market.

### **Relevance and alignment with needs**

To obtain support from Austrian Development Cooperation, educational measures must be demand-driven and geared to needs: What does the country or region need? What do the labour market and the private sector need? What resources can be drawn on? Ideally, needs should be articulated directly by the local partners and/or assessed jointly with them. From the outset, exchange is sought with all relevant stakeholders (ministries, training providers, private sector, interest groups) and their ideas and concerns are included in the planning and implementation of projects and programmes. This demand-oriented approach enhances the ownership and sustainability of measures. The emerging contacts and the quality of training facilitate the integration of trained labour into the labour market.

Depending on partner-country requirements, Austrian Development Cooperation intervenes in the formal (e.g. in South-Eastern Europe) or the non-formal sector (e.g. in Burkina Faso). Particularly for people with no access to the formal educational system, due to insufficient or unsuitable courses or poverty or conflict situations, for example, non-formal educational measures play a major role. These can supplement or connect up with the formal system.

Measures in vocational education and training can also support other thematic priorities of Austrian Development Cooperation and their sustainable impact (see project example: Know-how for sustainable water supply and sanitation, p. 8).

### **Approaches in vocational education and training promotion**

Austrian Development Cooperation sees vocational education and training as a comprehensive education concept that can also include socialisation processes. This is why it takes account of the notion of skills development, including the acquisition of so-called life skills, such as abilities to communicate.

#### **Holistic approach**

ADC is committed to the concept of holistic education. The lifelong learning approach interlinks the different educational levels and forms. In keeping with this holistic approach, ADC, for example, also supports non-formal education, such as mother-tongue-based training.

#### **Tradition of dual vocational education and training**

Dual vocational education and training has a long tradition in Austria. This approach is also applied in development cooperation. This should, however, be at the request of the partners and fit in with local conditions. It is also possible to implement just a few elements. The combination of theory and prac-

tice – enterprise and school – is therefore sometimes different to the model in Austria. Besides the practical skills and theoretical knowledge needed for an occupation, for example, the measures can also include basic education. This approach can be particularly useful in areas or for target groups that have been neglected by the formal system or beyond its reach.

### **Quality of education and training**

Learning outcomes are closely linked with quality of education and training. This interdependence is underscored in the annual progress reports of the Education for All initiative. In pursuance of the sixth EFA goal,<sup>17</sup> quality of education and training is accorded key status by Austrian Development Cooperation in the educational measures it promotes.

Key qualifications and occupational skills should be imparted with an emphasis on practice and cater for the needs of business and industry and the local labour market. Quality should comply with international standards, while also consistently accounting for national and local needs and cultural and social conditions. Training must be tailored to target-group needs and conditions and take modern teaching and learning methods into account. Contents and methodology must match the needs of the students and the requirements of the occupational profile as well as possible. Sufficient and adequate resources must be provided to meet these requirements.

### **VET needs resources**

More than in other educational sectors, success in vocational education and training depends on available infrastructure, adequate equipment, proper preparation of teaching materials and the qualification of teaching staff. These points must be taken into account when planning projects and programmes. Suitable responses can, for example, include establishing training-of-trainers modules, adapting and/or setting up education centres and providing modern teaching materials.

### **Sustainability**

Austria attaches particular importance to the sustainability of its projects/programmes. Catering for these quality criteria in project design and implementation contributes to the sustainable institutionalisation of measures in national educational systems and helps to advance ongoing development in partner countries.

## **Examples of ADC-supported projects**

### **“Mother-tongue-based” vocational education and training in Burkina Faso**

With its 40-years of know-how, Austria is a leading partner in Burkina Faso in vocational education and training. Particularly in the recognition and improvement of non-formal education, Austria has intervened in recent years with the project, Education et formation pour un développement endogène (EFORD). Children and youth in remote rural regions who have no chance to attend school are given government-approved vocational education and training in their mother tongue/s (local used language/s). This use of language also enables parents and relatives to take part in the school education of their children. Based on this, the centres for non-formal vocational education and training con-

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<sup>17</sup> Education for All, Goal 6: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.



duct specific courses in different occupational fields, such as agriculture, medicine and medicinal plants as well as tourism.

### **Vocational training projects in Moldova**

Austrian Development Cooperation's primary concern in Moldova is to provide future prospects for the rural population. One of the priorities is to promote VET geared to the labour market.

### **Know-how for sustainable water supply and sanitation**

Besides functional infrastructure, the sustainable supply of water and sanitation facilities also requires specialists for their professional operation and maintenance. There are, however, no specific vocational training schools for hydraulic engineering occupations in the Republic of Moldova. Austria therefore supports the development of suitable occupational profiles and modern curricula for practice-centred vocational education and training geared to labour-market needs. Two selected vocational schools in Chisinau, for example, have collaborated closely in curricula development for the occupational profiles of plumbers and electricians. Furthermore, they have been provided with suitable teaching and practicing material. The teachers undergo further training in subject-matter and didactics and are supported to enable them to apply the new curricula effectively in their lessons. These curricula have been officially accredited for nationwide application. Well-equipped training places for practical training adapted to the new curricula are already available at the pilot schools.

### **Career in agriculture**

At the Moldovan agricultural vocational schools in Nisporeni and Leova, Austria supports the adjustment of the viticulture and fruit-growing curricula to higher labour-market demands so as to improve quality in these sectors. In the long-term, this will pave the way for a scheme to reform nationwide agricultural education and training to meet the needs of the region and promote rural development. With Austrian support, the vocational schools are being upgraded into regional competency centres for training in viticulture and horticulture.

### **Labour-market opportunities for marginalised groups in Albania**

With specific measures, a major concern of Austrian Development Cooperation is to restore socially excluded and marginalised groups of the population mostly living below the poverty line to a place in society. Labour-market integration is of major importance for this. Together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), it therefore promotes the development of effective labour-market policy measures at local and central level in Albania. This includes increased and specific VET courses and training opportunities to raise awareness among personnel in the competent national institutions of the special problems of communities on the fringes of society. At local level, employment schemes are being devised in three selected municipalities with combined social services.

### **Practical-oriented training at South-East European business schools**

The service sector and small and medium-sized enterprises are playing a growing role in South-Eastern Europe. Sound training tailored to the needs of the changing labour market is therefore important. This is why Austrian Development Cooperation supports education and training reforms at business schools in several South-Eastern European countries. These measures include curriculum development, preparing new teaching materials, introducing quality standards, gender mainstreaming and developing innovative forms of cooperation between schools and business and industry. Improved education and training raises the chances of employment and affords prospects for the future. Austria thus makes a contribution to stemming unemployment, which affects youth above all.

## **Vocational education and training in business partnerships**

As part of ADC Business Partnership Programme, Austrian companies can also invest in training skilled personnel. One of these projects is being implemented in Latin America:

Successful production firms rely on the know-how of well-trained skilled personnel. These are frequently lacking in developing and emerging countries. An Austrian packaging manufacturer in Mexico has therefore started to run apprenticeships (dual vocational education and training model) for toolmakers and plastic moulders. The company cooperates closely on this with local educational experts. As the government has approved the courses and certificates and the practical focus and relevance of teaching contents to working life have been assured, the project is sponsored via a business partnership with Austrian Development Cooperation.

## Further reading/sources

### Basic documents

United Nations (UN), Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Article 26  
UN, Millennium Development Goals, 2000

UNESCO, The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All, Meeting our Collective Commitments, 2000

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### Specific sources

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DFID, Briefing: The importance of secondary, vocational and higher education for development. Briefing, 2006

Jacinto, Claudia, Policy transfer and policy learning in skills development policies. Insights from the NORRAG Conference, 2009

## **Additional sources of information on topic**

International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC), International Library of Technical and Vocational Education and Training:

[http://p19035.typo3server.info/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pubs/UNEVOCPublications.pdf](http://p19035.typo3server.info/fileadmin/user_upload/pubs/UNEVOCPublications.pdf)

Network for Policy Research, Review and Advice on Education and Training (NORRAG):

<http://www.norrag.org/>

European Training Foundation (ETF): <http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/home>

European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop):

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/>

International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP):

<http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/newsletter/2004/jane04.pdf>

International Labour Organisation (ILO): <http://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>

German Research Centre for Comparative Vocational Education and Training (GREAT):

<http://www.great.uni-koeln.de/>

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany (BMZ) on vocational training:

[http://www.bmz.de/de/was\\_wir\\_machen/themen/bildung/berufliche\\_bildung/index.html](http://www.bmz.de/de/was_wir_machen/themen/bildung/berufliche_bildung/index.html)

Directorate of Development and Cooperation; Switzerland (SDC) on vocational training:

[http://www.deza.admin.ch/de/Home/Themen/Arbeit\\_und\\_Einkommen/Berufliche\\_Bildung](http://www.deza.admin.ch/de/Home/Themen/Arbeit_und_Einkommen/Berufliche_Bildung)