



University of St.Gallen

Center for Governance  
and Culture in Europe



## **Workshop and Call for Papers for Special Issue**

### **Governance of vocational education and training in the countries of Southeast Europe and the Black Sea Region**

(New Europe College, Bucharest, May 2022)

Many countries in Southeast Europe and the Black Sea region (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine) face similar structural challenges such as the threat of the middle-income trap, weak economic competitiveness, emigration, and population degrowth. Extensive reforms in their vocational and technical education (VET) governance systems are increasingly prioritised to achieve long-term economic (higher production, competitiveness, growth), social (education, inclusion, combating youth unemployment) and individual (labour market skills) goals. In the present context, VET governance is understood as the combination of binding and non-binding regulations, norms, negotiations, practices, and cooperation agreements that influence the decisions of a wide range of actors at individual, local, regional, national, and supranational levels to participate in VET. Together, they determine how the main tasks in VET governance are performed, namely

- 1) developing the VET system (e.g. VET reform strategies, VET legislation, VET governance bodies),
- 2) defining the content of VET (e.g. VET curricula, occupational standards, learning plans),
- 3) organising VET provision (e.g. school-based and company-based learning phases, training of teachers and company instructors, learning and training materials),
- 4) financing VET (e.g. training funds, subsidies, remuneration of VET students/apprentices),
- 5) matching demand and supply of VET (e.g. labour market analysis, VET marketing campaigns, career guidance, employment agencies),
- 6) assuring quality (e.g. examination, assessment, qualification).

The modernisation of the school-based, supply-driven VET governance systems in the countries in Southeast Europe and the Black Sea region is taking place at different speeds. First positive developments can be observed, but major challenges remain – especially in orienting VET towards the needs of employers, in developing stronger institutional capacities (e.g. of public VET bodies, private sector organisations, trade unions), and in dealing with post-socialist legacies (e.g. significant size of informal economies, low institutional trust, broken linkages between the world of work and the world of education). At the same time, global trends like digitalisation and automation and accordingly the need for upskilling and lifelong learning opportunities, increased migration movements, and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic all challenge the VET governance systems.

Despite the increased number of VET reforms and according VET initiatives, institutionalised and independent research on VET governance in this region is surprisingly limited in comparison to other regions with many middle-income countries (e.g. Latin America, South and East Asia). This is even more important as major conclusions can be drawn from research in this geographic area, most notably on educational policies, EU integration, the development of public-private partnerships, and more generally on politics and economics in middle-income economies.

Against this background and in order to promote emerging research on VET governance in the countries of interests, the editors are seeking papers from different disciplines that deal with VET, including political science, economics, sociology, and education sciences. Overall, we aim to feature contributions on different countries in the region as well as papers examining different aspects of VET governance (e.g. the different tasks of VET, impact of endogenous and exogenous factors), each contributing to our understanding of the governance of VET in countries in Southeast Europe and the Black Sea region. Research proposals may focus both on theoretical or empirical questions, applying qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.

The language of publication is English. In a first step, we will collect and evaluate research proposals. In a second step, depending on the direction of the submitted abstracts and summaries, a collaboration with an education or regionally focussed scientific journal will be established to publish a special issue.

All successful applicants will be invited to discuss their pre-circulated full paper drafts at the workshop, held at the New Europe College in Bucharest in the last week of May 2022. In addition to the discussion of paper drafts, keynote speeches and field visits will accompany the workshop. Participants' expenses linked to the workshop will be covered by the organizers (up to 500 EUR).

Please send an abstract of max. 300 words and an executive summary with up to 1000 words (in PDF-format), clearly outlining the focus and the structure of the proposed paper, as well as a short academic biography to [gce-info@unisg.ch](mailto:gce-info@unisg.ch) until **14 November 2021**. Submissions from junior researchers (late PhDs, Post-Docs) are particularly welcome. The 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.

Successful applicants will be notified by 23 December 2021 and are required to circulate their full papers no later than 30 April 2022.

The deadline and number of words for completed papers will be determined with the publishing journal.

Key words: governance, educational policies, vocational education and training, development of education systems, public-private partnerships, labour market-oriented education, youth unemployment, EU neighbourhood, EU accession