

## **After Event Press Release - “Gen Z”: creating skills for future leaders. Where do we stand?”**

*The “EfVET 2024 Annual Conference” successfully answered the question at the presence and with the collaboration of international experts, educators and VET professionals. Over 320 training providers from 29 countries participated.*

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### **Background**

*Amersfoort, Netherlands* - The 33rd EfVET Annual Conference titled “Training the Gen Z: New Horizons for VET” took place from **October 23 to 26, 2024 in the historic city of Amersfoort**, hosted by the Leer Hotel Het Klooster, a hospitality learning company managed by VET students and professionals of the sector. This prestigious event brought together more than **320 international experts, educators, and professionals from the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector** to explore how the next generation of learners, the “Generation Z”, can be prepared for the rapidly evolving workforce of the future. But above all, **the students at the VET schools were the real protagonists** of the discussion, the activities, the promoters of new proposals. Within this frame, the EfVET Conference 2024 aimed at **addressing those challenges in order to offer the delegates and the VET ecosystem concrete tools to successfully cope with the new emerging challenges in education and training**. The event was designed for VET providers, policymakers, industry leaders, and educators dedicated to shaping the future of education and training in Europe. Delegates had the opportunity to **network, exchange knowledge, and gain insights into the latest trends affecting the VET ecosystem**. For the first time, students participated in the annual EfVET Conference and their contribution was outstanding!

### **Summary of the activities**

*23rd Oct.* - After registration, members had the opportunity to visit three vocational training schools of their choice: 1. ROC Mondriaan The Hague, with a focus on technical departments; 2. ROC Midden Nederland Utrecht, with a focus on hospitality and tourism; 3. ROC Aventus Apeldoorn, with a focus on health care, AI & robotics. An occasion to showcase VET activities and networking in an informal setting.

The international event officially opened with a **welcome speech** and the "Discover EfVET" presentation led by the EfVET President Joachim James Calleja with board members alongside project managers and collaborators, attended by EfVET members. The conference kicked off with a walking dinner and speeches by the *EfVET President* **Joachim James Calleja**, the *EfVET Dutch Board Coordinator and Conference host* **Marlies Verkuijen** (*Chair at the MBO Amersfoort*) and **Lucas Bolsius**, *Mayor of Amersfoort*. In their speeches they delved into the valuable contribution such events give to the sector of education and training through exchange of good practice, new ideas and networking for innovation projects and programmes. The

dance/poetry performance by the students of a written text entitled *Just keep breathing: Moving Words* was the **highlight of the evening**. **Young people reminded older generations of their responsibility to safeguard the world's natural habitat for future generations**. A stunning performance with lyrics of very high emotional and spiritual connotations.

*24th Oct.* - During the first day panels, experts in the VET field led the discussion by exposing stories, different points of view, showing the young people the skills they have matured in their long career path. Including:

- **Laureen Rwatirera**, *VP of Organization Development at ASML*, delivering a keynote on "Will Gen Z Sustain a Net-Zero Living?"
- **Nick Jordan** from *Vestas*, presenting on global apprenticeship programmes to attract Gen Z talent.
- **Chiara Rondino**, *Head of Unit for Vocational Education and Training at the European Commission*, discussing the future of VET in Europe.
- **Stefano Tirati**, *EfVET Vice-President*, moderator and host of the discussion.

The parallel workshop sessions were an **opportunity to present projects**, draw inspiration from EfVET members, but also to get GenZs to participate in the activities. The best stage given to the local youngsters was the **"elevator pitch" competition**, in which students from the MBO VET school demonstrated their communication skills, held the stage with confidence, and exposed their ideas with a fresh point of view open to technological innovations. The reception of the institutions in the magnificent St. Joris Kerk (downtown Amersfoort) was a bright moment of meeting and appreciation for the **"Dutch horizon" perspective**, networking and informal conversations. Similarly, the **Roundtables** provided an excellent informal platform for exchange of ideas on future projects, good practice and innovation in the vocational sector for all.

*25th Oct.* - Session "Building the VET Ecosystem for the Future: Collective Discussion" moderated by Arja Flinkman, EfVET Vice President. Announcement of the winners of the Sustainable Development Award. Closing remarks by EfVET President with key messages from the Annual International Conference. **Announcement of the location of the next EfVET Annual Conference: Fatima, Portugal from October 22-25, 2025**. The **Gala dinner** closed the conference proceedings. During the dinner, appreciations from members and authorities to all VET students and professors for their hard work in professional learning and good success of the conference. EfVET President thanked the host manager of the Leer Hotel Het Klooster for his leadership of students during the two day event.

*26th Oct.* - Cultural excursions of choice in three locations: Amersfoort, museum tour & boat tour; Utrecht, walking tour & Domtoren visit; Park De Hoge Veluwe, museum tour in 'De Hoge Veluwe'. Another opportunity for networking in an informal setting.

## Results and Conclusions

**The direct participation of students and representatives of the new generations was the cornerstone of the 2024 EfVET Conference:** how can we include and **make room for the innovative ideas of the young people** who will lead our future? How to **create a bridge** between generations that can give the practical and theoretical tools, update and modernise practices, methodologies and external communication? The international conference was an **important gateway to initiate new professional opportunities**, establish **networks**, and also to share many informal moments and make **personal connections**.

At the end of the intense 2024 EfVET Conference, the *EfVET President Joachim James Calleja* commented:

*“An extraordinary gathering of VET leaders. Their commitment is so strong that they are the only natural catalysts for any possible reform of European vocational training. It is only by placing this process in their hands that we can finally see this sector flourish and provide adequate resources for vocational education and training for Generation Z learners. EFVET is your platform for the success of this process! Students should be kept at the heart of education of any education; our responsibility towards their upbringing and provision of skills and competences is huge compared to our entitlement as educators.”*

*We extend our sincere appreciation to the whole EfVET Dutch Board and its Coordinator Marlies Verkuijlen, and to our main sponsors MBO Amersfoort, Aventus, ROC Midden Nederland, Roc Mondriaan, the City of Amersfoort, and MBO Utrecht.*

*A very special appreciation also goes to the many students who made the 2024 EfVET Annual gathering a truly remarkable and memorable event for all.*

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For more information, please visit [www.efvet-conference.eu](http://www.efvet-conference.eu) - [@linktr.ee/efvet](https://linktr.ee/efvet)

**The photo album of the event** is available on our channels and shared under Creative Commons licence.

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