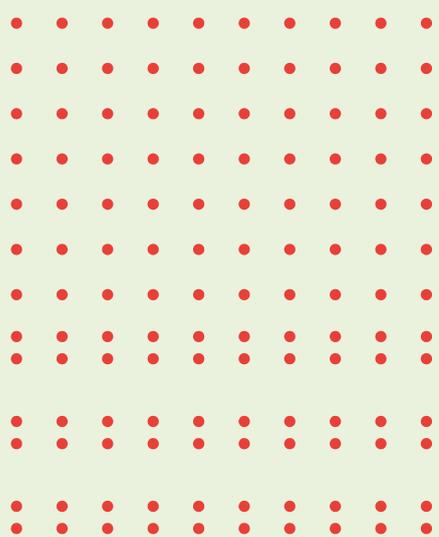


# WBL in Europe

FOR SUPPORT OF  
WORK BASED LEARNING  
(WBL)  
2020-2-BG01-KA205-079436



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# Introduction

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## 1. *European context*

In recent years, work-based learning has risen significantly on the EU policy agenda. As European governments aim to increase the skills and employability of young people, efforts to strengthen work-based learning in vocational education are becoming more frequent. Indeed, the promotion of work-based learning has been and continues to be a priority of the European Commission, with various policy initiatives aimed at promoting it in the pre- and post-2020 policy cycles, such as the early Bruges communiqué of 2010 on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training for the period 2011-20 and the Riga Conclusions of 2015.

In the post-2020 context, increasing the availability of (and the exposure to) work-based learning, along with increasing its quality, remains central to the EU policy agenda, as shown by key policy documents such as the European skills agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience of 2020<sup>1</sup>, as well as the Council recommendation on a bridge to jobs of 2020<sup>2</sup> and the Council Recommendation on VET of 2020<sup>3</sup>, which all argue for expanding the number of young people who benefit from work-based learning and improving its quality.

Work based learning is at the heart of education and training policy. It is represented as a collaboration between education and professional industries and is recognized as a good practice to provide learners with knowledge, skills and competences that are necessary on the labor market.

WBL can be on-site trainings, but also trainings that take place in dedicated vocational or occupational centers and which focus on the expectations of a specific industry or profession

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<sup>1</sup> Available here: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=9723#navItem-1>

<sup>2</sup> Available here: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2020.372.01.0001.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2020.372.01.0001.01.ENG)

<sup>3</sup> Available here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1202%2801%29>

and provide learners with knowledge, skills and competencies aimed to meet these expectations for them to fit with the labor market requirements.

Work Based Learning can take different forms. It can be represented as alternance schemes or apprenticeships. In this type of programme, learners spend a significant amount of time learning within the companies' realities. At the same time, they acquire general and vocational knowledge and skills in VET schools or other education/training institutions. EU school-based vocational education and training (VET) instead includes periods of training in enterprises. These training periods usually cover work placements which are a compulsory or optional element of VET programmes leading to formal qualifications. Another possible option is the integration of the WBL into a school curriculum, through on-site laboratories, workshops (e.g. kitchens), start-ups or training companies, simulations or real-life project assignments in business or industry.

The aim here is to create "real" working environments, to establish contacts and/or cooperation with real companies or sectors.

Apprenticeships have been a political priority in vocational training at European level, especially since 2012 with a communication from the European Commission which encourages Member States to support a first work experience and on-the-job training as a way to tackle youth unemployment<sup>4</sup>. The Osnabrueck 2020 Declaration confirmed that apprenticeships and on-the-job training improve employability by providing people with knowledge, skills and competences that are necessary for the job market and enable them upskilling for inclusion. The Council Recommendation on vocational education and training from the 24 November 2020 confirmed the potential of apprenticeships to tackle youth unemployment and prepare young people for the existing opportunities and challenges in the labor market, including the transition to a green and digital economy<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/apprenticeships-work-based-learning>

<sup>5</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0933&from=EN>

## 2. *The Work-based learning (WBL)*

There is no single definition of what Work-Based Learning (WBL) entails beyond the notion that it implies two characteristics: learning in a work context and learning through practice. We could say, then, that WBL refers to learning that occurs when people do real work. This work can be paid or unpaid, but it must be real work that leads to the production of real goods and services. WBL provides students with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills and develop their employability. Work-based learning has traditionally been defined as learning in a real working environment and learning in conjunction with practice. However, work-based learning can also combine with traditional classroom learning and e-learning, and the extent of the work-based activity can range from high to low intensity, depending on the type of WBL considered.

In the context of the Inter-Agency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training, more coordinated work on an internationally agreed notion of work-based learning has advanced (IAG-TVET). An agreement on the following ideas:

- a. *work-based learning 'refers to all forms of learning that takes place in a real work environment';*
- b. *work-based learning 'usually - but not always - combines elements of learning in the workplace with classroom-based learning';*
- c. *the most common types of work-based learning are apprenticeships, internships/ traineeships and on-the-job training<sup>6</sup>*

Most WBL programs are generally university accredited courses, aiming at a win-win situation where the learner's needs and the industry requirement for skilled and talented employees both are met. WBL programs are targeted to bridge the gap between the learning and the doing. "Work-based learning strategies provide career awareness, career exploration opportunities, career planning activities and help students attain competencies such as positive work attitudes and other employable skills."

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<sup>6</sup> IAG-TVET (2016). Investing in work-based learning. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---ifp\\_skills/documents/publication/wcms\\_565923.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_565923.pdf)

Work-based learning encompasses a diversity of formal, nonformal and informal arrangements including apprenticeships, work placement and informal learning on the job. The key driver is the need for active policies to secure learning that meets the need of the workplace.

### **3. *WBL Strategies***

- Apprenticeship or internship or mentorship: An apprenticeship involves the student working for an employer where he or she is taught and supervised by an experienced employee of the chosen organization. The student is periodically evaluated for progress as per the skills and knowledge acquired, and maybe granted wages accordingly. At the end of the course, the student receives a certificate of service. The student learns in a realistic environment and gets the opportunity to apply his or her knowledge in real-world scenarios.
- Job shadowing: Job Shadowing is a short-term opportunity that introduces the student to a particular job or career by pairing the student with an employee of the workplace. By following or 'shadowing' the employee, the student gets familiar with the duties and responsibilities associates with that job.
- Business/industry field trip: Field trips offer the students an insight in the latest technical advancements and business strategies of an enterprise. Students also gain awareness of the various career opportunities available and understand the driving forces of the community's economy.
- Entrepreneurial experience: This includes setting up of specific business, right from the planning, organizing and managing stage to the risk control and management aspects of a business.
- Cooperative education: In cooperative education, the work experience is planned in conjunction with the technical classroom instruction. This method is used by universities that do not have access to state-of-art equipment required to transact the technical course practically.
- School-based enterprise: A school-based enterprise is a simulated or actual business run by the school. It offers students a learning experience by letting them manage the various aspects of a business

- Service learning: this strategy combines community service with career, where students provide volunteer service to public and non-profit agencies, civic and government offices etc.

#### **4. Beneficiaries**

- Student: The student is central to the WBL process. The student engages in a WBL program and completes all requirements of the program, maintains high degree of professionalism and acquires necessary competencies for which the WBL program was designed.
- Business Mentor: A business mentor sets realistic goals for the student to acquire, engages and supervises them to complete their tasks and is a role model for the student to emulate.
- Teacher Coordinator: A teacher coordinator is a certified educator who manages the WBL program and checks on the student progress and supports whenever required to ensure successful completion of the WBL program
- School Administrator: The school administrator is key in introducing WBL programs within the curriculum after identifying the appropriate courses that can be learnt through the program.
- Parents: Parental support enables successful completion of the WBL program as offer suitable guidance, support and motivation to their wards and approve the WBL program that would be most suitable for meeting their ward's learning needs and career aspirations.

#### **5. WBL Advantages**

##### General benefits

- Application of classroom learning in real-world setting
- Establishment of connection between school and work
- Improvement in critical thinking, analytical reasoning and logical abilities
- Expansion of curriculum and learning facilities
- Meeting the diverse needs of the learner

- Creating a talented and skilled pool of future employees
- Reduces pre-service training time and cost
- Improvement of student awareness of career opportunities
- Making education relevant and valuable to the social context
- Community building exercise for productive economy

### Benefits for stakeholders

There are a number of reasons for policy makers, individual companies and social partners to be interested in introducing, expanding and improving the quality of work-based learning:

- For enterprises, benefits are represented by increased productivity of the employees and in a greater innovativeness of the workplace itself thanks to the employees' knowledge, improving the quality of the product/service and reducing staff turnover
- For learners, WBL can make their courses or programmes of study more interesting, and it connects them directly to the world of work, thus improving their job perspective thanks to more relevant skills and the relations created with perspective employers. This represents also an important opportunity to increase the social inclusion of those with disadvantaged background and improve their opportunities in the labour market.
- For those who run schools and colleges, benefits are to be found in the development of generic skills such as teamwork and problem solving, and basic work habits such as punctuality. It also shows students the relevance of their courses to future jobs, increasing their motivation for studying and – at the same time – increasing participation and outcomes for disadvantaged students.

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## *Collection of European good practices*

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The data collected in the youth, education, training, and VET sector from the partners have shown severe problems related to the youth unemployment tendencies in Europe. In addition to this, in the past two years the situation did not seem to improve mainly because of the uprising economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic consequences.

To these regards, specific efforts, and strategic actions, such as those the project Work Based Learning tries to foster, are necessary in order to restart the economy in a most effective, propulsive and innovative way. The necessity to react and provide solutions to the related issues seems urgent since the educational processes and economical activities need to be reorganized accordingly, especially when educational needs must be adapted to a new post-pandemic social landscape.

While collecting the data, the partner organizations have conducted a deep analysis of the existing best practices widespread in Europe. In this respect, the aim of this chapter is to deepen the results of these research showing how the European countries have faced the issue of youth unemployment through the implementation of VET strategies at national and regional levels. This part, according to the project's main objectives, will provide an overview of the existing practices, fundamental to understand how to create or implement network and partnerships in this field, how to improve the quality and efficiency of VET, enhance the impact and relevance of vocational education for VET learners and employers, and build cross-border cooperation for VET quality and attractiveness.

Given that the WBL project aims at promoting deep holistic approaches for fostering youth employability by bridging non-formal, formal education and labor market sectors, its mission is to actively contribute to the creation of long-term multi-level cross-sectorial networking and cooperation and includes for this purpose the collection, study and analysis of existing practices that are implemented and reformulated according to the needs of the present project.

## **1 - INNOTRAIN - Innovative Training in VET. Professional capacity building of VET-business key actors for qualitative WBL experiences**

This project was led by the *Österreichisches Institut Für Berufsbildungsforschung*, Austria, between November 2018 and October 2021 (Start: 01-11-2018 - End: 31-10-2021), taking place in Austria, Italy, Germany, Spain and Greece. The involved stakeholders were: Jugend Am Werk Berufsausbildung Für Jugendliche GmbH (At), Association Of Thessalian Enterprises And Industries (El), Proyecta Mejora Empresarial, S.L. (Es) , Centoform Srl (It) , Institute Of Entrepreneurship Development (El) , K.O.S GmbH (De), Westdeutscher Handwerkskammertag (De) , Cipfp Valle De Elda (Es).

The overall objective of this project was to create transferable outputs (more specifically, 4 IOs) with the aim of upgrading the professional competences of practitioners which are daily involved in VET-business relationships and delivery of WBL programmes.

The main focuses of the project, those that we found more interesting for our research, were especially the qualitative growth of high-quality skills and competences. In addition to this, the project *INNOTRAIN* intended to investigate and develop new strategies for effective VET-business cooperation structures involving complementary local stakeholders, but with an outlook at exploitation in other EU regions.

More specifically, the objectives of the project, strictly related to the concept of empowerment, were to:

- understand and innovate VET-Business Partnerships;
- design new training programmes and training methodologies based on WBL for skills upgrade of key practitioners;
- suggest for more effective cooperation structures between a wide audience of stakeholders.

The project was implemented focusing on the regional and local levels improvement, benefitting from a transnational dimension working on effective practices leading to innovation of training programmes and tools for professionals involved in WBL development.

The strategic international partnership pointed to create a more systematic engagement of VET providers and businesses with the proposal to investigate, design and implement new synergies among local key stakeholders involved in cooperation structures for WBL promotion and inspire sustainable policy reforms on education and employment.

The main beneficiaries of this project were professionals involved in VET, general education, business and social partners, local bodies and youth associations.

The main tangible result for this project has been the creation of a platform that serves to provide trainers and interested experts in the field of work-based learning with information, tools and teaching materials. The platform, that can be reached through the link: <https://innotrain.whkt.de/content/moodle>, was one of the outputs funded under KA2-Capacity Building in Higher Education of the Erasmus+ programme and seems to be a very useful toolkit to take inspiration from. The total grant of the project is estimated at 307.032 euro.

To know more about the project you can visit the following link <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplu-project-details#project/2018-1-AT01-KA202-039218>, or take a look on the official project's website: <https://innotrain.whkt.de/content/about>.

## **2 - Work-Based Training in the school-to-work transition process (WBT)**

Work-Based Training in the school-to-work transition process (WBT) Project was leaded by the Zentrum für Integration und Bildung, Germany (2015 – 2017), The other project's stakeholders are ZIB Zentrum für Integration und Bildung GmbH(DE) , Anziani e non solo(IT), Afyonkarahisar Meleki ve teknik Anadolu Lisesi (MTAL)(TUR), Esprominho(PT), RESC Pleven(BG), PCO – Poklicni center Obala(SI), CFL Soderhamn(SE), Hermes Corporation Ltd(MT), Liceul Tehnologic Grigore Moisil Braila(RO).

The project overall goal was to find successful methods and learning strategies suitable for removing long-term learning barriers and ensuring lasting learning success, in order to provide young people with learning difficulties with a successful outlook on the job market.

The main objective of the project was to improve the school-to-work transition in Europe. As part of the implementation of the project, an online survey was carried out among the three main target groups involved in school-to-work transition and work-based learning, namely teachers, trainers and young people themselves. The results led to a report of findings which forms the basis of the "Manual on Work-Based Training", describing national approaches to school-to-work transition and offering proposals for improvement and documenting many examples of good practice from the partner countries.

The practice constitutes an important source of information regarding WBL situation in the partner countries and how the current situation can be improved to further develop WBL. Such projects can serve as a basis for educational support and statistical support in WBL practices. It can be used by public authorities but also to organisations which seek to improve work-based learning activities in these countries.

This project was funded in the framework of the Erasmus + and granted with a total amount of 161.575,00 EUR.

### **3 - Vocational Education and Training in the Working World 4.0**

This project, coordinated by Bezirksregierung Koeln, Germany, and implemented between 2016 and 2018 (01/10/2016 – 30/11/2018), developed specific learning modules on how Smart and Keen Company aims at the possibility of prototyping and manufacturing components with 3D printers and the networking of different actors in a production process. The partnership which promoted this experience was made up of an international team: Vytauto Didziojo Universitetas (Lt) , Central European Chamber Of Commerce (PI) , Kouvola Kaupunki (Fi) , Förvaltningen För Gymnasium & Arbetsmarknad, Kungsbacka Kommun (Se) , Fondazione Centro Produttività Veneto (It) , Stichting Voor Beroepsonderwijs Envolwasseneneducatie Westelijk Zuid-Limburg (NI) , les Campanillas (Es) , Istituto Formazione Operatori Aziendali (It).

More specifically, the objectives of Vocational Education and Training in the Working World 4.0 were:

- To produce an analysis of which competence requirements in the fields of electronics and mechatronics will change among the skilled workers and training personnel.
- The development of exemplary learning modules for trainees, which give an initial access to the future working world 4.0 and which can be implemented with relatively little resources and are suitable for all participating countries.
- Building on this, the development of learning modules for teaching staff in order to sensitize them to the challenges of digitalization and enable them to teach in a project-oriented and forward-looking manner and to guide their students in their learning.

The main interesting part of the project concerns the way the large differences within and between different sectors as well as between different countries and regions in terms of adapting to the requirements designated as "4.0" were tackled.

The project, indeed, always keeping in mind the various backgrounds, aimed at analysing and better understanding the expected needs per country in terms of competence within the sectors of electronics and mechanics and to develop exemplary learning modules for future professionals, teachers and trainers in these fields in order to respond to the development at an early stage. The results achieved were highly successful, but during the project it also became apparent how dynamic and unequal this process is.

Although the results of the project have been very positive, what has emerged is this different pattern that characterizes the different contexts of project application and study. It is possible to know more about the project and deepen on the results in the project's dedicated website (<https://vet-4-0.eu/Expertise.html>).

This project was funded in the framework of the Erasmus + and granted with a total amount of 297.570 EUR.

## **4 - Strategic Partnership for a sustainable vocational education and training for the European painting trade**

The assumption this project originated from is that there is a general criticism that many VET systems are too remote from the requirements of the economy and offer insufficient opportunities to acquire professional and personal skills that are demanded by the labour market. In this context, the EU calls its members to reform the vocational education and training. Vocational education and training and the economy must cooperate with each other to compensate for the deficits.

From this shared postulate, the project PaintingSkillsNetwork started under the guidance of the German leader *Sächsische Bildungsgesellschaft Furumweltschutz Und Chemieberufe Dresden Mbh- Sbg* , involving different partners from all over the Europe: *Achverband Farbe Gestaltung Bautenschutz Sachsen (De)*, *Union Internationale Des Entrepreneurs De Peinture Asbl (Lu)* , *Cech Maliru A Lakyrniku A Tapetaru Cr Zs (Cz)*, *Székesfehérvári Szc Vörösmarty Mihály Ipari Szakgimnáziuma És Szakközépiskolája (Hu)*, *Statny Institut Odborneho Vzdelavania (Sk)* , *Alytaus Profesinio Rengimo Centras (Lt)* , *Stredni Skola Stavebni A Strojni Teplice Prispěvkova Organizace (Cz)*, *Nti Mmm Limited (Uk)*, *Confederation Nationale De La Construction Asbl (Be)*.

The activities, which lasted four years (01/09/2014- 31/08/2017), found the VET providers of the European painting trade and business representatives (Association of the European painting trade - UNIEP and professional associations from different countries) agreeing on the conceptual basis for a business-related training. They described units of learning outcomes and learning outcomes to arrange this, facilitating the transfer of these units of learning outcomes in educational practice, pedagogical guidance for teachers and a method for measuring the learning outcomes were designed.

What we found particularly matching with our WBL project idea, is that the project was able to establish a network (PaintingSkillsNetwork) for vocational training in the painting trade. This network offered a future of cross-border mobility, where participants could complete selected units of learning outcomes. Also, during the project runtime in methodology workshops and student camps on their practicality and ability to match with the various training systems.

More information on the project can be found at the following link:  
<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplus-project-details#project/2014-1-DE02-KA202-001597>.

## 5 - Europäisches Qualifizierungskonzept "Fachkraft Berufsorientierung"

The aim of this specific project was to promote the professionalization of the specialists/actors of VO (Vocational Orientation) by the above-mentioned EU qualification concept and the supplementary VET products contributes. In particular, the beneficiaries of the projects were young people with a low/middle school leaving certificate and disadvantaged young people in the Industrial-technical and handicrafts fields.

The coordinating partner Padagogische Hochschule Schwabisch Gmund (De), in synergy with the other organisations COMUNIDAD FORAL DE NAVARRA - GOBIERNO DE NAVARRA (ES) , SOLSKI CENTER NOVA GORICA (SI) , Österreichisches Institut Für Bildungsforschung Der Wirtschaft - Ibw (AT) , Coleg Y Cymoedd (UK), wanted to promote actions to support and advise young people in accomplishing better quality in their process of career choice, with the result that the next generation of skilled worker is sustainable ensured for companies.

During the project duration (01/09/2016- 31/08/2018) the EU level was developed as well as a web platform to download all the products and further instruments and useful tools for the work in the field of VO. Also, the strategic partnership was able to develop different products based on a VET scientific analysis (actual/ target analysis, case studies, expert interviews) in all participating countries on the current status of VO and the level of implementation of VO and the requirements of all stakeholders to a VO. The developed products, aimed at being sustainable, contributes to initiate a professional future orientation support process, which enables young people to establish their own career choice competence.

Young people could be able on the basis of an acquired overview knowledge and specific knowledge that they got from the specialists of VO to make the right career choice and to reflect their choice according to their interests, abilities and skills.

More informations about the project *Europäisches Qualifizierungskonzept "Fachkraft Berufsorientierung"* can be found in the Erasmus + website (<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplus-project-details#project/2016-1-DE02-KA202-003251>), which enabled the project to be implemented with a budget of 286.012 EUR.

## **6 - Work-Based Training in the school-to-work transition process (WBT)**

Another best practice we would like to discuss is that of the project *Work-Based Training in the school-to-work transition process (WBT)*, coordinated by the German *ZIB Zentrum für Integration und Bildung GmbH* and implemented during the period 01/09/2015 -31/08/ 2017. We found this strategy particularly interesting and useful to compare with the modus operandi that the WBL project intends to adopt.

The aim of the partnership, which included Regionalni Center Za Razvoj D.O.O. (SI) , Afyonkarahisar Mesleki Ve Teknik Anadolu Lisesi (TR) , Liceul Tehnologic Grigore Moisil Braila (RO) , Centrum För Flexibelt Lärande (CFL) (SE) , ANZIANI E NON SOLO SOCIETA COOPERATIVA SOCIALE (IT) , Regionalen Zentar Za Podpomagane Na Stopanskite Predpriemachi (BG) , Esprominho (PT) , Hermes Corporation Ltd (MT) , PCO - Poklicni Center Obala (SI) was to find successful ways and strategies for overcoming long standing learning barriers and blockades. The scope was to create sustainable learning success and to secure the successful integration of young students into the labour market.

How did the partners move during the project implementation?

- At first, the partnership researched the different transition settings and WBT approaches in the partner countries and illustrated the findings in an overview report.

- Secondly, an Online Survey was carried out, addressed to the main relevant stakeholders involved in school-to-work transition: teachers, trainers/instructors and the young learners themselves. The interviews were done through an online questionnaire containing a mix of standardized and open questions. The aim was to find out what were the great advantages of the respective WBT approach in the country; what were the drawbacks; and what kind of improvements can be identified.
- The online survey collected around 20 interviews from each stakeholder group in each country, producing more than 560 interviews in total.
- The online survey was evaluated in a Report on Findings and finally lead, as the core product, to a Manual on Work-based Training that illustrates the different approaches of WBT and which documents the findings of the survey.

Such a project has an important value as it allows to provide valuable data which are based on a common ground. Such data are somehow missing in Europe as member countries adopt different definitions of WBL. Consequently, such work is helpful for the development of WBL practices and provides relevant information regarding the situation in European countries in terms of use of WBL methodology.

The project was implemented in the framework of the Erasmus + project and received a total grant of 161.575 EUR.

To deepen on the results of the project we advise to take a look on the project's page (<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplus-project-details#project/2015-1-DE02-KA202-002447>).

## **7 - Work-Based Learning in the Field of Cutting Mechanics: Introducing VET Multipliers to Alternate Work-Based Learning in Romania and Slovakia**

One of the European good practices we can highlight is the project *Work-Based Learning in the Field of Cutting Mechanics: Introducing VET Multipliers to Alternate Work-Based Learning in Romania and Slovakia* and implemented during the period 0.09.2015 – 31.08.2018.

The project's aim is to improve education systems by laying the foundations for a competitive, sustainable industrial sector and reducing the discrepancy between the demand for skilled workers and the training of skilled workers.

The coordinating partner Bildungswerk der Bayerischen Wirtschaft gGmbH(DE) in synergy with the other organisations SC STABILUS ROMANIA SRL (RO) , Schaeffler Romania SRL (RO) , Stredna odborná škola strojnica (SK) , SCOALA PROFESIONALA GERMANA KRONSTADT (RO) , DTR Draexlmaier Sisteme Tehnice Romania SRL (RO) , Lisa Dräxlmaier GmbH (DE) , INA Kysuce, spol. S r.o. (SK) wanted to make the training more practice-oriented and action-oriented.

In order to achieve the goals, further training courses and workshops on practice-oriented training methods and 2 workshops on the dual training system in Germany were carried out within the framework of the project. These took place for vocational school teachers as well as company trainers and managers of the project partners.

In addition, existing teaching and testing materials were revised and modernised. The regular feedback from participants and partners on the activities and the course of the project was positive and most of the suggestions for improvement were implemented at an early stage.

The implementation of the project positively impacts the sector of Mechanics as professionals in the sector may use training materials to implement WBL practice and increase the chance to make it a successful experience. Its specialisation in a specific sector makes the tools more accurate with a better focus to fill the market's requirements in terms of competences.

The project was implemented in the framework of the Erasmus + project and received a total grant of 155.451 EUR.

To deepen on the results of the project we advise to take a look on the project's page (<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplus-project-details/#project/2015-1-DE02-KA202-002514>).

## 8 - Testing New Approaches to Training VET and Workplace Tutors for Work Based Learning” (TTT4WBL)

The project which was implemented between November 2018 and March 2019 supports an innovative approach – tandem training – for the training of trainers in work-based learning (WBL) of the Baltic countries – Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Testing New Approaches to Training VET and Workplace Tutors for Work Based Learning” (TTT4WBL) project develops and pilots a sample training program for in-company and vocational education and training (VET) institutions’ trainers. A common competence profile of WBL trainers in the Baltics will promote a common Baltic vision while respecting the needs of each particular country in developing the training programs for WBL trainers.

The partnership which promoted this experience was made up of an international team: National Centre for Education (Latvia) The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia The Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Baltic Bright (Latvia) Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Development Centre (Lithuania) Lithuanian Association of Vocational Training Institutions Kaunas Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (Lithuania) Tartu Vocational Education Centre (Estonia) JAMK University of Applied Sciences (Finland).

At a later stage each Baltic country develops its own training program in relation to the national priorities, legal framework and the interests and opinions of involved stakeholders in the particular country and based on a common agreed competence profile of a WBL trainer. A Finnish research institute is providing methodological support based on the analysis of the opinions of involved stakeholders from all the Baltic countries.

The project supports an innovative approach – tandem training – for the training of trainers in work-based learning (WBL) of the Baltic countries – Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

During the project’s implementation, it was developed and tested a sample training program for in-company and vocational education and training (VET) institutions’ trainers.

Such a project allows to improve WBL activities as it allows its beneficiaries to have a better and complete overview of the national system in the respective countries, including the legal framework. This research work constitutes a good basis in order to provide relevant and well addressed Training for trainers who need such information.

More information on the project can be found at the following link: [http://balticbright.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/TTT4WBL\\_2.zi%C5%86u\\_lapa.pdf](http://balticbright.lv/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/TTT4WBL_2.zi%C5%86u_lapa.pdf) .

## **9 - From birth to adult age - a WBL successful Practice!**

This project is *From birth to adult age - a WBL successful Practice!* coordinated by AEVA - ASSOCIACAO PARA A EDUCACAO E VALORIZACAO DA REGIAO DE AVEIRO and implemented between 01-09-2017 and 31-08-2020, aimed to improve education systems, thereby laying the foundations for a competitive, sustainable industrial sector and reducing the discrepancy between the demand for skilled. The partnership which promoted this experience was made up of an international team: POLITEKNIKA IKASTEGIA TXORIERRI S.COOP (ES) , INSTITUTO POLITECNICO DO PORTO (PT) , Municipio de Sever do Vouga (PT) , TKNIKA (ES) , PROVINCIA DI PESARO E URBINO (IT) , Benelli Armi SPA (IT) , ITIS "E. Mattei" (IT) , GESTAMP TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE (ES) , A. Silva Matos Metalomecânica SA (PT).

From birth to adult age - a WBL successful Practice! project focused on this duality of purpose and sought to move VET students & teachers/instructors from ‘theoretical, technical and entrepreneurial competences’ to ‘Real usage and adaptation of technical and entrepreneurial competences’ and develop the skills amongst VET students&teachers, enabling them to ‘hit the ground running’ in an industry sector that has an in-built bias towards entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation. This constitutes the key element of this practice which makes it useful for other WBL projects as this New pedagogy was developed for VET staff enabling higher level ‘applied’ and updated skills amongst learners, increasing simultaneously innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial skills and thereby narrowing the gap between academia and the world of work.

The 3 companies involved other local similar businesses and provided a real world learning environment leading to more motivated VET students willing to fill in the vacancies in the labour market, more innovative VET staff and more inclusive employers/trainers, able to share their knowledge among apprentices, being responsible actors in the educational process, from the very beginning. This platform is reusable and expandable for other VET areas.

The project was implemented in the framework of the Erasmus + project and received a total grant of 288.365 EUR.

More information on the project can be found at the following link: (<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplus-project-details#project/2017-1-PT01-KA202-035903>)

## **10 - European Alliance for WBL and Inclusion: practices and tools to design flexible and tailor-made learning plans**

*European Alliance for WBL and Inclusion: practices and tools to design flexible and tailor-made learning plans Project* was led by the AEVA - ASSOCIACAO PARA A EDUCACAO E VALORIZACAO DA REGIAO DE AVEIRO, Italy (Start: 01-10-2019 - End: 31-03-2022), The other project's stakeholder is I.I.S. PERTINI-MONTINI-CUOCO taking place in Italy.

Another experience that we found particularly interesting: BEST@LLIANCE which responds to a specific need for training and professional update for those who carry out tutoring functions in alternating school and work pathways, international mobility and apprenticeship for learners with specific learning disorders and intellectual disability. In particular, they are school tutors (teachers) and network tutors.

The project aims, therefore, to give a concrete answer to the aforementioned problems through the achievement of the following objectives:

- Train staff and teachers who work to make the WBL experience more fruitful and aimed at the future employment of students with specific learning disorders and with intellectual disability;
- Develop more flexible and personalized pathways that link the formal VET curriculum to work-based learning for students with specific learning disorders and with intellectual disability;
- Support mentors and business staff during the WBL experience of students with specific learning disorders and with intellectual disability;
- Strengthening a national and European network of VET schools, VET providers, public bodies, companies, trade associations and social partners to allow the active participation to Alternating School and Work pathways, Mobility and Apprenticeship.

Students with specific learning disorders and with intellectual disability need a personalized learning plan that includes the WBL tailor-made experience; companies, on the other hand, often are not ready to support students with special needs in the different work-based learning pathways and in turn need to be supported and guided by highly trained staff equipped with innovative methodologies and tools.

The transnational development of BEST@LLIANCE is therefore crucial to promote a common EU methodology for training teachers and network tutors in a priority and thematic area, such as the WBL pathways for students with specific learning disorders and with intellectual disability.

From the methodological point of view the project includes:

- The continuous and active involvement of all project staff figures and supervision by the tutors; accompaniment and tutoring; learning methodologies based on involvement, participation, high integration between theory and practice; the development of immediately expendable practical skills, the validation of LOs;
- A system of intermediate and final checks that allow the monitoring of the progress in terms of LOs achieved by the participants, as well as evaluating and validating them in an ECVET-compatible framework.

The following, therefore, are the expected impacts:

At the end of the project: development of specialized skills of the two target groups involved (100 school tutors/teachers and 20 network tutors); realization of a learning model of innovative value.

In the middle term: dissemination of the results and the learning model among the subjects of vocational training; making available results and learning model for institutions and professionals of local/regional/national/EU territories.

The project was implemented in the framework of the Erasmus + project and received a total grant of 288.365 EUR.

More information on the project can be found at the following link:  
<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/eplus-project-details#project/2019-1-IT01-KA102-006997> .

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## *Conclusions*

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Work-based learning (WBL) is an educational strategy that provides students with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills and develop their employability. It encompasses a diversity of formal, nonformal and informal arrangements including apprenticeships, work placement and informal learning on the job. The key driver is the need for active policies to secure learning that meets the needs of the workplace.

Work-based learning is an essential component of school-based VET. Done well, it makes a significant difference to the educational experiences and employment prospects of young people.

Educational centers should consider how theory and practical learning can be effectively linked so that students can easily trace these relationships. The skills needed in today's business world are very diverse; it can be difficult to meet the demand with the traditional school-based model. In a WBL model, schools provide classroom theory and supportive technical training in a student's chosen career plan, and businesses provide students the opportunity to experience and master their skills in a live setting.

WBL experiences provided by business interaction create a relevance to the technical training that is difficult to achieve in the classroom. WBL provides students critical insights to help them be successful, whether they choose college or career. WBL programs are targeted to bridge the gap between the learning and the doing. As such, teachers should be encouraged to incorporate Work-based learning activities into their teaching. Schools should consider how theory and practical learning can be effectively linked so that students can easily trace these relationships. They need to keep up with the ever-evolving technological developments. Besides teaching theoretical knowledge and technical skills, schools should also focus on the young learner's general personality and basic social skills - reliability, accuracy, dexterity, teamwork and ability to solve problems are all important soft skills and competencies required for successful integration into the job market.

Young people need someone around them who can advise them on labor market issues. Questions about the right career choice, required competencies, training and job postings,

and the application process are important questions that need to be answered in order for young people to enter the labor market. Schools and companies should therefore appoint a named person to guide careers and make them visible to students.

The provision of work-based learning is being promoted within current education and training policies at national and European level, with collaboration between education and industry being regularly emphasised. Work-based learning is increasingly recognised as an effective way for learners of all ages to acquire the knowledge, skills and competences required by the future labour market<sup>7</sup>.

However, in order to be successful, the process of integrating WBL in the learning practices should be structured and the stakeholders aware of how to proceed to offer the right WBL form and how to make this experience fruitful for the learner. It is therefore relevant for the government to guide the stakeholders on this path and to frame the process.

We can take as an example Finnish government which in 2010, published a manual aimed at supporting stakeholders (VET providers, colleges, training centers, but also employers) in offering proper WBL practices. The manual provides some guidance to stakeholders for them to choose the appropriate WBL by identifying the needs in terms of practices and thus the WBL methods that can address these needs<sup>8</sup>.

Such a tool has also been developed by the Belgium government in order to guide the stakeholders in the path to implement WBL practices from their preparation to their real implementation<sup>9</sup>.

Intervention from the governments may have an important role in guiding the stakeholders in the process of implementing WBL practices in order to encourage it, but their role go further that only encouraging in order to ensure the real positive effect of WBL. Indeed, without any policies in the sector, such practice could lead to experiences without relevance for the learner and without any skills improvement. In order to be successful, policymakers need to provide a legal frame to make sure WBL is used efficiently to meet the needs it addresses

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.wbl-toolkit.eu/index.php?id=13>

<sup>8</sup> WBL-TOI MANUAL - Manual for planning of work-based learning - transfer of innovations, Finish National Education Board (2010)

<sup>9</sup> The Flemish government, Agency for Educational Services; <http://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/leidraad-kwaliteitsvol-werkplekieren>; Brochure with guidelines for students and companies explaining how to organize and what to expect from a work-based learning experience (in Dutch only)

which lie on filling the job market requirements by improving learners' skills in a focused and practical way.

In order to promote and develop quality work-based learning and strong learning systems, this requires a long-term commitment from employers as well as from policy makers. The benefits for individuals, companies and society as a whole are considerable and it is essential to promote the use of such a practice by guiding the entities involved in the process and by establishing a legal framework for its effective use.

To make this learning method effective, it is essential to obtain the active commitment not only of political decision-makers but also - and above all - of the social partners.

This includes three essential elements:

1. A good governance of work-based learning, which requires effective collaboration and strong commitment from stakeholders and a clear definition of their roles and responsibilities;
2. Both the qualification acquired and the learning process itself must be of high quality to realise the full potential of WBL and ensure its recognition across borders.
3. Effective partnerships between schools/VET institutions and enterprises.

While WBL is a method encouraged by European institutions, its use and effectiveness differs from country to country. In some countries, Work Based Learning practice has long been an integral part of the education system, most often in vocational education and training (VET), with dual apprenticeships and education-industry partnerships operating successfully for many years (e.g Austria, Germany, Switzerland). For other countries, WBL is still in the emerging phase (e.g Ireland, Finland, France, the Netherlands) while in some others, WBL is slow to become part of the education and training offer (e.g Poland)<sup>10</sup>.

Terminology and definitions vary from country to country, making it difficult to collect clear statistical data on VET. In general, VET at higher education level is mainly school-based. Apprenticeship programmes often co-exist with school systems.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.wbl-toolkit.eu/index.php?id=16>

It has been shown that countries with strong apprenticeship systems, such as Germany, have a very good record of getting young people into employment. Each stakeholder gets what they need: learners acquire the skills they need to make a first step into the labour market and employers train their workforce to provide the knowledge, skills and competences they need to remain competitive.

As evidenced by our collection of good practices, organisations across Europe try to increase the use of WBL in order to foster young people's employability. In order to do so, they act on different aspects:

- Provide specific competences to teachers or to businesses to train them on how to integrate WBL activities in their practices;
- Provide learners adapted orientation support and be able to find the best field where they will develop technical and practical competences required by the chosen field's market;
- Provide government and other organisations seeking to support and encourage WBL activities with relevant data and suggestions to improve WBL integration process.

The collection of practices also shows that Germany is actively engaged in developing WBL activities and can serve as example to other European countries as WBL is there quite well implemented compared to other countries in Europe where WBL activities are still lacking in terms of quantity or quality.

In this context, the Erasmus+ project "Work Based learning - Pathway to youth Empowerment" seeks to continue the European effort and build on the initiatives already undertaken in Europe to promote WBL and thus respond to the need to increase the efficiency of European education systems and to support the transition of young people into the labour market by responding as closely as possible to market expectations. To this end, the partners wish to contribute to the creation of a long-term multi-level networking and cooperation in the field of WBL and to stimulate quality and excellence in education, training and youth systems across Europe in the future.



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