

SubWP 3c Report

Cooperation Training center/VET school – companies and involvement of social partners

Transitions from school to work are a crucial stage in the professional careers. A true apprenticeship needs improving and developing technical and social skills in order to increase the employability of the workers.

Work-based learning (WBL) is proving to be a successful model to improve the students' and apprentices' employability, which is especially relevant at this time in Europe if we are aware of youth unemployment rates. WBL approach pretends to make VET more labour-market-oriented by combining practical and theoretical learning so as to qualify skilled workers in a practical way and better prepare them for the requirements of the labour market. This perspective aim searches achievements not only for the students or apprentices but for educative centres and employers. Students could take advantages of the knowledge of real productive processes and labour environments. Being in touch with the labour market demands is important for educative institutions. Employers would achieve more benefits with a proper training of their future workers and a better knowledge of them. However, there are some barriers which hinder the successful transitions to work.

This work package is aimed to identify weaknesses and strengths in the field of cooperation among VET institution and labour market. The workshop focused on the cooperation between training centres, VET schools and companies and on the involvement of social partners, including examples of good practices, and a debate based on some key questions about work-based learning needs, gaps and expectations and the role of European projects in the field.

The following points were explored by the participants:

- Interaction between VET schools, employers, social partners. The attractiveness and the obstacles of this tripartite WBL approach (VET centre-learner-company) within different European contexts and VET systems;
- Exploring ways of cooperation and communication among VET schools, companies and social partners at European level, with the aim of determining strengths but also needs and gaps.

- Lack of motivation among the companies concerning WBL.
- Mismatches between learnings in schools and in job centres.
- Role of teachers and trainers in companies.
- The role of the European projects as an enrichment of the capacity to be employed.

The workshop, realised within the Monitoring Conference, focused on the cooperation between training centres, VET schools and companies and on the involvement of social partners and it featured a brief presentation of the network approach and objectives followed by three presentations including examples of good practices, and a debate in small groups based on four key questions about work-based learning needs, gaps and expectations. The debate was aimed at identifying weaknesses and strengths in the field of cooperation among VET institution and labour market. The conclusions of the preceding workshop were the starting point of this one in order to make progress towards these four questions:

- How to motivate companies to host IVET learners?
- There is a lack of communication between school and the world of work. What can be the solutions to facilitate the communication?
- What is needed to have opened curricula so as to reduce the mismatches between lessons & real market?
- EU projects: how can EU projects promote the implementation of WBL? What is the added value?

The conclusions of workshop may be summarised as follows:

- The motivation of hosting IVET learners is not the same for SME's and for big companies. The smaller company, the more difficult one. So it should be implemented a different strategic process to motivate them.
- There is a need of a systemic approach and more incentives from the government.
- Governmental policies should be addressed to enhance the dialogue between institutions and companies.
- The advantages of hosting IVET learners have to be showed to the employers in comparison to the weak costs for companies.
- It is needed more professional guidance for students to strengthen and improve the professional orientation. That guidance would be able to bridge the gap between schools and companies.

- There is a lack of a higher involvement of teachers/trainers in companies. It would be positive to strengthen teacher and trainer competences by encouraging job-shadowing in companies. Employers should go to schools for a short period to teach and, in this way, to get a better understanding concerning the world of school. Moreover, teachers should complete practical training periods in enterprises where apprentices can be learn.
- Mismatches between what is learned at school and what is required at real market constitute a barrier for optimal learning. The fact that companies move faster than schools hinders the adaptation of schools curricula. Some actions could help to overcome this obstacle:
 - Developing a clear learning outcomes framework at European, national and local level between schools and companies.
 - Transparent curriculum with clear final objectives and sub-targets for education and training.
 - Involvement of employers in curriculum development
 - Use of ECVET as a tool of communication between the responsible (schools and companies) for the student education and training. By the use of a common terminology and understanding of education and training.
 - Researching best practices, in particular within EU projects.

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