



**INTERMEDIATE REPORT**  
**ON WORK BASED LEARNING NEEDS AND GAPS**

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## Introduction

The present Interim Report was developed by the members of the **NetWBL Work Package 3 devoted to National Agencies' monitoring activities, pre-selection of projects, identification of Work Based Learning needs and gaps**. It represents a first reflection and summary of the activities carried out by the abovementioned group of National Agencies, during the first 10 months of the project lifecycle. The reports collect, therefore, the main contributions that, to different purposes and in relation to different activities, provided materials or elements supporting a further debate useful to guide the development of planned activities.

In this perspective the European Monitoring Conference, held in Brussels on 11-12 February 2014, represented a fruitful moment of cooperation that was characterised by a strong cooperation of the overall WP 3 working group. As a matter of fact the organization of the Conference featured a complex activity of collection of data involving all the LLP National Agencies (Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus) as well as EACEA. Moreover the information collected was analysed thus enabling the accurate selection of both project initiatives to invite to the conference and of projects' representatives to be actively involved as speakers in the 6 thematic workshops.

The contribution of the sub WP3 leaders, actively involved in the organization and in the implementation of the 6 thematic workshops, with the support of EACEA, enabled the acquisition of significant elements promoting the overall activity that the working group is developing with a view to defining the expected final result of the NetWBL project represented by a toolkit, a collection of products and tangible results developed within the initiatives financed by the LLP Programme in the period 2007-2013, a product that will be freely available online.

With a view to providing a complete overview of the activities that involved the working group during this first phase of the project lifecycle, the present section of the report describes the methodology adopted for the selection of projects considered as relevant. As a matter of fact chapter 1 of the present report summarizes briefly the process that enabled the drafting of a list of relevant projects to provide to the experts that will be appointed, as foreseen by the NetWBL project proposal, to explore in depth the information available in relation to the different LLP projects, with a view to identifying the projects that contributed to the realization

of tangible, transferrable and sustainable products to be valorized through the online toolkit. Furthermore chapter 2 is devoted to the presentation, for each of the 6 thematic issues, of a set of information and data supporting the explanation of the process that involved the different working groups established, coordinated by the different sub WP3 leaders, in the analysis and selection of relevant projects. In particular the chapter includes the description of the specific thematic area as considered within the LLP Programme and as “implemented” in approved projects. Moreover this part of the report features a presentation of the activities carried out by the working groups that involved the National Agencies participating in the NetWBL. In particular the related achieved results represented the basis for the organization of the Thematic workshops realised within the first European Monitoring Conference. The chapter is enriched by the conclusions highlighted by the participants of the above-mentioned workshops that identified a first set of needs, future challenges and opportunities that should guide VET and Higher Education professionals within the new Erasmus+ Programme.

With a view to exhaustively present the activities carried out by the sub work packages groups the chapter also highlights the added value characterising the projects that were presented during the workshops and that were required to present their project experiences. Lastly chapter 3 is characterised by the effort to present a first overview of needs and of areas of intervention still not adequately addressed by the initiatives financed by the LLP Programme, with a view to identifying possible future fields of activity, in terms of open challenges that work-based learning offers to the potential beneficiaries of the new Programme. A similar analysis will be further developed within the Final Report in order to provide to the European Commission possible suggestions to shape potential future priorities for the Erasmus+ Calls.

## 1. Methodology and activities carried out

The NetWBL thematic networking project started officially in September 2013. The network aims at identifying and clustering the best project initiatives in the field of work based learning implemented in Europe through the LLP Programme with a view to realising a “toolkit” supporting the development and dissemination of WBL experiences in the different countries involved.

The analysis focused on the projects financed within the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013) and, in particular, within the Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus sectoral programmes, that dealt with apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning issues. Moreover the network, besides the analysis of the results achieved by the above-mentioned projects, envisages the realization of valorisation initiatives through conferences, seminars, reports, websites or publications.

Therefore the goals of the NetWBL project are:

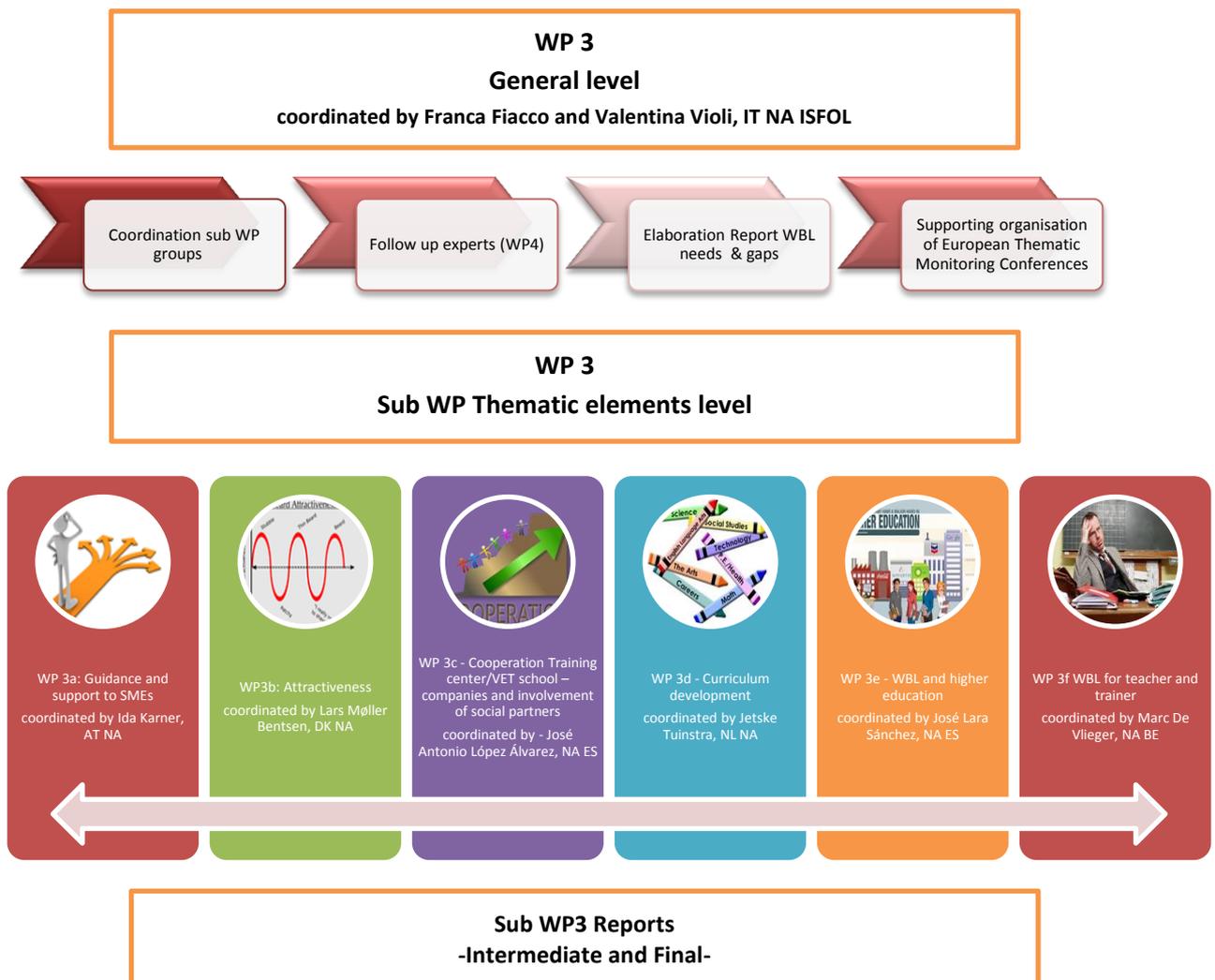
1. encourage LLP NAs to be actively involved in the valorisation of the LLP projects in order to promote the widest dissemination at European level of the best practices and experiences realised;
2. promote the mainstreaming of achieved results within VET organizations at national level;
3. support the development of policies and actions in this field.

The project, based on project initiatives financed at both central and decentralised level, will have to take into consideration the different contexts of the several European Countries involved also with a view to promoting the networking of beneficiaries dealing with similar issues thus ensuring the sustainability of relevant projects. The structure of the project proposal, organized in 7 work packages, envisages a specific Work Package 3 "NA's Monitoring activities, pre-selection of projects, identification of needs and gaps", specifically devoted to the analysis and selection of all the relevant projects financed within the 2007-2013 programming period. The WP3 working group, coordinated by the Italian NA ISFOL, involves the following National Agencies: OeAD (AT), EPOS (BE), FIVU (DK), OAPEE (ES), CINOP (NL).

Since the first planning of the project proposal, the working group involving the different National Agencies that took part in the definition of the project identified 6 thematic areas. The analysis of the financed project initiatives focused, therefore, on these fields and the network identified, a National Agency responsible for each issue and a staff member appointed as sub work package leader. The above-mentioned subWP leader coordinates a

small working group involving NAs with a view to exploring in depth the specific WBL thematic area.

In this perspective the areas of interest identified by the members of the WP3 working group guided the analysis carried out within each sub work package. The table below details the organisational structure characterising work package 3, the links with the other project activities, the main important issues as well as the inputs provided by the working groups and the results achieved until today.



Afterwards, all supporting LLP National Agencies were required to provide a list of relevant projects, financed at national level, connecting the above-mentioned project initiatives to, at least, one of the 6 thematic areas, in the awareness that some projects could be considered as relevant in relation to more than one WBL thematic field.

Also the Executive Agency EACEA supported the pre-selection of projects and provided the information concerning all relevant projects implemented at centralised level.

The overall mapping enabled the identification of a comprehensive list of 365 projects including project initiatives already finalised, as well as ongoing projects and projects that just started their activities.

The above-mentioned comprehensive set of projects represented the basis for the definition of a list of project beneficiaries and stakeholders to be invited to the first WBL European Monitoring Conference that was held in Brussels on 11-12 February 2014. In fact among ongoing and preferably already finalised project initiatives the network identified at least 4 potential “testimonials” for each of the 6 planned thematic workshops organised in the framework of the Conference. The project promoters were asked to present their project activities thus providing “food for thought” to enrich the debate aimed at highlighting the main needs in terms of work-based learning schemes and provisions that, at present, are not effectively addressed by the different national VET and Higher Education systems. As a matter of fact, due to the widely diversified national systems involved, the debate focused on the most urgent WBL needs and gaps, regardless of the different national contexts, with a view to identifying through emerging needs the open challenges that professionals and experts may tackle in relation to the theme of work-based learning, a topic increasingly important at European level.

The conclusions of the above-mentioned thematic workshops are described in detail in annex 2 of the current report.

The initiatives considered concern the overall LLP Programme, from 2007 to 2013, even if during the development of the project the activities are expected to progressively focus on the project initiatives that will have finalised their activities and developed the expected results by 2015. This focus corresponds to the project goal to develop an online Toolkit that will include all the products that will be realised within the financed projects in order to enable all stakeholders interested in the promotion, design, development and update of learning experiences in working settings to get inspired by the selected best practices and, if possible, to use the products made available through the envisaged Toolkit.

## 2. WBL main issues: a first overview

Work-Based Learning and apprenticeship practices include a widely diversified set of experiences corresponding to the different Education and Training national systems at European level. In this perspective the NetWBL project aims at developing a common understanding of work-based learning in European Education and Training systems with a special regard to its main thematic elements identified by the network.

To this end the above mentioned six thematic areas were explored in depth through specific exploration activities that proved effective in the identification of work-based learning main issues, potentialities and open challenges.

### 2.A Guidance and support of Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)

School or apprenticeship, studies or job? What options does the European education and job market offer? The main aim of the **Work package 3A** is represented by the pre-selection of relevant projects focusing on **guidance** within the Lifelong Learning Programme and by the identification of further projects and **products supporting SMEs** in the provision of work placements and guiding people in working on the job.

Good practice examples of improved vocational guidance should be identified and highlighted in order to allow projects with an impact on a national/regional level to be up-scaled to achieve an impact on system level. Some NAs are also in charge of Euroguidance, so this synergy will help to further raise the quality of content-related work. Moreover, needs and gaps in the area of vocational guidance have been identified and they can be used as an input for recommendations for policy-making and EU Programmes.

The participation of SMEs in work-based learning is crucial for the successful recovery of the European labour market. Offering training opportunities for VET at the work place would contribute to raising the youth employment rate and to decreasing the rate of permanently unemployed persons. Projects which deal with coaching, mentors, trainers etc. may also support the school-work transition and the transfer from unemployment or the second labour market to the first labour market. The projects/products identified may:

- Offer tools or “transferable core elements” in guidance for different target groups (e.g. students, parents, enterprises...);

- Support the professionalisation of the career guidance sector on a national and international basis;
- Detect weaknesses and strengths in the field of guidance;
- Identify the benefits for SMEs participating in the process of work-based learning;
- Deal with attractiveness of work based learning for enterprises, especially for SMEs;
- Develop tools or instruments supporting SMEs;
- Use and promote international work placement opportunities as an attractive element of VET pathways;
- Explore effective ways to adopt WBL in the transition from lower to upper secondary education (*bridge building*);
- Develop initiatives to increase the number of work placements in enterprises through VET stakeholder involvement and cooperation;
- Develop innovative work place simulation methods in school-based (non-dual) VET systems.

In order to prepare the first thematic European Monitoring Conference on WBL & apprenticeship the subWP members took part in skype meetings aiming at sharing information concerning the NetWBL activities and, in particular, to supporting the above mentioned thematic monitoring event. The activities focused on the organization of the workshop 1 “Guidance and Support of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises”, which highlighted good practice examples of vocational guidance and support of SMEs both inside and outside the LLP programme. These initiatives supported effectively SMEs in providing work placements and in supporting people in “learning on-the-job” in a structured way. As a matter of fact the participation of SMEs in work-based learning represents a key factor to promote a successful recovery of the European labour market. In this perspective guidance is a powerful tool to effectively promote the access of youth people to the labour market as well as the integration of permanently unemployed persons. Moreover, needs and gaps in the area of vocational guidance were identified and will serve as input for the development of recommendations for policy-making and EU Programmes.

In the field of guidance and support of SMEs four projects were selected to present their experience and initiatives during the conference and some of them were also invited to present their projects during the market place.

The results of the projects funded by the European Commission should support the achievement of the EU 2020 objectives. One main topic is to raise the employment rate up to 75% within the EU. Labour has changed within the last 20 years tremendously. People have

more than one job, there are periods of unemployment, job change etc. This is why Lifelong Guidance should be available also after the first vocational choice, especially during phases of vocational or personal changes.

The four best practice projects invited to the work shop enabled the identification of a first set of criticalities and fields to further explore in the area of WBL guidance.

In particular the representative of the Leonardo da Vinci TOI project “NAVIGUIDE” highlighted a lack of coordination of guidance activities at national level. As a matter of fact information on vocational education, job profiles, etc. is necessary but not sufficiently provided yet. The project promoter called attention on the need to facilitate the access to guidance support of vulnerable groups (e.g. NEETs not in education, employment or training). Furthermore, guidance should also support the school-work transition and in a quality assurance perspective the training for guidance staff should be based on common quality standards. Within NAVIGUIDE the methods and material database of the Austrian Employment Service has been enriched with a high number of supplement examples of guidance and has been transferred to other European Countries.

The Leonardo da Vinci TOI project “ECGC – European Career Guidance Certificate” showed a good practice example concerning how a Career Guidance Service of a Chamber of Commerce could support SMEs in their work based learning activities. Based on the experience in apprenticeship in Austria the project gave an overview of the role of SMEs in apprenticeship and their interests in being engaged in WBL. The benefits for enterprises to be involved in apprenticeship training are quite clear: productivity and investment results in future skilled workforces; an effective recruitment and lower training costs for new staff; image improvements as SMEs get more publicity at local and regional level; visibility of their social responsibility efforts. In the context of the challenges for SMEs, the project an overview of Career Guidance Services activities supported by the Chamber of Commerce in Austria, e.g.: providing information to companies, teachers and future apprenticeships, organising special activities for schools and acting as interface between companies and schools. Within all these activities the professionalisation of career guidance counsellors as qualified professionals plays a key role in a successful intervention. The aim of the Leonardo da Vinci TOI project “ECGC-European Career Guidance Certificate” was, therefore, to develop a standardised and internationally transferable certification system (“ECGC-certificate”) to acknowledge formally

or non-formally acquired knowledge/skills/competences of career guidance counsellors that is compatible with existing training offers.

Furthermore the workshop highlighted the results of two further LLP projects concerning WBL addressed to two different target groups: Students from a Higher Education Institution (HEI) and low qualified persons in agricultural sector.

The project “WBL as integrated curriculum” (WBLIC) was based on the cases provided by partners about the relationship between HEI and companies and it focused on three elements of research, which are shaping the integration of WBL in curricula and influencing the success of study programmes at HEI: structural elements, relationship and people. Moreover the analysis of the project underlined the importance of the cooperation between key players in WBL, in this case the relationships between HEIs and the labour market and the role that all involved people, like teachers, mentors/coaches in companies and students have.

The Leonardo da Vinci TOI project “AGROTATE - Job Rotation e-service enhancing lifelong learning for the Agriculture Sector” exploited an e-service platform to: 1) detect the educational needs of companies in the agricultural sector and to match them with the qualifications of job seekers; 2) propose to the job seekers the offered positions that are best for them; 3) offer training to the job seekers in their CVET-institution in order to prepare them for the needs of their new job or to help them to get more job offers; 4) provide training to the companies in order to fill their gaps. This tailor made e-service platform could be transferred to other branches and sectors and could support SMEs in identifying the best matching employee for an open position while supporting the job seeker to get trained on the job in those topics he/she has still deficits.

Different challenges, needs and gaps were identified in different countries concerning guidance and support of SMEs within the context of WBL and apprenticeship. It is therefore not possible to give one solution which will fit to every country specific need. Therefore many different solutions have been discussed – from small improvements to substantial changes in schooling systems in some countries.

The **first conclusions** of the debate that took place during the workshop highlighted the need to provide SMEs with necessary resources, in terms of:

- Guidance support - Apprenticeship counsellors should also support SMEs concerning the following questions:

- What are the sector specific needs of SMEs?
- How to prepare a good training?
- Where to find good trainers/mentors?
- How to start an apprenticeship scheme?
- Financial support (taxes, ...);
- Human resources (qualification clusters, trained mentors/coaches at the workplace).

Moreover the workshop participants underlined the necessity to adopt a broader approach to invest in Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance through the introduction of WBL at all levels of education – IVET, HE, CVET (employees training, management training, requalification for unemployed,...) as well as the need for a standardisation of common topics in guidance and career counseling in order to reduce the heterogeneity of the training for counsellors (professionalisation), on one hand, and providing country specific training for career guidance counsellors, on the other.

Guidance activities need to be coordinated by well-established guidance organisations so that all target groups are effectively addressed while further training is needed on changes and new trends on the labour market. An improved cooperation between educational institutions and companies is also needed as well as the start of guidance in all types of schools (primary, secondary, high): schools should be open to new approaches (short placements for pupils and teachers). As a matter of fact teachers are very often the ones who act as career counsellors, so they should therefore stay in touch with the world of work (job shadowing in enterprises for teachers; qualification on guidance and career counselling for teachers). Innovative approaches are needed to reach NEETs and low-qualified persons: these groups get least guidance but would need it the most (their access to guidance is difficult).

The workshop participants highlighted the need to simplify the guidance process for low qualified people and to reduce the extent to which documentation ("*written material*") is required.

A change in the mindsets has been also wished in terms of shift from theory to practice (cooperation between educational sectors and companies would be necessary) and from standardisation to innovation (skills mismatch; labour market needs very often a quicker change of professions).

Erasmus+ may represent an opportunity for developing projects promoting:

- company-specific modules that could be integrated in VET curricula;
- a definition of basic understanding of employer involvement;

- strengthening the cooperation between structural elements, relationship and people in WBL (following the results of WBLIC);
- proposing phases of WBL before taking a career decision for one or another profession;
- developing possibilities for adapting Lifelong Guidance to trends in the labour market behavior.
- WBL schemes for weak learners (e.g. Überbetriebliche Lehre in AT; Production School in DK & AT)

**List of projects valorised in the workshop:**

<b>Project ID</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Project beneficiary</b>
518586-LLP-1-2011-UK-ERASMUS-ECUE	WBLIC-WBL as integrated curriculum: Partnership Delivery by HE and the Labour Market	Universidad Jaume I
LLP-LdV/TOI/2007/AT/0026	ECGC – European Career Guidance Certificate	ibw - Institut der Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft
2011-1-AT1-LEO05-04870	AGROTATE – Job Rotation e-service enhancing lifelong learning for the Agriculture Sector	Technopolis Manpower Development SA
2011-1-AT1-LEO05-04870	NAVIGIUDE - International Data Base for Guidance Methods in Group Settings & GuideMe! Quality Measures for Guidance of Job-Seekers in Group Settings	abif - analyse, beratung und interdisziplinäre forschung
2009-1-AT1-LEO05-01190	GuideMe! Quality Measures for Guidance of Job-Seekers in Group Settings	abif - analyse, beratung und interdisziplinäre forschung

## 2.B Attractiveness of Work-Based Learning

Despite the fact that work-based learning in VET has proven effective in terms of providing students and apprentices with skills useful in relation to labour market needs and helping to reduce the risk of youth unemployment, VET and work-based learning in many cases is not the well reputed among students, enterprises and the public in general.

For young people (and their families) VET and work-based learning is often seen as the second choice in comparison with general education pointing directly towards Higher Education. It is regarded as less intellectually challenging, with vague or unattractive job and career opportunities and, moreover, burdened by the fact that often not enough training places are available to make work-based learning a real choice. Only a limited percentage of European enterprises offer training opportunities for VET students, however with substantial differences among countries depending on traditions of VET systems.

Within the area of attractiveness of work-based learning the main challenge is represented by the identification of ongoing and finalised LLP projects (and, later on, also Erasmus+ projects) that provide ideas, approaches and solutions that may help raising the attractiveness and prestige of work-based learning in VET.

This may be projects that:

- Explore ways to raise awareness about advantages of WBL in VET to students through counselling and promotion activities targeted at young pupils;
- Use and promote international work placement opportunities as an element of VET attractiveness;
- Look at ways to introduce work-based learning in the transition from lower to upper secondary education (*bridge building*);
- Deal with development of more clear and attractive career pathways from VET to Higher Education;
- Develop initiatives to increase work placements in enterprises through VET stakeholder involvement;
- Collect, examine and compare factors determining education choices and the prestige of VET across Europe;
- Develop higher level (elite) VET pathways to attract academically high performing students;
- Develop innovative work place simulation methods in school-based (non-dual) VET systems.

The subWP held a preparatory meeting featuring:

- The discussion of the “core” of WBL attractiveness elements and the sharing of experiences on the topic of work-based learning;
- the subWP contributions to the conference;
- the identification and selection of best practice LLP projects and of potential speakers to be invited to the conference;
- the exchanged ideas on the workshop structure (presentations/small group discussions/panel etc.).

On the basis of this preparatory meeting 7 projects were selected as speakers and some key questions for the Monitoring Conference were identified. The aim of workshop focused on “Attractiveness of VET, WBL and Apprenticeships”, held within the first EU Monitoring Conference, was to highlight good practice examples of projects focusing on various aspects of attractiveness. During the workshop speakers and the other participants were asked to address 5 key questions:

1. How can vocational guidance and counselling be improved to provide young people (and their families) with a better understanding of vocational education and job and career opportunities for VET graduates?
2. How may recognition of vocational skills and more transparent and cohesive education pathways from VET to higher education help to raise the attractiveness of VET and WBL?
3. How may international work placement opportunities help to lift the quality, status and esteem of vocational education and attract young people to the trades?
4. What types of collaboration and support is needed to attract and engage more companies, and particular SMEs, in the task of training young people as future workforce in Europe?
5. Where do we need to focus in the new Erasmus+ Programme to raise the attractiveness of VET and WBL – where are the needs and gaps – potential ideas for new projects?

If VET and work-based learning is to gain ground and become a **more attractive choice** for young people around Europe, guidance and counselling (and promotion) activities needs to

start early. The project “Take Tech” represents a promising model for integrating company visits for school children into school curricula.

There is, however, a **need** to focus on making professions and career opportunities in VET and WBL more well-known and visible to the parents as they play a crucial role in decisions on educational pathways. This family issue was also stressed by the initiative “Take a peek into VET promotion throughout Europe”. Similarly, professional guidance counsellors with background in higher education often have little understanding of VET and WBL and professional development activities for this target group is also crucial to ensure solid information on career.

The project initiative “GO4Job” highlighted ways to use information technology and involve young people in peer-to-peer learning. The project developed a web platform with virtual learning modules, to support vocational counselling. Use of podcast, blogs and young people to young people learning (peer communication) has proven useful to reach and make young people aware of education and job opportunities, including apprenticeships. There is a **need**, however, to develop and share methods to ensure more extensive and positive promotion activities on VET and WBL – including use of role models, success stories and television to “visualize” VET jobs and careers. Many factors are involved in decision making concerning choices of education and the importance of factors determining the attractiveness of WBL differs among EU countries. There is a **need** for research aiming to compare attractiveness of WBL across Europe, through the analysis of VET systems, enrollment trends, public perception of VET, counselling and promotion, company involvement etc. Clear **education and career pathways** from VET to Higher Education are another element influencing attractiveness of VET and WBL. In some countries transition from VET to Higher Education is smooth and students build directly on top of their VET skills, while in other cases students need to back-track or find it difficult to have VET based skills recognised in relation to entry requirements to Higher Education.

The project “University Recognition of Prior Learning Centres - Bridging Higher Education with Vocational Education and Training” revealed that in addition to improve formal procedures and pathways there is a **need** also to work on the perception at HE institutions of skills acquired through work-based learning.

**International work placements** may help to lift the quality and status of VET, boosting students' self-esteem and attracting young people to the labour market. This was the message from the projects "Vocational training in insurance industry across European borders" and "European Class in Industrial Automation". There is a **need** to demonstrate more widely that international learning and job opportunities are not confined to students and graduates from HE institution. Both VET institutions and companies could use international work experience more systematically in promotion of VET and WBL. Attractiveness of work-based learning relates not only to young people but also to the companies that have to provide apprenticeships and other WBL opportunities to make WBL a reality. Evidence shows that many SMEs do not find it attractive to offer training opportunities. The project "YES - Youth Employment Support" demonstrated that **collaboration and support for SMEs** involving education and coaching targeting training supervisors at the companies and focusing on labour market legislation, pedagogical skills, soft skills, behavioral psychology aspects etc, may overcome SMEs reluctance to employ trainees.

We may highlight a **need** for European surveys and studies on the impact in companies of employing apprentices and there is a need to develop more practical support schemes that make WBL attractive for the companies.

<b>Project ID</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Project beneficiary</b>
2011-1-PL1-LEO05-19897	University Recognition of Prior Learning Centres - Bridging Higher Education with Vocational Education and Training	Jagiellonian University in Krakow, PL
LLP-LdV/TOI/2007/AT/0003	YES - Youth Employment Support	Die Berater, AT
DE/10/LLP-LdV/TOI/147343	Go4Job - European Gateway to Career and Success	Hauptstelle RAA Nord-Rhein-Westfalen, DE
2012-1-DK1-LEO01-05253	Vocational training in insurance industry across european borders	Danish Insurance Academy, DK
2011-1-SE1-LEO05-08388	European Class in Industrial Automation (EURIAC)	Kungsbacka Municipality, SE
2011-1-HR1-LEO04-00790 1	Take a peek into VET promotion throughout Europe (EUROPEek)	Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts, HR
LLP-LDV-TOI-11-AT-0004	Take Tech	Steirische Wirtschaftsförderungsgesellschaft, AT

## 2.C Cooperation Training centre/VET school – companies and involvement of social partners

Work-based learning is proving to be a successful model to improve the students' and apprentices' employability, which is especially relevant at this time in Europe with a dramatically high number of unemployed youths. In this WBL approach the aim is to make VET more labour-market-oriented by combining practical and theoretical learning in order to qualify skilled workers in a practical way and better prepare them for the requirements of the labour market.

This work package is aimed to identify ongoing and completed projects addressing the topic of cooperation between the world of VET education and the world of work. These projects might be contained within the scope of the Lifelong Learning Programme actions (mostly Leonardo Mobility, Innovation projects and Partnerships) and, later on, also within the Erasmus+ programme.

The topics of these projects might include, among others:

- Interaction between VET schools, employers, social partners and WBLs. Special attention will be paid to apprentice schemes;
- Providing evidence of the feasibility, 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 among VET schools, companies and social partners at European level, with the aim of determining strengths but also needs and gaps.

The sub WP3c is coordinated by the Spanish NA that hosted a meeting in November to share the network concept, along with the tasks of the working group and the objectives of the first European monitoring conference. Some issues were discussed, like the concept, needs, gaps and the state-of-play of work-based learning in different countries as well as the criteria for the pre-selection of projects to be included in the toolkit.

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 two sessions including examples of good practices, and a debate in small groups based on

some key questions about work-based learning needs, gaps and expectations and the role of European projects in the field.

The debate, aimed at identifying weaknesses and strengths in the field of cooperation among VET institution and labour market, was introduced by the presentation of a few best practices, further detailed below.

The key points discussed by the participants were related to needs and gaps in work-based learning in relation to school and company cooperation at national level. The following main issues were explored:

- Concept of work-based learning;
- State of the art of work-based learning in different countries and institutions;
- Expectations from the two points of view: school and company;
- Successful and unsuccessful approaches between both worlds;
- Role of teachers and trainers in companies.

The first conclusions of workshop may be summarised as follows:

- The percentage of company training in VET education is very diversified from one country to another;
- Selection of companies for training varies a lot as well, with some countries requiring certification of companies for sending trainees;
- In some countries WBL, usually identified with apprenticeship, is still seen as an old fashioned practice. Nevertheless such an approach is changing, mainly due to high youth unemployment rate. However the idea still remains that WBL represents a second choice, worse than other options that students might have;
- The concept of WBL is not clear and it varies a lot depending on the context;
- Many companies lack motivation for WBL, they see mostly paperwork and waste of time and resources. Some companies interested in WBL are mainly thinking of cheap employees and at getting financial resources or fiscal benefits from the Government;
- There is a lack of tradition of communication between school and the world of work that should be changed from primary education;
- Sometimes the student is reluctant as well and there are some company dropouts: as a matter of fact a financial subsidy is not always the best motivation approach;
- Validation and monitoring are necessary to ensure quality in WBL;

- European projects promote quality in VET and these initiatives are fundamental for mobility and students exchanges, as much as enriching for students and teachers. They promote as well the involvement of companies in curricula development;
- Contact with policy makers and stakeholders is sometimes not easy for beneficiaries: this reduces the impact of the projects;
- Beneficiaries lack information about former or current projects in the field and they find it difficult to build a network with relevant organisations. More good practice dissemination is needed;
- Finding the right partners may be a complicated task, especially for non-profit institutions, due to the number of intermediate organizations and the lack of initiatives for contact;
- Projects bureaucracy refrains institutions from applying;
- European tools promote mobility, but they are not sufficiently promoted in all countries.

<b>Project ID</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Project beneficiary</b>
ES/08/LLP-LdV/TOI/149067	KIMET - Methodology for formalization and transfer of informal knowledge in metal sector SMEs	Metal Enterprises Association of Bizkaia, Spain
527183-LLP-1-2012-1-DE-LEONARDO-LNW	EREIVET - European Regions Enhancing Internationalisation of Vocational Education and Training	Ministry of Education of Lower Saxony
2010-1-PT1-LEO04-05125 1	WIN - Wining a job through successful workplacement	VET Centre for Wood and Furniture Industries, Portugal
2011-1-TR1-LEO05-27927	M.A.S. ECVET - Mobility in Automotive Sector through ECVET	MESS - Employers Association of Metal Industries, Turkey

## 2.D Curriculum development

At European level, VET curricula represent an inventory of activities implemented to design, organize and plan an education or training action, including definition of learning objectives, contents, methods (including assessment) and materials, as well as arrangements for training teachers and trainers<sup>1</sup>.

School and business cooperation on the WBL provision can also enhance cooperation in areas such as curriculum design, career guidance and mentoring, thus resulting in better value for money, as costs, resources and technology are shared with employers.

In work-based models, learners spend a large part of their training pathway at the workplace. It is therefore crucial that the workplace offers diverse and rich learning opportunities that enable learners to develop the skills, knowledge and competences they need to become fully qualified professionals. A too narrow and too company-specific training limits opportunities for transferability and career progression. Students need exposure to a range of situations and tasks and the curriculum for WBL should define a sufficiently broad range of knowledge, skills and competences, including a range of key competences. Companies, especially SMEs, can usefully cooperate to establish “training alliances” to offer learners a full range of settings and tasks. Sharing an apprentice among several companies ensures that the student gets familiar with different technologies and processes.

Some economic sectors, such as information technology or creative industries, may be organised in a way that does not fit into traditional apprenticeship schemes of providing learning at the workplace, with dedicated training by a master craftsperson. Innovative models of work-based training may overcome this limit, for example by engaging apprentices in problem-based, creative and innovative tasks and assignments<sup>2</sup>.

In order to contribute to the first thematic European Monitoring Conference, the subWP members took part in skype meetings aiming at organising a specific workshop focused on curriculum development issues related to learning in work-based contexts. The workshop highlighted good practice examples of curriculum development though the involvement of project promoted that dealt with the theme. For the conference the sub work package leaders were also responsible for the process management besides the content. The leader choose for an interactive way of working with the participants. The direct feedback from the participants

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<sup>1</sup> European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Work-based learning, Practices en policy pointers, Policy handbook Europe Commission, June 2013

of the panel was also very interesting providing useful elements for the current analysis. The aim of the workshop was to identify common challenges and major barriers, share examples of interesting practices, develop practical solutions in WBL curriculum development, identify needs and gaps and outline the political relevance. The participants who attended the workshop came from different backgrounds and different countries, and the panel could, therefore, be considered as quite representative of Europe. On the other hand, another random sample could have resulted in different outcomes.

In a facilitated setting, in small groups, the participants shared their needs and challenges.

The **first conclusions** of the debate that took place during the workshop highlighted the following main **needs** to tackle:

- the necessity to enhance work-based learning by facilitating teachers to move beyond traditional teaching;
- the necessity to develop tools including different methodologies for teaching, tutoring and learning which can be adapted to different national contexts;
- linking needs of the identified target groups to labour market needs as well as to existing educational offer to develop flexible, modular and motivating curricula;
- the need for strengthened cooperation between schools and world of work in curriculum design;
- attractive and motivating curricula (for students) giving early access to the world of work.

The debate highlighted the following main **open challenges**:

- Quality of flexible curricula (core competences + response to changing environment);
- Meet the needs of company and learner;
- Involve the learner in the curricula design;
- Challenge teachers and trainers;
- Cooperation of all stakeholders.

As regards curriculum design in work-based learning experiences, Erasmus+ may represent an opportunity for developing projects taking into consideration the following issues:

- needs expressed by companies;
- learners' needs;
- ways of involving learners in the curriculum design;
- knowledge about how teachers and trainers feel challenged;

- good practices concerning stakeholders cooperation in the curriculum design;
- programmes or methods for facilitating teachers for modern way of teaching applying different methodologies for teaching, tutoring and learning which can be adapted;
- methods for developing flexible, modular and motivating curricula;
- methods for cooperation school and world of work in curriculum design;

The projects valorised within the workshop were the following:

“Agricultural Alliance for Competence and Skills based Training” from the University of Duisburg-Essen showed how they developed during several projects a generic scheme and structure for competence-based vocational education and training. It is based on sector-specific competence models and job profiles. The direct feedback from ‘the world of work’ made them adjust their model to a practical division.

“Fusion of knowledge” from Biotechnical Centre Naklo showed the impact from the mobility’s for teachers on the school as well as on the surrounding context. They integrated newly acquired knowledge and skills into the curriculum as well as to the teaching process. The project features approaches that promoted the acquiring of new, innovative and applicable knowledge, skills and qualifications of teachers. They always work from a needs analysis and offer new possibilities of professional development.

“PISTEUR - Transfert du revet de pisteur secouriste français”, from the University of Brasou, showed the successful transfer of the French certification to Romania and Bulgaria. In a short period of time, employees were assessed and retrained.

The presentation of the “Microtraining project”, developed by the Delft University of Technology, was introduced by the description of the trends in curricula development characterising Europe. The presentation was followed by the explanation concerning the Microtraining method. She also showed how research brought evidence for how Microtraining contributes to business results.

<b>Project ID</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Project beneficiary</b>
NL/07/LLP-LdV/TOI/123017	Microtraining	Technical University Delft-NL
LLP-LdV/Tol/2008/RO/026	PISTEUR - Transfert du brevet de pisteur secouriste français	Transilvania University of Brasov - RO
540426-LLP-1-2013-1-DE-LEONARDO-LMP	Agricultural Alliance for Competence and Skills based Training	University of Duisburg-Essen - DE
2010-1-SI1-LEO03-01685	Fusion of knowledge	Biotechnical centre Naklo - SI

## 2.E Work-based learning and higher education

Work-based learning, as defined by the WP3E group represents the “umbrella” term used to identify activities which collaboratively engage employers and Higher Education Institutions in providing structured learning experiences for students in a working environment. These experiences focus on assisting students in developing broad, transferable skills for higher education and the workplace.

Work-based learning occurs, away from the Higher Education institution, in a business or community organisation and it is combined with theoretical learning which takes place within the Higher Education organization. The main purpose of WBL is to be meaningful to students by narrowing the gap between theory and practice.

Study programmes which include work-based learning generally require a different set of practices for learning facilitation and learner support from the ones appropriate to taught programmes or conventional research degrees. The role of the tutor often moves, on the one hand, from being a teacher to being both a facilitator and an expert resource, and, on the other, from supervisor to advisor or counsellor.

The main aim of work-based learning schemes is to strengthen employability. As a consequence WBL should be labour-market-oriented and, in the same perspective, the ratio of higher education programmes must be geared to the needs of the respective national economic contexts, or even European.

The aim of this work package is to identify ongoing or completed LLP projects that:

- Show pedagogical approaches to employability skills and promote employability;
- Use and promote international work placements opportunities;
- Promote cooperation between university and enterprise;
- Involve a cross-sector approach that responds to the employability challenge;
- Reinforce cooperation between different government departments at national/regional levels;
- Show attractiveness.

The topics of these projects might include, among others:

- Interaction between HEIs, employers, social partners and WBLs;
- Providing evidence of the feasibility, the attractiveness and the obstacles of this tripartite WBL approach (HEI-learner-company) within different European contexts;

- Exploring ways of cooperation among HEIs, companies and social partners at European level, with the aim of identifying strengths but also needs and gaps.

The contribution of the subWP group to the Monitoring Conference was mainly based on the organisation of the workshop 5 specifically addressed to the analysis of work-based learning in the field of Higher Education.

The workshop featured four different parts:

- a. Brief summary of the network concept and objectives;
- b. Presentation of projects;
- c. Active role of participants: round table & world café conversation (a debate in small groups based on some key questions concerning work-based learning needs, gaps and expectations and the role of European projects in order to fill those needs and gaps);
- d. Workshop conclusions.

The workshop aimed at promoting the exchange of experiences between project actors strengthening the networking between practitioners and decision makers together with National Agencies staff. The main goal of the debate was to identify common challenges and major barriers, share examples of interesting practices, develop practical solutions in WBL, identify needs and gaps and outline the political relevance.

The **first conclusions** of the debate that took place during the workshop might be summarized as follows:

The project “WBLIC - Work-based Learning as Integrated Curriculum” from the Policy Research Institute at Leeds Metropolitan University, focused on a conceptual framework aimed at explaining the relationship among all the elements to take into account when developing a WBL programme with emphasis on learning. This initial framework considered in the development of a WBL programme all the stages of the development cycle (planning, design, delivering and evaluation related to the labour market needs).

The project “EREIVET - European regions enhancing internationalisation of vocational education and training” from the Regional Ministry of Education in Andalusia (Spain), was addressed to enhance collaboration and to improve better practices among regions in Europe.

It also explained how EREIVET network “European Regions Enhancing Internationalisation in Vocational Education and Training” has improved the quality of placements in the last years.

The project initiative “International Mass Events Organization based on Recent Experience of EURO 2012” of the Wroclaw School of Banking, gave a very good example of how an intensive programme can be very attractive and related with daily life, based on the last EuroCup 2012 which was held in Poland and Ukraine.

The project “Ljubljana Summer School” from the International Relations Office, Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia showed the successful experience of a project idea which started in 2002 involving 35 students, and later becoming a summer programme of 500 international students in 40 international faculties.

The discussion was focused on the following questions:

What is Work Based Learning?

What does a training activity have to accomplish to be considered as WBL?

What are the benefits of WBL?

What are the main challenges to be faced when implementing WBL?

The answers provided by participants were organised as follows in order to identify current needs and future challenges :

- Curriculum development faces both rigid academic plans and rigid national legislation;
- Difficulties to evaluate transversal competences and soft skills;
- Academic calendar is a challenge. A lot of students are seeking traineeships at the same period of the year;
- Lack of knowledge and mutual trust between Higher Education organizations and the world of business;
- Learning outcomes difficult to assess in practical areas - risk of using the same way of measuring as for theoretical aspects - models for practical exams are needed;
- Companies do not understand the concept of learning outcomes;
- Curricula should take more into account the company procedures;
- Challenge to get the companies involved;
- How to get recognition of work-based learning, when it is not an integrated part of the curriculum;

- Companies - HEIs might be reluctant to listen to their needs when they express them;
- Learners should bring an added value to companies;
- Incentives are needed to get companies to cooperate with educational institutions. Also students need to be motivated (if work-based learning is not a compulsory part of the curriculum);
- Promotion and dissemination of work-based learning among HEIs;
- Differences in curriculum development between different types of HEIs;
- Many SMEs are family run businesses and they will only recruit within the family and they might not be interested in cooperating with Universities.

<b>Project ID</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Project beneficiary</b>
518586-LLP-1-2011-1-UK-ERASMUSECUE	WB LIC - Work-based Learning as Integrated Curriculum	Leeds Metropolitan University
527183-LLP-1-2012-1-DE-LEONARDO-LNW	EREIVET - European regions enhancing internationalisation of vocational education and training	Ministry of Education of Lower Saxony
2012-1-PL1-ERA10-28985	International Mass Event Organization based on Recent Experience of EURO 2012	Wroclaw School of Banking
	Ljubljana Summer School	University of Ljubljana Faculty of Economics - International Relations Office

## 2.F The role of teachers, trainers, mentors

This subWP focuses on the role teachers, trainers, mentors, job instructors play in achieving quality work-based learning. In general, we could say that all professionals that are involved in implementing and organising WBL are at the core of this work package.

The issues identified for this theme are (non-exhaustive list):

- the different roles of a mentor;
- the competences / skills / qualities that are required to be a mentor in WBL;
- the cooperation between teachers and mentors to support the learning process (when both are in the same country / when both are in a different country);
- the role of these professionals as key for quality assurance;
- specific training provision for mentors;
- recognition of skills;
- the role of teachers and mentors in the ECVET process;
- the communication between professionals and learners.

No joint subgroup events were organised in order to prepare the first thematic European Monitoring Conference. Even if the member of the NAs involved contributed to organisation of the workshop sessions. The aim of the workshop 6 “The role of mentors, teachers and trainers”, which was realised during the Monitoring Conference, was to highlight good practice examples of projects inside the LLP programme which support the professionals involved in work-based learning whether they are working at the training organisation or at the workplace. Four project promoters were invited to present their experience and projects during the conference.

The first project “JOEL – On the job learning in social profit. Tools for job embedded learning in social sector” is defining a tool box of learning on-the-job best practices in the sector. The focus is on best practices in job embedded learning, in relation to students, teachers and mentors in child, elderly and health care. The focus is on the quality of the workplace through the definition of a self-evaluation tool for workplaces to enable the evaluation of a specific workplace as work-based learning.

The project “Improving quality in work based learning” defined guidelines for teachers and students to guide them through the process of work-based learning. Those tools were specifically targeted at teachers preparing young people for mobility abroad.

The project “European Workplace Tutor” developed the specific profile of the tutor in the workplace. Starting from the previous “It’s time” project, that tackled the issue of developing a programme for work-based learning tutors in company, the European Workplace Tutor project developed the idea of providing effective training to in-company tutors. In particular the initiative developed the qualification profile for the “Learning process guide”.

Lastly the initiative “VMA - Mentoring in the Work Place” aimed at applying mentoring methods to support students during placements. The work mentor identified is, first of all, an employee, in charge of guiding the learner towards the goal of becoming a staff member. The mentor’s core qualities identified are: empathy; trust-worthy; respectful; confidentiality. As regards the mentor’s skills the project identified: the ability to active listening; the ability to questioning; the ability to give instructions in the right way, thus motivating and stimulating the learner; problem solving; the ability to effectively planning the learning process.

The **preliminary findings came up from** the debate that took place during the workshop might be summarised as follows:

- there was a great consensus with regard to the job title and work of a VET teacher. However there was confusion with regard to within enterprises, where work based learning takes place. There were numerous titles for apparently the same thing: supervisor, mentor, job instructor, professional learning agent, work place facilitator, job coach etc. While the title is different, the job description is broadly similar and there was consensus with regard to what the person does, the profile and characteristics required as well as the role undertaken within the work place.

The following topics were addressed:

- competences and skills of all professionals involved e.g. mentors and teachers;
- communication between these professionals and also between professionals and learners;
- documents used by professionals;
- transnational issues - when the professionals are located in different countries;
- professionals’ competences and skills.

- There is clear understanding of competence profile, skills needed with a mix of technical skills, soft skills, communication skills, the ability to anticipate sector-specific needs, make the VET pathway attractive, deal with challenging behaviour, intercultural skills, negotiation skills as well as open-mindedness and the ability to make the mentee feel welcome.
- Good communication already exists and there are a variety of skills and methods of building relationships, for example employer forums in VET schools to discuss issues regarding training and bi-lateral meetings at least once a year amongst others. Frequently VET schools develop incentives to get companies involved and build relationships, for example, for those providing nursing training, they offer reduced first aid training for staff in the host companies. Students are also involved in the communication process, for example in the Netherlands a database is being developed so students can rate host companies. Students are also involved in compiling videos of tasks they undertook in the workplace to show to their classmates, and also exchange these videos with other international partners.
- There is a wealth of documents that currently exist, such as: checklists, learning agreements, evaluation tools, progress tools, needs analysis, learning plans, schedules, logs, diaries, skills cards, documents via TOI tools.
- Focus is on personal contact with partners in other countries but this becomes more difficult as a project grows and partnerships expands. A number of transnational issues centre on translating paperwork and contextualising the related paperwork.

In this perspective, the Erasmus+ Programme may represent an opportunity for projects taking into consideration the following issues:

**Competences and skills of professionals:** formal recognition of VET professionals; standardisation of existing qualifications at European level; up-skilling opportunities through teacher exchanges; mandatory return to enterprises for tutors in order to re-familiarise themselves with the workplace, anticipate needs of the work environment, identify new technologies and developments in order to update curricula appropriately in the classroom that is consistent with new developments in the appropriate sector.

**Communication:** to implement a well disseminated EU wide work-based learning portal for sharing products and tools.

**Documents:** to avoid too much documentation or over burdening companies with documentation. There is also a desire not to re-invent the wheel. Therefore again, the request

was for a well disseminated EU wide work-based learning platform for sharing products and tools. The issue of reducing the need for documentation and capturing requirements in alternative methods, for example a video which would provide richer data and contextualise learning, was also raised.

**Transnational issues – when the professionals are located in different countries:** while the European Qualifications Framework can bridge certain problems, for the future, areas that need to be addressed include: the creation of non-sector specific standard; a training programme for those mentors who also host a foreign student who may come from a very different cultural background; common definitions in order to avoid misunderstanding and miscommunication; the creation of a network or Community of Practice for tutors and mentors similar to what exists for Erasmus international co-ordinators.

**List of projects valorised in the workshop:**

<b>Project ID</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Representative organisation</b>
2010-1-BE3-LEO04-02272	JOEL – On the job learning in social profit; Tools for job embedded learning in social sector	HIVSET Turnhout - BE
2010-1-FI1-LEO05-03042	Improving quality in work based learning	Kokkola Business Institute - FI
DE-11-LLP-LDV-TOI-147433	European Workplace Tutor	Salpaus Further Education - FI
2011-1-IS1-LEO05-01263	VMA - Mentoring in the Work Place	Akureyri Technical College - IS

### 3. Overall analysis: first findings and challenges



#### *The perspective of enterprises*

The design of work-based training pathways should definitely involve enterprises and, in this perspective, the analysis carried out by the team of experts of National Agencies that participated in the present Interim Report on work-based needs and gaps highlighted the fact that often companies experience difficulties in “accessing” education and training systems that envisage experiences of learning in working environments. Furthermore the related difficulties increase in relation to small enterprises or to family run companies.

These complexities and “resistances” are widely diversified, but undoubtedly the lack of appropriate information in relation to both the opportunities and benefits that work-based learning offer to enterprises and the added value that students and apprentices may ensure within the company represent significant background elements to consider.

The above-mentioned context highlights elements that might represent the new challenges in the perspective of the promotion of a greater diffusion of WBL schemes. First of all awareness-raising initiatives targeted at enterprises are needed, with a view to providing the world of work with tailored suitable information. Furthermore specific initiatives could envisage the exchange of experiences and best practices among enterprises, involving both companies that implemented work-based learning schemes addressed at students and apprentices and enterprises that never experienced such initiatives. Such peer-learning could represent an effective tool to attract the world of work showing the actual feasibility of work-based learning.

As already highlighted in the present report, the different national contexts characterising the European countries hinder an exhaustive description of the actual implementation of work-based learning at European level. Moreover the identification of a transferrable model is even more complex due to the widely diversified national laws, to the different education and training systems as well as to the different rules concerning access of young people to the

labour market hinder the definition of a “one size fits all” common scheme universally valid and effective.

A further element is represented by the need to support enterprises through skilled professionals able to guide and assist them in the development of work-based learning pathways.

Moreover we may highlight the need for initiatives aimed at reducing the administrative burden as well as the documentation required by enterprises interested in work-based learning, as well as the necessity to define financial incentives and subsidies for enterprises involved in cooperation initiatives with education Institutions.



### ***Human resources (A, B, F)***

As already highlighted, a crucial role is played by the different professionals involved in work-based learning schemes. These professionals' role should be, therefore, adequately recognised such as a VET or Higher Education counsellor. As regards, in particular, guidance activities often this role is assigned to teachers and trainers that, in some cases, are not appropriately trained to provide an effective service and they have, therefore, to “compensate”, as best as they can, the related lacks in existing guidance and education systems.

In this perspective guidance professionals should receive a standardised training on-the-job with a view to ensure a service based on the same quality minimum standards to all potential interested actors. As a consequence it would be, therefore, necessary to identify common training standards (not sector-specific) to be potentially applicable to every context/sector.

Furthermore ad hoc training pathways, specifically addressed to tutors and mentors would be useful, with a view to enabling these professionals to effectively provide guidance services to foreign students and apprentices. In particular, in relation to guidance and counselling services targeted at NEETs, often involving low-skilled young people, it is necessary to underline the urgent need to develop accessible and “*user-friendly*” guidance services.

We may also underline the need to support the development of exchange processes (e.g. communities of practice) involving tutors, mentors and VET teachers as well as the opportunity

to share a common language to facilitate communication and the diffusion of both information and best practices.



### ***Cooperation and dialogue efforts (A, B, C, D, E, F)***

The information collected within monitoring activities underlined a weak communication among all relevant stakeholders as well as a limited, in cases nonexistent, exchange and dialogue between the world of vocational education and training and the world of work. This context hinder the definition of effective work-based learning schemes and the possible implementation of positive development processes.

Even if it is possible to highlight different levels of dialogues characterising the European national contexts, experts underlined the necessity to strengthen the links and the cooperation between education systems and the world of work, a cooperation that should be widened to all levels of education with the corresponding establishment of guidance services accessible since primary education.

Such cooperation should promote the joint development of training curricula matching labour market demands through modular and flexible pathways. As a consequence the current analysis highlights the need to develop cooperation models and tools supporting the creation of training curricula defined through a structured and organized cooperation involving education and training Institutions and enterprises or the related representation bodies (e.g. chambers, social partners etc.).



## ***Higher education ( E )***

Despite the common elements already highlighted, the world of higher education in relation to work-based learning is characterised by specific features not applicable to the other thematic areas explored. Therefore a specific section of the current report is devoted to the criticalities that were identified in relation to this thematic issue.

Work-based learning systems are expected to assess and recognised the initial competences as well as the competences acquired through the study/work experience in working settings. In this field we can highlight the difficulties experienced by higher education Institutions in the assessment of transversal and soft skills acquired by students through their traineeship in enterprises, in particular abroad.

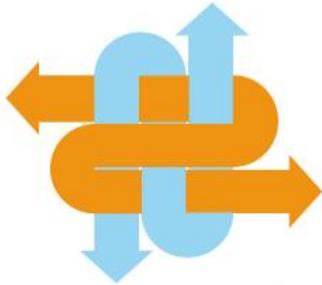
A further element of complexity is represented by the difficulty to assess learning outcomes developed within apprenticeship experiences, due to the demonstrated trend towards the application of the same assessment methods and tools applied to the evaluation of theoretical knowledge. The assessment is increasingly complex when apprenticeship experiences are not integrated in the curriculum, a situation that often still occurs, even if positive trends towards the stable integration of WBL in curricula emerge. As a matter of fact the different European systems are widely diversified also in relation to this specific topic.

It is therefore necessary to develop models and tools supporting Universities in the process of learning assessment while promoting the definition of flexible curricula, if possible overcoming the rigidity of the single Universities as well as the rigidities due to national regulations.

Moreover also academic calendars enabling students to access traineeships are quite rigid and they only enable students to access these opportunities in a specific period of the year, thus creating an excessive demand in comparison to provisions which are, already, insufficient. As a matter of fact offering to students the access traineeship opportunities in different periods of the year would widen such opportunities and, as a consequence, a larger number of young people could take advantage of this training model which is essential to promote the access of young people to the labour market, in particular in the current time of economic crisis.

Lastly it is important to highlight the necessity to establish processes aimed at supporting the transition of VET graduates towards verso Higher Education through the use of the EQF and ECVET tools thus promoting the transparency of acquired competences and their recognition and valorisation in students' CVs.

Furthermore as regards the cooperation between Universities and enterprises it is useful to underline the fact that substantial differences exist between science and technology Faculties and Literary Studies Faculties: as a matter of fact the Faculties related to scientific studies are characterised by longstanding effective cooperation arrangements.



### ***Methods and tools (A, B, C, D, F)***

In some countries work-based learning is mainly connected to apprenticeship and it is often considered as an old-fashioned tool. Nevertheless apprenticeship is high on the agenda of many European countries due to the high unemployment rates affecting young people even if this kind of work-based learning scheme is perceived as a “second option” in comparison to education and higher education pathways. Therefore it is clearly necessary to promote and implement methods and tools able to answer the specific needs of individuals potentially interested in work-based learning while enhancing the attractiveness and effectiveness of WBL schemes.

First of all, the analysis carried out the necessity to test new teaching and learning methods, enabling the actual application in practice of the theoretical knowledge acquired. Furthermore it is possible to highlight the need to promote an increased use of ICT mainly in the development of updated sector-specific curricula.

Moreover the analysis highlighted the need to promote the development of tools to identify, and possibly anticipate, labour market demands and trends, with a view to supporting the definition of models supporting the development of competences matching the evolving requirements expressed by the world of work.

It is increasingly essential to develop learning pathways envisaging transnational mobility experiences: these opportunities should be promoted and widened with a view to be accessible by large numbers of VET graduates, and only by higher education graduates.

Moreover it is necessary to create ways of “coming back” in enterprises specifically targeted at work-based learning tutors thus enabling these professionals to get back in contact with the evolving world of work, also with a view to let them experience new technologies and processes.

From the point of view of quality assurance in work-based learning provisions, it is necessary to develop effective validation and monitoring strategies and tools, enabling WBL schemes WBL to provide actual opportunities and effective solutions promoting the access of young people to the labour market.

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*The present Report represents an intermediary step of analysis in relation to the issue of work-based learning and, in particular, as regards the first findings of the European Monitoring event.*

*The approach used aimed at providing useful elements and at highlighting possible areas of development open to both project promoters, in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme, and to all other relevant stakeholders.*

*During the next two years the current analysis will be widened and enriched through the envisaged activities that will be realised within the NetWBL project.*

*First of all, the comprehensive analysis will represent a discussion paper, targeted at the steering group and, furthermore, at the involved NAs and, from there, at the broader public.*

## **ANNEXES**

- 1. List of the all relevant projects selected by the National Agencies**
- 2. EU Monitoring Conference Workshop Reports**
- 3. EU Monitoring Conference COMPENDIUM**