

Report on national focus groups

WP n.2 – Del 2.2

Compared analysis of all reports submitted by project partners
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Introduction

The VET system in a nutshell and the intent of ENNE

Let us start with a fact: **an extreme heterogeneity emerges when we talk about Vocational Education and Training**, which is dictated both by the different educational systems and by the social and economic aspects characterizing each country. For this reason, getting to know each other and exchanging ideas and good practices is very important, as well as building collaborative alliances and thinking about new supporting and development measures. Indeed, this is a key way of thinking and doing, also recognized by the EU, in order to increasingly raise the level of education and vocational training, and optimize interventions at a transnational level. ENNE aims at achieving this result by establishing Excellence VET Networks in five different countries.

There is no doubt that Vocational Education and Training is a key element of lifelong learning systems. On average, half of all young Europeans between 15 and 19 years of age are enrolled in an initial VET course or qualification. However, the EU average masks significant geographical differences in participation rates, ranging from 15% to over 70%. There are many reasons for this to happen and ENNE aims to contribute overcoming them.

The purpose of VET is to equip citizens with the knowledge, skills and competences required for certain positions in the labour market; moreover, the VET system responds to the needs of economy and also provides participants with the competences needed for personal development and active citizenship. In addition, it supports business performance, competitiveness, research and innovation and it is essential for social and labour market policy. ENNE is positioned between “saying and doing” because, still, there is much to say and much to do!


It is also true that, lately, the awareness on the importance of this type of education, from which Everyone can benefit has raised. An “Everyone” that includes students and their families, the local community and businesses.


Today, the VET system in Europe can count on a network of actors active in education and vocational training, and foresees the participation of many social and economic actors. They are divided into initial and permanent VET. Initial Vocational Education and Training (VET-I) is usually provided at upper secondary level, prior to entry into employment. It takes place in a school setting (mostly in classrooms) or in a work context, such as training centres and enterprises. Permanent Vocational Education and Training (VET-P) takes place after initial education or training, or after entry into employment. It aims to refine knowledge, help citizens acquire new skills, retrain or continue their personal and professional development.

This general categorization varies from country to country, depending on national education and training systems and economic structures. The EU institutions, Member States, candidate and European Economic Area countries, social partners and VET providers agreed on a set of objectives for the 2015-2020 period:


- **to promote work-based learning in all its forms**, with a particular focus on apprenticeship, by involving social partners, enterprises, chambers of commerce and VET providers, as well as stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship;
- **to further develop quality assurance mechanisms in VET**, in line with the Recommendation on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), and implement information and feedback loops based on learning outcomes in initial and permanent VET systems;
- **to improve access to VET and qualification for everyone** through more flexible and permeable systems, in particular by offering integrated and efficient guidance services and by making possible the validation of non-conventional and informal learning;
- **to further strengthen key competences in VET curricula** and provide more effective opportunities to acquire or develop these competences through Initial and Permanent Vocational Education and Training;
- **to introduce systematic approaches and opportunities** of initial and permanent professional development **for VET teachers, trainers and tutors** in school and work settings.


The Commission's work in the field of Vocational Education and Training is supported by two agencies:


 **CEDEFOP** the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), which contributes to the development of European VET policies and their implementation through research, analysis and information on VET systems, policies and practices, as well as skills needs and demands in the EU;

 **ETF** the European Training Foundation (ETF), which contributes, in the context of the EU's external relations, to the development of vocational skills and competences.

In a nutshell, the EU promotes vocational education and training in different ways:

 **ECVET** the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) facilitates the validation and recognition of skills acquired at work and knowledge assimilated in different systems and countries;

 **EQAVET** the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) is a tool intended to help EU countries promoting and monitoring the continuous improvement of their VET systems based on commonly agreed references;

 **Council of the European Union** the Council Recommendation on a European framework for effective and quality apprenticeships identifies 14 key criteria that EU countries and stakeholders should follow to define effective and quality apprenticeships;



the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, established in 2013, brought together EU Member States, European Free Trade Association countries and EU candidate countries, as well as over 230 stakeholders to commit to improving the offer, quality and image of apprenticeships. The mobility of apprentices was recently added to the objectives of the alliance;



the European Apprentices Network was established to make the voice of young apprentices heard in debates on vocational education and training and apprenticeships;



the European Vocational Training Week, launched in 2016, is a Europe-wide campaign aiming to improve the attractiveness and image of vocational education and training;

the ET2020 working group on vocational education and training aims to help policy-makers and other stakeholders define appropriate policies and practices. The current working group focuses on innovation and digitization in VET at secondary and higher levels. The UNESCO-led Inter-Agency Group on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (IAG-TVET) ensures the coordination of activities between the main international organizations, including the European Commission, dealing with policies, programmes and research in this field.

Moreover, we cannot avoid to mention the main financial instruments to support VET policies:



the Erasmus+ programme had an indicative budget of €14.774 billion, of which around €3 billion were invested for Vocational Education and Training in the 2014-2020 period. Every year around 130 000 students and 20 000 staff members from VET institutions benefited from the mobility opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme. In addition, around 500 projects a year were funded under Erasmus+ strategic partnerships. The programme also funds other activities, such as Sector Skills Alliances and other networking and capacity building programmes;



the European Social Fund (ESF) is an important financial lever for vocational education and training. From 2014 to 2020, a thematic objective made it possible to allocate significant resources in favour of VET. Around €15 billion were earmarked, inter alia, for strengthening equal access to lifelong learning and promoting flexible pathways, as well as for improving the labour market relevance of education and training systems.



The contribution of the ENNE project

Within the above framework, through the **establishment of Excellence National VET Networks in five EU countries**, ENNE starts in 2020 and aims to:

- 1) **Provide specialized tools and support to its members** in order to improve the quality of the provided services;
- 2) **Promote interaction and cooperation between European VET providers** thus increasing the quality and attractiveness of VET;
- 3) **Involve VET providers in each country**, with particular attention to those **who haven't been involved in EU cooperation projects**.

The services that the National networks will provide to their respective members comprise:

- Monthly newsletter;
- Info-board where members can publish news and information about their current projects, search for partners, etc;
- Tools and applications (EUKCEM platform, training courses etc.);
- Dissemination of projects/methodologies considered as good practices;
- Complementary services between members (e.g. construction of mobility projects where VET providers can act as a sending or hosting organisation);
- Organization and participation in conferences on the topics of the ENNE project;
- Job – shadowing opportunities amongst the organizations with the aim of exchanging good practices;
- Help in the development of a European Development Plan.

After having identified the 5 initial associated partners in each country that have contribute to the formal establishment of each ENNE National Network, project partners supported their respective associates in the organization of local/national focus groups aimed at:

- collecting information on **how to improve the capacity building and mobility activities** planned in the work plan of the ENNE project;
- enlarging the scope of the ENNE National Networks by **identifying at least other 5 VET Institutes who are willing to join**.

Therefore, under the coordination of the project partners, associate partners have been responsible for the organization of focus groups with a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 10 representatives selected among VET providers providing different Curricular programmes (Eg. catering, buildings, mechanics, etc.).

Based on the results of the Research conducted in Italy, Portugal, Bulgaria, Germany and Belgium, we have produced this compared analysis report summarizing the strong and weak aspects of VET, the perceived benefits on transnational mobility and the expected outcomes of the ENNE project among local VET providers.

ENNE Focus Groups

The composition of Focus Groups at national level

23 among focus groups and direct interviews have been implemented by the project partners, mostly in the period between April and June 2020, with the exception of the Belgian partner who had the chance to start only after summer due to its late entrance in the consortium.

IT – EGInA	PT – Arts&Skills	BE – Connectief	BG – ECQ	DE – Wisamar
5 Focus groups	3 Focus groups	5 Focus groups	5 Focus groups	5 Focus groups
15 VET Centres involved	21 VET Centres involved	16 VET Centres involved	29 VET Centres involved	21 VET Centres involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberghiero "Duca Di Buonvicino" ISIS "Attilio Romanò" ITIS "Augusto Righi" ISIS "Sandro Pertini" Afragola ITG "Della Porta/Porzio" Liceo Scientifico "F. Vercelli" di Asti IO "Pestalozzi" Liceo statale "Turrizi Colonna" ISS "Benedetto Radice" Liceo Statale "Ettore Majorana" IO "Salvatorelli Moneta" IIS "Patrizi Baldelli" Cavallotti IO Giano Bastardo IPSIA "E.Orfini" IO "Dante Alighieri" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary School of Felgueiras School Group Santos Simões School Group of Fafe School Group of Lixa Vocational and Technological School Profensino School Group of Santa Maria da Feira School Group Coelho e Castro Porto Fashion School Vocational School Bento Jesus Caraça - Porto Institute for Qualification, IP-RAM Secondary School of Amarante COOPETAPE - Teaching Cooperative School Group of Castelo de Paiva Art and Vocational School Árvore EPROSEC - Vocational School Vocational School Mariana Seixas Secondary School of Amarante Vocational School of Espinho School Group João da Silva Correia Vocational School of Paços de Brandão School Group nº3 of Elvas - Secondary School D. Sancho II 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Petrus en Paulus Campus West Oostende GO Next Level X Broedersschool Sint-Niklaas GO Technisch Atheneum Brasschaat College Ten Doorn Eeklo Hivset Turnhout PTI Kortrijk Technische Scholen Mechelen Scholengroep 23 Athena campus Heule LTi Oedelem Sint Lutgardis Mol Don Bosco Halle Don Bosco Sint-Denijs-Westrem ZAVO Zaventem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VET School Byala VET School "Dr Petar Beron" VET School "Marie Skłodowska Curie", Sliven VET School Varna VET School „Hristo Botev“, Shumen VET School "Dechko Peychonov", city of Kazanlak VET School city of Burgas VET School "N. Y. Vaptsarov", city of Yambol VET School Vasil Levski, Montana, Bulgaria VET School in Home Appliances National High School in Finance and Business VET School Galabovo VET School "Kolio Ficheto", Burgas VET School "G. S. Rakovski", Stara Zagora VET School "Eng. Nedyo Ranchev" VET School "Rayna Knyaginya", Stara Zagora VET School "Dimitraki Hadzhitoshin", Vratsa VET School "Vasil Levski", Blagoevgrad VET School "Ivan Vazov", Slanchev Briag VET School Yambol VET School „Vladimir Petkov Minchev“, Vladimirovo VET School „N.Y.Vaptsarov“, Haskovo VET School "Gen. Ivan Bachvarov", Sevlievo VET School city of Burgas VET School "G.S. Rakovski", Yambol VET School prof. Asen Zlatarov School of Commerce, Burgas VET School "Todor Peev", Etropole Vocational High School of Agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSZ Prof. Dr. Zeigner Landwirtschaftskammer Niedersachsen „Europe for you“ c/o Bits & Grips gemeinnützige GmbH Regionales Berufsbildungszentrum (RBZ) ECKENER-SCHULE Flensburg Regierung von Schwaben Berufliche Schule Pinneberg Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein GmbH ITKAM Henriette-Goldschmidt-Schule IHK Potsdam HWK Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Stade Handwerkskammer Schwerin Handwerkskammer Münster IHK Nürnberg für Mittelfranken HWK Pfalz Handwerkskammer Düsseldorf Handwerkskammer Flensburg Handwerkskammer Lübeck HWK Leipzig BSZ für Technik und Wirtschaft "Julius Weisbach" Freiberg Ruth-Pfau-Schule BSZ Großenhain Karl-Heine-Schule Leipzig BSZ für Technik Gustav Anton Zeuner Die Handelsschule (BSZ für Wirtschaft "Franz Ludwig Gehe" Dresden

Therefore, with a total of 102 additional VET centres involved in the research phase of the project, the ENNE partners have managed to considerably enlarge the scope of the ENNE networks, thus collecting important information to better design and deliver the capacity building and internationalisation activities listed in the project work plan. *(Individual reports are attached as an Annex to this document).*

The strengths of VET

According to the average opinion of our stakeholders who participated at the focus groups in the different partner countries, the **VET system offers training opportunities that are better answering to the needs of students** and it is able to guide them towards the future needs of the labour market. The attention is increasingly paid to the personalization of learning paths. **Personalized learning aims to give each learner the opportunity to develop his or her potential to the best of his or her ability** and, therefore, it can set different goals for each learner, as it is closely linked to that specific and unique person being addressed.

The VET learning model is increasingly focused on alternating the on-the-job training directly in the company with periods of external training and education. Certainly, the German dual system is an example, whose validity is now widely recognized. It is a system that allows young people to acquire a qualification and to develop knowledge and skills useful for their integration into the labour market, improving the transition between study and work in order to reduce youth unemployment and stimulate, at the same time, the development of new skills and increased employability.

The link with companies is the main strength of the VET system. The involvement of the productive sector becomes essential to ensure adequate preparation of young people.

Teaching methods in the VET system are increasingly focused on bringing out and/or enhancing personal and social competences including soft skills, i.e. transversal and transferable competences through the operational dimension of doing: the ability to interact and work with others, problem-solving skills, creativity, critical thinking,



self-awareness, resilience and the **ability to identify available forms of guidance and support to deal with the complexity and uncertainty of change**, preparing for the changing nature of modern economies and complex societies. In other words, there is a strong desire to **reinforce the centrality of the student in the educational action**, to **increase collaboration with the local context** and to design effective training paths, oriented towards **integrating the founding cores of the teachings with the development of transversal or personal skills**, commonly referred as soft skills in school and in the world of work.

Main strenghts identified in each partner country

Italy	Portugal	Bulgaria	Belgium	Germany
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater connection with the world of work • Easier to find employment • Recent commitment of the Italian Government to re-evaluate VET education • Part of the teaching staff open and ready to educational innovation • Interaction between practice and theory • Development and enhancement of transversal competences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-based learning • Connection to the labour market and the business world • Respect for individual learning pace • School-company relationship • Flexibility of teaching and learning content • Development and enhancement of specific and transversal competences • Education to active citizenship • Containment of early school leaving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of skills required by the world of work • Development and enhancement of transversal skills (teamwork) • Combination of general education and vocational training • Key role in the country's economy • Higher chances of finding a job at the end of the studies • Interaction between schools and companies in the same city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving • Theory and practice go hand in hand • Relationship between school and industry • Teaching approach focused on students' time and interests (personalized learning) • Practice-based learning • Students prepared for the labour market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent relationship with companies • High hiring rates at the end of the training course • Transnational recognition of the effectiveness of the dual system • Presence of a national network of mobility coaches

The weaknesses of VET

Except for the German system, **the negative social image of VET is probably the greatest weakness** being mentioned by the stakeholders of all ENNE partner countries. The VET system is still anchored to prejudices: "lower schools", "social parking", schools receiving a large number of so-called "problematic" and unmotivated youngsters. It is difficult to fight against the preconceptions of families who enrol their children in lyceums or technical schools, believing that vocational training prepares them for an unrewarding job, solely based on manual skills, with few employment opportunities. Yet, the labour market tells us otherwise: **companies are looking for workers with an adequate training, without finding them!** In this case the guidance service for young people is also questioned, a system that comes too late and, most of the times, proves itself to be anachronistic and useless.

Having said that, according to the results we have obtained with local focus groups and interviews, there are still some evident shortcomings within the VET school system that

feed this negative view. First of all, the obsolete equipment with which the learners are supposed to practice and learn a job. There is also a perceived issue of funds' scarcity, which seems to result into the lack of facilities and personnel. **The training programmes are too rigid** (and this also affecting Germany) **and/or outdated**, in the sense that they do not reflect what companies need. Also criticized is the negative attitude of some trainers in dealing with different and innovative ways of teaching and – in some cases – also their preparation for teaching in VET education systems.



The weakness of the VET system also stems from the reluctance of some companies in partnering with the schools and/or host trainees. Without generalizing, the trainee is seen either as a labour force to be “exploited” or as someone who will “waste the time” of other experienced workers. Indeed, if this is not the case in Germany, in other countries a lot of work is being done and entrepreneurial foresight is prevailing: the trainee who works and learns is an investment. Finally, it happens that both company and school tutors are not sufficiently prepared.

Last but not least, the school location can also influence the choice of whether attending a particular VET course or not. Certainly, schools that are located in distant areas and/or do not operate in a productive context lose their attractiveness due to the travel costs that students have to incur and due to a lesser connection with companies, which may affect the level of preparation and the opportunities for a faster job placement.

Main weaknesses identified in each partner country

Italy	Portugal	Bulgaria	Belgium	Germany
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor social image of vocational education • Decline in enrollment % • Lack of collaboration from families • High incidence of problematic and/or vulnerable students • Lack of collaboration of some teachers who hinder and/or underestimate European projects and possible mobility • Ineffective school guidance leading to a high drop-out rate • Poor production system in some areas offering few opportunities to students • Low language skills of teachers and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social image negative with many prejudices • “Problematic” and unmotivated students • Low investment and poor equipment • “Territorial difference” due to the entrepreneurial network present and the distance from the most populated centres • Internship sometimes seen as a way of obtaining cheap labour force • Difficult access to higher education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications with low social recognition • Unattractive image of VET • Insufficient involvement – in some cases – of companies in the process of planning and implementing vocational training for students • Insufficient space, technology and teachers • Outdated curricula with outdated teaching tools • Late and underdeveloped career guidance • Low language skills of teaching staff • Unmotivated and underperforming students • Activation of courses that do not meet the real needs of the local productive world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmotivated students choosing VET schools • Language barrier: lack of knowledge of foreign languages (also an obstacle to participation in eventual international exchanges – fear of going abroad) • Difficulty in finding tutors and teachers available to accompany students abroad • Obsolete equipment • Obsolete educational programmes • Negative social image of the VET school • Lack of funds • Overprotective parents • Lack of trained trainers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very comprehensive, but sometimes too rigid vocational curriculum • Problems with language skills • Competition between public and private VET schools • In some cases, low motivation of teachers for all extra-curricular activities

The benefits of mobility

“Packing your bags and participating in Erasmus mobility makes you grow”... a statement that has been heard in all the focus groups. **A growth that affects both personal and professional dimensions, being relevant for both learners and trainers, and – not a small matter – companies as well.** Young people take responsibility, get to know other people and experience how to cope with different cultures. They usually have the opportunity to work with new machinery and advanced technology. All transversal skills benefit from this, with language and interpersonal skills, in particular, finding a training ground that cannot be replicated in the classroom. Travelling and working in other countries allowed some students to make their own life choice. On their

return, students are usually more motivated and their academic performance tends to improve. Their CVs are enhanced, with the experience abroad representing an added value in the recruiting process. Last but not least, school mobility programmes give the chance to travel also to those students who wouldn't have been able to afford such an experience differently.

As said at the beginning, also trainers benefit a lot from transnational mobility, having the chance to learn new educational methodologies and transfer them to their colleagues or within the framework of cooperation with local companies.

The main threats influencing participation in a mobility are: lack of knowledge of the working language, the initial "fear" of learners to experience a foreign country, the resistance of their families, the difficulty of finding accompanying trainers or tutors willing to travel. Then, many concerns are related to the occurrence of the COVID-19 health emergency that, although we hope it will soon be over, it has supported the identification of alternative ways to carry out transnational mobility, mostly by taking advantage of the combination of remote work and innovative immersive technologies (eg. virtual mobility).

Most relevant benefits of mobility identified in each partner country

Italy	Portugal	Bulgaria	Belgium	Germany
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased performance of students returning from mobility • High degree of motivation • Strengthening of transversal competences • It promotes students' autonomy • It enables the exploration of career options • Benefit for the local community • Possibility to make life choices by deciding to move abroad • Opportunity to travel regardless the financial situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and professional growth for students • Language skills • Professional growth for teachers • Comparison with other teaching methodologies • Possibility to get to know new equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural exchange • Development of entrepreneurial skills • Enhancement of language and communication skills • Employment opportunities • It enhances the image of VET education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students take responsibility • It enhances their CVs • It allows teachers to compare teaching approaches and to grow professionally • Stepping stone for students into the professional world • Opportunity to get to know different cities and new things • Enhancement of language, communication and interaction • Opportunity for everyone travel • Opportunity to see and learn about advanced technology machines • Exchange of good practices • Ideas for innovating teaching methodology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth for students • Benefit for schools and companies • Acquisition of language skills • Development of interpersonal and intercultural skills • Possibility to make life choices by deciding to move abroad

ANNEX – Reports submitted by the ENNE partners



ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Arts&Skills - Portugal

Focus group n.

1

Date of implementation

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

Vocational School Bento Jesus Caraça; Francisco de Holanda Secondary School; Arrifana's School Group;

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Vocational School Maria na Seixas	https://www.epms.pt/			IV	No
2	Secondary School of Amaranate	https://www.esamarante.edu.pt/			IV	Don't know
3	Vocational School of Espinho	http://espe.pt/			IV	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
4	School Group João da Silva Correia	http://www.aejsc.pt/			IV	No
5	Vocational School of Paços de Brandão	https://www.eppb.pt/			IV	No
6	School Group nº3 of Elvas - Secondary School D. Sanchão II	http://www.esdsanchoi.net/site/			IV	Yes
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

Although the group consisted of both private and public schools, the group seemed to agree on the strengths of the vocational education. They highlighted the following:

- Offers a specific training in a professional field by corresponding to the personal and vocational expectations of students;
- Offers a connection to the entrepreneurial world through the work based learning and activities developed throughout the school years;
- Integrates all of the students and tries to follow their individual rhythm and empower their personal and professional capacities;

- Responds to the needs of the local market
- Allows the contact and a closer relationship between companies and schools.
- It has diversity of options and choices;
- Allows flexibility of teaching and learning content and strategies;
- Enhances cooperative and collaborative work among students;
- Allows great development of soft and hard skills;
- The companies increasingly rely on VET because the courses also suit their needs;
- In theory, students enter the labour market with a better preparation;
- It is more connected to reality;

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

One of the greatest weaknesses pointed out was the poor social image. The whole group agreed that in Portugal, vocational education is still subject to prejudice. However, opinions were divided on the solutions to this problem. While some argued that another way of teaching should be created to integrate the students who do not like school and the "problematic students", others argued that this another way of education would create more social divisions and would end up becoming the poor type of education, which later would wish to become better and would want to create another type of education, and thus transforming the whole situation into a vicious cycle.

Other weaknesses highlighted by the participants are:

- It requires higher investment in equipment and consumables;
- High workload which becomes very demanding for students and often demotivating;
- Constant change of legislation
- Access to higher education has not yet been legislated in a coherent manner, which complicates the lives of many students who might want to pursue studies;
- Parental resistance due to the poor social image. One might think that the students that choose vocational training do not have learning skills and the majority of the students have deviant behaviour, which can cause social exclusion and immediate demotivation;
- Option for students who just want to finish their obligatory education;
- Option for students with poor school performance;
- Schools do not work together to improve the social image of vocational education. They often focus more on the recruitment of students.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

We asked the participants if their school would like to join the Network and if yes, what type of services would be interesting. The participants responded as follows:

- Workshops and/or training on how to write Erasmus+ projects that are adequate to their educational offer and on how to establish good partnerships with foreign companies;

- Workshops and/or training for parents, focusing on the goals and advantages of international mobility;
- Training on the logistic aspect of mobilities, since schools often struggle with the sending of students abroad;
- More information on calls dates, how the whole process works, applications, legislation, logistics, among others

ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Arts&Skills - Portugal

Focus group n.

2

Date of implementation

Thursday, May 21, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

Vocational School Bento Jesus Caraça; Francisco de Holanda Secondary School; Arrifana's School Group; Vocational School of Felgueiras

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Vocational School Bento Jesus Caraça - Porto	https://epbjc.pt/porto/			IV	Yes
2	Institute for Qualification, IP-RAM	https://www.facebook.com/Instituto para a Qualificação			IV	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
3	Secondary School of Amarante	https://www.esamarante.edu.pt/			IV	Don't know
4	COOP ETAP E - Teaching Cooperative	https://www.eta.p.pt/			IV	Yes
5	School Group of Castelo de Paiva	https://www.agrupamentoescolascp.pt/			IV	No
6	Art and Vocational School Árvore	https://www.arvore.pt/			IV	Yes
7	EPRO SEC - Vocational School	https://www.eprasec.net/			IV	Yes
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

Similar to the first Focus Group, the participants were from both private and public schools and they also were in sync regarding the strengths of vocational education. Their answers are as follows:

- Diversified educational offer. It prepares students to the labour market and allows them to acquire skills that will make them attractive and competent workers;
- It allows flexibility of teaching and learning content and strategies;
- Enhances cooperative and collaborative work among students;
- It is a practical and experimental teaching;
- Connection with the labour market through internships, projects, and other activities;
- It offers curricular internship;
- Technical expertise;
- It values theory and practice;
- More open to the community;
- Education for active citizenship;
- Connection to companies;
- Greater respect for the profile and learning rhythms of students

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

The poor social image of vocational education was once again the main debated weakness during the focus group. Another issue that was also discussed was the difficulty many schools have in opening or maintaining certain technical and specific courses. If schools are located in large cities it seems easier to keep certain courses open and thus take advantage of the investment. However, if schools are located further inland it can be difficult to attract enough students to keep the course running. What eventually happens is that some students in the interior of the country have to travel long distances in order to attend a specific course.

Following are more weaknesses pointed out by the participants:

- Poor social acknowledgement, since it is often linked with problematic students;
- It is hard to attract excellent students;
- This type of education requires high investment on equipment;
- High workload which becomes very demanding for students and often demotivating;
- Many companies see internships as a way of obtaining cheap or free labour;
- The current legislation;
- Financial dependence on community funds

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

For this second focus group, we also asked the participants if their school would like to join the Network and if yes, what type of services would be interesting. Their answers were:

- Open days to the community to show parents, companies, and others the work and skills developed by vocational students;
- Practical language training on specific situations;
- Events where students who have already had the experience of international mobility can share their

experiences in order to convey a sense of security and motivation to students and parents;

- Workshop and/or training on logistical and financial matters and follow-up of Erasmus+ applications
- Workshop and/or training for the companies' tutors;
- Workshop and/or trainings to motivate students;

ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Arts&Skills - Portugal

Focus group n.

3

Date of implementation

Wednesday, May 27, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

Vocational School Bento Jesus Caraça; Francisco de Holanda Secondary School; Arrifana's School Group; Teaching Cooperative Vocational School of the Youth Center of Campanhã

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Secondary School of Felgueiras	http://esfelgueiras.pt/			IV	Yes
2	School Group Santos Simões	http://www.santossimoes.edu.pt/escola/			IV	Don't know
3	School Group of Fafe	https://www.aefafe.pt/portal/			IV	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
4	School Group of Lixa	https://www.aelixa.pt/			IV	Yes
5	Vocational and Technological School Prof. nsino	https://www.eptprofnsino.pt/ept-profnsino/			IV	Yes
6	School Group of Santa Maria da Feira	http://www.esc-sec-feira.org/?home=20200626162111			IV	Don't know
7	School Group Coelho e Castro	https://www.facebook.com/CoelhoECastroATuaEscola/			IV	No
8	Porto Fashion School	https://emp.pt/			IV	Yes
9						
10						

What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

As in the first two focus groups, this group of participants

seemed to be unanimous regarding the strengths of vocational education. Their answers are as follows:

- It is more focused on preparing students for the labour market because of its practical side;
- It offers better integration into the labour market;
- It is characterized by being a technical training;
- Greater connection to the companies;
- It is more technical, practical and adequate to the society needs;
- Avoids school dropouts;
- It follows the students' rhythm;
- It offers flexibility in the organization and management of courses;

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

Once again, the poor social image of the vocational education was the main weakness pointed out by the participants. Usually it is associated to the "problematic students", to those who are only in school because they have to complete the mandatory education, or to the students who do not "fit in the in the "regular education". Over the years, it was created this poor image and today vocational education still suffers from that prejudice. Other weaknesses identified by this group of participants:

- Excessive workload;
- Difficulties to access higher education;
- It is often regarded as an "easy way" to finish school;
- Resistance from parents due to poor social image;
- Demotivation of some students;

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

As in the first two focus groups, we asked the participants if their school would like to join the Network and if yes, what type of services would be interesting. The participants responded as follows:

- English language training;
- More information or training on the logistics of mobilities;
- Events with exchange of good practices and experiences;
- Basic intercultural training;
- Events where students who have already had the experience of international mobility can share their experiences in order to convey a sense of security and motivation to students and parents;
- Trainings and/or workshops to motivate students;
- Workshops and/or training on how to write Erasmus+ projects that are adequate to their educational offer and on how to establish good partnerships with foreign companies;
- Workshops and/or training on project operation. From application until the end;
- Workshop and/or training on how to overcome the difficulty of finding international partners;
- Workshop and/or training on how to ensure the quality of European mobility programmes;

ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Belerasm - Belgium

Focus group n.

1

Date of implementation

Friday, October 2, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

Connectief

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Don Bosc o Halle	https://www.donboscohalle.be/wp/			4	Don't know
2	Don Bosc o Sint-Denij s- Westrem	http://www.donboscosdw.be/			4	Don't know
3	ZAVO Zaven tem	http://www.zavo.be/			4	Don't know
4						

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

For students

Problem solving as a skill

Hands-on experience: the students have the opportunity to function in a real work-environment. Theory is translated into practice. Some students can better show their strengths in practical subjects.

The students gain insight into the entire process from client briefing to realization and can work on this independently.

For the school

Contact with the professional field: pupils are ambassadors for the school, this is important for the name recognition of the school in the surrounding area

-> the school can build up a network with people from the field of work and call on them: e.g. speaker on entrepreneurship, safety, give students the opportunity to work with tools they cannot work with at school...

-> the school can use this opportunity to attract students

Advantages of international internships for students

- The students learn to take responsibility for their actions and to take initiative.

- International internships are a strong point on the students' resume.

- The students get an idea of how a company handles work related attitudes (coming in time, working in a safe manner, notifying your employer when you're sick...)

Advantages of international internships for teachers

- Comparing the didactic approach (in schools)

- Comparing the way internships are approached abroad and apply these methods at home (in schools as well as in companies)

- Note: if a country is interesting for exchange depends on the industry

- Note: the gain is mainly in didactic and educational innovation

Good practice:

One of the participants did an international exchange with a school in Istanbul that enabled students to practice their skills in a company that is managed by the school. For Belgian schools, the SODA-certificate can be a part of the selection procedure. <https://sodaplus.be/nl-be/anderen>

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

For some pupils, VET is not a positive choice, but a choice out of necessity. These pupils are more difficult to motivate. There is too little time to focus on the professionalization of teachers and on being in touch with the field of work. The only way to do this is through the organization of internships, but there is no time for job shadowing during these contacts.

Challenges related to international mobility

Will there even be candidates?

- Language barrier: some students don't study foreign languages, so this could be an obstacle for them to participate in international mobility.
- Internships can be a stepping stone for students to start out in the professional world. Some of them are hired in the company where they did their internship. Students that do an international internship miss out on this opportunity.
- Some students have never even left their home town. The step to international mobility might be too big. (note: if they do succeed, this is a huge achievement for them)

Unpredictability

- It is more difficult to arrange things from a distance, especially when there is no possibility to meet in person. E.g. content of the internship, accommodation, arrangements with the professional partner...
- The practical arrangements take a lot of time: supporting students in looking for companies for internships, accommodation, ways to move from their place of residence to the company or school... a good partner is crucial in this
- Safety: it is difficult to assess the safety of the neighborhoods where the student will be located (e.g. traffic, crime rate...)
- Transparency: some companies don't receive interns as they want to keep their process secret. For some internships, students have to obtain a safety certificate which requires finishing a certain training. In some companies, this training takes up to two weeks. That is not an option for short term internships.
- In case of mobility for teachers, the other partner has to be open to exchange of good practices for there to be any benefit.

Mobility for tutors

- The participants see little openness on the part of tutors to go abroad for exchanges.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new

According to the participants, ENNE can support the schools in:

- the search for partners and establishing contacts

activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

between schools and companies,

- the practical preparations: provide a concrete step-by-step plan with a time schedule,
- drawing up the application: schools are often lost in the paperwork,
- finding a way to “measure” a student’s (or teacher’s) progress. The process is more important than the end result of the mobility, but it is difficult to determine and evaluate its added value.

Any additional comment or information?

A win-win is often the base of a successful collaboration. This is achieved by making proper arrangements: what do the company as well as the students expect from this experience?

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
3	Athena campus Heule	https://www.athena-school.be/onze-school/campus-heule			4	Don't know
4	LTI Oedelém	https://www.lti-oedelém.be/			4	Yes
5	Sint Lutgaridis Mol	http://www.sintlutgardismol.be/			4	Don't know
6	Athena campus Heule	https://www.athena-school.be/onze-school/campus-heule			4	Don't know
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

For students

Learning paths follow a tailor-made approach: the aim is to achieve maximum learning gains and maximum well-being. We work on a project basis, taking into account the capacities of the students. The students follow a customized learning trajectory in which they achieve the

curriculum objectives at their own pace.

Pupils who are less strong in conceptual thinking, but rather in the practical part of VET are given the opportunity to further develop their talents and are not held back in a system of conceptual thinking. The focus is on workplace learning and practical learning .

The pupils are practice-oriented, they see things that theoretically minded people do not see and have qualities that other people do not possess.

The schools offer a lot of structure and good guidance to the students.

In certain fields of study, there is a lot of competition with the colleges of higher education for internships. An international traineeship can then be an added value.

For some students, an international internship is an opportunity to go abroad that they would otherwise not get. Some pupils do not have the financial means to finance a trip abroad themselves.

For the school

Cooperation with companies: schools don't have the means to constantly update machinery. In this way, students can work with the most up to date tools. You have to make sure there is also something in it for the company. It is crucial to listen and respond to their needs.

Schools learn to be creative with the few resources at their disposal.

Cooperation with other schools: exchange good practices in both directions.

It is important for a school to have a good network.

Especially when working with smaller companies, it is important that someone acts as an intermediary, being the face of the school.

The internationalization possibilities can make the school more attractive to students.

Advantages of international internships for students

Pupils become more independent, language proficient – they learn to communicate in a different way – and motivation grows.

Advantages of international internships for teachers

When teachers go on an international exchange, they set an example to students. In addition, they experience for themselves how difficult an international internship can be for the students and are better able to respond to their uncertainties and concerns.

Job shadowing can be a starting point for teachers to take the initiative to start their own international cooperation.

An international internship is an opportunity for teachers to grow as teachers and as people. They become more tolerant towards others and their view is broadened. They also develop a form of diplomacy that is important in this type of project. It also gives a boost to their entrepreneurial spirit.

Teachers can establish contacts with companies and schools abroad and find internships for the students.

Internationalisation can play an important role in personnel

policy. Careers in education are generally flat. Internationalisation can be an incentive for teachers looking for a challenge.

When you go on an international exchange, you always learn something. This contributes to the innovation of education and the various didactic working methods.

Good practices:

Evaluation system with colours to indicate whether or not they achieve an objective independently.

“De groene kring”: sector organisation that organises work placements for students in agricultural and horticultural companies abroad during the summer holidays.

When an international internship is received positively in a limited group, it is contagious for other students and the students themselves ask to be allowed to do an international internship.

What are the main weaknesses highlighted by the participants?

Pupils' self-reliance is not stimulated enough. They are sometimes kept too much at hand, as a result of which the pupils are not adequately prepared for the future.

The educational programs are too fixated on the needs of today and less on the needs of the future.

People's perception of VET is quite negative. Pupils themselves often have a low self-esteem, but people outside the school often look down on VET. Changing this perception is a long-term task.

The funds made available to the schools are not enough to keep up with the evolving business world. Schools often lag behind when it comes to tools.

When things go wrong on an internship, this is usually due to unclear expectations. It is important to communicate clearly what both parties can expect from each other. Sometimes the profile of the student doesn't match with the company. Within a domestic traineeship, the learning gain is often too limited. The technical knowledge of the students is under-utilised. In an international work placement, the learning gain is greater because the content of the internship is broader.

Many foreign schools have much more staff available to carry out tasks not specifically related to teaching, such as supervising the playground, preparing snacks, etc. This is not the case in Flanders.

Challenges related to international mobility

Students have cold feet in order to embark on a foreign adventure. Commitment to better preparation is necessary. Some pupils are afraid of the language barrier.

It will be difficult to get the international story back on track after Covid-19.

Parents and pupils expect a teacher to accompany them on the internship. For many, this is a condition for taking part in a traineeship abroad. Many pupils are not self-reliant enough to do this independently. -> this is probably a problem in the mentality of Flemish people. Protective parents are sometimes a problem. Good information can reassure them and convince them that the pupils are well received. It can help if they end up in a host family with a child about the same age.

When pupils are received from abroad and they don't speak English, the language is sometimes a barrier. If they do it's not a problem to find an internship for them.

Teachers often mention the same thresholds as the pupils: family reasons, language skills, fear of the unknown, etc to go abroad. Forcing or pushing people in an international program is not a good idea and is counterproductive.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

There is a need for guidance in the ways to sensitize and train teachers and pupils.

The schools are looking for support in their search for partners.

For those schools with more experience in internationalization, the project can also offer added value. On the one hand in the search for partners and on the other hand because all education providers are represented in the project. It would also be nice to divide the work for writing an accreditation.

Any additional comment or information?

The atmosphere at a school determines the pupils' motivation. When pupils feel good at school, they are more willing to open themselves up to projects organized from within the school. When the local community is involved in school life, this also has a positive influence on the perception towards the pupils.



ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Belerasm - Belgium

Focus group n.

6

Date of implementation

Saturday, October 10, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

Provinciaal onderwijs Vlaanderen

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	PTI Kortrijk				4	Yes
2						
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

The internships are most important and strong part in VET. Especially for students who are not good at cerebral work

and find it difficult to sit still. Practical lessons, but especially internships (direct link with work reality) are of great importance for these students. Further innovative projects are very important for VET. To stay on top of evolutions schools have to invest time and money. However, this is not easy in every school. But innovative projects can be exploited and are attractive to new students and schoolpartners.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

There is a great shortage of VET teachers. This pressure forces schools sometimes to recruit people who are less skilled than necessary. In terms of pedagogy as well as content, concessions must be made alternately. Education struggles with a not always positive image. Further, the system of appointment of teachers is not always the best way to have the right person in the right place. On top, high educated people don't choose VET schools. They earn more in private company's.

A second weakness is the search for internships linked to the thesis they make in the end. Some company's and organisations only want to work with students from university's or other higher education.

Te

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

Teachers often use the same reasons not to go abroad. The language, family situation, and so on. To motivate them is hard because the wins are not always clear to them. In our school we want to reward the teachers with this but a change in the public opinion is required. The goal for the school is that teachers become enthusiastic and they pass it on to students. Teachers do not always know how to link what they have seen abroad with their own lessons.

For students it's different because they will be easier to motivate to go abroad. The school believes they will be more confident and independent, their self-knowledge grows and they have a broad vision on what it means to be a EU member after a mobility. On top, it's a way for students who live in poverty to get a chance of a lifetime.

ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Belerasm - Belgium

Focus group n.

3

Date of implementation

Sunday, January 10, 2021

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

Connectief

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	College Ten Doorn Eeklo	http://www.coltd.be/			4	Don't know
2	Hivset Turnhout	https://www.hivset.be/			4	Don't know
3						
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	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
9						
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

For students

The students are prepared for the labour market. The link with the labour market is very important here so that there is a smooth transition from education to the field of work.

Traineeships are crucial in this so that the students are already in touch with the labour market.

The students can make better-informed decisions for the future.

For the school

The sector participates in the revaluation of VET education.

With the support of the sector, you can achieve more as a school than when you only depend on the support of the government. The level of involvement depends very much on the sector.

Developing a network with companies within the sector in the surrounding area ensures good cooperation with these companies. It is also important to pass this on to younger colleagues so that this knowledge is not lost when, for example, a colleague retires.

When local communities take the initiative to bring schools and businesses into contact with each other, meaningful partnerships can develop here. Schools train future workers and are looking for apprenticeships, companies are looking for future workers and can contribute to training. Both partners can mean something to each other.

Advantages of international internships for students

The gain for the pupils is limited in the area of technical competences. They make the greatest learning gains in the area of generic competences, such as independence.

The students are challenged to become independent and see firsthand why they go to school and why they learn what they learn. They are more motivated because they understand why they need to learn certain skills.

Advantages of international internships for teachers

Teachers who have participated in an international traineeship come back very enthusiastically and pass this on to the students. This allows them to boost their motivation and encourages them to keep innovating in their lessons.

Teachers who go on an international internship as an accompanying teacher can find inspiration in this to go on an international internship themselves.

Good practices:

All students from a certain orientation go abroad. Due to the

positive experiences of the participants, it becomes easier year after year to convince the students that still have doubts to go along.

Education also focuses on work attitudes. These are very important at school, but they are also important attitudes on the labour market. The SODA certificate shows employers how students functioned at school. In their search for employees, they can take the attitudes of these students into account.

Work lunches can be a way of disseminating good practice to colleagues who have not taken part in mobility, in order to make the best use of mobility.

What are the main weaknesses highlighted by the participants?

Pupils who do not yet have any experience in the field also have to be prepared for the labour market. This is becoming more and more difficult because there is less and less time for technical training within the curricula.

It is difficult to keep the school's equipment up to date.

When there are problems in placements, this is often due to communication: communication between teachers and pupils on the one hand and tutors on the other. The preparation that takes place in the lessons is not always what is expected from the internships.

Insurance: what if students cause damage to materials on the internship. The school normally does not have to insure itself for this, this should be done through the internship, but for some internship partners this is a problem.

Challenges related to international mobility

For some fields of study it is difficult to find (sufficient) internships abroad.

When working with intermediary organisations that are not schools, a significant part of the funding goes to the intermediary organisation and not to host families, schools... On the other hand, an intermediary organisation is often the quickest way to realise something in another country.

For a short-term internship, tutors are not always willing to complete all the paperwork required by Belgian law, such as a risk analysis and work post sheet or an internship agreement. If they see how much paperwork is involved in such an internship, they quit because they don't think it is worth it.

When only the teachers go on a traineeship abroad, this increases the pressure on colleagues who stay at home because they have to look after the pupils in the absence of the colleague.

Depending on the student's profile, it is important that accompanying teachers go with them. Less independent students need the guidance and follow-up of a teacher. Cultural differences sometimes cause difficulties. Some young people are not allowed by their parents to go on international traineeships because it is not always clear what is expected of them abroad. Comprehensive information through, for example, parents' evenings is very important here. Parents who are not present are contacted

to ensure that they are well informed about where the pupils end up in order to remove most of the uncertainties.

Sometimes it is difficult to provide a programme that is perfectly suited to the needs of a colleague going on a foreign traineeship. This internship must be meaningful, because the students do not have a lesson from this teacher at that time. It is important that the teacher starts working with the acquired skills in classroom practice. In order to be successful, the policy must be permeated by the internationalisation project, which must be integrated into the school's overall strategy. It is important that internationalisation is a project of all colleagues and not just of one colleague who then has to search for partners within the school.

Unfortunately, only a small proportion of pupils are reached. It is impossible to offer all students a foreign experience. There is simply too little time and too few resources for this.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

What if damage is caused by one of the students in a company abroad? Who is then liable for the damage? Can ENNE provide information on which insurance policies have to be taken out in the different countries or who is liable under the law for damages suffered?

Help with compulsory administration: it is important to be clear which administration is expected in which country. Which paperwork needs to be prepared before an internship can be started?

Help with the practical side of the application: how to get started? How to build a network? How to submit an application? How do you build up the support within the school and how do you look for partners?

Any additional comment or information?

Oriented traineeships abroad are an opportunity for students to explore where their interests lie so that they can make a more conscious decision towards their future education. You can link an international internship for teachers to a project for students. This saves a lot of work. general, foreign partners are satisfied with the skills and competences of our students.

ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Belerasm - Belgium

Focus group n.

4

Date of implementation

Thursday, October 15, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

Connectief

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Petrus en Paulus Campus West Oostende	https://www.petrusenpaulus.be/			4	Don't know
2	GO Next Level X	https://www.levelx.be/			4	Don't know
3	Broederschool Sint-Niklaas	http://www.handel.broeders.be/handel/			4	Don't know

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
4	GO Technisch Athenium Brasschaat	http://ktabrasschaat.be/			4	Don't know
5						
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

The mix of working and learning: doing an internship and going to school at the same time and the interaction between them are a strong point of VET education. The students have many practical lessons at a very early stage of their education, which creates a link with the work field. They are able to specialise in a particular discipline at a fairly early stage.

There are many different types of education: vocational education, technical education, dual learning, learning and working... these different forms allow us to work according to the needs of the pupil. The new vision of education focuses on individual pathways (e.g. competence reports). These types of education are differentiated by definition. Most schools are still looking to develop these new pathways.

If an internship goes smoothly, students may be offered a contract upon graduation. For companies, an internship is also an opportunity to select future employees.

Collaborating with a qualitative partner, for example one who works with a methodology that is less known or that is progressive, is the essence of a successful internship. The company must have confidence in the school and vice versa. This creates the opportunity to discuss a lot of things. If you have the "luxury" of being able to choose between different internship placements, you can select on the basis of the curriculum objectives that can be achieved and the practice opportunities that the students get at the different internship placements.

It is important to be quick on the ball in communicating with companies. The evaluation reports of the traineeship are followed very closely and if there are any problems or questions, the company is contacted immediately.

Students are allowed to apply for a specific traineeship. This increases the student's involvement because it gives them more say.

A foreign internship for the staff opens the door. Sometimes teachers get stuck in a certain pattern or system and finding inspiration abroad can be a good way to get out of it. This is also an added value for the students. Teachers can also compare the systems in other countries with our own and in this way the strengths of our educational system are highlighted.

The students who go on an internship abroad come back with much more self-confidence. In the field of languages, too, the pupils gain a lot by daring to speak and make mistakes. The fact that they communicate with other pupils (and not with a teacher) lowers the threshold for speaking in another language.

An exchange between two practice enterprises may also be an option. In this way, both practice enterprises can gain inspiration from each other.

One of the most important selection criteria is the willingness to learn: what does the pupil want to learn through his work placement abroad?

What are the main weaknesses highlighted by the participants?

Students are sometimes allowed to do very little in the internship companies. This makes it difficult to achieve all curriculum objectives. In order to still be able to achieve all objectives, some schools organise an internal traineeship. Training the tutors in the companies themselves is a challenge. The school's teachers act more as counsellors. In this way, the subject teachers can strengthen the link with the workplace.

For some orientations (e.g. Office) the chances of success on the labour market are very small.

Under the current circumstances (working from home, Covid-19 measures) it is very difficult to find (qualitative) internships for certain orientations. The requirements are not high at the moment, the schools are happy if they find internships at all, but this is very sector-specific.

Problems on internships often have to do with attitudes: being on time, notifying (on time) in case of illness or other problems... As a school this is out of your control. Pupils who go on an internship abroad are selected based on these attitudes.

Choosing a foreign partner is not always easy. It is difficult to build a bond of trust with a partner you can only speak to from a distance. A physical visit in advance is not always possible.

When internationalisation is not included in the school's policy, but depends on the pioneering role of a few teachers, it is very vulnerable. The success of internationalisation depends on the goodwill and commitment of the teachers who voluntarily commit themselves to it.

Project grants are subject to competition from higher education, which makes it more difficult to obtain an approved project application. Higher education has more resources for this than secondary schools.

Teachers who are not involved sometimes have prejudices about internationalisation.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

Provide a quality framework against which you can test foreign partners so that you know that you are sending your students to a place where they will be well received.

Any additional comment or information?

This focus group was cut short due to technical problems.



ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

ECQ - Bulgaria

Focus group n.

1

Date of implementation

Monday, July 6, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

National High School in Finance and Business, Sofia

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Vocational High School of Tourism prof. Asen Zlatarov	http://pgtbs.com/			4	Yes
2	Vocational High School in Home Appliances	http://www.pgbt-plovdiv-bg.com/			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
3	Vocational High School in Home Appliances	http://www.pgbt-plovdiv-bg.com/			4	Yes
4	School of Commerce, Burgas	https://blog.tg-bs.com/			4	Yes
5	Vocational High School "Todor Peev", Etropole	http://pg-etropole.eu/			4	Yes
6	Vocational High School of Agriculture	http://pg-dunavci.idwebbg.com/			4	Yes
7	National High School in Finance and Business	http://www.nfsg-sofia.net/			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
8	National High School in Finance and Business	http://www.nfsg-sofia.net/			4	Yes
9						
10						

What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

During the discussion the participants in the focus group expressed their belief in the effectiveness and functionality of VET. As main strength is seen the opportunity for the students to develop skills, needed in the real work environment. Moreover the VET facilitates the effective transition from education to employment, encourages the good professional realization and stimulates the development of communication skills and teamwork competences.

One of the main benefits of VET education is that in addition to studying the general subjects from the school programme, students also learn subjects specific to a certain profession and upon successful completion receive not only certificate for secondary education, but also a certificate of professional qualification, and for some specialties driving license, category B.

One of the participants expressed an interesting point of view. According to him/her the title of a specific occupation is important to increase the attractiveness of VET. For example, a "hotelier" - could be replaced by an "administrator in the hotel industry", which sounds more representative and catchy. The members of the focus group mentioned also the benefits for the business - during the mandatory work practice in companies the employers have the opportunity to teach and train students in a company-specific methods and to recruit quality staff at school level. On the other hand, students can start their professional career immediately after graduation.

An interesting part of the discussion was the moment when the participants started to share positive experience of successfully implemented mobility projects and to exchange ideas and good practices. Not all of the schools participating in the focus group had experience in mobility projects. As successful they considered a mobility that boosts the multicultural communication and at the same

time develops practical skills. They specified that the flexibility and the good organisation skills of the business partner is an important aspect. Those schools that didn't have experience in mobility projects mentioned that according to them a successful mobility project would be: tailored to students' knowledge and abilities in order to be effective; held at the appropriate time; the practice concludes with a tangible final result.

One participant pointed out that even if just one student continues his professional career in a company where he performed an internship, the mobility project could be considered as successful.

It could be stated that the members of the focus group shared the idea that with participation in international mobility project the students have the unique chance to develop practical working skills in real work environment; to broaden their horizons and to enhance their language and communication skills. Often some of the students face barriers related to the cultural differences. Difficulties meet also the international business companies – they need to invest resources to recruit mentors and trainers who can work effectively with students.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

As main barrier of the enhancement of VET service, the members in the focus groups pointed out the unsatisfactory actions of the business organizations. According to the participants, the companies should participate in the admission and training process of students and should also involve them in the working process. In this way the young professionals will acquire a better overview of their future job tasks.

The unattractive image of VET in Bulgaria was pointed out as another main challenge. Nowadays, most of the parents see the VET sector as a sector with extremely low remuneration which, however, does not correspond to the reality. In recent years, some of the occupations have been very well paid. In order to change this negative tendency it is necessary to popularize the VET activities and practices through articles, publications, and interviews.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

The participants shared the following ideas in order to address the aforementioned problems:

- + Development of clear mechanisms and state policy measures aimed to encourage business companies to participate directly in the elaboration of training curricula, related to the specific VET sector;

- + Determining the number of students in certain disciplines;

- + Determining different levels of professional qualification depending on the level of the students.

- + Students should be oriented towards vocational education in the fifth grade (when they are 12 years old).

+ Parents should be well informed about the opportunities and benefits of VET education. Primary school teachers who know their students well should give the right advice and guidance to their students. So improving the career guidance from early age is an important aspect.



ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

ECQ - Bulgaria

Focus group n.

2

Date of implementation

Monday, July 6, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

Vocational High School of Economics "G.S. Rakovski",
Yambol

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Vocational High School of Transport and Transport Management "Dechko Peychonov", city of Kazanlak	www.pgttm.com			4	Yes

	Name of the organi zation	Websit e	Ref. Perso n	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET networ k
2	Vocat ional High Scho ol of Trans port and Trans port Mana geme nt “Dech ko Peych onov”, city of Kazan lak	www. pgttm .com			4	Yes
3	Vocat ional High Scho ol of Mech anical Engin eering and Electr onics, city of Burga s	http:// pgme e.co m			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
4	Vocational High School of Mechanical Engineering and Electronics, city of Burgas	http://pgme.e.com			4	Yes
5	Vocational High School of Lifting, Construction and Transport Equipment "N. Y. Vaptsarov", city of Yambol	https://pgpstt-yambol.com/			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
6	Vocational High School of Lifting, Construction and Transport Equipment "N. Y. Vaptsarov", city of Yambol	https://pgpstt-yambol.com/			4	Yes
7	Vocational Technical High School, city of Burgas	https://ptgburgas.com/			4	Yes
8	Finance and economy High school Vasil Levski, Montana, Bulgaria	https://www.fsg-montana.com/			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
9	Finance and economy High school Vasil Levski, Montana, Bulgaria	https://www.fsg-montana.com/			4	Yes
10	Vocational High School of Economics "G.S. Rakovski", Yambol	https://pgi-rakovski.com/			4	Yes

What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

A very positive experience shared by the Vocational Technical High School was the successful cooperation with a modern factory for air-conditioning equipment which was right next to the school building. The factory was exporting all of its production for the UK, EU, Dubai, Sri Lanka, etc. The students from the technical school could go and work as interns at the factory. One of the floors of the highest building in London is using the air-conditioning systems from this company. The opportunity to work in cooperation with such prestigious company boost the authority and self-confidence of the students. A big information board in front of the factory building presented the cooperation project with the school, thus informing the local community. The cooperation of the school with such a successful company with internationally proven quality also boosted the prestige of the profession and the education in the field. The link between education and employment was very feasible for the students.

The participation in mobility projects is another positive practice that helps improve the image of VET education and attract more students. Students who have participated in mobility projects afterwards share this experience with their smaller friends and siblings and in this way promote the education in the VET school.

The organization of open days and school showcase days also contributes to the attracting the attention to VET education and empowerment of VET staff and learners.

Different interest clubs have also proven as successful practice for attracting the attention of students to VET schools. An example is Robotics club in the Vocational High School of Mechanical Engineering and Electronics, city of Burgas.

The successful career realization of the students in the studied field is the best factor strengthening the image of VET education. What differs VET education from the general education is that students study in detail a concrete profession and graduate with the skills necessary to practice it.

It is a positive trend that many students who graduate from VET schools continue their higher education in the same field.

A mobility can be called successful if it benefits all parties: students have gained confidence in their own abilities because they have improved their foreign language skills, developed a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, expanded intercultural awareness and are motivated to participate in future education and training. The companies have provided their professional experience to help students achieve the expected results.

Mobilities are very important as they provide an opportunity to practice the chosen profession before the end of theoretical training and allow for proper career guidance. The lack of experience in a studied profession often leads to demotivation and a change in the initial choice of profession or early dropping out of secondary vocational education.

In terms of learning mobilities the specific needs of the students are the need to improve their professional skills, teamwork and their communicativeness and their language competence.

Students face difficulties in complying with work schedules and rules for internal labour order, adapting to foreign culture and traditions.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

The interest in the vocational education, especially in the technical specialties, is diminishing year after year. Fewer

students are interested to graduate from technical VET schools. An example is the moving of the Vocational Technical High School in the city of Burgas from a spacious and modern building to a much smaller building in order to accommodate the school for Computer technologies and information systems, since computer sciences are the most preferred specialties nowadays. The number of teachers was also substantially reduced. 10 years ago there were 140-150 teachers, nowadays they are 20.

The material base in the VET schools needs to be updated. Without modern equipment the teachers cannot teach and the students cannot get used to the modern way of working and be able to use/operate the modern equipment they will find on their workplace. This leads to another shortcoming many companies are open to receive interns but when they see that the students don't have the necessary skills and knowledge to operate the new machines. There is need for support on national level.

Another pointed weakness is that the professional practices can be conducted only in the town of the school and not in other cities which limits very much the choice of companies for the work practice.

Changing curricula and including more subjects that predispose to learning by doing is also necessary. One of the schools, supported afterwards by the others, expressed the opinion that they work on poorly structured curricula, with insufficient hours in basic theoretical disciplines, dilution of information through many subjects of specific industry training and few hours of advanced training in the main specialty, hours of internship, which is not outsourced in a real work environment but is conducted with alternative methods and tools on site at the high school.

Early career guidance is poorly developed. Support from business and various professional chambers and associations is needed. The contact between the educational institutions and the business is not at the necessary level for the development of a quality dual system at an average professional level. The communication with the business is intensive only during the production practice and when ordering the planned admission plan. The business is not actively involved in activities dedicated to initiatives related to open days or early career guidance.

Regarding mobility projects, school share as main weakness the fact that the active teachers of the available teaching staff are foreign language teachers and have to develop project ideas in various professional fields where they are not specialists. While the colleagues from the specialized subjects have a certain deficit of basic language and digital competencies. Thus during mobilities it is very difficult to select the teachers whom to accompany the students – either teachers who are specialists in the subject of the mobility but don't know the language in which the mobility is conducted or send language teachers who cannot provide specialized support to the students on the profession practiced.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

+ Training in any professional field must directly meet not only the current need for specific staff, but also to look at the longer term or this means to implement advanced training. Developing a mechanism to anticipate future training needs in cooperation with business and policy makers is very important capacity building activity.

+ Training or strategies how to involve business in open days or early career guidance in order to promote VET education.

+ Develop a strategy how to convince companies to have greater commitment to VET education, e.g. ensure scholarships for best student and internships. There should be not only formal but real commitment by the business.



ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

ECQ - Bulgaria

Focus group n.

5

Date of implementation

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

**Name of the Associated partner
involved in the organization of the
Focus Group**

Vocational School of Tourism "Aleko Konstantinov",
Pomorie

Other VET organisations
participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Vocational High School of Mechanical Engineering, Electronics, Telecommunications and Transport „Hristo Botev“, Shumen	http://www.pgmett.shumen.bg/			4	Yes

	Name of the organi zation	Websit e	Ref. Perso n	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET networ k
2	Vocat ional High Scho ol of Mech anical Engin eering , Electr onics, Telec omm unicat ions and Trans port „Hrist o Botev “, Shum en	http:// www. pgme tt.shu men.i con.b g/			4	Yes
3	Vocat ional High Scho ol of Agric ulture and Touri sm, Byala	http:// pgsst - byala. idweb bg.co m/			4	Yes
4	Vocat ional High Scho ol of Agric ulture and Touri sm, Byala	http:// pgsst - byala. idweb bg.co m/			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
5	Vocational High School of Transport „Vladimir Petkov Minchev“, Vladimirovo	http://www.daskalo.com/pgtvladimirovo/?page_id=2			4	Yes
6	Vocational High School of Transport and Agriculture Technologies „N.Y.Vaptsarov“, Haskovo	http://pgssthaskovo.com/			4	Yes
7	Vocational High School of Mechanics and Electrical Engineering "Gen. Ivan Bachvarov",	http://pgmet.com/			4	Yes

	Sevlie vo					
8					4	Yes
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

During the discussion the participants in the focus group expressed their opinion that VET plays a key role in the economy of every country, as it prepares specialists for specific occupations and helps young people to develop skills, needed in the real work environment. VET supports the enhancement of both skills - basic knowledge and a wide range of professional competences, needed in the future career of the students.

The participants mentioned also that an important positive aspect of VET is the combination of general education and vocational training. Moreover, with VET and professional internship the students can acquire the right skills, required to meet the needs of the 21st century labor market.

It was pointed out that the involvement of the students in a real work environment is a prerequisite for their future professional development as specialists in a given field.

An interesting part of the discussion was the moment when the participants started to share positive experience of successfully implemented mobility projects and to exchange ideas and good practices. Not all of the schools participating in the focus group had experience in mobility projects. According to the participants the mobility projects offer to the students the unique opportunity to improve their language and culture competences, their technical knowledge and to acquire specific skills needed to build them as good professionals. Moreover the young people increase their sense of self-efficacy. All of the above mentioned aspects of the mobility experience are prerequisites for a future successful realization on the labor market. The language barrier, cultural differences and the communication with the mentors, who often use different and unfamiliar training methods, were pointed out as obstacles in the implementation process of the mobility. As successful the participants in the focus group considered a mobility that motivates students for career development; provides additional professional knowledge in a real work environment; boosts the multicultural communication and at the same time develops practical skills.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

The participants in the focus group pointed out the following negative aspects of VET:

- Unsatisfactory actions of the business organizations - The main negative aspect of VET sector in Bulgaria is the lack of business engagement - the companies refuse to cooperate, there is no clear communication and interaction between the private and government institutions. Unfortunately the business sector don't recognize the training practices as important characteristic – the companies need educated young professionals, but at the same time refuse to contribute and to take part in the training process. Moreover often the mentors don't believe

in the effectiveness and functionality of the training practices and delegate to the students elementary or physically difficult tasks that don't reveal the entire work cycle. Diversification of the duties is needed. The participants pointed out that the business needs to realize that the training of the young professionals is an investment in the future development for the company.

- The lack of integrated and innovated didactic tools and modern equipment, outdated material and technical base, unable to correspond to the current work environment. Modernization of the base, especially in the VET sector, is crucial for the adequate preparation of the students for the business reality. Although there are many national and European opportunities for modernization, all of them require co-funding from the schools, which is unaffordable for the institutions.
- The unattractive image of VET in Bulgaria - As the main barrier of the enhancement of VET service, the members in the focus groups pointed out the unattractive image of VET in Bulgaria. In recent years, the VET sector has been seen as a sector with extremely low remuneration which, however, does not correspond to reality.
- Imbalance between examination systems for VET students. In Bulgaria, all students are required to take 2 exams at the end of their secondary education - 1 compulsory in Bulgarian language and one optional – in voluntary determined subject (English, Biology, Chemistry, etc). However, students from vocational high schools are obliged to choose as a second exam, related to their professional qualification, which is much more difficult. This leads to a rapid decrease of new students.
- Lack of sufficient motivation in students.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

The participants shared the following ideas in order to address the aforementioned problems:

- Development of clear mechanisms and state policy measures aimed to encourage business companies to participate directly in the elaboration of training curricula, related to the specific VET sector.
- One of the participants expressed the opinion that the problems of VET are external and complex – he/she stated that the early career orientation and a specific focus is needed. The participants shared the point of view that a deep analysis of the labor market and of the future trends should be conducted, in order to determine a particular number of students in a certain specialty. In this way the demand for labor force and skilled workers will be addressed and at the same time the market won't be oversaturated.
- Increasing the amount of practical classes and training practices.
- Change the public's attitude towards VET and improve awareness. It is necessary to shift the focus – nowadays

sectors as IT and Finance are more attractive and popular to the society – but at the same time there is a shortage of a medium-skilled workforce. Parents should be well informed about the opportunities and benefits of VET education. Specific examples and ideas for gaining more popularity were mentioned – sharing good practices, presenting opportunities for realization, creating encouraging and motivating articles, publications, and interviews with students and teachers.

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Vocational High School of Clothing and Catering "Rayna Knyagina", Stara Zagora	https://www.pgohsz.com/			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
2	Vocational High School "Dimitraki Hadzhitoshin", Vratsa	http://pg-vratza.com/			4	Yes
3	Vocational High School of Construction, Architecture and Geodesy "Vasil Levski", Blagoevgrad	http://www.pg-sag-blg.com/			4	Yes
4	Vocational High School of Tourism "Ivan Vazov", Slanchev Briag	https://www.pgturizam-nesebar.com/			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
5	Vocational High School of Food Technology and Tourism, Yambol	https://pght-yambol.net/wp/			4	Yes
6	Vocational High School of Economics "Dr Petar Beron"	https://pgi-varna.com/			4	Yes
7	Vocational High School of Economics "Dr Petar Beron"	https://pgi-varna.com/			4	Yes
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

The most positive aspect of VET education is that it prepares specialists according to the current needs of the market (business). The needs of the business are best reflected in the VET education. Therefore, students graduating from a VET school have higher chances of finding a good job.

Another strong point of VET education is that it gives a

chance to students to work in a company during their studies, so they receive a chance for career orientation and learning job routines much earlier than their peers in general education.

The interaction between the students and the companies in the same city allows for better reflecting of the needs of the local employers in the training curriculum of the respective school. By seeing what knowledge and skills are required in practice the teachers in the specialized vocational subjects can adjust the content and exercises they teach. However, no fundamental changes to the school curriculum are possible without the participation and approval of the Ministry of Education.

The dual education was pointed as a very good and effective form of education. Popularizing this form of education among wider number of schools and among the student and their parents should be encouraged.

What are the main weaknesses highlighted by the participants?

- There should be more commitment to the updating of the VET school curricula on institutional level. The VET school curricula should be made more attractive to the students.
- There should be more targeted and creative forms of promoting VET education.
- Traditionally VET education is preferred by students with lower grades and poor performance. There is a prejudice that VET education is not as prestigious as the general education. This requires a lot of work on governmental level to change the attitude of parents and students.
- There is low motivation among the students in VET schools they are not striving for high grades or good performance; many students don't even sit the exam for receiving professional qualification at the end of the education.
- Modernized facilities and special classes (subjects) offered only in vocational schools might support VET schools in the harsh "competition" for students with language schools and IT schools, which are among the most preferred choices for the youngsters.
- Another general recommendation made was that many on-site trainings for certain levels of qualification do not correspond to the level of development of the regional economy and the stated investment intentions. This results in training specialists in fields which have limited opportunity for professional realization in the region. Thus, students have to leave for another city or work in a field they didn't receive qualification for.
- The cooperation between VET schools and business companies calls for structured and organizational support.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

There are many fast-developing economic sectors, with which the education system fails to catch up. It is necessary to think of a mechanism allowing for quick and flexible adjustment of the education system towards the needs of these emerging economic sectors/occupations.

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
2	Vocational High School of Electrical Engineering, Varna	https://www.pgevarna.com/			4	Yes
3	Vocational High School of Electrical Engineering, Varna	https://www.pgevarna.com/			4	Yes
4	Vocational High School of Construction, Architecture and Geodesy "Kolio Fichetov", Burgas	http://koliofichetov.com/			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
5	Vocational High School of Electrical Engineering and Technologies "G. S. Rakovski", Stara Zagora	http://www.pgetsztz.eu/			4	Yes
6	Vocational High School of Electrical Engineering and Electronics "Marie Sklodowska Curie", Sliven	https://pge-sliven.bg/			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
7	Vocational High School of Electrical Engineering and Electronics "Marie Skłodowska Curie" Sliven	https://pge-sliven.bg/			4	Yes
8	Vocational High School of Engineering and Wood Processing "Eng. Nedyo Ranchev"	https://www.pgdsz.com/			4	Yes
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

VET education is fundamental for the economy of any country. One of the positive sides of VET is the better chance for students' career development in the desired specialty. Students from VET schools can almost directly after school find realization on the labour market. This is especially valid for the students graduating from the dual education system.

VET education is fundamental for the creating of specialists

performing key positions in manufacturing companies and enterprises.

Another very strong positive side of VET education is the opportunity to organize mobility projects and internships abroad. Most participants in the focus group already had experience in mobility projects and pointed the many positive effects of these practices for the students – such as gaining work habits, getting to know about business practices in a different country, practicing their language skills, practicing their theoretical knowledge. For the accompanying teachers there is also a benefit as they have a chance to compare the applicability of what they teach and get new insights about developing technologies.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

As in the previous focus groups, the participants in this group also shared the opinion that an awareness raising campaign at national level on the need for vocational education and how it differs from profiled and non-profiled education should be conducted.

The image of VET education in Bulgaria needs to be improved by targeted and structured activities. Parents need to receive more and accurate information so that they can take informed decisions about their children's education.

There is lack of interest on behalf of the business to take active part/role in the VET education process. Very few companies are interested to start cooperation with some of the schools, participating in the focus group. There should be change of attitude of the employers that VET schools can provide them with well-trained and qualified staff.

Part of the problem is that educational curricula are updated rarely and they don't reflect the real business needs and the development of technologies, this has to be changed. Devising mechanisms how to make VET education flexible is a must.

The government should also support the practical training of students in companies and enterprises corresponding to the specialties. To a large extent this responsibility is part of the schools' tasks now. The schools very often rely on the support of former students who occupy managerial positions in different companies. Maybe if the government offers some tax reductions or other financial incentives to the companies this would increase their engagement.

The material base of the schools should be also updated – this should be done on national level with support from the Ministry and the business. The better material base can significantly increase the satisfaction of VET students with their education.

In the dual education form of education it would be more useful if the number of hours for practice could be increased, as this is the most valuable part for the students.

The best students for example can receive internships.

The national list of occupations has not been updated for a very long time. There are many emerging new professions that need to be included in the list of professions. Also there are professions that have changed a lot and the training curriculum requirements for them are very far away from the business needs.

Creating a system for open job positions in companies related to the specialties taught in VET schools would increase the employment rate among graduates of VET schools as they will have preferential information about the open job positions. The companies on the other hand will gain from the direct access to qualified specialists graduating the school.

The encounters with a different culture are suggested as the challenge most often faced by the participants in mobility projects.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

- It would be very useful for schools, if they can build a strategy to attract successful business companies to provide internships and work practices for the students. Working with proven companies and not just any company would improve the image of VET education.
- Better strategies for cooperation between schools and business would be beneficial. These strategies can be specialized according to the different business sectors.
- Another big challenge is the preparedness of mentors at the companies where students make their internships (in Bulgaria as part of the regular education as well as during mobilities abroad). Focused training for these company mentors would be beneficial.
- Another good practice can be to involve the business in promoting development of the education – for every profession at a certain company there can be a web page updated by companies active in the sector and presenting the newest technologies for this profession with videos and manuals, etc. These resources will be very beneficial for the teachers at the schools.
- Strengthening the capacity of schools to implement mobility projects would be beneficial. Especially knowing which important aspects of the mobility should be discussed and agreed in advance in order to avoid unpleasant surprises.
- Since many schools face language barriers when they develop mobility projects support in this area would be very useful. Sample successful applications as well as training the most important aspects to be included and considered.

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
2	Istituto Professionale E. Orfini	http://www.istorfini.it/pvw/app/PGIP0006/pvw_sito.php?sede_codice=PGIP0006			4	Don't know
3	Istituto Omni comprensivo Dante Alighieri	https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=dante+alighieri+nocera+umbra&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8			4	Yes
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

Participants underlined the importance of the impact of internationalization towards students' learning and how transnational mobilities experience can influence learners'

growth.

Participants claimed that they have found some major benefits that any student will get from WBL experiences abroad:

- Performance: WBL abroad is an effective tool for improving student's performance and increasing student achievement;
- Motivation: learners are inspired by new experiences, returning from their mobility highly motivated;
- Development: WBL abroad provides an immersive experience for the learners. This is crucial for developing/consolidating their personal and professional skills.

According to one participant, "transnational mobility can definitely take students a step ahead of their peers".

When asked if they had any transnational mobility success stories to share, some of the participants were of the opinion that the Erasmus+ project I-MEET - International Mobility Experience for E-Tourism (<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2015-1-IT01-KA102-004316>) has been shown to work well, succeeding in achieving its objectives and in the implementation of ECVET.

An additional advantage of VET is linked to the employment. In fact, vocational graduates enjoy a faster transition to work. Participants believe that VET can easily open door to employment.

PCTO (formerly known as ASL- Alternanza Scuola Lavoro) is an internship programme addressed to Italian High School students. It aims to encouraged to explore work-based learning opportunities.

The completion of an internship is mandatory for all the students.

Some of the participants highlighted that most of the work placement experiences carried out at local level during the School year end with a full-time job after they leave school.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

Participants complained about the fact that VET enrollment continues to decline across Italy. VET schools' enrollment figures continue dramatic fall and participants reported that they have experienced pretty dramatic decreases in VET schools located in small towns lacking manufacturing industries or business community. In fact, small-town students usually prefer studying in a big city and choose other categories of Upper Secondary Schools, which are not technical or vocational schools.

Participants' impression is that the decline in VET enrollment is also attributable to cultural reasons and misconception about VET. In Italy, comprehensive high schools are seen as superior to VET. Many families are under the impression that VET is less rigorous or

challenging,

As stated by the participants, the statistics about the integration of VET students into the labour market bust such stereotypes. VET has a very positive impact on labor market integration

The Italian Government has enacted many reforms with the purpose of promoting vocation education and better equip the labour force to meet the demands of the economy now and into the future.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

Participants are absolutely convinced that some actions could be taken to improve the quality, the image and attractiveness of VET:

- Support the implementation of training activities addressed to VET Staff on European mobility programmes, especially for newcomer schools. Considering the forthcoming European programme for the period 2021-2027, this issue becomes even more urgent.
- Develop a strategic common vision for VET institutions: it is crucial to build a strategic plan that provides a clear picture of the VET organizations that we want to innovate and promote.
- Further develop the VET international strategies through two main tools: WBL abroad and language certifications.
- Cooperate with the Intermediary organizations/Hosting companies with the purpose of better identifying the tasks that each student is asked to perform abroad, as well as the expected learning outcomes. All parties must do this before the start of the mobility. Some participants highlighted the relevance of ECVET to facilitate such process. A couple of participants also pointed out that they use ECVET tools such as Learning Agreements (LA) and Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) to document Learning Outcomes (LO) achieved during the work placement carried out at local level, not only during mobility abroad.
- Promote the digitization of the classroom
- Make the local community more attractive to youngsters
- Enhance vocational guidance: lack of vocational guidance and coaching affects access to VET programmes/pathways
- build a network of local companies where students can benefit from high quality work experience
- train the tutors from the host companies: their responsibility is to promote the overall development of students. They should be close to the student to help the learner develop his/her full potential. However, due to the lack of "qualified" tutors, participants highlighted the importance of training tutors.

Some of the participants were of the opinion that in most cases the tutors from the host companies show no interest in being trained and acquire the skills and competencies needed to act as a mentor during the student's work placement.

Any additional comment or information?

N/A

ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

EGInA - Italy

Focus group n.

2

Date of implementation

Thursday, April 16, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

I.I.S. CIUFFELLI - EINAUDI

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	IO Salvatorelli Mone ta	https://salvatorellimoneta.edu.it			3-5	Don't know
2	IIS Patrizi Balde lli Caval lotti	https://www.iiscittadicastello.edu.it/pvw/app/PGIP0004/pvw_sito.php			3-5	Don't know
3						
4						

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

Participants have underlined the relevance and the role played by teachers in VET pathways. VET teachers are open to educational innovation and eager to put in practice innovative educational solutions. In addition, teachers usually play a key role in promoting WBL abroad. They encourage and motivate students to undertake such experiences abroad.

According to the participants, the impact of internationalization towards students' learning is an additional strong point of VET. Participants referred to the transnational mobility projects they have implemented or are still implementing, and they all agreed that such activities have an immediate impact on students' performance and motivation.

After the mobility, students are more active and participate in classroom activities. The motivation and autonomy of the students after the mobility experience is greatly improved.

The impact that transactional mobility has on students' motivation is "incomparable to the level of motivation they have during face to face lessons".

Participants also pointed out that after the mobility students are enthusiastic about their experience and they are eager to share their feelings and opinions about the transnational mobility.

Good practices implemented by the Schools in the field of WBL and empowerment of VET Staff and Learners:

- KEY Competences for A Lifelong Learning
- ECO Project

What are the main weaknesses highlighted by the participants?

Participants reported some difficulties encountered in terms of collaboration with the students' families during the educational path

In relation to WBL abroad, some participants pointed out that the families do not encourage students to join WBL experiences abroad.

Apart from the lack of collaboration with the families, some

participants also highlighted the challenges faced by teachers and School Staff.

VET programs usually attract vulnerable and this is maybe the reason why there are many vulnerable students in the same class. It is extremely difficult to deal with such complexity of needs and problems.

Finally, the perceived lack of attractiveness of VET. One participant claimed that this is not attributed to educational factors but to cultural issues. "It is a reflection of a society, the Italian one, where people do not respect all works. All professions deserve equal respect".

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

Participants focused on some issues which are crucial to improve the quality, the image and attractiveness of VET:

- Teachers need to acquire the skills and competencies needed to design and implement mobility projects. This would allow to increase the opportunities of participating in international experiences and, consequently, share their views and experience with other European teachers
- Promoting innovative practices: it is necessary to use tools and methodological approaches that can capture and keep students' attention. Some participants underlined the fact that the COVID-19 emergency and the consequent use of distance learning solutions has been extremely relevant in terms of reflection and practice.
- Promoting digital classrooms (PON, the National Operational Programme on Research and Innovation, has played a key role in developing education and training infrastructure)
- Engaging the local community

Any additional comment or information?

N/A

ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

EGInA - Italy

Focus group n.

3

Date of implementation

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

IPSSAR ROCCHO CHINNICI

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Istituto comprensivo "Pestalozzi"	http://www.pestalozzi.cc/index_v1.php			4	Don't know
2	Liceo statale "Turrisi Colonna"	https://www.turrisicolonna.it			4	Don't know
3	ISS Benedetto Radice	https://www.issradice.edu.it			4	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
4	Liceo Statale Ettore Majorana	https://www.majorana.liceo.edu.it/scuola/			4	Yes
5						
6						
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

Participants agreed about the significance of Work-based learning (WBL), carried out both at local and European level.

Participants underlined the benefits of WBL:

- it is convenient way of learning that is relevant to students and Schools
- provides the opportunity to strengthen soft skills (e.g. communication, teamwork, time and budget management, etc.)
- promotes learners' autonomy
- creates new networks with new organizations/SMEs
- it connects classroom learning to the real world
- it is a great way to explore career options
- support students understanding if their learning path is the right choice for them
- focuses on practice-based learning, allowing students to put theory into practice

Participants claimed that WBL experiences are the main tool for enhancing VET attractiveness. In fact, providing students with WBL experiences -both at local, national and European level- definitely improves the quality of VET, making it more attractive for learners.

WBL experiences provide students with real-life work experiences where they can apply theoretical and technical skills. So, WBL promote innovative experiential learning practices which are appealing to students.

Participants agreed that long-term WBL experiences (a minimum of 3 weeks) have a great impact on students' personal and professional growth. One of the participants argued that Sicilian students are very close to their

families. So, being away from their family for an extended period of time can play a key role in their personal growth. In addition, most of the students come from vulnerable backgrounds, for them the WBL experience can turn into a job offer.

What are the main weaknesses highlighted by the participants?

Participants complained about problems they encounter in engaging students in theoretical activities (teachers are facing such difficulties also during the online educational activities carried out to keep students learning during the COVID-19 pandemic).

Another critical issue is the lack of collaboration of teachers. In particular, different participants agreed that many teachers underestimate the educational value of WBL experiences. Some of them do not recognize the value of WBL and they often deem it a waste of time.

The role of parents in promoting WBL is also perceived as a negative aspect. In fact, they are often reluctant to 'send' their sons and daughters abroad.

One of the weaknesses highlighted by the participants is about the national policies regarding VET: sometimes they are not aligned with the students' real needs. The Ministry of Education has reduced the hours for foreign languages in the curriculum. According to the participant, students (in particular those of the tourism industry) are being penalized by such situation.

To conclude, VET dropout rates are quite high. According to the participants, the key factor that causes students to leave school before graduation is that in Italy, students must make a choice about their Secondary education at an early age, when they are 14 years old. According to the participants, students at this age are still uncertain about their future and career options.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

According to the participants, the ENNE project can play an important role in enhancing the quality and attractiveness of VET. In particular, according to the participants, ENNE can be relevant in terms of meeting some key needs of the VET system:

- to support teacher competence development for designing, organizing and managing European projects
 - to share good practices with other Schools at local, regional level and European
 - to create new networks with other local, regional level and European Schools committed to promote WBL abroad.
- "Creating opportunities for teamwork is crucial" as one of the participants underlined.



ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

EGInA - Italy

Focus group n.

4

Date of implementation

Friday, May 15, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

IIS G.Penna

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Liceo Scientifico F. Verelli di Asti	http://www.scientifico.asti.it			4	Yes
2						
3						
4						
5						
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

Interesting insights were proposed by the participants who underlined the role and power of Work-based learning experiences.

Both Schools are experienced in the field of transnational mobilities (e.g. Intercultura programme, LLP, Erasmus+). Participants highlighted the impact of such experiences on both teachers (job shadowing activities) and students (WBL).

Participants agreed about the educational value of WBL, a strategy that provides students with the opportunity to put theory into practice with real-life work experiences.

Although both Schools have previous experiences in the field of transnational mobilities, participants claimed they face difficulties in:

- carrying out these kind of activities (management difficulties)
- finding opportunities for transnational mobilities for both students and teachers (lack of international networks/contacts).

This is the reason why most of the WBL activities have been carried out at local level.

WBL experiences are also crucial for “licei” (Editor's note: Students may choose what level of Secondary School to attend: Liceo which is very academic; Technical High School; VET High School). It is extremely relevant provide licei learners a practical working experience. The previous WBL experiences in local robotics and biotechnology companies reflect the relevance of such educational approach to put theory into practice with real-life work experiences.

Participants' impression is that WBL experiences carried out at local level, have a strong impact also on local communities.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

Participants highlighted the impact of the city's economic base on youngsters' school choice. In fact, they agreed that the lack of job opportunities in the field of agriculture or manufacturing pushes youngsters to enroll in “licei”.

That has a great impact on students' motivation as the school choice is not based on their real interests or inclinations.

Participants highlighted the power and relevance of WBL in enabling students' real to discover their real interests and future career.

Another critical issue is the conflict between teachers. Participants underlined the fact that many teachers do not see WBL as a powerful vehicle for developing workplace skills and promoting productivity of the labour force.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

Participants have been asked to focus on a gap analysis, taking into account their needs and gaps and the contribution of the ENNE project in filling such gaps. Participants consistently indicated that they need:

- high-quality educational opportunities, with a special focus on transnational WBL experiences
- support for the organization and management of transnational mobilities (they do face difficulties dealing with bureaucracy).
- a network of local companies willing to “host” the students after the mobility phase.



ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

EGInA - Italy

Focus group n.

5

Date of implementation

Tuesday, June 30, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

I.S.I.S. ALFONSO CASANOVA

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	I.S.I.S. - "SANDRO PERTINI"; ISTITUTO PROF. LE DI STATO ENOGASTRONOMIA E OSP. "DUCA DI BUONVICINO"				4	Yes

	Name of the organi zation	Websit e	Ref. Perso n	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET networ k
2	ISTIT UTO STAT ALE DI ISTRU ZION E SUPE RIORE "Attili o Roma nò"				4	Don't know
3	ISTIT UTO TECN ICO INDU STRIA LE STAT ALE " AUGU STO RIGHI "				4	Don't know
4	ISTIT UTO STAT ALE DI ISTRU ZION E SUPE RIORE "SAN DRO PERTI NI" Afrag ola				4	Don't know

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
5	ITG "DELL A PORT A/PO RZIO "				4	Don't know
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

Participants agree that Transnational Mobility experiences bring many benefits. The motivation that drives the students to participate is very strong since they would not have the possibility to travel if it were not for the opportunities offered by the school. One participant stressed out that experiences abroad are fundamental because they "open up a world of possibilities and new perspectives. Many of these students now live abroad".

In addition, after returning from transnational mobilities, many extremely positive results are seen, both at a personal and professional level, especially when it comes to WBL. Several participants underline that the general turnover that is taking place within the teaching staff plays a key role in improving the quality and attractiveness of the VET sector.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

Several participants emphasise the difficulty to combine the school system with the world of work.

Characterized by important questions of legality, the socio-cultural context greatly penalizes the students. Sometimes, they may come from extremely uncomfortable and absent families with important economic problems. All this combined prevents the students from travelling for personal reasons or pleasure, making it necessary to give them the chance to benefit from internship experiences abroad.

Other critical issues may be found both in terms of registrations (due to the drop in demand) and appeal. VET courses are affected by the prejudice that they are second-class schools, only attended by lazy students who do not want to study.

The first two years of study are very tough and requires a lot of effort, from the third year it becomes easier: the activities support and expand the school offer (through PCTO – Pathways projects for Transversal skills and Orientation – and practical workshops in the schools), while the Maintenance profile is the one that struggles the most.

Experiences abroad are essential (among them the NOP) and gave the students the opportunity to “start dreaming”. According to one participant, the Individualized Training Plan Reform penalized the VET sector. A teacher follows 10 students and each of them has their Training Plan. Often, they are students with special educational needs, with whom it is very difficult to deal. Finally, participants highlight the poor language skills of teachers and students, which prevent/limit them from participating in international mobility experiences.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

Participants strongly believe that it is necessary to stimulate the participation of teachers, who are usually reluctant to plan/join internalisation activities. Considering the fact that this reluctance is often due to insufficient (or lack of) preparation, participants agree that it is necessary to take part in activities aimed at training teachers within the field of European project planning and management, with a focus on mobility.

Any additional comment or information?

N/A

ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Wisamar - Germany

Focus group n.

1

Date of implementation

Friday, April 24, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

it was an interview carried out by Wisamar

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Die Handelsschule (BSZ für Wirtschaft "Franz Ludwig Gehe" Dresden	https://www.bsz-gehe-wirtschaft.de/			3 & 4	Don't know
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
7						
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

The interview partner sees the good relations with companies as a big strength of their school as well as in general the strong role of companies in the German VET system. After their training VET students are usually well equipped with practical work experiences for their future work. Around 2/3 of the apprentices are taken on by the employer after they finished their training. This shows that the VET system in Germany is market-oriented and companies train apprentices demand-oriented.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

One of the difficulties mentioned during the interview is the on the one hand well structured, but on the other hand also quite full curriculum for VET professions in Germany, which does not leave a lot of space for alterations, like for example adding more language lessons and other languages as compulsory subject. Optional subjects or extracurricular activities are possible, but students are often not very motivated to attend those classes, don't see the added value or just don't have the time to study for those courses. In general, for most VET professions language learning does not belong to the important subjects and therefore is often neglected. But knowing at least some basics in another language makes taking part in a mobility easier and especially increases the willingness to go on a mobility. Besides the students, also many staff members don't have a good command of a foreign language, including English. This makes it more difficult to have relations to partners in other countries

Another barrier to organizing mobilities sometimes is that teachers have to be very motivated, since activities like this are often extracurricular. This also means that they don't always have dedicated working time for this. Since teachers are employed by the federal state it is also complicated to give teachers a special bonus for their engagement.

Another point we spoke about was the competition between public and private VET schools. Private VET schools often have more resources at their disposal, also due to the fact that students or their companies have to pay for it. Therefore, private schools have more possibilities to offer their students. The interview partner gave the example that they lost the students of two big companies with several apprentices per year to a private school some years ago.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

In general, the activities of the ENNE project are seen as very good. Especially the results available in German will be interesting for the staff. The willingness to take part in face-to-face activities in another country with the working language English is not very high, due to the lack of language skills.

The school prefers to have reliable and experienced partners dealing with the management and administration of mobilities, since for them it is very time consuming to familiarize themselves with all necessary procedures. The ENNE project offers for them the possibility to think about an internationalisation strategy for their school. They would like to intensify relations with a school in Czechia and establish Czech as a foreign language in their school. Their goal is to enhance the offers of their school and guarantee a broad and future-oriented positioning of the school.

Any additional comment or information?

no

ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Wisamar - Germany

Focus group n.

2

Date of implementation

Tuesday, June 30, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

The interviews took place on an individual basis between 4th and 30th of June, but have been summarized as one focus group.

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	BSZ für Technik und Wirtschaft "Julius Weisbach" Freieburg	https://www.bsz-w-freiburg.de/			3 & 4	Don't know
2	Ruth-Pfau-Schule	https://www.ruth-pfau-schule.de/			3 & 4	Don't know

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
3	BSZ Großenhain	https://www.bsz-grossenhain.de/			3 & 4	Don't know
4	Karl-Heine-Schule Leipzig	https://www.karl-heine-schule-leipzig.de/			3 & 4	Don't know
5	BSZ für Technik Gustav Anton Zeuner	http://www.bsz-technik-zeuner.de/			3 & 4	Don't know
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What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

The VET system in Germany has a high renown in other countries and also in Germany itself, especially because of the dual system and the well-structured combination of theory and practice. VET is very job-oriented and structured curricula exist for professions for the whole of Germany. The apprentices are employed at the company during their training, receive a salary and the chance to stay employed after finishing the training are high if the apprentice proves himself. For some professions VET is more school based and the students don't have contracts with companies, but nevertheless there are long practical phases and internships integrated into the curricula.

Mobility is in general seen as a very good opportunity for the growth of the students, but also a benefit for the schools

and the companies. One school uses the possibilities to go for a mobility period abroad within the marketing strategy of their school. They inform about it in flyers, on education fairs, etc. And each year the new students are informed about Erasmus+.

The students willing to take part in a mobility project abroad are very excited and thankful for this opportunity. This usually depends on the VET program they are attending. For example students becoming real estate agents are very keen on getting to know the situation in another country.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

During the last month the greatest difficulty has been the situation due to COVID-19. Teachers are trying to deal with home-schooling, digital barriers or teaching everything 2 or 3 times to 1/3 of the class face-to-face. The VET schools are not very well equipped for these type of situation. Some schools already had online repositories in place, others did not. The responsible authorities for school and education developed an online platform for distance learning in Saxony: Lernsax. Unfortunately especially VET schools did not always make use of it. Teachers were not equipped with the knowledge and competences to start distance learning from one day to the next. Therefore, teachers right now don't have the capacity to deal with other topics, including mobility. Also companies these days and possibly in the near future are not willing to spare the working power of their apprentices or are afraid they might have to stay in quarantine for weeks after they come back. In general there is a huge uncertainty among all actors how things will continue, including on the side of the students and the parents.

Another issue discussed was the fact that it is not always easy to find apprentices wanting to go on a mobility abroad. They also should have good behaviour in general and enough independence to spent time abroad. And they should have good grades. In addition, the companies have to agree. This does just not apply to a very limited number of VET courses in Germany, which are school-based and the apprentices don't have contracts with a company, e.g. physiotherapists. So the number of students to be selected for a mobility is very limited. Therefore, for several schools it would be much easier if the period spent abroad would be possible with a minimum of 5 working days. This duration could be managed by a VET school during the period where the students are in school. Usually they are 2-4 weeks in school and then again in their company.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

In general there should be more information about the possibilities of Erasmus+ in the schools. For example information events for staff and students are always a good possibility to raise more awareness.

Also the employment agency could be involved in promoting and informing about Erasmus+ opportunities at different schools in the framework of their facilitation to bring companies with open apprentice positions and students together. In addition, readily available materials on the

Erasmus+ programme and the possibilities for students as well as the benefits for companies could be disseminated among companies and students through the schools. This could also include prepared text blocks to be used easily on the school's websites. In these times this text blocks or ready-to-use information should also include up-to-date information what is currently possible in terms of mobility or what will be possible from when. More time should be invested in the preparation of participants for a mobility.

Any additional comment or information?

-

ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Wisamar - Germany

Focus group n.

3

Date of implementation

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

Wisamar conducted the interviews

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	IHK Potsdam	https://www.ihk-potsdam.de/			-	Yes
2	HWK Braunschweig-Lüneburg-Stade	www.hwk-bls.de/berufsbildungsgrenzen			-	Yes
3	Handwerkskammer Schwerin	www.hwk-schwerin.de			-	No

	Name of the organi zation	Websit e	Ref. Perso n	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET networ k
4	Hand werks kam mer Müns ter	www. hwk- muen ster.d e			-	Don't know
5	IHK Nürnb erg für Mittel frank en	www.i hk- nuern berg.d e			-	No
6	HWK Pfalz	https: //ww w.hwk - pfalz. de/art ikel/f uer- auszu bilden de- 51,12 29,23 15.ht ml#M obilit aetsb eratu ng			-	No
7	Hand werks kam mer Düss eldorf	https: //ww w.hwk - duess eldorf .de/			-	No
8	Hand werks kam mer Flens burg	www. hwk- flensb urg.de			-	Yes

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
9	Handwerkskammer Lübeck	www.hwk-luebeck.de			-	Don't know
10	HWK Leipzig	https://www.hwk-leipzig.de/			-	Yes

What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

This report summarizes 10 interviews done with representatives of chambers. Some of them are so called mobility coaches in Germany. The interviews took place between 28th of August and 10th of September 2020. In Germany, nowadays there are many apprentice positions, but not enough young people willing to take them. There are several ways how chambers and companies are working on the attractiveness of VET. One way is to offer more opportunities for the VET students, which does include the possibility to do an internship abroad and take part in a mobility project. These offers go beyond what used to be “normal” and can counteract the lack of qualified personnel, make the company more attractive for young talents and also retain the qualified employees. Many companies, including SMEs, want to position themselves more internationally. Therefore, they need open-minded employees, who are also willing to work abroad for a period of time. Other companies see a mobility abroad as a further qualification for their apprentices, want to reward a very good apprentice or want to get an insight into the VET system or working practices of another country through their apprentices. The reasons of companies to support mobilities are extremely diverse. Many companies, which have been convinced and started to send their apprentices once, also continue to do so with future apprentices. The ideal company includes a stay abroad into the training plan as obligatory or facultative option. Companies use mobilities as an incentive for the apprentice, for example when the results of the mid-term exams are good or there has been a positive development. Other companies have subsidiaries, partners or suppliers in other countries or export their products to other countries. In these cases, companies are also very interested to send their apprentices there. In these cases, they know the companies

where the apprentice will do the internship, the circumstances and that it is a good fit for the apprentice. For example, a producer of medical technology sent the apprentice to a hospital in the UK, a major customer, and the apprentice was able to see where the technology is deployed. Another good example is a bakery, which expanded its range of goods with a German-Spanish bread, after the apprentice had been in Spain for an internship. Especially in the tourism and gastronomy sector, companies can also use slow periods within a year when they don't have so much to do for the apprentice to send them somewhere else for an internship. But not all companies use it in such a strategic way and don't disseminate this opportunity enough to make themselves more attractive for young people. Some chambers for example award a seal or signet to those companies sending their apprentices abroad or hosting VET students from other countries. But not all companies put it on their website. In Germany exists a national network called "Training Without Borders", which consists of mobility coaches mostly located in chambers of commerce and industry and chambers of crafts. They give advice and guidance regarding internships abroad to VET students, VET schools and companies. They offer great support not only in terms of the Erasmus+ program, but also other programs, like the national German program "VET worldwide", which supports internships outside of the EU. Some of the institutions, where these mobility coaches are located, apply for funding of mobility projects on their own. Others see their role solely in the information and consultancy. The network became established over the last years and has a coordination office, which among other things offers further education for the mobility coaches, transfers knowledge and partners from other countries can present themselves during the meetings of the network.

The ways of disseminating the possibilities of a mobility stay abroad within VET are diverse. One chamber gave the good practice example that all VET students in the sector and region of the chamber get information about the possibilities to go abroad for an internship when they start with their vocational education and training. These information include rights and obligations for the students as well as for the companies. The company always needs to agree. Therefore, other chambers start with the companies, since they also want to be included from the beginning. For example, chambers have vocational training advisors, who visit training companies on a regular basis. By this they can inform the companies directly about the opportunities of mobilities for their apprentices or also for the training instructors. Besides the visits to companies a good way is also to give information in master schools/ during master classes, since these are the future training supervisors and heads of the companies. Furthermore, in terms of dissemination press releases are sent, information is provided on a broad range of different events (e.g. educational fairs, open days in VET schools, own information events, guild meetings, breakfasts for entrepreneurs to foster exchange, plenary assemblies of the chambers, meetings of the examination and vocational

training committees at the chambers, etc.) or through public relations activities (e.g. press contacts, social media, etc.). Many chambers publish articles about good practice examples in their magazines or contact the local press. The press is sometimes more interested when contacted directly by a company, which had sent an apprentice abroad, in comparison to being contacted by a chamber. Testimonials, who experienced a mobility themselves, are the best way to persuade others. Over the last years the willingness of companies to send their apprentices for a short time-period (2-4 weeks) abroad, has significantly increased, also do to the efforts in advertising these possibilities.

Most VET students going for a mobility abroad stay between 2 and 4 months. In some craftsman's trades like bakers, confectioners or hairdressers the students can learn new things, since other techniques, tools, products or unfamiliar materials are used in different countries. Through a mobility, the VET students get a chance to learn supplementary things, like for example when a carpenter trainee does an internship in a restoration company. This is not the case for all professions. Therefore, the gain of competences lies also in the social and personal areas. The apprentices gain language skills and intercultural competences, as well as independence and self-confidence. All these competences increase the chances on the labour market for the apprentices and give them new perspectives. Furthermore, it is a change from the daily grind; VET students experience their profession from a different perspective and can make new contacts in other countries. The students need to orientate themselves in a different context and especially in non-English speaking countries learn to communicate with gestures and facial expressions. This is of course easier in the craftsman's trades with the practical work, in comparison to office work at the computer, where foreign language skills are fundamental. People who have been in a working situation in a foreign country are also more open and understanding when it comes to foreign co-workers in their companies. They know the situation of being the "foreigner" and can help to support the integration process. For some VET students a mobility stay abroad has been a life-changing turning point and they decided after finishing their education to move to another country to work there. In other cases, an internship in another country increased the motivation of VET students, who had been bored in their everyday education at home. Sometimes after the internship they are able to value their company in Germany more than before. If the host company did not fit perfectly, the students can also learn something from these negative experiences. In a very short period of time the apprentices learn a lot in terms of tolerance, respect and self-awareness, which in their usual context would take much longer. A mobility period abroad is especially a very good opportunity for young people, who just finished their VET education. They have the chance to do internships for a longer period like three or six months, since they are independent and don't have to be on leave from school or the company.

A good practice mentioned during the interviews was organising short-term staff mobilities during the VET students mobilities. In this way, the teachers, trainers or training instructors of the companies get the possibility to

be introduced to the VET system of the other country and see where their VET students work. They also get in contact with other teachers and trainers and can discuss issues like the motivation of employees or the shortage of skilled workers. Thus, they are able to compare the different systems and learn about the similarities. After these staff mobilities, the companies are often more open to send their future apprentices abroad as well, host foreign VET students in their own company or cooperate at events as testimonials.

Some individual mobilities took place this year or are taking place within the next months. This is decided on an individual basis with all people concerned. Projects where groups were supposed to take part in a stay abroad won't take place before next year. There are a few attempts to organize virtual mobilities, like for example an exchange between training instructors in hairdressing to get an insight into a hair salon and different techniques in another country. For VET students in an extracurricular course with usually an obligatory stay abroad of 3 weeks, it is planned to organize virtual meetings between the students of the two countries within their lessons at the school. This can of course not replace a real mobility stay, but it can foster the motivation and make the students curious to go abroad when it will be possible again. Regarding the preparation of the VET students for a mobility, one interview partner mentioned that besides the OLS it is very important for the students to meet in real life and offer for example language animation, to clear concerns and doubts. This also boosts the motivation and the excitement of the students.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

The biggest challenge for everyone this year has been the COVID-19 pandemic, which is still ongoing. Most mobility stays of VET students or staff have been cancelled until the end of the year. Many companies did not allow business trips, which includes mobilities of their apprentices. Nevertheless, they are open to send their students next year and also receive foreign students. Other companies hesitate to send their students these days as they are happy that their employees are healthy and able to work. The host companies in other countries are not so eager to receive foreign students. The added value of having a foreign VET students in their company for 2-4 weeks is not so high and right now these students are more of a risk coming into the company. VET students are willing to take part in mobilities next year, depending on the situation. VET schools are more critical regarding mobility projects abroad for their students, since the students have to make up for the lost time due to the cancellation of classes during the last months. Not everything could be done in a digital way and it is not clear if within the upcoming months the classes can regularly take place. Not in every case it will be possible to carry out a mobility that had been planned for this year and cancelled later, since it does not always fit into the tight curriculum for example in the last part of VET before the exams. Also mobilities for VET staff probably won't be possible within the next months. The teachers and trainers are needed in the schools and don't get a leave to go on a mobility

abroad. Right now, all mobility actors are more or less on hold respectively in an expectant position.

In order to allow for mobilities to continue in 2021 there are several preconditions, which have to be fulfilled. Mobilities cancelled in 2020 can only be organised again if all actors (VET student, school, company, etc.) agree and the host company still exists. The particular rules, which apply to the VET students in Germany, also need to be kept during the stay abroad, like for example a single room for each student. Since flights are often cancelled these days, it would be better to travel by other means of transport and buy flexible tickets. This will increase the costs for a mobility, which cannot be covered with the available budget. In case the mobility needs to be cancelled last minute, it needs to be made very clear who takes over the costs. Especially for VET students, who don't earn a lot, taking part in a mobility at their own risk would be very difficult. In general, there can always be done more in terms of disseminating the program. Although there are support systems in place and information is widespread, there are still many students and companies unaware of the possibility to take part in a mobility. People for example still think that a lot of money is necessary to go abroad for a period of time, or that this is only something for university students with good grades and good high school exams. It also depends on the professions if VET students are eager to take part in a mobility. Within the crafts, for example carpenters, bakers or confectioners want to experience their profession in another country. Within other professions, it is not always easy to find participants. On the one hand, the network "Training Without Borders" mainly consists of chambers, but on the other hand still not all chambers are aware of the possibilities of mobilities for VET students and staff. Looking at the map of Germany highlighting the places of the mobility coaches within this network it becomes obvious that there are a lot less mobility coaches in the Eastern part of Germany. Therefore, many companies and VET students are still not aware of their opportunities. It is difficult to disseminate VET and in particular mobilities these days. Information events cannot take place or have to be organized outside. Usually, information is also given during educational fairs, meetings of training supervisors, events at VET schools, etc. All these events don't take place and it is therefore more difficult to reach the different target groups.

Schools are often already convinced, but don't have the time or capacity to be more engaged. Companies are more difficult to persuade. Many companies don't see the benefit of mobilities of their apprentices for themselves and ask why they should pay someone if he or she is somewhere else. The apprentice is sometimes needed and indispensable when there is a lot of work, but not enough skilled workers. One approach could be to offer the companies during a specifically busy periods to host a foreign VET student for an internship in the company. During these busy times, it is also not easy to find a suitable time to speak to a person responsible in a company and inform 7 them about the possibilities during a relaxed talk. A good way is when a company hosts students from another

country. During a monitoring visit, the benefits of a mobility for their own apprentices can be illustrated. The companies are not aware that it can be a good investment into the future of their company through attracting the most talented young people to work for them. Some companies want to be reimbursed for the time the apprentice does not work in their company because of a mobility. Of course, on the one hand this could be an option to motivate companies to send their students. On the other hand this practice could depreciate mobilities, which could then be seen as something negative, for which a company needs to be compensated and not as a gain also for the company. Unfortunately, some VET students still take their days of holidays, even just partly, to be able to go abroad. But a mobility is not a holiday and apprentices are not supposed to spend their holidays on this. The companies need to have a very clear picture what their apprentice will be doing abroad, what to expect, with clear, comprehensible and concrete information, like a profile of the host company. Of course, the apprentice cannot always be satisfied and all wishes considered (e.g. which country, etc.). Often the VET students have a very limited say in what kind of company they will do their internship in. Sometimes the VET students learn about their placement just one week in advance. Usually, there are 3-4 months preparation time, but partners, especially new ones, tend to give last-minute responses. Often the ideas, expectations and claims for a stay abroad differ from the reality. One challenge in the organisation of mobilities are the different occupational profiles in the different countries. In order to find a suitable placement for a VET student it is therefore advisable to translate the German profile and send it to the company or partner in the other country.

The possibilities of mobilities are also limited by the language skills of the VET students. Many students in the crafts attended school for 9-10 years with a limited number of classes in foreign languages. Therefore, they are sometimes also afraid of going abroad and are not confident in their language skills. About half of the apprentices prefer to go to an English speaking country. Sometimes, there are native speakers doing their VET education in Germany and going for an internship to their home country (e.g. Italy or Poland, etc.).

There are many actors involved in a mobility and it can be a challenge to reconcile everyone. The whole bureaucratic process of organising and implementing a mobility is quite challenging. The VET students get a lot of information (e.g. advice, insurance,...) and can get overwhelmed by all the paperwork. This might sometimes spoil the enjoyment of this great opportunity. Another difficulty in the organisation of mobilities is always to find reliable partners, especially in "new" regions where there are no personal contacts yet. The mobility coaches in the chambers depend on funding from ministries, for which they need to apply on a regular basis. A more continuous funding is necessary in order to guarantee stability.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be

The best way of networking are personal conversations –

improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

on the phone, but also meeting face-to-face is very important. You need to keep the dialogue flowing to be successful in convincing someone of the great opportunities for VET students taking part in a mobility stay abroad. In order to reach the target group of young people it could be beneficial to use Instagram as another channel. One of the interview partners said that they are thinking about going there. Another interview partner suggested more advertisement in TV or cinema on a national level. Most support is needed regarding all the necessary documentation and paperwork, including applying for funding, as well as finding suitable companies and reliable partners in other countries. There should be more information on intermediary organisations in other countries. One interview partner expressed the wish of more bilateral partners to build reliable relationships and foster the exchange of the VET students. It is necessary and a lot of work to stay in contact with the partners, cultivate contacts and expand one's own network. It would be great to have such a network like "Training Without Borders" in Germany also in other countries with a national coordination office with a liaising role. This would make many processes easier, like finding suitable partners, and increase the transparency of who is active in the different countries. Mobility coaches are experts in the field of mobilities in VET and know the system with its rules and regulations in their country very well.

University education is often higher renown compared to VET. The dual VET system in Germany needs to be more present in the public with all the opportunities and chances it offers. Also mobilities for university students are much more known within the general public, as well as among politicians. Deciding to name the whole education programme of the EU Erasmus+ did not counteract this tendency, as Erasmus is still mostly known for what it stands for: „European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students“.

There have also been some other suggestions during the discussions. More attention should be put on the linguistic and cultural preparation. In order to enable an adequate linguistic preparation with an online language course, it should be adapted to the different professions or at least in general to vocational education and training. Another interview partner mentioned that especially for new or not so experienced mobility coaches it would be good to get some advice how to contact companies about mobilities and which benefits for the company to emphasize.

Any additional comment or information?

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ENNE Focus Groups reporting template

Reporting partner

Wisamar - Germany

Focus group n.

4

Date of implementation

Monday, November 9, 2020

Name of the Associated partner involved in the organization of the Focus Group

Wisamar conducted the interviews

Other VET organisations participating at the Focus Group

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
1	Regionales Berufsbildungszentrum (RBZ) ECKENER-SCHULE Flensburg	https://www.w.eckener-schule-flensburg.de/			3 & 4	No
2	Regierung von Schwaben	http://www.regierung.schwaben.bayern.de			-	No

	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
3	Berufliche Schule Pinneberg	www.bs-pinneberg.de			3 & 4	Don't know
4	Wirtschaftsakademie Schleswig-Holstein GmbH	http://www.waksh.de			-	Don't know
5	ITKA M	https://itkam.org/de/			-	Yes
6	Henriette-Goldschmidt-Schule	http://www.goldschmidt-schule-leipzig.de			3 - 6	Yes
7						
8						
9						
10						

What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

This report summarizes 6 interviews between 31.08.2020 and 11.09.2020 with different actors active in European mobility projects.

Germany has a good labour market and less unemployment compared to other European countries. The dual VET system prepares VET students in a very comprehensive and practical way for the labour market. One interview partner

emphasized the benefits of the German VET system and especially the different possibilities to start with VET. There are vocational schools with apprenticeship programs (dual VET - Berufsschule), full-time training colleges with school-based VET programmes with WBL (Berufsfachschule) and also basic or pre-vocational training programs. It is possible to change between these types of schools and programs. In addition, there are further vocational training programs and vocational retraining possibilities mainly financed by the employment agency or the pension scheme. Therefore, it is possible to start vocational education and training at any point in life. Through the dual VET system, the students are able to learn about the current diverse practical requirements of a profession in terms of adaptation, modernisation and restructuring of companies. Although teachers and trainers are always trying to be up to date with current developments, a VET school is not able to achieve this on its own. The different actors of VET in Germany need to cooperate, which is for example apparent in the examining boards for VET, where all actors are represented (teachers from VET schools, representatives of companies/training instructors from companies, etc.).

It is also a good development that over the last 10 years the VET professions have been classified according to the EQF levels. By this, the value of some VET professions in Germany has increased. For example in Germany there is the profession of educator, who work in kindergartens, day-care centres, after-school care centres, youth clubs, etc. This profession is very different from teachers, who work in schools and have to attend university. To become an educator a person needs to attend a VET program. This profession is now recognized as level 6 and therefore has the same value as a Bachelor degree. A school needs to work on the recognition of their programs in order to achieve this. The interview partner reached this goal for her school and also agreed with a university of applied science that her students after finishing their VET as an educator can start their studies in a Master program.

There are many benefits for VET students going on a mobility abroad. It is a very important experience for young people and their personal growth. They usually come back more worldly and open. Some of them go for the first time to a foreign country. Erasmus+ enables also VET students from families with less income to do an internship abroad. The number of people doing an internship abroad after they finished their VET is increasing, because directly afterwards they have the opportunity to stay longer in another country. During a 2-4 week stay abroad, the apprentices don't always learn a lot new professional things, but afterwards they are able to find better solutions in unknown situations and improved their language skills, which is also a great benefit for their training company. In some cases, the host companies also offered jobs to the foreign VET students. Other companies give some pocket money if they have been very satisfied with the interns.

The students are usually on a mobility for 3-4 weeks. It is a good practice and advisable that a teacher will undertake a mobility in the 2nd week of the stay of the students. In this way, the students first get a chance to orientate themselves

and work out their new routines. And if there are some problems, the students have the possibility to find solutions on their own and if this is not possible the teacher can intervene in the 2nd week. It is not always possible to find the most suitable placement. A good way is also to contact the network of chambers of foreign trade, which have a good cooperation and national company networks. When the VET students are open to new experiences they can also learn a lot and be very satisfied with an internship in another company. One interview partner said that the support of an intermediary organisation is very good and the school is really satisfied that they take care about all the application and reporting processes. It is always good to know the partner in the other country personally. Therefore, it is good to travel there and get an own impression or use contact seminars to meet the people in person. Besides visiting the host companies of the students, a monitoring teacher has the possibility to undertake a study program to get to know the VET system in the other country and according to their professional interests. Of course, the topics for staff mobilities are very diverse. One interview partner mentioned that they are hoping to get an insight and cross-border comparison regarding the digitalisation of vocational education and training through a staff mobility.

VET staff or students don't always have to go abroad to broaden their horizon, mentioned one of the interview partners. Visits from VET staff and students from other countries in the own institution are also always an enrichment and change in the daily routines.

The motivation to organise mobilities despite all the barriers and difficulties stems from the enthusiasm and excitement of the students, who come back from a mobility. The students also don't always see the negative points or find a way to turn them into positive learning experiences and use their time abroad actively. It is great to see when students identify themselves with the host company already after a week of internship saying sentences like "at our place it works like this..." etc. The students are different when they come back. For them it is a huge step within their personal development. This is then also seen by the companies.

During a mobility, the apprentices get the chance to think outside the box. They gain flexibility and self-confidence, which leads to a self-confident manner at the workplace. The students build contacts and networks, which can also be useful for their companies back in Germany. For companies mobilities can also be a good recruiting tool. The guarantee to be able to take part in a mobility stay abroad during vocational education and training increases the attractiveness of an apprentice position. The apprentices can also improve their value for a company or future work place through taking part in a mobility. There are many more benefits for the companies. Supporting mobilities can mean an increased motivation for the VET student, and it can bring new ideas into a company. One good practice example given by an interview partner was that Italian VET students developed the social media presence for the German company and explained and showed everything to their German colleagues. A good way to motivate companies is a seal awarded to them if they supported outgoing and incoming mobilities of VET students. It is a very effective tool and does not cost a lot of

money. For companies it is also a chance to get the good apprentices they are looking for and retain them. Big companies use this opportunity to send their apprentices to a branch or a supplier in another country.

Today there are already some training instructors, who were able to go abroad during their VET about 15 years ago. They encourage the next generation to use these opportunities. By this the long-term impact can be seen, which is also obvious in their perception of foreign countries. In general, the younger generation of training instructors has been travelling more and is more open to send the students on a mobility.

In Germany, there is the practice of so called pool projects. This means that educational organisations keep “a pool” of places for individual mobilities ready. In this way, individual apprentices are able to take part in a mobility, although the school does not have a mobility project. The organisation of such pool projects can also be co-financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

One of the interview partners said that at her school during the lockdown they used online learning a lot. They had been using the tool LernSax, a platform for all school types in Saxony, already before, but the Covid-19 pandemic forced all teachers to become acquainted with the technology and use it. This worked very well and due to this good experience, the school continues to use the platform with the students in blended learning solutions. It needs to be taken into account that for online teaching the amount of work is mostly higher. Through the platform, all teachers and students of the school can be easily reached and important information provided. For example, important documents are uploaded there in advance and everyone needs to read them before they meet. In this way, a meeting is really effective, because things can be discussed more deeply and everyone has the basic information. Like this, also information about mobilities can easily be disseminated to the students and staff.

Dissemination is very important. Usually, fairs, networking events or visits to the VET schools are used to spread information about the program. Also the use of social media is widespread. For these channels, for example short videos with testimonials are very effective. With each single project, the whole program becomes more known also among the general public. Networking and telling people about the program during informal talks is another way of disseminating the European mobility opportunities. In some schools, the students get informed at the beginning of their professional education about the possibility to take part in a mobility to another country. Furthermore, articles about the stay abroad are published on the starting page of the school’s website.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

In Germany VET students in the dual system are paid by the companies. This salary differs a lot between the different sectors and professions, which is not fair. The appreciation

for VET education is reflected in the salary the apprentices earn. The Each VET student should get the same salary. Full-time VET programs are even less attractive, since in these programs the students don't get any salary. At some private schools they even have to pay. The students can get financial support from the authorities, but these VET professions are therefore not as attractive as others. These professions include for example many professions in the health care and social sector. There are nowadays a few attempts to make these professions more attractive, for example by signing contracts with the future employer at the beginning of the VET program and also get a salary from them. Another possibility now is to attend a part-time VET program. In this case the students have the chance to work besides their training course and earn their living expenses. Also full-time VET programs include longer periods of internships, which are usually unpaid. It would help these students if at least these internships would be paid. In general, the willingness to take part in a mobility abroad, has increased over the last years. In Germany this is especially true for apprentices in the dual system. The chances are usually not as good for students in full-time programs at training colleges. Apprentices, who already have kids, and especially single parents, have less opportunities to go abroad for an internship. This year, planned mobilities have been cancelled or, if possible, postponed to 2021. Only a few individual mobilities take place. Due to the situation, those who still want to do their internship abroad prefer to travel to neighbouring countries like Denmark or Austria. They don't want to be too far from home. Two interview partners from VET schools stated that the willingness to take part in mobilities has dropped among VET students and staff due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They don't want to take such risks. Another reason is the liability and the question who is accountable if the mobility cannot take place as planned. Therefore, everything is planned with reservations. It needs to be avoided that the VET students are left with the costs in case the mobility cannot be carried out. Another interview partner stated that the VET students themselves still want to go abroad, but their companies in Germany as well as the host companies in the other countries are more hesitant.

One of the schools has not been very satisfied with the partners and especially intermediary organisations in other countries. The internships often don't really fit the profile of the students. It is definitely not easy to find suitable host companies. And unfortunately there is not a lot of continuity, for example when an internship has been really good, but this is only because of one single engaged person. If the person is gone, then this company might not host students for an internship anymore. When hosting foreign VET students for an internship, some German companies, especially the bigger ones, want to know this at least 6 months in advance, which is not always possible. From the experience of one interview partner companies are not so interested to send their apprentices abroad. Although, the stay abroad is sometimes taken from the time₆ the apprentices are at school, the companies don't want that they miss too many lessons. Still apprentices take their

holiday days to be able to take part in a mobility. It should be normal that the apprentices get an official leave from the company for their mobility. In general, it is perceived that university students have a lot more possibilities. The legislator should manifest the right for paid educational leave. There are only very few companies, who come up with the idea of mobilities for their apprentices on their own or who use it to recruit apprentices. German companies in the car or metal industry are less likely to send their students abroad. They don't see the benefit, since in their opinion the technology in these fields in Germany is very high and the students cannot learn something new in another country. Companies from the gastronomic sector are much more open to mobility opportunities for their VET students. Another interview partner said that the main barrier when organising mobilities are the different legal regulations of the countries. For example in Sweden it is not allowed to work without payment and it is necessary to explain that the students get a scholarship, etc. Someone needs to take the responsibility to organise everything, including the planning of the trip and booking tickets and accommodation. This is very time consuming. Furthermore, it is a great responsibility, especially when travelling with a group of students banking on the teacher. A well-wrought program is also very important, which does not overwhelm the students and does not overestimate their independence. Many of them have never been away from home alone, never used a plane before or travelled far away. One of the biggest challenge is always the language barrier. For example, many VET students coming to Germany for a mobility stay, don't know German and are often also not used to communicate in English. Also the customs might be different in the professions from country to country and the students are not used to it. For example in Germany many people use professional pictures of themselves on their CV. Since in other countries people are not used to this sometimes you can find pictures with sunglasses at the beach on a CV of a VET student from another country. Also the expectations of the students are sometimes quite high, for example regarding the accommodation. They think they will stay in a single room in a hotel and then find themselves in a double room in a youth hostel. The communication and information to the students beforehand should prepare them for these kind of circumstances of their mobility. VET students from other countries don't always have practical experience and the company tutors need to take the time to train them from the basics.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

Vocational education and training could profit from a more modular system, where the prior knowledge of a student is evaluated and, based on this, the modules to reach the professional goal are compiled. This would make the whole system more open, transparent and flexible. It would also make it easier to recognize previous learning, skills and competences of the individual students. In general, there is already a good support system in Germany for people, organisations or institutions, who want

to organise mobility projects. Some interview partners stated that the application process should be easier and the application form shorter in order to enable more teachers to apply for funding for their school. A teacher works at a school to teach and not to deal with all the bureaucratic burdens these mobility projects bring along. Some teachers get extra working hours to organize mobility projects, others don't. One interview partner suggested that schools willing to organize mobilities should get a specific share of hours for this task from the responsible authorities. VET students often don't know about the possibilities to go abroad, except there is a very engaged teacher informing about it. Therefore, advertisement and promotion by young participants of the program directly in the VET school classes would be a good thing or using social media much more. Other ways of disseminating Erasmus+ mobilities mentioned by the interview partners are articles in local newspapers and magazines, meetings of VET school head teachers, during further education and training or internally on platforms used within bigger institutions. Another suggestion was to organize more short-term staff mobilities for training instructors from companies that don't take part in the Erasmus+ program and mobility projects yet. Also the offer of contact seminars should definitely be increased, since personal meetings between partners are crucial for the good quality of a project.

Any additional comment or information?

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	Name of the organization	Website	Ref. Person	Email	EQF Level	Likely to join the VET network
3	„Europe for you“ c/o Bits & Grips gemeinnützige GmbH	https://www.europe-for-you.org/			-	Yes
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

What are the main strengths highlighted by the participants?

This report summarizes 3 interviews done on 28th of September 2020 with different actors active in European mobility projects.

Again the dual system of VET education in Germany has been highlighted offering theory in the VET schools and practical work in the companies. However, it has also been mentioned that this system has evolved over the last 100 years in order to involve all the now participating actors. Therefore, the system cannot be imposed on other countries just like that, this doesn't work. In other countries, it is not so known that in Germany VET schools don't have to look for or organize internships for the students, accept for students in full time vocational colleges. In Germany, VET schools are understood as service providers, offering a part of the vocational education, which would be more difficult to do within each company separately. There is a high commitment between the schools and the companies and the communication works well. Most VET schools offer meetings for the training instructors of the companies. These meetings are also used to present the Erasmus+ program, but there is always just a very limited time of 5-10 minutes for this. There are so many important other issues discussed during these meetings so that this short part is not always remembered by the participants. Furthermore, there is a close cooperation and good exchange with the chambers and other lobby organizations

as for example for lawyers or the social security funds of specific professions. All actors inform each other, which is crucial for the system to work.

On the one hand, the representatives of a VET school in Dresden stated that the VET schools in this city are well equipped at the moment – regarding the technical equipment as well as the staffing situation. On the other hand, in smaller administrative districts, everything is closer together, responsible persons can be reached more easily and therefore agreements can be made faster.

Especially in times of globalisation to think outside the box and be familiar with different contexts is very important. In this sense, mobility opportunities are very valuable.

Professions like industrial business management assistants are more globally interconnected as for example trained employees in the field of social insurance, which are usually working in the German context only. In general, the students are happy to escape the everyday treadmill for a bit. Most students are happy to get everything organised for them.

Some others take matters into their own hands. The personal gain is immense and self-confidence increased a lot. Many VET students realize that their company back home is better than they thought and appreciate the company and what it offers more afterwards. This is also a benefit for the company to have motivated employees.

Some companies use mobilities in their marketing – externally and internally. Some companies also appreciate to receive a seal.

For VET students in the field of social insurance there is a subject called “Organisation and Communication” to which belongs project work. Therefore, at a school in Dresden they use this subject for students to prepare their own projects. This is done over the duration of two academic years.

Within these projects, they have the opportunity to go on a mobility abroad. In this way, the students don’t take part in a usual internship abroad but it has a project character. The students are able to set their own goals and organise themselves. They learn to give a structure to their own ideas and improve their project management skills. They need to discuss their ideas and visions with their classmates and need to agree, which also binds them closer together. The VET students are used to a school-like system and have to learn to think outside the box. But they cannot think of nothing but themselves, they need to involve the school, their companies, etc. In this way, the students are trained to think ahead and in having foresight over a duration of 2 years. Of course the motivation descends if not everything works out as planned, but they realise that plan B works as well. Therefore, also crisis management is part of the learning. They get the chance to make mistakes and have a go at new things. Within their companies, they cannot afford to make mistakes. A responsible person for the training in a company stated that what the students learn in terms of project management through this experience in school could not be achieved only within the company. All of these are opportunities and great learning outcomes the students don’t see from the beginning, but realize afterwards. They are growing a lot during this experience and reach maturity. A mobility experience is a symbol for lifelong learning.

Also the possibility for staff to take part in a mobility has been mentioned as a great opportunity to shine a light on things, which might not be relevant for the specific subject of the teacher but spanning across all subjects, like for example methodologies and didactics or topics such as globalisation and digitalisation. The VET school should promote the possibility for a staff mobility more and make more use of it. Schools have already partners and good contacts abroad through the projects of the VET students and can also send their staff for teaching, sitting in on classes and job-shadowing to them. It is important to remember that there needs to be added value for both sides, also for the host organisation, like for example organising a mutual exchange. It should always be a give and take. An example was, when the VET school does not have a specific profession, they could still refer the partner to colleagues in other VET schools, which will be able to help.

One interview partner talked about a good practice within their organisation to train multipliers for networking and disseminating the possibilities of mobilities. These are for example teachers, consultants, master/ foremen or trainings instructors. They all took part in a mobility, received training and all get a guide on communication. In addition, they have an online platform for exchange. These multipliers also accompany groups for a mobility abroad. In this way, the organisation built a regional network over the last years. For host companies in other countries they use a quality management system, which needs to be fulfilled in order to send students there. In order to widen the network in other countries they also had people evaluating companies and doing an internship of 4 weeks in one of them by themselves. This organisation sends VET students for at least 30 days plus travel days. In their opinion only in this amount of time the students get the most out of it. Most companies agree on this, especially in the sector of gardening. Of course, sometimes there is a company that doesn't want to give their apprentice a leave of absence for such a long time. This happens for example in the sector of agriculture, since they are working all year round.

One organisation takes care of some equipment before the mobility. For example, at a training centre in Spain, they have bikes for the German VET students and they always get repaired before they come. In addition, the VET students get things like a high-quality nametag, a shirt or hat with the logo. These serve as working materials, but they also support the group identity. Another tool is a small dictionary covering specific vocabulary in several languages as learning aid, which is handed over to the students.

At the end, it's all about the people and with people.

What are the main weakness highlighted by the participants?

In Germany, the landscape of VET professions is very diverse and there are 325 recognized occupations that require formal training (VET). This is a huge number and the degree of specialisation is very high, probably even too high. This also does not make it any easier to bring young people and companies together, especially in small-scale occupations, where there are not a lot of companies and

also not a lot of young people wanting to go in this direction.

One problem in Saxony would be that there is not a coordinated and agreed plan for a VET school network. This fact hinders the further development of VET schools into competence centres. Another point mentioned for Saxony was that the contact persons for business trips at the school authorities change and mobilities always need to be explained when the teachers send their business trip application.

Of course, this year most planned mobilities could not take place. Nevertheless, the planning continues for the next year. In some cases, the mobilities cannot just be moved to next year for the same group of students. For example students, which are now in their 3rd year, will be in the VET school until February 2021 before they prepare themselves for their final exams. But in Saxony travels abroad for students are not supposed to take place before March 2021. The next group of students is willing to go next year and they are preparing for it.

Companies are mildly interested in mobilities, stated one of the interview partners. There is less interest for mobilities in companies, where the VET students are needed as workers and sometimes even seen as cheap labour. But there are also a few companies organising internships abroad for their VET students on their own. Many companies still take the view that the VET students will just be on holidays. The apprentices have a full curriculum and school is sometimes organised in blocks. This means that the students are for 2-4 weeks in school and then for several weeks in the company. Therefore, it is difficult to organise mobilities for more than two weeks and even two weeks cannot only be taken from the time in school, because then the students would miss too much. Therefore, one week is taken from the time in school and the second week from the time in the companies. Not all companies are happy to do so. But after working with the companies together for some time, it is like to push at an open door in certain companies.

Nevertheless, it is not always easy to get the leave of absence from the companies for the students. In other schools the VET students are 2 days of the week in school and 3 days in the company. Then sometimes students use the school holidays for a mobility – this means they don't miss anything at school, but still the company needs to agree.

In order to organise a mobility project many parties need to be involved and reconciled – the VET students, the training instructors and the companies, parents or guardians, VET schools and vocational training advisors. This is not always easy and the cooperation on all sides needs to be improved. Furthermore, there is a lot of paperwork and bureaucracy involved, which will hopefully improve due to the new accreditation.

Another point was the language preparation for the VET students. The interview partner is not convinced by the OLS. Therefore, in this organisation they organise language courses beforehand for a group of VET students face-to-face with a teacher. This is co-financed by the students

themselves through a co-payment for the mobility. This model works very well.

One difficulty is definitely searching for and finding project partners in other countries. Many German professions don't exist like this in other countries. Although contact seminars organised by the National Agencies are a good way to meet and get to know partners, one always needs to explain in detail what kind of profession it is, what are the learning outcomes, what is expected, etc. And when you have a partner, it is always difficult to find an appropriate time in the year together with the partner for a mobility period due to times of holidays and exams in the different countries. There are always good partners and not so good partners. You need to make your own experiences or learn from others if something happened only once or if there is a structural problem. It can also happen that the participating VET students are not the easiest.

Based on the results obtained with the Focus Group, provide information on how the capacity building activities offered by the ENNE project could be improved and/or integrated with new activities and services for the members of the VET networks.

Erasmus+ and going abroad are still widely connected to university students. Also publications and reports on stays abroad concentrate on university students. The possibilities for VET students need to be more public and for example a regular focus in the media and press. The word about Erasmus+ and the possibilities for VET students need to get out more. Also within the VET schools, it is necessary to promote mobilities. Of course, projects are presented on the websites, but people also need to look at those. It's always good when people hear about a best practice, which is used as an example for dissemination. Therefore, one VET school always organises a final presentation at the end of a project and invites among others the companies of the VET students. Another interview partner agreed that everyone, who took part in a mobility, and talks about it, disseminates the program in this way. In their case, the students need to prepare a short presentation about their mobility and show it in their companies and to their family and friends. In addition, they organise a bigger event to hand out the Europasses. One of the interview partners asks members of the European parliament to hand out the Europasses to the students. Other tools used for dissemination are the own website, social media like Instagram or also campaigns on Google Ads.

Within the school due to the schedule, the students of different years of training in the same profession never meet each other and word-of-mouth recommendation therefore doesn't work. One idea could be to promote it more during events like the Europe day at a school or getting the title of "European school in Saxony" by the State Ministry for Education. Word-of-mouth recommendations work well among the staff. Staff, which has taken part in a mobility, can be multipliers for areas becoming more relevant for all professions and which are interdisciplinary, like for example digitalisation. And these teachers can also talk about their experiences with their students and motivate them to take part in a mobility.

All actors aim for the accreditation of their organisation for mobilities. They are working on their internationalisation strategy and the Erasmus plan. This needs to be part of the organisations development.

Any additional comment or information?

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