



Interreg 
EUROPEAN UNION

Danube Transnational Programme
Learning by Doing

“LEARNING BY DOING” PROJECT

**“Targeted capacity building of VET partnerships
in the Danube Region for the effective modernisation
of VET systems”**

WP 6: Policy Engagement

OUTPUT: 6.2. ROMANIA - Policy recommendation

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Version: 2.0

Date: February-May 2019

One of the assumed results of the project *Learning by Doing* is 6.2. Policy recommendations part of the strategies that aim at a better integration of work-based learning schemes in the present system of education and training. .

Development and validation of the policy and strategy recommendations were established during the stakeholders' group meetings between November 2018 – January 2019. Moreover, *The High Level Round Table* event (8 May, 2019) will support the project's results at the level of indirect target groups, as county councils, trade unions, workforce agencies, students' leaders, or NGO's with relevant activity.

The recommendations can be implemented in the actual legislative framework, or they can become proposals for new regulation, as a lack of regulation is identified, taking into account the local context of each country partner.

These strategic views are the subject for High Level Round Table, finalized with pledges, which promote and support the partners through specific agreements for modernizing VET system at regional and national level.

The project *Learning by Doing* created the perfect frame for the necessary stages of well defined policy recommendations from context analysis to identifying proper solutions and pilot them and then getting the final recommendations.

The stakeholders' group created within this project, established, based on the local needs, several areas of interventions based on the four challenges considered relevant for Danube Region: Institutional, Cooperation, Cultural and mind-sets challenges and Expertise and capacities challenge.

Between 2017 -2019, the implementation period of the project, the participants took part at capacity building actions at local level, in accordance with specific challenges from each partner country, followed by piloting of the identified solutions. These are structured in case studies and associated with three possible strategic areas of intervention, as follows:

Area of intervention ACCESS based on -

Inventory of qualification and skills need of the employers as a response to *Institutional challenges* and
Innovative approach for counselling and career guidance as a response to *Cultural and mind-sets challenges*

Area of intervention QUALITY based on the mechanism

Title of Excellence – a solution for *Cooperation Challenges* piloted in Hunedoara county and then extended to three more counties, covering three more Regions

Skills development internship for tutors and VET teachers organised in companies is a solution for *Cooperation* with local companies

Area of intervention “From DUAL to TRIAL”

Examples of local *Cooperation* between local authorities and schools, companies, chambers of commerce and other institution open to cooperation

The solutions piloted in Hunedoara county were promoted in each Region of the country during the project implementation. Furthermore, the solutions were multiplied in three more regions, in the counties interested and open to test the solutions.

Furthermore, the recommendations for the areas of interventions already piloted and based on the results from the four regions on the one hand, and the stakeholders’ group discussions and workshops on the other hand were analyzed from the point of view of the contribution to the VET Strategy 2016 -2020.

The following synthetic table highlights the connection between operational elements of the project *Learning by Doing* and VET Strategy 2016 -2020. The table includes the synthetic elements from the implementation process and those of the project results:

Challenges

Actions and Case study

Areas of intervention *Learning by Doing*

While VET Strategy 2016 -2020 includes the elements that can support this connection:

Objectives

Areas of Intervention form VET Strategy 2016 -2020

Synthetic Table Challenges – Areas of Intervention and Key Studies -: „Learning by Doing,, & Objectives and Areas of Interventions VET Strategy 2016-2020				
„Learning by Doing,, Project			VET Strategy 2016-2020	
Challenges	Local Study Cases	Areas of Intervention - Learning by Doing project	VET Strategy Objectives	Areas of Intervention
INSTITUTIONAL CULTURAL	Operational mechanism for identifying in real time the concrete local skills and competence/qualification needs. Effective model for counseling and career guidance	ACCESS	O2: Increasing participation and facilitate access to education and training programmes	D2. Developing mechanisms in order to adapt curricula to labor markets needs and trends. D8. Improving .counseling and career guidance
COOPERATION	Mechanism <i>Title of Excellence</i> Internship schemes, organised in companies, for tutors and VET teachers	QUALITY	O3. Increasing quality for vocational education and training	D15. Promoting excellence for vocational education and training D13. Improving competences for persons responsible for delivering vocational education and training programmes
INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES	From DUAL to TRIAL	RELEVANCE	O1. Improving relevance of education and training system in accordance with labor market;	D5. Improving mechanisms for financing vocational education and training . D6. Improvement for the social partners involvement in developing the VET system .

Policy recommendations

The recommendations stated in the present paper are based on piloted actions, on real cooperation between schools, local authorities, partner companies. They represent a complex response to each type of identified challenge from the beginning of the project - institutional challenges, cooperation, cultural and institutional capacities.

The areas of intervention for TVET capacity building actions were piloted in Hunedoara county, where a **Local stakeholders group relevant for TVET was established**. The group agreed an Action Plan (during the workshop from October 2017) when five main key interventions were established. These are relevant for Hunedoara county, having a direct influence in improving TVET quality and correlation with labour market where the WBL has a central role

The case studies are developed in accordance with the stakeholders' group activities and the areas of intervention accomplished in the pilot county Hunedoara can be identified in the ***Guidebook for more efficient Work-Based Learning in the Danube Region¹***, one of the project's main result.

The following policy recommendations are analysed and proposed for assumption at the High Level Round Table, on May 8th 2019 in Bucharest. The event has the purpose of assigning the discussed versions of the recommendations by the stakeholders from the institutions responsible for TVET .

1. Recommendation ACCESS – from local actions to national policies

Area of Intervention

Access in the educational system - from local actions to national policies

Recommendation

Initiation/implementation

Mechanism for identifying in real time the concrete skills and competence/qualification needs of the employers and a process of integrated career guidance and counseling for the students and their parents piloted in the Learning by doing project, capitalizing JOBS model.

Policy recommendations in correlation with VET Strategy 2016 – 2020:

¹ The Guidebook will be launched during the final conference of the Learning by Doing project, June 2019

Strategic objective 1. Improving relevance of education and training system in accordance with labor market;

Performance indicator 1: Employment rate of the young people aged 20-34, not included in education and training system, ISCED level 3-4

Area of Intervention 2 Developing mechanisms in order to adapt curricula to labor markets needs and trends

Strategic Objective 2 Increasing participation and facilitate access to education and training programmes

Performance Indicators

1. Students enrollement rate in IVET
2. Adult participation rate in LLL.

Conceptual background

The access to technological high-school and professional education was established as a strategic priority in *Learning by Doing* project by the stakeholders group. In this context, during the project activities, the following areas of interventions were identified:

a) Inventory of qualification and skills need of the employers

The stakeholders group considered that it is an urgent need for innovation of the process for collecting skills needs of the employers. We need a rapid system for collecting relevant information about the real needs, and to use these data to adequate the VET supply. The success of this mechanism depends of the involvement of the responsible partners, from each institution – schools, companies, local authorities, parents, the community, media etc. We shall underline that, at present the companies can forecast their qualifications needs for maximum 3 years, but the VET system can provide properly qualified graduates only if the concrete demand is identified 5 years before. This means that there is an urgent need to innovate the paradigm of skills needs forecast, and to make possible a much quicker answer from the VET system to the employers' urgent requirements. T

b) Innovative approach for counselling and career guidance for lower secondary education/gymnasium

The stakeholders group targeted that the most important aim of the career guidance is to ensure the right access of the students to the right qualification, and then the school will provide the needed labour force to the employers. It is crucial that the counseling model will respect the local needs and the very local opportunities. Only a local specific content can reach the beneficiaries, with the recommendations. The most important objective of the career guidance and counseling is the access to a proper qualification. The working group created from the interested members of our stakeholders considered that there is a need for an innovative approach of the counselling, by providing this service to students, together with their parents. The new model capitalizes the results of the project JOBS, which piloted and developed a counseling programme for students taking into account the teacher training for this programme. The teacher training programme offers concrete instruments that can be used in classroom (JOBS Handbooks) . After graduating this programme the teachers from Hunedoara county applied the programme in their schools. They deliver some innovative counselling sessions in their school, covering rural and urban areas as well

2. Recommendation Excellence in VET

Area of Intervention

Local actors cooperation aiming to increase the quality of the VET supply, correlated with relevance of the VET supply in accordance with rapid changes in companies' demand in line with the strategic priorities of regional socio-economic development and present and future labor market needs.

Recommendation

Implementation of the mechanism for identifying and validating excellence in VET schools through Title of Excellence at national level, piloted in the project in 4 counties from 4 different Regions and recognition of the mechanism as a part of quality assurance for VET.

Policy recommendations in correlation with VET Strategy 2016 – 2020

Strategic objective 3: **Increasing quality for vocational education and training**

Performance indicators:

1. Drop-out rate for IVET system
2. Success rate at baccalaureate of the IVET graduates

Conceptual background

Title of Excellence is a distinction awarded to VET school as a sign of recognition by local / county / regional authorities and the validation by the economic environment, of good practices in the development and promotion of initial educational supply, correlated with employers' needs, according to the aspirations of the beneficiaries and in line with the strategic priorities of regional socio-economic development

Title of Excellence, Edition 2018 – 2019 is organised as an assumed action of the local stakeholders group from Learning by Doing project, cofinanced by Danube Transnational Programme 2014 - 2020.

The cooperation mechanism piloted in the project *Learning by doing* is based on cooperation between employers, local authorities and VET school, aiming to increase the quality of the VET supply, through the EXCELLENCE recognised and awarded by the beneficiaries of the well qualified workforce.

The Title of Excellence scheme is part of our national strategy, within the QUALITY priority and it is an innovative element that brings added value to vocational education and training.

The 2018 Edition ran from February to June 2018. . The relevant local stakeholder group agreed a set of criteria of excellence and defined their own requirements, the level of performance it deemed sufficient for excellence. This year the five criteria were: attractiveness, flexibility, relevance, innovation and business. A number of 14 schools applied for 31 titles, out of which 26 have been awarded by the stakeholders (9 - attractiveness, 5- flexibility,6- relevance, 5 - innovation and 1- business).

For the 2019 edition a number of 24 schools applied for 96 titles.

Title of excellence"- distinction awarded to VET schools by employers' representatives and other partners, validating the quality of the process and the results of VET education from the perspective of actually beneficiaries of vocational education and training. Audit visits were carried out by teams of relevant actors in schools that have applied for a „title of excellence“. The teams spent one day in the candidate schools, focusing on the concrete aspects of areas of excellence, while the school had the opportunity to prove that it deserves the recognition of the partners and the whole community; the partners representatives had the chance to convince themselves about the realities of the schools in order to correctly and objectively assess their performances

Direct dialogue between the school and external teams proved to be of great importance, this day contributing to a better understanding and mutual trust between the education sector and employers and finding together solutions to existing problems. Thus, the attitude of the parties has changed, they demonstrate openness for further dialog and cooperation, and we believe that this is one of the main condition, for a better matching between schools and employers, a better chance of the VET graduates to enter the labour market with the relevant and right skills and behaviours.

Based on our experience we consider that the schools which are FLEXIBLE enough to adapt their offer to the needs of employers, and in order to do this they are open for INNOVATION of the teaching-learning process, have the chance to build a RELEVANT VET supply, harmonized with the companies' expectations, and they will become more ATTRACTIVE for the students and their parents, and can obtain the recognition of the BUSINESS sector.

3. Recommendation From DUAL TO TRIAL

Area of Intervention

Cooperation between local actors for VET administration, in order to provide the necessary human resources at local level for a sustainable development of the community.

Recommendation

From DUAL to TRIAL in order to increase the relevance of VET supply and VET participation

Accepting and approving *de facto* and *de iure* situation of local level VET administration by THREE main actors, meaning school, local authority and company – practice partner by using the name TRIAL .

The proposal takes into account a local level solution , for the difficult situation , especially in rural area, for access to a proper educational level in accordance with labor market needs.

Policy recommendations in correlation with VET Strategy 2016 – 2020

Strategic objective 1. Improving relevance of education and training system in accordance with labor market;

Area of intervention 5 . Improving mechanisms for financing vocational education and training

Strategic objective 2 : Increasing participation and facilitate access to education and training programmes

Conceptual background

Improving education and training quality by developing social partnership represents a fundamental pillar of the project *Learning by Doing*, taking into consideration that work based learning activity is directly connected to the partnership school – employer/company.

Stakeholders group activity in the project highlights the fact that education and training achieve superior results when local authorities are directly involved together with the school open to innovation and change, and with the employers willing to invest in education.

Former years experience attests that TRIAL model is functional for TVET. The classical partnership between school and company is supported by a third entity – local authority, which can convince the employers to be involved in students' education and training.

Therefore, what we stated above represents the concept “from DUAL to TRIAL “ and it can be a national level solution, especially because dual professional education is governed by a partnership contract, signed by the three parts involved – school, company and public administration.

The *Methodology for organizing professional dual education* (stated by OMEC 3554/2017) defines in Chapter II, article B11 Employers rights. Article B12 schools rights and Article B.13 local public administration rights, and the articles C 14 and C16 represent the signing parts obligations.

This legal frame defines a cooperation context between the three actors, and some counties experience is a proof for positive effects of the involvement of the local public authorities in managing education and training administrative issues.

Local authorities can have a representative impact from the moment of identification of local workforce demand, because they are familiar with economic perspective of the area. This inventory of local labour markets needs are reflected in qualification supply form educational offer.

It is well known that local authorities can offer financial support for transport, accommodation and meals, for the students with low family income

The investment in educational infrastructure represents the direct responsibility of local authorities, which are, in fact, the owners of the schools buildings. In order to have

Learning by Doing

an efficient distribution of the resources, which are fewer than the needs, the authorities can define criteria for urgent and relevant needs.

Nevertheless, local councils and city hall can offer amenities and support to employers involved in education and training. We identified examples of local authorities implication and contribution to a proper functioning of educational system.