

Guidelines for VET directors and administrative staff

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INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines are addressed to VET directors and administrative staff and aims at providing information about the existing work based learning practices throughout Europe.

The objective of the Guidelines is exploring the different ways to design and implement work based learning initiatives for VET students, at local, national and transnational level, and offer some insights and tips for a good quality internships.

Due to the variety of VET educational systems throughout Europe, the Guide also tries to analyze the WBL experience and its integration in VET school systems from different perspectives, always highlighting the benefits of this approach on all the actors involved: VET schools and providers, VET students and staff and companies.

It also provides indications on the available European finding programs, that offer a unique opportunity for VET providers and schools, to promote and carry out learning experience abroad for their students, and to also enhance the acquisition of transversal and intercultural skills, as an added value for youth employability.

CHAPTER 1 - FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERNSHIP

1.1 - European Programmes for mobilities

The European Commission provides opportunities for VET students to have an internship experience in other EU member countries. Funding opportunities are framed in Programmes, with its own requirements, rules and structures.

ERASMUS + In the framework of the Erasmus + programme, there are a number of different fund streams available for schools, centres and organizations involved in VET education. Each strand refers to key actions that set up different conditions and criteria.

Key Action 1 – Mobility for VET Learners and Staff

Under this action, VET schools and centres can apply for funding to provide VET students and apprentices with training placements, in company or at similar VET school, in another EU country. Under this action, there is also the possibility to apply for funding professional development experience for VET staff, like teaching experience in similar VET schools, job shadowing and work placements in foreign companies and VET organizations.

Applicant: Any VET school and centre sending students abroad or leading a national consortium of VET organizations sending their learners abroad.

Funding Calls: Funding calls are set up by the Erasmus + programme Guide. The Guide is regularly reviewed and updated yearly. [Erasmus + Guides](#) are available in different national languages on the website of the EC or the several + National Agency web.

VET organizations can apply only for one KA1 mobility project per funding call. As a member of a consortium, the organizations can participate in more projects per call.

Participants: VET students, recent graduates of a VET school or former apprentices. In the last case, the mobility has to take place within one year of graduation.

Duration: The overall duration of the KA1 projects is between 12 and 24 months. The duration of the mobility experience is between 2 week and 12 months.

This part of the Key Action 1 is managed by the Erasmus + National Agencies, based in each of the EU programme countries. The **role of the National Agency** is supporting the management and implementation for the programme at decentralized level, in each programme countries. The role of the agencies at national level, is promoting and providing information about the programme, offering support and assistance to applicant organizations and participants, selecting, monitoring and evaluating funded projects as well as disseminating results and best practices.

Find your [National Agency contacts](#) and visit its official website.

ERASMUS PRO

This new initiative has been recently introduced to respond to the EU Parliament call and other stakeholders demands to increase the employability of VET learners through long-term working placement abroad.

Specificities of the Erasmus Pro are:

- Working experience abroad, in VET providers and/or companies can last from 3 to 12 months.

- Even though the host organization can be a VET provider, the activity must have a clear work-based learning component.
- Among the activities, an Advance Planning Visit (APV) can be carried out and funded, from sending school to hosting organization, in order to efficiently plan the mobility and straighten the interinstitutional cooperation.

VET MOBILITY CHARTER

VET organizations with a proven track record in organizing VET mobilities for learners and staff, can apply to obtain the charter, at yearly *Call for Proposals*. When holding the chart, VET organizations can benefit from streamlined procedures, in application process, organization of the mobilities and reporting activities. Subject to the continuing quality performance, the charter keeps valid until the end of the programme.

To facilitate the creation of transnational partnership, the [VET Charter Holders Map](#) is a useful online tool aiming at providing information about the organizations holding the VET Charters in each of the programme countries.

The map shows the details of 754 VET charters holders, who have been participating in Erasmus + projects between 2015 and 2017.

This tool is meant to facilitate the networking among VET organizations all over the EU programme area, thus encouraging the creation of effective and high-quality partnerships for the VET mobility projects. Furthermore, it enhances exchanges of best practices and transnational relations among similar organizations, thus promoting the development of common transnational approaches and facilitating the internationalization strategies of VET institutions.

Key Action 2 – Strategic Partnership of VET

Key Action 2 projects mainly aim at improving VET provision, by carrying out several actions by all the transnational partnership members, like: developing, testing and implementing innovative approaches and methodologies, promoting entrepreneurship and employability, enhancing the skills and competences recognition and certification, carrying out transnational training mobilities, etc. Although the major goal of this action is not the merely mobility, transnational learning mobilities can be organized in this context, to provide learners with specific skills and competences related to the project topic.

BENEFITS for VET institutions.

- **Internationalization** of the institutions.
- Exchange of **best practices** with other peers in Europe: educational policies, effective strategies, innovative and transferable approaches, etc.
- **Professional development** of the students and staff, through the acquisition of practical on job experience, of transversal abilities to properly behave in a working environment, of new professional practices that may be transferable to local companies and whose knowledge represent an added value for the students' CV.
- **Personal and intercultural skills development** for students and staff; skills to deal with and appreciate cultural differences, to work in a multicultural environment, knowledge of foreign languages, etc.
- **Networking** with peers for the future organization of joint transnational mobility projects and to build up consolidated and trustful partnerships.
- Increased capacity **to participation in policy** at national and transnational level.

1.2 - The European Social Fund

The European Social Fund is the European main tool for fostering employment and social inclusion of people in Europe, by supporting education and training and promoting better and equal work opportunities throughout Europe.

The ESF strategy and budget are negotiated and jointly established by the EU governments, the EU Commission and the EU Parliament. The EFS implementation is structured in **7-years operational programs**, planned by the national government and approved by the EU Commission.

Therefore, ESF does not operate as a job agency; it finances projects in the field of employability and training, at local, regional and international level.

The main objectives of the 2014-2020 program are:

1. Training and help people get into work
2. Promoting social inclusion
3. Improving education and training
4. Improving the quality of public services in EU countries.

Under the objective to improve training services and increase their effectiveness, by a real correspondence with the labor market needs, the ESF fund projects and initiatives in the framework of VET that aims at aligning teaching to the job market demands, by promoting apprenticeship and company trainee scheme. The implementation of the ESF is different according to the national governments, as well as the assigned budget. In some countries, like Italy and France, the ESF operational programme are being carried out in combination with the European Regional Development Fund and calls are issued by regional authorities.

To know more about how the ESF is implemented in your country and the procedure to apply for calls and projects, visit the [dedicated ESF official website](#).

To know about the projects that have been funded by and developed in the framework of the ESF, visit the [Project section](#) of the ESF website.

CHAPTER 2 - WORKED BASED LEARNING AND VET

2.1 - WBL modalities and typologies

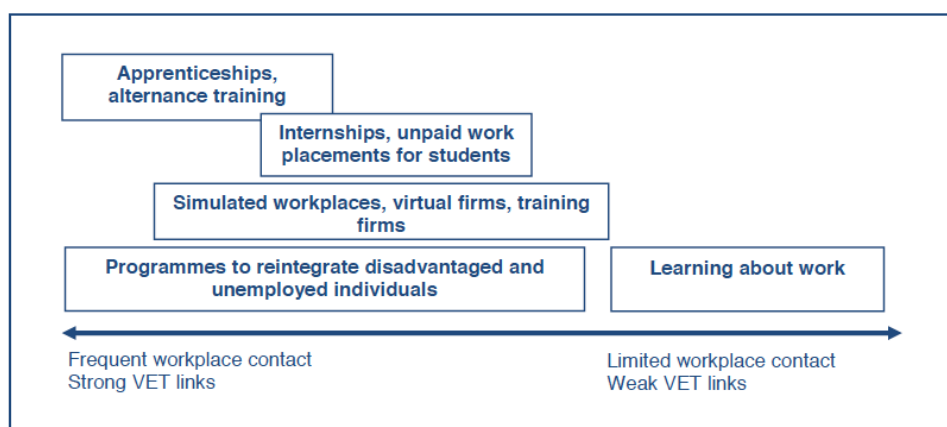
Work-based learning initiatives can be organized and shaped in the framework of different programs, each one with its advantages for learners, VET insitutions, employers and social partners. WBL initiatives can be also differ according to the national legal educational and training frame of countries.

Objectives of the WBL programs may be:

- To develop learners' vocational skills and contribute to the recognition of VET qualifications;
- To provide learners with a first-hand job experience, to help them get a realistic idea of a profession in order to guide them better in future career choice;
- To train learners in job skills to prepare them for the world of work;
- To provide opportunities for job seekers and disadvantaged people to access the labour market.

Although the distinction among the WBL programs can be quite blurred, they can be classified as follow:

- WBL activities, where learner is legally and employee; *traineeship and alternance*.
- WBL activities where learner is legally a student. In this case the activities are being called in different manners, like *traineeship, internship, working placements or cooperative education*.
- Mixed models, where WBL activities are implemented in *virtual companies*, training companies or companies that are part or attached to an educational insitution.
- *Work shadowing* or work experience programs, whose objective is to teach learner abut work and not train him/her on how to carry out the job.



Source: Adapted from ETF (2013)

All the WBL programs that are addressed to learners who are legally students in VET insitutions, share the following features:

- Generally, the majority of the learners' time is spent in classroom and not at the workplace;
- The major responsibility of the program is placed on the VET institution and not on the companies or social partners;
- The duration and times schedule of learners at the work placement is normally conditioned by the school timetables and timing.

2.2 Approaches and best practices in internship organisation

Approaches to establish QUALITY in work-based learning initiatives, suggested by CEDEFOP, can be divided in 3 main Steps:

STEP 1: ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION WITH COMPANIES.

Making contact, generate cooperation and recruit companies to provide appropriate work-based learning opportunities.

- **Suggested actions:**
 - Invite companies' employers and managers to school events and presentations of VET students' work to external audience
 - Organize visits to companies
 - Establish contacts with chambers and entrepreneurs' associations
 - Invite companies to collaborate in surveys and interviews

STEP 2: PLANNING THE WBL TRAINING

Once a collaboration has been set between VET provider and company for the implementation of a work-based learning experience, VET providers are the main responsible to plan the activity, complying with all the legal requirements and respecting pedagogical aims.

- **Suggested actions:**
 - Make up contractual arrangements that clearly set up responsibilities and rights of each part.
 - Check out the adequacy of the working placement to the curriculum of the VET programme.
 - Make sure the working placement will facilitate the ET student learning progress in terms of both soft and technical (hard) skills.
 - Draw up a detail learning plan for VET trainees, detailing all the competences and skills to be acquired during the WBL training experience.

STEP 3: MONITORING AND TUTORING

Monitoring the learning experience and tutoring the VET trainees and the company is an action to be carried out with great care. The better will be the cooperation between VET providers and in-company trainer/tutors, the better will be the quality of the experience.

- **Suggested actions:**
 - Create or use specific monitoring tools, like a *WBL Protocol for in-company trainer and/or tutor* and a *Learning Diary* for the trainer.
 - Facilitate a space for self-assessment for both in-company trainer/tutor and VET trainee, in order to foster a sense of ownership and control over the learning process.
 - Organize in-site visit to follow-up the trainees' performance and the learning process and eventually provide feedbacks.
 - Keep an ongoing exchange with the in-company trainer/tutor.

STEP 4: EVALUATION

Evaluation is a key step to measure the impact of the training experience on trainee and to collect information for further improvements.

- **Suggested actions:**

- Use interview, questionnaire and informal meetings to collect feedbacks on the quality and results of the WBL experience from trainee and in-company trainer
- Assess the learning outcomes in terms of technical and soft skills, comparing the achieved ones with expected ones.
- Build up the evaluation on observations and feedbacks collected during the in-site visit to the company.



STEP 5: FOLLOW-UP AND IMPROVEMENT

An agreement of the quality approach among all the stakeholders, and the application of shared *quality indicators*, of the WBL training are key elements to efficiently work on the further improvement of the WBL initiatives.

- **Suggested actions:**

- Facilitate a space where involved teachers and trainers can share evaluation results with other colleagues and staff of the VET centre
- Share evaluation results with the in-company trainer/tutor
- Organize focus group open to the contribution of any stakeholders
- On the basis of shared reflections, feedbacks and suggestions, come up with (agreed) quality indicators to ensure a minimum quality standard and approach.

The Table below shows strategies and methodologies to effectively engage and set a fruitful cooperation with external stakeholder and companies, to achieve a quality WBL trainings.

	Type of activities	Tools applied	Quality goals
WEAK  Degree of involvement	Socialising with external stakeholders to increase participation in common activities	Public relations and Information activities to stakeholders	Strategy to Improve cooperation with stakeholders
	Participation of stakeholders in feedback surveys or interviews	Questionnaires, interview guidelines	Response of stakeholders to quality issues
	Participation of stakeholders in workshops: (a) selective meetings; (b) thematic workshops; (c) continuous cooperation	Invitation, agenda setting, Inputs from VET provider, collecting feedback, focus groups	Contribution of stakeholders to quality improvement
	Cooperation in training provision		
	Shared Implementation of training in cooperation with external stakeholders	Formalised cooperation agreement	Strengthening work-based training
 Degree of involvement STRONG	Shared monitoring and tutoring of work-based training	Training protocols and diaries, site visits, feedback	Assuring quality of work-based learning
	Application of shared quality indicators in common provision of VET	Agreement on indicators, common quality approach	Improvement of common VET provision

Source: Cedefop.

2.3 - Integrate internship in VET initiatives

VET Dual System

The VET dual system stands out as a successful VET system made of two learning venues: the VET school and companies. The advantage of this system is that it facilitates the transition from learning to employment, preparing effectively students to enter the labor market, by combining vocational school based education with workplace experience at companies, thus acquiring the skills that are really demanded by the job market.

The Dual VET has been originally implemented by countries like Germany and Austria, considered as pioneers in Europe, although the dual approach is being implemented more and more in other EU countries.

The Dual Scheme can be very different from one country to another, for instance in Germany, around the 70% of the VET students is enrolled in a dual system; spending 3 or 4 days per week practicing job at the workplace and the rest of the week, assisting school lessons.

Similarly, other countries like Austria and France, outstand as a good practice, thanks to the effectiveness of the coordination model between VET centers and companies, the monitoring of student's learning process at the work centers and the tutoring system. In Austria, a 40% of VET students choose the dual scheme and spent around the 80% of their training time at companies.

The benefits of Dual System for companies:

- Opportunity to include contents of interest for the companies in the student's training curriculum
- To turn students into future employees and support the generational turnover
- To train a possible employee, so decreasing the external people hiring
- To transmit the company culture (habits, job-related skills, etc.)
- To enhance the company's social corporate responsibility

The benefits of Dual System for VET students:

- Increasing the job opportunities comparing with the traditional VET system
- (In some cases) trainees are enrolled in social security and receive an economical compensation
- Having a more constant and near contact with the reality of job market
- Receiving support and supervision by both an in-company tutor and a school tutor.

The benefits of Dual System for VET schools:

- Increase the student's chance to enter the labor market
- To get to know the new trends in companies and to be able to adjust teaching to them to better prepare students
- To further train teaching staff, due to the possibility for teachers and trainers to have access to companies' facilities, machinery and new technological equipment, otherwise, out of reach for schools.

To know more about the dual system and other apprenticeship schemes, visit the [Cedefop European Database on Apprenticeship Scheme](#).

Transnational Mobility Projects

As mentioned before, VET providers have the opportunity to participate in European programme, like the European Social Fund or the Erasmus + programme, with the objective to organize transnational mobilities abroad for their students.

Traineeship abroad also offer a set of benefits in terms of professional development and acquisition of soft, transversal skills, like foreign languages, the ability to work in an intercultural environment, and also the opportunity to learn new and innovative professional practices to be implemented in local companies, once back to home country.

Online and virtual WBL experiences

Although not so common, an innovative training approach to integrate traditional lesson and WBL practices can be represented by online internships, that would consist of:

- Developing job tasks at distance and online for a company, whit both the supervision of a school tutor and in-company tutor and manager

Or

- Running practical activities, developed by VE teachers and trainers, on the base of real companies' cases and situations.

The WBL 2.0 project, offer a good example of how provide a market oriented training offer and business driven learning pathways, through the creation of a video gallery and real case scenarios that teachers can use in classroom with students to work with them on the real needs of companies.

CHAPTER 3 - INTERNSHIPS EXPERIENCES PLANNING AND PREPARATION

3.1 - The Role of the VET Institution in an internship

Main responsibilities of a VET institution:

- Selecting accurately the companies (working placements) that best fit the expected learning outcomes and the correspondent VET curriculum programs
- Create or prepare existing administrative documents and arrangements to set up a collaboration with companies
- Set a clear and democratic selection procedure of trainees
- Selecting students carefully, also involving companies and in-company tutor in the process
- Do a suitable match between a trainee profile and company
- Organize classes and activities to previously prepare learners for work placement
- Set a list of Skills (both hard and soft) and Competences the learners are expected to acquire or improve during the WBL program
- Create or use existing tools or tools provided by the program itself, to monitor and follow-up the training experience; tools to be used by the trainee, by the in-company trainers/tutor and the VET institutions.
- Carry out in-site visit to the companies, during working placements
- Assess and evaluate the WBL training using common and agreed quality indicators, and suitable tools, also by involving all the actors
- Ensure the correct issue of Working placement certificates
- In case of EU programs, contribute to the dissemination of the mobility experience and engage all the key actors to share results and benefits gained
- Motivate other students to take part to transnational mobility programmes and WBL initiatives.

3.2 - The Selection of the Interns

The selection of the interns is up to the type of WBL programmes. Its criteria and procedure can differ according to the national, regional, European or transnational programme the WBL or internship experience is organized. Here below, there are some general tips for an effective selection processes:

1. **Procedure:** In case of limited working placements, the procedure (when not previously established by external sources or by a specific funding program) need to be:
 - STRUCTURED in previously established phases and steps
 - CLEAR, understandable for any potential applicant
 - TRANSPARENT. Transparency entails:
 - Open and public call for applications
 - Publicly disclosed selection procedure for the traineeship vacancy
 - Publicly disclosed selection criteria for the internship vacancy
 - A documented process of selection
 - Publication of the selection results
2. **Criteria:**
 - **Eligibility criteria:** established by the WBL of internship program, like: minimum age, certification, etc.

- **Other eventual criteria**, that can be considered to evaluate the adequacy of the candidates may be:
 - The grade point average
 - Previous working experiences
 - Foreign language knowledge and certificates
- 3. Tools:** in order to efficiently select the adequate candidate, there are some common tools that can be used:
- Curriculum Vitae
 - Application form
 - Letter of Reference by classroom tutor
 - Interview.

GOOD PRACTICES in Transnational internship mobility projects selection:

→ In projects with limited granted working placements, try to keep a **gender balance** when selecting participants in order to provide equal opportunities for male and female students.

→ Transnational mobility projects represent a unique opportunity for personal and professional growth, especially for those students who do not have financial resources to afford travelling and working abroad, who live in remote areas or who are facing social, cultural obstacles. Some transnational mobility programme, like Erasmus + put a big emphasis on VET schools providing the opportunity to participate to the programme to **people with fewer opportunities**. Some transnational programs, also foresee extra-budget to overcome eventual obstacles to the participation of this category.

→ **Motivation** and attitudes is very important when it comes with transnational working placements. This entails being open-minded and flexible enough to adapt to a new cultural context, to face language barriers, and handle with problems. Although these are all skills that student will be acquiring during the experience abroad, selecting students with good attitude and high motivation is a good starting point for a successful experience!

3.3 - The selection of the Companies

- The company profile match with the sector and the learning goals foreseen by the VET curriculum.
- The company is able to provide activities and tasks that students is able to perform, as in line with his/her training background.
- The company has the time to dedicate to monitor and support the student at the working placements.

3.4 - How to Prepare a Good Transnational Internship

To ensure an effective and good quality Internship abroad, find below a set of tips for the different time framework:

→ **BEFORE** the internship

- Ongoing communication with foreign partners (companies and peer VET schools) to agree on logistics aspects, learning objectives, practical arrangements, etc.
- Selecting school tutors and coordinators of the overall internship project; one for each school if the project is run by a sending schools' consortium.
- Agreement and preparation of the documents to be used during the project
- Selection of tutors at hosting partners and companies.
- Common review between sending and hosting organization of the project Timeline
- Setting up a joint work protocol between sending school(s) and hosting organizations; i.e. e-mails, Dropbox or Drive to share documents and materials, etc.
- Promoting the internship project and vacancies using all the available communication channels (school website, mailing lists, social media, announcements, etc.). Organizing an Info Day, where students and families are invited to get informed about the transnational internship project.
- Selection of participants, following a structure, common and transparent procedure.
- Matching participants and hosting companies, according to the profile of the interns and the characteristics of the companies. The match will be done through the cooperation between sending schools and hosting organizations.
- Preparing internship documents, like Learning agreements, MoU, and evaluation forms; with the collaboration of companies' tutors.
- Arranging logistics (i.e. booking flight, insurance, etc.) and organize a Pre-departure Meetings with participants, accompanying tutors (in case there are), families, etc. to deliver the final details on the internship and the stay abroad.
- Organizing a Pre-departure training, according to the needs of participants and any special requests (i.e., language course, soft skills, cultural preparation, etc.)

→ DURING the Internship, abroad

- Keeping an ongoing communication with hosting organization and companies, the company tutor and in case, accompanying teachers, in order to monitor the learning process and the development of the overall experience.
- In case, organize Skype calls with students and tutors, to keep a more direct contact with them.
- Ensuring that all the official documents have been duly filled in and signed by all the involved actors.
- Ensuring that all certification documents (i.e. Europass Mobility, Company certificate, etc.) have been duly issued and delivered to participants.

→ AFTER the Internship:

- General and face-to-face evaluations with all the involved parts.
- Dissemination of project results to several targets and stakeholders.

SOURCES:

CEDEFOP, *Handbook for VET providers*: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3068>

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EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION, *Work-based learning. A handbook for policymakers and social partners EFT partners countries*: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/work-based-learning-handbook-policy-makers-and-social>

European Social Fund: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1045&langId=en>

Mobility projects for VET learners and Staff: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/programme-guide/part-b/three-key-actions/key-action-1/mobility-vet-staff_en

2018 Erasmus+ VET Mobility Chart: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/calls/2017-eac-a06-vet-mobility-charter_en

The Dual training system: Integration of young people into the labor market:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1070&newsId=1948&furtherNews=yes>

La FP Dual en Europa: <https://www.fundacionbertelsmann.org/es/home/formacion-profesional-dual/formacion-profesional-dual/la-fp-dual-en-otros-paises/>