



Report of Spider VET in the net: WBL for the future

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EUROPEAN **VOCATIONAL**
SKILLS WEEK 2020





WORK BASED LEARNING IN THE FUTURE (results of word cloud among workshop participants)

Format:

Online Workshop

Speakers:

Ms. Eva Cendon, Vice-President of European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN)

Ms. Giulia Meschino, Executive and development manager, European Vocational Training Association (EVTA)

Mr. Joost Korte, Director General, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Mr. Hans Daale, President, CHAIN5, Belgium



Mr. Manfred Polzin, Senior policy advisor, international affairs, MBO Raad, The Netherlands

Mr. Andrea Giacomelli, Research and development director, ENAIP FVG, ENAIP NET, Italy

Ms. Alicia Leonor Sauli Miklavčič, Head of development, Slovene Association HVC, Slovenia

Ms. Lyndsey El Amoud, Assistant Director and Business Development Officer, ACE, University College Cork, Ireland

Ms. Margarida Segard, Vice President of European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVBB)

Mr. Rob De Vrind, Manager of Sustainable Vocational Education and Training (SVET) and sustainability co-ordinator at the VET institute King William I College, The Netherlands

Mr. Hans Lehmann, Vice Principal at EUC Syd, Denmark

Mr. Joachim James Calleja, President of European Forum for Vocational Education (EfVET)

Ms. Chiara Riondino, Head of Unit for Vocational Education and Training, Apprenticeships and Adult learning, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Number of Participants:

250

Main Messages:

Work-based learning (WBL) as learning from work is a core feature and basis of VET. WBL addresses not only young people in VET but also adult learners in need for re-skilling and upskilling. It spans from bigger programmes to short formats as micro-credentials. With this workshop, the Platform of the European Associations of VET Providers (VET4EU2) approached WBL as “The Spider VET in the Net” from different perspectives and explored its possible future developments and challenges.

Detail of the Meeting:

The workshop consisted of three main parts: “Setting the scene” opened the field of “WBL as the Spider VET in the net” with a European policy perspective by Joost Korte (Director General - DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion). Joost explained the recent proposal by the Commission on the initiatives on Youth Employment Support: and the renewed European Alliance for Apprenticeships. Both provide concrete additional support measures for young people in their school-to-work and early job-to-job transitions. The upcoming VET Recommendation and the Osnabrück Communiqué are



further important milestones for all VET Stakeholders (<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1507&langId=en>). This was followed by an introduction to the topic of WBL from VET and Higher Education perspective, spanning the view from its origins as well respected learning pathway the middle ages to actual developments to emerging future scenarios. “Perspectives on WBL” provided insights on engagement and current developments regarding digitalisation, micro-credentials and green skills – all in connection with WBL. The topic that the audience is currently most involved is, with no surprises, WBL and digitalisation, with 47% of respondents, as a poll showed. A panel discussion, including questions and comments from the audience (see some of them at the end of the report), concluded the “Perspectives”. In the last part, we looked at the future. Under the heading “WBL in 15 years” we gathered both the visions of the audience in a wordcloud and the visions of partners in companies and VET institutions presented in a short [video](#). In the concluding interview Chiara Riondino, the Head of Unit for Vocational Education and Training, Apprenticeships and Adult Learning, DG Employment, gave insights on her perspective on “WBL as spider VET in the net” and the priorities being set at European level for the coming years, esp. with view on digitalisation, micro-credentials and green skills.

Conclusions:

While WBL has a long-standing and tradition-rich past, the current developments show its “coming of age” in more than one sense. We have more and more learners of all ages with different learning pathways. They bring formal, non-formal and informal learning, encapsulated in professional, academic and life experiences, which need to be validated and recognized in the respective systems. We see diversifying routes for WBL: there is a trend to shorter and modularized programmes, for flexible and just in time learning as micro-credentials in different forms, for learning “à la carte” developed by both companies and VET schools or higher education institutions. At the same time, there is a drift, accelerated by COVID-19, to digitalisation, for distance and remote learning, making new digital forms of learning at work necessary. And, finally, the issues of the green agenda and green skills pose questions on how to include them within the existing programmes. This last issue still seems to be the one with most question marks, as a poll with the audience showed: following this, the biggest proportion of almost 40% saw WBL & green skills as a topic with more difficulties and room for development – followed by WBL & digitalisation with 30% and WBL & micro-credentials with 28% (more than one choice possible).

Useful links mentioned during the session

DG Employment site: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1507&langId=en>

EPALE Community of VET practitioners: <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/practitioners-in-vet>



Platform of the European Associations of VET Providers (VET4EU2): <https://vet4eu2.eu/>

[SELFIE Tool for Work-based learning](#)

Questions & Answers from the Workshop

DIGITALISATION

Q.: Agree with outline as presented by Andrea. Two issues: 1) many older persons are not willing or with a mindset to learn – how to deal with this. 2) we need to reach the huge number of self-employed or “nano”-enterprises – how?

A: 1) People over 50 are reluctant to participate in the upskilling offer when it is offered in the traditional way. For this reason, it is necessary to offer them the opportunity to be helped in their work with change projects that introduce digital in a functional way to a specific project. We need to help them change by intervening in their context and inviting them to collaborate with the centres of excellence.

2) We know that there are many professionals and micro-entrepreneurs who are no longer young. These must be offered a series of opportunities generally designed for young people, such as professional mobility abroad, the possibility of activating an internship, the possibility of activating an internship to become an entrepreneur, the possibility of following a language course or master abroad. We need to imagine a series of measures to help older workers rethink their career path by acquiring new skills even with experience abroad.

Q.: Andrea, can you explain better the training strategy for adults?

A: The strategy was very simple. We have offered design-thinking paths to rethink your artisan business trying to innovate thanks to digital. The change project has become the motivating factor for the acquisition of digital skills. All within an open learning space as a city coworking with a strong vocation for the innovation of small and traditional businesses.

Q.: Often there are no real opportunities for people over 50 who are quite high skilled. The older workforce is often regarded as “in need to upskilling” but it is not always the case. When we are upskilled we can’t find opportunities to gain more skills or experience.

A: There are also training opportunities for older workers and professionals. In my opinion, what is missing is experiential and cooperative training within informal and open learning spaces and training abroad even for short periods



Q.: Are orientation services prepared to channel training offers and the demands of the different productive sectors?

A.: Orientation services, as all other actors in career guidance services, are adapting to this new challenging and constantly changing reality. It is a challenge that can be successfully overcome only by close engagement of all actors on local, regional as well as national level and over all different productive sectors. Special care needs to be given to SMEs and among those to micro-companies as those are usually the ones least represented by various sector representatives.

Q.: How do you perform the competence trends tracking in practice?

A.: Using the Apprentice Track tool regularly, the feedback received on competence forecast by companies within the institutional ecosystem clearly identifies the future profile the region is heading to. This provides the opportunity for the institution to adapt its curricula accordingly as well as the opportunity for up-skilling and re-skilling formats that will be needed in order to make sure the already employed stay employed and the ones momentarily unemployed find their new future through these programmes.

Q.: How can we attract workers over the age of 50 to participate in digital training? Any good examples?

A.: We organise Study Circles on technologies and the interest of the participants is extraordinary. People aged 65 to 85 (<http://barrideleixample.blogspot.com/>)

A.: Also in our case, like the one taken up with the study circles, the engagement strategy was to offer improvement and change paths through digital but within projects developed together with young people and in informal learning spaces.

MICRO-CREDENTIALS

Q.: What are the reasons for the increase in micro-credentials offers? Or why is their development supported by government in Ireland?

A.: The popularity of micro-credentials can be attributed – at least in part – to the skills agenda in Ireland where there has been a growing recognition of the need for adults to upskill and reskill at various points in their lives. For the adult learner, micro-credentials are attractive as they provide targeted knowledge and skills in a particular area in a relatively short amount of time. They are also popular among employers for the same reason in that employees can upskill in an area of skills need without significant time away from work.

Q.: May I ask Lyndsey what challenges and limitations you may have identified in micro-credential programme of ACE at UCC regarding RPL?

A.: Within the Irish context, we still don't have a national framework for RPL. There is a project currently in train to address this deficit, but for now, each institution operates its own RPL policy and practice.



Within my unit, we try to be as inclusive as possible in terms of applying our institution's RPL policy. The challenges we have experienced primarily lie in the recognition of prior experiential learning. While we try to include as many learners as possible who may not have formal qualifications but who can demonstrate strong professional experience, in a small number of cases such students still find it very difficult adapting to the academic requirements of a course and can often struggle with the content. Due to the relatively short duration of these micro-credentials, it can be challenging to support such students to successful completion. For us, it is a delicate balancing act in widening participation to as many learners as possible, while also ensuring that these learners will be capable of learning at the appropriate level upon admission to the programme.

Q.: What is the difference between micro credentials and open badges?

A: Open or digital badges are a form of micro-credential. UNESCO identifies the term 'micro-credential' as an umbrella term that "encompasses various forms of credential, including 'nano-degrees', 'micro-masters credentials', 'certificates', 'badges', 'licences' and 'endorsements'". For more detail, see: UNESCO (2018) Digital Credentialing: Implications for the Recognition of Learning across Borders. UNESCO Education Sector. Retrieved from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000264428>

Q.: Can micro-credentials be issued in the shape of open badges? What are their value in national systems?

A: Yes, open or digital badges are a form of micro-credential. Micro-credentials can be used quite successfully as a form of lifelong learning targeted at enhancing human capital for the knowledge economy. However, their impact can be limited unless there is widespread trust and recognition of these as a valuable credential.

Q.: I still miss a definition of micro-credentials, they are used in in-company C-VET in DE but its use in I-VET raises a lot of concern, see the current VET Recommendation. Hope it helps that COM announced in its communication on Europ. Edu Area a proposal of a Rec in 2021.

A: An all-encompassing definition of micro-credentials proffered by UNESCO identifies the term 'micro-credential' as an umbrella term that "encompasses various forms of credential, including 'nano-degrees', 'micro-masters credentials', 'certificates', 'badges', 'licences' and 'endorsements'". For more detail, see: UNESCO (2018) Digital Credentialing: Implications for the Recognition of Learning across Borders. UNESCO Education Sector. Retrieved from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000264428>

My own experience has been limited to the tertiary sector where we work primarily with mid-career adults, so I'm afraid I can't comment on their application in I-VET. It will indeed be interesting to observe how the Commission's roadmap unfolds over the next several years.

GREEN SKILLS



Q.: May I ask Mr Lehmann to comment on how he sees the role of HEIs in connecting SDGs and VET?

A.: I believe the HEIs have the role to relate SDGs to any subject in teaching and research, and thereby bringing knowledge and skills to students who may be engaged in VET programmes later on. HEIs will also be able to secure a firm basis for the cooperation between industry/business to the SDGs. I also presume many HEIs have a close connection to business/industry and will offer LLL-programmes for staff with VET background.

Q.: @Rob, aren't the competencies you mention, the competencies of the nation, governments or at least should be introduced by them first.

A.: The government asked VET to implement competences with regard to sustainability in the qualifications. For that, we have an institute called SBB. Companies together with educational institutes there define the attainment targets in the qualifications. For them I have presented this suggestion. They were quite positive on them and were willing to look at it further and discuss it in their meetings.

Q.: Empathy and emotional literacy – how can we foster these skills in WBL/distance learning setting to reach out to those, who need reskilling/upskilling and to include all.

A.: I suggest that you base your work/approach on the SDGs and have students relate to specific SDGs (choose for example a sub goal and have students describe their own life or a friend's life seen from the SDG perspective and find pathways for a better future). We also have seen students who found answers for some of the own issues/problems by producing very practical answers, for example a specific climate issue in their everyday life, for example, what can I do re plastic. This will create an understanding for a sustainability topic but also for a personal issue, and they will understand that they are part of something bigger.