



Guidelines for career coordinators at VET schools for key competences training with cooperation with employers

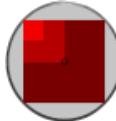
DECO PROJECT – Key competences for career designing in cooperation with
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This document was elaborated by *Método Estudios Consultores S.L.U.*, partner of DECO Project, in cooperation and with the contributions of all project partners: *Public institution Panevėžys vocational education and training centre*, *Panuvezys Business Advisory Centre – PBAC*, *Professional High School of Lifting, Construction and Transport Equipment "G. S. Rakovski"*, *National Management School – NMS*, *CIPFP Misericordia Vocational education high school*, *Tarsus Chamber of Commerce and Industry – TTSO* and *Emin Kasapoğlu Multi Program High School*

More information about the project is available at:
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INTRODUCTION

DECO PROJECT

▪ THE PROJECT IDEA

The economic crisis that started in the second half of the last decade has created a particularly fragile situation for today's young generation. As **youth unemployment is one of the leading challenges the EU Member States** are facing today, it is important to give young people **access to training** that is relevant to the needs of the labour market, establish links with businesses and find effective routes into employment.

The project idea addresses the need to improve **competitiveness of young people** along with optimizing training and making it more **attuned to the needs of the business environment**.

For such reason, and according to the growing demand by employers of hiring workers with not only technical, but also other **generic competences** that can enable them to adapt to the changing requirements of today's business world, the project focuses on these competences as the **key for VET students to succeed in the labour market**.



The project idea addresses the need to improve competitiveness along with optimizing training and making it more attuned to the needs of the business environment

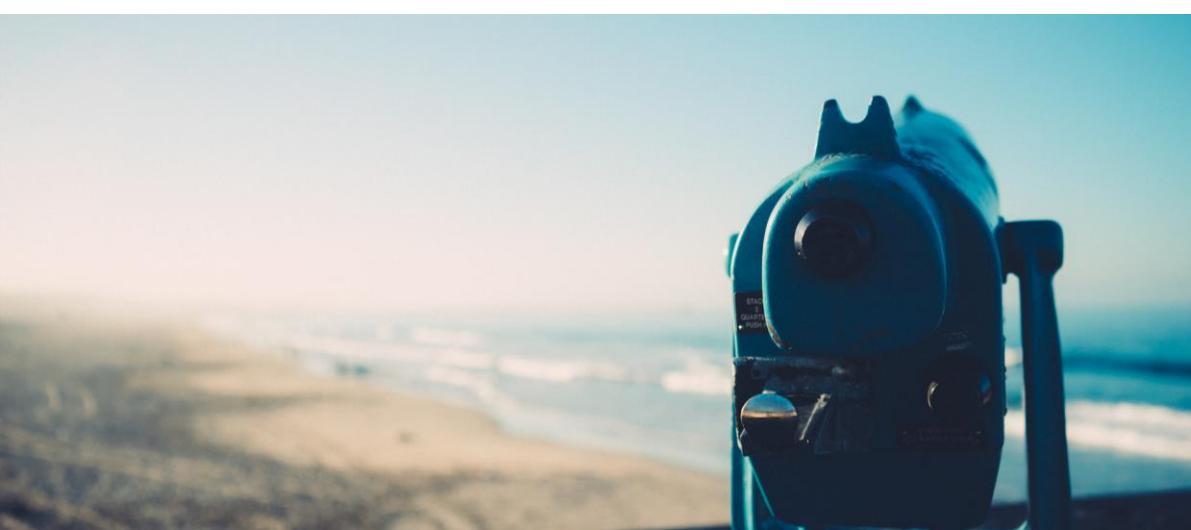
▪ THE PROJECT OBJECTIVE

And so, DECO project aims to **identify those generic or key competences**, necessary for the successful integration to the labour market of the VET schools students and **prepare guidelines for VET schools career counsellors** for these **key competences development**, based on a previous

research conducted by all project partners taking into account the point of view of the employers.

The activities implemented during the project help to reach the following objectives:

- To foster career consultants of VET schools professional development;
- To provide better services for the VET students in key skill development for the successful integration into the labour market;
- To develop services for the labour market representatives in cooperation with the VET schools and expert organizations;
- To ensure the need of the labour market for the qualified work force.



The project aims to identify those generic or key competences, necessary for the successful integration to the labour market

■ PROJECT PARTNERS

Partner organisations of the project have **broad previous experience in the Vocational Training field** based on the basis of successfully realized projects, as well as a **wide network of contacts** of SME's, schools, education and business associations, regional authorities and stakeholders created over the years, which assures a great knowledge regarding the key competences needed for a successful integration of VET learners into the labour market.



- ❖ **Public institution Panevėžys vocational education and training centre** (Panevezys, Lithuania), established in 2000, is one of the biggest vocational training schools in North and East Lithuania. There is a wide spectrum of specialities taught in the centre with about 1200 pupils studying at the centre. The centre offers not only vocational education and training but also vocational education together with secondary education. The centre at the end of October 2013 was provided with the quality certificate which states that the centre meets the requirements of ISO 9001:2008 (LST EN ISO 9001:2008). The centre takes part in the implementation of different projects funded by EU or other programmes, also establishing a close relationship with business sector, education institutions, municipality, labour exchange office, secondary schools and gymnasiums.



- ❖ **Panevezys Business Advisory Centre - PBAC** (Panevezys, Lithuania) is a non - governmental regional organization, established in 1995 that promotes public entrepreneurship, business development and employment growth and to seek Panevezys and other Lithuanian regions economic and social development by providing high-quality, market oriented services. Trainings and consultations for people, who are interested in entrepreneurship, improving skills to successful access to the labor market, creation of the own work place are some of the main activities of this organization today, as well as its involvement in projects and close collaboration with local vocational schools, college and university.



PANEVĖŽIO VERSLO
KONSULTACINIS
CENTRAS

- ❖ **Professional High School of Lifting, Construction and Transport Equipment "G. S. Rakovski"** (Pleven, Bulgaria) is an urban Professional High school, situated in Pleven, Bulgaria. The policy of this school is focused on creativity, good knowledge of foreign languages and team-work of students linked with key competences of technical skills in order to increase their chances of finding good jobs in the future. The partnership with the other schools give its students the possibility to expand their knowledge of culture, history, old crafts and traditions, to develop good communication skills with partners across Europe and motivate students to search for new information through participation in research activities.



- ❖ **National Management School – NMS** (Sofia, Bulgaria) is specialized in trainings for development of transversal competences. As a Vocational Education Provider (VET centre) it ensures constant and close links with employers and strategic understanding of the emerging labour market needs, which is an additional guarantee that the youth trainings in transversal competences are tuned to the world of work.



Национална школа по мениджмънт
National Management School



- ❖ **Método Consultores** (Vigo, Spain) is an international consulting firm for advanced services in training, social-labour research and design and implementation of co-operational projects using new technologies to provide innovative solutions that optimize its clients' resources. It has more than 16 years of experience developing comprehensive training projects aimed at maximizing the productivity of both companies and people. Método Consultores holds the "Management System Certificate" of the company DNV Business Assurance. This organization certifies with the standard ISO 9001:2008 and takes part in many national and international co-operational projects and bids in Europe and South America related to the training and social-labour field.



- ❖ **CIPFP Misericordia Vocational education high school** (Valencia, Spain) is a state centre depending on the Valencia Ministry of Education. All studies have an official character and are free. With almost 3000 students and 160 full-time teachers dedicated to vocational education and training is the biggest vocational high school in the whole region. Pupils can study vocational studies of the following professional branches: Business administration, Secretarial studies, Commerce, Marketing, Electronics and Socio cultural services. Also evening and night studies are offered in order to attend workers enrolled in full time programmes. It is also a centre for official VET e-learning in the whole Valencia region. In that sense, and since 2006 is offering several full e-learning programs with official recognition. In addition, it has taken part in several European Projects (Lingua, Comenius, Socrates, Leonardo and Erasmus) and also holds the Erasmus Charter.



- ❖ **Tarsus Chamber of Commerce and Industry – TTSO** (Tarsus, Turkey) works very close to the business. The Chamber is committed to providing quality services and creating opportunities for success for its member businesses. To achieve this, it focuses on networking businesses through its member base, providing training member businesses, providing opportunities for business member discounts, and striving to create new and innovative initiatives to revitalize and benefit both the businesses and community residents of Tarsus.



- ❖ **Emin Kasapoğlu Multi Program High School** (Antalya – Yeşilköy, Turkey) was established in 1995 and it is located in the Southern part of Turkey in Antalya , Yeşilköy. It is a regional public school with 19 teachers and 150 students, offering three kinds of educational programme: a university-oriented programme, vocational class and ordinary high school class. Its aim is to raise the quality of the education, to find out different methodologies, follow the latest developments, making reasonable comparisons in other educational establishments, being always open to new ideas, approaches and formations.





All these partners have **actively participated in the Research phase** of the project. Thus, partners with a more business-oriented approach have conducted an online research with a questionnaire among employers in the 4 countries of the project, while the 4 VET institutions have focused on the development of round table discussions with employers.

The **main findings** of such **individual researches** have been put in common in the second project meeting in **Sofia (Bulgaria)** in July 2015. Conclusions of the research was collected and prepared by **National Management School** (Bulgaria).

Then, all the partners provided their respective support to **Método Consultores** for the development of this document (**Guidelines for career coordinators at VET schools for key competences training with cooperation with employers**) by providing feedback and ideas related to methodologies and good practices for the effective implementation of key competences in VET centres.

So, by integrating the capacity of these different organizations from different countries and fields, we have achieved a **fruitful synergy effect** resulting in the end product here described.



*All these partners
have actively
participated in the
Research phase*



▪ PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

This document (*Guidelines for career coordinators at VET schools for key competences training with cooperation with employers*) has been developed upon the research conducted by all the project partners described above. So, after the identification of the most demanded key competences that according to employers could permit a better access of VET students to labour market, we have tried to collect and summarize the most important **ideas, suggestions and educational approaches** that could better **improve the acquisition of such key competences** among VET learners.

These guidelines try to give response to the following questions:

Why?

Need to reinforce the cooperation between VET institutions and labour market by presenting some useful recommendations, tips and good practices in key competences development.

All the actors or stakeholders involved in Vocational Training Education can make use of this document (career counsellors, teachers and trainers, persons with managerial responsibilities in VET centres, policy-makers and VET students).

When?

These guidelines can be read anytime by any person interested in VET area, as the document is uploaded in the project website for free access (<http://deco-erasmus.weebly.com/project.html>)

Users can get main ideas and recommendations on the aspects to be considered for the proper development of key competences among VET learners, as well as specific examples and tools that are having a good performance nowadays in many VET institutions and that can facilitate their understanding.

Who?

How?

KEY COMPETENCES IN VET

The so-called '**key competences**' – knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help learners find personal fulfilment and, later in life, find work and take part in society, is a key issue constantly addressed and strengthened by the European Commission.

In the last years, several actions were developed concerning legislating, providing support to different initiatives around them and enhancing their importance in different documentation and actions.

Thus, **lifelong learning** has been considered as a necessity for all citizens, where skills and competences play a crucial role and so **must be developed throughout our lives**, not only for our personal fulfilment and our ability to actively **engage with the society** in which we live, but for our **ability to be successful in a constantly changing world of work**.

The knowledge, skills and aptitudes of the European workforce are a major factor in the **EU's innovation, productivity and competitiveness**. Growing internationalization, the rapid pace of change, and the continuous roll-out of new technologies mean that Europeans must not only keep their specific job-related skills up-to-date, but also possess the generic competences that will enable them to adapt to change.

People's competences also contribute to their motivation and job satisfaction in the workplace, thereby affecting the quality of their work.

Vocational training courses in secondary schools should make the development of key competences possible and so make the transition from the education system into the workplace smoother.

So, changes in **VET schools** must become an especially relevant issue. It is necessary the new programs and plans of training to be developed so as to open the space for the development of key competences as well as strengthen the role of teachers and trainers so that they can have the necessary preparation to enable them to implement the development of these skills in the most efficient manner.

And these are the aspects that **DECO project** tries to address, putting the emphasis especially on **vocational training schools** and their need to include **tools** for the implementation of **effective ways of teaching and assessment key competences** that would result in a better employability of VET students when accessing at labour market.



The knowledge, skills and aptitudes of the European workforce are a major factor in the EU's innovation, productivity and competitiveness



RESEARCH

KEY COMPETENCES IN DECO PROJECT

In order to address the project aim related to the identification of key competences, necessary for the successful integration to the labour market of the VET schools students and prepare guidelines for VET schools career counsellors for these key competences development), in the first stage of project implementation **a series of key competences were set** in order to conduct the research (through questionnaires and round tables).

It was not the aim of the project to focus exactly on the key competences set by The European Reference Framework, but to address **those** that by our common understanding, based on partner's experience in vocational training and labour market, were **mostly required by employers**. However, the competences we have focused on have a transversal nature and share aspects which can be found in the Reference Framework and are also in line with the so-called "soft skills".



Identification of key competences is necessary for the successful integration to the labour market of the VET schools students

Such key competences / skills were brought together in the following groups:

- **Effective communication** (active listening, question and answer capability, empathy...)
- **Teamwork capacity** (cooperation, relation with colleagues...)
- **Entrepreneurship** (capacity to bring new ideas and possibilities, risk management, flexibility...)
- **Problem-solving capacity** (concentration and understanding of the reasons of the problems, participation and offering of solutions...)
- **Self-management of work-related stress** (self-management, self-control, resilience...)
- **Professional autonomy** (self-confidence, self-management, cooperation...)
- **Command of foreign languages**
- **Proactive capacity** (creativity, innovation capacity...)
- **ICT-related skills** (professionally)
- **Efficiency** (concentration, planning, diligence, result orientation...)

Skills development is essential for increasing the productivity and sustainability of enterprises and improving working conditions and the employability of workers and job-seekers. In order to secure a job, retain employment and advance in the labour market, individuals need to be able to continue to learn and adapt; read, write and compute competitively; listen and communicate effectively; think creatively; solve problems independently; manage themselves at work; interact with co-workers; work in teams or groups; handle basic technology, lead effectively as well as follow supervision. These core skills for employability are required by employers, and enhance an individual's ability to navigate in the labour market as well as engage in lifelong learning.

"Enhancing youth employability: What? Why? and How? Guide to core work skills" / Laura Brewer ; International Labour Office, Skills and Employability Department. - Geneva: ILO, 2013.

Transversal competences (...) are not associated with school subjects that derive from traditional academic disciplines. Encouraging the development of these skills is nevertheless equally important in the context of our knowledge based, globalised and fast-evolving societies.

Curriculum organisation – approaches to the transversal competences (http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/145en.pdf)



RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS

■ RESEARCH STARTING POINT AND DEVELOPMENT

The main objective of the research was to identify those key competences necessary for the young labour force to successfully integrate into the European labour market.

In order to carry out an investigation into the needs of employers of a prepared labour force, i.e. to identify key competencies that young people need to find a more successful realization on the labour market, **two independent approaches** have been used in **all four countries** represented in the project:

- An **online research with a questionnaire**, developed by the 4 partner entities with experience in professional counselling and the design and creation of networks with labour market representatives.
- **Round table discussions with employers**, conducted by the remaining partners, the 4 VET schools.

The argument in favour of this approach was that by collecting data from two independent channels, and after comparing and analyzing them, **more reliable end results** were going to be achieved.

(For further information, please see Annex 1: "Research Summary Report")

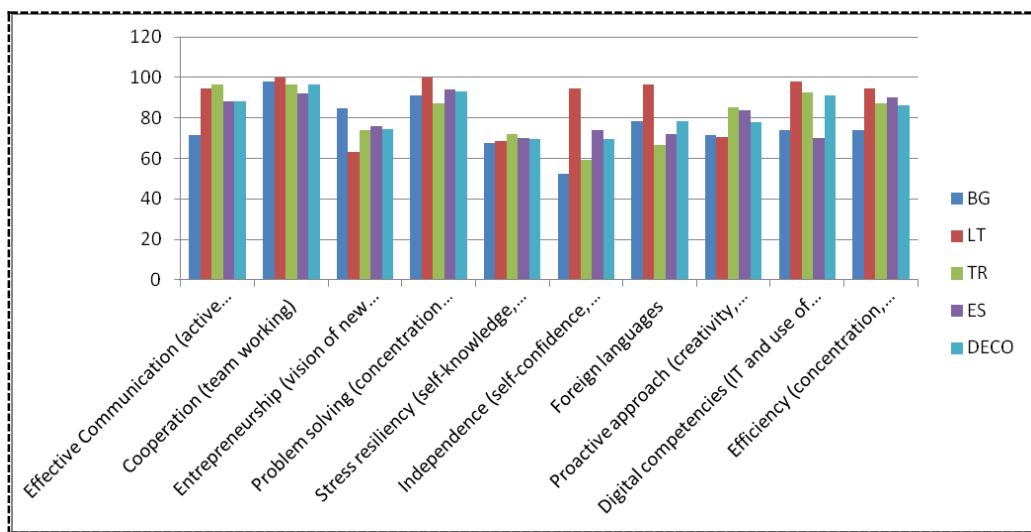


The main objective of the research was to identify those key competences necessary for the young labour force to successfully integrate into the European labour market.



▪ RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PHASE

The research conducted in four countries with over 250 participants through such two independent channels of gathering information, shows that nowadays employers need employees with developed **internal motivation for work** and having developed skills basically in **teamwork capacity, efficiency, problem-solving capacity, proactivity, self-discipline, initiative and creativity**. I.e. they often give priority to these 'soft' skills to professional abilities.



Estimation of the skills that must be developed by training programmes

▪ CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH PHASE

The lack of professional skills much easier for a short time and with less consumption of resources could be **compensated** on the spot **in the working environment**. While social skills and motivation are being developed in the course of life and this is an endless process. The earlier education and training begin to focus to this aspect of intelligence; the better would be the results.

This makes the topic of changes that should occur in **VET schools especially relevant**. It is necessary the new **programs and plans of training** to be developed so as to open the space for the development of key competences. It is also necessary a special attention to be paid to the qualifications of the teachers and trainers there with a view to:

- Developing their understanding of the current needs of learners and business environment,
- Improving their preparation to meet these needs,
- Providing them the necessary methodological tools to use in the learning process.

GUIDELINES

RATIONALE

The guidelines here described aim to serve as a **useful tool for all the actors involved in Vocational Training** (career counsellors, teachers, trainers...) providing a series of **key messages, tips and recommendations** that can facilitate the understanding and implementation of methodologies and good practices related to the development of the key competences among VET students. So, first of all, some **key points** referred to the importance of the inclusion of key competences or skills in the VET systems curricula are highlighted, based on both the Research conducted under DECO project, as well as other projects and literature addressing this same issue.



*The guidelines aim to serve as a **useful tool for all the actors involved in Vocational Training** providing a series of **key messages, tips and recommendations**.*

Then, we will focus on the two main aspects that need to be addressed by VET staff when dealing with the effective acquisition of key competences among the students: the **delivery of activities** that make possible the practice in the development of such skills, on the one hand, and the **measurement and assessment** of the students' performance in the development of such skills, on the other hand. This section includes general recommendations, tips and approaches on how to deliver and asses this kind of competences in VET schools.

Some **trendy educational approaches** that foster the development of key competences are also described, including some examples and tools that facilitate their understanding.

In addition, there are some **general recommendations** on how VET staff with responsibilities in career coordination can implement an effective development of key competences among their students.

Finally, and **specifically for each partner country represented in the project** (Lithuania, Bulgaria, Spain and Turkey), there are some **recommendations and measures** that could be introduced and/or reinforced in VET institutions for a further development of key skills among students, based on those key competences that must be addressed in more detail according to the Research Phase conducted in each country during the first part of DECO project.

INCLUSION OF KEY COMPETENCES IN VET SYSTEMS- 3 KEY POINTS

1. An accepted reality

VET institutions worldwide have accepted that **it is a must** to prepare their students for a complex and uncertain society and labour market, and here is where **key competences** have a vital role.

Many employers are no longer prepared to hire new recruits without demonstrated ability in these core skills. So, both individuals and education and training systems must do more.

2. Confusion in definition and implementation

However, there is considerable **confusion** over how key competences can be defined (what they look like within each discipline) and implemented (how they should be taught, assessed and evaluated, and how their adoption should ultimately shape teaching practices).

3. Quality and innovation

What is true is that **it is crucial to ensure quality and change learning practices** to equip people for work, with more emphasis on learning by doing, working in teams and thinking creatively; and developing reliable and efficient assessment methods so the core skills developed are recognized by employers. Thus, teaching such key competences requires **innovative ways of delivering the academic curricula**; it's not about developing a core skills curriculum. The question is how best to **integrate these skills into core academic content**.

High quality vocational training that caters for the widest possible range of abilities, interests and backgrounds is vital to set young people on the path to the world of work, as well as to give countries the educated workforce they need to compete in today's technologically driven world.

DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT OF KEY COMPETENCES

There are basically **two main aspects** that need to be addressed by VET staff when dealing with the effective acquisition of key competences among the students:

- **Delivery of activities** that provide appropriate practice in the development of key competences.
- **Measurement and assessment** the students' performance in the development of key competences.



Some theories point that a good combination to help students develop key competences would be 20% theory and 80% practice

▪ KEY COMPETENCES DELIVERY

The delivery of activities for the acquisition of key competences must be seen as **something more related to an art than a science**. This artistic vision must be understood as the base for teaching this kind of competences. It must be taken into account that there is not a standardised style for making students acquire them. However, there are some points that can be used as **general guidelines or recommendations** when dealing with the development of such competences:

1. Try to reach a proper balance between theory and practice.

Some theories point that a good combination to help students develop key competences would be **20% theory and 80% practice**. It is important that the practice can be supported by a theoretical basis.

- Theory: explanation of the different key competences, their importance in labour market nowadays, some examples and tips on each of them, etc.
- Practice: Put in practice the lessons learnt in the theory.

2. Try to focus on real life scenarios.

It is important that students have some kind of **knowledge on the topics or scenarios that will be addressed**. Thus, practice should focus on real life scenarios on which the students can feel comfortable and so have their say.

A good approach would be to present **scenarios related to their life and age**, for example related to their vocational school life, using for that the following methods:

- Team project dynamics
- Friendship conflicts
- Communication issues with parents
- Peer pressure
- Etc.

3. Set challenging tasks and offer support.

Engage learners in **challenging tasks**, while also supporting them with guidance, feedback, and encouragement to reflect on their own learning processes.

4. Try to focus on students' motivations and interests, not just on scores.

Prime student motivation by connecting topics to **students' personal lives** and interests, engaging students in problem-solving, and drawing attention to the **knowledge and skills students are developing** and their relevance, rather than grades or scores.

5. Teach with examples and foster students' understanding of the topic.

Teach with examples and cases, such as modelling step-by-step how students can carry out a procedure to solve a problem while explaining the reason for each step.



Use **multiple and varied representations** of concepts and tasks, such as diagrams, numerical and mathematical representations, and simulations, along with support to help students interpret them.

Encourage elaboration, questioning, and explanation – for example, by prompting students who are reading a text to explain the material aloud to themselves or others as they read.

▪ **KEY COMPETENCES MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT**

Educational assessment has been a topic of great concern since the beginning of education. Its forms and aims, however, change over time, according to the specific goals of education and training and learning theories in use.

As it occurs with the teaching stage, the key competences assessment does not have a widely accepted definition. However, it is clear that the characteristics and methods of assessment of **key competences should be addressed in a different way** than the traditional assessment related to the examination of acquisition of basic skills and knowledge.

However, there are some **general approaches / methods** when trying to measure and assess students' performance of key competences in VET schools, which can vary widely from quantitative nature to purely qualitative, and from having high to low validity and reliability.

Most of the theories regarding key competence assessment recommend "**formative assessments**", which continuously monitor students' progress and provide feedback to teachers and students for use in adjusting their teaching and learning strategies.

These are some of the **most common assessment techniques** related to the key competences recognized in the Research phase of the project:

- **Self reports:** Administration of self-report surveys or inventories to capture students' skills, attitudes, and disposition.
 - **Useful for:** risk taking, openness to new experiences, motivation, creativity, ability to plan and monitor progress towards goals.
- **Global-rating scales:** global rating system completed by parents or educators.
 - **Useful for:** Creativity, motivation, communication, teamwork, resilience, planning and organisation.



- **Standardized assessments:** Standard templates (often through automatic / electronic scoring) of both multiple choice and performance-based (traditional multiple-choice items or more open-ended prompts).
 - **Useful for:** critical thinking, creativity, communication, teamwork.
- **Observational measures:** Direct observation of the students' performance and the circumstances in which students' behaviour occur.
 - **Useful for:** communication, relationships and collaboration, critical thinking and decision-making, initiative and self-direction.

Educational assessment has been a topic of great concern since the beginning of education.



Technology evolution facilitates in a great manner the assessment possibilities. **IT tools** such as Google Drive, Google Docs, Skype, Moodle or Social Networks like Twitter or Facebook, just to mention the most well-known, are being increasingly used for students and teachers monitoring evaluation.

In order to get a proper assessment of key competences, relevant literature in the field suggests the following **recommendations**:

1. Multiple measures.

Assessment systems should provide multiple measures that permit to obtain the best possible results.



2. Complexity and challenge.

Assessment tasks should be of sufficient complexity and/or offer sufficient challenge.

3. Inclusion of non defined tasks.

Assessments should include open-ended and/or ill-structured tasks.

4. Real-world based contexts.

Assessments should use tasks that establish meaningful and/or authentic, real-world problem contexts.

5. Foster critical thinking.

Assessment tasks should strive to make student reasoning and thinking visible.

6. Meet scalability issues.

Assessments should explore innovative approaches to address scalability concerns, this is, their continuous improvement potential.

TRENDY EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

In line with the results obtained from the communication between the participants in the process of education and training and real business (*see Annex 1 "Research Summary Report"- Good Practices, section 6*), a series of educational approaches are proposed, based on the success of such initiatives and its implementation potential to be adapted in VET centres.

The most visible results are related to the cooperation between VET centres, institutions and companies, the participation in events and exhibitions, the support provided to the best initiatives and the relationship with companies, as well as of course the mobility of VET staff in international projects.

- **Cooperation between VET centres, institutions and companies:**
 - *Cooperation with the other vocational schools in the region*
 - *Regular study trips in companies*
 - *Meetings with the representatives of the vocational schools and employers*
 - *Constant contact with the employers, regular working meetings*
- **Support to the best initiatives and the relationship with companies:**



- *Rewards to the innovative ideas of the students and supporting their projects*
 - *Success stories of the former students or friends*
 - *Participation in exhibitions and different activities*
 - *Regular study trips in companies*
 - *Participation in professional skills competitions*
- **Mobility of VET staff in international projects:**
 - *Presentation of the process and the system in the partnership countries, training activities within project partnerships*



The most visible results are related to the cooperation between VET centres, institutions and companies, participation in events and exhibitions, support to the best initiatives and the relationship with companies

Such results from the Research can be fully or partially covered by the following educational approaches:

1. COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative learning is an educational approach which aims to organize classroom activities into academic and social learning experiences. Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning.

There is much more to Cooperative Learning than merely arranging students into groups, and it has been described as "**structuring positive interdependence**". Students must work in groups to complete tasks collectively toward academic goals. Unlike individual learning, which can be competitive in nature, students learning cooperatively can **capitalize on one another's resources and skills** (asking one another for information, evaluating one another's ideas, monitoring one another's work, etc.).

There are **many different types and techniques** under cooperative learning, from **formal** (structured, facilitated, and monitored by the educator over time and used to achieve group goals in task work), **informal** (which incorporates group learning with passive teaching by drawing attention to material through small groups throughout the lesson or by discussion at the end of a lesson) and **base group** (effective for learning complex subject matter over the course and establishes caring, supportive peer relationships), although all these types can be used together.



FACEBOOK AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Facebook (www.facebook.com) is probably the most palpable example of environments known as 'social networks' or 'Web 2.0'. Social networking sites are platforms that facilitate information sharing, interaction and collaboration among their users.

However, Facebook's success is not solely dependent on its capacity to connect people, although this was its initial orientation. The platform's power for sharing resources and linking content on the Internet to user profiles, as well as its evolution towards live streaming and micro blogging, enable it to provide support for complex, continuous interaction experiences and, consequently, to structure collaborative-learning processes. The platform's communication tools, combined with the option to enhance its potential by installing third-party modules and applications, allow members of a community or work team to carry out very diverse activities.



2. SKILLS COMPETITION

Celebration of competitions where VET students can **show their ability in dealing with different types of key competences** represents a good method in motivating them and at the same giving visibility to VET as an educational option. In addition, such events can raise the interest of companies, decision-makers and VET institutions, which increase the interest for vocational training and help to **promote** both the curricula and the professions.



WORLDSKILLS

WorldSkills Europe (<http://www.euroskills.org/>) is a non-profit member association, which promotes excellence in the field of skills and competence development. The organisation raises awareness of the importance of professional excellence and high quality vocational education and training for Europe. To do so, WorldSkills Europe orchestrates the biennial EuroSkills competition, a spectacular promotion of professions for young people following the latest developments in skilled professions around Europe.

It connects members, international industry partners, governmental agencies and educational institutions on an international platform to promote vocational education and training excellence and encourage world class standards of skills and competences in Europe. Moreover, it provides a unique means of exchange and comparison of European-class competency standards in the industrial trades and service sectors of the global economy.

3. VET LEARNERS AND STAFF MOBILITY

The fact of taking part in learners and staff mobility represents a very good opportunity not only to the individuals participating in such initiatives in the sense of learning new skills, languages and methods but also to the VET centres themselves.

It is an option that is being implemented in more and more VET centres around the European Union, with the following benefits:

- Hosting students and apprentices from abroad creates an **international atmosphere** that brings benefit for the whole institution (e.g. inspiration of other students, learning language).
- VET-institutions have the possibility to **benchmark their course contents and pedagogic practices**.
- Involvement of a VET-institution in mobility activities makes it **attractive for students** in comparison with other ‘not-towards-mobility-oriented’ institutions. In addition, the role of VET-institutions is gradually changing from a traditional ‘school’ towards a regional knowledge centre. There is a need to **reflect internationalization** in their array of competences and skills.
- Transnational mobility projects can serve as a **launch pad for transnational partnerships** and for a proactive internationalization strategy and policy.
- Mobility projects might imply **income-generating activities**.



ERASMUS + IN VET



The ERASMUS + Programme provides opportunities for both students and staff.

- Opportunities for vocational students, trainees and apprentices to undertake a placement abroad:
 - ✓ In a company, public organisation or NGO.
 - ✓ In a vocational school with periods of work-based learning in a company.
- Opportunities for VET staff to undertake European professional development activities, such as:
 - ✓ Training,
 - ✓ Job shadowing or observations,
 - ✓ Teaching assignments.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/vocational/index_en.htm

4. COOPERATION WITH BUSINESS

VET may also become a driving force for success and competitiveness for European economies and societies. The importance of VET is vital in contributing to sustaining economic development, stimulating capacity for business innovation and improving productivity.

In addition to the technical skills, a close cooperation with business can facilitate a **better adaptation of VET curricula and methodologies** to the needs for key competences that companies can have.

Constant dialogue between VET centres and companies is a must nowadays at both local and regional level (adapting to the specific needs of the companies of a specific territory) and at supranational level.



SECTOR SKILLS ALLIANCE - ERASMUS + PROGRAMME

Sector Skills Alliances aim at tackling skills gaps, by identifying sector specific labour market needs and demand for new skills with regard to one or more occupational profiles, and/or enhancing the responsiveness of initial and continuing VET systems to sector-specific labour market needs.

Public or private VET providers can participate as partners under this ERASMUS + Key Action, particularly in Sector Skills Alliances for design and delivery of VET (Lot 2), working to design and deliver common training content for vocational programmes for one, or several related, profession/s in a sector, as well as teaching and training methodologies. A particular focus is to be put on work-based learning, providing learners with the skills required by the labour market.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/vocational/business_en.htm

5. COOPERATION BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS

The cooperation between VET centres has always been a way to learn from each other and improve methodologies and curricula.

The role of VET-institutions is gradually changing from a traditional ‘school’ towards a **regional knowledge centre**. This change of perspective is making VET centres more **professional and attractive** for students, which at the same time improves the quality of the methodologies and broads its scope.

So, there is a need to **reflect internationalization** in the VET centres array of competences and skills. As a result, the more dimension the VET centre has, the better the development of key competences among its students.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS – ERASMUS + PROGRAMME



VET institutions can work with others to help improve vocational education and training across Europe. It is possible to establish partnerships and collaborate with enterprises, social partners, and local or regional authorities to deliver high quality vocational education and training which is relevant to national and European labour market needs.

Depending on the objectives and the composition of the Strategic Partnership, projects may support innovation or exchange of good practices.

International relationships with key stakeholders, including higher education and adult learning bodies, also help to share new approaches and improve vocational education and training across Europe.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/vocational/institutions_en.htm

6. INCLUSION OF ICT IN THE TRAINING METHODOLOGIES

Vocational training is an ideal educational stage to **develop digital competences**, which are at the same time very useful for developing the rest of professional competences. Such digital competences can be articulated through the design of each training module. Such competences represent an indispensable methodological change in today's vocational training.

Tablets and smart phones are other devices, in addition to laptops and computers, with great potential both as consulting tools and to work with specific applications, fostering students' ubiquitous usage.

There are appearing **new ICT tools** every day that can be used in vocational training and with great potential of integration in daily activities, for both developing key competences and assess students' performance.

FREE SOFTWARE AND TOOLS



Google Apps are a series of free services that Google provides that represent a good option for educational centres and that can be used for the learning of each training module. With *Google Drive* it is possible to work in teams through collaborative documents, developing all the activities in this format and sharing them among students and teachers. Classroom blogs using *Blogger*, on which students participate and develop module contents through articles, a good way to learn to create materials, work in teams and share resources with both the group and outside. *Google Sites* is useful to create the teacher website to upload the materials and resources of the modules (programme, notes, practical cases, videos, etc).

Social Networks can also be quite useful. **Twitter**, for example allows users to send messages related to the modules, and it also serves as a direct communication tool between teachers and students in order to solve doubts, send materials, etc.

Free and open-source software, like **Open Office** permits text edition, presentations, spreadsheets, images edition, etc.

7. VOLUNTEERING AND SERVICE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Volunteering and the other activities embedded in the so-called Service - Learning are getting more and more importance nowadays in many VET schools, as many of them are embracing this concept as a **beneficial method for student's learning experience**. So, coordinators and teachers must be aware of this and try to foster these activities among their students.

Service-learning is an educational approach that balances formal instruction and direction with the opportunity to serve in the community in order to provide a pragmatic, progressive learning experience. Service-Learning must properly connect the traditional classroom experience with the real life lessons that come through service.

Proper S-L approaches will provide a series of exercises to allow students to reflect on their service experiences in order to grow in character, in problem-solving skills, and in an understanding of civic responsibility.

Some of the most representative service-learning activities are:

- Volunteerism: acts of service performed out of free will without expectation of recompense and are generally altruistic in nature; whose main beneficiaries are generally those served by the student.
- Community Service: Community service is quite similar to volunteerism; the main difference is that involves more structure and student commitment than do volunteer programs.
- Internships: Internships can provide students with experience in various fields of work; however, unlike volunteerism and community service, students gain a more measurable benefit from this aspect of service learning.

EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE – YOUTH EXCHANGES



The Youth Exchanges offered by the European Voluntary Service are educational opportunities offered by the European Commission for young people to travel and enjoy intercultural experiences with people from all over Europe.

These youth exchanges enable VET students to acquire many **key competences and values** at the same time they discover other cultures and learn other technical skills related to the field of work they are involved in.

https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering_en



Volunteering and the other activities embedded in the so-called Service - Learning are a beneficial method for student's learning experience



GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to all the points addressed in the previous sections, there are some general recommendations that all VET staff with responsibilities in career coordination must take into consideration when trying to implement an effective development of key competences among their students so that the transferability potential to the labour market can become a reality:

DEFINE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

There must be a clear strategy in the VET centre regarding the development of key competences among students. Such strategy must be properly communicated, by defining also the importance of such competences in the labour market, the measures the VET centre is going to implement in order to make the students achieve them, the tools to be used and the tasks and responsibilities of the students.

It is in some way trying to equate these key competences to the technical skills.

GIVE VISIBILITY AND RECOGNITION TO KEY COMPETENCES IN THE TRAINING CURRICULA

In addition to the effective communication of the strategy regarding key competences among students, it is also important that such competences can be recognized through effective grading and assessment processes that can be able to measure the students' performance before, during and after the development of the training on such competences.

This would also facilitate that teachers and students can have a more objective assessment of their performance, and so they can focus their efforts on improving those competences which need a further attention or correction.

Online assessments are some trendy tools that can be used for this purpose at both before and after training.

USE COLLABORATIVE APPPROACHES IN LEARNING

Giving the fact that the process of acquiring key competences cannot be simply lectured or taught in a stand-alone workshop, continuous practice should be incorporated throughout training curricula, where feedback from peers is highly recommended. Thus, collaborative learning approaches incorporating key competences can help students engage and be more successful.



INCORPORATE REAL - LIFE SCENARIOS

It is important, especially with young students, that key competence learning process can be developed in an environment where students can feel comfortable and have a proper knowledge about it. A simulation of a topic related to the classroom or the high school life can be very useful as students can develop team-based scenarios and get the opportunity to practice interpersonal, reliability, and problem-solving skills.

FOSTER COMMUNICATION

One of the main pillars for a proper implementation of key competence learning processes is the communication at all levels. Communication competences must be developed and practiced by students in the classroom on a daily basis by fostering student's communication with their colleagues and supervisors constantly.

Thus, actions such as problem solve, listen, adapt, receive and give feedback will be improved through constant communication.

It is also useful for trainers and VET coordinators to know from the student's side the aspects to be improved.

CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT OF THE STRATEGIES

In addition to the assessments of students' performance, there is also a need that the VET centre has an evaluation system to ensure that the strategies being employed are working.

There are assessment tools that help community colleges evaluate their strategies by gaining perspectives from students.

This constant learning culture would help VET staff improve and so, define better strategies for the benefit of the students.





THE LITHUANIAN CASE

RATIONALE

About 1 billion Euros – this sum of money Lithuania is being spent on unemployed youth each year. Some of the main causes of youth unemployment are the **inadequate vocational guidance, the lack of secondary education and the lack of vocational and higher education cooperation**, enabling young people to make a decision on the future of the profession, as well as the **lack of interest** of young people in the labour market.

According to the information of labour exchange office, Lithuania faces the problem of **inadequate vocational guidance**: 60 % of young people who are registered in labour exchange office don't have professional education; 50 % don't have work experience; 10 % have high education degree.

Many employers believe that youth is not settled in the labour market for various reasons: lack of motivation on working conditions, wages or lack of career prospects. In this case, **employers are partly responsible for this situation**. It is understandable that a young person wants to make more money, so he/she begins to look for a job abroad. On the other hand, the other part of young people's decision is influenced by the current social assistance system, which does not give reasons to start working soon.



According to employers youth is not settled in the labour market in Lithuania especially due to the lack of motivation on working conditions, the wages or the lack of career prospects.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PHASE

Among the responses obtained from the Research phase in the Lithuanian context, from both the questionnaire among employers and the round tables, the most important competences that should be developed and introduced in teaching methodologies are the following ones:

- **Efficiency** (concentration, planning, diligence, result orientation...)
- **Problem-solving capacity** (concentration and understanding of the reasons of the problems, participation and offering of solutions...)
- **Teamwork capacity** (cooperation, relation with colleagues...)
- **Professional autonomy** (self-confidence, self-management, cooperation...)
- **Self-management of work-related stress** (self-knowledge, self-control, stress management...)
- **ICT related skills** (using IT and office equipment...)

POSSIBLE MEASURES FOR KEY COMPETENCES DEVELOPMENT

• COOPERATION BETWEEN VET SCHOOLS AND BUSINESS SECTOR

Until now it has not been established an institutional framework covering VET schools and labour market representatives – employers and representative industry associations. One of the opportunities to get a closer communication between these parties is **students' participation in vocational skills competitions** which are significant for improving key competences such as self-confidence, self-management, work-related stress management, efficiency. **Mobility visits** to foreign countries could be useful for improving language skills, self-confidence and stress management. Only such cooperation can guarantee the compatibility of experts prepared by VET schools to the labour market needs.

• SUPPORTING CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Career development and advisory services may significantly improve the VET quality by using **individual approach and by allowing the students to choose the most suitable profession**, thus reducing the risk of early drop-out or having chosen the wrong profession, which are not in line with his/her personal features. Qualitative career development support VET schools can only provide with targeted measures, including by establishing a **special team of career development advisors**.



• DUAL VET SYSTEM

Dual VET system is a partnership, where the main responsibility for the curricula content, its implementation and responsibility, as well as the right to assess the student performance and hand over a qualification deed, lies within the employers. The studies at the education establishment may be started only after a contract is concluded with the company, where he/she is named an "apprentice" and gets an apprentice salary. **Great attention is paid to the training teacher.** In addition to the existing qualification they have to have **knowledge of the teaching and work pedagogies**, which is approved by a certificate of conformity exam.

• IMPLEMENTING A NEW CURRICULA

The VET schools elaborating individual learning plans may determine the length of the study year, learning schedule, holidays, in cooperation with other local education providers and employers. Each student creates his own study plan. The studies are subject to individual needs and capabilities to fit within the VET system (principle of gradualness) and the **curricula content is determined in close cooperation with the social partners**. The students create their individual study plan in all stages. The initial study stage serves as an introduction in the chosen industry and profession or for trying the various professions/industries in order to choose the most appropriate one. The next stage is largely implemented like the dual system, e.g. contract with a company, apprentice salary, on average 60% of the studies are organized at the company, but the main responsibility lies with the education establishment, which organizes the final examinations and invites external examiners from employers and trade unions.

• ENCOURAGING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

School-based enterprises – the type of work experience program, when students produce goods or services for sale or use to other people. Such enterprises include school restaurants, construction projects, child care centers, auto repair shops, hair salons, and retail stores. This program does not place students with employers. Rather, the goal of school-based enterprises is to **allow students to apply their classroom knowledge to running real-world businesses**. School-based enterprises are a viable option in communities where there are too few employers to provide sufficient jobs and training opportunities in the private sector.



Only the cooperation between VET schools and businesses can guarantee the compatibility of experts prepared to the labour market needs.

THE BULGARIAN CASE

RATIONALE

Dynamics of **youth unemployment in Bulgaria** follows the **general European trends**. Level of the indicator for Bulgaria in 2008 - **12.4%**, 2013 - **28.4 %**, long-term unemployed /actively seeking jobs for more than 12 months/ aged 15-24 are 13.2% of the workforce in the country, 2014 – **22.01%**, long-term unemployed /15-24/- 8%, January 2015 /15 - 25 / - **22.6%**. In 2014 - 73% of young people aged 19-25 don't work or study.

In Bulgaria the problem of low economic activity of youth and their unwillingness to work is **not only caused by the crisis**, as a reason in some other countries. In our country we have the highest proportion of people aged 15- 24, who have **no desire to work** - nearly 10%.

According to business organizations over 3% of GDP or about 1 billion BGN are the annual losses for Bulgaria resulting from young people who neither study nor work, nor seek employment.

This observation is in line with the outlined in the "Review of Progress in Bulgaria on the Europe 2020 strategy: employment, education and poverty" structural imbalances in the labor market in the country in terms of the lack of adequate manpower for the needs of Bulgarian business.

Over 3% of GDP or about 1 billion BGN are the annual losses for Bulgaria resulting from young people who neither study nor work, nor seek employment





According to the Institute for Market Economics, there are a number of factors as follow:

- **Structural imbalances in the labour market in the country**
- **Slightly reformed educational system**
- **Anachronistic labour legislation -discrimination of youth**
- **Cultural characteristics**
- **Difficult inclusion in the labour market.**

While at European level the ratio between the overall level of youth unemployment and the share of long-term unemployed young people in 2013 was 3 to 1 (i.e. one of three unemployed youth is long-term unemployed), in Bulgaria, the ratio is closer to 2 to 1 (i.e. one of every two young people is long-term unemployed).

According to Eurostat data only 0.3% of young people aged 18-29 benefited from funding programs for youth entrepreneurship, and over 60% did not know of the existence of such programs.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PHASE

Among the responses obtained from the Research phase in the Bulgarian context, from both the questionnaire among employers and the round tables, the most important competences that should be developed and introduced in teaching methodologies are the following ones:

- **Effective communication** (active listening, question and answer capability, empathy...)
- **Teamwork capacity** (cooperation, relation with colleagues...)
- **Problem-solving capacity** (concentration and understanding of the reasons of the problems, participation and offering of solutions...)
- **Efficiency** (concentration, planning, diligence, result orientation...)
- **Stress resiliency** (self-knowledge, self-control, stress management)
- **Entrepreneurship** (vision of new ideas and opportunities, risk management, flexibility)

100% of participants think that in order to achieve better realization, **young employees need additional training**.



About 70% of the respondents are of the opinion that vocational training and education should **integrate curricula for the development of key competencies**.

POSSIBLE MEASURES FOR KEY COMPETENCES DEVELOPMENT

• WIDE INFORMATION CAMPAIGN IN TWO MAIN DIRECTIONS.

One of them is about the nature of key competences and benefits of their development among all stakeholders - young people, employers and teachers. It is necessary to **use the most appropriate channels according to the habits of different target groups**. Personal motivation and positive attitude towards learning and development could be fostered by means of systematic and focused provision of information on the topic. Crucial in this process is to identify the places and ways to develop key competencies. The second direction is in response to the obvious need for young people to know more about funding opportunities for their business Initiatives with funds from state and the EU.

• CHANGES IN THE CURRICULA

Changes in the curricula of vocational schools so as to **create conditions for development of soft and hard skills** that correspond with the practices and needs of the business environment.

• LINKS BETWEEN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND BUSINESS

Establishing **direct and sustainable links** between vocational education and business.

• TRAINING OF TEACHERS RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Training of teachers who have key role in the development of young people. The efficient work with students is not possible without the full involvement of teachers. The **great challenge** before the teacher of today is to **motivate youngsters to learn** and to assist the formation of learning skills, as well as to support them in the process of thinking and acquiring knowledge. The teacher is expected to be active in the process of personal development of young people. He/she should help them to learn more about themselves, as well as about their desires and needs; the teacher has to advise and encourage and at the same time guide them in the process of setting goals and choosing the right measures for their achievement – this will greatly contribute to their preparation for the constantly changing dynamics of the labour market. In other words the teacher of today should



not only teach, but also consult, mentor and coach his/her students. At the same time the researches among teachers show that they are not well prepared and do not have the necessary tools to work with students in the field.

• RELEVANT TOOLS DEVELOPMENT

Creating relevant tools for teaching and working with young people. Besides training teachers need developing **new approaches, methodologies and tools** to assist them in their **multifunctional role** today.



The efficient work with students is not possible without the full involvement of teachers

THE SPANISH CASE

RATIONALE

Youth unemployment in Spain is the highest across the OECD countries and is a problem of big concern, especially in the last years.

As youth unemployment is affecting in a bigger scale **low-skilled young people** in particular, VET centres must be fostered among young people as a good option to find a job and have long-term career prospects.

*Employers need workers with not only technical, but also other generic competences that can enable them to **adapt** to the changing requirements of business world.*



The involvement of VET centres and staff (coordinators, teachers, trainers, counsellors....) in the development of **strategies fostering core skills and abilities** in training paths is crucial in order to make students acquire such key competences and therefore have more chances to enter in the labour market.

The importance of key competences is getting a **growing importance in companies** nowadays, as employers need workers with not only technical, but also other generic competences that can enable them to **adapt** to the changing requirements of business world.

For example, the Public Employment Service, among other institutions with a relevant role in the educational and employment field, state that it is on labour skills where the effective exercise of the capabilities to perform a particular occupation is based. Such skills are **more than just technical knowledge** referred to simply "know-how". From this perspective, the concept of competence includes not only the skills needed for the full exercise of an occupation or profession, but



also a set of behaviours, abilities for analysis, decision making, information transmission, etc.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PHASE

Among the responses obtained from the Research phase in the Spanish context, from both the questionnaire among employers and the round tables, the most important competences that should be developed and introduced in teaching methodologies are the following ones:

- **Effective communication** (active listening, question and answer capability, empathy...)
- **Teamwork capacity** (cooperation, relation with colleagues...)
- **Problem-solving capacity** (concentration and understanding of the reasons of the problems, participation and offering of solutions...)
- **Professional autonomy** (self-confidence, self-management, cooperation...)
- **Proactive capacity** (creativity, innovation capacity...)
- **Efficiency** (concentration, planning, diligence, result orientation...)

POSSIBLE MEASURES FOR KEY COMPETENCES DEVELOPMENT

These are just some measures that could be introduced and/or reinforced in Spanish VET institutions for a further development of key skills among students.

• DUAL VET

Dual VET is a vocational training mode being implemented in Spain since November 2012 **combining in-class training with in-company training**.

The educational centre and the company set how the contents and the number of hours and days in each institution so that the students acquire the necessary knowledge and competences to develop their occupation in the labour market. The usual length of a Dual VET cycle is two years, with the possibility of being up to three years.

This system can have **several benefits for both companies and students**, specially related to the development of key competences. If after the apprenticeship period, the company is willing to make an employment-contract with the student after his dual education time, the company will get an employee who knows the company's workflow. The student can also **benefit from the knowledge** about **hard skills** and **soft skills** of more experienced co-workers. The student develops under **real conditions**.

Surveys conducted to employers taking part in this training mode show that VET education programmes normally deliver graduates with good soft



skills, especially in dual education system, as company based apprenticeships are a good way to teach students the required key competences. Thus VET education with company apprenticeships gives a higher likelihood for obtaining better soft skills. Dual VET systems expose students more to soft skills than a closed or traditional VET system.

• COUNSELLING

Counselling services in VET centres is something that must be further developed, addressing more issues than just orienting students towards the possibilities of a specific training path or another. Counselling services should be given enough **power in centres** (with more resources) to be able to attend all student needs of information and **raise awareness** of the most demanded key competences by employers, such as proactivity, international mindset, among others.

Even, counselling should be specifically **included in** subjects in the **training itineraries**.

• ENTREPRENEURSHIP SPIRIT

The fact of including entrepreneurial aspects in the training paths of VET schools could make students develop a set of key competences that cannot be easily achieved through traditional learning paths.

For example, one good option could be making students create a **dummy company** during the course. This would make students think about the different difficulties and key competences that they must have in order to face them. Thus, the fact of knowing how a business could be would allow them to realize what kind of key competences they need to develop, something that in another way they would not know.

In addition, and related with the **spirit of proactivity and decision-making**, by fostering the entrepreneurial spirit, students are given more power to take their own decisions and responsibilities. This is an aspect that in round table discussions was highlighted by employers as one of the main problems when recruiting young workers, indicating that they are excessively dependent on their superiors, as if they still were at school under the supervision of a teacher or tutor.

• ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN BUSINESS-VET CENTRES COUNCILS

VET staff should **attend and participate** in any kind of event concerning the relationship between companies and VET centres, like seminars, conferences, workshops, presentations and so on.



Thus, VET trainers, managers and other staff with responsibilities in designing and implementing training methodologies and paths can get firsthand information regarding the most highly-valued key competences that VET students must have in order to have better access possibilities to the labour market.

In addition, they can also **share their concerns and ideas with company representatives and other VET staff**, which can help improve the learning methodologies of VET centres by implementing good practices and state of the art methods in key competences development and assessment.



The fact of including entrepreneurial aspects in the training paths of VET schools could make students develop a set of key competences that cannot be easily achieved through traditional learning paths.

THE TURKISH CASE

RATIONALE

Turkey has a **young population** demographically. This situation also raises the importance of education of the young labour force. The determination of in which areas the young labour force needs vocational education, making educational plans according to the needs, and training labour force with a quality in accordance with the demands of the society, markets, and sectors are crucial.

Youth unemployment is also **back on a rising path**, although at 18.5% in 2015, it is still well down from the peak of 24% that was reached in 2009. The share of young people not in employment, education or training have fallen steeply in Turkey over the past few years, mainly reflecting rising school enrolment. But at 28.4% in 2014 it still remains the highest among the OECD countries.

THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

A national employment strategy document has been drafted with the participation of all sectors of society in order to solve the structural problems faced by the country's labour market and to **find a sustainable solution to the unemployment problem by 2023**. This strategy has been prepared with the participation of government institutions, organizations, and agencies as well as professional associations, labour and employer confederations, NGOs, members of the scientific community, the media, and representatives of political parties.

The strategy has been built on four pillars:

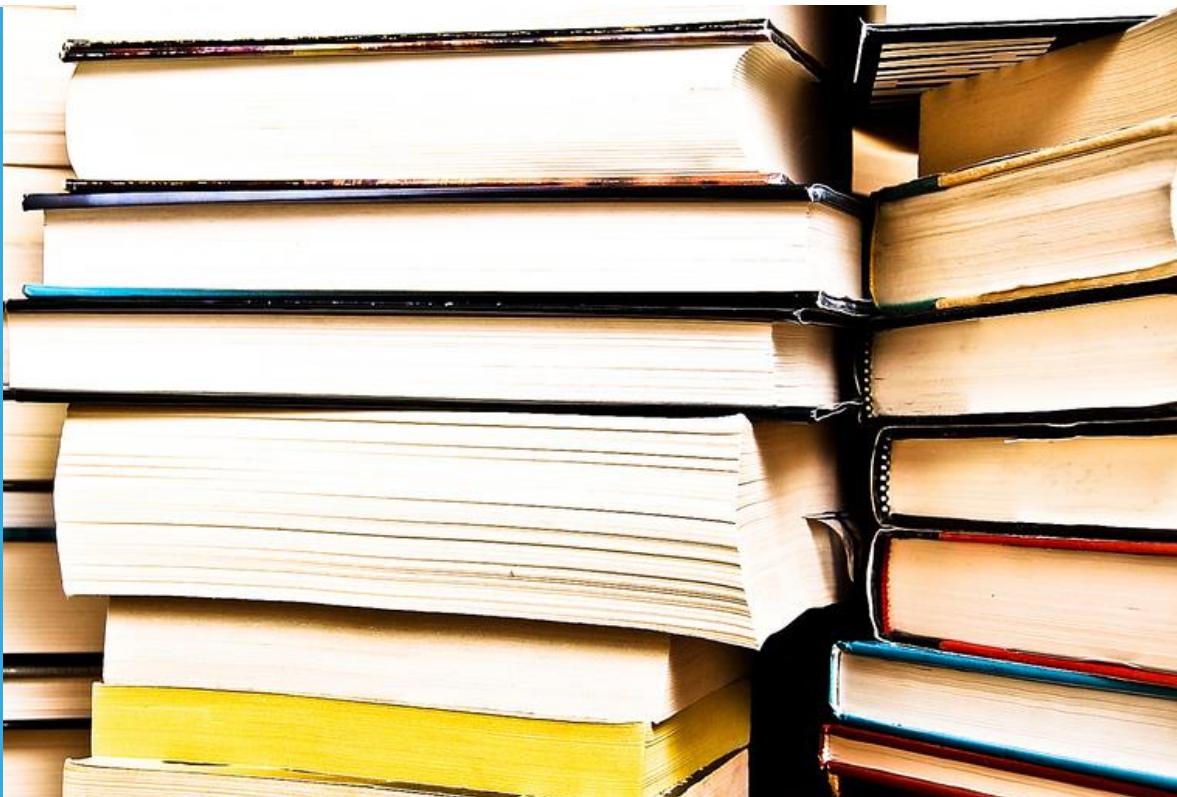
- **Strengthening the link between training and employment:** This pillar aims to establish a direct link between training and employment and training a labour force whose qualifications are compatible with the needs of the labour market.
- **Ensuring security and flexibility across the labour market:** This pillar aims to introduce reforms throughout the labour market in order to make it more flexible, to make it easier to enter and exit the labour market, and to make the protection of the individual rather than the job a priority.
- **Promoting the employment of the underprivileged:** This pillar aims to make it easier to employ women, the long-term unemployed, the disabled, and other underprivileged groups in the Turkish society by developing employment strategies that focus specifically on solving the problems these groups face.

- **Strengthening the link between employment and social protection:** This pillar is aimed at developing a social protection system that does not prevent return to employment; that is comprehensive; that is compatible with existing economic, social, and fiscal policies; and that provides both safety nets and flexibility.

The functional **relationship between vocational education and employment is quite poor** in Turkey. On the one hand, graduates of vocational education are not exactly have the qualifications demanded of labour market, on the other hand there are also skilled technicians gap in the business. The paradoxical problem which arises from the mismatch of supply and demand in the labour market should be solved. This situation may lead to unemployment problems of graduates or to work in other jobs outside of their field of study.

Generally it is seen that **the quantity** of vocational education is **more important than quality** in Turkey. However, the vocational training and employment paradox can be overcome by means of quality-oriented solutions. Turkey urgently needs to a **paradigm change in the vocational training system**. In this study it is discussed the quality and quantity of the Turkish vocational training system and also gave place to solution-oriented thoughts.

Generally it is seen that the quantity of vocational education is more important than quality in Turkey



RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PHASE

Among the responses obtained from the Research phase in the Turkish context, from both the questionnaire among employers and the round tables, the most important competences that should be developed and introduced in teaching methodologies are the following ones:

- **Teamwork capacity** (cooperation, relation with colleagues...)
- **Effective communication** (active listening, question and answer capability, empathy...)
- **Efficiency** (concentration, planning, diligence, result orientation...)
- **Digital competencies** (IT and use of office equipment)
- **Problem-solving capacity** (concentration and understanding of the reasons of the problems, participation and offering of solutions...)
- **Entrepreneurship** (vision of new ideas and opportunities, risk management, flexibility)

98.1% of participants think that in order to achieve better realization, young employees need additional training.

About 63% of the respondents are encountered problems / difficulties when performing the staff selection or recruitment process of a young professional.

POSSIBLE MEASURES FOR KEY COMPETENCES DEVELOPMENT

• STRENGTHENING THE LINK BETWEEN VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

The "Strengthening the Link between Vocational Training and Employment" (MEGEP) Action Plan was developed in order to ensure that vocational and technical training are offered **according to the needs of the country's labour market**; that the link between vocational training and employment is strengthened; that active labour market policies are implemented in accordance with the principles of lifelong learning; and that the employability of the labour force is increased through enhanced cooperation and coordination between government ministries, government institutions, organizations, and agencies and private sector institutions. The action plan was launched in 2010.



According to the Law No. 5174 and 5362, the chambers can open courses in the professional branches that have not been included in the Vocational Education Law No. 3308, and issue certificates related to the implementation. In addition, within the scope of the Article 7 of the Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216, the metropolitan municipalities have the duties and authorities of opening, operating or having operated courses for acquiring profession and skills, and to make cooperation with universities, colleges, vocational high schools, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations in conducting these services.

• ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMMES

These are programs that aim to train the unemployed to set up and manage their own businesses and draft business plans and to help them access the financial resources offered by Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization (KOSGEB) and other agencies.

• PROVINCIAL EMPLOYMENT AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING COMMITTEE

The Turkish Employment Organization (ISKUR) carries out its activities in accordance with the demands of the Turkish labour market and in cooperation with the relevant government institutions, organizations, and agencies and social stakeholders. As the primary steering bodies of the organization, the General Assembly and Executive Committee consists of members of the relevant government institutions, organizations, and agencies as well as labour and employer associations. A similar structure has also been created at the provincial level. The Provincial Employment Committee and Provincial Vocational Training Committee, which used to operate as separate entities, were consolidated into a new organization entitled the Provincial Employment and Vocational Training Committee in 2008.

• ACTIVE LABOUR FORCE PROGRAMMES

Factors that prevent individuals from participating in the labour market include lacking a profession, having vocational and professional skills that are not good enough to meet the demands of the labour market, and not having sufficient information or experience about how the labour market functions. Accordingly, Active Labour Force Programs have been implemented in order to increase the employability of these individuals and to meet employer demand for a skilled workforce. At a time when Turkey has achieved an unrivalled pace of economic growth, it has once again become clear how important vocational training and working together are to enhancing the knowledge and skills of individuals in line with the demands of the labour market.



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USEFUL WEBSITES

In this section we have tried to gather a selection of links to websites that under our understanding represent helpful tools in the key competences area and that can help to clarify different aspects on this regard.

Here you can find access to some EU websites with interesting information regarding the General Directorates and portals more related to VET and job competences, as well as other state of the art websites dealing with key competences and learning area.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/competences_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm

The **Directorate General for Education and Culture, or DG EAC**, is the branch of the European Commission charged with Education, Training, Youth, Sport, Languages and Culture.

Its activities, as concerns education and training, are framed by the Education and Training 2020 strategy (ET2020), a part of the Europe 2020 strategy , designed to **promote growth and jobs** in Europe, as well as **contributing to the development of skills** for the labour market.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1146&langId=en>

Section of the website of the **Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion** related to **skills**, where the different initiatives for developing skills and for managing the availability of required skills are described.

<https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>

ESCO is the **multilingual classification of European skills, competences, qualifications and occupations**. ESCO is part of the Europe 2020 strategy.

ESCO identifies and categorises skills, competences, qualifications and occupations in a standard way, using standard terminology in all EU languages and an open format that can be used by third parties' software. It enables users to exchange CVs and job vacancies stored in different IT systems.

<http://keyconet.eun.org/>

The **European Policy Network on Key Competences in School Education** (KeyCoNet) was launched in 2012 with the remit to analyse and map emergent strategies in implementing key competences in education across Europe, and to

develop recommendations to strengthen policy and practice in different country contexts

<http://www.euroskills.org/>

WorldSkills Europe raises awareness for today's need for skilled young professionals across Europe. The organisation promotes excellence in the field of skills and competence development by orchestrating the biennial EuroSkills event, a spectacular **promotion of professions for young people**.

https://europa.eu/youth/volunteering_en

Portal of the **European Voluntary Service** (EVS), an international volunteer programme funded by the European Commission. It enables all young people legally resident in Europe, aged between 18 and 30 years, to carry out an **international volunteer service** in an organisation or in a public body in Europe, Africa, Asia or South America for a period ranging from 2 to 12 months.

<http://www.docurated.com/101-free-free-try-online-collaborative-learning-tools-teachers-educators>

List of **101 online tools for collaborative learning** (all free to use, or at least free to try). There is an explanation for each of them, mentioning the options offered, as well as the benefits it can provide to students and teachers.

<http://www.techlearning.com/default.aspx>

Website with interesting articles regarding learning and **use of technologies**. Users can find a series of technological tools to foster and assess key competences by students in different areas that have become good practices (reflection and goal setting, collaboration and discussion, future thinking, risk taking, coping with failure and collaboration with experts, etc.).

<https://bemycareercoach.com/>

Blog with **useful tools** for the **development** of soft skills.

<https://www.mindtools.com/>

Website where it is possible to learn hundreds of useful **career skills for free**.

<http://www.ecompetences.eu/faq-competences-skills-jobs/>

The European e-Competence Framework (e-CF) provides a reference of 40 competences as required and applied at the **Information and Communication Technology (ICT) workplace**, using a common language for competences, skills and proficiency levels that can be understood across Europe



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