

Project “NewWBL: New Models in Work-Based Learning”

No 562090-EPP-1-2015-1-SI-EPPKA3-PI-FORWARD



Newsletter no 6



Stakeholder Consultations on New Models for WBL

The previous project newsletter described the new WBL models developed by the project partners. The next step according to the project plan was to consult key VET stakeholders on the draft models. This was necessary for finding out advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses as well as problem areas of the models developed.

Methodology for carrying out stakeholder consultations – a set of questions for interviews and guidelines for focus groups was developed by the activity lead partner from Bulgaria – ITPIO.

From June till November Partners in Bulgaria, Latvia and Slovenia organized consultations with stakeholders implementing in each country 30 interviews, three focus group meetings as well as online surveys for VET students. As the result of stakeholder consultations country reports on interviews and focus group discussions were prepared.

In this Newsletter we offer a short insight into the process and results of stakeholder consultations.

Focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews in Bulgaria

To discuss the NewWBL models project partner Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Dobrich organized the focus group discussion on October 18, 2017. 20 participants representing VET schools, Direction of Education of Dobrich Municipality, companies, VET centres, Varna University of Management (Dobrich), Trade Unions and NGOs participated in focus group discussions.

Below are the comments of stakeholders:

"At the moment the system of VET is very conservative. A strong change is needed, starting with employers. Children do not know the business in the region. In the campaigns organized by the Municipality (Professional Exchange), the businesses have to take an active part because there is a lack of well-trained staff, not as it is today - the vocational high schools are participating but the employers are absent. Children have to be trained in development of their personal skills, such as initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, so that when they graduate in veterinary medicine, for example, to found their own farm ; new skills for new jobs. There is also a need to change the facilities in vocational schools, but also in the financing of VET Schools, as well as the payment of the students - with the active participation of the business."

G. Vassileva - President of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Dobrich region.

"I agree that the businesses have to be very active, to intervene substantially in the process of implementing the dual system in order to meet the needs for skilled workers. And I am ready for cooperation, being ready to finance the training of the staff that we need. Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Dobrich can be an intermediary organisation in this process."

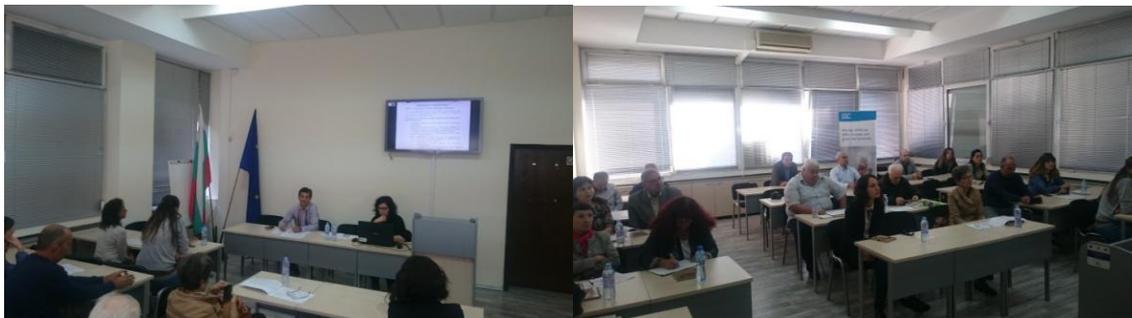
V. Velev - Manager of Neoperl Bulgaria

"The main problem is the distribution of students between vocational schools and secondary schools at regional level, and for Dobrich region: 70% of the students choose general education schools and only 30% go to the vocational high schools, and our students are usually with - low educational attainment after primary education. One of the reasons is that the parents are not interested in the professional training education of the children, and another is the poor professional orientation - the children don't know companies in the region, there is no one to show them different professions."

Dr. St. Todorova - Director of Professional school for veterinary medicine.

"For me the first and the main problem is the professional orientation - it is important to work seriously with early-school students. They are always welcome in our school. Unfortunately, such visits are not being made. Another important problem is that during the VET orientation organized by the Municipality, the students do not visit the vocational high schools, but most often they are kept in the fire brigade. Another third problem is the number of VET schools, offering education in one profession- for example in the area there are 4 agricultural schools - Dobrich, Kavarna, Balchik and Sredishte. The decrease of the number of children shows that only 1 VET school is enough in our area and the rest have to be closed down. But it will be a difficult political decision."

Mr. G. Gospodinov, Director of the agricultural VET school.



Stakeholder interviews organized by Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Dobrich took place in July, 2017. All together 18 participants from SMEs, Department of Education – Dobrich Municipality, RC of CITUB (Trade Union) and Private Labour company were present.

Focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews in Latvia

In Latvia 30 stakeholder interviews were held from the 1st August till 15th October, 2017. Interview participants represented different institutions from different regions from Latvia – VET schools, Ministry of Education and Science and National Centre for Education, Parents' association, Regional Education authorities, National, regional and local employers' organizations, Career guidance institution, companies.

Project partner Employers' Confederation of Latvia (LDDK) implemented focus group discussion on November 2nd, 2017 in the Confederation premises. Focus groups were moderated by representatives from LDDK and VISC. In total 16 stakeholders participated. They represented VET schools, National Education authorities, employers and employers' associations, sector Expert Councils and Trade Union.

Overall conclusions from focus group discussions were as follows; Models 1, 2, 3 were generally well accepted. Focus groups proposed another timeline for implementation of the models, especially Model 1. Participants identified that some measures in Model 1 and Model 2 were overlapping and could be moved from Model 1 to Model 2. Some new recommendations were added and suggested for implementation at a national level – for example, training of VET schools to provide training for in-company trainers at local level, also training of in-company trainers (mentors) should be considered and added to recommendations and models.



Some stakeholder comments:

“Employers are also ready to contribute to the training of highly qualified labor force. Work-based learning allows you to start working in the chosen field early, get to know the work environment and, after completing your training, be fully prepared to build your own career. The successful introduction of Work-based learning is also directly dependent on the willingness of entrepreneurs to engage in such a training model, where, in the long run, everybody will benefit - employers who will have trained staff and the whole industry, who will have a skilled workforce.”

L. Mengelsone, Director General, LDDK

“An initiative of joint training activities for the WBL tutors from VET schools and enterprises (Tandem training) is welcome, given that today expertise in a subject or field is being co-created in a process of common efforts based on the experience and resources of all the involved parties.”

I.Buligina, VET policy expert, MoES

“We have been involved in work-based learning since 2013 and here I would like to thank the director of Ogre Technical School for our cooperation. I believe that work based learning provides a good opportunity for a young person to get to know the company and its requirements, as well as to grow with the company and become a good professional.”

M.Legzdīns, Malevs Ltd, Chair of board

“I have a plan to start my own business after graduation. I'm trained to become a catering specialist and WBL is not only about being involved in all the work processes, but also feel more like an adult.”

E.Kaktiņa, Ogre Technical School student

“School is the place where students come with some interest to acquire their chosen profession. A successful partnership between a school and a company as their future employer can certainly deepen this interest.”

V.Ozoliņš, Ozoliņš confectionery, Ltd Chair of board

“Companies want to hire those students whom they have trained. But the students have a free choice. If another company offers better working conditions, they may choose another company. The result is good in both situations - the student is in a labour market.”

I.Brante, Director of Ogre Technical School

“Employers-entrepreneurs who are willing to invest their time and money resources in training new specialists undoubtedly have important role in the implementation of the work based learning. However, quite a lot of employers still take an observer role. Of course, entrepreneurs have a choice: to train a young person themselves or to take one from the free labor market. After all both of them will need some training, but as we know, the sooner the entrepreneurs starts to work with the potential employees, investing in their development, the more loyal employees they can get.”

I.Šusta, Deputy Director, Department of Education, Ministry of Education and Science

Focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews in Slovenia

There were 31 stakeholder interviews and 3 focus groups with a total of 33 participants conducted regarding the assessment of NewWBL models in Slovenia. Participants were representatives of all key VET actors – VET schools, ministries of education, economy and labour, national VET institute, chambers, employment services and companies.

Content developed and measures proposed in models 1, 2 and 3 were generally well accepted. There was prevailing opinion that, with the sufficient financial support and commitment coordinated on national level, timeframe for the implementation of the models would be feasible. It was also agreed among stakeholders that national, regional and local partnerships have the most important role in implementing successful model of work-based learning and the key for successful partnership is cooperation.



Some stakeholder comments:

“It is very important for us to have apprentices, but to have them here in the company, to raise them and after 3 years to have independent workers. I think this is far more valuable than the costs that the company has with it. The same is, for example, when you employ a new person. You need six months to teach him and introduce him and then you have to give him a normal salary, with all the associated benefits and costs. So, I do not see here, as far as finances are concerned, such a heavy cost. It seems to me that this is more an investment in a person.”

“Here we should give more emphasis to the fact that mentors in the company are mostly masters who are specialists in their field and do not have pedagogical knowledge. At the moment, mentor trainings are short and funded through projects, but we have to keep in mind differences between new generation and older ones and also train mentors to be able to bridge this gap.”

“One of the possibilities is for teachers to get into companies as well, because technology is rapidly progressing and changing, while the school system remains, in my opinion, the same, it is not flexible enough. And you cannot follow all these changes and teach students if you do not have basic knowledge of what is happening on the market. It is a possibility that should be exploited - I am aware that teachers cannot afford to miss six months in school, but it would be very valuable for them to come to the company at least for a month, to go through the process, to learn and then to share knowledge further. Integration of the education and economy is necessary, especially the vocational education”

Tina Menard, Head of HR department of Poclairn Hydraulics

“The labour market needs are huge and there is a lack of skilled workers. I see apprenticeship as a right way to ensure adequate VET system response to labour market needs in terms of qualification and knowledge, skills and competences of VET graduates. Other thing is that the demand from the sides of the companies is there, however, so many professions are still not recognized as good professions – e.g. metalworking – it is not the same profession as it was 25 years ago. There is a lot to be done in improving awareness and attractiveness of WBL/VET, especially among students and parents and starting with improving career guidance”

Aleksandra Čepon Igličar, Employment Service of Slovenia.

“According to the regional survey that we have conducted through our work and work, we can say that the reputation and interest in VET are improving. We also know a positive trend in Slovenia, since the enrollment has almost doubled in the vocational technical direction, so I would say that more young people know the professions and there is less stereotype of bad reputation and of lesser value of vocational education. However, there is still not enough support for VET students in career planning and the promotion should be more intense. The most important aspect still is for young people and their parents to learn about professions. This has for now been accomplished and it should be continued through visits to workshops and companies, where young people learn about the nature of certain professions. Working with companies enables young people to see good practices which raises both the knowledge about the professions and the reputation of professions and vocational education.”

Robert Grah, Director of Pomurje Chamber of Commerce and Industry

“I strongly support apprenticeship and work-based learning because it is linked to real needs in the labour market and we know at first hand that there is a skills mismatch between VET graduate occupations and labour market needs, as we experience lack of skilled workers in our company. Through apprenticeship and its promotion, there is a real opportunity for students and parents to get to know the professions and there would definitely be more students enrolling if the level of awareness was higher. Apprenticeship offers a concrete opportunity to reduce this gap.”

Alenka Dodig, head of training centre, Slovenian Railways

Visit NewWBL project website at: <http://newwbl.eu/>

