

The SEEVET-Net and Chambers Investment Forum Meeting / Workshop:

WESTERN BALKANS ALLIANCE FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING:

Workshop: Towards a regional on-line knowledge platform on Work-based learning

Vienna, 28th and 29th November 2017

Venue: Hotel Fleming, Vienna

The Meeting / workshop was organized by the KulturKontakt Austria, Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE), and WB Chamber Investment Forum (CIF). It gathered 29 participants, composed of representatives of agencies for vocational education and training from the region under the umbrella of the South Eastern Europe Vocational Education and Training Network (SEE VET Net), and regional chambers of economy under the umbrella of CIF from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The meeting was also attended by the representatives of the Austrian Chamber of Economy, as well as by the representatives of the Austrian Development Agency.

In the opening session of the meeting, the audience was addressed by Ms Monika Mott on behalf of the KKA, Jürgen Schick from Federal Ministry of Education; Alexander Hölbl from Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy; Melina Schneider on behalf of the Austrian Economic Chamber; Mr Walter Ehmeir as the representative of the Austrian Development Co-operation; Ana Stojanović, on behalf of the Chambers Investment Forum; and Tina Šarić on behalf of the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe. All the participants welcomed the establishment of the Western Balkans Alliance for work-based learning and its efforts regarding the modernization of VET and enhancement of work-based learning in the region.

In her introductory presentation, Ms Šarić presented the concept of the regional knowledge platform for work-based learning, as one of the activity being a part of a bigger planned project that would deal with the development of regional standards of occupations, qualifications and curricula in the priority sectors, and their piloting. The whole project would be the result of the joined work of the SEEVET Net and Chambers of Economy from the region, coordinated by CIF and ERI SEE, thus responding to the mandate given to ERI SEE and CIF in the framework of the Berlin Process (promoting high quality, labour market relevant VET through strengthening elements of dual systems and other forms of WBL and enhancing the overall co-operation between the private and the public sector in VET).

The regional knowledge platform for WBL would imply mapping of the current situation in the region in terms of the already existing formats, tools, instruments, legal practices etc. used for WBL; and identifying gaps - what is needed but lacking, potentials for regional cooperation in the development, trainings and capacity building, regular alliance meeting etc. The platform would serve for more efficient use of already developed instruments and existing expertise and experience, and would be made operational through the creation of the on-line data basis/platform, on which the participants will be invited to give their ideas during the meeting itself.

The participants were then invited to present various formats of work-based learning that are currently in use in the countries, as well as the documents and tools that are accompanying these formats. More information about the input can be found in Annex 1 – Matrices per countries on the formats and tools.

Mr Zelloth from the European Training Foundation presented the situation regarding the work-based learning in the EU candidate countries; specifying the term ‘work-based learning’ refers to learning that occurs when people do real work in a real work environment, whereas practical learning that takes place in an educational institution – for instance in a vocational college’s workshop – and classroom-based learning that happens to take place in an enterprise are not WBL. He also presented and explained the three main types of WBL:

- Apprenticeships that provide occupational skills and typically lead to a recognised qualification. They combine learning in the workplace with school-based learning in a structured way. In most cases, apprenticeships last several years. Most often the apprentice is considered an employee, and has a work contract and a salary.
- The second type is traineeships and internships, which are workplace training periods that complement formal or non-formal education and training programmes. They may last from a few days or weeks to months. They may or may not include a work contract and payment.
- And On-the-job training is training which takes place in the normal work environment. It is the most common type of WBL throughout an individual’s working life.

After that the participants were invited to the workgroup - mapping exercise (mapping of the existing formats of WBL and documents in the region, identification of gaps, needs and challenges, and identification for potential regional exchange and cooperation).

The second day of the meeting started with the presentations of the conclusions from the workgroups of the previous day.

Conclusions of the workgroups:

Existing documents in the region:

- Strategy on VET, Law on VET, Law on Crafts, Law on Dual education Law on NQF, law on general education, law on professional qualification and the bylaws; Programme for VET development
- Standards for conducting practical trainings, Standard for professional staff implementing WBL, Programme for training of trainers; Programme for mentors, Regulation on minimum conditions for apprenticeships mentors, final exams journeyman exam
- Guidelines for practical learning in companies, occupational standards, curriculum, contracts between school and company and student and company, Guidelines for instructors in companies and in schools; Manuals for planning the visits in companies, for monitoring, for organizing practical trainings; checklists, plans for instructors, manuals for organization of practical training, for evaluation, for VET matriculation exam

What is missing:

- Funding for training of mentors, further implementation of curricula, establishment of training centres, design and implementation of promotion campaign for 3-year programmes
- Model for financing WBL

- Increasing attractiveness of WBL
- Recognition of prior learning
- QA in practical trainings
- Building trust between business and education
- Motivation for companies to enter VET
- Education plan for WBL
- Registers – technical documents and procedures (collecting information on apprentices, trades etc.)
- Instrument for matching companies and schools
- WBL platform – on line tool

Regional cooperation can be further extended to the areas of: documents harmonization, capacity building in companies, exchange of good practices and content-related documents.

After that, the participants were invited to discuss ideas about the future on-line data basis/platform on WBL in SEE, working in the 4 work-groups, after which they presented their results.

Conclusions of the workgroups:

- The purpose of the portal should be sharing of expertise and good practices
- Target groups would be ministries, VET agencies, Chambers, VET providers, businesses, professional associations, parents, mentors, students...
- The WBL platform should consist of an open/public and closed/private part which would target different target groups
- The open/public would target the students, parents, decision makers, companies, schools, experts etc., and contain information about the current situation in the region in the field of the WBL – the legal framework, the types of WBL, roles and responsibilities. This open part should also serve as a tool for increasing attractiveness of the WBL and VET in general in the region
- The closed/private part should serve for the purposes of the WB Alliance on the WBL, for the communication, translations, exchanges of documents, creation of the new etc.
- There are different ideas about how content should be structured:
 - o according to the themes/documents, and not countries, and should have a strong filters/search option that could enable searching by countries, by documents, by theme;
 - o by country, by topic, by target group
 - o by legislation/documents; upcoming events/news; education profile (occupation, qualification), search filter, and member countries (information about actors involved)
- It is important to develop a glossary that would ensure common understanding of WBL terms
- The home page should offer the menu divided into laws, strategies and manuals, good practices
- It should also contain the list of VET experts from the region
- The maintenance should be regular and provided by ERI SEE in cooperation with the national focal point officially appointed, that should feed ERI SEE with documents
- The links to the portal should be placed on all relevant partners and stakeholders' webpages – ministries, chambers, VET centres, businesses etc.

- The portal should have an interactive component in the form of a forum/blog
- The portal should be promoted by a big promotional event including all stakeholders, at regional and national levels; and should coincide with the launch of a mobile application
- Issues such as language and quality check should be discussed further.

It was agreed that the ERI SEE should deliver the minutes and conclusion for the consent of the participants; that the election procedure for the president of the SEEVET Net will be initiated by the ERI SEE together with the Centre for VET of the Republic of Serbia, by 1st April 2018.