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UNIONE EUROPEA DELL' ARTIGIANATO E DELLE PICCOLE E MEDIE IMPRESE

**2008 UEAPME concept
on
Fostering mobility of apprentices and young people in initial vocational training
in the framework of the Integrated LLL programme 2007-2013 and after**

Introduction

Mobility is more than ever recognised as a major training tool in Europe.

Young people, enterprises and public authorities are more and more convinced about the necessity to further develop mobility. Therefore UEAPME sees the need to develop a new impetus for European exchange programmes through the creation of a specific “mobility programme” for apprentices and young people in initial vocational training.

UEAPME strongly supported and still supports the already existing European mobility programmes, in particular the Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) programme and its training objectives. However a clear need appeared in the last years for a new qualitative step forward with the creation of **a specific mobility programme** dedicated to apprentices and young people in initial vocational training in order to make mobility a real and easily accessible option of individual training pathways in the framework of well-defined training policies.

Tangible progress has been made in the mobility of young people in initial vocational training thanks to the Leonardo da Vinci programme, but despite changes introduced, this programme does not allow to overcome the current limited participation of apprentices and companies from the craft sector in the community programme. This is caused in particular:

- by the inflexible structure of the Leonardo da Vinci programme despite some efforts to improve it
- by its non-adaptation to the need for a long term and stable exchange programme of apprentices with the support of strong networks of intermediary bodies.

This is why UEAPME originally proposed an initiative for an “ERASMUS-style mobility programme for Apprentices”.

The idea of a programme fostering mobility for apprentices and young people in initial vocational training

The concept is about specific mobility measures for apprentices, as long as they are in an alternating training system (work-based and school or training centre based system).

The main aim of the initiative is to:

- Increase mobility of apprentices and young people in IVET
- Allow the professions/trades, the enterprises and training centres to fully integrate mobility in their training and education policies, while giving mobility a new role as an integrated and easily accessible part of individual training pathways
- Enhance visibility of mobility for young people in VET just like in higher education. This will strongly contribute to increase participation in mobility programmes, but also create a parity of esteem between VET and higher education
- Promote and communicate the advantages of mobility to craft and SMEs
- Create stable networks of intermediary bodies able to support long-term exchanges of apprentices.
- Use ECVET in order to recognise and validate the competences and learning outcomes from the mobility period.

The need for specific measures for apprentices was recognised and addressed by the European Parliament when voting for pilot projects in 2005 and 2006 and more recently in 2007 for preparatory actions supporting mobility of apprentices with the Erasmus programme as a reference.

The success of the Erasmus programme is mainly due to two factors, the establishment of long-term university partnerships and networks and the recognition of knowledge acquired abroad through the ECTS system.

In analogy to it two main issues for an equally successful new mobility programme for apprentices and young people need to be tackled:

1. The establishment of a long-term stable cooperation between enterprises, training centres and intermediate bodies, such as professional organisations, chambers, social partners etc.
2. The ability for every participating student to validate the learning outcomes and competences acquired in another Member State through the ECVET system.

Therefore it is highly necessary to lay down **the foundations of networks or consortia** consisting of intermediary bodies participating in such exchange programmes. For a substantial increase of mobility of young people in IVET it is necessary to establish and maintain exchange and partnership networks.

Under present conditions this is not possible as the current “Leonardo da Vinci” programme is designed to finance only specific one-off and time-limited actions.

Moreover, project submitters are facing the constraints linked to the yearly programme's procedure in their Member State, which eliminates all possibilities for long-term actions and for partnerships capable of providing either training or financial support. Furthermore, the evolution of the programme in other Member States might jeopardise the exchange under entities based in different countries, whenever one of the participants sees its project rejected by the national agency. Clearly the current LdV regulation does not allow the development of long-term relations.

In order to guarantee the long-term existence and development of apprentices' mobility in Europe, it is essential to support the establishment of European platforms consisting of networks or consortia dedicated to work-linked alternating training. Enterprises, training centres, representative business organisations will play a key role in these platforms.

Conclusion

Such new mobility programme will:

- take better into account the constraints and the specific resources needed for worked-linked training activities, which is of utmost importance considering that the vast majority of apprentices will be hosted by small businesses;
- secure the development of cross-border exchanges throughout the whole duration of the project;
- strengthen the coherence and the transparency of actions taken in the framework of long-term partnerships;
- rationalise expenses and favour co-financing for projects.

Against this background, UEAPME calls on the forthcoming French Presidency to support the establishment of a fifth sectoral sub-programme alongside Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig under the LLL programme dedicated to apprentices and young people in initial vocational training.

Such an initiative should guarantee the recognition and validation of the acquired skills and competences and provide a long-term perspective to the initiatives taken in the framework of cross-border training platforms.

Annex

Mobility programme of apprentices and young people in initial vocational training

The target group benefiting from the specific measures:

The two target groups should be “apprentices and young persons in initial vocational training”

*The first group, “apprentices” being based on “systematic, long-term **training alternating periods** in a school or training centre and at the workplace; the **apprentice is contractually linked to the employer** and receives remuneration (wages or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation”.*

The other group is “General or vocational training carried out in the initial vocational training system, usually before working life....IVET may be carried out at any level in general or vocational education (full-time school-based or alternance training pathways or apprenticeship”.

Intermediate bodies:

The role of intermediate bodies is crucial to optimise the efficiency of any type of mobility programme for apprentices and young people in initial vocational training.

1 - Possible structures: Chamber of skilled crafts and chambers of commerce, business organisations, training centres, structures responsible for managing training funds, etc. They should be involved in partnerships within networks and consortia. The choice of the structures has to be defined on a case by case basis, according to the Member State specificities.

2 - Possible tasks:

1 – Administration of apprentices’ placements and organising support (this will help to reduce the administrative burden for the participating individual and company, and to ensure individual mobility for an apprentice through simplified application procedures;

2 - Assistance in EUROPASS application and quality assurance;

3 – Communication role: awareness raising of the advantages of mobility and promoting the new programme and its mobility opportunities;

4 – Acting as recognition, validation and certification bodies for competences and learning outcomes;

5 – Key actors for the establishment of zones of mutual trust between different national intermediate bodies and establishing memoranda of understanding between different countries in line with the ECVET initiative.

Multi-annual Contracts:

The two main obstacles for optimising the organisation of mobility projects for apprentices are the rule that financing contracts are only given for limited periods (maximum two years) and they have only one application deadline a year.

The intermediate bodies, as mentioned above, should receive multi-annual grants. This will facilitate the planning of activities like communication and promotion. It will simplify the search for companies, as well as apprentices, by fixing short, medium and long term objectives, and will provide with more continuity for the various activities.

Global grants for more flexibility:

The grants should be of a more global nature in order to facilitate a better distribution of the subsidies.

In practical terms, the allocation should not only cover travel, subsistence costs and grants of the individual but also be used to finance the preparation costs for the sending company, a compensation for administrative expenses of the company without being the promoter, taking into account the costs for the hosting company like tutoring, costs for the training coordination, for the validation of learning outcomes, etc

A global grant for single placements will give more flexibility in the costs coverage. This increased flexibility would not mean a higher grant level. Flexibility of grants should also include the possibility for co-financing.

Co-financing as another possible resource:

The possibility of benefiting from a co-financing from other sources like local authorities, regional bodies and other institutions should be seriously envisaged. Its feasibility should be further explored on a national basis.

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