



Euro Apprenticeship

APPRENTICESHIP IN EUROPE

The European network to promote, implement
and enhance learning mobility for apprentices

Report on the peer-learning activities



**How to foster and better recognize
the involvement of companies
in the mobility process?**



**Toward recognized mobility,
ECVET as a tool for learners
and companies**



**Virtual mobility: what can
information technology add
to the mobility experience?**



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ENHANCING LEARNING MOBILITY FOR APPRENTICES

«Learning mobility, meaning transnational mobility for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge, skills and competences, is one of the fundamental ways in which young people can strengthen their future employability, as well as their intercultural awareness, personal development, creativity and active citizenship. Europeans who are mobile as young learners are more likely to be mobile as workers later in life. Learning mobility can make education and training systems and institutions accessible and more efficient. It can also strengthen Europe's competitiveness by helping to build a knowledge-intensive society.»

With these words, the European Council Resolution of 28 June 2011 neatly summarizes why it is so important to enable as many young people as possible to spend some of their lives learning in other regions or other countries, and how such mobility will ultimately enrich Europe itself.

These sentiments are echoed in the European Union's 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Two of its flagship initiatives are particularly relevant here:

An agenda for new skills and jobs aims to modernize labour markets and empower people by developing their skills and improving flexibility and security in the working environment. It also aims to help workers seek employment across the EU more easily in order to better match labour supply and demand.

Youth on the move aims to enhance the performance of education systems and to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour market.

Young people in higher education already benefit from mobility opportunities under the ERASMUS programme. But the same is not yet true of those undergoing vocational education or training (VET).

EuroApprenticeship, the European network to promote, implement and enhance learning mobility for apprentices, has been researching how to make it easier for apprentices to do part of vocational training abroad.



THE EUROAPPRENTICESHIP NETWORK

EuroApprenticeship is a network of more than 250 competent bodies, intermediate organisations and vocational education and training providers, offering expertise, information, help and support to learning mobility projects for the benefit of SMEs, skilled craft companies, apprentices and young people in work-based learning and training systems.

Euroapprenticeship relies on a collaborative platform online www.euroapprenticeship.eu. The website is based on existing tools and projects that have been implemented successfully in recent years to increase the mobility of apprentices. It provides information, tools, contacts, support and solutions for transnational mobility. Communication tools, as the label for companies, aim to give more visibility to learning mobility and to valorise the role of Vet providers and in particular of companies in the implementation of learning mobility. Regularly networking seminars and peer-learning activities are organised in order to exchange experiences among the members and to find partners for future common mobility projects.

HOW TO FOSTER AND BETTER REGOGNIZE THE INVOLVEMENT OF COMPANIES IN THE MOBILITY PROCESS?

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Peer-learning seminar, 16th - 17th November 2011 - Brussels

TOWARD RECOGNIZED MOBILITY, ECVET AS A TOOL FOR LEARNERS AND COMPANIES

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Peer-learning seminar, 12th - 13th June 2012 - Paris

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Peer-learning seminar, 5th - 6th November 2012 - Copenhagen



HOW TO FOSTER AND BETTER REGOGNIZE THE INVOLVEMENT OF COMPANIES IN THE MOBILITY PROCESS?

Brussels, 16th - 17th November 2011

Companies in particular, in both the home and the host country, have a crucial role to play in making mobility projects successful. But first, they must be aware of the challenges. Sending / hosting apprentices is still associated with considerable **financial, administrative, organisational and pedagogical efforts**.

The sending company:

- will temporarily have a workforce that is person short (this can make a real difference in very small companies), but will probably continue to pay salary and employer's social security charges,
- will have an extra administrative load: special insurance, learning agreements with the receiving company and educational establishments,
- should play its part in assessing the learner's progress after the placement, and in re-integrating him/her into the work team back home, while helping him/her to take advantage of the extra knowledge and insights gained while abroad.

The hosting company will be expected:

- to provide a suitable working and learning environment for the learner,
- to support the learning process, bearing in mind that the learner probably comes from a different educational, cultural and/or work background, and may not speak the language well,
- to accept that even though the placement may consume company time and resources, and despite other differences and difficulties, enabling learner mobility is an extremely worthwhile endeavour.



However, this involvement should not become too much time and resource consuming for the company. Therefore adequate support and assistance from intermediate organisation and training centers are necessary. In a survey¹ about companies perception about mobility, 84% of companies appreciate a meeting with the trainer, the apprentice and the supervisor in order to set up the project together.

Participants at the PLA identified the following key issues:

Networking

Cooperation between the different stakeholders needs to be facilitated in order to support the company's role in preparation, tutoring, evaluation / assessment of the mobility and to overcome administrative barriers. Moreover, mobility should be considered as an intrinsic step in the training courses and be promoted as such among youngsters, parents, companies and prepared in collaboration with training centers. Sharing information, tools and expertise could allow the different players to implement this quality approach. The EuroApprenticeship platform should play a major role in this respect.

Awareness rising: how to encourage companies to invest more in mobility?

To find as broad acceptance as possible, transnational learning mobility has to offer added value for all concerned: home companies, host companies, training providers in both countries and above all for the apprentices. The communication towards companies should focus on best practices and the return on investment: what competitive advantages, what impact on the social image for the company? More innovative means of advertising about mobility opportunities among companies could be developed (as a specific European event - Day of European mobility).

¹ Report about the image and perception of mobility among companies in the French craft sector, 2009 - Survey ADDITIV for APCMA



A LABEL TO RECOGNIZE COMPANIES' INVOLVEMENT IN THE MOBILITY PROCESS

In a EuroApprenticeship survey on companies' attitudes towards mobility projects, just over half the respondents from sending companies and two-thirds of respondents from hosting companies felt that the role of companies in mobility projects was not taken into account and highlighted enough. About three-fifths of sending companies and two-thirds of hosting companies agreed that the setting up of a recognition item for companies involved in mobility would be of interest to them.

Clearly, companies' involvement and commitment to young learner mobility projects should be recognized, celebrated and promoted, so that other companies, educational establishments and young learners are motivated to join in. In this way, companies that are successfully involved in mobility programmes will become more attractive to future apprentices and employees, and will point other companies in the right direction.

Thus was born in the Peer Learning Activities sessions the idea of a brand and certification, which would draw attention to the contribution made by companies to the future of Europe by their willingness to facilitate cross-border placements.

The participants at the PLA seminar discussed the advantages and awarding conditions of different types of labels, such as quality labels (awarded for a quality performance which has been demonstrated to an "accredited institution") or compliance awards (conformity labels). Indeed, a label, whatever the type could constitute:

- A source of information for external people: "this company offers high quality placements".
- A symbol of belonging: "my company is member of the "club" supporting the transnational learning mobility".

Participants recommended that the main objective of the EuroApprenticeship certification is to recognize and reward the value of those companies which make an outstanding commitment to, and investment in the success of apprentice mobility, but raised also the difficulty of how to control conformity with common criterias.



Therefore some basic commitments (shared objectives about the quality of organisation are formalised in a “charter” which is agreed with the company before the mobility takes place. On the basis of a self-commitment, members (training centres etc.) guarantee that the company respects the following minimum standards:

- To respect the appropriate regulations and laws in force in the EU
- To provide a safe work & good training environment
- To contribute to all phases of mobility (before, during, after the placement)
- To cooperate with the “competent body” in charge of the placement organisation
- To promote mobility
- To recognise and value the benefits/experiences of the participant

The commitments are associated to criterias, which can be used by the sending training institutions for monitoring the respect of these commitments by the company. While commitments are broad and general, criterias used for the evaluation are concrete and measurable. The certification does not create supplementary entrance barriers or more bureaucracy, but it is meant to allow the development of quantity of mobility without losing quality.

It takes the visible form of a certificate which can be displayed in the company's offices, and a graphic device that can be used as a brand on the company's printed materials and websites.



To apply for their quality certification, companies / intermediary organisations should fill in the on-line form available at <http://www.euroapprenticeship.eu/en/mobility-label.html>





TOWARD RECOGNIZED MOBILITY, ECVET AS A TOOL FOR LEARNERS AND COMPANIES

Paris, 12th - 13th June 2012

For young learners in full-time vocational training or apprenticeship, moving to another country or region can be quite a complex matter. Compared with ERASMUS students, they are probably younger and may legally be minors. But for mobility to be an option, educational institutions need to have confidence in what will be taught in the host country, and in the quality and compatibility of the instruction and assessment offered there to their learners.

In particular, training organizations need to:

- coordinate all placements carefully through continuous contacts with the companies and VET centres involved in the other country,
- gain the confidence of learners in advance of the placement, to inspire them, gain their confidence, guide them, mentor them, and motivate them to make their placement a success,
- ensure that learning outcomes gained both before the placement and during it, are duly recognized (through the ECVET system) and that good use is made of them.

If these challenges can be met successfully, every apprentice able to take advantage of a mobility opportunity should return home more mature, more employable, and more aware of the reasons why things are often done differently in other countries.

Successful mobility placements are win-win situations, for all concerned: home companies, host companies, training providers in both countries, and above all for the young ambassadors of the future.



ECVET as a tool for learners & companies

To succeed, any attempt to provide technical education and training to individual learners in more than one country needs a system that formally guarantees the comparability and mutual acceptability of qualifications. That is partly the role of ECVET, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training.

ECVET is based on:

- Learning outcomes - statements of the knowledge, skills and competence to be acquired by learners, in a variety of learning contexts,
- Units of learning outcomes - the components from which qualifications are built,
- ECVET points - additional information about units and qualifications, in numerical form,
- Credit - given for a learner's assessed and documented learning outcomes; credits can be transferred to other contexts and accumulated, to achieve a qualification on the basis of the qualifications standards and regulations existing in the participating countries.

The 2013 Peer Learning Activity (PLA) seminars looked at two experimental ECVET projects:

- **SME Master Plus**, which aims to promote transnational mobility in master crafts-person qualifications such as baker, joiner, florist, hairdresser.
- **ECVET Asset**, testing the implementation of ECVET (recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad) through a geographical mobility programme in a car maintenance and repair sector's qualification.



The ECVET system relies on mutual trust and partnership among participating organisations, which find their expression in Memoranda of Understanding and Learning Agreements.

- **Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)** are agreements between job services agencies and vocational education and training providers that set the framework for credit transfers. The MoU formalizes the ECVET partnership by confirming the mutual acceptance of procedures for assessing competences. It can be signed either by a network of competent institutions from different countries, or on a bilateral basis.
- **Learning Agreements** bring together all the detailed aspects that are agreed on before a mobility experience takes place, including who is responsible for what, dates and places of the mobility experience, content of the learning situation, assessment procedures, and how the skills acquired will be validated in the home country.

Participants were offered the possibility to accustom themselves to ECVET through hands-on exercises, mainly building on the two above-mentioned case studies.

A group worked on items they deemed essential to find in every learning agreements – i.e. signatures, duration, qualification, content of learning situation, assessment and validation. A second group worked on crucial items to be put in Memoranda of Understanding.

During the reporting session, participants were asked to deliver a couple of recommendations (to EAS members and if relevant to the European Commission) in the light of what has been done – here are some:

- To speed up the description of qualification in terms of learning outcomes (system-based) which would make the work of training providers easier.
- Integrate ECVET into existing tools and procedures (EUROPASS, Skills Passport).
- Focus on the added value of mobility for the labour market / employment and its promotion toward companies (valorise more systematically the effort of a learner when he takes part in a mobility programme).
- Getting the sectors more involved in the process of recognition via ECVET.
- **Being precise on ECVET purposes:** ECVET is a way to promote mobility (without forgetting lifelong learning), it helps building partnerships and it enhances transparency and can be used as a management tool.



- **The identification of actors:** participants were willing to identify the various actors in order not to lose time and avoid misunderstandings, but also proposed to set up a simple questionnaire to help asking the good questions and finally proposed to fill in a VET functions table, country by country.
- **The use of a bottom-up approach as the main engine to move forward:** participants proposed to start with existing reliable partnerships and well targeted units, according to criteria (such as duration of mobility, content of unit, trade and relevance of the chosen unit for mobility); they also proposed to use synergies approaches (tools and/or actors).

The last exercise proposed to participants was about improving communication related to ECVET (for internal and external purposes). Here are what participants found as solutions:

- use of leaflets,
- creation of a FAQ,
- using the EAS website as a communication tool (both internal and external use),
- having face-to-face activities and meetings to explain ECVET to companies, VET centres, learners – always bearing in mind that adaptation to the audience is important.



VIRTUAL MOBILITY: WHAT CAN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ADD TO THE MOBILITY EXPERIENCE?

Copenhagen, 5th - 6th November 2012

Definition of virtual mobility

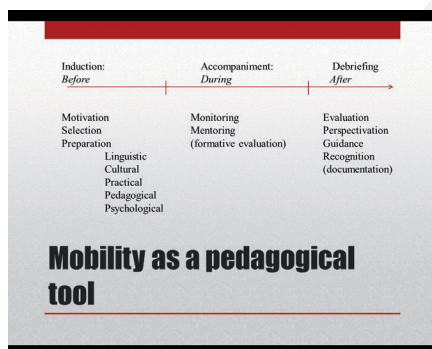
"... a set of ICT-supported activities that realize or facilitate international collaboration experiences in a context of learning"

Despite the advantages of learning mobility, relatively few young learners experience it - roughly 1 to 3%, about half as many as students in higher education. Clearly, there are barriers: differences in the status of apprentices from one country to another, curriculum differences from one educational system to another, language problems, issues linked to contracts and responsibilities... But could information technology (IT) perhaps provide some sort of virtual alternative to actual physical placement abroad, or add value to it?

It is true that IT offers a range of tools that have already proved their worth in distance learning: internet-based courses, video conferencing, web conferencing, social networking, case-study databases, and many more. Provided the content is properly designed with the needs of the young cross-border learner in mind, and based on an accessible, user-friendly, reliable technology, much can be achieved.

The advantages of IT

On one hand, these technologies could be extremely useful before, during and after a mobility experience for the learner, tutors and companies involved.





- Before, to help the learner to become familiar with various aspects of the mobility experience, before having to confront them physically, to reduce apprehension and uncertainty.
- During, to keep the learner in contact with teaching and company staff back home, and to add to the learner's understanding of what is being taught, through appropriate distance learning initiatives.
- After, to help with debriefing learners, tutors and companies, and to assess the progress made.

But can IT actually replace the experience of being trained abroad?

Interfacing with a computer is not the same as living and working in the reality of a real workplace in a real foreign country, confronting another culture, and developing the transversal and social skills that physical mobility can bring. Coaching and accompaniment by real people in a real place will always be key components of a successful mobility experience.

Therefore, there is also a need to develop new scenarios implementing successful learning mobility processes taking into account the diversity of situations, contexts and actors. Including virtual mobility in the process forces stakeholders and VET providers to reflect on the different processes which are intertwining when a learning mobility occurs:

- the mobility organisation process
- the mobility learning process
- the mobility accompaniment process
- the mobility and learning evaluation process
- the value creation process from mobility

Could these processes be improved by introducing virtual mobility? How to extend, sustain, and strengthen impact of physical mobility? What could be a "mix" of both that could be called "blended" mobility?



Conditions for success

From previous projects and by learning from the experience in Higher Education, we can already draw some “key success factors” for implementing virtual mobility for VET students. Virtual tools will probably be best used in addition to, not instead of, actual physical mobility. The virtual mobility component should enable, support and facilitate the physical mobility of the learner. Some key questions could be asked regarding the selection of participants, the nature and importance of tasks achieved within the mobility process, the coaching, mentoring, monitoring activities, the balanced amount of face-to-face and virtual interactions.

Key questions for developing, implementing and supporting virtual mobility

- What could the benefits for the young people? They are willing to move “really”, but the use of distant learning could enable them to stay longer abroad and still validate their training modules at home, for example?
- What could be the benefits for the Schools and Education Institutions? A better follow-up of the young people abroad, a better knowledge of the programme, a richer and more in-depth relationship with the corresponding bodies and Institutions, for example?
- What could be the benefits for the companies? A better knowledge of the corresponding companies processes, know-hows and organisation by implying more the tutors and company’s actors in the young people mobility process, for example?
- What could be the benefits for the mobility process itself?
- How to shift from a fully real mobility process to a more “virtualised” one? What can be “virtualised”? How? Which are the expected impacts, advantages and drawbacks of the virtualisation process (or processes)?
- How to enable, support and ensure the quality of the virtual mobility process?
- How to better develop the awareness, knowledge and competencies of the actors involved in the process (accompanying persons, organisers, schools, companies, Institutions, regional and local bodies, etc.)?
- How to better prepare the young people and create more value from their mobility?
- How to evaluate the benefits?
- What should be the “toolbox” of actors involved in a virtual mobility process?
- How could we start to set the foundations of a collaborative platform, for example?



Building on successful practices to improve practices: an organisational learning process about “blended” mobility

Developing virtual mobility require fruitful cooperation between all actors and stakeholders in the VET mobility process, and a strong support from European bodies and policy makers in order to enable and sustain the efforts on building gateways between the heterogeneous VET Education processes through Europe.

We learn also by looking at successful practices. It is thus crucial to have a place – real and/or virtual – to report of such practice, share experience, discuss about improvements and pitfalls to avoid overpass. The building of a community of practice could result of such exchanges and then act to support and develop actors experience in:

- accompaniment of actors by other actors (including from peers),
- cooperative help,
- improvement of relationship between training centres, companies, third parties, etc.
- enhancement of companies’ commitment,
- monitoring, mentoring, coaching and the (e-) versions of them,
- development and implementation of participative, longitudinal and formative evaluation processes to monitor them,
- developing a “case studies” data base,
- etc.

Next steps

The Euroapprenticeship network has already been the place to reflect upon these issues and it is conceivable to recommend the following key steps to undertake in order to foster blended mobility:

- Issue models and frameworks to develop and implement successful scenarios for blended learning mobility.
- Promote and support the building of a community of practice of professionals about blended mobility.
- Develop and promote tools for supporting the organisational, learning and evaluation processes which sustain the blended mobility process.



THE PEER-LEARNING SEMINARS

The current research into how to make mobility more available to young people in vocational training has been largely conducted from 2011 to the present through Peer Learning Activity (PLA) seminars. These meetings, lasting one or two days, bring together representatives from EuroApprenticeship member organisations and experts to share experiences and exchange opinions on problems, needs, constraints and possible solutions. Thinking together and exchanging ideas has proved to be a very effective way of producing results in terms of tools, plans and practices that take account of on-the-ground constraints or obstacles, and that can be widely and rapidly implemented. The present brochure summarizes the results of three PLA seminars conducted during 2011 to 2012 with more than one hundred members and experts from various backgrounds. Further information, background papers and synthesis of the thematic are available on the website.



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www.euroapprenticeship.eu

