



**Study Summarising Project Impacts –
ACCESS to VET**

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1. Introduction

The 24-month project entitled 'ACCESS TO VET – with Competence Development and Skills Recognition' has been implemented by the Government Office of Békés County in collaboration with a partnership of 6 members including Irish, Italian, Spanish, Romanian and Hungarian organisations dealing with VET.

In the project the partner organisations, through mutual learning processes, developed their methods applied in the operation of a VET system considering the experiences targeting the improvement of transversal skills and the results of acknowledging and validating learning outcomes acquired in non-formal learning environments.

Each partner has experiences, best practices, innovative methods in the professional fields addressed by the project, they are concerned with further developing their methods and applying new ones.

As an impact of the project, the professional work of partner organisations participating can be revised and improved, due to the new methods applied in the topic of improving transversal skills and recognising and validating prior knowledge, it is allowed for more adults to attend in any form of VET as part of a lifelong learning process.

In the framework of the project, the following best practices and methods acquired during the project implementation have been tested in real environments in practice:

1. 4-zone model enhancing planning life management related matters for NEET young people
 - a. Government Office of Békés County, Hungary (coordinator – PA1)
 - b. Békéscsaba Centre of Vocational Training, Hungary (PA6)
 - c. Granada Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Spain (PA3)
2. Job Club aiming at improving self-awareness, motivation and decision making process
 - a. Government Office of Békés County, Hungary (coordinator – PA1)
 - b. AJOFM Covasna (employment agency), Romania (PA5)
3. Use of a document called 'career plan' that helps measuring skills and competences and defining future goals
 - a. Government Office of Békés County, Hungary (coordinator – PA1)
 - b. AJOFM Covasna (employment agency), Romania (PA5)
4. Creating a training course based on individual needs and considering employer demands
 - a. Ballymun Job Centre, Ireland (PA2)
5. Tool and method aiming at measuring transversal skills
 - a. "A Rocca" Associazione Artistica Culturale, Italy (PA4)

6. Examining competence fields with the so called resilience quiz
 - a. Békéscsaba Centre of Vocational Training, Hungary (PA6)

2. Results and Impacts of Testing Best Practices by the Partner Organisations

2.1. '4-zone model'

The result of the EC-YP project from Ireland aims to develop, transfer and implement a flexible model of customised support to improve VET outcomes and lifelong learning pathways for disadvantaged and vulnerable young people who experience difficulty coping in traditional vocational education and training environments and help them build confidence, self-esteem and encourage motivation which supports their personal choices and commitment for learning and work. The innovation of EC-YP rests on the provision of a joined up approach to addressing a young person's complex and changing needs that facilitates the development of a flexible personal action plan and customised timetabled schedule that "wraps around" each young person based on the 4 'Zones' of Life, Leisure, Learning and Work.

Each zone was used to set goals with clients according to their current circumstances.

Weekly action plans were created with small tasks and steps towards clients' goals. These goals were worked on and developed at each weekly session and through other intensive forms of contact via phone, email etc. Clients logged their work on the system and could track their progression overtime. The four zones are navigated by the client and their mentor to address the challenges that are most critical to them at points in their lives.

The project was designed to be flexible to meet the needs of each young person and to assist them to gain confidence, marketable qualifications, work experience and improve competences and employability.

Further information on the method can be found under chapter IV.2.2. of the Brochure of Best Practices.

The method has been tried out in two countries, on the one hand, by the Government Office of Békés County (coordinator) and the Békéscsaba Centre of Vocational Training in Hungary, on the other hand, by the Granada Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Spain.

2.1.1. Results of the testing process implemented in Hungary

In **Hungary**, 7 NEET young people were involved **in the testing process at the Government Office** who all had their unique life stories and demanded tailor-made help in order to improve their employability.

Testing the method meant consecutive interviews, personal and telephone meetings and conversations, which sometimes included a face-to-face visit to the young person's home into the own environment to hold sessions.

According to the 4 time zones, the clients – with the help of their own mentoring persons – examined their wide needs, developed their personal action plans, which was reviewed and assessed from time to time, from one meeting to the other.

During the testing period their daily routine was observed and systematised according to a 24-hour time schedule, adapting to the client's individual demands/needs. An individual action schedule/plan including a day from 8.00 a.m. to 22.00 p.m. on a 7-14-day time scale was developed, which enhanced them to prepare their daily routine accordingly thus forming behaviour consciously, in which tasks were defined according to their abilities and skills and the proper ratio of leisure time was also recognised.

With the help of a 10-graded scale it was defined how the clients assessed their self-awareness, support, independence, motivation, leisure time spent actively, and knowledge on the labour market at the moment of the particular session.

The individual development aims complying with the rungs of the so called 'Cantril ladder' were defined as well as identified during each session, which highlighted at which step the clients were standing in order to reach their aims within the zones of Life, Leisure, Work and Learning.

The method was also tested at the **Békéscsaba Centre of Vocational Training** in Hungary. During the process 2 students – a 21-year-old and a 25-year-old one – were involved.

The psychologist and the participants met each other altogether 5 times, through which personal, brief, problem-focused consultations resulted in defining the aims to reach, the methods to perform the aims (in the form of questionnaires). Following the discussion on the questionnaire results and practical situations, a strategy was developed including concrete aims and difficulties hindering their performance. At the last session, the participants gave feedback on their experiences to the psychologist.

In case of both students it is a positive impact that they have become more open in their group and felt a lot more valuable and productive owing to the special attention and care.

According to the professionals carrying out the testing, the best practice clearly and obviously contributes to the more effective operation of the to a great extent, and enhancing the labour market re-integration of people with multiple disadvantages and to acquiring qualifications demanded on the labour market by more people thus reaching higher level employability.

According to their unanimous opinion, the method can greatly be sustained, it is however needed to be further developed. Providing rapid feedback towards the participants is extremely important they are thus motivated to continue, and it is necessary to set an aim at every session, which further results in continuing the programme even in case of difficulties.

Providing more high-level technical and IT conditions would help sustaining the method in a successful way.

When testing the best practice, it was only the lack of time that caused some difficulties considering that setting and performing short-term aims with tangible and measureable results is a bit more complicated.

2.1.2. Results of the testing process implemented in Spain

In **Spain**, young job seekers between the ages of 16-30 were involved **in the testing process** who were not in education and joined the Spanish Youth Guarantee Programme.

The primary aim of professionals in Spain is to improve the employability of job seekers with disadvantaged background attending their courses as a result of the methods tested. Therefore the soft skills of participants improve thus become able to successfully be represented in the labour market.

The testing process was divided into four different sections:

1. Prior to the training, mentoring days had been held, through which the daily schedule, expectations and goals of the clients were identified therefore the mentors could become acquainted with and prepared for the personal qualities and attitudes of the mentees. Mentoring days were finished on the first day of the training by handing over the psychological wellness test to the participants.
2. During the training of mentors, the sensitisation of professionals was held and they were prepared for the task to be carried out.
3. Training course.
4. Developing a plan for leisure time, which combined and mixed leisure time with training and sometimes amended, if needed (common group on social platform, meetings and sessions combined with an informal lunch for the participants, games, etc.)

Once the testing was finished, a questionnaire surveying satisfaction was conducted among participants to measure the impact, in which the training could be evaluated with scores from 1 to 6, then share their experiences orally.

During the testing process the professionals were applying three different tools:

- psychological wellness test
- career guidance interview
- questionnaire on contentment

As a consequence of the testing process, the psychological wellness test filled in by the participants of the training indicated an improving positive tendency as regards young people's self-esteem and personal comfort.

The assessment of the questionnaire on contentment justified the tendency identified when evaluating the psychological wellness test, namely that young people evaluated the training at 5,4 points (from the maximum of 6 points).

According to the professionals carrying out the testing in Spain, the best practice clearly and obviously contributes to the more effective operation of the tasks in case of the chamber to a great extent, and enhancing the labour market re-integration of people with multiple disadvantages and to acquiring qualifications demanded on the labour market by more people thus reaching higher level employability. By integrating the best practice, it can be reached that more adults could join the training programmes aiming at improving transversal skills thus providing more people with qualifications demanded by the labour market and improving employability. Furthermore, satisfaction – according to the experiences – on client level will increase.

According to colleagues testing the method, it can be sustained to a medium level, however by integrating an adapting the methods into the trainings, the more effective application of it can be accomplished.

The Granada Chamber of Commerce and Industry is intending to develop a methodology that promotes the integration of the '4-zone model' method into their training programmes.

2.2. The 'Job Club' model

The idea and method of the 'Job Club' was presented by the partner from Romania, AJOFM Covasna. Unemployment has various negative consequences, including: Tense family relationships, social isolation, lack of confidence of the persons in themselves, as they are unable to keep up with the problems of job competence, low moral, lack of confidence in themselves.

In the Job Club it is allowed to provide goal-oriented tailor-made labour market information in order to improve self-awareness, motivation and decision-making abilities through analysing market trends and jobs, even vacancies, and to offer career counselling in order to reach professional re-integration and to give individual support in order to map professional abilities along with opportunities.

The good practice focuses on basically three target groups as regards its aims to be reached:

- jobseekers,
- employed people who are about to change/forced to change job
- students being before making a career decision.

Further information on the method can be found under chapter IV.5.1. of the Brochure of Best Practices.

The new approach of the Job Club has been tried out, on the one hand, at two local district employment offices of the Government Office of Békés County: in Orosháza and Gyula, and, on the other hand, by the partner from Romania, AJOFM Covasna.

2.2.1. Results of the testing process implemented in Hungary

During two weeks, two days were dedicated to the sessions each week at both locations, in 2 hours at a time with the involvement of jobseekers.

Professionals holding the group sessions built the 8-hour agenda of the Job Club according to a pre-defined system of criteria and schedule, whose primary aim was to provide information, correlations beneficial for jobseekers on topics freely selected by them on their own, which later on could help them in finding an appropriate job. With respect to these aims, a job club method including several fields was developed, which contains every important element however does not go into brief details as if it were a separate type of service provided for individuals. Evaluation/self-assessment, getting to know the fields of interest – as basic notions – were among the programme elements, which define the right decision-making processes. As content elements, the task of clarifying values and motivation, and transferring the basic methods and technique of job seeking studies were also included. The methods and tasks were amended continuously according to the particular situations. Basically, the job club methods were built on group problem solving and team work but individual, frontal ways of communication, pair-work as well as written tasks could also be found. Demonstration tools in large quantities were used as well, which can perform more efficient results with their impact.

The impact of the basic aims as the Job Club is concerned can be measured in the effectiveness of the long-term changing in the job seeking attitude and behaviour. Clients attending the sessions, besides job seeking techniques, methods, will become acquainted with definitions related to services as well, which not only help acquiring the ideal job/place of work but aim to create the appropriate essential attitude with self-awareness. Measuring such impacts can be seen in establishing job seeking skills and continuously maintaining motivation. The impact of the club activities is most measurable in the time factor, which demonstrates whether the client manages to get a job on the labour market according the set aims within a particular period of time.

The opinion of staff members testing the best practice was different in Orosháza and Gyula as regards to what extent the integration of the method contributed to their more effective daily work and operation. Colleagues in Gyula thought the method helped their everyday tasks in a greater, while colleagues in Orosháza considered the good practice to help their job in a slight degree.

According to their unanimous opinion, the good practice can be sustained on a medium level, however its further development is essential, which would mean the clarification in syllabus and methodology, and it would greatly be realised with applying more role-play and thematic, theme-specific games – also including the tools and equipment necessary for them.

The Job Club is definitely a service that is right and well applicable, however requires thorough and large-scale organising works in advance to have the appropriate number of attendants in order to reach the desired and intended positive impacts and effects. That would all require an overall programme aiming at sensitisation to help jobseekers recognise their needs and demands of joining the club.

2.2.2. Results of the testing process implemented in Romania

The testing process in Romania is a bit different from the one implemented among other partners in a sense that the Job Club as a method is currently applied in Covasna county.

Their own practice run by the employment agency has been further developed based on the method presented briefly by the Irish partner during the kick-off meeting, on which detailed information can be found at <http://bmunjob.ie/job-seekers/job-club/> website.

When testing the method, great emphasis was put on creating a kind atmosphere in a room with tables, chairs and the necessary office equipment (projector, flipchart). The session was held by a professional who informed the participants on the mission, goal and expectations in the first part.

Following the introduction of participants, several different tasks, exercises and role-plays were carried out, then the participants reported on their experiences. They honestly revealed their thoughts and results reached as compared to the expectations in details. As a next step, the counsellor informed the participants on the further steps, opportunities, then the schedule of activities were defined as well as finalised.

According to the professionals carrying out the testing in Romania, the best practice clearly and obviously contributes to the more effective operation of the tasks in case of the agency to a maximum extent, and enhancing the labour market re-integration of people with multiple disadvantages and to acquiring qualifications demanded on the labour market by more people thus reaching higher level employability. By integrating the best practice, it can be reached that more adults could join the training programmes aiming at improving transversal skills thus providing more people with qualifications demanded by the labour market and improving employability. Moreover, applying the method greatly contributes for jobseekers and people in public work to join training programmes adjusting to their key competences thus allowing them to enter the primary labour market with supported employment, and it enhances improving efficiency as regards the professional training and further education of adults.

The tested method can be measured in numbers as regards clients getting employment, and can be experienced in the quality of communication with employers and the improvement of information transfer related to vacancies.

In case of clients attending the Job Club, the moral, financial and health status of people increased, the programme contributed to maintaining healthy way of family relations.

According to colleagues carrying out the testing, the best practice can be totally sustained, however it is definitely to be further developed, which can be realised by involving more professionals (sociologist, psychologist, occupational health medical practitioner, HR staff and public administration staff as regards making a schedule).

2.3. The 'career plan' document

The career plan is an 8-page document, which provides the opportunity for the client to concentrate on the individual aims and future plans, and helps surveying professional skills and their relation to the career selected. The best practice was presented by the Ballymun Job centre in Ireland as one of the useful tools of methods applied in counselling.

Besides real capabilities (education, qualification, previous work experiences, community activities) documented in the plan, it helps mapping the client's skills, abilities and personal qualities. The client can fill in the form in a written way and report on the future plans, the related expected and necessary competences, qualifications, further steps (both educational and employment ones) to perform the plans, finally the next steps (fields to be developed) to reach the aims.

The best practice was tested at two district local offices (in Szeghalom and Sarkad) of the Government Office of Békés County with involving 10 jobseekers (altogether 20 persons) each.

According to the professionals, clients are open and receptive in connection with filling in the 'career plan' document. The process was implemented partly through the first interview, partly as an element integrated into the counselling activity. Some of the clients filled in the document at home, however most of them asked the counsellor to help them filling in the document. Typically, young jobseekers realised the beneficial opportunity of the document.

As a general opinion, counsellors thought that integrating the best practice would contribute to the more effective way of carrying out their everyday tasks on a medium level, however it totally contributes for the target group to join training programmes – in accordance with the aims set in the project 'ACCESS to VET' – improving their key competences then entering the primary labour market with some support. It also enhances for more people to acquire qualifications demanded on the labour market, improves efficiency as regards the professional training and further education of adults as well as contributes to increase client satisfaction.

The project is definitely sustainable but only in case there are some further developments as regards its details and particular elements.

The document itself is a long and somewhat complicated paper, it can hardly be interpreted by some clients. With simplifying its language and terminology, clients with less qualifications but concrete plans for their career would be able to join the process and fill in the document individually.

Developing the document is a longer process taking much time – even with having some continuous guiding instructions -, which requires close cooperation between the client and the counsellor therefore its demand of human resources is also high.

2.4. Training course based on individual needs – PICE programme elements

The best practice was presented by the Spanish partner, the Granada Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The PICE programme was established to provide employment opportunities for NEET young people under the age of 30. Its major aim is to reach their labour market integration and continuous employment on the labour market. The programme enhances the increase of young people's employment rate.

As regards its operation, it is composed of several activities: on the one hand it offers individual counselling services for the young, on the other hand, it includes improving skills that is aimed at handling individual needs and broadening knowledge on the requirements demanded by employers.

Within the original programme, a training plan is developed, which includes professional counselling, training, job mediation and support services (wage subsidy or support on starting entrepreneurship/business). Additionally, a mobility plan is created that helps the young person in finding on his/her own which work practice is the most suitable for him/her – as if it had happened in real life when seeking a job. As a consequence, the person involved in the programme can acquire international life experience, leaving the comfort zone in a way, through which soft skills are improved as well.

Further information on the method can be found under chapter IV.3.1. of the Brochure of Best Practices.

Only some elements of the best practice were tested in Ireland. This approach was integrated to employer engagement with the 3 remaining cycles of their IN-VEST IT training programme for young people. Using feedback from employers about the skills and competencies they need in employees, they adjusted the curriculum to include modules that covered these skills such as leadership, team work, and project management skills. They also created a competency assessment for each participant that they would then send to employers in advance of participants' work experience placement so the employer could see exactly what skill level they had in each desired employability competency area.

The best practice had an impact on the IN-VEST programme participants' labour market readiness and their confidence levels. It also had an impact on employer expectations and satisfaction. The impact the tested best practice had on both participants and employers was overwhelmingly positive. Both participants and employers reported greater overall satisfaction with the work experience placement experience.

According to the professionals carrying out the testing at the job centre in Ireland, the best practice contributes to the more effective operation of the tasks in case of the job centre to more than a medium extent. It enhances the labour market re-integration of people with multiple disadvantages and applying the method greatly contributes for jobseekers and people in public work to join training programmes adjusting to their key competences thus allowing them to enter the primary labour market with supported employment. Moreover, by integrating the best practice, it can be reached that more adults could join the training programmes aiming at improving transversal skills thus providing more people with qualifications demanded by the labour market and improving employability. It additionally enhances improving efficiency as regards the professional training and further education of adults. Client satisfaction thus will increase.

The impact was measured through a Social Return on Investment evaluation that was conducted by an external evaluator. Through consultations with programme participants and employers, the evaluation found that the IN-VEST programme had a €4:€1 return on social investment ratio with a 30% increase in participant independence and a 33% increase in participant personal development. These improvements were largely due to integrating the best practice method into the programme delivery.

2.5. Keystart2Work

The best practice was developed and presented to the partnership by the Granada Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The programme basically focuses on avoiding and eliminating the negative impacts originating from the lack of competences. Its major aim is to raise professionals' attention to the value and significance of competence development aiming at increasing the employability of the target group as a result of which the rate of low-skilled workers as well as the lack of competence on the labour market can be reduced.

The best practice is made up of tools to survey and assess transversal skills, professional meetings with some of the parties concerned (employers, business representatives), and disseminating the project results in the form of different events.

Further information on the method can be found under chapter IV.3.2. of the Brochure of Best Practices.

The method was partially tested and tried out among the stakeholders working in close cooperation with 'A Rocca' Arts and Cultural Association.

To implement testing the method, the association organised a 1-day training with 1 representative per hosting company they cooperate with. In total the representatives of 8 companies were involved.

Through the training the self-assessment tools were used to let the participants involved become aware of their competences and of the transversal competences acquired during the internship. After the training, the participants had the chance to test the method acquired while hosting VET students as interns. Only some elements of the best practice were used, as it was needed to adapt them to the internal context of the company. Counselling service was not provided by experts, it was substituted with a common meeting with 1 staff member of the organization who supported the participants on their process.

According to the professionals carrying out the testing at 'A Rocca', integrating the best practice contributes to the more effective operation of the tasks in case of the association to a medium extent. It can be reached that more adults belonging to the target group could join the training programmes adjusting to their key competences thus allowing them to enter the primary labour market with supported employment. It further helps more people acquiring qualifications demanded by the labour market and thus improving employability, and it enhances improving efficiency as regards the professional training and further

The project is sustainable to a medium extent at 'A Rocca', however further developments are unnecessary.

The best practices had a multilevel impact according to the partner. The 8 companies involved got acquainted with it and understood the importance of the transversal skills analysis. The 8 interns who were selected to test it learned to make deep analysis of the competences they were acquiring during their internship process. They also learned to focus on the tasks received, to think as well about what they were doing and for what reasons.

2.6. Art en Prise – Resilience Quiz test

The test has been shared by the Spanish partner in the Google Drive folder of the project, which also stores a variety of professional materials related to the methods/best practices. The online training of the ARTenPRISE programme, coordinated by the Granada Chamber, is made up of 6 modules, one of whose topics is self-motivation. That module has 4 parts, one of them contains the quiz aiming at identifying internal and external factors hindering flexibility.

The selected best practice was tested during a training course of basket weaving run by the Vocational Training Centre. The original test – without making any changes – was applied in case of 11 participants. Of them, attendants of each age was selected to fill in the test (6 of them from the ages of 22-25, 2 of them from the ages of 25-50 and 3 of them from the age of 50+). The method was tested among adults with low level of education. The test filled in by them examines 8 fields of competence.

Prior to completing the test, the colleague from the Vocational Training Centre informed the respondents on the aim of the test and that as a result of it they would be able to recognise their strengths and weaknesses, through which their self-awareness would be developed therefore they could even deal with their problems on a higher level. The test was handed out in a paper format for the participants who had 45 minutes to fill it in, which was followed by an assessment of 20 minutes.

Of the 11 persons completing the test, 10 of them had really positive attitude towards the task, they took it seriously. Based on the results, they found out what factors impeded them in their successful participation on the labour market.

According to the staff members of the Vocational Training Centre, integrating the best practice contributes to carrying out their everyday tasks to a small extent. The best practice plays great role in increasing client satisfaction, however it would worth considering which new element should be adapted in order to reduce the necessary resources.

Completing and assessing the test had important role for the participants in becoming able to recognise and understand the source of problems. During the course, thanks to the newly acquired knowledge, they became capable of improving their social relations, they even dared asking for help.

According to the colleagues of the Vocational Training Centre, the tested method is sustainable within their organisation, however it is needed to be further developed. The best practice could be amended in a way that it would require the involvement of a psychologist or a mental health specialist, and it would be popularised with organising goal-oriented events.

3. Conclusion

As a consequence of the project entitled ‘ACCESS to VET – with Competence Development and Skills Recognition’ altogether 6 best practices – entirely and/or partially – have been tried out in practice as a result of which the participating organisations could acquire added value/information and practical experience with which they can renew their existing professional work.

Thanks to the integration and use of the best practices, the labour market reintegration of people having multiple disadvantages, it can be reached that more adults could join training programmes developing their transversal skills thus the efficiency of their professional training and further training is increasing. Moreover, adults can start training programmes adjusting to their key competences and enter the primary labour market therefore employability will improve, the number of jobseekers will decrease in the partner countries, and the attitude and willingness for work of labour market actors will be developed.

During the adaptation and testing processes, the partners – in most cases – experienced positive impacts when integrating the programme elements into their work.

Clients and businesses concerned with and involved in the testing processes took the tasks – let it be completing and assessing a questionnaire or participating and actively collaborating in an event – seriously. That is primarily – besides the selection of participants – due to the fact that staff members managing the testing process informed their clients on the programme aims and its expected results in details. The majority of clients closed the programme in a positive attitude, with forward-looking thoughts by improving their self-awareness.

It can be claimed in general that according to professionals, the integration of the tested best practices has contributed to the more effective task implementation of the particular organisation to at least a medium or great extent. It is to be considered that the results largely vary, a particular good practice helps the work to a small extent, some others do so and contribute to labour efficiency to a maximum extent.

All in all, based on the partners’ feedback, best practices – or its elements – are sustainable even in the long run with more or less changes.

A further innovative impact is that the coordinator and its partners (GEMS Northern Ireland and partners) of the original project in which the ‘4-zone model’ was created, submitted a new proposal – based on 2 former projects, its results and further developments – in the Erasmus+ programme in 2019 that has been awarded for the grant. In the three-year project started on 1st October 2019, besides the former and current new partners, the Government Office of Békés County is also participating as a partner in the entire professional implementation. Therefore we do have the opportunity to participate in the testing and development processes of the former activities, then further develop our own method tested and to be applied in national circumstances.