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INTRODUCTION

The **Survival Skills for Trainers of Apprentices in Initial VET** (SUSTAIN VET) Project is a two-year initiative implemented in the period between October 2020 to September 2022. The project is financed under the KA2 Strategic Partnerships in the field of VET of the Erasmus+ Programme.

The partnership consists of 5 organisations from four different European countries. It comprises of experienced organisations with complementary expertise in VET, work-based learning (WBL) and training delivery. Partner organisations involved in the elaboration of the present Training programme and project delivery in general are the following:

- Modern Education Foundation, Bulgaria;
- Branch Chamber of Woodworking and Furniture Industry, Bulgaria;
- Macedonian Civic Education Centre, North Macedonia;
- M&M Profuture Training, S.L., Spain;
- Public institution Panevėžys vocational education and training centre, Lithuania.

The SUSTAIN VET project is designed to strengthen the provision of WBL acknowledging the fact that quality apprenticeship schemes are a vital component for VET to keep pace with the rapid technological, economic and social developments. WBL has gained increased attention at EU and national levels as one of the remedies for boosting employment and growth in Europe and reducing skills gaps and mismatch. It has been widely accepted that the key to an effective apprenticeship is the role of the company mentor to create a supportive work environment, with learning opportunities.

The objective of the SUSTAIN VET project is to support company mentors in the planning, delivery and assessment of apprenticeships. For the purpose, **trainers of company mentors** are identified as the primary target group as providers of initial WBL-related professional development to company mentors. To address the needs of the target group, we will develop the present Training programme which aims to facilitate their work in delivering trainings.

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

The present Training Programme is designed for trainers of company mentors in WBL settings. Considering the characteristics of the target group and the specific national contexts these can be:

- Trainers from VET centres, including counsellors and advisors;
- Trainers from industrial chambers and branch associations;
- Human resources specialists responsible for the training and development of company staff;
- Vocational schools/ centres staff, such as teachers and/ or tutors;
- Trainers from regional and/ or national education authorities;
- University lecturers in pedagogy;
- Other types of trainers in adult education and training.



This programme is aimed at the above target groups as the main providers of specific know-how to company mentors. Respectively, they are responsible for the relevant WBL skills provision for mentors. In other words, they are the main providers of initial professional development related to mentorship of apprentices.

The Proficiency Train-the-Trainer Programme comes as a response to the fact that specific training for trainers of company mentors, which place emphasis on the characteristics of WBL apprenticeships, is currently not available in the project partner countries, as well as in many other countries across Europe. This has been confirmed by both - an initial desk research and a follow-up survey across the partnership.

The design of the training programme is structured around key information provided by all partner organisations and a comprehensive needs analysis.

The innovative component of this output is related to the introduction of a **situation-based** approach for planning, implementing and assessing apprenticeships. The Programme is flexible in terms of delivery and can be delivered independently, as well as a separate module integrated in other relevant training programmes.

The lead organisation for the development of the present Programme is the Modern Education Foundation, the project contractor, supported by all partner organisations in line with their specific knowledge and expertise.

The objective is to create an optimal opportunity for sustainability of the current output and its effective implementation in WBL provision.

PROGRAMME DURATION AND STRUCTURE

24 academic hours (1 hour = 40 mins) for the entire Training Programme. Detailed duration by topics is further provided in each of the Training Modules. Based on the experience of the trainers, the proposed duration of the training modules allows for adaptation to the needs of the target group. For the purpose, initial analysis of the knowledge and competences of the trainers should be carried out. The programme offers flexibility in terms of provision as sections of the envisaged training modules could be offered as self-study as well.

Structure of the Training Programme:

Training Module	Duration (Academic hours)
What are the main principles for effective WBL provision?	4
How to successfully plan apprenticeships?	6



How to deliver quality apprenticeships?	8
How to assess apprenticeships?	6
Total duration	24

PROGRAMME AIM

Europe's most advanced economies acknowledge that WBL is a key factor for establishing young skilled professionals who contribute to the economic growth and prosperity. In order for WBL to be a win-win system for employers and apprentices, with the elaboration of the present Proficiency Train-the-Trainer Programme, the SUSTAIN VET project will provide trainers of company mentors with specific knowledge and skills related to core WBL principles. The emphasis of the first intellectual output of the project is on planning, delivery and assessment of apprenticeships.

By developing the first intellectual output, the partnership aims to support the continuous professional development of trainers of company mentors. The aim of the Train-the-Trainer Programme is to equip trainers with essential knowledge, skills and attitudes to efficiently train company mentors on how to successfully deliver apprenticeships. The Programme is targeting the real needs of both trainers and company mentors to create a common understanding of the concept of mentorship to foster inclusive and high quality WBL environment.

The Programme will enhance WBL-related knowledge, competences and skills of trainers of company mentors, namely:

- general knowledge about WBL legislation and regulation;
- knowledge of the situation-based approach to curricula development, instruction and assessment of apprenticeships;
- knowledge of competence-based methods for the design of in-company training programmes;
- competence to train mentors on how to instruct apprentices around professional situations from the real world of work;
- WBL-related horizontal competences;
- knowledge of the specifics of different forms of practical training and areas for cooperation between schools and companies;
- ability to provide efficient training to company mentors on how to conduct apprenticeships;
- capacity to develop effectively company mentors' key skills and knowledge in their work with VET students, teachers and schools;
- competence to train mentors on how to effectively monitor and evaluate apprenticeships.



TRAINING MODULES

In the following section fields of activity of company mentors are described as modules within the apprenticeship programme. These fields of activity have been transformed into learning areas. Thus, company mentors are able to recognise which theoretical elements refer to which kind of training practice.

The role of the trainer is to enhance company mentors' skills in order for mentors to be able to effectively complete the whole process of work (general overview, planning, delivery, assessment).

The suggested approach encourages development, which means that the incorporated learning tasks should be appropriate for different stages of growing expertise of the mentors.

The modules are task related and organised in specific knowledge, skills, competencies and topics to be trained.

The framework allows more training topics to be added according to the specific needs of the country, industry or profession.

MODULE 1: WHAT ARE THE MAIN PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE WBL PROVISION?

This module illustrates the essential WBL principles necessary for the design and delivery of trainings to company mentors who train apprentices.

Considering the identified basic WBL principles, as well as the profile of the target group, the present module also outlines the main characteristics of WBL and training requirements in partner countries. Similarities and differences are drawn.

Module 1 introduces the general idea behind the **Situation-based approach** for each of the three WBL principles, as a precondition for effective apprenticeship provision.

WBL consists of structured opportunities for learning and is achieved through genuine activity and is supervised in the workplace. These opportunities are underpinned by formal agreements between educational institutions, employers and students. All participants in this process consider the specific issues in relation to the workplace environment and deal with them appropriately, including informal discussions.

Work-based learning opportunities enable students to apply in practice areas of a given subject and professional knowledge, skills and competences to enable them to meet course learning outcomes.



Traditionally, WBL courses and opportunities are designed and developed in partnership with employers, VET schools and other stakeholders and contain learning outcomes that are relevant to work objectives. WBL is delivered through a meaningful partnership

All stakeholders should understand and respect their roles, responsibilities and expectations, and appropriate training and support is provided where required.

The underlying principle for this collaboration is that educational institutions and employers acknowledge that individuals (students) have unique needs within the educational institution and in the workplace, and collaborate to ensure that the opportunities are inclusive, safe and well supported.



The partnership between employer and educational institution is generally developmental, helping with the focus on the content and delivery of the work-based modules, and in designing the work-based assessments.

1. WBL IN THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Creating opportunities for quality VET lies in the implementation of effective WBL principles. WBL systems of participating countries face similar demands to enhance training programmes flexibility and



apprentice's adaptability to real work environment. Generally, these demands can be structured in the following **WBL principles**:

- proper **planning** in terms of designing competency-oriented training programmes and aligning these to school curricula;
- adequate **delivery** of apprenticeships. Methods how to **instruct, assign tasks and monitor** apprentices progress thus ensuring relevance to labour market needs;
- relevant **assessment** of apprentices' acquired skills, knowledge and competencies in a real work environment.

Considering the above outlined WBL principles, the profile of the target groups and their role in applying these principles, we can portray the main characteristics of apprenticeship schemes and of training requirements in partner countries and draw similarities as well as differences.

a. SPAIN

In Spain two different WBL systems can be distinguished regulated by national law. These two systems are:

- Training in work centres (Formación en Centros de Trabajo FCT): These are non-labour training practices carried out by VET students in work centres, located in the surroundings of the centres where they study, through a collaboration agreement signed by the school and the company;
- Dual System: Dual vocational training is the form of vocational training in which the student becomes an apprentice and combines training in the school with activity in the company.

In Catalonia, company mentors' training can be organised by:

- VET centres, for company mentors with which they develop dual training;
- The territorial services of Education, the Barcelona Education Consortium and the central services of the Department of Education;
- The Continuing Education Consortium of Catalonia.

In Spain there are official requirements concerning the trainers of company mentors which can be summarized as follows:

Required qualification:

- Graduate, Engineer, Architect or the corresponding Degree Title or other titles;
- Diploma, Technical Engineer, Technical Architect or other equivalent qualifications;
- Higher Professional Training Technician;
- Level 3 Certificate of Professionalism.

Required professional experience:

- 1-year professional experience as a trainer, in the last 10 years.

Teaching competence:

- Certificate of Professionalism of "Teaching of Professional Training for Employment";
- Accredited proven teaching experience of at least 600 hours in the last ten years in vocational training for employment or the educational system.



Currently no specific training for trainers of company mentors with focus on WBL exists. The above-mentioned national professional certificate (Teaching of Professional Training for Employment) offers general knowledge about being a trainer. The content of the training programme is the following:

Unit 1: Program training actions for employment, adapting them to the characteristics and conditions of the training, the profile of the recipients and the work reality.

Unit 2: Select, develop, adapt and use materials, media and resources didactics for the development of training content.

Unit 3: Provide and tutor training actions for employment using techniques, teaching strategies and resources.

Unit 4: Evaluate the teaching-learning process in the training actions for employment.

Unit 5: Provide information and job orientation and promote the quality of the Vocational training for employment.

Apart from the official requirements concerning the trainers of company mentors, the Dual System law also to a large extent regulates the training program for company mentors. The aim of the training is to introduce people interested in WBL and provide them with the skills to exercise business tutoring in this form of vocational training. The qualification course must include at least training related to:

1. WBL in Catalonia and its organization.
2. The organization of the stay in the company.
3. The admittance of students in the company.
4. Monitoring, student assessment and other pedagogical aspects.
5. Skills, leadership and incident management.
6. The relationship and communication with the instructors.

The role of company mentors is defined by law in Spain. According to it, company mentors are expected to have a professional qualification or experience and the necessary skills to host, train and monitor and assess learners and an appropriate time arrangement for develop the intended functions. More specifically, the functions of the company mentors are described as the following:

- Make communication with the training centre (vocational schools) through the tutor (teacher) of the training centre training;
- Coordinate with the tutor from the training centre the development of the training program;
- Monitor the training activity in order to assess the progress of the apprentice;
- Collaborate with the tutor from the training centre in the evaluation of the progress;
- Ensure that the apprentice complies with the corresponding safety protocols and prevention of occupational risks associated with the different jobs and learning;
- Prepare, at the end of the work activity of the apprentice, a report on the job performance and learning outcomes achieved during the apprenticeship in the company.

b. NORTH MACEDONIA

In North Macedonia, the conditions which an employer should meet in order to host apprenticeships are defined in the Law on Vocational Education and Training. One of the conditions for the employer is to be



able to appoint a company mentor, who has the appropriate knowledge, skills and competencies to be able to carry out his/her WBL related tasks. For the purpose, a special type of training is provided that must be successfully completed. Following the completion, company mentors are certified. According to the Standard for professional and other staff for conducting practical training with employers, the institutions responsible for the delivery of the trainings for company mentors are:

- Industrial Chambers and;
- the Centre for Vocational Education and Training.

On the other hand, currently no dedicated training for trainers of company mentors exists in North Macedonia. At the time of the elaboration of the present Training Programme, the training is carried out by the advisors from the Vocational Education and Training Centre. These experts participated in the preparation of the Curriculum and the program for professional-didactic training of the trainers by the employers where the practical training is carried out. It is envisaged that in the training program for trainers a special part will cover the principles of WBL. A Certificate is issued upon completion of training. In order to participate in the training, candidates must meet one of the following criteria:

- To be an advisor in the Vocational Education and Training Centre;
- To have at least 3 years acquired certificate for completed training for conducting practical training with an employer;
- A person who has obtained a certificate for successfully completed training for mentor for on-the-job learning and acquired pedagogical-psychological and methodological training in accredited higher education institutions or acquired andragogical training;
- A person in a Chamber that organises trainings with at least 3 years of work experience in the field of vocational education and acquired pedagogical-psychological and methodological training in accredited higher education institutions or acquired andragogical additional training.

The Standard for professional and other staff for conducting practical training outlines the role of company mentors in WBL. The standard covers 7 areas which company mentors should have knowledge in and be able to perform. These are the following:

1. Education system, regulations and responsibilities of the participants in the training;
2. Safe workplace learning environment;
3. Communication between the participants in the apprenticeship;
4. Planning and achieving the goals of the practical training programs;
5. Monitoring, recording and assessment of apprentices;
6. Training of teachers in professional theoretical subjects and practical training with an employer and
7. Work with apprentices from different ethnic / cultural backgrounds and with disabilities.

The role and responsibilities of company mentors is defined in the Concept for WBL adopted by the Minister of Education and Science with decision no. 08-4305/ 2 from 13.04.2020. Outlined role and responsibilities of company mentors are:

- presents the organisation and activity of the company to the apprentice;
- identifies apprentices' placements;
- prepares work assignments in accordance with the curriculum;



- adjusts jobs and tasks for apprentices with disabilities;
- prepares an annual operational plan and program for realisation of WBL in cooperation with the teacher based on the curriculum;
- introduces the apprentice to the regulations and measures for safety and protection at work;
- monitors, records and evaluates the progress of apprentices in the company;
- provides information to the teacher about the work and progress of the apprentice;
- participates in conducting the final exam;
- determines a joint assessment of the practical training program in cooperation with the teacher;
- controls the documentation kept by the apprentice;
- shares professional experiences and transfers knowledge and skills to the apprentice.

c. LITHUANIA

In Lithuania two forms of vocational education and training can be identified. These are:

- School form of vocational training. This type of training is carried out in a vocational school or another type of school. Practical training can be carried out in a company, institution, farmer's farm, or even with a freelance teacher;
- Form of organisation of apprenticeship vocational training. In this type the training is carried out in a workplace: in a company, institution, organisation. Theoretical instruction may be given at a vocational school or at another type of school.

Several pieces of legislation regulate the provision of WBL in Lithuania. The responsibilities towards the company hosting apprentices are formulated in the Requirements for Vocational Training Contracts and the Description of the Procedure for Their Registration. The requirements towards host companies can be summarised as follows:

- to ensure the implementation of the apprenticeship tasks and conditions provided for in the program specified in the Agreement, to develop the relevant competencies of the apprentice;
- to acquaint the apprentice with the documents regulating the internal procedure of the company (rules of internal procedure and conduct, etc.);
- to organise the necessary safety at work and fire safety briefings;
- to provide the apprentice with a place for practical training, to assign practical-production training tasks, documentation necessary for the performance of these tasks;
- assign a company mentor to the apprentice from experienced staff;
- if necessary, to provide the apprentice with work clothes and work footwear, other means of individual and collective safety at work in accordance with the procedure established by regulations;
- to remunerate the apprentice who independently performs the functions assigned to him/her in the production of commercial products or provides paid services by concluding an employment, service or other type of contract with him, depending on the object of the contract and the nature of the relationship;
- mark the beginning, end and course of the apprenticeship in the practical training diary. Provide the training diary to the vocational school.



According to an Order “On approval of description of formal vocational training procedures”, the employee responsible for the organisation and coordination of the apprenticeship, the company mentor, shall be appointed by the company, institution, organisation, farmer or other natural person who has accepted the apprenticeship and undertakes to organise and carry it out. Also, it is necessary to mention that according to the above-mentioned Order, a vocational teacher is appointed by the vocational school or similar educational institution to supervise the apprenticeship at the workplace. The role of the vocational teacher in the process is to develop an apprenticeship program that sets out the tasks for the apprentices. The progress of the apprentices is evaluated by the company mentor according to the criteria provided by the vocational teacher.

Despite these regulations, currently, in Lithuania, no officially recognised training programme for company mentors training exists. This also applies to the training for trainers of company mentors. Instead, various organisations deliver different mentoring courses. Considering there is no compulsory training for company mentors, there are also no specific requirements towards the mentor as well. Typically, companies hosting apprentices assign their most experienced and skilled employees to mentor the students. When selecting the right employee, companies consider several aspects. It is expected that the assigned company mentor is:

- Experienced in the field or subject within which the apprenticeship is carried out;
- Responsible for the safety and security of the apprentice during WBL;
- Able to motivate and support the apprentice;
- Able to transfer his practical and theoretical experience and knowledge, know-how and improve key competences of the apprentice;
- Pedagogical and psychological prepared to deal with apprentices;
- Aware of the VET system and legislation related to VET and WBL;
- Able to cooperate with the VET institution, including vocational teacher and management.

During the delivery of apprenticeships, company mentors largely rely on the support of vocational teachers who act as supervisors of WBL provision.

d. BULGARIA

In Bulgaria, the provision of WBL is regulated under several pieces of legislation. Namely these are the VET Act, as well as the Ordinance on the conditions and procedures for WBL (dual education). According to the 2018 revision of the VET Act, the right to deliver trainings to company mentors have the following institutions:

- higher education institutions accredited in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Higher Education Act;
- vocational schools;
- certified centres for vocational training;
- vocational colleges.



The profile of trainers of company mentors is not explicitly defined within existing legal regulations. The VET Act stipulates that the above listed institutions can train company mentors in case they follow the approved by the Minister of education and science training program. On the other hand, there are requirements towards the company mentors. He/she should be an employee of the company, has at least 3 years of work experience in the same profession and has attended a training programme provided by the employer. One company mentor shall be in charge of no more than 5 apprentices. The amendment to the VET Act introduced the role of the so-called teacher-methodologist. The delivery of apprenticeships is facilitated by a teacher-methodologist appointed by the school principal. The teacher-methodologist holds regular meetings and on-site visits at the enterprise/company according to a schedule approved by the principal and addresses in cooperation with the appointed company mentors any issues related to the practical training of apprentices.

In 2018 the Ministry of Education and Science endorsed an officially recognised training programme for company mentors. Organisations wishing to train company mentors should follow the structure of the programme as a minimum requirement. The Training programme for company mentors to acquire pedagogical and psychological knowledge and skills in working with apprentices in WBL consist of two main components:

1. Training Objectives:

The purpose of training for mentors is the acquisition and development of:

- methodological, organisational and social competencies;
- skills for planning, conducting, controlling and evaluating apprenticeships;
- skills for cooperation with teachers, partner vocational schools and companies;
- setting training objectives based on the working environment;

2. Training content:

- Legal framework of WBL;
- Basic pedagogical and psychological knowledge and skills;
- Planning, implementation and evaluation of WBL;
- Case studies and good company practices.

Considering WBL has been introduced in Bulgaria just recently, at present no specific training with WBL focus is provided to the trainers of company mentors.

e. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

When we consider the characteristics related to the requirements towards the target group and their involvement in the implementation of the identified WBL principles, we can elaborate the following overview of similarities and differences which exist in partner countries.

In three of the four partner countries, training for company mentors is offered by VET centres. These are Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Spain. The system in Spain is indeed more flexible as other training providers eligible to train company mentors of apprentices exist. To a large extent the same applies to Bulgaria. However, possible providers differ in both countries. In Bulgaria training to company mentors



is also organised by higher education institutions, vocational schools, and even vocational colleges. In Spain on the other hand by the territorial services of Education as well as the central services of the Department of Education. In Lithuania the approach to company mentors training is not centralised and/or standardised. Training is offered by organisations providing general mentoring courses.

In three of the four participating countries, North Macedonia, Spain and Bulgaria compulsory training programmes for company mentors exists. Lithuania is the only exception where no officially recognised training programme for company mentors is offered. A closer look at the compulsory training programmes for mentors demonstrates that indeed WBL related aspects are covered. In all of the participating countries however, discrepancy is observed between the requirements for the trainers and the training programme for mentors. Even though WBL principles are included in the training programmes for mentors, this specific knowledge is not outlined as a requirement towards their trainers.

No specific training for trainers of company mentors, with emphasis on the principles of WBL exists in any of the partner countries.

In all participating countries, company mentors are involved to certain extent in the elaboration of the training programme. The elaboration procedure is also somewhat identical. The development of the training programme occurs in a collaboration between the teacher/ tutor on behalf of the vocational schools/ VET centre and the company mentor on behalf of the company.

By involving teachers/ tutors and company mentors in the planning of apprenticeships, team spirit and efficient cooperation is enhanced.

Typically, developed training programmes consist of a work plan, learning outcomes and evaluation criteria. The procedure for elaboration of training curricula is slightly different in Lithuania however. The development of curricula occurs at the level of Sectorial Committees. On the other hand, companies and VET institutions working in cooperation for the provision of apprenticeships, usually engage in the development of non-formal training programmes to target the specific needs and requirements of the company.

Taking into consideration the characteristics of training programme development in partner countries, the project's intervention point is on the level of design of in-company training plans for practical training, which occurs between a VET institution and a company. This is the level where teachers/ tutors work in close cooperation with company mentors to plan the apprenticeship.



Elaborated training programmes serve as the main reference point around which apprenticeships are delivered and assessed. This inevitably leads to improved cooperation between vocational schools and companies from the very outset of the partnership between the two types of VET providers.

The role of the company mentor has been transformed. Nowadays, quality WBL systems require company mentors who are able to design and integrate the training content, are able to induct apprentices and assign the right practical tasks, are able to monitor their progress and last but not least are able to establish effective communication with the vocational school and/ or training centre. This requires an all-round, logical and flexible approach to planning, delivery and assessment. It also requires trainers of company mentors to be familiar with this approach.

2. THE SITUATION-BASED APPROACH

Situated learning is based on the finding that the situation-derived knowledge is more sustainable than the declarative, procedural and attitude-related knowledge, as its activation happens spontaneously. It is thus the entry door to all other knowledge.

The introduction to the situation-based approach is the result of continuous development on the basis of the situated learning theory, which forms part of the situation-based didactics.

Situation-based didactics seeks the answer to two key questions:

- How can we ensure that the acquisition of knowledge in school is not an end in itself, and that this knowledge can respond to the needs of daily life, especially the requirements of daily professional life?
- How can we ensure that knowledge gained from our daily experience contributes also to the learning process?

The main focus of situation-based didactics is the situation itself. Situations are what our lives are made of. Our behaviour, both in our personal life and professional life, materialises in space and time in a series of different situations.

Therefore, if we manage to describe comprehensively a set of related professional situations, we will have a framework, based on which to build an effective educational process in school, as well as a highly relevant apprenticeship programme to be delivered by employers.

Thus, **situations give meaning to the learning process**, no matter where it takes place – at school or in a company.

Situations help us connect and combine two perspectives: the one from the world of work and the one from school.



Advanced education systems around the world achieve the above by **using examples from everyday life to illustrate specific subject/topic and to better link theory to reality.**

The term "situation" is related to the Latin verb "situare" meaning "define, place, or position", and the noun "situ" which means "place, position". Thus, a situation by definition is positioned in space and in time. It is interrelated with various preconditions and variables which have an effect on us and our actions. In other words, our existence, our lives and our activities happen in situations that are influenced by different circumstances and that we can also influence on our part.

A situation is a structured unit of life in which people perform deliberate meaningful actions.

A situation is characterised by objective circumstances such as time and place and specific local context, as well as by subjective circumstances, e.g. the skills of the person taking part in the situation.

Therefore, the structure of a given situation is determined by at least the following elements:

- Aims that require relevant action;
- Issues and challenges that need to be addressed;
- Actions taken;
- Conditions in which these actions occur;
- Tools used;
- Rules and standards to be followed.

Daily life consists of a complex combination of activities, actions, skills, behaviours, rules, roles, values and many more. Making daily life accessible to teaching is not an easy task. For this reason, the concept of the situation is valuable as it helps us narrow down the complexity of reality and synthesize it into modules that can be useful in the teaching process.

The situation-based didactics takes the situation understood as a work situation with specific requirements and characteristics and puts it in the middle of the didactic arrangement.

From a didactic point of view, we are interested in those situations that are particularly important and illustrate significant moments in our professional lives.

In brief, it is all about transforming specific work life situations into didactic/learning situations that one can reflect upon and acquire knowledge and competences by using them.



Effective didactical approaches do not require that one first acquires the knowledge in order to put it into practice later, but rather tries to combine knowledge acquisition with action and connects theory with practice.

The concept about situations provides a tool for targeted observation, reading, selection and description of elements from reality in order to make these applicable at school.

The basic principle of teaching through situations is the understanding that **the learning process starts by “immersing” the trainees in practical experience**, goes through reflecting upon and analysing the experience, providing theoretical knowledge that enriches the practical experience, re-immersing in the practical experience and ends with assessing the acquired knowledge and skills.

The purpose of the high-quality learning process is to enable the student or trainee to develop relevant knowledge, skills and competences, but most importantly to apply these competently in dealing with real life situations.

In the field of vocational education and training (VET), situations describe and link the core activities specific to a given profession.

This process allows for the following:

- Developing a comprehensive outline of a given vocation and the relevant activities that are normally carried out by those practicing this vocation;
- Extracting relevant knowledge, skills and competence areas to practice the given vocation;
- Ensuring that there is consistency between what is learnt at school as theory and what is acquired as practical knowledge, skills and competences through apprenticeships;
- Better cooperation between the education sector and the world of work;
- Relevant experience for the students;
- High-quality learning process.

Module	What are the main principles for effective WBL provision?
Time plan	4 academic hours
Learning outcomes	<p>Knowledge: The Trainer of company mentors is familiar with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WBL framework legislation in the respective country; - Basic characteristics of the WBL principles; - Basic requirements for the WBL provision. <p>Skills: The Trainer of company mentors is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present and explain relevant legislation which regulates WBL;



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Illustrate the process of WBL principles implementation; - Clearly understand the WBL life-cycle, as well as its role and that of other organisations in implementing the training; - Ensure the acquisition of knowledge; - Demonstrate the process of integration of VET programmes into the processes of company activities; - Connect key competences and professional skills. <p>Competencies (Attitudes): The Trainer of company mentors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourages collaboration between employers, VET schools and other stakeholders for the design, delivery and assessment of WBL; - Recognises the advantages of situation-derived knowledge over the declarative, procedural and attitude-related knowledge; - Promotes the understanding that the learning process starts by “immersing” the apprentices in practical experience; - Promotes knowledge of the legal framework regulating VET in the given country.
<p>Topics</p>	<p>WBL Principles in participating countries</p> <p>Situation-based approach</p>
<p>Additional reading</p>	<p>Spain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dual System National Law - Dual System Company Mentor Certificate - Generalitat de Catalunya. Departament d’Ensenyament (2014) <p><u>National Law</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FCT <p><u>Autonomous Law</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FCT system in Catalonia: - General Law - 2020-2021 Law <p>North Macedonia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VET Act - WBL Concept Note - Standard for professional and other staff for conducting practical training in companies - Manual for cooperation of schools with companies for implementation of quality criteria



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Areas and forms of cooperation between VET schools and companies <p>Lithuania</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Legal act regarding requirements for VET contracts and their registration- Order “On approval of description of procedure of organizing vocational education and training in the form of apprenticeship- Vocational education and training law of the Republic of Lithuania- Professional standards- Formal vocational education and training programmes- Order “On approval of description of the procedure of conducting a course of pedagogical and psychological knowledge <p>Bulgaria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ordinance on the conditions and procedures for WBL- Company Mentors’ Training Program <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Cedefop (2018). Apprenticeship schemes in European countries. Luxembourg: Publications Office
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MODULE 2: HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY PLAN APPRENTICESHIPS?

This module identifies key principles for successful **planning** of quality apprenticeships.

Complex work demands careful planning in order to be effective. The present module introduces the **IPERKA** method which is an abbreviation for a structure of a complete work process in 6 steps. Structuring the work process helps assuring quality while reflection allows personal and procedural improvement.

The module also introduces the methodological rationale behind the **situation-based curriculum development** in order to foster a training which is based on work situations and provides very vivid and relevant learning that is clearly focused on real life work situations or competences respectively.

After the decision to take apprentices a good planning of the training period is important. There are some key aspects that the company mentor has to consider before the training.

On the basis of existing training regulations and general training plans (provided by the school) the company mentor should prepare an operational in-company training plan (workplan) and programme, which is aligned with the specific circumstances in the company.

As a trainer of company mentors, you will be expected to equip your trainees with the necessary skills and tools to plan effectively the apprenticeships that they will be responsible for. These include various aspects such as planning in general, target group analysis, programme design, etc.

1. KEY PRINCIPLES

Company mentors should be constantly reminded that they will be supporting young people as they start their working life, which requires a lot of **commitment** and **dedication**.

It is important to note that the process of designing apprenticeship programmes follows several **key stages** whose consistent and proper implementation guarantees the relevance and effectiveness of the apprenticeships as such.

The direct involvement of the business in developing the apprenticeship programme guarantees maximum alignment of theory with practice and the preparation of apprentices who possess knowledge, skills and competences that are adequate to the needs of the whole economy.

One of the proven horizontal methods applied in countries where apprenticeships and VET are delivered to the highest quality standard is **IPERKA** (Informieren Planen Entscheiden Realisieren Kontrollieren Auswerten).



The IPERKA method is based on the assumption that each task/project/process can be divided into six phases in which certain steps have to be taken, certain activities carried out and typical questions answered. The method involves the following stages:

- INFORM
- PLAN
- ELECT
- REALISE
- CONTROL
- ASSESS

In this module we will focus on the **first three stages** as these are of key importance for preparing company mentors for the actual delivery of the apprenticeships.

a. INFORM

This stage refers to **setting the overall objectives** of the apprenticeship. The activities that company mentors should be encouraged to do in this initial stage of preparation could be as follows (*this is not an exhaustive list and could be complemented by other relevant activities*):

- Self-reflection;
- Preparation of an induction session and additional guidelines related to the specifics of the workplace, the specific task and the Health and Safety rules;
- Communication with the school.

Self-reflection:

Before the first apprenticeship training it is important that company mentors spend enough time to reflect on some key questions (you can ask each of your trainees to complete a simple questionnaire, which will help them organise their own tasks and better understand their role).

Below is an example of the topics to be covered which can be expanded depending on the specific context and needs.

Please consider following aspects:

My notes:

What are my expectations with regard to training apprentices?



What are my role and tasks in the training of apprentices?	
How will this mentorship impact on my current tasks?	
Who can I expect support from?	
What knowledge, skills and competences should I have to train apprentices?	
What is my company expecting from me with regard to the apprenticeship training?	
What expectations will my apprentices have for me?	

After reflecting upon some key aspects of the apprenticeship, trainers can encourage mentors to discuss in groups their thoughts and then summarise some key findings and conclusions. This would help mentors in two aspects: have reassurance that peers have similar concerns and expectations with regard to their role as mentors and clarify for themselves how to best prepare for the new experience.

Induction and guidelines:

An induction for a young apprentice should consist of all the usual induction procedures that are carried out when a new employee is hired. Therefore, trainers should explain to mentors that a well-designed induction programme would guarantee a more effective apprenticeship, as well as clarity with regard to many key aspects that the apprentice is likely to come across during the time spent in the company.

Some of the best practice Human Resources (HR) policy examples include:

- Welcome of the apprentice;
- An introduction to the company, department and personnel structure;
- A layout of the establishment, depending on the building size and structure;
- The terms and conditions of the apprenticeship;
- Relevant personnel policies, such as provision of feedback, reporting and health and safety;



- Company rules and procedures;
- Arrangements for the apprentice's involvement in the business area or unit;
- An induction checklist, which will be used as a quick reference guide.

Communication with the school:

Building a good stakeholder relationship based on mutual trust is an important prerequisite for successful collaboration between the education institution where the apprentice belongs to and the company where the practical aspect of the apprenticeship will take place.

Trainers should emphasize on the fact that the traditional setting where the schools guide the process and are expected to be the proactive part during the apprenticeship is not always the best possible option. Since it is the company that will deliver the practical side of the training, it is a lot better if the mentor seeks regular communication with the teacher responsible for the apprentices' practice and coordinates any issues that may arise, as well as changes and progress.

To ensure successful collaboration from the very start of the apprenticeship, mentors should be encouraged to invest some time in planning the channels to be used, the frequency and the format of the communication with the education institution, as well as some key aspects to be discussed during these sessions. It is a good practice to schedule regular one-to-one meetings (could be online) with the responsible teacher and invite representatives from the education institution to witness what apprentices are doing during in-company training.

b. PLAN

This stage involves the actual **preparation** for the apprenticeship which is more tailored to the real needs and background of the apprentices to be hosted at the company. The activities to be carried out could include, but are not limited to the following:

- Plan the apprenticeship period step by step;
- Prepare alternative activities in case the original plan cannot be implemented on the specific day;
- Make a list of the necessary tools / machines;
- Calculate the indicative time required to complete a given task;
- Prepare a short script for the day.

A detailed overview of this stage will be provided in the next part of Module 2 dedicated to the "Situation-based Training Programme Design".

c. ELECT

While the PLAN stage involves considering various alternatives of how the apprenticeship could be carried out, during the ELECT stage the mentor should actually **choose the specific approach** to be



applied during the in-company training. This involves a comprehensive list of activities that are closely related to the working process:

- Determine the technological sequence of actions;
- Determine the exact type and number of resources needed to complete the task (machines, tools, materials);
- Schedule the use of the available resources;
- Determine precisely the time to complete each task from the apprenticeship plan.

The current training for trainers' key focus is on how to plan and deliver successful apprenticeships by applying the so-called situation-based training programme design. Therefore, when trainers are training mentors on how to effectively plan apprenticeships, they need to also equip them with knowledge and competences on how to design an apprenticeship programme (and plan) through situations, which will be comprehensively explained in the following part of Module 2.

2. SITUATION-BASED TRAINING PROGRAMME DESIGN

The situation-based approach can be applied to any profession and format of mentorship, as it refers to the methods used to design a relevant and effective apprenticeship programme, irrespective of the vocational specifics. This is possible because the whole design process is based on extracting and exploiting real professional situations that exist within a given occupation.

It is also possible to train simultaneously company mentors from several different professions, in which case the trainees are either divided into groups, or occasionally work individually. The advantage of such approach is the ability to hold joint introductory and concluding sessions, as well as discuss common challenges and share best practice.

The process utilizes the format of "working groups" and follows scenarios and programs prepared in advance. Various techniques are used to extract information and assist the process during the different stages.

In order for the trainer to be able to conduct successfully this part of the training, it is vital that he/she:

- is familiar with the vocational education and training system of the given country;
- has knowledge of the legal framework regulating the vocational education and training in the given country;
- is not a specialist in the profession under development (as this could lead to an unintended influence on the actual content of the produced documents);
- has excellent communication skills;
- is capable of providing clear and accurate explanation of processes and rules of operation;
- possesses good analytical skills.



In order for company mentors to be able to design a relevant apprenticeship programme and plan, it is necessary that the framework is based on what employees actually do as part of their everyday job.

Therefore, the situation-based approach seeks to collect as much information as possible on the typical daily activities performed within the company by the regular employees whose skills and competences the apprentice is expected to master.

In line with the above, the first step of the process entails the development of the so-called **situation profile**, where the trainer assists company mentors to elaborate an account of their daily work activities, which would then serve as the basis for the apprenticeship programme and plan.

The actual work should start with extracting information from the mentors (trainees) about their typical work activities. Since in most cases trainers would be working with groups of mentors from diverse vocations, this stage would require joint introductory sessions, when all the guidelines and clarifications are given, as well as each mentor working on their own.

STEP 1: The trainer **explains the purpose of this task** by providing information on the situation-based didactics and how situations can help describe the activities that apprentices should be involved in while on in-company training.

STEP 2: The trainer highlights that each participant should initially work individually and has to produce a **list of typical activities** from the working context of their profession. To help mentors in formulating a comprehensive record of job tasks, the trainer can ask them to try and respond to the following question: *What were your work activities over the last month? Please, try to describe all things that you've done in this period of time by trying to mention each different task only once.*

STEP 3: The trainer should help each mentor to **remove repetitions and inaccuracies**, as well as ask additional questions to make sure that there are no omissions.

STEP 4: The trainer then explains to the mentors that a group of similar activities can form one situation.

Situations represent a relatively complete stage in the workflow where a specific result is available in the form of a particular end product or service.

Practice shows that the situations should be no less than 15 and no more than 30. These situations are then summarised into 3 - 5 areas of professional competence.

Each mentor is then asked to **group the activities** described in the list in **work situations**.

STEP 5: The trainer then encourages each mentor to **group the various situations into larger clusters** which refer to the so-called



areas of professional competence. These areas of professional competence represent sets of work situations.

It is important to avoid the repetition of same situations in different areas. If this happens, it would mean that the proposed grouping is not appropriate and the process should be reorganised.

Practice shows that, depending on the specificity of a profession, situations are most often grouped into areas of competence following one or a combination of the following criteria: technological sequence of activities and situations; types of end products/services produced/delivered as a result of practicing a given profession; types of work materials used in performing certain activities; types of products produced; types of customers; and types of services.

STEP 6: After all situations and areas of professional competence are finalised, these are recorded in a template for the so-called **SITUATION PROFILE**. *Annex I* shows an example of a completed situation profile.

STEP 7: Once the situation profile is ready, mentors are asked to go back to each situation and break it down into smaller **actions**, which are needed in order to identify the knowledge and skills necessary for completing a given task by the apprentices. *Annex II* is a template that could be used to outline the actions.

Actions describe the lowest level of workflow performance. An action cannot be broken down into smaller units. It is a one-component act that does not usually lead to a specific result in itself. Actions can be repeated in different combinations and sequences in different situations.

Since in many cases company mentors find it difficult to differentiate between the concepts of actions, situations and areas of professional competence, it is important for the trainer to provide clear explanations and appropriate examples for all categories, putting them into context.

STEP 8: To formulate the skills that the company mentors would have to assist apprentices in acquiring, it is necessary that these skills are directly linked to the real professional situations. Therefore, the next step of the process is to train mentors on how to develop the so-called **qualification profile**, which will serve as the **framework for the apprenticeship programme**.

Each mentor should be asked to produce a short text, in the form of a **story**, which illustrates a specific situation or part of a situation. It is not necessary that the text exhausts the actions that are contained in a given situation, but should **illustrate a real professional practice** from the actual work process that leads to a specific result.



For example:

Area of Professional Competence: Conceptual Design

Situation: Design of Furniture

Example of a situation (story):

A furniture company has received an inquiry for the production, delivery and installation of 250 single beds of solid softwood for furnishing a hotel.

The technologist Peter receives from the owner of the company an assignment to prepare a conceptual design of the requested furniture product.

Peter determines the functional dimensions of the product and prepares a drawing of the general appearance of the bed with overall dimensions. He then proceeds to preparing a digital visualization of the bed.

Peter sends the client the visualization for approval.

After approval by the client, he prepares the design documentation and the specification of the materials.

Peter draws a preliminary balance expense rate and presents it to the owner of the company for approval and coordination with the client.

STEP 9: Once the stories are ready, the trainer helps each mentor to edit the narratives, supplementing or correcting the information as needed.

STEP 10: The next step is the identification of the skills and social competences necessary for the realisation of every situation. The trainer asks each mentor to start formulating lists of required skills and competences that he/she feels are necessary for successfully carrying out the situation (guided by the story).

Questions and reflection points that might be mentioned by the trainers to assist the process could be: *“Think about what the main character of the story needs to know in order to be able to do a conceptual design”, “Does he need to be familiar with certain machines and tools?”, “What skills should he have in order to do a digital visualisation?”, “Does he need to be able to work in a team to accomplish this task?”, etc.*

Trainers should also briefly explain company mentors about **Bloom’s Taxonomy** ([short explanatory movie](#)) and how it could be used in this case. The Bloom’s Taxonomy verbs are used to correspond to the level of knowledge required for a particular qualification, speciality and profession. Skills (which is what company mentors should be interested in), are formulated through **action verbs**. Social competences are acquired both in the education institution and in the company. Essentially, they constitute psychological qualities, including attitudes, temperamental characteristics and personality traits. Their general purpose is to provide a good psychological environment, both individually and at a group level. They are often the same for different situations. Even though knowledge is predominantly



expected to be acquired at the educational institution, in many cases an apprentice would learn theory while on in-company training. Therefore, this aspect should not be neglected when designing a comprehensive apprenticeship programme/plan.

List of useful active verbs:

Knowledge	define, describe, identify, list, outline, explain, write, report, evaluate, critically evaluate, differentiate, compare, summarise, justify, analyse...
Skills	demonstrate, apply, assemble, install, perform, prepare, create, plan, select, estimate, make, locate, record, review, coordinate, extrapolate...
Competences	communicate, lead, instruct, monitor, act independently, establish, interact, respond to, reflect, collaborate...

Below is an example of formulating skills and competences for a particular professional situation.

Area of Professional Competence: Conceptual Design

Situation: Design of Furniture

Skills needed:

- ✓ applies in practice the knowledge about the functional dimensions of the types of furniture
- ✓ applies in practice the knowledge about the design features of the types of furniture
- ✓ differentiates the types of materials and fittings
- ✓ is able to make constructional sketches, drawings and specifications of materials
- ✓ uses suitable computer programs for visualisation
- ✓ understands the impact of colours, lines and shapes in the overall presentation of the product
- ✓ uses the consumption norms of the main and auxiliary materials
- ✓ calculates the time for making the parts and units
- ✓ applies the rules and norms for pricing
- ✓ is able to present, substantiate and defend a conceptual design

Competences needed:

- ✓ works effectively with clients
- ✓ provides the client with technical information in accessible language
- ✓ works independently
- ✓ has decision-making skills
- ✓ demonstrates responsibility and commitment
- ✓ has good communication skills
- ✓ plans effectively
- ✓ possesses organisational skills
- ✓ flexibility
- ✓ creativity
- ✓ shows initiative

STEP 11: The trainer should invite company mentors to develop such lists of skills and competences for each situation from their qualification profile. Once ready, mentors will notice that certain skills and



competences are repetitive, which is absolutely normal and would confirm that various skills would be mastered through different professional activities that apprentices would be assigned to during their training in the company.

STEP 12: The next step in developing the qualification profile is to analyse how the skills and competences relate to all situations. The moderator invites the group to transfer all skills and competencies to an Excel spreadsheet (*Annex III*). The spreadsheet provides information about which skills and competences apply to which situations.

STEP 13: Once ready with the lists of all professional situations, mentors can start designing the apprenticeship programme. This process should start by transforming each situation with its relevant story, skills and competences into **specific learning objectives and working tasks**. These are also called learning situations in a simulation and reflect on the training experience. The stories can be also an invaluable source of information when trying to train an apprentice into a certain process or working practice that he/she would be faced with. The skills and competences defined earlier would then transfer into **learning outcomes**, which are the aspects to be assessed during the apprenticeship.

STEP 14: The next stage in the planning process is **the drafting of the in-company training programme/plan**. Trainers should train company mentors on how to effectively design these by using the information compiled on the various professional situations that exist in the given company/occupation.

The training programme/plan developed by a company hosting apprentices sets out how the enterprise implements the apprenticeship curriculum in the workplace, and how the general requirements of the curriculum would be combined with the specific requirements of the enterprise. To ensure that apprentices fulfil all the requirements defined in the occupational standards, the enterprise training plan should provide a complete description of the training to be delivered and the skills and competencies to be developed.

More specifically, the training programme/plan should set out when and where different training sequences will be carried out, and identify the individuals responsible for delivering different parts of the training. It should also specify how and when the assessment will take place

The first thing that company mentors need to consider is that the apprenticeship programme normally consists of on-the-job (in-company) and off-the-job (at school) training. In most countries with dual VET programmes (apprenticeships) usually one to four days per week apprentices spend at school and the rest of the time in the company. The proportion of off-the-job training is usually greater in the first year and decreases in the following years. Therefore, company mentors need to **have a clear picture about the time each apprentice would be spending at the company** in order to plan and schedule the activities to be carried out in real work situations.



To ensure consistency between on- and off-the-job training company mentors should always work in collaboration with the teachers from the VET school/institutions that the apprentices belong to. There are a few **requirements** that are valid no matter where the apprenticeship is taking place and the specifics of the given VET system. These are:

- The in-company training plan and the VET curriculum should fully **comply with the occupational standards** for the given vocation.
- Company mentors should draw up a **rotation plan for apprentices** in various departments of the company and coordinate apprentices' training with the relevant departments, supervisors and mentors.
- The plan should specify:
 - ✓ The **arrangement and frequency of on-the-job and off-the-job training** – if part of the training takes place in other companies or intermediaries, the plan should state the specific duration and parts of the curriculum to be covered outside of the company.
 - ✓ Details on the various **training methods, tools and materials** to be used, as well as any additional support available to apprentices to help them to successfully complete the training.
 - ✓ The **skills and competences** to be acquired by the apprentices at various stages of the training and how the **monitoring and assessment** will take place.

3. PARTNERS – GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR PLANNING

When briefly outlining the planning process of apprenticeships in the partner countries, we consider several characteristics. These are related to the profile and responsibilities of people responsible for the process but also to the procedure behind the elaboration of the apprenticeship in-company training plan, the formulation of objectives in the in-company training plan and last but not least to the administrative regulation of the entire process.

a. SPAIN

In Spain, the company undertakes to comply with the planning of training activities that have previously been agreed with the VET provider, to monitor and assess the progress of the apprentices and, together with the teacher/ tutor of the vocational school/ training centre, to revise if necessary, the schedule in view of the results achieved.

The in-company training plan is made up of three core elements:

- A set of activities that the apprentice has to develop, programmable in time and specified in positions, situations and means of work;
- Some procedures of realisation, from a default document, which adapts to the specific characteristics of the company and the apprentice and gives rise to the specific training program agreed between the company and the vocational school/ training centre;
- Some conditioning factors, derived from:



- The contents of each occupational field
- The organisation, resources and nature of each company
- The characteristics of the educational centre/ vocational school
- The characteristics of each of the apprentices.

The in-company training plan is a document agreed between the company and the training centre. It is the document that specifies the activities that can be carried out by the apprentice. The company mentor can make a thematic proposal of the mentioned training activities. The tutor of the training centre typically validates the activities proposed by the company mentor.

The in-company training plan includes relevant aspects for the proper implementation of training practices, such as:

- Specific programming of activities;
- Schedule for carrying out the practices;
- Name of the company tutor
- Monitoring procedures;
- Schedule of visits of the teacher/ tutor to the company;
- Evaluation procedure and criteria.

b. NORTH MACEDONIA

In North Macedonia, apprenticeship coordinators are appointed within the vocational schools. Their main role is to establish cooperation between the school and the company and to provide apprenticeship schemes for students by companies, and to keep records of the placement of apprentices for jobs according to the qualification for which the student is studying. There are work-based learning curricula for each qualification that list general learning outcomes. The on-the-job learning teacher, together with the company mentor, reviews the program and records the learning outcomes which apprentices in the company can achieve by working in one or more jobs in the company. Based on that, a plan is made for the placement of apprentices in the company.

A form for planning the apprentice's work for practical training is structured. The in-company training plan contains: Specific goals / Learning outcomes from the work-based learning Program, topic / modular unit, place / job where the tasks for achieving the competencies are realised, for example: name of the production plant, name of the service department, etc.

The goals which students are expected to achieve during the apprenticeship with the employer are set together by the teacher and the company mentor.

c. LITHUANIA

The duration of the module "Practical training in a real workplace" is determined in the vocational education and training program according to which the student studies. The maximum duration of this



module is 10 credits or 220 hours. The module “Practical training in a real workplace” takes place in a real workplace (company) or in a sectoral practical training centre (modern practical workshops established according to the needs of business in bigger regional VET schools). Apprentices find practice places by themselves with the help and mediation of the vocational teachers. The practice can only be done by those pupils who have positive evaluations from all other modules they had studied. When a student is sent for apprenticeship, a tripartite agreement for practical training is concluded between the apprentice, the school and the company. The form of the agreement is established by law.

The in-company training plan is drawn up and the practice tasks are determined according to the vocational education and training program. The in-company training plan is discussed and agreed with the assigned company mentor of the company.

The teacher from the vocational school, who is responsible for the student's practice, prepares the in-company training plan and tasks of the module “Practical training in the real workplace”, based on the competencies provided in the vocational education and training program. The tasks that the student must complete during the apprenticeship are written in his/her practice diary. The goals for the apprenticeship are set by the vocational teacher appointed by the school.

According to the general vocational education and training plans, (article 35 “The implementation of the compulsory modules of modular programs shall allocate at least 70 per cent of their volume to practical vocational training, unless otherwise provided by European Union or national legislation. Part of the compulsory modules of practical vocational training is recommended to be carried out in a sectoral practical training centre and, if possible, in a real workplace.”) it is also allowed and recommended to carry out practical part of the compulsory modules of the programme in sectorial practical centres or in real-work place.

The VET provider appoints a responsible employee to supervise the implementation of the final module of the modular VET programs (“Introduction to the labour market”), who assigns 15 contact hours per week for the supervision, analysis, discussion and counselling of students' practical training in the real workplace.

d. BULGARIA

The planning of WBL in Bulgaria is regulated in the Ordinance No. 1 of 8.09.2015 on the conditions and procedure for carrying out training through work. This document describes all stages of the procedure for organising and conducting apprenticeships. Generally speaking, the coordination of the apprenticeship which occurs between a vocational school and a company is supervised by the so-called teacher-methodologist.

Enrolment of students to the work-based learning system of VET and training is decentralised and is based on a partnership between a school and an enterprise. The partnership is governed by a



partnership agreement between the school and the company, which specifies the terms and conditions for conducting the apprenticeship as well as the rights and obligations of the parties.

For the apprenticeship, vocational teachers and company mentors work in close cooperation to develop a program for practical training that is endorsed by the school principal. This document is the so-called in-company training plan and the role of vocational teachers is to align it to the State Educational Standards. During the practical training, a logbook (could also be referred to as apprentice’s diary) is kept, in which the student records the topics covered, the practical assignments given to him/her, materials, machines and tools used, the skills acquired and the problems that may have arisen during the apprenticeship.

For each apprentice the employer assigns a specific workplace and a trained company mentor under whose guidance the apprenticeship is carried out. Practical training in real working environment is carried out in line with an in-company training plan developed jointly by vocational teachers and company mentors, as mentioned earlier.

Module	How to successfully plan apprenticeships?
Time plan	6 academic hours
Learning outcomes	<p>Knowledge: The Trainer of company mentors is familiar with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The IPERKA method; - The Situation-based training programme design process; - The Bloom Taxonomy; - Apprenticeships’ planning procedures, including the legal framework regulating VET, in the respective country; - Organisational requirements for situation-based training programme design workshops. <p>Skills: The Trainer of company mentors is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrate the planning of apprenticeship training using the first three stages of the IPERKA method; - Explain how training is prepared in compliance with the Situation-based Didactics; - Explain the logic behind the situation-based training programme design; - Demonstrate each step of the situation-based training programme design process; - Describe and arrange a learning situation in a simulation and reflect on the teaching and training experience.



	<p>Competencies (Attitudes): The Trainer of company mentors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourages the direct involvement of the business in developing the apprenticeship programme in order to guarantee maximum alignment of theory with practice; - Promotes the IPERKA method for the preparing of apprenticeships' delivery; - Demonstrates the importance of the situation-based curriculum development method for the design of in-company training plan which provides learning focused on real life work situations.
<p>Topics covered</p>	<p>The IPERKA Method</p> <p>The Situation-based Training Programme design</p> <p>Planning procedures in partner countries</p>
<p>Additional reading</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Commission: High-performance apprenticeship & work-based learning: 20 guiding principles. - Guidelines for ferial practice in North Macedonia (General guidelines for planning, organization and implementation, monitoring and recording of ferial practice - Situation-based didactics, Emanuel Wüthrich, SFIVET, 2014



MODULE 3: HOW TO DELIVER QUALITY APPRENTICESHIPS?

This module will introduce trainers of company mentors in WBL to key aspects for the delivery of quality apprenticeship, which should be highlighted during a company mentors' training. The initial step recommended is to review the role of the company mentor in WBL, which will serve as a self-evaluation starting point of the competences each mentor should develop. Following, several key processes and stages in apprenticeship delivery should be covered such as induction of apprentices, assignment of tasks and monitoring process. Depending on the national context and the type of collaboration between companies and schools an additional emphasis can be placed on the communication with VET teachers and school administration.

1. ROLE OF WBL COMPANY MENTOR

The company mentor in WBL, is the key figure in apprentice's life, under whose guidance in-company practical training is conducted in a real working environment.

The company mentor is a key factor not only in adapting the student to the profession but also for building work habits and employability, acquiring and building up knowledge, skills and competencies. The mentor shares the experience and the lessons learned in practice, encourages, supports, exemplifies, tracks development and progress, evaluates.

Through the interaction with the company mentor, the apprentice aligns with professional values and integrates them into his/her mindset.

Across the different national WBL systems the scope of work of mentors might differ, but in general there are several key areas, where company mentor's contribution is needed, which can be summarised as follows:

- participates in the development and updating of the in-company training programme and implements it;
- introduces to each student the company's internal rules for practical training, as well as the occupational health and safety regulations;
- assists apprentices' adjustment at the work place and organises the supply of necessary materials, documentation and tools;
- demonstrates individual steps of the work process and assigns practical assignments to apprentices;
- controls the performance of tasks, gives practical advice during the work process and evaluates the quality of performance;
- monitors on ongoing basis the accomplishment of assignments and progress made in each apprentice logbook for practical training;
- along with the vocational teachers (where applicable), estimates each student's annual evaluation score for in-company practical training in a real working environment.



A good company mentor – apprentice relationship should bear the following characteristics (Balažević et al., 2020):

- ✓ Empathy (acknowledging and understanding that once you were in the same situation your apprentice is in today);
- ✓ Positive approach and enthusiasm (believing in your work and demonstrating enthusiasm for the area you work in);
- ✓ Developing capabilities (focusing on giving instructions and developing skills and knowledge of an apprentice);
- ✓ Inspiring (giving ideas and inspiring to do a meaningful work);
- ✓ Valuing opinions as well as proactivity and initiatives;
- ✓ Offering meaningful tasks and opportunities;
- ✓ Providing corrective feedback;
- ✓ Encouraging discussion, asking questions and critical thought.

The key to ensuring quality mentor-apprentice relationship is also linked to mentors' social skills¹. Social skills means being able to train and work cooperatively in a WBL setting with students. In the framework of apprenticeships, social skills are less about teaching and more about having the trainees try performing their daily tasks with your guidance and encouragement. It is also about spending extra time discussing over and reflecting on achievements and challenges faced by the apprentice, and how he/she could improve over time.

In the end of any company mentors' training, ideally, they would have acquired a minimum set of social skills as well as attitudes needed to perform their role better. These are horizontal to the WBL-related knowledge, competences and skills of company mentors offered by the present training programme. The list below is not exhaustive and serves only as a starting point on which trainers can build (SUSTAIN VET Project Training Findings, 2021):

Social skills for:

- effective communication and an appropriate approach to learners, stimulating learning and working;
- recognition of age and individual characteristics of apprentices;
- motivation for activity in the learning/ training process;
- setting achievable goals;
- avoiding conflict situations;
- dealing with conflict situations;
- teamwork, etc.

Attitudes/ personal characteristics:

- applying a flexible approach when working with apprentices;
- applying an individual approach to training;
- responsibility for the success of the apprentice and for the image of the company;

¹ Additional information with regard to relevant company mentors' social skills is provided in the Ultimate Company Mentors Survival Toolkit.



- taking on additional responsibilities for combining more activities;
- applying appropriate skills when mentoring apprentices with special needs;
- protection and care for the apprentices.

During company mentors' training, you can use the presentation of mentor's role as a self-evaluation exercise, combined with a group discussion. In the current practice of WBL mentor's, methods such as **World Café** are utilized to harvest the collective knowledge of learners and based on main conclusions decide on what to emphasise further. The practice shows that usually mentors participating in trainings come with different range of professional expertise and experience in working with apprentices. When these different perspectives are broad to the surface through the Word Café method, participants in the training will have the opportunity to engage in a constructive exchange of knowledge on the topics addressed.

There are several models that describe the growth in a mentoring relationship. One of these models is the **Goodlad model**, which contains four phases of a mentoring relationship – Initiation; Cultivation; Transformation; Separation (Simon et al., 2014). Basically, during Initiation the mentor should demonstrate that he/she is present for the apprentice. In the Cultivation part there is a strong focus on company mentor's belief in the apprentice's success. In the Transformation phase the company mentor encourages action. In the Separation phase it is about integrating learning and moving forward.

2. INDUCTION OF APPRENTICES

The first impression the company mentor conveys to the apprentices is one of the key factors for success of the whole training process to follow.

The quality of induction depends on mentor's ability to balance between formal compulsory elements to be presented (e.g., company description, code of conduct, safety instructions, labour policy arrangements, workplace specifics, training plan, etc.) and the informal getting to know each other aspects. The informal communication is usually underestimated in the formal setting of the induction process. Still, it holds the key to building a trustful relationship between the mentor and the apprentice, which is a key driver of apprentice's motivation for learning and development and compliance with rules and procedures during the apprenticeship period.

Company Mentors should be encouraged to think of ways to "humanize" the initial experience of the apprentice. Usually, mentors start right away with presenting their company and the rules the apprentice should follow. It would add greater value to approach this situation with a focus on non-formal communication with the aim both sides to understand more about each other in personal terms. This will minimize initial stress and make the apprentice feel better understood and recognized from the very start of the relationship.



There are several approaches to work with company mentors during training, in that regard:

- Practical activities, helping visualize and experience the first induction situation. For example, using a role-play game, called "Induction meeting of students during their first day on the job" (Uzunova and Afrikanov, 2018). Mentors in training are placed in the role of a mentor working with 5 different types of apprentices, representing wide range of personalities and psychosocial state of being (e.g., demotivated student, over-ambitious, in love, apathic, aggressive, problematic, opposing, etc.). They have the task to participate in a short induction meeting with "apprentices", who are actually other mentors from the training group. In this role-play, company mentors very quickly connect with the idea to embrace more personal and non-formal approach in communicating the apprentices;
- Practical activities, helping company mentors better understand their apprentices and see through their eyes (Georgieva and Afrikanov, 2020). For example, asking company mentors to complete an empathy map of a real or imaginary apprentice. Empathy map is an instrument that focuses on the main characteristics, values, emotions, behaviours of the person it depicts. This allows mentors into the shoes of their apprentices and through this perspective create their plan for the forthcoming apprenticeship;
- Practical activities, helping mentors tell the story of their profession in an attractive and humane manner. In this activity, the **stories developed in the previous module** can be utilized. These are stories, which are written in a non-academic and concise manner, clearly depicting the work reality that will become the work reality of mentors. Mentors can be encouraged to revisit some of these stories and on the basis of these stories, create an interactive oral presentation for the apprentice. In such a way they will avoid the formal sounding of occupational descriptions or national framework programmes and will enable apprentices to understand clearly what they can expect from this workplace and from the concrete professional occupation they are assigned in.

The positive and personal check-in will build strong prerequisites for nurturing an atmosphere of psychological safety, needed for quality of the learning process.



3. ASSIGNING TASKS DURING APPRENTICESHIP

In the induction phase the company mentor discusses the overall frame of the apprenticeship with the respective apprentice. In brief, at this starting point they agree on the rules of their relationship and what learning situations can the given professional provide to the learners.

The following indicative task assignment process structure can be followed:

Task assignment is an important daily process, which ensures that the overall plan for the apprenticeship is complied with.

1. Company mentor and apprentice discuss the tasks for the day or the week (depending on their preliminary agreement).
2. Company mentor inquires to what extent the apprentice understands the tasks and checks whether he/she can implement it autonomously as a result of skills and knowledge acquired at school. Probably the task will be new for the apprentice due to the concrete specifics of the professional environment, but still, it is important to always start the process by asking the apprentice whether he/she can implement the task or elements of the task. Through this acknowledgement the mentor foster apprentice's self-esteem.
3. When the level of expertise of the apprentice is established and the task is assigned for the first time, the company mentor provides detail instructions and demonstrates how the task should be carried out. This can also be called modelling task implementation process.
4. During the first implementation of a given task by the apprentice, the company mentor is in a supportive side coaching role, actively observing the process and providing on the spot instructions if needed.
5. Following each implementation or at the end of the working day, mentor engages the apprentice in a quick reflection-feedback process during which the apprentice comments on how the process of implementation was, rates satisfaction with one's performance and maps areas of improvement. Following this self-reflection, the mentor provides feedback. It is important to highlight that the feedback should be constructive and emphasise on the strengths demonstrated by the apprentice with combination of concrete improvements to be taken into consideration for next implementation rounds.

For repeating tasks, the mentor is advised to gradually increase the percentage of autonomous working of the apprentice. In other words, start to deliberately leave the apprentice to work on the task on his/her own, which will enable building strong self-confidence.



4. MONITORING PROGRESS DURING APPRENTICESHIP

Monitoring essentially is about ongoing review of implementation of tasks agreed between the company mentor and the apprentice. In the context of apprenticeship along the task implementation review, monitoring should be also about collecting data on the progress towards achieving the learning objectives, aligned with the tasks.

When introducing this topic to company mentors during their training, it might be a useful approach to consider **using the stories about professional situations developed in previous modules**.

Mentors might be encouraged to look at the stories trying to identify what is the set of competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) needed to implement them in a quality manner. This self/group reflection exercise will deepen their understanding and sharpen their focus on the learning aspect of apprenticeship.

Company mentors are not just supervisors. They take the role of "teachers" in work-based learning setting, which requires carrying out multi-level monitoring

The list of competences identified can also be referred to as resources that the apprentice needs to develop and demonstrate to successfully implement a given task. This list can be compiled in a table format, which can then be used as a working checklist for the mentor when conducting monitoring activities. The compact checklist can easily demonstrate, where are the areas of improvement to be addressed.

Another source of data is the self-reporting and self-evaluation activities conducted by the apprentice. In some national systems, these activities are formalised and the apprentices is required to fill in a work diary/logbook on a daily/weekly basis, marking tasks implementation and presenting this document for verification by the mentor. In this document the mentor gives assessment on the basis of a set of quality criteria on the performance of the apprentice.

Since practices differ across national systems, when training mentors on this topic, it would be recommended to explore different experiences in that regard within the concrete groups and based on this map a common pattern and approach to be utilized. Furthermore, it is essential to always highlight the following main principles:

1. Monitoring provides evidence that both mentor and apprentice are performing well and in accordance with the initial mutual agreement.
2. Monitoring is not about controlling, but ongoing review of progress to provide timely constructive feedback to each other, which will further improve both the mentor-mentee relationship, but also the final outcomes.
3. Monitoring in work-based learning context reviews both task implementation in the given working environment, but also collects information on the level of competences development.
4. Monitoring generates significant data, which should be collected, stored, and organised in a structured and orderly manner.



5. COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION WITH VET SCHOOLS

Mentors play a crucial role in the process of bridging education providers and employers.

Traditionally, education providers and employers easily fall victims to generalised assumptions that education institutions cannot equip young persons with the necessary skills they would need on the labour market or that employers only demand results, without investing in education of future workplace. Mentors as representatives of the employers in this relation can also be impacted by stereotypic thinking, which they bring into their work with the apprentices. In training of company mentors, mentors should be encouraged to address these mental models and try to widen their perspective on the role of schools and respectively teachers.

One approach to nurture their understanding that teachers are partners in the process of work-based learning, who can support the company mentor in delivering high quality service is through providing them opportunities to see through the eyes of the teacher. One practical training activity that can be introduced is so called **empathy map**, which is an instrument from the field of design thinking. Empathy map encourages trainees to focus on what design thinkers call a “persona” (in current case, this is the teacher). There are different templates of empathy maps available online as an open source. Engaging mentors in this activity will enable them to better connect to teacher’s values, way of thinking and aspirations, which eventually would make them revisit their limiting beliefs and be more open to future collaborations. Presenting different empathy maps of teachers can be used as a strong starting point for group reflection, leading to awareness that both teachers and mentors share the same calling of supporting young persons to grow and that by being in close partnership all parties can reach high outcomes.

Breaking the ice of stereotypes allows for moving forward in proposing ways on how to engage teachers in active and productive partnership. Some principles can be highlighted in that regard:

1. Mutual agreement – similarly to the agreement with apprentices, the mentor can invite the teacher to discuss and agree on a framework of their relationship during the apprenticeship.
2. Active contribution – mentor should provide for active contribution of the teacher in the apprenticeship. Sometimes, teachers might feel excluded by not seeing and participating in the learning process of their student.
3. Sharing innovations – teachers do not have many opportunities to develop their knowledge in their professional field. Mentors at the same time can provide them with information on current developments in the given profession/industry. This will keep their level of teaching up to date.
4. Active listening and feedback – embracing active listening mode from the mentor will provide space for the teacher to share one’s thoughts and concerns freely, which will create trust in their relationship. Feedback in the context of this relationship, is about keeping informed the teachers about the progress of the apprentice on regular basis.



6. PARTNERS – GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR DELIVERY OF APPRENTICESHIPS

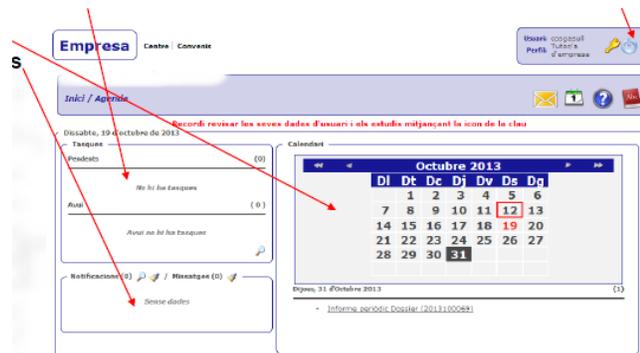
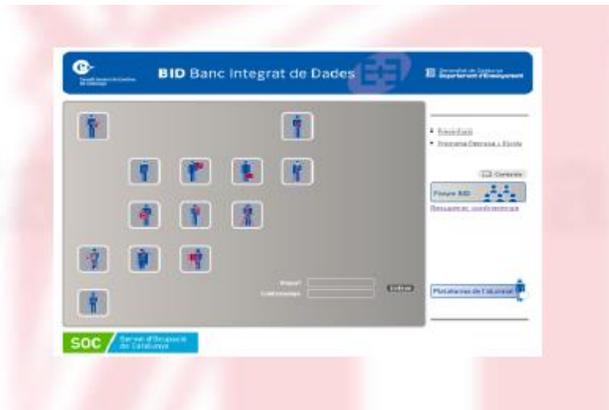
Inevitably, WBL stakeholders in partner countries implement varied approaches to apprenticeship delivery. In the following sections we will pay closer attention to some basic principles related to the delivery of training to apprentices by company mentors. Namely these are the activities and methods for assigning of tasks to the apprentices and the monitoring of apprentices' progress.

a. SPAIN

The overall management and monitoring of the apprenticeship period is done through a computer application quality integrated data bank (qBID): <https://www.empresaformacio.org/sBid>

The qBID presents several possibilities as an organizational model, mainly the following:

- Decentralized model: tutor teachers register companies, apprentices and agreements;
- Semi-centralized model: the VET coordinator discharges the companies and apprentices. Each tutor is responsible for making their own agreements and managing them;
- Centralized model: the VET coordinator registers companies and apprentices and create agreements. By reassigning, it transfers the tasks of monitoring and evaluation of the tutor of the students, object of the agreement.





b. NORTH MACEDONIA

In North Macedonia company mentors have mandatory task to provide brief training on occupational safety and health, safeguards and a code of conduct. Although, the apprentice is provided with general occupational safety and health training by the school before going to the company. Furthermore, the mentor has the task of assigning apprentices to appropriate jobs, and constantly explains and introduces them to work. According to existing regulation, the company mentor:

- ✓ ensures the fulfilment of the conditions for inclusion of the apprentice in the process of learning through work;
- ✓ transmits information to apprentices about the organisational set-up, the activity of the company and the code of conduct in the company;
- ✓ determines jobs at the company level, according to the learning objectives / results, the age of the participants in the training, inclusion of students with disabilities and takes care of the adjustment of jobs;
- ✓ organises job rotation to achieve the goals / learning outcomes of the practical training programs (workplan);
- ✓ controls the documentation related to the realisation of on-the-job learning with the employer, and recommendations for the success of the performed training;
- ✓ applies the provisions of the contract for the performance of the practical training of the apprentice with the employer and directs the student to fulfil his / her obligations in accordance with his / her role and responsibilities.

It is planned that one company mentor can be responsible for the provision of training to up to five apprentices. The company mentor introduces and explains processes and procedures and gradually incorporates them into the work process.

A general Form with points for evaluating the apprentice's work has been prepared by the company mentor. It contains evaluation elements (entered by the mentor), for each element the maximum number of points and the points given by the mentor after achieving the stated elements for valuation.

c. LITHUANIA

In the company, the company mentor (also referred to as company practice supervisor in Lithuania) acquaints the apprentice with the company's internal procedures, work safety, fire safety and work rules. He also assigns practical tasks, taking into account and following the practice program prepared by the vocational teacher who has been appointed by the school. The company mentor evaluates the completed practice task of the apprentice for each day, marking "completed" or "not completed" in the practice diary, respectively. The company mentor discusses the shortcomings individually with the apprentice every time it is necessary.

Depending on the specifics of the work, the mentor appointed by the company may use his/her own criteria by which to assess the student and the task completed by the apprentice. During the practice



period the apprentice is also monitored by the vocational teacher assigned by the school. The company mentor and vocational teacher communicate and cooperate whenever it is necessary.

d. BULGARIA

WBL for students from the 11th and 12th grades starts with the beginning of the school year and lasts throughout the entire school year according to a schedule approved by the vocational school principal and the employer. During the provision of WBL, each apprentice is assigned to a company mentor from the enterprise. As a general rule, one company mentor is responsible for no more than 5 apprentices.

At the start of the apprenticeship, the apprentice is acquainted with the instructions under the Safe Working Conditions Act and the Fire Safety Act, to which he/she shall testify with his/her signature. During work at the enterprise, the student shall adhere to the company's internal rules for training, as well as the instructions for safe working conditions and fire safety. He/she is expected to perform the tasks assigned to him/her in good quality and timely manner and make efficient use of the resources, machinery, materials, energy, etc.

Each apprentice keeps a logbook of his/her practical training progress. In it, the apprentice records the topics covered, the practical tasks assigned and completed, the materials, machines and tools used, the acquired skills and any issues encountered. In the logbook, the company mentor records his/her evaluation of the assigned tasks and the progress made by the apprentice. The company mentor supports the adaptation of the apprentice to the work process. Occasionally, company mentors are also expected to develop visual, didactic and other aids required for the provision of WBL.

Module	How to deliver quality apprenticeships?
Time plan	8 academic hours
Learning outcomes	<p>Knowledge:</p> <p>The Trainer of company mentors is familiar with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Characteristics of company mentor – apprentice relationship; - The role of company mentors in WBL; - Effective company mentors’ training methods; - Induction techniques; - Communication strategies; - Mentors’ tasks and responsibilities in WBL setting; - Basic task assignment processes; - Situation-based approach to monitoring apprenticeships. <p>Skills:</p> <p>The Trainer of company mentors is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Align the situation-based approach to induction of apprentices; - Demonstrate the process of task assignment;



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify and present learning tasks and work requirements; - Describe and arrange a learning situation in a simulation and reflect on the teaching and training experience; - Explain the principles of monitoring using professional situations; - Use effective instruments to encourage communication between company mentors and vocational teachers. <p>Competences (Attitudes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empathy; - Positive approach and enthusiasm; - Recognises the importance of the situation-based approach to induction, task assignment and monitoring; - Promotes communication and cooperation between company mentors and VET schools; - Encourages discussion.
<p>Topics covered</p>	<p>Role of the company mentor in WBL</p> <p>Induction of apprentices</p> <p>Assigning tasks during apprenticeship</p> <p>Monitoring progress during apprenticeship</p> <p>Communication and Collaboration with VET schools</p> <p>Delivery of apprenticeships in partner countries</p>
<p>Additional reading</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nevena Balažević, N., Kovač, A., Starčević, M. and Vierda, B. Toolkit for Mentors, Social Innovators project, 2020 - Simon, S. et al. Manual - SUPREME Mentoring Programme, SUPREME project, 2014 - Evtimova, P., Georgiev, N. and Zlatarska, P. Practical Guide – Dual Education, Domino Project, 2019 - Spain: Training Programme/ Apprentice Weekly Sheet/ Individual Evaluation Report Templates - WBL Toolkit – a single platform for the promotion of identified products and approaches



MODULE 4: HOW TO ASSESS APPRENTICESHIPS?

This module introduces the concept of situation-based assessment. The aim of this approach is to evaluate whether all theoretical, skills related and attitudinal knowledge can be mobilised into practice.

As the assessment guides very much the learning process, the assessment must be in line with the methodology and the objective of the instruction: that is assessing competencies. For the purpose, company mentors should implement a combination of practical assessments with a theoretical discussion pointing at explanatory knowledge. (*Emanuel Wüthrich, SFIVET, 2019*)

1. ASSESSING THE ACQUIRED SKILLS AND COMPETENCES USING THE SITUATION-BASED MODEL

An effective apprenticeship assumes that the company mentor and the apprentice regularly monitor the present state and assume the performance level of the apprentice. These aspects include, but are not limited to, clarifying the following questions:

- ✓ What is he or she able to do already?
- ✓ What is not yet achieved in such a way as it should be?
- ✓ What must be done to compensate the existing skill gaps?

The assessment process pursues the following key aims:

- Providing feedback to the apprentice on his or her state of training and behaviour.
- Motivating the apprentice to achieve the learning and working objectives.
- Arrangement of supporting measures for the optimisation of the apprenticeship itself.

The assessment process offers the apprentice the opportunity to express an opinion on the assessment results or to put forward questions. Very important for the success of an assessment is the real dialogue. The apprentice should not be a passive listener, but should be invited as a partner in the process.

Giving feedback to the apprentices provides them with the possibility to learn from mistakes and to use their individual strengths even more intentionally.

Assessment is usually divided into two categories with different objectives: **formative** and **summative** assessment. Summative assessment (also known as assessment of learning) refers to final assessments (including tests and examinations) after the completion of the apprenticeship programme. It is used to determine whether apprentices have achieved the learning outcomes of the programme or competency standards that would make them eligible for the intended qualification. Formative assessment (also



referred to as assessment for learning), by contrast, draws on information gathered at frequent intervals throughout the learning process, with the aim of identifying specific learning needs and adjusting training and teaching accordingly (Looney, 2011).

Many apprenticeship schemes involve **logbooks**, maintained by the apprentices, in which they note down the tasks they have performed and reference relevant documents, photographs of finished products, etc. Logbooks are used in various ways:

- to direct apprentices' attention towards what they need to achieve;
- to encourage them to reflect on their performance;
- to record key stages of achievement for assessments of progress, or to count towards formal qualifications.

In some countries a **training report** is produced, which indicates the level of progress achieved by the apprentice, at least once each semester. The apprenticeship trainer and apprentice discuss the content of the training report, which includes the assessment of technical, methodological, social and personal competencies, as well as a section to be filled in by the apprentice, with a focus on technical and methodological competencies, working atmosphere and level of personal encouragement with the programme - [Template for training report \(Switzerland\)](#)

With regard to situation-based model, the didactic questions are:

- How should the learning performance of apprentices be assessed?
- How should the various resources and the resulting skills competences be weighted?

The trainer should ask company mentors to go back to the earlier developed situations and the respective skills and competences which have been systematised. These are the aspects that need to be comprehensively assessed and if the situation-based model is applied this task is quite easy to organise in terms of WHAT will be assessed. Taking into account that each skill and competence belong to a very specific situation/s, company mentors should be encouraged to monitor and evaluate the performance of the apprentices during the execution of this particular situation.

The situation-based didactics recommend an assessment at the competence level, i.e. assessing the implementation of learning results in a real or simulated situation.

Trainers should encourage company mentors **to use a mix of assessment methods** that will deliver the most valid assessment of an apprentice's skills and competences across the situation and qualification profiles (also aligned with the occupational standards).

To choose the best assessment methods, company mentors should be encouraged to consider which methods are reflective of how the apprenticeship is conducted.



Below are some points for company mentors to consider when choosing the right mix of assessment methods:

- assessment methods should be as relevant to the vocation as possible;
- consider the level of the apprenticeship and the age of the apprentice;
- go through each professional situation and consider which assessment method would be the best one to assess competence against it;
- check that each professional situation is mapped against an assessment method to avoid over-assessment; this will prevent placing a greater proportional weighting on certain skills and competences;
- if there are particularly important skills and competences that require assessment in more than one method (for example, health and safety compliance), then these should appear to be assessed with regard to each professional situation;
- an individual assessment method can be made up of two or more complementary components to make that assessment method more robust and to cover skills and competences in a more comprehensive manner (for example an observation followed by questioning specifically about the tasks undertaken during the observation);
- assessment methods should be distinct and not be overly reliant on one form of delivery only (for example all orally based) as this might disadvantage some apprentices;

During the training trainers should present to company mentors some of the most popular assessment methods that could be applied. Below are some examples with explanations on how, when, why, as well as the pros and cons of applying each method.

OBSERVATION: An observation involves observing an apprentice undertaking a task or series of tasks in the workplace as part of their normal duties ('on-the-job'/naturally occurring). This must be complemented by questioning from the company mentor during and after the observation. Observational assessment is deemed the most appropriate assessment method for evaluating practical skills. By watching the apprentice complete a task, they can demonstrate their occupational competence. This assessment method is suitable for assessing skills and competences holistically. It is the assessment method most clearly aligned to the working environment and gives reassurance to employers about an apprentice's competence level. It also provides reliable, valid and authentic data and is cost-effective for the company. Observations allow for the assessment of skills and competences that relate to interaction with customers/members of the public which cannot be demonstrated in a simulated practical task. However, this assessment method may be less suitable for assessing vocations where the skills are less directly observable, e.g., accountancy, as well as vocations that take place in dangerous or restricted environments.

PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT: A practical assessment involves the company mentor observing an apprentice undertaking a set task or a series of set tasks in a simulated environment. It allows the apprentice to demonstrate their procedural knowledge and skills of 'how to do something'. This can be complemented by questioning from the company mentor during or after the simulation. This assessment method is



suitable for collecting first-hand evidence of knowledge, skills and competences. Advantages include: direct testing under controlled conditions, allows for preparation and could be performed at any time. This method might be less suitable when assessing skills and competences that involve interaction with customers/members of the public.

TESTS: This method includes a variety of tests that are predominately used to assess apprentice theoretical knowledge acquired during the in-company training. This can include multiple choice tests as well as open-ended questions. A multiple-choice test consists of a series of questions in which apprentices are asked to select the correct answer(s) from 3 to 5 options. Individual questions or groups of questions may include case studies, scenarios, sections of text, graphs or diagrams on which the questions are based. Well-designed multiple-choice tests provide an effective and valid assessment for occupations at all levels. A written test with open-ended questions consists of a series of questions which apprentices are required to answer. These could consist of one type, or a variety of types of question such as open questions and scenario-based questions. Short or long answer responses force the apprentice to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge and skills. Well-designed tests are suitable for assessing knowledge, the ability to judge between different options, assessing skills relating to data and information handling skills, problem solving, written communication skills, critical thinking and reasoning. It is easy to administer, is straightforward to mark, can be done electronically and low-cost to operate. This assessment method may be less suitable when assessing behaviours and skills pitched above those outlined in the occupational standard. Multiple-choice and written response questions need to be regularly reviewed to prevent predictability and to ensure suitability. In addition, some apprentices might be highly skilful when performing a practical task, but be less proficient in explaining what and why needs to be done.

PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION: A professional discussion is a two-way discussion between an employee at the company and an apprentice to assess the apprentice's in-depth understanding of their work. In this respect, it differs from an interview, which consists of asking questions and the apprentice answering them, with less scope for interaction and discussion. Professional discussions should not be led by the company mentor himself/herself as it requires active listening and taking notes. Therefore, the company mentor should act as an observer, giving the apprentice the opportunity to make detailed and proactive contributions to confirm their competency across the skills and competences mapped to this method. This assessment method is suitable when assessing in-depth understanding of a subject, occupations that cannot be directly observed in practice, aspects of an occupation that are difficult to observe, are rare occurrences, or take place in restricted or confidential settings. The advantages of this assessment method include the following: it can be used to supplement another component of assessment, for example, building on an observation, following a project report or a presentation; it can be wide-ranging in scope and cover a large part of the role and the occupational standard; it can draw upon other supporting evidence such as a portfolio or a project report and can effectively determine the authenticity of that supporting evidence. This method can also assess those skills and competences that require probing questions to explore the reasons for the apprentice's ideas or actions. It can be conducted online/remotely and is an effective way of collecting qualitative data. This assessment



method may be less suitable when assessing skills and competences in practical occupations which would be better assessed directly through workplace observation and practical assessment.

INTERVIEW: An interview consists of the company mentor asking an apprentice a series of questions to assess their skills and competences. It differs from a professional discussion in that the mentor's role is restricted to asking set questions, and there is no scope for two-way discussion. The independent assessor leads this process to obtain information from the apprentice to enable a structured assessment decision making process. This assessment method is suitable when assessing knowledge and understanding of a specific subject, as well as when assessing skills and competences that are very straightforward or basic. It may be less suitable when assessing skills in practical occupations which would be better assessed through workplace observation or practical assessment. It should be also considered that some apprentices may be nervous or anxious in this type of assessment, which may impair their performance.

PRESENTATION AND QUESTIONING: A presentation involves an apprentice presenting to the company mentor on a particular topic. It will be followed by a questioning session from the mentor. This assessment method is suitable when assessing the in-depth understanding of a subject, as well as some competences such as presentation skills, interaction with others and the ability to structure information. The method can be supported by other evidence, for example a portfolio of work completed during the apprenticeship, or a project. It may be less suitable when testing skills and some competences in practical vocations where presenting is not a regular activity. Here again, it should be noted that some apprentices may be nervous or anxious in this type of assessment, which may impair their performance.

PROJECT: Using a project as an assessment method involves the apprentice completing a significant and defined piece of work. This could for example involve producing an item which the company mentor can review and assess. The project should be designed to ensure that the apprentice's work meets the needs of the business, is relevant to their role and allows the relevant skills and competences to be demonstrated. Therefore, the project's subject and scope should be agreed between the employer and the education institution. This assessment method is suitable when assessing skills and competences in occupations where the work cycle is too long to be reasonably observed during the in-company training. Moreover, this assessment method can lead to producing something that is of genuine business value to the apprentice's employer, as well as testing skills and competences holistically (including practical, analytical and interpretive skills, as well as the wider application of skills and competences in real situations). Projects may be less suitable when assessing all the skills and competences that the apprentice should demonstrate in real working conditions, when there is time pressure, lack of opportunity to redo a certain aspect, etc.

PORTFOLIOS AND LOGBOOKS: A portfolio is a collection of pieces of evidence, gathered together during the in-company training that is used as the underpinning basis of an end-point assessment method. A logbook is the record of achievement created over the course of the training and can be used as the underpinning basis of an end-point assessment method. Portfolios and a logbooks or their equivalents can be used to support an assessment method (such as an interview or professional discussion). The



apprentice may use their portfolio/logbook to support their responses to questions. Logbooks and particularly portfolios are a suitable way of collecting evidence from a range of sources over a long period of time. They can collect supporting evidence from a number of sources over a long period of time. However, these do not provide enough information on the quality of the acquired skills and competences, as well as on the reasons for the apprentice being less competent in certain vocational areas.

When performing an assessment during an apprenticeship company mentors should find a suitable way to mark the achievements of the apprentices. Therefore, it is necessary that some **grading descriptors** are developed from the onset.

Grading descriptors are statements that identify clear features which enable a company mentor to measure the level of achievement. These statements tell the apprentice what they need to do or say to meet the required grade.

Grading descriptors break skills and competences down into actual actions and specific requirements which can be more easily assessed by making them measurable. Therefore, these are easily linked to the situation and qualification profiles that are being developed when applying the situation-based model of apprenticeships.

All assessment methods require pass grading descriptors.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF GRADING DESCRIPTORS:

- Ensure that descriptors are written in a sequential and logical order which follows the occupational standard and that they directly relate to their underpinning skills and competences from the qualification profile;
- All pass descriptors need to explicitly state what a pass looks like in practice. This enables the apprentice to understand what their practice should look like if they are working at the level of the occupational standard;
- All merit and distinction grading descriptors must be explicit and clearly demonstrate progression from the pass descriptor but without introducing additionality. This enables the apprentice to understand what their practice should look like when they are working at a level above that of the occupational standard;
- All grading descriptors must solely focus on testing the skills and competences and not the method itself. For example, a presentation method should not be used to test presentation expertise unless there is a competence within that occupational standard related to presentation skills.
- The most effective grading descriptors are clear, explicit and unambiguous and they should not be more complicated than the original skills and competences described in the qualification profile.



- When formulating their grading descriptors company mentors should be encouraged to start with an appropriate active verb to ensure these are measurable. *Since the Bloom's Taxonomy has already been introduced to company mentors in the module on planning and has been applied when elaborating the qualification profile, it should be easy for mentors to use the same approach when formulating the descriptors.*

Some other tips include:

- ✓ The verbs and language should align to the assessment method. For example – observation would likely be “demonstrate” whereas in a professional discussion then verbs such as “explain, describe, discuss” are effective as these imply that a question can be asked.
- ✓ Decide on which tense all descriptors are going to be written in (past, present, future) and apply this consistently throughout.
- ✓ Read through each formulated grading descriptor to check that it is clear and that it sufficiently covers all of the elements within the skills and competences assigned to it.
- ✓ Avoid repetition! Once a skill/competence has been covered sufficiently within a grading descriptor, it does not need to be covered again through an additional grading descriptor.
- ✓ Consider which skills and competences are simply pass/fail and do not create higher order descriptors there.

2. PARTNERS – GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES FOR ASSESSMENT

When we consider assessment procedures in partner countries, we try to answer several relevant questions. These are:

- Who is involved in the assessment of apprentices?
- Do company mentors use pre-defined materials for assessment?
- How is the assessment process organised?

a. SPAIN

In Spain, a number of different people have responsibility for apprentice training and assessment respectively within an enterprise. Typically, the roles are as follows:

- ✓ **Supervisors** have immediate day-to-day responsibility for an apprentice. They may be either a first line manager (who may have responsibility for other workers as well) or a qualified skilled worker. Apprentices will have different supervisors as they move between sections of an enterprise;
- ✓ **Mentors** have a more general role in keeping an eye on apprentices throughout their training programme. They may be from the HR department, or simply an experienced and understanding person who has volunteered for the role. They will **check apprentices' overall progress**, identify any personal problems and be available for a friendly chat. Sometimes staff from intermediary organizations perform this supporting role;



- ✓ **Assessors** make the formal judgements of whether apprentices have achieved elements of their qualifications. This role can be undertaken by accredited company personnel, but is often carried out by staff from intermediary organizations or vocational schools.

These roles are not always distinct. For example, some enterprises expect supervisors also to perform the role of a mentor, and a qualified worker can be accredited as an assessor.

Evaluation Tools:

- Evaluation sheet

The evaluation sheet is used to evaluate the professional apprenticeship module by the tutor of this module in the educational centre together with the person in charge of the work centre, i.e. the company mentor.

- Weekly student sheet

The weekly student sheet is a kind of "part of work" that the student completes as he/she executes the different tasks of the Training Program. This document can be included in a practical notebook that will serve to inform the teacher-tutor at the educational centre about the use of their training in the company.

- Documentation at the end of the Training in Work Centres

The tutor-teacher prepares a report on the development of the apprenticeship of their students that will be included in a global report on the apprenticeship made by all the students of the centre.

- Job placement report

Six months after having finished the professional module of the apprenticeship, the tutors of the educational centre consult the students about their employment situation to carry out a study on their professional insertion.

b. NORTH MACEDONIA

The assessment of apprentices in the implementation of practical training with an employer is performed by the company mentor and the vocational teacher. The recording of the training results is done by the company mentor and together with the teacher the mentor participates in the formulation of the apprentice's grade.

Currently a detailed procedure for assessing the achievements of apprentices during WBL is being elaborated.



Typically, company mentors use forms/ templates to monitor, record and assess apprentice's readiness and achievement, as well as the work-based learning process in general.

Company mentors keep track of apprentices' progress. Initial forms for monitoring, recording and evaluation have been developed, but the procedure and process is not sufficiently detailed.

c. LITHUANIA

The apprentice is assessed after completing practice in a company. The assessment is carried out by a company mentor appointed by the company and its assessment is recorded in the practice diary. The assessment is "completed" or "not completed". The company mentor also writes a conclusion about the practice, the pupil's abilities, makes recommendations, identifies shortcomings and areas for improvement. The pupil must complete at least 75 percent of initially planned tasks in order for the practice to be carried out and concluded.

After completing the practical training, the apprentice acquires the right to assess his/her competencies (during the exam). Competency assessment consists of theoretical and practical parts. The assessment of competencies is carried out by an employer commission consisting of an independent (the one who was not teaching the student) profession (in the field student was studying) teacher and 2 employers' representatives delegated by the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts or similar associated structures.

d. BULGARIA

The amendment of the VET Act in 2018 introduced a specific WBL feature related to examination commissions for professional qualification acquisition. Besides representatives of the school, of the employers' and of the employees' organisations, these commissions shall obligatorily include a representative of the specific employer partnering the vocational school for the delivery of WBL.

Section III of the Ordinance on the conditions and procedure for carrying out training through work regulates the assessment, completion and certification of WBL. The procedure foresees an ongoing and annual assessment of the practical training. The ongoing assessment is performed by the company mentor who records the marks in a practical training logbook (apprentice diary). On the basis of the ongoing assessments, **the company mentor and the teacher-methodologist determine the annual assessment of the student**. The annual score containing a quantitative and a qualitative indicator is recorded by the teacher-methodologist in the school documentation while the company mentor records the score in the practical training logbook.

The assessment of apprentices is based on criteria for their overall development. This includes criteria for:

- Teamwork;
- compliance with technological discipline;
- compliance with working conditions;



- personal discipline and motivation, etc.

After successfully completing the training, the apprentice receives a high school diploma and a certificate of professional qualification.

Module	How to assess apprenticeships?
Time plan	6 academic hours
Learning outcomes	<p>Knowledge:</p> <p>The Trainer of company mentors is familiar with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The concept of situation-based model of assessment; - Formative and summative categories of assessment; - Types of assessment methods; - Different tools for evaluation such as logbooks, training reports, etc; - Key principles of grading descriptors; - Assessment procedures and standards of the vocational education and training programme in the respective country. <p>Skills:</p> <p>The Trainer of company mentors is able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present clearly the concept of situation-based assessment; - Describe in detail how the assessment at the competence level is performed; - Differentiate between formative and summative assessment; - Differentiate between the different types of assessment methods; - Outline the pros and cons of each of the assessment methods; - Support the elaboration of evaluation tools; - Outline methods to analyse the information obtained throughout the training process to modify those aspects that improve the quality of the training action; - Demonstrate how the achievement of learning outcomes in a real or simulated situation is assessed; - Outline techniques for the provision of feedback to apprentices. <p>Competences (Attitudes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivate company mentors to use a mix of evaluation methods; - Encourages regular assessment of apprentices' progress, the acquisition of new practical skills and the compliance of these skills with the professional qualification; - Promotes the implementation of formal evaluation tools to document apprentices' progress.
Topics covered	Assessing the acquired skills and competences using the Situation-based model



	Assessing apprenticeships in partner countries
Additional reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Situation-based approach of SFIVET – a comprehensive methodological and didactical approach in VET, Emanuel Wüthrich, 2019- Steps and tips: Monitoring, assessment and certification, ILO



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ANNEXES

TRAINING MATERIALS

SAMPLE TEMPLATES

- **Situation profile**
- **Activity Description template**
- **Skills and competencies map (Excel)**