Dear Reader,

As you may know, the Early School Workers project is supporting the renovation of VET systems in Europe with the ultimate goal of tackling ESW and increasing the employability of youngsters in the society.

The difficult times that we are all experiencing following the post COVID-19 had a huge impact on the schools and consequences for our teachers and students. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closing of education and training institutions all over the world, several initiatives have been mounted to ensure continuity of the learning and teaching through this period.

The post COVID-19 outbreak brought out a renewal entrepreneurial away spirit focused on new ways of virtual studying and working. Within the Vocational Training, many teachers are working hard to develop innovative solutions to support their students during these uncertain times. Also, all over Europe, practitioners and policy-makers have been moving as fast as they can to implement distance learning.

There are over 2 billion of students in the world that today are forced by the post COVID-19 to study and work from home, and 27 European countries where the vocational education systems have been obliged to review the methods of delivery the exams by online in support of having distant learning methods.

Learning support is being provided in different ways: via books and materials taken from school; through various e-learning platforms enabling teachers and pupils to work and interact together, and with the help of quickly developed national television programmes or lessons on social media platforms. Some education systems announced exceptional holidays at the beginning of the school closures to better prepare for this distance learning support, but now all European countries are organising distance instruction.

We believe the post COVID-19 crisis will be characterised by schools focused more on the demand than on programs and will accelerate of the modernisation of our school systems in a good digital era way.
We also believe that it is time where we are all doing things differently and learning from the experience and we will continue to adapt our response to this unprecedented situation as it evolves. People’s ability to adapt rapidly to working and educating children at home has been extraordinary, and technology is something we should be grateful for, as it can assist us in this delicate phase and in something so important as education is.

When we have got through this crisis, we will not return to the world as it was. Rather, we can say that we improved our way of teaching, learning, adapting to new methods and practices, teachers interacting with students and vice versa. We can say that we are now preparing ourselves to face the world as it will be in the future.

The partnership of ESW welcomes IES Puerta Bonita as a new project partner

IES Puerta Bonita is a Public Vocational Training Centre located in Madrid and specialised in training professionals for the communication industries.

The mission of the Centre is to train its students (middle and higher grade) of Graphic Arts and Image and Sound as technicians, with the main objective of training professionals in graphic arts and audio-visual communication, facilitating their insertion in the workplace or self-employment.

One of the fundamental lines of the Educational Project of the IES Puerta Bonita is to promote international actions and projects to improve the professional qualification of the students and staff of the Centre, giving priority to inclusive and quality Vocational Training, perfecting the knowledge of new realities educational, social, economic, and professional at international level, especially in Europe.

Participating in the Early School Workers project, within the Erasmus+ KA2 program, is a great opportunity to continue with the internationalisation of the IES Puerta Bonita since it allows us to:

- Contribute to the improvement of Vocational Training in Europe with the aim of avoiding early school leaving and increasing the employability of young people and their active role in society. It is a shared interest at IES Puerta Bonita and an exciting challenge.
- Compare and contrast different educational experiences in different countries to achieve a much broader and more complete teaching perspective. In this case, knowing the experience of the English model University Technical Colleges - UTCs and its fit in the Italian, German and Spanish context is very inspiring.

- Share good practices developed through the PBL “Project Based Learning” methodology, making it easier to work on the key competences in Vocational Training and at the same time analyse the difficulties and strengths that help us improve the teaching-learning process.

**Training for Trainers**

**Italy - November 2019**

At the end of November around 20 people have been involved in a training for trainers in the Italian region Emilia Romagna: directors, teachers and tutors from the two Italian partners ENDO-FAP and ENAC, together with Prof. Franchini and Prof. Serrelli from the Cattolica University, met in the VET centres in Piacenza and Borgonovo to continue the training started in Foggia (Apulia) during the summer.

During the first day the coordinator explained the project starting from the rationale and then focusing on the phases and the results already achieved. After presented the first two Intellectual Outputs and the tools to use during the piloting phase, the participants started the workshops to practically project the PBL activities. In particular, during the first day the group had the possibility to work on the project “Etichette biscotti” (lit. “Biscuits labels”).

On the second day, the group took part in a presentation of the PBL activities developed at the UTC in Warrington, that were the focus of the second training organised in the UK one month before. Pictures, videos, and other materials were distributed to better figure out how to proceed in the experimentation phase.
Germany - January 2020

As part of the ESW project, a local training for trainers took place in January 2020 at two different locations of the CJD association North-Rhine-Westphalia South/Rhineland, where the ESW-Early School Workers project is being implemented.

The two VET training courses that are participating at the ESW project at CJD are the painters and varnishers at the CJD Frechen, a three-year course, and the VET training for sales (helpers) at the CJD Gummersbach, a two-year course.

The basis of the training was the product of Intellectual Output I, the Critical Review on the UTC and Concept model (guidelines), as to examine the UTC system together, discuss it and receive an introduction into the different components of it.

As the next step during the training the development of a first draft for a curriculum in the area of sales (helpers), as well as in the area of painters/varnishers based on the UTC system have been discussed.

The aim is to promote in that way the concept of dual vocational training and use the PBL method. The training was well received by the trainers and a vivid discussion took place, discussing PBL activities that are already taking place and can be further developed with these newly acquired insights of the UTC model.

An online meeting also for the ESW partners - March 2020

If we have to elect the main skills we have developed in the last months, for sure we will think about Adaptability, Problem-solving, and Digitalisation.

Everything was planned for the third project meeting and the third staff training activity: they were planned to take place from the 23rd to the 26th of March in the beautiful Emilia Romagna region, but since the end of February in Italy first and in other European countries later (and then countries all over the world) people - and therefore European project managers too! - had to face the terrible situation related to the Coronavirus spread.

The meeting was cancelled but the partners continued working in new, and sometimes creative, modalities.
Stuck in their houses, the ESW project managers had the possibility to proceed their work and to meet online through one of the several apps available.

On the 22nd of April all the partners connected on Teams to hear about the state of play of the project and to figure out how to proceed in the following months, both in the best and in the worst scenario.

The meeting was also the occasion for the new Spanish partner to present the centre and for EFVET to introduce the new Communication & Project Officer.

The first results of the piloting phase

During the meeting held online on the 22nd of April 3 out of 4 user partners had the possibility to present the results of the first piloting phase of their new curriculum.

Different PBL activities have been organised in the last months by the German and Italian partners, all of them with very good results.
Intellectual Output N°2 "Methodological framework and common tools for developing new curriculum"

Work Package 5 is the phase dedicated to the implementation of a methodological framework to be used as a basis when designing new curricula and for piloting new training courses aimed at young VET students.

The specific goal of this WP is the creation of tools that partners can test during the initial pilot phase and then apply them during the actual trial (WP6). The expected result is the application of the tools in three countries (Germany, Italy, Spain) and for each of the professional areas identified by each partner.

The innovation of the curriculum is focusing on the objectives expressed in terms of transversal skills and employability skills. The choice is closely linked to the recommendations of UTC model analysis and transferability guidelines. In this model, soft skills help to build the professional identity of young people and are, therefore, a priority for both teaching and learning. IO2 is currently available to download on the project’s website.

The Intellectual Output 2 stems from the 1st Intellectual Output, known as “Critical Review on the UTC and Concept model”. In particular, it is based on the importance of “establishing fundamental references and principles of the curriculum” and on the need for a VET centre “to choose and implement a validated model for the acquisition of transversal skills and include them explicitly in the curriculum”.

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