The Magazine for VET Professionals
Issue December 2020

The EfVET Magazine is published electronically on the website and sent to members by e-mail.

EDITOR
Leif Haar

COORDINATOR & GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Vittoria Valentina Di Gennaro

CONTRIBUTORS
EfVET Members

PICTURES
EfVET Members
EPALE website, European Commission website (European Vocational Skills Week 2020 webpage)

PUBLISHER
European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EfVET)

EfVET is a unique European-wide professional association which has been created by and for providers of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in all European countries. Its mission is to champion and enrich technical and vocational education and training through transnational cooperation and building a pan-European network of institutions that could lead European VET policies.
MESSAGE FROM EfVET PRESIDENT
by Joachim James Calleja

ANNOUNCEMENTS
New Treasurer from p-consulting, Greece

ANNOUNCEMENTS
New Vice President (Policy) from Esedu, Finland

29th ANNUAL EfVET CONFERENCE
by EfVET Conference Team

EFVET WORKSHOPS & ROUNDTABLES 2020
by EfVET Conference Team

INTERVIEW
by Catarina Boleo-Tomé Esménio, Escola de Comércio de Lisboa | Ensinus Group

INTERVIEW
by Tanja Halttunen, Axxell Utbildning Ab

INTERVIEW
by Luca Calligaro, ENAC - Ente Nazionale Canossiano

THE EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL SKILLS WEEK: AN INTRODUCTION
taken from the European Commission
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>BIC LJUBLJANA RECEIVED THE 2020 EXCELLENCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AWARD FOR THE BEST INNOVATIVE VET PROVIDER IN EUROPE</td>
<td>Tjaša Vidrih, Biotechnical Educational Centre Ljubljana, Member of Association of Slovene Higher Vocational College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>THE EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL SKILLS WEEK IN SLOVAKIA</td>
<td>Barbora Jakubíková, State Vocational Education Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>THE ASSOCIATION OF SLOVENE HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGES PARTICIPATION TO THE EUROPEAN VOCATIONAL SKILLS WEEK 2020</td>
<td>Miha Zimšek &amp; Alicia Miklavčič, Association of Slovene Higher Vocational College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>FROM VET TO TRAINING ENTERPRISE</td>
<td>Simona Aquilano, ENGIM Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>INTERVIEW</td>
<td>Ana Zacharian, Albanian Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>BRINGING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) POLICY CLOSER TO PRACTICE</td>
<td>Anna Barbieri, European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>CHRISTMAS WISHES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Message from EfVET President

JOACHIM JAMES CALLEJA

EfVET beyond COVID-19

This extraordinary year has affected the world in positive and negative ways.

EfVET is no exception to the challenges that the organisation had to face during 2020. The fact that members could not meet face-to-face proved to be a hard-hitting aspect of our communication and work with each other. The physical interaction between human beings is inherent in human nature and colours the rapport between members of any organisation.

While the pandemic kept us physically apart, technology brought us together more than we expected to be. In fact, those of us who had to work from home or from their office, using one of the online platforms will vouch for the increased number of hours to get things done. Of course, we are at all times saving on time to travel but even that has now been missed because travel can also help you reflect on things, which a normal busy day would not allow you to do so.

2020 will certainly go down in history as the year of COVID-19. For EfVET, it will also mark the year when for the first time in our history an annual conference has been successfully organised entirely online. This meant enormous work for our colleagues in Brussels particularly the Conference Team and for many of the Steering Committee and Executive Board Members to coordinate every aspect of such a huge gathering. It is therefore with pride that I look back at the 2020 EfVET Annual Conference and say that it has been an unprecedented surprise and successful event, which attracted at times over 250 participants. This is a record crowd for EfVET events and clearly shows that the organisation is going from strength to strength. It also illustrates that for the coming years we should consider having a hybrid conference mixing face-to-face with online transmissions.

Why are more people looking at EfVET as the voice of VET for Europe? The answer is very simple. We are the frontlines; we are those who make VET; we are the employees who confront the real problems on the workplace; we are those who speak to VET students, staff members, stakeholders. EfVET Members implement policy that emerges from research but which can only be fulfilled through hard work, the passion for providing attractive learning opportunities and for preparing young people to a work environment which is changing continuously. The focus in the annual conference on “COVID-19 beyond 2020: A new generation of VET?” proved to be an exercise in building enough predictive capacity to confront the unexpected.

The contributions from the OECD speaker Andreas Schleicher, João Santos from DG-EMPL, Michèle Grombeer from EACEA, Mika Saarinen from the Finnish National Agency for Education EDUFI and my colleagues Jon Harding and Stefano Tirati among many others were directed towards sharing with
training providers practical recommendations to support the new learning era post COVID-19. Presentations also focused on good practices from colleagues in different institutions across Europe who met COVID-19 challenges creatively and with success. Lessons were learnt from the COVID-19 period. The use of technology on its own is not the solution for situations in which learners and teachers cannot physically interact. Speakers and participants were in agreement that flexibility and blended learning could be the new form of learning in the 21st century. We need to embrace a broader range of cognitive, emotional and social skills at the same time. With or without COVID-19 or similar pandemics or hazards, the new generation of VET will be more demanding on work-based learning from home and workplaces. Young people will demand that teachers and trainers are well equipped to face technology in a creative, attractive, and sustainable way. In addition, they will demand that teachers are well versed with the developments in industry and the latest innovative aspects of workplaces and work practices. This implies that teacher training for VET teachers will be more focused on a sharing of knowledge and competences needed in sectoral places of work. When dealing with knowledge and skills from a theoretical point of view, the demand will be contextualise and not adopt abstract learning.

With the new ERASMUS+ 2021-2027 focused on continuity and wider cooperation at a global level, it is expected that VET responds by being more inclusive, by promoting the European values of mutual respect, freedom and democracy and having a greener approach to jobs and of integrating virtual cooperation when effectively needed. It is clear that VET institutions from schools to Applied Universities will be at the heart of the learning process needed to address the post COVID-19 period. Now that online learning has been tried and tested, we expect demand being greater than supply. This is because traditions die-hard and being largely a conservative cohort (of course countries and groups vary from one another) many teachers and trainers will find it hard to switch exclusively to online learning. There are many valid reasons why this is so. First, nothing substitutes personal interaction between a teacher and a learner. Secondly, VET is largely based, on hands-on experience, on learning by doing and on applying knowledge to practical live cases. Although virtual reality and augmented reality workshops are making a huge difference to students around the globe, yet the real experience of doing things is invaluable and a key characteristic of VET.

The aspects that emerged from the 2020 Annual Conference throw a new light on the role of EfVET in the coming months and years. Besides accomplishing, the strategic goals set in 2018 and in particular in increasing our effectiveness and efficiency with Members, in increasing membership and in endorsing a new and fresh EfVET Constitution. The organisation is also strengthening its qualitative role in its 17 EU projects to mention a few: SAAM, D-CARE, SWIRL, PECVET, Let’s Play in VET, SELFIE WBL and others as well as the work generated from the 17 Roundtables organised in the margin of the annual conference. In 2021, we will also work towards a web portal, which is more interactive and loaded with information to Members. A special focus will be dedicated to policy documents that throw new light on VET issues and hopefully surveys that indicate the trends in VET in Europe as part of our drive towards sustainable and attractive VET programmes. We are looking forward to 2021 with the hope of a much better year for all. Meanwhile, on behalf of colleagues in the Executive Board and the Steering Committee I wish you, your loved ones Season’s Greetings and a safer and back-to-normal New Year 2021
New EfVET Vice President (Policy)

Arja Flinkman, Esedu, Finland

The main task as the Vice President Arja sees the enhancement of increase in deployment of green skills, digitalisation and more flexible learning paths for all students in VET and CVET. Arja is now EfVET’s representative in EQF and participates also VET4EU2 and LLL Platform. She thinks that the best way to affect the up-skilling of European citizens and companies as well as public sector organisations is to co-operate with national education boards and local authorities through working together with EARLAL, for instance. To manage this we need to integrate the national boards of EfVET and all our members with Steering Committee and Executive Team.

“As Vice President, my term is three years. I’m really glad of my choice. In an interview with the Board, I promised to promote, in cooperation with other members of the Board, within the European education policy, lifelong learning and its access for all, the quality and sustainable development of education, and equality and entrepreneurship, among other things”, says Flinkman.

Arja has three children and is happily married. Her hobbies are playing golf, hiking, summer cottage and having both a dog and a cat.

She wishes Merry Christmas to everyone.

Arja Flinkman was elected the new EfVET Vice President (Policy). Flinkman currently works as the CEO of South Savo Education Ltd (www.esedu.fi) which runs the South Savo Vocational College. Previously she was the CFO of Mikkeli City consortium and the CFO/CIO and Vice President in South Savo Education Ltd. She has also previous experience on leading of education development and international affairs. The well-being of students and staff members has always been important to Arja.

Arja holds a Master of Science with Marketing as a major and excellent remarks and a Licentiate Degree with Accounting as major. Currently she is preparing a PhD in Management Control Systems in Planned Organisational Change. Making change means working together towards a common objective, and different kinds of managerial interventions are needed depending on the context and time capacity. To succeed in making change requires all kinds of interventions, commanding, engineering, teaching, and socialising ones.
Mr Panagiotis G Anastassopoulos holds a MSc in Business Administration and a bachelor’s degree on Mathematics and several certifications on the IT sector (including Java Master from Oracle). He speaks fluently, besides Greek, Italian and English and can easily communicate in Spanish. He serves the VET Sector for more than 15 years in different positions. In 2012 he created his own organisation based on the digital training and since then, he has collaborated internationally, through more than 30 EU projects, acknowledging and respecting the similarities and differences around European cultures and mentalities. The common ground of European Thinking and Living has inspired him for expanding his network also beyond Europe. Since 2020 he is the LifeLongLearning Sector moderator of Greece, working together with the General Secretariat of the Government for the needed reforms of VET in Greece.

Introduced to EfVET, back in 2007, becoming a Greek National Representative in 2013 and an active member in several working groups in EfVET, European Commission and Cedefop, has shared his passion for EfVET with several educational organisations, coming from Europe and beyond. In mid 2018, with the support of Jon Harding (UK representative), he acted as Secretary to cover the rising needs of EfVET. He has been leader of the EfVET Communication Team, as well as member in the Project and Conference Team for years, learning all the internal procedures of the organisation. Admirer of the detail and time frames he has passion for international collaboration and EfVET’s growth in terms of becoming and staying the greatest representative of the grass-roots organisations in the European environment, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. He said: “The voice of the VET providers to be heard is essential for the democratic structure of European Union and this is a great task to fulfil in the coming years facing all these challenges.”
This year EfVET hosted its Annual Conference 2020 in an online format with the title “COVID-19 beyond 2020: A new generation of VET?”. The conference was split in three sessions: EfVET Conference on October 22, EfVET online Workshops on November 5, and EfVET online Roundtables on November 19. On this occasion, it gathered over 280 participants coming from 30 different countries.

Joachim James Calleja, EfVET President welcomed delegates to the EfVET Annual Conference online saying that the topic of the day might not have surprised many among them. The COVID pandemic has hit the world and now we are faced with an enemy that has a strong impact on Education and Training. We had to find solutions very quickly and reach again the students in order for them to conclude their school year. The European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, addressed the welcome message to the EfVET 29th Annual Conference participants on the 22nd of October 2020 in his video message that you watch at this link.

The contribution from Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills, OECD highlighted that we also need to increase the use of technology in education and training and focus more on training in the future - proof sectors and occupations and enhance broader range of cognitive social and emotional skills. However, the countries used a variety of resources to support students’ learning while they were unable to go to school, including packages educational television, online instructional resources, etc.
Countries usually used several tools in order to reach the largest portion of students possible.

"The Future of the Erasmus Plus Programme: Key Elements in a European Education Area" saw the participation of three experts and high-level speakers who gave EfVET delegates insights and the possibility to learn from the last policy developments and future of work trends, and to exchange views among peers at EU level.

João Santos, Senior Expert - Vocational Education and Training, Apprenticeships, Adult Learning, DG-EMPL, European Commission, highlighted that the EU needs a skills revolution to ensure that people can thrive in the green and digital transitions and to help in the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Michèle Grombeer, Head of the Skills Sector at the EACEA explained the eligibility of costs in ongoing actions or contracts when individuals taking part in mobilities, meetings or events are prevented from doing so, for example owing to their recent contact with someone suffering from the virus or their presence in an area considered to be at high risk. The EACEA may consider as eligible expenses of travel or accommodation that could not be cancelled, and which are not reimbursed from other sources provided that the beneficiaries/ contractors/ experts submit relevant supporting documents in this sense.

Mika Saarinen, from the Finnish National Agency for Education, highlighted the Finnish Skills Anticipation Forum and the most important skills of the future in the TOP 15 and the new Erasmus+ 2021-2027 in its continuity and new focus areas.

The session of "Good Practices from EfVET Members and EfVET Declaration on VET in the post-COVID-19 era" was introduced by Stefano Tirati, EfVET Vice-President (Projects) and Jonathan Harding, EfVET National Representative, together with EfVET Members. In this session by showcasing some good practices during the COVID pandemic times, our aim was to show what resilience can do. The first day of the conference was focused on the immediate response to the pandemic and the support to Vocational Education and Training that VET providers have provided to their most vulnerable learners. In the discussion among participants, it was pointed out that vocational and adult education providers are proud of the diversity in the field. However, there are some areas where a common approach is needed. Useful documents can be found at this link and the Conference Video at this link.

During the EfVET online Workshops on 5th November we splitted up in 6 workshop sessions. EFVET President Joachim James Calleja addressed his welcome to all delegates to the EfVET Virtual Workshops 2020. He said "This session is very important in the EfVET Conference structure and gives us the opportunity for share ideas on topics related to VET but also related to the challenges brought by the recent COVID pandemic. When we talk of a new generation of VET, we hope that this will be soon the new generation that will be ready to the challenges of a new workplace and I look forward to your conclusions and deliberations looking into the above-mentioned topics". The Workshops Presentations & Reports can be found at this link and the Workshops Video at this link.

The EfVET online Roundtables took place on November 19, 2020 and represented an occasion not only for conference participants to learn about interesting best practices, colleges, promoted good inputs of the projects, but also for promoters to provide more in-depth information to all interested people and discussed future cooperation opportunities in the projects and in mobility. Seventeen European projects were proposed in the roundtables, just to mention a few: D-CARE, SWIRL, PECVET, Let’s play VET, SAAM, Early School Workers, SELFIE WBL, DRIVES and many others, proposed in the 17 Roundtables organised in the margin of the Annual Conference. The EfVET Roundtables brochure is available at this link.

The challenge today online is in managing the transition from face-to-face into one virtual world. The EfVET Conference, the EfVET Workshops and the EfVET Roundtables in 2020 have been a success for all EfVET Members and others!
Vocational Education and Training 4.0 TT tries to give answers and reflections, what are the biggest challenges to the traditional VET training and how should we develop our VET systems, working methods and required skills in order to operate in the next 10 years? The Covid-19 pandemic changed the world rapidly and we all realised how fast a global crisis challenged our systems and way of living. Even major changes in our educational models can be implemented quickly if necessary, if the reasons are important enough. The world is changing and VET needs to keep up with it. In this workshop you have a possibility to see and comment on the work so far and influence the recommendations from the thematic team, which will be forwarded to VET providers and policy makers.

Moderators: Kari Puumalainen & Vibeke Holtum Nørgaard
Rapporteur: Carina Oliveira

WORKSHOP 2: Blended Mobility: A Challenge for the future

The COVID-19 situation raised the urgency to find alternative solutions to replace temporary physical mobility. In this context Blended mobility has been promoted as a new possibility within Erasmus+ by the EC and National Agencies. However, combining
physical and virtual mobility was already a priority of the new Erasmus 2021-27 and its relevance for the internationalisation of a VET institution goes far beyond this time of crisis. It is well known how challenging the organisation of blended mobility is and with this workshop we want to focus on the start-up of it, to provide participants with practical input and ideas to get started. We'll hear from two keynote speakers sharing their experiences about how their institutions managed to develop blended mobility and we'll then work in small groups to define the roadmap to follow in this challenging pathway.

**Moderators:** Andre Schoonhoven & Andrea Lombardi  
**Rapporteur:** Justina Pluktaite

**WORKSHOP 3: New Reality in VET: Practice in companies/college training, online learning**

Online teaching and learning have had its problems and its advantages. Many have experienced difficulty in making sure that the class meets at a particular time, on a given platform and with the same state-of-mind that normally takes place when people meet face-to-face. Teachers and companies to find ways to continue to communicate. Some countries have developed YouTube channels for learners to follow the general VET lessons, others still have learning platforms like Moodle. With the education technology resources, students are able to learn, practice and preparation of real-life scenarios. The companies-based curriculum, software and education materials benefit and teachers alike. VET will be faced with the challenge of helping companies, online learning to new reality, maintaining as many VET practices as possible. Together, we can prepare students for a career in key industries. How can teachers partner with technology and remain in command of the learning process?

**Moderators:** Gaby Tinnemeier & Paulius Čepas  
**Rapporteur:** Nacho Camacho

**WORKSHOP 4: Sustainable development goals in VET**

The COVID-19 has resulted in a risk of losing millions of jobs – amongst them a lot of jobs related to the VET sector. At the same time, we face an increasing political focus on sustainability as huge climate challenges lie in front of us. We discuss how to mainstream green skills and incorporate them into education policies and practices as one of the measures to promote sustainability among European students/workers. And we look at the 17 SDGs as tools to take action and promote change within the VET. The following questions will be addressed in this workshop:

- How are education and training systems going to facilitate the transition towards a blue and green economy – and which skills are needed? – Which new dilemmas and paradoxes are we faced with as results of Covid-19?  
- How do we work together transnationally to find sustainable solutions within the VET institutions?  
- How do we facilitate collaboration between civil society organisations, companies, industries and public education colleges towards a sustainable future?

**Moderators:** Louis Aquilina & Stine Brynskov  
**Rapporteur:** Giorgos Giorgakis

**WORKSHOP 5: Post-COVID-19: The Education &Training roadmap to normality**

The Roadmap to normality describes how the COVID-19 restrictions will be lifted. Many countries are setting out their own individual guidelines and roadmaps regarding this matter. In many ways we are seeing an acceleration of the nascent changes that already existed. Online learning, for instance, previously a key point within a college's 2 to 3 year roadmap has now become...
an integral delivery mechanism for courses currently taking place. Will international students continue to study remotely for the foreseeable future? Do you think students will consider vocational educational training through this new medium, including the quality of their online instruction?

**Moderators:** Paul Murray & Jonathan Harding  
**Rapporteur:** Tibor Dori

**WORKSHOP 6: Online Learning and Teaching: the role of practitioners and capacity building**

COVID-19 pandemic effected more than one million teachers in 27 European countries. Governments are all stepping up efforts to provide training and resources to support teachers in adapting to this new learning environment. Capacity building development is integral to harnessing the transformative potential on the ongoing development communication technologies. In some European countries, initial teacher education and training courses are taught online, therefore VET teachers need high quality digital delivery skills and confidence in using web conferencing solutions. Distance education benefits institutions, not only because online learning and teaching requires no physical location, but also because it offers the possibility of increased enrolment compared to classroom-based capacity building education.

**Moderators:** Catarina Boleo-Tomé Esménio & Paolo Nardi  
**Rapporteur:** Liisa Metsola
Catarina Boleo-Tomé Esménio is the Advisor to the Board on Corporate training for ENSinus Group, a Portuguese leading educational and lifelong learning provider, since 2017. We had the pleasure to talk to her and ask her point of view on the online sessions of EfVET Workshops 2020 as the point of view of one of the moderators of the WS6: Online Learning and Teaching: The role of practitioners and capacity building.

Can you please introduce yourself and the college/organisation your work in?
My name is Catarina Boléo-Tomé Esménio, I am both the General Advisor to the Board at Escola de Comércio de Lisboa - ECL (Lisbon Commerce School) and the Advisor to the Board on Corporate Training for Ensinus Group, a Portuguese leading educational and lifelong learning provider. ECL belongs, thus, to Ensinus Group, as well as to a strong social partner, CCP – Portuguese Commerce and Services Confederation. It provides Upper secondary Education (12th grade) and professional certification, European Qualification Framework – EQF level 4 in Commerce/Retail, Tourism, and Computing.

What was your role in the workshop and, if you were a moderator, how was it to facilitate the session?
I was, together with Paolo Nardi from Cometa, Italy, the moderator for workshop 6 – “Online Learning and Teaching: the role of practitioners and capacity building”. It was wonderful to be able to facilitate this workshop and to revive the spirit we usually live every year at EfVET Conferences. Of course, it was not the same as if we were to be in Kuopio, Finland, in...
person – we all know how we like to be together, exchanging ideas, but hugs as well... after all these years, it's almost like we are a family! However, we were able to give good inputs, create good moments for reflection and sharing of good practices and we truly had a wonderful and enriching workshop, even if it was not in person, as we first imagined it.

**What were the key issues addressed within the overall topic of the workshop?**

The first key issue addressed in our workshop was the role of practitioners in this new hybrid and online environment and the question of being or not that different from what it should be in tomorrow's education systems, post COVID-19; from that discussion, we went on reflecting on the challenges faced by practitioners within hybrid and online learning and teaching. And finally we all debated upon the question of practitioners being ready or not to embrace this new transformative challenge, as well as creative and sustainable forms to improve teacher capacity building. To facilitate the discussion, we introduced OECD’s “new normal” in education (*OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030: OECD learning compass 2030 – A Series of Concept Notes*, p. 14), a table confronting traditional education systems with those embodying the “new normal”, that is, those emerging innovative features of education systems that may become commonplace in the future. We have also presented OECD’s *Future of Education and Skills 2030 new focus: “teaching for 2030”*, a new phase that will explore the types of teacher competencies and teacher profiles that can help all students realise their potential. To continue the introduction, we brought to the discussion the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu), underlining that in addition to the general digital competences for life and work, practitioners need educator-specific digital competences to be able to effectively use digital technologies for teaching, and this means, like we have seen three years ago at the European Vocational Skills Week in Brussels (cf. image), amongst other skills, “Facilitating Learners’ Digital Competence”, that is, enabling learners to creatively and responsibly use digital technologies for information, communication, content creation, wellbeing and problem-solving (DigCompEdu). We have also introduced the concept of emergency remote teaching vs. online learning, stressing that remote and hybrid learning are more than just digital versions of the classroom. Finally, we presented the idea of real communities of educational practices, transforming VET providers into action tanks. All complex, but critical questions that led us to truly fruitful considerations and exchange of good practices.

**What were the reflections matured at the end of the workshop?**

First of all, that change is paramount: we need a new mindset for VET colleges, not only on a strategy level - management- but for teachers as well and that there is no turning back, this has to be the “new normal”. Also, the need for learner activation and engagement – not forgetting social and emotional issues which are much easier to strengthen in a face-to-face interaction: social interaction is key in VET in order to give students the skills to manage not only personal but working life as well. Moreover, we need individual and personalised solutions, which means flexible curriculum and ways to adapt teaching to available learning environments and tools, whether we are referring to online or face-to-face systems. Teacher skills and competences must be developed in a versatile way, and this means training on methods, tools, but also on ability to change (!), and reinforcing practitioners’ active role to manage their own capacity building, which is absolutely imperative. In this regard, we have shared a publication from OECD with tools for teachers: “Supporting the Continuation of Teaching and Learning during the COVID-19 pandemic”. We have also discussed the problem of the digital divide and the urgency to pay attention to vulnerable students by finding creative solutions to face the different problems, whether they are of accessibility, school failure, student well-being or others. Linked to the digital divide, we have obviously highlighted the need for VET schools to be equipped with technical devices and tools for teachers to respond to these challenges. Last but not least, we all have
emphasised that what we have learned is capital and that all the good practices and findings should be used after COVID-19, and that they need to be the “new normal”.

Did you come up with a proposal of good practice regarding the topic discussed?

We have had great exchange of good practices in our workshop, and that is why EfVET is always so rewarding, even more in these times of crisis, I dare say. I have shared Portugal’s new School Mentoring Programme that encourages interpersonal relationships and cooperation among students through students’ co-agency and the identification of students who are prepared to support their peers, as well as my school’s initiative on creating the CHO - Chief Happiness Officer, to strengthen the positive atmosphere in the group. This lead us to dwell on the fact that we should have mentoring and tutoring programmes for both teachers and students and communities of practitioners within the schools, but also at a national and European level as well; peers and communities that would support each other. We have also discussed the learning ecosystem and the need to strengthen the efforts to include in it not only VET colleges - teachers and students - but also companies, parents, and other stakeholders.

Another great practice came from the “Thematic Team initiative: Coaches and Athletes”, which is a mentoring help and support programme to beginners from the more experienced.

Where do you think you might use the ideas developed during the workshop in your college/organisation or you have already implemented them?

I have shared with the group a new initiative from our school which has had already a huge impact on the community: the CHO – Chief Happiness Officer. We have a different CHO every two weeks, per class: a student focused on keeping colleagues happy, motivated, and engaged in their own learning by promoting and suggesting measures for the class benefit. This is a student who has to develop his or her social awareness to be able to ensure every peer in the class has a voice and that they are well to encourage effective teamwork.

We also have a CHO staff for each work space and this is someone who is supposed to develop his or her social awareness to be able to ensure the colleagues in the office are well and to promote and suggest measures for their benefit and well-being. This helps us to emphasise what we can do to alter negative contexts rather than what others aren’t doing.

After the workshop, and having in mind the shared good practices, we have just started a new role within the students, the Learning Navigators. This is a volunteer that will give and share his or her free time and digital skills to help students, teachers or other staff with regards to technological issues. We are building a schedule that will be added to our online Remote Learning Plan with the different contacts of ECL’s Learning Navigators so that we can reduce the digital divide in what digital competences are concerned.

What were your impressions about the workshop as a moderator and the way it addressed the topic discussed?

We were really pleased with the discussions we had. We got really good feedback from different participants and to be truthful, I think it has exceeded my expectations. Having had different EfVET Conference experiences in the past and knowing how enriching they usually are, I thought that it would be much more difficult to receive spontaneous interactions and good inputs in an online environment, so distant and so different from what most EfVET participants are used to. However, they completely sandbagged us with their insights, knowledge and contributions within the topic. This must bring evidence that the topic was indeed relevant and useful for VET.

Moreover, Paolo was a wonderful partner in this workshop that added much value, as well as our diligent rapporteur, Liisa Metsola, from Live (Finland), without whom we would never be able to present our key messages in the plenary. It was indeed a privilege!
Tanja Halttunen, Expert of International Affairs at Axxell Utbildning Ab in Finland, was interviewed by EfVET and expressed her point of view on the online sessions of EfVET Workshops 2020.

Can you please introduce yourself and the college/organisation your work in? My name is Tanja Halttunen and I work as the expert of international affairs at a finland-swedish vocational college called Axxell. Axxell offers versatile education for both youngsters and adults in 5 municipalities located in south-western parts of Finland and education for immigrants in the Helsinki region. To learn more about Axxell, please visit its webpage.

You participated to the online sessions of events offered by EfVET within the Virtual Conference 2020. Which workshop did you participate in and why did you choose it? During the EfVET workshops I participated in 2 excellent workshops; WS2: Blended mobility: A challenge for the future and WS6: Online learning and teaching: The role of practitioners and capacity building. Both workshops dealt with a topic that were relevant for my work and very current due to COVID-19.

What were the key issues addressed within the overall topic of the workshop? What was your reflection at this regard? Both workshops showed me how digital technology, when deployed skill-fuly and effectively by educators and international coordinators, can fully support the agenda of high quality and inclusive education and training for VET students. The workshop on Blended Mobility gave me ideas of how to implement virtual aspects into traditional mobilities and thus raise the quality of the learning outcomes. The workshop on Online learning and teaching gave me ideas about how to take advantage of digitalisation and virtual learning when planning the content for the curricula.
In my opinion both workshops were very interesting and gave me a lot of knowledge that I can and will implement in my day-to-day work at Axxell.

Where do you think you might use the ideas developed during the workshop in your college/organisation?
Both workshops gave me ideas of how to implement some of the cases, presented during the workshop, in the way Axxell works with KA1 mobilities and virtual education. The workshops provided me with the ideas needed to be able to present to Axxell's management what actions I felt Axxell needed to take and how to make sure that some of the cases presented during the workshops can and will be implemented in Axxell's pedagogical program.

What were your impressions about the workshop and the way it addressed the topic discussed?
I was a bit sceptic when I heard that the workshops would be held online. After participating I felt that the concept of offering workshops where you share best practices relating to a topic was extremely rewarding. Being divided into small groups gave us, the participants, the opportunity to speak and learn from each other. I sincerely hope that these virtual workshops were not just a one-off happening. I hope they will become a regular feature of the way EfVET works and shares best practices among its members.
The EfVET online Roundtables took place on the 19th of November 2020 and represented an occasion not only for conference participants to learn about interesting best practices, colleges, promoted good inputs of the projects, but also for promoters to provide more in-depth information to all interested people and discussed future cooperation opportunities in the projects and in mobility. Seventeen European projects were proposed in the Roundtables, just to mention a few: D-CARE, SWIRL, PECVET, Let’s play VET, SAAM, Early School Workers, SELFIE WBL, DRIVES and many others.

We interviewed Luca Calligaro, from ENAC - Ente Nazionale Canossiano (Italy), who is the coordinator of the project Early School Workers and presenter of the Roundtable related to it to ask him how was the overall experience.

Can you please introduce yourself and the college/organisation you work in? My name is Luca Calligaro, I work in ENAC-Ente Nazionale Canossiano as Project Manager since 2015. ENAC is an Italian association which brings together around 80 schools and VET centres. The international office has grown during the years and we are now active in several projects, from Erasmus+ KA1 to KA3, and more.

You presented your project in the online session of EfVET Roundtables 2020. Regarding the IO1: UTCs transferability guidelines, in what sense their approach seems to be capable of addressing and preventing the Early School Leaving (ESL) problem? In the UTCs knowledge and skills are acquired through the resolution of real problems or projects and/or creation of cultural and professional products. These innovative methodologies - as well as other aspects such
as re-thinking spaces, times and partnership with the world of work - are able to narrow the gap between knowledge and competences acquired at school and those required on the job. Moreover, employers work with school’s staff to develop the curriculum. In this way students receive *first-hand experience* of what life is like after school.

**Innovative methodologies and by re-thinking spaces, times and learning approaches have been very important to reach the excellent results of UTCs. How would you promote these results at national level in your countries and other partners’ countries?**

**Networks** are so important for us. As already said, we are an association of schools and centres based in 10 Italian regions. Moreover, we are member of the most important association representing VET in Italy, **CONFAP**, and also the other Italian partner, **ENDOFAP**, represents lots of VET centres. Through these networks we are therefore able to spread the results in Italy. We have also to consider that the projects is supported from two Regional Authorities in Italy (**Regione Emilia Romagna** and **Regione Puglia**) and one in Spain (**Comunidad de Madrid**). **EfVET** itself is another important partner that helps in disseminating the results, as well as all the other partners through their networks.

**Within the implementation of the project, and as a coordinator, what are the main differences you noticed between schools in UK and Italy?**

UTCs try to overcome the curricular-extracurricular dichotomy by including in the curriculum several activities that develop cross-cutting skills and competences. Moreover, UTCs are able to transform physical spaces to overcome frontal lecturing and they expand the school day changing the nature of school (no longer a “parking lot” but rather a place that promotes a wide range of activities). They are also able to involve companies and educational institutions to close the gap and mismatch between school and job market requirement.

Italian school has a very strong tradition, but the organisational model is far from the needs of new generations.

**Regarding the IO2, how does the created tool allow to combine the national standards of Italy, Spain and Germany with the innovative elements of the UTCs?**

The innovative element of the tool is determined by:
- The centrality of transversal skills and employability
- The adoption into the curriculum of innovative methodologies (Project & Problem Based Learning - PBL)

These elements allowed each partner to adopt the innovative aspects of the UTCs without breaching national standard.

**What were your impressions about the online session of Roundtables and would you see it projected in the future?**

The roundtables have been a great way to disseminate the project
results, able to reach people already aware of the project and also new ones, either members or not-members of EfVET. Taking into account that this year they were online, like all the other activities normally foreseen during an EfVET Conference, we could have foreseen longer sessions, since the interest was very high. Online events are great, but we hope to go back to face-to-face meetings as soon as possible!

What are the next steps of the project?
We have now started the piloting phase in all the VET centres (user partners) involved in the project and we are working to organise also some PBL activities online, considered the pandemic that still affects us. After the piloting we will evaluate all the results and we will publish the last Intellectual Outputs, namely the new curriculum created and the evaluation of the project itself.
The fifth edition of the European Vocational Skills Week was held from 9 to 13 November 2020. It was initially planned to take place in Berlin (Germany), however it was a 100% online event organised by the European Commission in cooperation with the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

This year’s theme has been VET for Green and Digital Transitions, in line with the Commission priorities of a “European Green Deal” and a “Europe fit for the digital age”.

As every year, a series of partner activities took place digitally across the EU. Anyone, anywhere had the opportunity to join in these activities.

Each year, as part of the Week, the Awards for VET Excellence recognise individuals and organisations for their efforts in promoting and offering high-quality VET. The awards are a celebration of commitment to VET and are designed to highlight the quality in VET, provide visibility to the winners, motivate learners and trainers, and support the development of networks and career opportunities. The award aims to give visibility to good practices of career-long professional learning in enterprises.

The winners of the 2020 Awards for VET Excellence have been honoured at the Closing of the European Vocational Skills Week. The winners come from across Europe and beyond, and they are all inspiring examples of excellence in vocational education and training (VET).
The awards were presented by Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights. He said: 'This ceremony closes a fascinating week. A week that showcased what vocational education and training has to offer. Participants have demonstrated that VET can be innovative. That it can be a bridge to the new digital and green world of work. Together, we will keep working to promote vocational education and training, and to make it more agile, digital and accessible to workers of all ages and throughout their whole life. We will keep making clear that VET is a unique path to employment.'


We are pleased and proud to announce that in the framework of the European Vocational Skills Week 2020, the European Commission awarded Biotechnical Educational Centre Ljubljana, Slovenia (BIC Ljubljana) with 2020 excellence in vocational education and training award for the best “Innovative VET Provider” in Europe! BIC Ljubljana is a member of the Association of Slovene Higher Vocational Colleges, Slovenia, which is an EfVET Member.
We are pleased and proud to announce that the European Commission on Friday, 13th November 2020 awarded Biotechnical Educational Centre Ljubljana, Slovenia (BIC Ljubljana) with 2020 excellence in vocational education and training award for the best “Innovative VET Provider” in Europe!

BIC Ljubljana was established in 1947. With 3500 participants and 210 employees, it is one of the 10 biggest educational centres in Slovenia today. It consists of nine secondary and two vocational college programmes and so BIC Ljubljana enable secondary and further education students as well as adult learners to gain general and professional knowledge in the fields of veterinary practice, food technology and nutrition, biotechnology, nature protection, hospitality and tourism. They provide in-company training for professional workers in companies. BIC Ljubljana runs confectionery, bakery, cookery, veterinary courses. Its career centre helps students take the next step to further education or employment. They actively participate in the local and wider community through numerous activities, projects. Their shop KRUHarije & CUKRniţe offers confectionery and bakery products made in their bakery. Since 2014, they have been running the Primula Tea shop in the Ljubljana botanical garden. In 2015, they opened the first school veterinary clinic in Slovenia and also the Culinary and Tourism Centre KULT316. The Culinary and Tourism Centre KULT316 is a unique and representative example of modern educational practice in hospitality, tourism, food technology, nutrition. The new premises enable further education and vocational college students to gain practical experience in a real-life learning environment, as the centre is open to the public. Within KULT316 first school microbrewery has been operating since 2016 and since 2018 also the first school tourist agency in Slovenia. Their recent innovative approaches include Kulinarična doživetja - a website (kulinaricnadozivetja.eu) and app with which they educate their students, parents and general public (also international) about gastronomy, nutrition, tourism, sustainable development... For kulinaricnadozivetja.eu they received a national award NETKO 2020 in the category ‘The best website of education and scientific organisations’.

In 2020, they opened EcoHouse BIC Ljubljana, a wooden and almost zero energy school building for students in the nature conservation technician programme. BIC Ljubljana is also a member of the Association of Slovene Higher Vocational Colleges. They organise professional international conferences on Trends and Challenges of Food Technology, Nutrition, Hospitality, Tourism, Education and Training. BIC Ljubljana has more than 20 years of experiences with international projects (Erasmus+, Interreg V-A Slovenia-Croatia...), partnerships with foreign schools, companies, etc. As an example of best practice, they often host schools from abroad, ministries, development agencies, employers… always with employee and students involvement.

Their students are encouraged to establish practice firms within which they develop new products and gain practical knowledge of enterprise and entrepreneurship. They often
receive awards for their innovative entrepreneurial approach and products.

Numerous **medals** and other **awards** from national/international competitions (Ecotrophelia, Krka awards, Eurosskills, AEHT, Biology Olympiad…) are the fruit of effectively preparing students in this learning environment using innovative pedagogical approaches.

The aim of the **“VET Innovators Award”** is to identify a European vocational education and training provider who has contributed to excellence in their field of work through innovative practices – and this type of provider is BIC Ljubljana.

---

Mag. Jasna Kržin Stepišnik, a Director of BIC Ljubljana:

"We are proud of our work and we are happy that it was recognised at the European level. Our main mission is education and we will continue to strive to ensure that our students on a secondary and tertiary level as well as our adult learners will always have excellent conditions for education and receive the latest knowledge in order to develop their skills."
The Slovak contact point for the European Vocational Skills Week (EVSW) have organised many activities to rise awareness and attractiveness of VET despite of the restrictions aimed to slow down the COVID-19 pandemic. State Vocational Education Institute, an agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, took the role of the EVSW national contact point for the first time, although it organised many activities in the previous years.

One of the key events of the European Vocational Skills Week 2020 organised by the Institute was the competition “MAKE IT VISIBLE-RESTART-INSPIRE” for small entrepreneurs, companies and training of students organised in cooperation with Slovenská sporiteľňa, Green Foundation, Junior Achievement Slovakia, and the Representation of the European Commission in Slovakia and other partners.

A series of videos on various aspects and challenges of VET in Slovakia reflects views and insights of Slovak and EU experts, including Joao Santos (European Commission) and Noémi Ráczová, the Slovak EVSW ambassador.

Quality assurance of VET in Slovakia and the Czech Republic was the central theme of two seminars organised by the Slovak and Czech
EQAVET Reference Points
for teachers, school managers, and policy makers from both countries.

The Slovak series #HumansofEuropass posted by the Slovak National Europass Centre has raised attention of wide Europass community.

In Slovakia, VET is still not perceived as the first choice among wide public. The aim of these activities was to highlight opportunities in VET for various target groups. Detailed information about the activities are available on the website.

© Photo by State Vocational Education Institute: Easy Way Fyto, school training company, running ecological bussiness, employed disadvantaged people/people with difficult social background

© Photo by State Vocational Education Institute: REN Slovakia, school training company, create ecological cleaning stuff and helps furing COVID-19 pandemic. All of them are winners of the competition "MAKE IT VISIBLE-RESTART-INSPIRE"
The Association of Slovene Higher Vocational Colleges has actively contributed during the European Vocational Skills Week 2020.

On the opening day of the European Vocational Skills Week 2020, November 9th, the Association of Slovene Higher Vocational Colleges took part in the session on "VET and Digital Tools in the organisation of EDEN" (European Distance and E-Learning Network). The session presented case studies applied to VET and based on work based learning and training, recognition of competences with employers and training providers and innovative practices in apprenticeships based on the use of digital tools presenting and discussing cues to future cooperation between associations dealing with VET and with online teaching and training. Two presenters are members of two expert providers groups of Platform of European Associations of VET Providers (VET4U2 group) of DG-EMPL and one presenter has worked across education and training sectors with experience in dealing with different stakeholders.

Alicia Leonor Sauli Miklavčič, Head of Development at the Slovene Association HVC presented "Smart e-Quality@WBL" on an
innovative digital management tool developed under the auspices of the Apprentice Track project. The prototype of the tool enables management of identity, apprenticeship design, recording details of placements, assigning and documenting learning activities during placement, monitoring progress per competence, feedback & evaluation, assessment and reporting, as well as database of final credentials. The presentation included a good practice of distant apprenticeship. The video recording of the event can be seen here.

The next contribution was on Thursday morning. The session focused on **Europass and Digital Credentials (EDC)**, the use of digitalisation and innovation to establish transparent career pathways and qualification systems. The new Europass platform was presented as the European tool for managing careers and lifelong learning, followed by a discussion on how Europass can support communication on and understanding of VET. Slovenia is among the early adopters and Jasminka Poličnik, Secretary General at the Association of Slovene Higher Vocational Colleges, presented the experience, opportunities, and barriers of issuing EDCs to students.

There are 19,430 registered users of the new Europass portal in Slovenia, which was established on 1 July 2020. As a Europass support service, the European Commission is developing the **Europass Digital Infrastructure for Digital Credentials (EDCI)** to support efficiency and security in credential recognition across Europe, enabling the authentication of digital documents.

The Association HVC and higher vocational colleges were invited to the pilot implementation of 'Implementing the Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI)', which began in September 2020. Four higher vocational colleges from Slovenia joined the pilot: **GEA College CVŠ, School Centre Novo mesto, Traffic and Transport College Maribor** and **Professional College Academia**.

The first test results indicated:
1. To issue digital credentials, it is necessary to amend the current regulations on issuing of public credentials in higher vocational education, which is the basis for issuing diplomas and diploma credentials.
2. EDC makes it possible to enter all the information currently required for the issue of the diploma and the diploma supplement. A good understanding of terminology is required for proper data entry as well as adequate support from the EDCI technical team.
3. It will be necessary to prepare an automatic transfer of data from the relevant college software in the form of CVs for entry into EDCI.
4. The graphic design of the higher education diploma is not in line with the existing EDCI template, the EDCI technical team has prepared the possibility to enter certain graphic elements and thus enable certain adjustments.

A final contribution was within the "**Spider web in the net: the future of VET session on Digitalisation in WBL**". This session discussed work-based learning (WBL) and its future developments and challenges in light of digitalisation, micro-credentials and green transition. The Slovene Association HVC presented a newly developed tool for competence trends tracking through institutional evaluation on regional engagement, a Smart Electronic System for Quality at WBL, quality criteria and indicators for WBL with supporting materials for educational institutions as well as SMEs. The video recording of the event can be seen here.
Biasiotto, Head of Ficiap Veneto Impresa Sociale, and from the experiential viewpoint analysing the characteristics, differences, and perspectives of the ENGIM educational enterprises currently in motion.

The educational enterprise was born in Italy in order to grant learning in the workplace within the school curricula. This formula can really contribute to the goods and services production and selling process, such as the case of “Officina UBUNTU”, the training enterprise crafted in Emilia Romagna as a bistro and an outlet selling local products. Over the years, the initiative has succeeded in increasing its standing and creating a powerful network generating revenues, which are continuously reinvested for the improvement of the learning experience and the equipment of the educational center.

In this context, building a solid and lasting relationship with the surroundings and a profitable network with the institutions is crucial, without entering into competition with
with the local enterprises.

The entire process stems from the identification of a **business opportunity** upon which establishing the **educational enterprise**. The previously mentioned recognition is possible only by the creation of a tight bond with the surrounding area. From there, in collaboration with institutions and local enterprises, we set up a training enterprise with the aim to properly answer the business opportunity.

The synergy with the territory has been essential for the training enterprise “**Facciamo quello che potiamo**” (we do what we prune) shaped by **ENGIM Lombardy**. The initiative was successful thanks to the citizens’ steadily request for green maintenance or for the cultivation of land given on loans free of charge. By dint of the local network created beforehand, the learning enterprise is ready to face the challenge of selling the products cultivated by its students.

As to the ways of setting up a successful educational enterprise, three options lay before us: the direct management by the VET center, the full control of the center over the enterprise and lastly the management issued by the agreement between a company and the VET center. To the latter managing model belongs the training enterprise **Etiko**, established by **ENGIM Piedmont** in 2016 as a result of the agreement between the **Artigianelli VET center** in Turin and the social company currently running Etiko. Located in the same building as the Artigianelli VET center, the training enterprise allows reducing the gap between learning and working by enhancing the interaction with a company. The process is furtherly encouraged by the daily lineup and demand-side response summarised by the motto “**learning by doing**”.

© Photo by ENGIM Foundation
The training enterprise should also be a place promoting **inclusion**, where “working with students” takes priority on “working for them”. The **Sanga-BAR by ENGIM Veneto** is a brilliant example of it: it is a training enterprise meant for students with disability transitioning from schooling to working after the end of their courses. The Sanga-BAR operates in compliance with the **Universal Design of Learning Principles**, which should be adopted by every training enterprise willing to become inclusive.

The consolidation process of the training enterprise model is yet at its first steps and, according to the ever-changing context; it assumes various shapes, involving students in internship, apprenticeship or the like. To handle this growing and innovating reality, the figure of the training enterprise manager is becoming pivotal: he/she shall be a crucial binding force between the production process and the educational world, endowed with the ability of staying among young pupils while managing the complex structure of the newly born training enterprise.

Without the **European Vocational Skills Week**, we would not have the opportunity to share this event and to link up with other VET centers interested in Training Enterprise model.

Thanks #EUVocationalSkillsWeek 2020!
Interview with Ana Zacharian - Albania’s Ambassador for the 2021 at the European Vocational Skills Week 2020

Ana Zacharian, Albanian Skills, Albania

Can your introduction yourself and the organisation your work in?

With a Master in Engineering, studies in business administration and growth strategies in Sweden and in urban planning from Erasmus in Holland, I have 30 working experience in industry sector as engineer, in education sector as teacher, in international cooperation field contributing in different project management and senior roles including administration, finances, acquisitions and monitoring, in many programs supporting education and vocational training, entrepreneurship and innovation. After my service as a Volunteer in World Skills Leipzig 2013, together with some international and local exerts I initiated the Albanian Skills initiative, the very first and unique start-up -
promotion and collaboration platform for young talents, innovative ways of learning and enterprising of skills through organisations of yearly skills competitions similar to WorldSkills from July 2014. From 2018, she initiated Albanian Skills Week inspired by the European Vocational Skills Week.

What does it mean to be an ambassador to you?
For me, it is both an honour and responsibility to give to the promotion of VET Skills Week a positive light and a strong voice to help the raise of the awareness for skills and VET education in my country and in the region. The role model we play in the society is very important for the future of our children and young people who are equally or maybe even more than us worried about today and future uncertainty. This wears us, together with VET institutions, teachers, families, stakeholders with an ultimate role model to continue inspiring, motivating, teaching, mentoring, preparing young generations for these global challenges that are in front of humanity and also affecting VET systems particularly.

You participated to the online sessions of VET skills as a speaker during the VET Internationalisation. How you see the benefits and challenges of international cooperative network in your country?
Yes, and it was an honour to represent the local and regional voice in that panel of excellent speakers. Skills and work in the frame of the globalised world, economy, and markets which are demanding increasingly internationally oriented professionals have neither borders nor nationality and as such the internationalisation of the VET systems or making VET international is key because it helps VET staff, students, and learners get oriented to the European and international context, labour skills needs and standards. As such, there is a great need and interest from schools and teachers to cooperate with international programmes in our country which are active in the city or school basis but the cooperation between VET schools, providers, institutions should prevail in order to ensure a better harmonisation of the international cooperation even among schools without any international support. The international VET community in the country and WB should play a role model in this aspect.

What will be the benefit of using skills and mobility in your country?
The mobility opportunities in our country will definitely contribute to:
- More international competences for VET learners and implement them in their schools or businesses when are back in the country, with their peers and friends;
- More intercultural knowledge and experience us as the project partner in the implementation of INTERVET.
- More VET knowledge and experience for the VET system, institutions and stakeholders while cooperating and sharing
with other EU and WB countries.

**How do you see the future of VET Skills at regional, local and national levels?**

From some years, I am glad to see the raise of the importance for VET Skills in our society, in local and national levels. This goes also in line with VET European initiatives. Governments, ministers, institutions, schools and families are talking proudly more about skills and the importance of VET. More parents are now bringing their children to VET schools and who look VET as the first choice of education. But we need private sector, industries to believe more in VET and support the entire process of VET schooling as a natural part of it. VET and business cooperation, the link between the world of education and the world of work is of paramount importance for VET-quality and attractiveness. And enhancing this VET – business cooperation should be on the top of each VET agenda, which ultimately will contribute to improving skills the business need and thus supporting an increase of employment or self-employment opportunities for young people locally, nationally, and regionally.

**What message would you have with reference to the INTERVET WB project?**

As project partner in the implementation of the INTERVET Western Balkans, I must proudly reconfirm the importance of this project for Albanian VET staff and learners. The intercultural exchange accompanied with technical skills acquired through mobility schemes in other EU countries will expose VET staff and learners to more learning and training opportunities: language and intercultural skills, and international professional competences. That is why, even with some difficulties experienced during the application process in the first calls for VET staff and learners’ motilities, a high participation of applicants for these first calls was evident and it gives a nice feeling of doing the right thing for VET systems in our countries.
BRINGING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) POLICY CLOSER TO PRACTICE

Anna Barbieri, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Unit for VET, Apprenticeships and Adult Learning

A new online Community in EPALE has been created by DG Employment to foster exchanges and peer learning among VET practitioners. Want to discuss green skills, online/distance learning, mobility or social inclusion? Join us.

How do we bring policy closer to practice? This question has become more and more crucial over the years.

In 2017, a Cedefop Community of learning providers was set up in cooperation with VET4EU2, a group of six European Associations*, with the objective of deepened cooperation and mutual learning on selected themes, to be dealt with in three parallel sub-groups on Technology Enhanced Learning, Learning Mobility, and Migration.

The Cedefop Community wished to bring policy closer to practice and ensure that policy initiatives and research are relevant for practitioners (teachers, trainers, tutors) working on the ground. Three final reports of the Community concerning members’ main

*EFVET (www.efvet.org), EUproVET (www.europvet.eu), EVBB (www.evbb.eu), EVTA (www.evta.eu) as VET centred organisations, and EURASHE (www.eurashe.eu) and EUCEN (www.eucen.eu), representing higher education and lifelong learning.
recommendations on the three topics, featuring a rich list of **good practices**, have been recently published [here](#).

While the Cedefop Community has completed its work now, DG Employment has recently set up an online **Community of VET practitioners** in EPALE, which aims to become an interactive space for teachers, trainers, and in-company tutors to **network** and **exchange practices** and **ideas**. The online space brings forward the work undertaken by the Cedefop Community.

The EPALE Platform is a European, multilingual, open membership community of **adult learning professionals**, including trainers, guidance and support staff, researchers and academics, addressed also to practitioners in the field of **vocational skills** for the labour market.

Members can find concrete solutions to their problems in the Community, with the help of peers, keep up-to-date with **European policies** and contribute to **European VET initiatives**. The Community wishes to attract newcomers to VET cooperation from all European countries, in order to foster peer learning. As it is currently a closed community, registration is required to become a member and registration in EPALE is a pre-requisite.

Discussions among the members will cover mostly **green skills**, **online/distance learning**, **social inclusion**, and **transnational learning mobility**.

The Community will need to overcome several challenges, like language barriers (as the language for exchanges is English), provide clear information beyond EU jargon and ensure **interactivity**, because the Community is not meant like a “newsletter” to provide just one-way information. At the same time, several opportunities are also available through the Community: networking with new contacts, increased **visibility of good practices** shared, swift information about news in VET and adult learning and ways to make one’s voice heard.

So far, the Community has around 80 members, focusing, for the time being, on **EU Member States**, **candidate countries** and **EFTA countries**. But of course, there is scope to extend the group beyond these boundaries, as VET will become more and more a global reference for skills development.

The aim for the Community is to become the biggest online Community in EPALE but, most of all, it should be ‘**the place to be**’ for VET practitioners, a vibrant, self-sustained space for teachers, trainers, tutors to cooperate.

Bringing policy closer to practice (and practice closer to policy) is the responsibility of both policy makers and practitioners. Be part of this adventure: join the Community and actively engage with the other members!

Register now in EPALE (if you haven’t already) and then request membership to the **Community of European VET practitioners**!


[Twitter](http://twitter.com): [www.twitter.com/EU_social](http://twitter.com/EU_social)

#VETCommunityEPALE
Welcome to New Members

SPAIN
Dirección General de Formación Profesional de Gobierno de Navarra
www.educacion.navarra.es

SPAIN
Mediterraneo Culinary Center
www.mediterraneoculinary.com

SPAIN
Salesians Sarrià
www.salesianssarria.com

DENMARK
Learnmark Horsens
www.learnmark.dk

NORWAY
Prios
www.prios.no

PORTUGAL
ETPM - Escola Técnica e Profissional de Mafra
www.etpm.pt

NORWAY
Trøndelag County Council
www.trondelagfylke.no

CYPRUS
SHIPCON
www.shipcon.eu.com

ESTONIA
Tallinn Health Care College
www.ttk.ee

CYPRUS
WISEFOUR
www.wisefour.eu
Dear Members,

We at EfVET thank you for all your support and commitment throughout the year.

We have enjoyed having you as Members and, in some cases, partnering with you in this complex year. We look forward to a continued relationship in 2021.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year ahead!

Sincerely,

EfVET