



Regional Networks for Quality in Vocational Mobility
Project N° 2014-1-AT-01-KA202-000954

Research Study

Executive Summary

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About the REMO project

The REMO project aims to foster regional exchange and improve the quality of mobility for vocational education and training (VET) learners. Therefore, an online platform and a network will be developed allowing everyone involved in vocational education and training to be informed, to inform as well as to connect and interact with each other concerning the planning and implementation of mobility actions. This includes both, learning as well as working mobility of VET learners. For VET learners, VET organisations and the world of work the online platform will support the planning, organisation and implementation of VET mobility. By providing a legal structure that is able to maintain and support the objectives reached during the project duration, the REMO network will be installed which ensures a sustainable structure for long-term cooperation between the participating organisations. Targeting the quality of mobility actions, ISO 9001 coherent process descriptions will be developed based on the principles of the European Charta for Quality in Mobility, as well taking into account requirements of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

Methodology

The research study was conducted on the basis of prior investigations by partner institutions in order to allow a detailed analysis of requirements and needs of the different main target groups of the project, initial VET learners, HR managers and VET organisations. Related to the mobility online platform, the network building as well as to the process descriptions considering the European Charta for Quality in Mobility and ECVET requirements, research instruments were developed. Data collection took place in spring 2015 in Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Slovenia. In favour of having a broad basis included in the introductory research, all different target groups were questioned, with data collected from a total of

21	HR managers or persons responsible for mobility in VET schools,
38	initial VET learners,
183	sending and hosting organisations and
240	external stakeholders.

Adjusted research instruments were elaborated in order to address the specific needs and being able to include all perspectives best possible, generating

- interview guidelines for HR managers or persons responsible for mobility in VET schools,
- interview guidelines for VET learners,
- questionnaires for sending and hosting organisations and
- questionnaires for external stakeholders.

Results and Deductions

After analysing collected data, a number of interesting and guiding results could be derived. Mobility stays are generally considered as very useful among all target groups. Thereby, next to language skills, communication and adoption to new working environment, social competences including intercultural aspects and VET learners becoming more open minded and flexible are of the highest importance for all those questioned. Based on the European Charta for Mobility¹, process steps connected to before, during and after mobility actions are commonly seen as important. However, questioned representatives put a focus on all matters connected to the time before a mobility stay takes place. This includes reliable and up to date information with clarified and confirmed conditions including roles and tasks on all sides and a good organisation. Especially for VET learners but also for HR managers and responsible persons for mobility in VET schools, a support function and having a contact person is of significant relevance. Furthermore, VET learners underline that they want to be informed about the country with a focus on living there, the accommodation as well as travelling there. These and mainly language and communication issues abroad, especially also in the hosting organisation belong to the biggest worries and concerns. Whereas a constant contact and support should continue during mobility, also the preparations allowing later on accreditation of competences are considered as essential. The validation is seen as crucial among the vast majority as a cross-national comparison and common standard allowing transparency and traceability but keeping it simple by avoiding too much bureaucratic effort. Even though recognition and transparency are among

¹ Recommendation (EC) No [2006/961](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: [European Quality Charter for Mobility](#) [Official Journal L 394 of 30.12.2006].

the important aspects for everyone, the general use but also knowledge about the existence of European quality and transparency instruments is rather low. Next to the Europass Mobility and learning agreement, the European Language Passport belongs to those documents people are more commonly familiar with and put into practice.

Concerning the online platform, all target groups highlight the importance of the user friendliness by suggesting a clear and well arranged structure with content provided being short and easy to understand, enabling a practical, quick use. Besides ensuring up to date information and providing information in languages other than English only, also links to external resources are wished. Especially for the young target group of VET learners but also for the majority of others, mobile accessibility to the online platform is an important feature. Provided information should contain some kind of short guidelines for mobility stays, ready prepared forms and a data base of sending and hosting organisations as well as interested VET learners. Concerning the data base, general country information, branch and/or production, the experiences regarding mobility stays, languages spoken and accommodation issues belong to the most important ones mentioned. There should also be the possibility to include photos and upload documents. Short case descriptions and testimonials are considered as essential for the majority of questioned target group representatives. Some kind of direct contact possibility as well as a search function is considered as necessary alike. Filter options should allow searching for the country, branch and languages spoken just as for specific sending and hosting organisations. The majority would put information online and also be willing to test and give feedback on the online platform. One motivating factor is that target groups are interested to have a look at the product, decide on the further use of it and also getting the possibility to address some further requests.

Among questioned target group representatives, an interest to join a sustainable network certainly exists. Strongest benefits seen are in connection with a secure access to the platform guaranteeing data protection, admission to more detailed information as well as a closed area to contact other users and share documents. The expenses feasible for organisations vary, as many do not have a budget foreseen or would like to make it depending on the benefit of it. VET learners are open to share their experiences and offer help to others after they have been on a mobility stay as they would like to pass on the support they have received as well as to encourage others to use this chance.

Summing up, mobility stays are broadly considered as very useful especially for the personal development of learners which all target groups can profit from in the end. As a high number of organisations have cooperation to interregional organisations beyond country borders, this aspect be taken into account for the REMO project. Their cooperation can be strengthened and a broader network within the region can be build up by fostering mobility stays and exchanges.

With the strong demand for an easiest possible handling which is user friendly and not very bureaucratic but at the same time guarantees transparency, validation and recognition, the project is facing a huge challenge that is known in the context of the ECVET. This core problem will be faced within REMO but at the same time the awareness exists that maybe only little steps can be accomplished when taking into account the frame conditions coming along with the project. An easy and up to date step-by-step guide, keeping information short and simple is targeted with a feedback loop including all target groups again implemented in favour of establishing a good quality product.

This piloting of process descriptions will be carried out together with the online platform as it is part of the product. As well as concerning guidelines, also the online platform should have an easiest possible handling and be user friendly going along with a well structure. Taking into account achievements already made alike, including links to external sources and connecting diverse accomplishments represent an opportunity to provide a best possible overview for all target groups of the project even beyond the work frame of REMO. The development of the online platform also faces challenge when it comes to switching between languages or a barrier-free use. Other important features like a direct communication possibility, mobile access and an adequate search function will also be part of clarifying technical possibilities and affordable programming solutions.

For the establishment of the network the strongest motivations indicated for joining and setting up a sustainable frame will be considered. However, the task of maintenance of the platform, keeping information up to date far beyond the projects lifetime will be another challenge as the introductory research showed that for a service like this the budget very often is not available. Nevertheless, the best possible solution needs to be targeted when starting the programming of the platform to keep the work load connected to maintenance as low as possible and guarantee a long-term use of REMO. As the interest of all target groups is high, the preconditions for project outputs to be sustainably benefited from are very good.