



eVETMI

Enhancing Vocational Education and
Training (VET) through Mobility and
Internships

eVETMI-Enhancing Vocational Education and Training (VET) through Mobility and Internships

KA210-VET - Small-scale partnerships in vocational education and training
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Final Report- Greece, Italy and Germany

2nd Activity- Mapping and identifying the program activities for internship and mobility of VET trainees

Organisations: Learning Seed, IFOM, EKVASIS



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2ND ACTIVITY- MAPPING AND IDENTIFYING THE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES FOR INTERNSHIP AND MOBILITY OF VET TRAINEES

Content of activity






Preliminary research revealed the need to develop the project in Argos, as there was no corresponding structure to promote vocational education and training and to provide employment opportunities to trainees through mobility and internships. The L.S. enables trainees outside the city of Argos and the surrounding rural areas to acquire the necessary digital, language, business, intercultural, and other skills. From the data collection of the research, we will update its results for the mapping activity which will include:

-  Analyzes of partner activity reports
-  Interviews with staff: teachers, community workers and decision makers
-  Interviews with local population, trainees, VET trainers & companies
-  Report analyzes: each partner will be informed and will conduct a relevant study based on the available data of his country.
-  Online questionnaires to identify local needs, national and supranational vocational training needs

After the end of the update, the final mapping report will be connected, which will be the basis for further actions, which will concern the development of professional educational tools and means of mobility and practical work in Greece and abroad. Sharing and enhancing professional mobility and apprenticeship activities are important components of the program.

Expected results

This activity plays a key role in the successful outcome and fulfillment of the goals of the program, as all stakeholders are active, i.e., trainees, decision makers, educators, companies, etc. The final research report as mentioned above will identify and analyze activities, resources, and results. Specifically:

-  Identification and analysis of the actions of the partners that will be implemented in response to the needs of the target groups.
-  Presentation of updated findings and impact in a wider, national, and international context
-  Identification of local education and training organizations such as EPAL Argos and their information about the program
-  Finding and informing unanswered needs that have not been answered by research and required resources.
-  Final report from a mapping activity

Methodology

In order to approach the target groups, we decided together with the companies to distribute questionnaires and conduct interviews with the target groups in order to obtain a realistic picture of VET. For this reason, we decided to give questionnaires to VET students, VET trainers as well as companies in order to identify what are the skills that businesses today require from a candidate.

For the needs of the second activity of the program, we came into contact with VET students who are also the most basic target group. The LS and IFOM organizations were the ones who distributed questionnaires to students as I have direct contact with this target group in contrast to EKVASIS which is a technical company. Subsequently, the answers below refer to VET students in Greece and Italy.

Questionnaires of VET students

Profile of the participants

Most of the answers came from men, especially in the case of Greece, while in the case of Italy there was a balance between the races. In total, 43 students participated.

In the case of Greece, they came mainly from the region of Argolis, while in the case of Italy from the region of Romagna Emilia. Overall, most participants came from rural areas, particularly in the case of Greece. Moreover, most of the participants haven't complete their internship yet.

It is important to observe the choices of students in Italy and Greece regarding the field of study.

In Greece, most of the participants chose to study

- Computer Technician
- Economics
- Computer Science

In Italy, most of the participants chose to study

- Gastronomy
- Agriculture

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- Art
- Tourism
- Mechanics
- IT
- Beauty

It is important here to note again that in Italy the answers were half and half from women and men in contrast to Greece where we received only 2 answers from women. This is an observation that may not be related to our findings at all.

Then, we wanted to know what the reason was they chose VET Education. We received the following answers to this question.

Table 1. Why VET students choose to study at a VET school?

Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VET education is easiest. I like computer science. To study something, I love I failed in the final exams. VET education is more interesting. For finding a job easiest The exams are easier. I don't know. That way I can be better. In order to get to university Because of the level of the studies
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More opportunities to work It is easier Specific subjects

Based on the above answers, we distinguish common views of the important between the two countries regarding VET education. They believe that it would be easiest to find a job after their graduation, it is easier to graduate, and they prefer the subjects of VET education.

Subsequently, our questions were aimed at identifying and documenting the familiarity of these offenders with digital and soft skills.

Digital skills of VET students

Participants were asked to answer 1 to 5 sentence definitions related to digital skills. The question was put as follows;

Question: What level are the following sentences applicable in your daily life (1=not at all, 5=very much)

Sentences	1	2	3	4	5
I use smartphone devices in daily basis					
I search for information on the Internet					
I use the Internet when I am looking for a job					
I communicate socially using social media					
I use the Internet for payments/bank services					
I use social media to communicate with my colleagues					
I feel comfortable using digital tools					
I search for new digital tools					

The level of awareness of digital tools is also a crucial part of our research and our project. Therefore, we listed some tools and asked the participants to mark those they know how to use. Specifically, the tools were as follows:

- ☐ Google Drive
- ☐ Social Media (Facebook, Instagram etc)
- ☐ Bit.ly
- ☐ Zoom/Google Meet
- ☐ WordPress
- ☐ Hiring apps or Websites
- ☐ Online Website Builders (Wix Weebly, Squarespace etc)
- ☐ Google Pay
- ☐ Canva
- ☐ Microsoft Office
- ☐ Adobe software
- ☐ Google Analytics
- ☐ Cloud (Microsoft OneDrive, iCloud, Google Drive, Dropbox etc)
- ☐ Presentation tools (Microsoft PowerPoint, Keynote, Google Slides etc)

According to the results, most of the VET student feel comfortable using social media, google drive and google pay in Greece. Those are also skills that companies are looking for in a

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candidate according to our survey, especially in Greece. Finally, most of the participants consider the knowledge of digital skills highly important.

Soft Skills

Most people have a decent level of digital skills. For instance, they use their mobile phone every day, they use social media to communicate with others, and they use the searching engines on internet. However, not so many people use their e-banking services, and they don't look for tools such Canva, SurveyMonkey and other. Finally, a satisfactory percentage of participants searched for jobs through the Internet.

Regarding the soft skills, they were given the following sentence.

Question: From the following, which soft skills do you think you have?

- ☐ Leadership
- ☐ Teamwork
- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Work Ethic
- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Flexibility
- ☐ Adaptability
- ☐ Decision-Making
- ☐ Dispute resolution
- ☐ Enthusiasm
- ☐ Creativity
- ☐ Honesty
- ☐ Self-awareness
- ☐ Multi-tasking
- ☐ Reliability

Most of the VET students believe that they are good at time-management, teamwork and creativity. In both countries, we received approximately the same answers. Next, we asked which of the above soft skills they felt they could strengthen. In Greece, most of the VET students answered decision-making, adaptability and teamwork while in Italy they were focused on communicational skills.

Conclusions

To sum up, 43 students in total participated in the survey. we have observed common opinions and choices especially regarding the reasons they chose to proceed to VET Education. They seem to possess the basic digital skills, while common responses were also received for soft skills. It is important to connect the skills they have with those that the companies were asking for.

Questionnaires of VET Trainers

In addition to VET students, it is important to get the opinion of teachers and educational staff of VET schools. In total 16 VET trainers took part in the survey, 5 from Italy and 11 from Greece.

In total, 8 trainers work in a rural area and 8 in an urban area. Most of the VET institutions have around 500-600 students per year in both countries. It is worth to mention that in Italy, there is also a VET institution with less than 10 students per year while another one has more than 1.000.

In Italy and Greece most of the students choose IT studies. Apart from that, in Italy many students choose fashion/art and tourism. In Greece, the health and welfare sector is also a popular option among students.

In order to evaluate the results, it is important to distinguish the benefits of VET education in terms of opportunities for internships and practical training. Based on the responses we received, in Greece a small percentage of VET institutes have permanent and permanent offices. On the other hand, in Italy, most VET institutes have both offices that offer important benefits to students.

Then, we asked VET trainers about the main difficulties they have identified in VET schools. The answers were as follows:

Table 2. Main difficulties in VET schools

Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Finding job ✚ Finding internship ✚ In rural areas it is difficult to find a job ✚ They do not know the conditions of their profession ✚ Lack of equipment ✚ Most of the student work and it is difficult for them to attend the classes ✚ Financial difficulties
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	Many hours of working and therefore they are constantly tired
Italy	Lack of facilities at school Behaviour of the students Behaviors of the families

Especially in Greece, the students don't learn to acquire digital skills and they don't develop their soft skills. There is a demand for VET schools and they also have a good graduation rate besides all the difficulties. However, the students don't look often for internships through VET school. From the other side, in Italy,

We noticed several common points regarding VET students in Greece and Italy, especially regarding the choices of young people and the problems they face. It is important to mention a key difference: The existence of Erasmus offices in Italy in VET schools in relation to the answers we received from the VET trainers in Greece.

Questionnaires of companies

Since we have analyzed through the questionnaires the profile of VET students and VET trainers, it is timely to include the opinions from the side of businesses and to see what skills they were looking for. Moreover, through the program we will build a platform for finding practical training and mobility for VET students. In the case of businesses, EKVASIS has also participated. In total we approached 8 companies from Greece, 4 from Italy and 16 from Germany.

Most of the companies offer internship opportunities. Especially in Germany and Greece, they employ graduates of VET schools either through internships or recruitment. In Italy, half of the companies employ VET graduates.

Level of Awareness of Digital Tools

For digital skills, we asked businesses what skills they look for in a candidate. The list is the same as that of VET students. Below is a table with the skills that companies were looking for, and the skills that VET students have based on their answers above

Table 3. Digital Skills Connected












Country	Companies	Students
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Google Drive Social Media Microsoft Office Adobe Software Google Analytics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Media Google Drive Google Pay Cloud Zoom/Google Meet
Italy	Not something specific. Only software companies are looking for people with expertise.	
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microdoft Office Google Drive Zoom/Google Meet Cloud 	

In the same way, the elements of soft skills are compared with those possessed by the young

Table 4. Soft skills Connected

Country	Companies	Students
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliability Multi-tasking Creativity Enthusiasm Problem-solving Time-management Critical Thinking Teamwork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time-management
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teamwork Time management Adaptability 	

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	 Critical Thinking	 Teamwork  Creativity  Reliability  Critical Thinking
Germany	 Teamwork  Critical Thinking  Adaptability  Reliability  Decision-Making  Enthusiasm	

Conclusions

Based on the tables above, it seems that young people believe that they possess skills, both digital and soft, that businesses are looking for in potential candidates. Based on the tables above, it seems that young people believe that they possess skills, both digital and soft, that businesses are looking for in potential candidates.

Most businesses hire VET graduates for practical training. Some of these businesses will also create their own profile on the platform we will create in order to search for candidates for internships.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to the questionnaires, we also conducted semi-structured interviews with VET trainers and businessmen. As before, EKVASIS came into contact with businesses, while IFOM and Learning Seed contacted both companies and VET trainers.

VET Trainers

In the case of Italy, the interviewed VET trainees have been working in this sector between 3 and 7 years. All of them work in urban areas. They mostly face problems with the communication, and they have mentioned the change of values in society and how it affects the role of school. Most of the students come from the wider area, but some students also come from bigger cities. Regarding the gap in education, it wasn't easy to come in a conclusion. Half of the VET trainers agreed that there is enough room for improvements, while the others couldn't give a precise answer to this question.

In Greece, the situation is a bit different. The VET representatives/trainers were from rural and urban areas. All of them have many years' experiences in the field. Common responses and concerns noted. Specifically, the lack of equipment, books, and the behavior of the students themselves were mentioned. Many students decide to follow their education in VET since they seem to believe that they can find job easiest and faster. Some of them also choose VET education since they can choose what specialization they want to follow.

Companies

EKAISIS conducted semi-structured interviews with 5 representatives from companies and businesses, either located in Germany or working closely with German stakeholders, with the aim to identify the current situation regarding employability of VET graduates along with the market's needs. According to the collected answers, most of the people do not prefer to recruit VET graduates, as they believe that they seek advanced digital knowledge. They also mentioned that the current trends in the job market require specialized digital skills, and to that end, they try to promote digital education, including knowledge of not only widely-used tools, such as Microsoft office and Google apps, as well as more advanced tools, regarding Website development and programming. Finally, they have spotted gaps in candidates when it comes to digital and soft skills such as time-management and problem-solving.

In Greece, the situation seems to be a bit different. Most of the participated businesses, do not have a problem hiring a VET graduate. However, most of them operate in the primary and secondary sectors. They are looking mostly about basic digital skills but skills in marketing and in social media management appear to be an important asset.

Finally, in Italy, the businesses recruit employees both through internship and recruitment. They claimed that the main skill that students and adults miss is the lack of communication. According to the given answers, probably this refers to the lack of internships opportunities in order to be experience once they get their first job. Finally, they don't look specifically for candidates from the region.