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# Strategic Plan for our Network of Networks 2021 - 2026

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction to the Network of Networks

The Network of Networks is a European informal alliance aimed at strategic cooperation, mutual learning and exchange of best practices. Through close cooperation at regional, national and European level we want to improve the quality and efficiency of Vocational Education and Training (VET). Furthermore, we aspire to implement European VET policy initiatives at a grass roots level and share best practices to strengthen the quality of VET across our network.

The Network of Networks consists of five regional and national networks representing four countries: The Dutch Alliance in the Netherlands, HETEL in Spain (the Basque Country), FINN-NET in Finland, the Scottish Colleges in the UK and Northern Ireland Colleges in the UK. Collectively these five networks represent 49 Vocational Education and Training providers that offer a wide variety of VET programmes at upper secondary level covering EQF levels 1-5. In cooperation with the regional working field they also offer apprenticeship programmes for upskilling and reskilling of employees in all sectors of the labour market. More information about the Network of Networks and each regional network on the website <http://partnersin.vet/>.

Through a strong history and commitment to international collaboration, the networks have cooperated in various kinds of international activity since its establishment in 2005. At the outset, this included the facilitation of student work placements and staff exchanges under the Erasmus+ KA1 mobility programme and previous Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) initiative. Recently, the focus has shifted to cooperation for innovation, exchange of good practices and network development in the field of VET, through the KA2 strategic partnerships and KA3 Policy Reform strands of the Erasmus+ programme.

### 1.2. European VET Policy

The context and the operating environment for the Network of Networks is closely linked to EU policy in the field of vocational education and training, including the New Skills Agenda for Europe (2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>), the Riga Conclusions five priority areas for 2015-20, the Osnabrück Declaration, the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 (<https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in->

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[the-eu/digital-education-action-plan\\_en](#)), the European Green Deal (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal>) and policies led by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop). These strategic documents provide us priorities and directions to develop vocational education and training across Europe. Thus, the Network of Networks seeks to implement the initiatives, priorities and vision defined by EU VET policies.

The reason of the Network of Networks existence derives from the need to develop the quality, effectiveness and equal access in VET. The strategic development work is essential so the European VET can offer the right set of competencies for new workers and in addition, up-skill and re-skill the existing labour force for the rapidly changing, multicultural and international working life. We strive to enhance VET so it can provide comprehensive lifelong learning, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and the best educational outcomes which are essential to EU society, citizens, economy and the social fabric. Members of the Network of Networks share the idea that working together internationally is more fruitful to find joint solutions for common problems in this strategic context.

Thus, we align our actions towards EU VET policy which outlines the future development and priorities for VET. The defined vision for the future of VET is:

*“European VET systems by 2030 should aim to deliver excellent and inclusive education and training that offer opportunities for both economic and social cohesion, support competitiveness and growth and smart, inclusive and sustainable development, and foster democratic citizenship and European values - thus helping all individuals to develop their full potential in a lifelong learning continuum”.* **Reference this strategy**

They are defined by three core elements:

- They foster acquisition of skills, competences and qualifications which ensure employability, adaptability, personal development and active citizenship of individuals.
- They provide accessible, attractive, valued and innovative quality assured provision for all.
- They are integrated, responsive, diversified and quality assured, and they are underpinned by governance, funding and guidance which foster excellence, inclusion, effectiveness and shared responsibility.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20479&langId=en>



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Additionally, the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) are the background frameworks, which provide tools for the network. ECVET and Europass support the transfer, recognition and validation of learning outcomes abroad. The Erasmus+ programme is actively utilised as key resources for the network.

### 1.3. The purpose of this strategy

The strategic plan for the Network of Networks is collectively created to foster the cooperation between participating regional and national networks. The strategy will offer guidelines, directions and objectives for the Network of Networks. The strategy will be valid for 5 years, from 2021 through to 2026, with the aim of revisiting our agreed actions on an annual basis. Before the end of this strategic timeline, the discussion for the subsequent strategy will begin.

The implementation of the strategy will be described in detail in the complementary Action Plan. The Action Plan will be created on a yearly basis, providing an annual operating plan for the network. At the end of the year the achievements will be measured and analysed according to the Action Plan. The Network of Networks annual meeting includes a working session which will review the achievements and plan the next steps for the Action Plan for the next year.

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## 2. Mission Statement, Vision and Core Values

### 2.1 Mission:

The mission of this network is to **improve the quality and impact of Vocational training**, enhancing its relevance and attractiveness for learners, employers, and general society, building a cross-border cooperation to give VET an international dimension.

### 2.2 Vision:

Our vision is to enhance the volume of quality international opportunities available to the students and staff at Network of Networks partner colleges through closer strategic cooperation and enhanced identity building.

### 2.3 Core values:

#### Trust

Proposals exchanged between members and personal relationships established among people



#### Commitment

To act with responsibility with the other members



#### Collaboration

Reciprocity, to be generous with the rest of the partners, share resources and act in a responsible way



#### Motivation

Interest to share, work, learn, and develop different ideas with each other



#### Innovation

The members grow and improve in any aspect

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<b>Collaboration</b>	The collaboration between members is one of the core values of this network and the reason to be involved. This collaboration implies reciprocity, which means being generous with the rest of the partners, sharing resources with each other and acting in a responsible way with the rest of the partners. We can measure the reciprocity in the number of projects, mobilities, information sharing between the members. The lack of collaboration can be a reason for losing the trust of the members in the network. Also, if the collaboration is not balanced (some schools in the network “give more” than others, some members can feel overlooked or not interesting). This value is also related with the trust.
<b>Trust</b>	The number of interesting proposals exchanged between members (as projects/ mobilities/others) and the commitment of the members in the collaborative proposals in which they are involved build up the trust between the members of the network. And trust in the sense of personal relationships established among people in the network at various levels.
<b>Commitment</b>	To be a trusted member it is important to have the commitment integrated as a must in all the activities in which the members collaborate. The commitment means acting with responsibility with the other members in the network. It also implies the effort to fulfil the strategic objectives defined and the integration of the mission and vision by the members. In this sense, it could be measured by the involvement of each member reaching the objectives of the NoN.
<b>Motivation</b>	Members of the network are interested in sharing, working, learning, and developing different educational ideas with each other. This value can be measured by the number of participants in the activities promoted by the network.
<b>Innovation</b>	The innovation is a value that made each member grow and improve in any aspect. It can also be measured by the number of ideas, initiatives and projects implanted in each network as a result of the collaboration or the sharing ideas in the Network

### 3. International Story

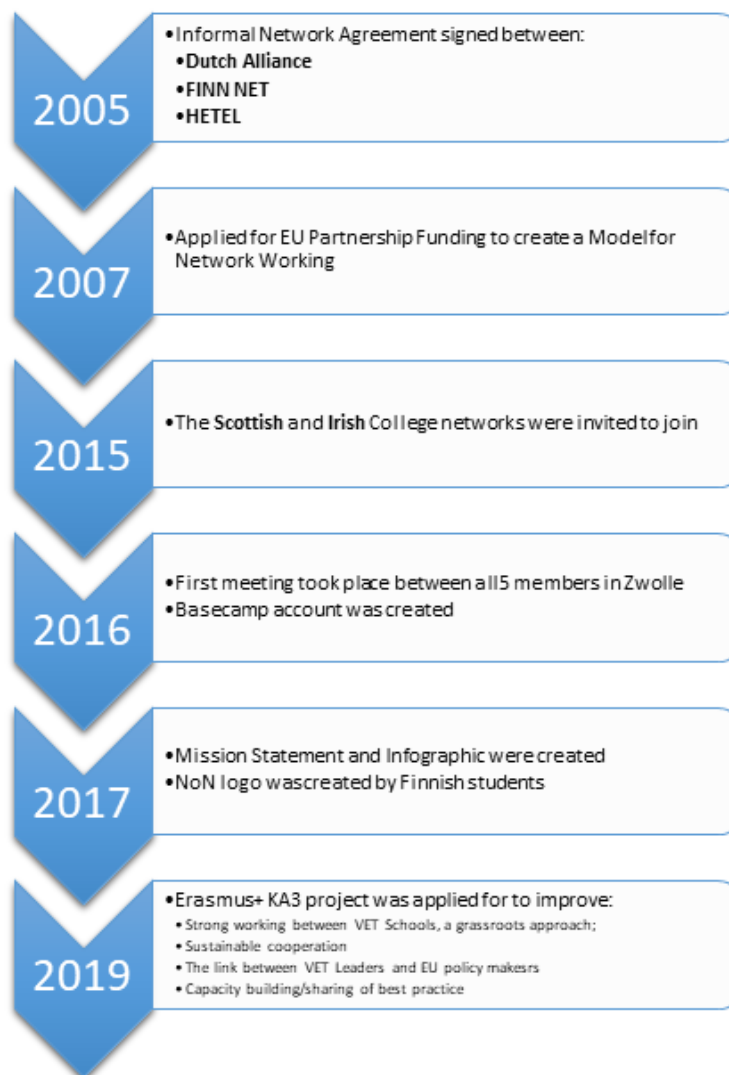
#### 3.1 History of collaboration

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I feel this section could be shortened, and perhaps moved below the initial introduction to create a better flow? It makes sense for the history to be before our forward planning (vision ,mission etc) to provide context.



For full details of the history of NoN please see Annex A.

### KA3 NoN project

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The Erasmus+ funded Key Action 3 “Network of Networks – International Network of VET Providers, A Grassroots Approach” project was created with 3 aims:

- Network building – how can we build a strong network? Make a model to give the NoN more strength, improve its quality and make it less vulnerable to outside risks.
- Capacity building – to exchange best practice in the 4 themes:
  - 1. Implementation of relevant EU tools and initiatives
  - 2. EU vocational skills week
  - 3. Innovative ways of learning Key competences
  - 4. Professional development work-based learning + digital approaches together with companies

Also deliver a model on how these best practices could be piloted in other schools, to see what is a worthwhile way of learning from each other.

- VET Policy – the EACEA wants more VET leaders to be involved in EU policies creation. How can we make VET leaders more sensitive and the policy documents more accessible so the two can work more closely together?

### International experience of the network

Many of the individual institutes comprising the network have years of experience of working in an international capacity. Examples of the work undertaken to fulfil their Internationalisation Strategies include:

- Recruitment of International Students
- Erasmus+ Student and/or Staff Mobilities
- Sending staff abroad to teach classes in other institutions
- Setting up campuses in other countries
- Collaborating on/creating new curriculum for other institutions
- Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership projects
- Advising on curricular set ups

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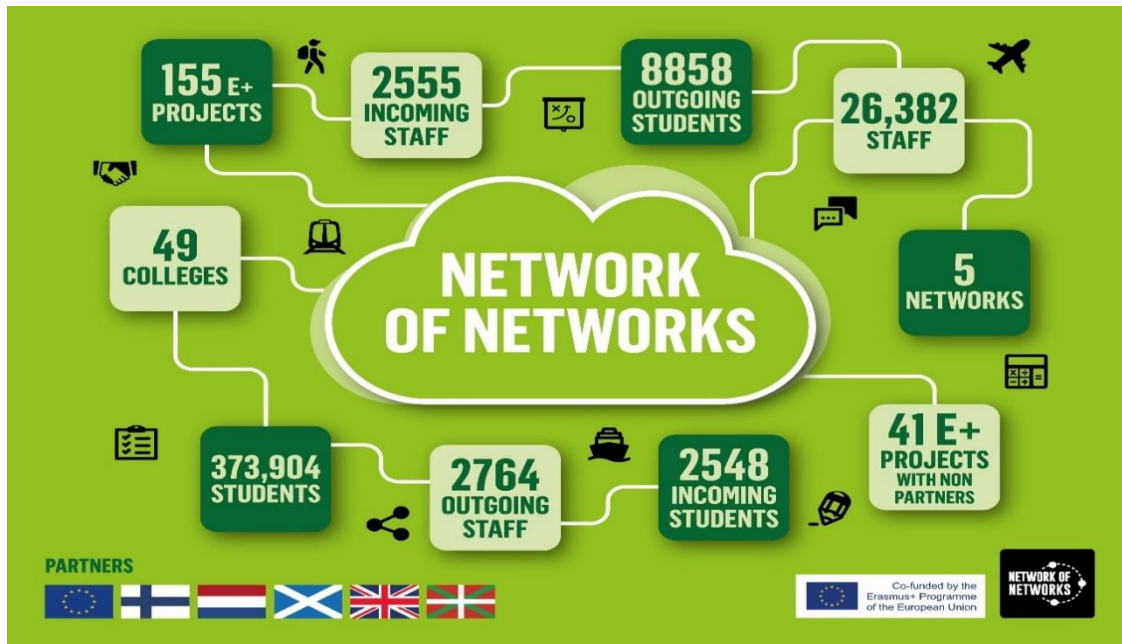


Figure 1 Summary of Networks of Networks & their International Cooperation

### 4. Our Aspirations

#### Aspiration 1. Bring coherence, and enhance effectiveness and efficiency

Our first priority is to bring long-term coherence and direction to the management of the Network of Networks alliance, maintaining close cooperation irrespective of Brexit and other changes in the external environment. We aspire to establish a smarter and more strategically

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driven network, through a network wide commitment to the implementation of a joint strategy and action plan. We want to continuously improve the effectiveness of our network, increasing efforts to capture data more effectively, embed communication structures and extend our outreach activity to increase collaboration and success within the network.

### Aspiration 2. Enhance the quality of VET and support Economic, Social and Sustainable Cohesion

Our priority is to strengthen the quality of Vocational Education and Training (VET) to help all learners develop their full potential.

We aim to provide accessible, attractive, innovative and quality VET that not only prepares learners for employment but equips them with the meta skills required to become active citizens. The international dimension in education will be strengthened to provide, not only additional learning opportunities for learners, but the ability to collaborate on new curriculum. An integrated utilisation of EU tools and principles such as EQF, ECVET, EQAVET and Europass will support these characteristics.

### Aspiration 3. Enhance the quality of VET education by Continuous Staff Competence Development

Our aim is to foster the continuous professional development of our VET staff, so that they stay up to date with international, digital and pedagogical trends and find relevant partners to develop practices. Within Network of Networks our idea is to share knowledge, good practices and experiences in order to facilitate the learning process and to enhance the quality of VET education. We will utilise the capacity building model created in the network and strive to foster forums for professional discussion.

### Aspiration 4. Raise Awareness about the Network of Networks and its Added Value

Our priority is to strengthen our internal and external communication to raise the influence of our network, both locally and internationally. Internally, within our NoN, we will target VET leaders and another VET staff to increase the involvement and commitment to internationalization by disseminating projects, materials, and good practices within the members, rising the brand awareness among them. This aspiration will integrate and support the actions collected in the other aspirations. Externally, we aspire to unleash the potential for increased visibility, through reaching out to other VET providers and networks, to disseminate our good practices and enhance the reputation of VET institutions involved in the Network. The consolidation of an international network will contribute positively to the image and influence of the VET institutions involved, in turn promoting a growth in the international activities of the members, in line with Regional, National, and European policy priorities.

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