

Newsletter 3

April 2021

Welcome to the latest newsletter from the Erasmus+ funded project from the Network of Networks: an international Network of VET providers, a grassroots approach. This project – 608977-EPP-1-2019-1-NL-EPPKA3-VET-NETPAR- brings together over 40 VET providers across five different countries in Europe.

The Covid-19 crisis has added urgency to many topics that were already on the European agenda, and one of them – advances in the use of digital methods – is the theme of this newsletter. In it, there are articles on digital disruption and the changing expectations of students, digital badges, virtual exchanges, . We hope you find something interesting and useful for your work in its content.

Embrace Digital Disruption with VET-TEDD



The digital literacy of teachers needs to increase to adapt to changing student expectations and the dynamic and constant change that characterises the technology landscape. This project aims to upskill, build capacity and develop future solutions around digital learning tools.

The VET-TEDD project, an Erasmus + project, aims to support the continuous professional development of VET teachers across the EU. It seeks to do by developing a skills pathway, and a resource library that will enable and increase access to learning resources for VET teachers.

VET-TEDD has, already, developed a Self-Assessment Tool (SAT), six micro-learning programmes, and a range of best practice case studies to help educators to adapt technology enhanced learning into their teaching.

Find out more by visiting www.vet-tedd.eu or by following VET-TEDD on Twitter and LinkedIn. The Final Conference will be held online on Friday 21st May 2021. Places are open to anyone who is interested in digital learning tools. Reserve a place at this web address: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/embrace-digital-disruption-with-vet-tedd-final-conference-tickets-145852445591>

Open badges: recognising and crediting key competences digitally



Open badges or micro-credentials is a digital means of awarding students or workers evidence of their learning achievements. An open badge is a digital certificate providing detailed information on the content of the learning outcomes achieved. Learners may collect badges in their open badge backpack that can, subsequently, be shared with employers or other educational institutions.

During the academic session 2019-20, Albeda trialled the use of open badges in recognising the 21st century skills students achieved in extra-curricular activities. With the impact of Covid-19, Albeda extended this in 2020-21 to using open badges to recognise the digital skills of their staff. In addition, in January 2021 other VET schools in the Network of Networks launched pilots in either accrediting the digital skills of their staff or the key competences of their students.

With the European Commission presenting its approach to micro-credentials for higher education in December 2020, it is hoped that the work of these pilots, which are one of the outputs of Erasmus+ project 608977-EPP-1-2019-1-NL-EPPKA3-VET-NETPAR (Network of Networks: an international Network of VET providers, a grassroots approach), will lend impetus to the adoption of digital badges across a broader terrain including VET.

Virtual Transnational Cooperation



These VET colleges have been working together to plan and implement virtual student exchanges, in several fields of study since last autumn (2020). Some months earlier, small-scale virtual exchanges took place involving students studying safety and security and others learning ICT helpdesk programmes. While in March, tourism students implemented a successful and interesting cooperation project on sustainable tourism. Although significant experience had been gained in virtual exchanges for staff, these examples demonstrate that VET students can acquire international competences through virtual experiences.

The Tourism project was developed with small teams of students and divided into three phases:

1. getting to know each other,
2. presenting sustainability in travel and tourism in both countries
3. discussion and feedback session.

By the end of the virtual exchanges, students had improved their knowledge of sustainable tourism and also learnt from good practice examples in Finland and the Netherlands. Topics covered included the future of cycling and tourism for the Dutch travel industry, a Finnish Sustainable Travel Programme, nature tourism, indigenous Sami tourism, and ethical guidelines. The students, also, demonstrated their knowledge of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and reported improvements in their international competences and communication skills.

Given the positive feedback from the participants, new cooperation initiatives are being developed for the future by English teachers in aircraft maintenance, and logistics teachers.

The Digital Education Plan 21-27

Following a consultation process between June and September 2020, The European Commission launched the Digital Education Plan 21-27. The Plan has two principal priorities:

1. Fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem, and
2. enhancing digital skills and competences for digital transformation.

The first priority focuses on the world of education and topics including infrastructure, connectivity, digital tools, digital competences of teachers, and secure environments. The second priority aims to equip every European citizen with a set of basic digital skills, starting from an early age, with a special focus on attracting women to digital studies.

To achieve these objectives, the Action Plan identifies the next steps as the development of a European Digital Education Content Framework including Artificial Intelligence and digital skills, the development of a European Digital Skills Certificate to be recognised Europe-wide by companies, governments and other stakeholders, and the increased participation of female students in STEM studies.

The European Union's focus on strengthening cooperation and exchange in digital education at EU level presents an opportunity for VET colleges to pick up the gantlet and share their best practices in this arena. One of the consequences of Covid-19 is that digitisation will be more important for everyone.

For more information on the Digital Education Plan 21-27, follow this link: https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en

Progress on Network of Networks: an international Network of VET providers, a grassroots approach

This Erasmus+ project- 608977-EPP-1-2019-1-NL-EPPKA3-VET-NETPAR – aims to establish an international network of VET providers by developing collaboration and cooperation among VET schools in different countries to improve the attractiveness of VET by:

- developing individual institutional and network capacity, and
- testing, adapting, and implementing best practices.

To help realise these aims one of the projects working groups is developing three outputs:

1. A strategic plan for this Network of Networks with mid-term and long-term objectives focused on international activities.
2. An action plan for promotion and effective use of EU funding.
3. A model that others may use to set up their own networks, and to extend the emerging network of networks by reaching out to organisations with close links to existing project partners.

Thus far, the first output has been developed with information gathered from a survey of VET leaders across the five partner countries in the project. The second output – the Action Plan – is nearly complete and will be validated by partners later this year. The third output is in an advanced stage of development and work to be undertaken in the next few months should lead to its completion. Thereafter it will serve as tool to help a different project working group reach out to other networks.