

Project - short description of implemented activities

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During the last years in the Baltic States development of Work Based Learning (WBL) is a priority topic within education policy. It derives from the need to bring closer vocational education and training (VET) to the world of work to ensure preparation of the skilled workforce with skills, knowledge and competences relevant to the labour market needs and the national economy, to enhance attractiveness of VET, to increase number of skilled graduates with VET qualifications and to improve youth employment overall.

This project “National Authorities for Apprenticeships: Implementing Work Based Learning in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia (WBL-Balt)” acted as a facilitator for national reforms in the 3 Baltic States, and as a tool for enhanced cooperation, exchange of information and experience, as well as for peer learning on implementing VET reforms, and especially developing further and promoting WBL and apprenticeships. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia each is implementing their own activities, and within this project mutual cooperation and coordination was being ensured.

The main problems addressed in the project were incomplete legal framework to accommodate WBL needs, insufficient WBL availability due to tradition of school-based VET, insufficient involvement and awareness of stakeholders, in particular employers. At the same time, there was an increasing pressure from the social partners and policy makers to improve quality and labour market relevance of VET.

The following activities have been performed and results achieved:

At Baltic level:

- In 2015, during the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, The Baltic Alliance for Apprenticeships (BAfA) was launched. It is based on the Declaration of cooperation between the three Baltic States on the VET issues which was signed by the three Ministers responsible for Education of the Baltic countries on June 22, 2015, during the Meeting of Ministers in charge of Vocational Education and Training, European Social Partners and European Commission, devoted to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships. This declaration provides the basis for co-operation of the three Baltic countries in the field of WBL and for activities to promote WBL in all Baltic States. During the project Steering Committee meetings and the Baltic seminar in Riga 24 January, 2017 concrete measures were be discussed on the implementation of BAfA in practice.

- The visual identity – logo – for BAfA has been created and Visual Identity Guidelines developed.

- In Latvia, background research has been carried out. Moderated discussion of all key stakeholders have been organised, in order to agree on evidence-based development of legal framework to accommodate WBL needs (5 round-table discussions, 4 regional dissemination seminars and 1 national level seminar with the participation of International Labour Organisation (ILO) experts). The discussions and the background documents were prepared by the expert team incorporating representatives from VET institutions, public administrations, social partners and employers. The national campaign has been organised to promote WBL and to collect and share examples of good practices. A Baltic seminar and the Final international conference has been organised in Latvia to agree on common Baltic challenges, solutions and areas for cooperation within BAfA to develop WBL; Members of the Parliamentary Commission on Education, Culture and Research of Latvia participated in the work of the conference, as well as. The participants in the final project conference represented: European Commission (Ms Dana Bachman), CEDEFOP (Mr James Calleja's video address, Ms Irina Jemeljanova in presence), Swiss Ministry of Education, Swiss Embassy, German Embassy, the Latvian Parliament members, the Vice-President of the Baltic Assembly,, ministries (Education and research, Economy, Welfare, Culture, Finances, Foreign affairs), Agencies under ministries; International Labour organisations, foreign investors council (FICIL), GOPA; Baltic VET providers (schools, colleges, universities), employers (counterparts in providing training practices and WBL), sector associations, employers' organisations, social partners, sector expert councils, HE institutions, researchers, as well as other international representatives/organisations and individual participants. The event was widely represented in media – press, TV, social media.

In the Baltic seminar 24 January, 2017 delegations from the three Baltic countries included policy makers (ministries), ministry

agencies, VET institutions' representatives, social partner, sector and employers' representatives. This allowed for a multisided dialogue and promotion of best practice, as well as for determining the framework and content of the potential future co-operation.

A promotional seminar for employers involved in WBL was organised by the project partner Employers' Confederation of Latvia 24 February, 2017 with the aim of presenting BAfA and the initiatives of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA). As a result of the seminar 16 Latvian employers submitted their pledges to EAfA.

- In Lithuania, objectives of activities are: elaboration and agreement among all key stakeholders on concrete immediate key actions; improving awareness about benefits of WBL/apprenticeship; ensuring participation of all key stakeholders to raise their awareness, involvement and commitment. The main outputs are: country background report and action plan, round table discussions in the preparation phase, awareness raising campaign and a an international conference 20 May, 2016. Final Action plan to Implement and Develop Apprenticeship in Lithuania includes reviews of apprenticeship schemes and WBL in Lithuania. These have been analysed to elaborate concrete immediate procedures needed for strengthening apprenticeship and WBL. A model for apprenticeship development, as well as recommendations from the Lithuanian pilot project have been prepared so that concrete actions and responsibilities could be formulated for subsequent implementation. The actions proposed were presented, discussed and agreed in round tables discussions with all the key stakeholders (representatives of Ministries for Social Security and Labour and Economy and major social partner and industry organisations). The developed final action plan aims at proposing necessary improvements of legal basis, governance and financing of apprenticeship. Six round tables were implemented to stimulate dialogue leading to partnerships for apprenticeship schemes implementation and better relevance of WBL. The topics of round tables were formulated taking into consideration the key success factors for apprenticeship/ WBL suggested in the EC guidebook "Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors": Robust Institutional and Regulatory Framework (1); Active Social Partner Involvement (2); Close Partnerships between Employers and Educational Institutions (3); Close Alignment with the Labour Market Needs (4); Robust Quality Assurance (5); Funding including Employer Subsidies and Other Incentives (6). In each workshop successful cases of WBL were presented. External speakers from abroad and Lithuania were invited to present good practices and stimulate discussions. The outcomes of discussions of round tables were included into testing Initial Action Plan and improving it, that resulted in preparing Final Action Plan.

The impact - national agreement on concrete key actions and procedures for strengthening of WBL;

- In Estonia, existing practices among different employers and VET institutions and different local project outcomes have been analysed to identify best practices and possible motivation schemes for employers. To improve awareness about the benefits and possibilities of participating in WBL among employers, three study trips for employers for peer learning from enterprises in different EU countries who have a long term experience in implementing WBL have been organised – to Denmark, Germany and Slovakia. An international conference for WBL was organised on 8 April, 2016 for a broad spectrum of stakeholders to share experience and discuss challenges in WBL implementation. Videos to promote VET and WBL were produced (with English subtitles) to be used in all the three Baltic countries.

In all three Baltic states, the social partners were strongly being involved in these activities. National activities was being coordinated between the three Baltic countries through the Policy dialogue of the ministry representatives.

<https://www.izm.gov.lv/en/project-short-description-implemented-activites>