

Project DB WAVE - Don Bosco Web for a more Accessible
and inclusive VET in Europe
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DB T-VET in Europe: Here & Now

**An assessment of the expertise and potential of the Don Bosco national
networks of VET institutions in Europe**

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Background

Though EU is on track to meet its 2020 targets on education, progress is uneven on employment and poor on poverty reduction: people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2013 are 122.6 million (2014 EC, 'Taking stock of the Europe 2020 strategy'), while EU youth unemployment is 22.7%, (Eurostat 2012); 4 Countries targeted scored higher LTU rates. Crisis showed an increased gap and need to align employable skills offer and demand, which is even more remarkable for NEETS (22,7% in IT and 21,1 in ES -EuroFound 2015) and vulnerable youth.

- The potential role of VET in meeting the dual objectives of increasing employability and reaching social inclusion; as it is the prevention of early school leaving, in extremely high levels in some partner countries (ES, 18.3%; IT, 14.0%; HU, 12.5%; Education Monitor 2018)

- VET providers through EU platforms could foster inclusion and employability though the following problems inhibit their full contribution to quality and inclusive VET:

1. T-VET suffers from a low recognition in society, mainly due to a false perception of lack of career prospects for T-VET graduates (as Commissioner Thyssen mentioned in the closing of Vocational Skills Week 2017: "All these events show that VET is not a "plan B", but a priority. This week, you let the rest of Europe know that VET is a first choice")

2. In many EU countries, we have detected an increasing need to improve the employability of especially young people in NEET situation, who usually risk early school leaving and drop out for formal education. (Education Monitor 2018, Figures 27 and 29, Volume 1).

3. As highlighted by the Skills Agenda, there is a huge skills mismatch between the labour market, and the new skills required and the training provided.

- The following needs are at the basis of the problems highlighted:

a) Weak technical and operational competences of VET providers to meaningful contribute to policy development.

b) Weak connection between EU policies and tools developed in Europe and grass-root VET provisions implemented at national and regional level.

c) Lack of planning approach and of structural multi-actor schemes of trans-border cooperation needed to set up and implement consistent strategies of internationalization.

Challenges: the urgency to implement this project given by the EU scenario and the upcoming challenges mainly in the field of skills employability and matching between, and/or the expected role and contribution of EU VET platforms

1. Considerable obstacles in the dissemination of EU. Many of our local T-VET do not know nor use those instruments.

2. There is still very little awareness of Lifelong Learning approach, and the need of continuous training, even if employed.

3. Even if experienced on working with companies we identify an urgent need of increasing the cooperation among stakeholders involved in training and employment, breaking the mentality of "silos mentality" as fostered by the future Centres of Vocational Excellence.

Don Bosco VET organisations count on over 250 T-VET centres in 12 different European countries and over 150 years of experience providing quality based initial and continuous VET. Our focus has been to provide employable oriented opportunities mostly addressed to disadvantaged youth, as between 70 to 80% of Don Bosco Beneficiaries faces a vulnerability, is out of mainstreamed VET services or is at risk of exclusion situation due to different factors: socio-economic background, learning difficulties, ethnic discrimination, migrant background and/or refugee status);

As Don Bosco T-VET centres we count on the following strengths and potential contribution to the employability of vulnerable youth:

1. Active and effective T-VET Centres with positive image in their local communities.

2. Long lasting experience in cooperating with companies in different aspects (identifying qualification needs, provision of new technology, apprenticeships and first-entry job placements).

3. An Apprenticeship scheme started in 1850 and updated to the current needs, which include a particular mode of relationship between company and training centre, and focusing on the provision of soft skills and citizenship competences.

-In line with the needs mentioned in the previous section, we have identified the following specific needs of Don Bosco networks:

1. Improve the transferability of our different best practices existing in the different partners (shifting from a simple exchange of best practice to a model of benchmarking among different existing realities)
2. Provide our learners with different soft skills: learn to learn, flexibility to adapt to changing labour market environment, and increase their mobility within the European Union.

The enhancement of Don Bosco network will hence influence a factual contribution to the EU 2020 strategy, and to meet the Bruges expectation and will contribute to achieve the following Objectives:

1. Contribute to enhance quality, inclusiveness, relevance and EU impact of VET provisions aiming to promote in particular vulnerable youth livelihood through employability and social inclusion
2. Increase EU national networks of VET providers' meaningful contribution to the achievement of the 2015-2020 mid-term deliverables in the field of VET set up in Riga. At the same time, to support EU policy reflection and to take action to enhance EU VET impact and relevance at grassroots' National and Regional levels through mainstreaming quality and inclusive VET provisions for vulnerable youth employability.

For this reason, the present call would be an opportunity to the reinforcement/building up of DB national networks. It will contribute to achieve the general objective mentioned above and also the specific objectives (the following paragraph) through capacity building, good practice exchange and through transnational structural schemes of cooperation.

DB WAVE - Don Bosco Web for a more Accessible and inclusive VET in Europe is a Project co-funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Programme – KA3; it gathers 7 Don Bosco VET national networks in Italy, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Hungary and France which will work together and endorse a consistent strategy to impact on expected short and long term objectives:

1. Institutional and network building to enhance DB VET accountability, EU relevance, capacity to endorse a planning and development approach and get engaged in EU cooperation (WP1):

- Detailed description of activities:

- a. Implementation of 14 peer reviews, endorsing the quality criteria developed by CNOS-FAP and the Finnish subcontractor LUOVI (Erasmus+ KA2 SEPRI -Strength from Peer Review“ -2014-1-FI01-KA202-000842 for planning, implementation ,evaluation and development of international activities in iVET.
- b. Drafting of 7 Network development action plans for the internationalization of VET system, based on the improvements suggested in the peer review reports;
- c. Execution of the activities foreseen in the plan and leading to the “institutionalization” and enhancement of network and of the quality and inclusiveness of their VET offer

2. Comprehensive technical and operational capacity building of key VET staff through peer learning and ToT, and of teachers and trainers (WP2)

- Detailed description of activities:

- a. Development of 5 peer learnings addressed to key staff focal points on different cluster activities: 1. EU Policies and tools; 2. Internationalization in VET; 2. JOB Services Offices and Tracking graduates approaches; 4. Key Competences in LLL; 5. Digitalization and Work Based Learning innovative VET. The ECVET toolkit for peer learning developed by CNOS-FAP through its KA2 JOB LABYRINTH (2016-1-IT01-KA202-005493) will be endorsed
- b. Delivery of 3 ToT modules addressed to 180 VET stakeholders on Dual Learning for Social Inclusion; on EU policies and DB approach to advocate for Social Inclusion; on Quality and inclusiveness of DB networks VET in Europe.

- c. Development of 5 training of trainers Modules, endorsing tools and practices exchange through peer learnings.
- d. Translation and upscaling ToT modules in English, French, Spanish, Flemish, German, Hungarian.
- 3.** Cooperative and mutual learning to develop, pilot and scale up at national/regional levels shared quality and inclusive VET tools and provisions (WP3)
 - Detailed description of activities:
 - a. Co-working process to adapt effective Tools & methods gathered to formal and non-formal learning environments and at national levels in the following VET cluster: Tracking Graduates; mentoring approach; validation of soft skills; Job Placement Services; digitalization and work based learning schemes.
 - 4.** Structured frameworks of cooperation to enhance engagement of VET providers in EU cooperation and mainstreaming of quality and inclusive VET in Europe (WP3)
 - Detailed description of activities:
 - a. piloting adapted selected tools into partners' national VET learning environment in Italy, Spain, Germany, France, Belgium, Hungary
 - b. Assessing impact and framing tools, practices and methodologies into partners international development plan and in the Db Tech Europe strategy plan.

The comprehensive technical and capacity building processes endorsed by the DB WAVE partners, will impact first at national level, and then at European following the building of the **DB Tech Europe** the upcoming VET network of empowered networks, representing all the Don Bosco VET institutions in Europe, on **60.000 learners** and **7.000 VET** staff in Europe through:

- Fostering quality, inclusiveness, EU relevance of VET provisions aiming to promote in particular vulnerable youth livelihood through employability and social inclusion.
- Stimulating EU policy reflection and increase national VET networks' meaningful contribution and engagement to achieve the 2015-2020 mid-term deliverables of VET set up by the European Commission in Riga.

DB T-VET in Europe “Here and There”: an initial assessment of the Don Bosco national networks of VET organizations in Europe

The present assessment is the first deliverable produced by DB WAVE partners within the **Work Package 1 - Network and institutional building** - aiming to:

1. Analyse the potential of each partner for the creation of sustainable systems of local clustering of T-VET centres in order to build/enhance their network, first at national and then at European level;
2. Conceive a new method of cooperation among T-VET centres within their networks, and of the regional/national networks with their peers in other EU countries.
3. Enhance national DB VET networks capacity to perform at national and EU levels as a reliable VET stakeholder to promote quality and inclusiveness of VET in Europe.

4. Identify objectives, results expected and cluster actions to be endorsed first by the DB WAVE networks at national level, then by the upcoming DB Tech Europe at European level, through a comprehensive internationalization strategy and action plan in order to meet the aims of the project.

To this aims, **DB T-VET in Europe “Here and There”**, represents an initial assessment of partners’ institutional capacities and internationalization potential: strengths, possible improvements, lines of actions, skills gaps and training needs of management, VET staff and students have been assessed in order to start up the institutional building path which, through peer reviews and the endorsement of continuous processes of development/enhancement of relevant and coherent internationalization strategies, will lead:

- in 2020 to the enhancement of DB national VET networks representativeness and capacity to get engaged in policy development processes at national and EU levels;

- in 2021, to the establishment of the European network of VET networks, and to the launch of its strategy:

DB Tech Europe: Don Bosco Network of Vocational Excellence.

The assessment has been coordinated and realized by CNOS-FAP & DBI – Don Bosco International, which last October 2019 developed a questionnaire, built up in 2 core sections, to be filled in all the DB WAVE partners in order to assess:

Section A: each partner national network’s legal status, coordination and representativeness potential as national network, actual and forecast engagement in decision making processes at national and EU levels;

Section B: each partner national network’s actual and forecast internationalization potential with reference to both their capacity to set up coherent, relevant strategies as national networks, and to the added value to be provided by a future Don Bosco European network of VET networks;

A third section in the Questionnaire (**Section C**), not directly linked to the assessment, have been added in order to identify each partner national network’s dissemination and impact potential. The results produced have been used by each partner to develop their own stakeholder map, national dissemination and exploitation strategies (Work Package 6 of the project).

While the questionnaires filled in by DB WAVE partners are attached (Annex 1), the following paragraph is aimed at presenting the global findings of the assessment, detailing, for each of the 2 Section (A and B), results assessed, strengths and points of improvement.

DB T-VET in Europe “Here and There”: results and future perspectives

Section A: each partner national network’s legal status, coordination and representativeness potential as national network, actual and forecast engagement in decision making processes at national and EU levels;

Results assessed:

All the DB WAVE partners assessed are formally established networks, representing a group of Don Bosco schools and VET Centres at Country or, in case of Spain, at Regional level. Most of the partners networks have been established with the explicit aim of formally representing their schools and VET Centres; the level of representativeness and membership ranges from partner to partner, from a full legal involvement of the schools, VET centres and of their managers in the decision making processes of the networks (Italy, France, Germany), to the simple consultation (Spain, Hungary) or to a substantial autonomy of the schools/VET Centres coordinated (Belgium).

The mission and services offered by the network to the member schools and VET Centres are very comprehensive and include:

- The continuous development of the staff of the member associations’ professionalism, qualifying and improving their educational, pedagogical, didactical and technical competences through the setting up and delivery of multiannual training programs and annual plans;
- Coordination for the continuous methodological, technical and technological development and improvement of the activities and services delivered by the members schools and VET Centres;
- Legal, educational and business administration counselling;
- Coordination of National wide initiatives and pilots;
- Information, awareness raising and dissemination of studies, laws, researches, pilot experiences;
- Providing advice and support concerning all issues specific to this level of education (administrative, legal, pedagogical, HR, finance, strategic policy).
- Representativeness and Advocacy at national and international levels on behalf of their members;
- Exchange of information and policy matters with key stakeholders;
- Promoting and implementing innovative projects concerning the modernisation of the learning environment;
- Fine-tuning the stock management and infrastructural development in the technical schools;
- Coordination and innovation in the fields of school management and quality in VET;
- Consultancy, orientation and pedagogical Coordination;
- Develop a continuous improvement plan for teacher’s technological competitiveness;
- Provide a coordinated labor intermediation service;
- Promote the relationship with companies in a work environment based in projects;
- Facilitate the presence in the market of the network of centres through corporate events related to VET;
- grant application and management support for national and EU funds;
- Promotion of networking and partnership building at all levels;
- Coordination and promotion of member schools and VET Centres participation in international projects.

Strenghts:

- All the networks are legally committed and built up to coordinate, represent, guide and orient the members school and VET Centres members;
- Membership and representativeness is granted at least at national level and, in most of the cases, institutionalized through the participation of members in the decision making processes of the network;
- Wide range of services offered by the networks to their members; with the only exception of one partner in Belgium, all the network have in the internationalization a core pillar of their strategy.

- All partners are engaged in advocacy and in the participation on VET policy development processes, on behalf of their members, though, with few exceptions (Italy), at the moment their action has mainly a national-wide scope.
- Rootedness in the different regions, relevance and multiannual history of cooperation among the schools and VET Centres both at national and international levels, also before or without a coordination body;
- All the partner network committed themselves to endorse institutional building processes through peer review aiming at enhancing their organization capacity to meet the needs and expectation of their members and the results expected by the DB WAVE project.

Points of improvement

- Though all the networks provide their members with guidance, facilitation of networking processes, information and awareness raising on VET topics, coordination in some Regions is not yet perfectly structured or does not happens on voluntary basis;
- Especially in the case of newly established networks, the amount of dedicated human and financial resources available is not consistent wide range of services to be provided; with regard to this institutional building processes, already in progress, will contribute to fill the gaps, also through the development of ad hoc terms of references, more consistent organizational charts and consistent action plans.
- Partners shall endorse institutional and capacity development paths in order to enhance their representativeness and capacity to advocate and to participate on VET policy development processes also at European level.

Section B: each partner national network's actual and forecast internationalization potential with reference to both their capacity to set up coherent, relevant strategies as national networks, and to the added value to be provided by a future Don Bosco European network of VET networks;

Results assessed:

All the Db WAVE partners have internationalization among their scope of action and of representativeness with reference to their members, or have planned to introduce it (Belgium).

The services provided range from the simple facilitation of processes aimed at fostering a single school or VET Centre profile's internationalization in Europe, to coordination and network, to a more structured and comprehensive medium term strategy and action plan, including Promotion, coordination and implementation on behalf of their members- of:

- Large-scope mobility projects (staff/students), of projects dealing with the development of innovation, of quality, inclusiveness and relevance of VET in Europe and at international level. The extent to which the networks are directly responsible of all the project life cycle and the nature of their support depend from the typology of project or action promoted, including: a. International Projects and initiatives promoted by the Network for all its members; b. International Projects and initiatives planned and managed by the network, and implemented by one or more VET Centres as operative partners; c. International Projects and initiatives planned and delivered by one or more VET Centres, which ask technical support to the Network as far as project design and management, are concerned; d. International Projects (usually student mobilities) planned and realized by the VET Centre themselves.
- EU and international network building strategies,
- Strategic MoUs and agreements signed with international key actors and with their networks;
- Meetings and conferences on EU and international issues;
- Training of trainers, peer learning, peer reviews and other continuous training initiatives on internationalization issues;
- Advocacy and active engagement to EU policy development processes (Italy)

Nevertheless, only in some cases (Italy, and partly Spain and Germany) networks have been able to frame the international activities and services provided into a consistent medium term Strategy and into a short term Action plan which, whether formalized or not, detail at network level:

- a. The operational objectives to be pursued and the in order to impact, in the long run, on the internationalization of the organizations, of their beneficiaries and staff.
- b. The results to be achieved and the cluster actions to be taken up and the indicators of results and of performance with reference to each objective;
- c. Procedures, tasks, time frame and resources assigned to the internationalization and, more specifically detailing what, how, when, and by whom international activities are planned, designed, implemented and evaluated.

Other partner networks (ex. Hungary, Belgium) are at the moment mainly focused on to promote the participation by one or more of their members to single international opportunities (projects, meetings etc.), or on to facilitate/monitor the achievement of the objectives set up in their schools/VET Centres own international plans (SMX in Spain), while others (France) are currently engaged in a comprehensive bottom-up needs assessment leading to the development of an internationalization strategy at network level .

Partners which have set up an internationalization strategy have identified similar cluster objectives and results to be achieved and are at the moment coordinating similar cluster actions at international level,

though few of them (Italy) have framed the strategy in their quality system and are constantly revising it through continuous development processes.

Among the objectives identified by most of the partner network in order to enhance the internationalization of their schools, of their students and staff' profile, we can mention the followings:

- To promote the internationalization of students' profile and increase their potential employability
- To promote the continuous development of the staff of the member associations' professionalism, qualifying and improving their educational, pedagogical, didactical and technical competences
- To improve the quality of CNOS-FAP training offer and to promote the "culture" of vocational training at European and international levels
- To promote at international level the Salesian "brand" CNOSFAP and the Salesian vision on VET
- To strengthen at European and international level the links with relevant market actors in order to improve students' potential employability
- To enhance the CNOSFAP financial sustainability through fostering a diversification of public-private financial sources of income

Results:

- Increasing number of students that take part to the mobility abroad and growing number of Centres involved as sending institutions
- All the following groups are yearly targeted: linguistic teachers, trainers, coordinators, project managers, directors
- Mobilities are planned and agreed within each yearly seminar held by the National project planning working group
- Ad hoc Training courses on the planning and management of EU and international activities are yearly offered to key staff of the Federation
- Quality of mobility schemes and capacity building of staff involved leading to more structured schemes of cooperation at EU level (European Mobility Charter)
- Network building at national, EU and international level leading to the enhancement of Federation as a network of Centres of Vocational Excellences within a European Salesian CoVEs.
- Yearly increase the number of centres taking part on international activities with staff, professors and students.
- Foster the international activity by means of a structure, at a province level, that participates in an international network activities plan.
- Collaborate, as regards the province structure, with the smaller centres in order to facilitate them the international participation on projects

With reference to this, the possibility, through the institutional and technical development processes planned in the DB WAVE project, to build up a European network of VET networks, capable to link and coordinate all the Salesian national platforms in Europe, is not only considered by all partners as the outcome of an Erasmus+ action, but also a key to enhance and scale the representativeness, relevance and visibility of their internationalization profile. According to the assessment realized and to the results of the questionnaires filled in, the upcoming DB Tech Europe is considered by all DB partners a core part of their internationalization strategies, where formalized, or, for those who haven't formalized a strategy yet, a key means to reach their objectives in Europe. The upcoming DB Tech Europe, according to its national VET networks' vision, shall:

A. Foster a solid international strategy, capable of planning and implementing projects and activities in line with the objectives and mission of its national network. Also through a consistent advocacy and network

building strategies, it is expected that the new network will boost their representativeness, improve the skills, opportunities of Salesian VET staff and enhance the quality, impact and importance of the VET offer addressed in favour of vulnerable youth throughout Europe.

B. Become an important player vis-à-vis the European key policy actors when it comes to education and training, lifelong learning and preventing the unqualified dropout of vocational education.

C. Bring management and teaching staff thematically together to share expertise, develop, broaden and deepen expertise. Such a European Network is an opportunity to share materials, to make arise professional learning communities at different levels. In the end, it must lead to a much more efficient use of the available financial resources. It makes no sense to develop the same material in several countries.

D. Facilitate national partners to increase and align quality education, evaluation system and learning outcomes to the EU standards, opening a door to the international labor market for trainees and graduates.

E. Increase the opportunities for students and VET staff mobility and employability across Europe, also through the design, piloting and institutionalization of innovative mutual schemes of cooperation among members.

Strengths:

- The management of all the national VET networks partners of DB WAVE are fully committed to endorse institutional and technical capacity development processes in order to enhance their representativeness, the relevance, quality and consistency of their internationalization strategy in Europe.

- While some partners already have solid and rooted internationalization strategies and action plan, all the others have anyway set up objectives and concrete results to boost cooperation and representativeness of their schools and VET centres in Europe.

- DB Tech Europe, a future European network of Don Bosco VET networks, is unanimously considered by all partners as key to fully achieve and scale at European level partners' internationalization strategies, brand and vision on VET: the process leading to the building up of the network seems not only to be sustainable and, at the moment, on track with reference to the forecast action plan, but is also considered as the natural outcome of the coordination and networking action taken up at European level by all the Don Bosco schools and VET Centres since 2010.

Points of improvement

- Internationalization, though a core part of their action, is not always framed yet into all partners' formal strategies and plans. Through the peer reviews already planned and implemented in the first year of DB WAVE project, is expected that all partners will develop/improve a multiannual strategy and a short term action plan by 2021.

- Though all the Don Bosco schools and VET centres share a multiannual history of networking and partnership in Europe, also through the implementation of several Erasmus+ actions, cooperation at European level still happens at bilateral school-to-school level, even though with few exceptions (Italy Hungary, Germany and partly Spain). With regard to this, the enhancement of the national partner VET networks and the upcoming development of a common EU platform will contribute to scale up networking at European level, to "institutionalize" and frame it into structural schemes of cooperation within a shared DB Tech Europe internationalization strategy.