



# Making placements abroad an opportunity for all

# move it



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PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS 

# Why support the mobility of young people and apprentices in Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET)?

Have you ever asked your baker where she learned to bake bread? And if so, did she learn to bake bread abroad? And have you ever thought of asking this same question to your hairdresser? Did he go to London, for example, to learn about the latest trends?

Most of us know people who went abroad, either for work, study or leisure. Most of us know that in certain trades (i.e. cooking), gaining experience abroad really makes a difference. Yet, not many of us realise that going abroad as part of one's vocational education is in fact a possibility for all; not just for students in higher education or for apprentices in specific trades.

Already more than 700,000 young people in Europe have taken advantage of a transnational placement funded through the Leonardo da Vinci programmes, which includes a series of activities specifically aimed at people in vocational education and training. In 2006, the annual budget for mobility through Leonardo was over EUR 48 million. Apart from this programme, many other initiatives exist (we identified 70 programmes in Europe besides Leonardo da Vinci) and, based on figures from 14 countries, approximately 20.000 apprentices in total take part in transnational placements.

Placements abroad and transnational mobility expose young people to new ways of thinking and working. They encourage the development of valuable skills, such as language proficiency, intercultural understanding and professional skills. They boost other qualities which can make a significant contribution to an individual's prospects, including self-esteem, self-confidence and adaptability. Furthermore, new relationships between schools, enterprises and individuals are often a source for innovation. Ultimately, mobility is one of the means to raise qualification levels and improve the competitive position of European economies.

We expect that you, as an employer, parent, teacher, mentor or a student in a vocational school, take action to support mobility of apprentices and other young people in IVET. If you are a policy maker, mobility organiser or intermediary organisation, we call on you to facilitate the mobility of apprentices across Europe. Several suggestions are provided here to help you get started.

This brochure is the result of a study funded by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture. The 'Study on the obstacles to transnational mobility faced by apprentices and other young people in initial vocational training and on ways of overcoming them', also referred to as the MoVE-iT project, identified obstacles to, and solutions for, mobility in (I)VET.

The brochure's content reflects the opinions of its author only and does not necessarily represent the official position of the European Commission.

The conclusions presented in this report are based on extensive research amongst apprentices, VET providers, employers, (EU and national) policymakers and expert views. The research base for this brochure can be found at:  
<http://www.europe-move-it.eu>

## Definition of terms

### Mobility

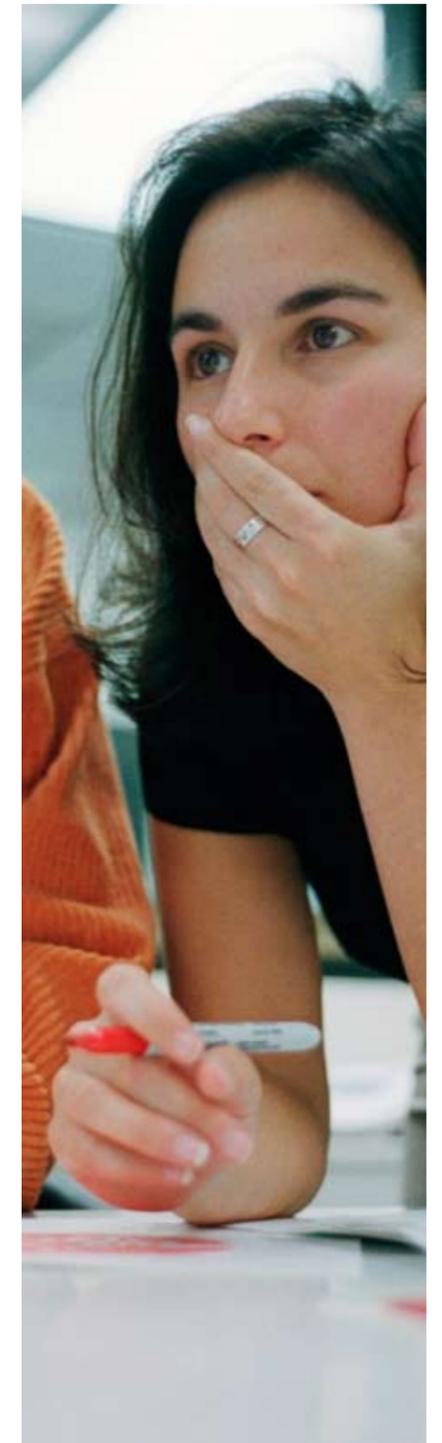
A stay abroad organised in a situation where 'earning a living' (as in gainful employment) is not the purpose of this stay. Transnational mobility focuses on work placements abroad. These are not restricted to apprenticeships, but also include placements in school-based IVET systems.

### Apprenticeship

Systematic, long-term training based on alternating periods in a school or training centre and at the workplace; the apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wages or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation.

### Initial Vocational Education and Training participants

Those enrolled in vocational education and training programmes at upper secondary level (in terms of the International Standard Classification of Education, ISCED level 3). This is irrespective of whether participants are enrolled in school-based vocational education or in work-based or alternance pathways.



# European society as a whole will benefit from increased mobility in IVET

## Placements abroad can improve intercultural understanding

Mobility in education and youth programmes reflect the initial thoughts of Jean Monnet when forging the European Coal and Steel Union in 1951: through mobility, young people develop a sense of “European Citizenship” as opposed to a strictly national outlook. Learning how to live peacefully together in Europe is still important for European society.



## Placements abroad increase internationalisation of education and training in Europe

National educational and training systems need to respond to globalisation. Mobility will address temporary gaps in qualifications and training provision, as well as improving the way institutions deal with internationalisation.



# Stakeholders benefit from mobility in IVET

## Employers derive benefits both for their current and future workforce

Have you ever hired a trainee from abroad? Chances are that you have not, actually. Maybe you have hired trainees from local schools, or a trainee from an institute of higher education. Transnational placements in VET are rare: less than 1% of VET students in Europe go abroad as part of their training. Recent research shows that employers, who do hire trainees from abroad, are very positive about this experience. In some sectors and countries, there is so much demand for trainees from abroad that it creates another problem: some claim that it inhibits opportunities for ‘local’ trainees. Companies then need to consider seconding their apprentices and trainees as well, to create a level of reciprocity. However, this is still far from reality in many sectors.

Transnational placements support the development of skills and competences that are important for the international market: greater cultural awareness, developing an international touch within the company, knowledge of new markets, improved language skills and technical understanding. Skills shortages in particular sectors or regions can be addressed through mobility as well.

## VET institutions confirm various benefits related to IVET students, staff and public relations

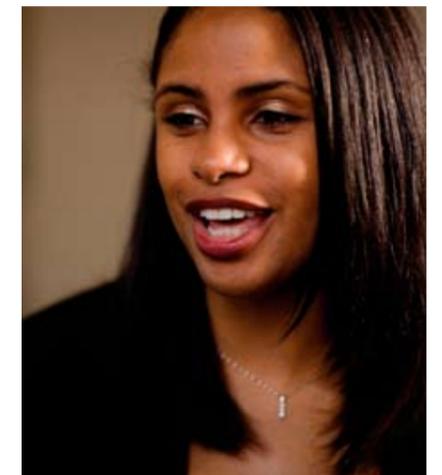
One of the dilemmas for many VET institutions is that they often serve a ‘local’ market, with an emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Although many SMEs in Europe have international customers and suppliers, the majority serves a local market as well, thus limiting the need for transnational placements. Each institution needs to deal with the ‘local’ versus ‘global’ dilemma in its own way. Our study shows that those who do deal with the dilemma experience a number of benefits from participating in transnational mobility programmes:

- they enhance the profile of both the VET institutions as such as well as the appeal of certain programmes;
- they offer staff in IVET colleges and centres the chance to utilise foreign know-how and experiences;
- for teachers and trainers, as well as mentors in host companies, incoming mobility can improve linguistic and intercultural (teaching) skills; and
- VET institutions can compare and match their teaching and learning performance against performances and expectations in other countries, providing useful benchmarks for future development.

## Benefits for apprentices and other young people in IVET experience: a positive impact on a wide variety of personal skills

Transnational mobility nurtures a number of increasingly critical skills. IVET students say their experience has given them:

- increased cultural awareness, language ability and self-confidence;
- willingness to go again and motivation to complete their studies;
- understanding of other countries in Europe and increased interest in other people;
- improved communication/interpersonal skills;
- expected positive impact on career opportunities; and
- improved vocational knowledge.



# Policymakers have already created the conditions for mobility in Europe. All citizens are free to go abroad as part of their learning pathways

## At European level and in many countries, legislation has facilitated mobility in education

Although our research revealed that there are many potential issues when going on a placement abroad, the basic premise is that free movement is an established right for all EU citizens<sup>1</sup>. In practice, those organisations that have experience with mobility of apprentices in VET stress that legal and administrative obstacles are not the main barriers for going abroad. Furthermore, several solutions can be implemented to mitigate legal risks, i.e. specific contracts, partnership agreements and insurance packages as well as support for administrative procedures.

## Programmes exist to support mobility of apprentices

Apart from the European programme to support mobility in IVET (called Leonardo da Vinci<sup>2</sup>), several programmes exist at the bilateral, national, regional and local levels. Our research identified almost 70

programmes in Europe that fund mobility for apprentices and young people in IVET<sup>3</sup>. Also, a number of sectors and companies are stimulating mobility through specific actions. Therefore, you need to find out which programmes are available to you.

## Policymakers are taking additional measures to address specific legal obstacles

The moment borders are crossed, the legal situation for young people engaged in apprenticeships and placements becomes complex. Some forms of placement are defined as employment, others purely as education. There are a number of overlapping laws and regulations that have an impact on the ability to pursue and provide cross-border apprenticeships and placements within the EU. These relate to issues such as residency, health, safety and liability insurance in the workplace and other problems related to legal and administrative issues. Several countries are implementing specific legislation for

study and placements abroad that will increase opportunities further. We urge policymakers to consider the following remaining issues:

- Apprentices' legal status. If a mobility project is organised as a work placement in a private or public company and is remunerated, the participant is given the status of an employee (worker). If the stay is organised as a work placement and the participant does not receive any remuneration, he or she has no clearly defined social and legal status in relation to some crucial issues at any workplace.
- Measures for dealing with health, safety and liability insurance at the workplace, until a separate legal status for apprentices is feasible
- Existing information on residence and visa applications. Providing young people with access to information in one place and in an easy-to-use format is essential to help them understand the possibilities of pursuing vocational training in other Member States.



## Tips

- The MoVE-iT Country report, gives a detailed account of the situation in 32 countries, including an overview of mobility programmes other than Leonardo. Often, transnational mobility of apprentices is related to the competencies of several ministries (i.e. education, employment, justice). Therefore, it is recommended to set up taskforces from different ministries to tackle the issues. Use the final report to set the agenda for this taskforce; it is there for your convenience.
- Some national administrations have acknowledged the potential legal problems and are now in the phase of drawing up specific legislation. Also, agreements between countries may exist that limit the risks for individuals to take part in a mobility programme. A separate paper describes the legal barriers that are still to be broken down at EU level.
- Contracts between schools, employers and insurance companies can also be used to mitigate legal risks. Examples are provided on the MoVE-iT website. Also, many schools and national agencies for lifelong learning can provide the necessary contracts.
- The European Commission provides information about your rights to take part of your studies abroad. See the website PLOTEUS or call Europe Direct.
- Leonardo Da Vinci National Agencies know about specific rules applicable to your country and the country you want to visit. Also, you can go to a EURES advisor in a Public Employment Agency, for specific rules on work contracts.



<sup>1</sup> For details, see [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/free\\_movement/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/free_movement/index_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> For further information, see [http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/leonardo/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/leonardo/index_en.html)

<sup>3</sup> For further details consult the National Agency for Leonardo or <http://www.europe-move-it.eu>

# How you can support mobility of young people and apprentices in IVET

Employers (both SMEs and larger enterprises) create opportunities for seconding and welcoming apprentices through:

- Collaborating with partners from education and sectoral organisations involved in mobility programmes and projects;
- Forming strategic alliances and networks with institutes of education and other enterprises, in order to improve the quality and availability of placements;
- Implementing sustainable financial support measures, e.g. grants, loans, investments in quality assurance and other investments;
- Developing competencies of workplace instructors to guide apprentices from abroad (e.g. by training or sending instructors abroad for short periods);
- Creating, supporting and/or expanding shared service centres for placements (abroad); and
- Developing a structured dialogue with services in charge of individual validation and certification of trainees in order to recognise the learning outcomes obtained during their training (including the mobility experience).

## Tips

- Many employers are represented by sectoral organisations; these often play a role in establishing the educational standards for the profession. Also, they often have relationships with similar organisations abroad. If your employer or school does not support placements abroad, you should consult with the sectoral organisation to find out which programmes they offer. An overview of European sectoral organisations is available on the Europa website<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/social\\_dialogue/sectoral\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_dialogue/sectoral_en.htm)



VET providers boost the value of mobility by fostering long-term strategies, partnerships and quality assurance systems. They help by:

- Developing an internationalisation and mobility strategy, linked with internal quality infrastructure and adequate stable funding (public, private, self-funding) of a number of core activities;
- Improving the competence of staff organising mobility as well as teachers, trainers and tutors involved;
- Investing in long-term transnational partnerships, creating a formal basis for co-operation and exchange among learners and companies for quality placements;
- Implementing a quality assurance system for placements, monitoring content and recognising the acquired skills abroad;
- Adopting EU-wide acknowledged tools, such as ECVET and Europass, to increase transparency and quality of the learning programmes offered; and
- Directing pro-active communication towards learners, raising awareness among students that placements abroad are an opportunity for all.

## Tips

- Many VET institutes in Europe have gained experience with mobility. Several tools and manuals are available to assist VET staff to develop an internationalisation strategy. The main providers of this information are a number of Leonardo National Agencies. Please check their websites for publications.
- The Leonardo Mobility Award is awarded to innovative and high-quality mobility projects every two years; these can serve as good practices for your VET institution as well.
- The European Commission is actively promoting the recognition and validation of learning outcomes and there are developments on going on European Qualification Framework, credit transfer and quality assurance.



### Intermediary organisations can reduce transaction costs for mobility, thus lowering entry barriers for all involved in mobility

- Intermediary organisations serve as a link between schools, employers and trainees. They can support the mobility of apprentices and other young people in IVET efficiently, through:
  - Administering placements and organising support for apprentices and other IVET participants on a placement abroad;
  - Assisting in organising mobility, in all stages (orientation, preparation, during stay, evaluation and debriefing);
  - Helping to find and pull together complementary resources;
  - Acting as a shared service centre for small and medium-sized enterprises, which cannot build up this expertise in-house;
- Developing and maintaining websites on mobility opportunities and match-making websites that address the needs of apprentices, schools and employers alike; and
- Creating communities of practice for organisers of mobility.

## Tips

- Whether you are a VET school, employer or apprentice seeking a placement, please consider seeking advice from a specialised agency. Many of these intermediaries have websites where you can find placement opportunities or specific advice on organising a stay abroad. Also, websites exist that match employer needs with placement candidates. Please note that placements are not the same as job vacancies: often additional mentoring and certification of the placement are needed. Therefore, personal advice is often required as well.
- There are more than 80 websites in Europe that are related to mobility and placement abroad. See: <http://www.europe-move-it.eu>
- VET schools that are active in the field of internationalisation, often maintain contacts with a limited number of similar organisations abroad. This often facilitates quick access to placements abroad and all the facilities needed to support this. Please consult with your own school (or internationalisation coordinator) to learn about the opportunities.
- The Leonardo National Agencies maintain networks of practitioners (such as Leonet), which can give support to staff in schools as well.

### Joint actions by all stakeholders

Arranging a placement abroad in IVET is different from finding a job in another country, where two players are involved (job seeker and employer). A placement in VET always involves a 'third player', that wants to get reassurance that the mobility experience leads to certain qualifications. Whether this 'third player' is a school, training centre or some government agency, those involved in mobility projects need to take this issue of recognition into account. Some of the best stories come from (smaller) network of employers, VET institutes, public administrations and their counterparts abroad. They have taken a collaborative approach.

Even though you may not know many examples yourself, a great deal of experience has already been gained in Europe with transnational placements

in the VET environment. The lessons learned basically boil down to three success factors:

#### 1. You can only raise the quantity if you also ensure quality

Creating a high-quality experience for young people on vocational work placements and schemes is essential and is inextricably linked to the drive for a greater quantity of opportunities. You can achieve higher quality by:

- setting up specific quality criteria for placements abroad;
- agreeing amongst the players involved, how the quality will be monitored; and
- ensuring that quality is recognised both by schools and the labour market.

#### 2. Long-term commitment of all actors involved is promoted

Building trust between actors, who are often far away from each other, takes time and effort. A longer-term commitment, which allows regular communication between mentors, teachers, schools, is often what makes an initiative successful.

#### 3. Increased awareness of the benefits of mobility

It is vital that maximum awareness is created through channels that will resonate and appeal to the appropriate target audiences, and there are many ways in which this could be achieved, even without government intervention.

## Tips

- Many quality assurance manuals, specifically for internationalisation in VET institutes, already exist. Please consult with your National Agency.
- ECVET is a system for transfer of credits, which is now being researched as a tool to enhance mobility in VET in Europe. Some sectors have already implemented their own systems. Please consult your sectoral organisation for the latest update.
- VET schools can use existing materials to develop communication messages for their own school. Furthermore, they could organise thematic and social events on placement/study abroad.
- Many apprentices who went abroad write about their experiences on the web. A long list of these stories (including films) is provided on the MoVE-iT website.
- Young people want to learn from other young people. One way of facilitating this is to appoint ambassadors for mobility, in schools or sectors.

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***Working together to accelerate  
mobility for Europe's apprentices.***



Directorate-General for Education and Culture



European Year of Workers' Mobility 2006