



Together for Future VETskills

Erasmus+ Project

Guidebook of internationalization Strategy in Vocational Education and Training

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ToVETD3 – WP3: Guidebook of Internationalization Strategy in Vocational Education and Training

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List of abbreviations

AR	Augmented Reality
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
EfVET	European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training www.efvet.org
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
eTwinning	The community for schools in Europe
EU	European Union
KA1	Key Action 1: Learning Mobility of Individuals
KA2	Key Action 2: Cooperation among organisations and institutions
KA3	Key action 3: Support to policy development and cooperation
MR	Mixed Reality
NA	National Agency
REX VET	From a rookie to an expert Erasmus+ KA2 project
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SELFIE	Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the use of Innovative Educational technologies
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
ToVET	Together for Future VETskills
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VR	Virtual Reality
XR	Extended Reality



Executive summary

Together for Future VET Skills project, [ToVET](https://www.tovet.eu/)¹ is funded by the European Union under the programme Erasmus+ KA3 – Support for Policy Reform Networks and Partnerships of Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The project involves four networks from Finland, Italy, and Spain.

The project activities aim to:

- Strengthen cooperation among VET providers by engaging in mutual learning, peer counselling, and capacity building, aimed at raising the quality and attractiveness of VET provision
- Promote and foster the effective use of EU funding instruments
- Support the implementation and dissemination of relevant EU tools and initiatives in the field of VET, whenever possible in national language(s)
- Involve and reach-out to VET providers that do not yet contribute or benefit from European cooperation.
- Contribute to the European Vocational Skills Week
- Support the development of an internationalisation strategy at providers' level, fostering the mobility of leaders, staff, and VET learners, as well as the establishment of cooperation partnerships.
- Foster innovative learning of key competences in VET as for example, allow flexibility and adaptability to meet individual learning needs by adapting programme design and assessment.

Within the above-mentioned framework, this guide aims to provide a practical tool for all those organisations eager to develop an international strategy, to re-start international activities after Covid-19 or that wish to take advantage of the novelties foreseen in the new Erasmus+ programme such as applying for the new Erasmus accreditation system.

¹ <https://www.tovet.eu/>

Foreword

Why is it necessary to have a strategy? The answer is easy; a strategy provides guidelines for action and helps clarify the objectives of the action. Ultimately, however, it is people who are active - even a well-planned strategy does not guarantee good activity if it is not being implemented by committed people. At its best, a vision of the internationalization of an educational institution and its forms is based on a planned strategy to which the entire educational institution is committed. The coronavirus pandemic stopped the international activities of educational institutions, especially in terms of physical mobility. On the other hand, it also required the rapid adoption and strategic planning of new forms of internationalization.

So why do vocational schools need internationalization? There is a constant need for renewal as working life changes, and the promotion of lifelong learning and the prevention of exclusion are some of the most important goals relating to the internationalization of education. All these areas are also covered in this guide. Strategic planning ensures that international activities become more responsible, sustainable, and equal. An internationally active and networked vocational school is also a competitive player in the education market.

After Covid-19, the entire field of education is eagerly waiting for the reactivation of international activities, and this strategy guide will be useful for this work. Of course, virtual internationalization has also been developed in vocational schools during the pandemic. In a survey conducted by the Finnish National Agency for Education in the autumn of 2021, educational institutions were asked what they anticipated virtual international activities of educational institutions to be like in 2025. The unanimous result was that virtual international activities were seen to be a natural part of the educational institution's operation. They will be used in the mobility of students and staff, in the recruitment of international professionals to local companies, and in cooperation and development projects. The sustainable development theme has been integrated into all mobility activities, both physical and virtual. According to respondents, the studies of every VET student will include some kind of international experience in the future, at least a virtual one.

The role of internationalization at home is becoming more and more important in educational institutions as part of international activities, and blended mobility has come to stay, even in the mobility statistics collected annually by the Finnish National Agency for Education. Among other



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things, this guide provides tips on how to integrate blended mobility into the strategic planning of internationalization. The purpose of the guide is to provide practical tips and exercises on how to start building an internationalization strategy and, with it, international cooperation in a new situation.

Ms. Siru Korkala, PhD, Senior Advisor, Finnish National Agency for Education



1 Introduction

1.1 What is Internationalisation in Vocational Education and Training VET?

The definition of the word “internationalisation” has not been fully agreed upon.

Internationalisation is a complex concept that when applied to the field of Vocational Education and Training entails multiple meanings and can be made up, among others, of the following elements:

- ✓ Mobility of students and teachers to other countries
- ✓ Participation in international projects, either in Europe or in joint projects with third countries in the field of the collaboration for the development
- ✓ Participation in European and International Vocational Training networks and contribution to the networks with initiatives, analysis, and research activities, attending annual forums and being an active member in the development of learning actions and innovation.

In other words, internationalisation is the word used to describe the process of integrating the international dimension into the teaching and learning aspects of VET organisations.

The main idea behind the concept of internationalisation in VET is to offer high quality vocational education which makes students more competitive and prepared for a “global future”.

1.2 Why is internationalisation important and what are the expected benefits?

Internationalisation is important for all VET students because they deserve to be prepared for living in an intercultural society and working in an international labour market. Through internationalisation VET providers can support students to develop important skills, both hard and soft skills, to be active citizens and successful workers.

Therefore, internationalisation is not an end, but it should be considered a driver to develop the skills required in the society and in the world of work.



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Various benefits arise from internationalisation:

- improved reputation and image of the VET system
- enhanced prestige and profile for the organisation as well as increased visibility
- enhanced international cooperation and networking capacity
- remained constantly updated in relation to the most relevant topics, policies, programmes, and tools in the field of VET
- improved quality of teaching and learning
- improved students' employability and active participation in the society
- increased awareness and engagement by students and teachers on the most important global issues and challenges.

1.3 What is the purpose of this guide?

This publication is based on the guide called "Go International - A practical guide on Strategic internationalisation in Vocational Education and Training" which was issued in 2017 by the European Union. The European guide is still the most comprehensive and complete manual for organisations looking for practical guidance and advice for the strategic planning of international cooperation in the VET field.

Starting from the principles outlined in the guide "Go International", ToVET partners aimed to provide an updated and practical tool for all those organisations eager to re-start international activities after Covid-19 or that wish to take advantage of the novelties foreseen in the new Erasmus+ programme such as applying for the new Erasmus accreditation system.



2 Methodology and Approach

ToVET project has re-worked the “Go International”² guide focusing on the last part of the manual where the experts provided eight steps to start ‘THE STRATEGY JOURNEY’. Thanks to the experience of the ToVET partners, which are organisations awarded with the VET charter in the previous Erasmus programme and now with the Erasmus Accreditation, this guide provides concrete examples, tools and exercise to support other organisations to start their journey.

The work has been carried out by the project consortium and it is the result of different phases:

1. Collection of existing materials and good practices on internationalisation in VET. In this preliminary phase the partnership collected and summarized the existing materials on internationalisation of VET and good practises in the implementation of international activities among partners and key stakeholders in 9 countries. The result of this work is available on the project website³.
2. Geographical analysis in partner countries on the benefits of European Cooperation. The partnership conducted an analysis to identify the “state of internationalisation” of VET organisations in Finland, Spain, and Italy. The partners collected the main performances of VET providers in EU projects and drew some conclusions concerning the level of internationalisation of VET providers in three countries. The report is available on the project website⁴.
3. International and national workshops addressed to VET providers. Project partners organised seven strategy workshops. One international workshop for project partners, three national workshops in project partner countries and three European workshops for VET providers from other countries were organised. During these workshops the consortium was able to identify the challenges that VET organisations face when they implement their international strategy and suggested practical solutions to promote the

² *Go International - A practical guide on Strategic internationalisation in Vocational Education and Training, European Union, 2017.*

³ https://www.tovet.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/WP1_D1_report_v01-Good-Practices-FINAL-170321.pdf

⁴ <https://www.tovet.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Geographical-analysis.pdf>

development of international strategies at VET provider level. The materials of the workshops are available on the project website⁵.

Finally, the Finnish Erasmus+ National Agency contributed to the process and Ms. Siru Korkala wrote the foreword of the guidebook.

The guide is divided in three main sections:

- Strategy process steps
- Erasmus+ priorities
- Tips for a new era of internationalisation

Strategy process steps. This section provides step-by-step advice on developing a successful internationalisation strategy. It is based on the guide “Go International” and shows case examples from which VET providers could learn; it provides practical exercises, tools, and suggestions to create a strategy from scratch.

The steps to create a strategy has been summarized as follows:

- a. Map your existing internationalisation activities, projects, and possible strategic documents
- b. Analyse the operational environment
- c. Understand the core skills
- d. Examine the mission and values
- e. Formulate the vision
- f. Strategic goals and the action plan
- g. Communicate both the strategy process and the strategic decisions to all actors and stakeholders

Erasmus+ priorities. This section explains the priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme 2021-2027 and offers examples and suggestions to embed these priorities in the international strategy.

⁵ <https://www.tovet.eu/outcomes/>



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The section has been structured around four priorities:

- a. Inclusion and diversity
- b. Digital Transformation
- c. Environment and fight against climate change
- d. Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement

Each priority follows the following structure:

- Short description: to explain the topic of that specific section
- Case examples: to show good practices and practical examples related to that specific section
- Suggestions: tips to support VET providers in that specific section

Tips for a new era of internationalisation. This section takes into consideration the impact that the Covid-19 had on the internationalisation process as well as the requirements by the Erasmus+ programme. Providing useful tips, this section aims to share practical ideas to take advantage of the new possibilities offered by new era of the EU funding.

The section focuses on five topics:

- a. Networking
- b. How to find partners
- c. Link internationalisation strategy with Erasmus plan and accreditation process
- d. Virtual and blended exchanges in practice
- e. International cooperation beyond Europe



3 Strategy process steps

This chapter is based on the guide called Go International, issued by the European Union in 2017. “Go International” was the result of the work carried out by several Erasmus National Agencies on the topic of strategic planning and strategic thinking.

The guide is still the most comprehensive and complete manual for organisations looking for a model for strategic planning of international cooperation in the VET field. However, the document was designed to provide general suggestions for different targets in different countries. ToVET partners wanted to create a new updated version of the guidebook to provide a step-by-step guidance, concrete tools and advice for VET organisations that need to design from the beginning their internationalisation strategy or just need to refresh it.

In the following section, VET providers can find concrete examples, tools and exercises to build their internationalisation strategy based on the eight steps "Strategy Journey" stated in the “Go International”.

3.1 Map your existing internationalisation activities, projects, and possible strategic documents to date

Short description

It is useful to understand your current situation and remember all the activities concerning internationalisation done in the last five to ten years and write them down in a visual way. Finnish National Agency for Education has created a method how to use The Storytelling Tool identifying internationalisation process of educational institutions. With this exercise, you can recall past experiences and then take the next steps. In this way you do not start from scratch, but you valorise your past performances and partnerships.

Case example

Education Centre Brahe has used a storytelling board to show its international journey. The example is available on [Brahe's International timeline](#)⁶. Education Centre Brahe staff members who had participated in international activities had a meeting to draw their international timeline. They also used the printed history-books and annual reports of the college. During the meeting participants told small glimpses of their international history. After that they discussed why something had happened and what could be learnt from those events. Finally, they finalised the story by making a timeline of the international activities using Prezi.

Tools

Free template for timeline can be found in [Prezi](#)⁷.

Exercises

- First, draw a timeline of the developments achieved so far by yourself on your international journey, underlining the main milestones
- In a small group draw a timeline of the developments achieved so far by your organisation, together with the major milestones in international fields. Involve people from different departments. Try to find the most critical and significant turning points and events.
- Describe the key contributors to international activities on the timeline. Also record key results as exchanges, projects, participants, international networks, and partnerships.
- What values have prevailed in different periods? How have they promoted or prevented activities? Who have been the participants and stakeholders involved as students, partners, staff, and management?
- When recording different situations and turning points, you can use different colour symbols.

⁶ <https://prezi.com/view/4TywerePrtzYllKn14E/>

⁷ <https://prezi.com/p/create-prezi/>



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Suggestions

- After some years you can use the map as a useful tool in refreshing your strategy. You can evaluate what has worked and what was not successful and not to use it.
- When you have drafted your timeline, remember to publish it on your website, annual report, or organisation history book. It is a way to make everyone aware of your previous performances in internationalisation.



3.2 Analyse the operational environment

Short description

Operation environmental scanning is a process that systematically surveys and interprets relevant data to identify external opportunities and threats that could influence future decisions. It is closely related to a SWOT analysis and should be used as a part of the strategic planning process.

Environmental scanning goes closely to the more traditional market intelligence as it is about being vigilant concerning the changes in one's environment. Thus, it helps practitioners identify changes as soon as possible. The focus is on discontinuities, emerging issues, and weak signals of change. In foresight context, this is usually called Horizon Scanning, which is also quite often described as the future knowledge gathering phase, the first stage of a more extensive foresight process.

Futures Intelligence can be divided into four categories, each suitable for a different purpose. Each category is comprised of different types of futures knowledge, which are the basic building blocks of Futures Intelligence. Together, the four categories provide a comprehensive overview of the plausible, probable, and possible futures.

Types of Futures Knowledge and Intelligence

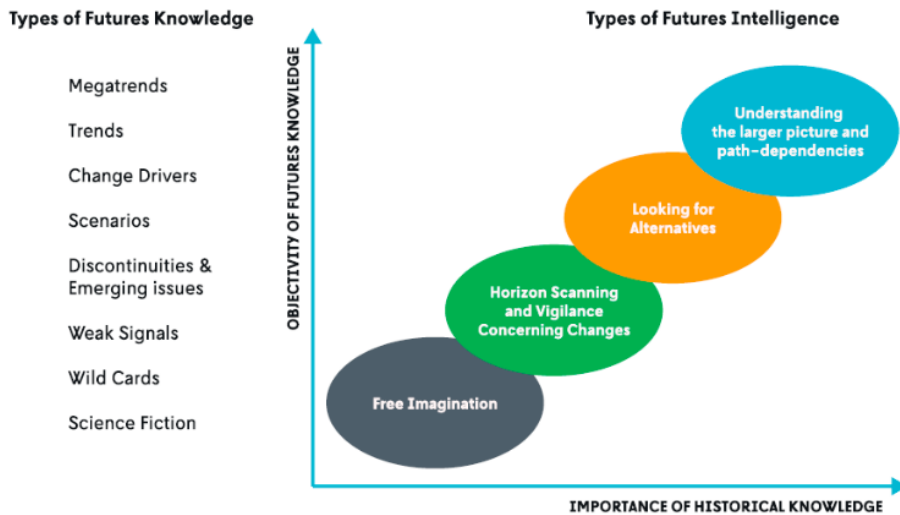


Figure 1. Futures Intelligence: How to Turn Foresight into Action⁸.

The role of strategic thinking and planning in Internationalisation is really important. In the [following video](#)⁹ Mika Saarinen, Director of the Finnish National Agency for Erasmus+, provides some useful insights about why strategic thinking and planning is important and how it can help to create an environment in VET institutions that supports the organisation in developing international activities and reach your internationalisation goals.

Case examples

Scanning and analysing the operating environment is a critical part of strategy work. It analyses the operating environment using different methods and utilises several different sources of information. For the work, a working group must be selected and appointed, whose members represent the different fields and professions of the organisation's activities. Members from outside your organisation from different stakeholders can also be involved.

⁸ *Futures Intelligence: How to Turn Foresight into Action*, edited by Tuomo Kousa and Max Stucki, Futures Platform eBook 2021.

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31PAUeaLOUA>

Vamia case example:

Vaasa Vocational Institute, Vaasa Adult Education Center, and Ostrobothnia Apprenticeship office merged in 2017 into one bigger organisation: Vamia. The new organisation needed a common internationalisation strategy.

The first step to create the strategy was gathering and reading the most important regional, national, sectoral, and European documents.



Figure 2. Analysis of the operating environment and steering documents.

In this [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPFLmTwxFcg&t=98s)¹⁰ Katarina Sandbacka, Manager of International Affairs at Vamia, explains the international strategy work carried out in Vamia with a specific focus on the analysis of the operating environment.

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPFLmTwxFcg&t=98s>



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VET 4.0 case example:

A scenario work to foresight the future VET in Europe started in the EfVET conference 2019. This work was pointed to the Thematic Team and work was focused on Technology and Industry 4.0.

Questions for the work:

- How will work and occupations change in the near future?
- How will these changes change vocational training?
- What is the Vocational College 4.0?

After the first team workshops, it was noted that a technology-focused scanning alone is not sufficient to anticipate future VET. The reference framework for the analysing was extended to focus more on responsibility and sustainable development. In addition to the Industry 4.0 and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) team added the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, to the operating environment scanning framework.



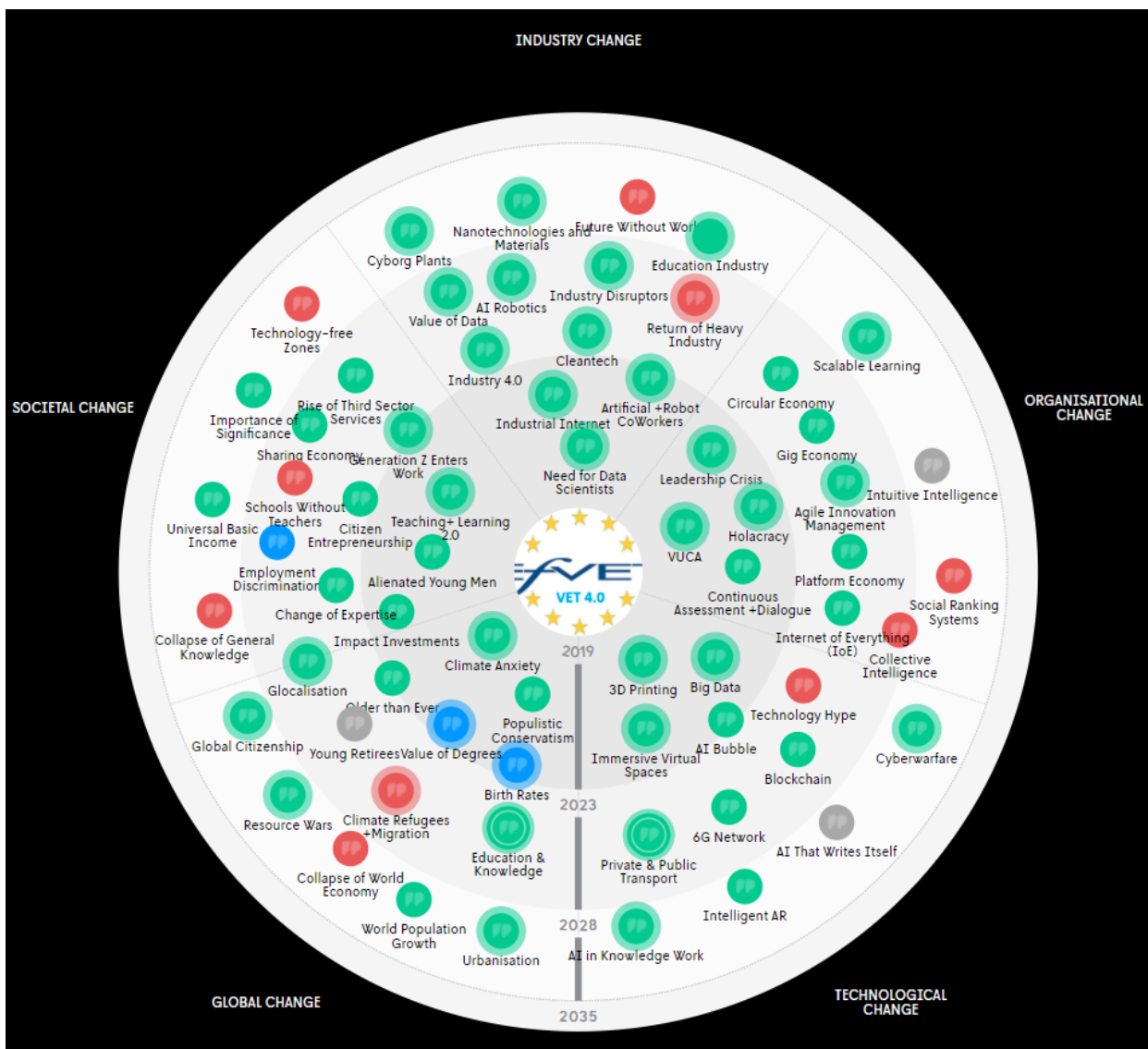


Figure 3. EfVET’s foresighting radar VET 4.0 made with Futures Platform. *VET 4.0 report*¹¹.

¹¹ <https://www.efvet.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/VET-4.0-Report.pdf>



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Tools

There is a wide variety of databases and platforms to support the scanning and foresight of the operating environment.

Statistics and forecasting information are provided by public and private bodies. In Finland, future work and the necessary skills are anticipated by the state, provinces, and vocational training institutions. Europe-wide data is provided by many organisations, e.g., Cedefop.

Examples of public databases targeting different geographical areas and target groups.

[Link to Europe level data](#)¹².

[Link to Finnish National Agency for Education](#)¹³.

[Link to Pohjois-Savo regional level data](#)¹⁴.

There are also plenty of foresight platforms offered by different organisations and companies.

Strategic insights and contextual intelligence from the World Economic Forum.

Explore and monitor the issues and forces driving transformational change across economies, industries, and global issues.

[Link to World Economic Forum Intelligence](#)¹⁵.

¹² <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/online-tools>

¹³ <https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/>

¹⁴ <https://foresavo.fi/tulevaisuuskuva-2/toimialakortit/>

¹⁵ <https://intelligence.weforum.org/>





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Exercises

- By yourself get to know the changing phenomena and trends of your operating environment with the help of different platforms.
- Continue to evaluate the phenomena with the expert group through your own field of activity and develop a vision of the desired operating model for the future.
- The team produces a condensed view of the organisation's desire for future internationalisation work.
- The team presents the output to those who continue to work on strategy.

Suggestions

- After some years revise and refresh your foresight and evaluate what has changed and update your strategy if needed. Introduce your organisation's own foresight programme.
- Publish the results of foresight work to the organisation's staff and learners. Enable continuous commenting and co-development.
- Evaluate the resilience capability of your organisation. What is the impact of an ongoing pandemic on your organisation's future operating environment and the way it operates in the future?



3.3 Understand the core skills

Short description

There are many ways to participate in international activities. VET teachers and other staff can be involved in coordinating incoming or outgoing mobility, writing applications to get funding for internationalisation, organising events, giving lectures in foreign language, networking or in virtual collaboration. It is obvious, that different skills are needed, not only language skills and cultural awareness.

- It is important to be aware of the international experiences and skills available in your organisation.

Case examples

REX VET

REX VET¹⁶ project focused on developing the international skills of VET staff, building internationalisation pathways, and supporting staff development by training and open learning badges.

In the first phase, the project conducted a survey to map the existing skills within each partner organisations. The partnership collected the findings, analysed them, and started to work on the next steps, how to enhance the international skills of VET staff.

¹⁶ <https://luovi.fi/hankkeet/rex-vet-from-a-rookie-to-an-expert/>

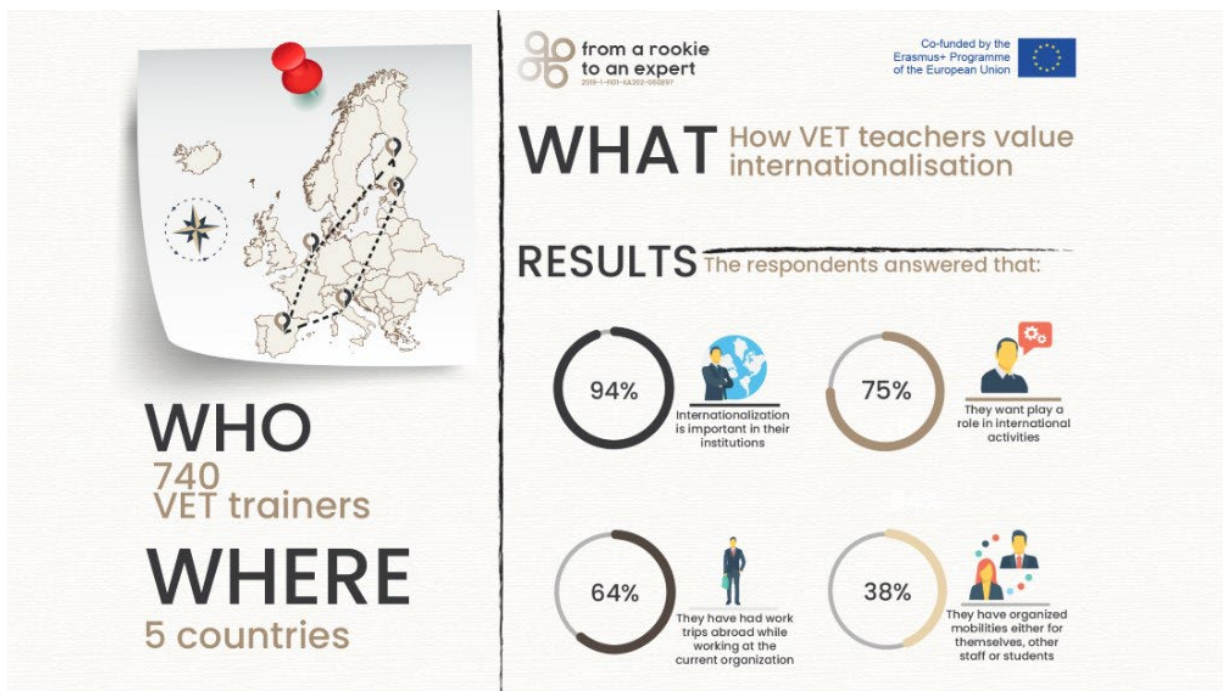


Figure 4. How VET teachers value internationalisation.

Tools

One way to get started is to carry out a small survey to find out existing experience, skills, and competences among the staff members in your organisation. You can make a questionnaire and send it to your colleagues.

- We made a survey in REX VET project to find out both the existing experience in internationalisation and the interest in participating in international activities.
- We also asked about the skills that are important and how the skills should be developed in the organisation.
- Personal information about gender, age, teacher or other staff member, previous experience in visiting other countries, working abroad, also if internationalisation is important in the organisation, involvement in organising student or staff mobility.
- Look at the Questionnaire REX VET17 as a model to get some ideas for your own questionnaire.

¹⁷ <https://luovi.fi/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/survey-rex-vet-2019.pdf>



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Exercises

- Create a questionnaire to map the skills and competences in your own organisation. You can invite some colleagues to plan the questions together.
- Choose the platform for the questionnaire. There might be some platforms, e.g., Webropol in use in your organisation or you can use some free tools, like Google Forms.
- Send the questionnaire to your colleagues with the deadline for answers.
- Analyse the results, communicate the findings in your organisation and agree on the next steps.
- If you prefer some other way instead of a questionnaire you could also organise a workshop or use focus group discussions.

Suggestions

- When you understand the core skills in your organisation it is easier to create an Internationalisation Strategy consistent with the skills you have inside your organisation and also make an activity plan for staff professional development.
- Try to involve your colleagues to work with you and communicate with the management and human resources staff members



3.4 Examine the mission and values

Short description

Mission and values are key elements to develop an international strategy and help the organisation to stay on track and work toward achieving the organisation ultimate goals.

VET providers that define a clear mission concerning their international dimension and activate values to support such mission are on the right pathway for long-term success in international activities. Moreover, these two key elements will support the management in taking the right decisions and inspiring the staff and students.

In general, mission and values alignments are essential to move your organisation in the right direction. This is also true when we talk about internationalisation.

It is important to know the mission of your organisation and how values can support it.

The mission is the purpose of your organisation and why your organisation exists, in other words why we do what we do.

Values, on the other hand, are the shared set of beliefs that determine the culture of your organisation, what an organisation believes and its guiding principles that are able to direct your organisation work. Values communicate what is important to the organisation and provide clarity and direction for the daily activities by guiding the employees about how they have to do their job. Defining your values means to set expectations for how your staff behave when interacting with families, students, and other colleagues.



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Case examples

You can find different examples and format of mission and values embedded in an international strategy

European Pathway example

Eurooppalainen opintopolku, European Pathway in English, is a Finnish network of seven vocational schools. The goal of the network is to make internationalisation a natural part of the student's study path. More information about the network can be found on the network [website¹⁸](#).

The mission and values of the network can be [found here](#) ¹⁹.

The branches of the tree represent the operating environment, the roots the values and beneath the roots mission, vision, and slogan are stated.

Luovi example

In the two pictures below, Luovi Vocational College states its mission, values and goals to be achieved.

¹⁸ <https://www.eurooppalainenopintopolku.fi/net-work-presentation/>

¹⁹ <https://urly.fi/2ysz>



ToVET

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Figure 5. Luovi Vocational College's mission and values.

Tools

You can use many different tools and exercise to define your mission and values. One effective tool is the Strategy Tree. It was created in Responsible Global Agents project by Vamia and Samiedu. The [tree model](#)²⁰ was used in the workshop organised for Finnish networks of VET providers involved in global mobility.

Exercises

Create your own Strategy Tree by filling in the empty boxes

STEP 1 - Define your organisation mission related to international activities

If your organisation exists, it has a mission. Most likely, your organisation already has a general mission clearly stated. The challenge is to translate that mission and make it consistent with the international dimension. If you do not have a mission statement for your organisation, first make one and then think how you can include it in your international activities.

²⁰ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1S6ACxVCPc-A5C6rbd2U7K3AWxtCkRRPg/edit>

How to do it:

With your team write down the mission of your organisation on a whiteboard. Now it is time to create a mission statement for your internationalisation strategy.

A good mission statement for international strategy generally answers at least one of these core questions:

- How can we include the international dimension in our original mission?
- What is our organisation's reason for doing international activities?
- What are we trying to accomplish and on behalf of whom by implementing international activities?

Work with your team and gather the input from your staff. You can use a survey or focus groups. Take all the input, process it, and create two or three versions and then vote the best one.

STEP 2 – Set your organisation values aligned with your mission

To establish a set of values for internationalisation you should consider what features reflect the organisational culture and which features represent better what the organisation is committed to do in its international dimension.

How to do it:

A good value statement defines the guiding principles of your organisation, how you want your staff to act.

Organise meetings with your colleagues and answer these questions:

- What practises will allow us to fulfil our mission related to international activities?
- What are the guiding principles we follow while implementing our international activities?
- When the organisation is demonstrating this set of values, what is it doing?
- How do we want to show up to our stakeholders while implementing our international activities?

An effective way to proceed is the following:

- Ask each person in the room to write one idea on a Post-it Note. Paste all the Post-it Notes on a wall and group similar ideas;
- Choose some group of ideas but not all by asking the participants to vote the best ones
- Pick the most voted groups and define your core values. They should not be more than five.



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Suggestions

Activate the values

Once you have set the values you should work on activating them.

To do that:

- start by defining what each value means to your staff
- create and share with the staff a common understanding of those values so they can be consistent across the organisation
- explain the values by creating concrete examples to express what the value means.

Visualisation helps the staff to embrace and activate values in their daily work.

- You should organise brainstorming activities during which considering ways to bring values to life in the workplace. Possible solutions could be posting these guiding principles on walls, computer screensavers, official documents, etc.

Finally remember to celebrate successes as the organisation works to achieve its mission and put in practice the values.



3.5 Formulate the vision

Short description

A vision describes and outlines the desired long-term results of your organisation. It should reveal what an organisation most hopes to be and achieve in five to ten years from now. If the mission answers the question "why you exist", the vision is about your goals for the future and how you will get there. In other words, the vision is your North Star.

At its best, vision of internationality is based on the vision and strategic direction of the organisation. From this the organisation can build the vision of the international operations. Remember, however, that internationality is not just about mobility, it is also much more, it is holistic and broad-based.

A vision is

- aspirational
- brief but comprehensive
- simple but at the same time ambitious
- about longer term outcomes and looks beyond the current status quo

Case examples

Here you can find some vision statements:

1. Ylä-Savon ammattiopisto YSAO

YSAO's vision is to be an internationally networked enabler of professional competence. The vision brings consistency and perseverance to operations. On the way towards the international vision, YSAO must remember its values – trust and responsibility.

2. City of Glasgow College

As a world class institution, we seek to redefine the learners' experience of a college education to 'Let Learning Flourish'. Our staff, clustered in Faculties of national expertise, will pioneer new ways of learning, with seamless learning support opportunities. Our curriculum and international



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partnerships encourage individual learners to achieve their potential, amidst an inclusive and diverse learning community.

The complete Strategic Plan can be found [here](#)²¹.

Tools

The importance of vision statements starts with the “Why.”

Simon Sinek shares his theory of the Golden Circle: Every person knows what they do; some people know how they do it. But few people know why they do it. The video is available [here](#).

Exercise

Dreaming Session - create your own vision statement

Step 1 - Form a team to write your vision

Summon the key staff members working on internationalisation in your organisation and other key players and ask each participant to think where your organisation will be in 10 years from now. The participants must draw an ideal scenario by answering the questions “what have you achieved through internationalisation”? “What would you like your VET school to become through internationalisation”?

Ask each member to write their words on post-it notes and place them on a whiteboard.

Remember

- use any existing school vision statements as reference points if you already have one
- Don't reinvent the wheel
- Get inspired by vision statements from other VET schools active in Internationalisation
- A vision statement should be concise, no longer than a sentence or two

²¹ <https://view.pagetiger.com/strategic-plan-21-30/v1>





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Step 2 – Create consensus in the team

Pick a meeting facilitator and start discussing, mixing, and matching the different ideas. Then take a picture of the final result for your records.

Develop a clear statement of your vision for internationalisation and aligned it with the overall vision and mission of your organisation

Suggestions

Be sure that the features of the vision

- inspire the staff of your organisation
- are tangible and concrete
- are realistic
- are connected with the mission of the organisation. To imagine what you would like to become, you need to know who you are and what is your purpose.

Vision statements are almost always written in future tense: “Our vision is to be...”



3.6 Strategic Goals and Action Plan

Short description

Goals define the purpose of an organisation, map out the way forward and, based on actions, ensure that the organisation can project itself into the future in a concrete way.

Goals are a fundamental part of an internationalisation strategy. Starting from the priorities indicated in the strategy it is necessary to focus on the goals that will permit the organisation to reach out its main aims. How is it possible to do it? Matching to each strategic goal a set of specific actions able to reach the foreseen results.

When defining strategic goals, it is important to keep in mind that they have to be:

1. Specific. Goals should be stated in very specific terms. Vague goals are difficult to attain, but specific goals give a concrete target.
2. Measurable. If we do not set our goals in measurable terms, it is very difficult to assess whether we have achieved them.
3. Achievable. Effective goal setting should include the action-based steps that you will do to make the goal happen.
4. Relevant. Align with your other goals.
5. Time-based. Goals must have deadlines. Defining a time limit for the goal gives a definite time frame to work in and a date at which to assess our success.

An action plan describes the way your organisation will meet its objectives through detailed action steps that describe how and when these steps will be taken. It describes the way your organisation will use its strategy to meet its objectives.

It is developed after it has been determined the vision, mission, objectives, and strategy of your organisation so that the action plan matches priorities with a whole series of strategic objectives which, in turn, are matched by specific activities to ensure that the organisation can achieve its goals in the short, medium, and long term.

The “Go International” states that an action plan must be revised annually, and it is important to set clear indicators of performance targets to know if the action has been successful or not.

The format of the action plan depends on the nature and needs of the organisation.

It might specify:

- The goals that are to be accomplished
- How each goal contributes to the overall strategic goals of the organisation
- What specific results or objectives must be accomplished that, in total, reach the goal of the organisation
- How those results will be achieved
- When the results will be achieved or timelines for each objective

Case example

The following tables show how to set Strategic goals and coherent activities to reach the goal.

PRIORITY INCLUSION	
STRATEGIC GOAL	ACTIVITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of inclusion of fragile people (e.g. people with disabilities, BES, etc.), through the implementation of innovation projects, exchange of good practices and short-term mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To implement a permanent mobility of young and/or adult disabled people coming from leFP and/or continuous training; • Launch collaboration projects, exchange of good practices, networking and mobility pathways for unemployed young people and adults and NEETs to support their transition to work.

Table 1. Priority-Inclusion

Tools

To create your action plan, the following table should be a concrete help to start working on it:

Macro-objective/Priority	Strategic Goal	Task/Activity	Responsibility	Timeline
1.1 (first strategy to reach Goal #1)	1. (Goal #1)	1.1.1 (first objective to reach while implementing Strategy #1.1)	who's going to accomplish that objective	when the implementer is going to accomplish that objective

Table 2. Concrete help for creating the action plan

Exercises

Create your own action plan by filling the boxes of the table above:

Step 1: List the priorities indicated in strategy

Define your end goal by listing the priorities indicated in the strategy that will show you the route to be followed. Then match to each priority the strategic goal(s) making sure that each goal follows the above-mentioned criteria

Step 2: List down the steps to be followed

The goals are clear. What exactly should you do to realise it? Create a rough template to list down all the tasks to be performed, due dates and people responsible. It is important that you make sure that the entire team is involved in this process and has access to the document. This way everyone will be aware of their roles and responsibilities in the project.

Step 3: Prioritise tasks and add deadlines

It is time to prioritise the tasks and to match them with the listed strategic goals. Add deadlines, and make sure that they are realistic. Consult with the person responsible for carrying it out to understand his or her capacity before deciding on deadlines.

Step 4: Identify the resources needed

It is crucial to ensure that you have all the necessary resources at hand to complete the tasks, both human and economic.



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Suggestions

Remember that an action plan is always a work in progress. It is not something you can write, lock in your file drawers, and forget about. Keep it visible. Display it prominently. As your organisation changes and grows, you will want to continually revise your action plan to fit the changing needs of your organisation.



3.7 Communicate both the strategy process and the strategic decisions to all actors and stakeholders

Short description

It is important to communicate your strategy with your stakeholders, too. You will get valuable feedback on your strategy. You can involve your stakeholders in all phases of the strategy process and thus ensure their commitment to the implementation of your strategy

Case examples

Vamia Vocational College:

Vamia strategy for internationalisation is closely linked with the strategy of city of Vaasa and Vaasa region.

The strategy roadmap of Vamia is based on the following steps:

1. Forming the strategy group
2. Analysis of the operative environment and steering documents
3. Determining the objective of the strategy and the international work in Vamia
4. How do we reach this goal – what are our success factors?
5. How to present the strategy so that it is as concrete and measurable as possible?
6. Feedback from the City of Vaasa and Vaasa Entrepreneurs association, Vaasan yrittäjät, in face-to-face meeting
7. Stating the meters
8. Presentation to the management group – amendments
9. Approval of the management group
10. Presentation and approval by Vaasa upper secondary educational board

When focusing on step five i.e., presenting the strategy, Vamia decided to have the same layout with objectives, key indicators, and measures as in the strategy of the City of Vaasa and in the general strategy of Vamia.

Objectives	Key indicators	Measures
EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS FROM ABROAD <i>Enable internationalisation at home</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of foreign educational professionals arriving annually The number of foreign students arriving annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating foreign educational professionals and students into everyday activities of the school Taking international tutoring into practise
CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH WORKING LIFE <i>We strengthen the co-operation between Vamia and working life as an enabler, expert and competence actor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the participation of the local working life in international programmes increased? Yes/No The percentage of exchanges organised via local companies? Have they been identified? Yes/No Have they been increased? Yes/No 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation on the needs of working life (international knowledge) Developing internationalism in all fields of education with local companies (teaching materials, the needs of the working life, co-operation within mobility programs, places for on-the-job learning)
GENUINE AND HIGH QUALITY PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKING <i>Locally, regionally, nationally and internationally between schools, working life and other stakeholders. Vamia is a desired partner</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of the continuity and mutuality of the co-operation at the end of the academic year and the programme 100 % memorandum of understanding or a mandate letter with partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memorandum of understanding with all partner organisations in mobility programmes A mandate / framework agreement with each partner Selection of partners based on trust, quality and added value

Figure 7. Excerpt of the layout of Vamia strategy.

Besides, the strategy presentation covers the areas that the strategy is based on. You can see the example in the picture below.

OUR SUCCESS IS BASED ON:



Figure 8. Excerpt of the layout of Vamia strategy.

Tools

When thinking about tools for communication it is important to keep in mind that communication is crucial throughout the process not only when the strategy is ready. There are several channels to communicate, e.g., through social media, web pages, newspapers, radio or television, specific events, meetings with stakeholders. During the strategy process you can use questionnaires, focus group discussions or workshops to involve your stakeholders in the strategy process.

Exercises

- If you already have a strategy for internationalisation, you could organise a workshop to refresh the strategy. Invite students, some staff members, local companies, and partners to participate. Define together what are the best ways to communicate your strategy.
- If you start from the very beginning of the strategy process, follow the steps described in this strategy guide. Involve your stakeholders in different phases of the process.



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Suggestions

- There are several ways to communicate, and you can use different channels to reach your target. Students usually prefer other channels than your colleagues and companies.
- Talk with your colleagues at communication if possible. You may get good tips from them.
- Use pictures, videos, infographics in communication
- When you communicate the strategy, start with the “why” i.e., the vision



4 Erasmus+ Priorities

For the 2021-2027 Programming Period, the Erasmus+ programme has been structured on four main priorities:

- Inclusion and diversity
- Digital Transformation
- Environment and fight against climate change
- Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement

These four horizontal priorities must be included in the Internationalisation Strategy and each organisation should tailor its goals and activities with these priorities in mind.

In this chapter, ToVET partners explain with practical examples what activities can be included under these general priorities, how to embed these key elements in the international core activities of VET providers and make them consistent with Internationalisation Strategy already in place.

4.1 Inclusion and diversity

Short description

Organisations must respect the principles of inclusion and diversity in all aspects of their activities. It means that they must ensure fair and equal conditions for all participants.

Whenever possible, the beneficiary organisations should actively engage and involve participants with fewer opportunities in their activities. The beneficiary organisations should make maximum use of the tools and funding provided by the Programme for this purpose.

When talking about inclusion and diversity organisations must pay attention to several things that can make a barrier to participation. Some examples:

- **Disabilities:** physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder someone's full and effective participation in society
- **Health problems:** Barriers may result from health issues including severe illnesses, chronic diseases, or any other physical or mental health-related situation that prevents from participating in the programme.
- **Barriers linked to education and training systems:** Individuals struggling to perform in education and training systems for various reasons, early school-leavers, NEETs i.e., people not in education, employment, or training
- **Cultural differences:** While cultural differences may be perceived as barriers by people from any backgrounds, they can particularly affect people with fewer opportunities especially newly arrived migrants, people belonging to a national or ethnic minority, sign language users, people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties, etc.
- **Social barriers:** Social adjustment difficulties such as limited social competences, anti-social or high-risk behaviours, current and former offenders and drug or alcohol abusers, or social marginalisation may represent a barrier.

In practice, Inclusion and diversity refers to all those people who have difficulties to access the Erasmus+ Programme for socio-economic, geographical, or other reasons. This includes people who dropped out of school early or are unemployed, people who are victims of exclusion and discrimination, as well as those living in remote areas.

Case examples

Luovi experience:

Luovi Vocational College offers vocational qualifications and preparatory training for students with special needs in Finland. Besides mobility, it is important to offer other activities to participate to ensure internationalisation for all.

Luovi organises student mobility in smaller groups of four to six students with one to two support persons from Luovi staff members. Preparation includes language and cultural awareness but also practical arrangements and building the team spirit.



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PR.E.S.T.O. – PRomoting pEople with diSability Transnational mObility:

It is a KA2 Strategic Partnership co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the EU. Its main aim is to promote the social inclusion and to facilitate the transition to the labour market of people with intellectual disabilities thanks to their involvement in transnational mobilities.

The project developed Guidelines and Training tools aimed at enabling VET providers to plan and manage quality mobility paths for disabled people and to facilitate their engagement in international cooperation paths.

The valuable network

The Valueable network is the European network of socially responsible companies of the hospitality sector set up thanks to the EU funds.

The project developed the Valueable Label which is a recognition sign of enterprises including people with intellectual disabilities within their work force.

More info available at the network [website](#)²²

Suggestions

- Mobility is not the only way to go international. There are several ways to enhance internationalisation without travelling abroad. Also consider internationalisation at home activities such as virtual lessons, integrating incoming students and staff to the daily activities of your organisation or organising international thematic days.
- Organise mobilities in small groups accompanied with support persons from the staff. This way students will get support from the peers and from the staff members and it makes them feel more
- Clear procedures and criteria for both student and staff mobility ensure that the process is transparent
- It is important to target the information about the possibilities to participate to all, both students and staff members. Remember to use different channels to reach your target groups.

²² <https://www.valueablenetwork.eu/>





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- People are in the focus of internationalisation. Encourage new people to participate. Some might be hesitant with language or for other reasons, so think about activities they can participate in pairs or in smaller groups. Share the experience of those more experienced ones with the rookies. You could also use peer learning, coaching, and mentoring.
- Take advantage of preparatory visits to organise mobility for people with fewer opportunities. Project organisers can foresee advanced planning visit to plan the mobility in detail with the organisations hosting the activity in a different country. During the advanced visit partners can agree on administrative arrangements, building trust and mutual understanding as well as tailor the mobility experience on the individual needs of the participant.
- Consult the guidelines "Implementation guidelines - Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy" which have been issued to reinforce the inclusion and diversity dimension in the Erasmus+ programme



4.2 Digital Transformation

Short description

“The Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated the need to accelerate the digital transition in the education system. By setting this priority, the new Erasmus+ programme aims to support the adaptation of the European Education Area to the digital era by investing on the development of digital skills, hybrid programmes (virtual/classroom) and e-learning platforms, etc.

As stated by the Erasmus+ guidelines, the new programme aims to support the endeavour to engage learners, educators, youth workers, young people, and organisations in the path of digital transformation. The programme will support the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem, by building capacity and critical understanding in all type of education and training institutions on how to exploit the opportunities offered by digital technologies for teaching and learning at all levels and for all sectors and to develop and implement digital transformation plans of educational institutions.

Digital technologies are changing many aspects of how we work and learn. The EU and the Member States must now quickly turn plans into action by investing in digital skills. During the COVID pandemic most of the planned Erasmus+ mobilities were either cancelled or postponed. However, with the help of new media technologies and platforms it has been possible for students and staff to have meaningful intercultural experiences. Virtual international co-operation has been tested in many fields of study.

These experiences support students to develop their language skills, get to know peers from abroad and compare their studies on a sectoral basis among different countries. Erasmus+ programme offers funding for:

- Blended mobility, where students combine physical meetings abroad with virtual teamwork. In this way, students and teachers can enjoy the thrill of an international experience without having to do a full Erasmus+ mobility abroad.
- Virtual mobility. That is a form of mobility using information and communication technologies to facilitate cross-border or inter-institutional academic, cultural, and experiential exchanges, and collaboration.
- The Digital Opportunity Traineeships in VET. Any Erasmus+ VET learner mobility will be considered a “Digital Opportunity Traineeship” when one or more of the

following activities are practised by the trainee: digital marketing, digital design, development of apps, software, scripts or websites or installation and maintenance and management of IT systems and networks, cybersecurity, programming and training of robots and artificial intelligence applications.

The technological development of Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Mixed Reality (MR) has been rapid in recent years. The common denominator of these technologies is the well-established term Extended Reality (XR). XR can be especially helpful in collaborating between VET institutes and companies in different countries.”²³

Case examples

- Virtual mobility: During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical school visits could not be arranged. At Samiedu Vocational College in Finland, school visits and recreational visits to the town of Savonlinna were made virtually²⁴ with ThingLink.
- At Brahe Education Centre in Finland XR technology is used in teaching in [car-engineering](#)²⁵.

Suggestions

- The VET institutions should raise awareness among their learners about opportunities within the Erasmus programme to acquire and further develop relevant digital skills.
- Try new innovative technologies in mobilities
- Start using digital technologies to support teaching and learning. You can start your journey by using SELFIE, Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the use of Innovative Educational technologies, which is a free tool designed to help schools embed digital technologies into teaching, learning and assessment²⁶.

²³ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme>

²⁴ <https://www.thinglink.com/blog/samiedu-1/#.Yic4C3pBxPZ>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FogWQxwoJHc>

²⁶ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie>

4.3 Environment and fight against climate change

Short description

“Environment and climate action are key priorities for the EU now and in the future. The Erasmus+ programme is a key instrument for building knowledge, skills, and attitudes on climate change and supports sustainable development both within the European Union and beyond.

The programme aims to increase the number of mobility opportunities in green forward-looking domains which foster the development of competences, enhance career prospects, and engage participants in areas which are strategic for sustainable growth, with special attention to rural development (sustainable farming, management of natural resources, soil protection, bio-agriculture). Moreover, Erasmus+, with mobility at its core, should strive for carbon-neutrality by promoting sustainable transport modes and more environmentally responsible behaviour.”²⁷

Erasmus+ Programme offers many possibilities for combating climate change. They can be e.g.:

- developing knowledge strategies and methods in the green sector
- curriculum development
- drawing up sustainable development plans for organisations
- promoting environmentally responsible consumption habits
- the potential of culture in promoting sustainable development
- rural development, e.g., sustainable agriculture, resource management, soil protection and bioeconomy

²⁷ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme>



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Green mobility

The aim is that about 10 million people would take part in mobility activities during Erasmus+ Programme in 2021 -2027. That may raise the question of how to take care of responsibility and CO2 emissions. Mobility is very important, but how to make sure the environment does not have to pay for increased mobility.

For a VET student, a mobility period can be a unique opportunity to get to know the culture and working life of another country. Therefore, they need to be encouraged to participate in mobility. At the same it can be highlighted how, in addition to travel, there are other ways to operate in an environmentally friendly way. More and more the internationalisation can be also virtual learning and collaboration.

In mobility projects, participants can receive additional grants if they use green travel. Green travel can mean e.g., travelling by train, bus, “ridesharing” or ship. For short distances, bus and train are often more environmentally friendly options. However, for long distances flying is often necessary. When flying, if possible, you should prefer direct flights. Take-offs and landings use the most fuel. You can also choose an airline that has modern and fuel-efficient aircraft and uses as much renewable aviation fuel as possible. By packing less luggage, you fly even more ecologically. By reducing the weight of your suitcase by five kilograms, you will reduce your carbon footprint by about 5%.

Accommodation in the destination country should be chosen so that you can make local trips either on foot, by bike or by public transport. In food choices, it is worth favouring food produced nearby.²⁸

²⁸ Lindroos Outi and Varsa Anita. PowerPoint presentation. Finnish National Agency for Education.





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Case examples

Erasmus+ KA2 project [Healthy Future](#)²⁹ aimed at improving awareness of healthy eating habits together with healthy food and climate-focused choices. This meant working with regional products, with an emphasis on biological, organic, and ecological food production in climate friendly matter. It also meant focusing on traditional regional cooking and recipes, using seasonal products but in a modernized way on aspects of health issues and on new styles of cooking using climate friendly ingredients.

RIVET - Responsibility in the internationalisation of Vocational Education and Training is Erasmus+ - partnership project. At the level of educational institutions, there is little information on how VET providers could be more responsible in defining their own internationalisation strategy by including sustainable development criteria. The project creates criteria and indicators for the responsibility of the internationalisation of vocational education and training. Peer review is used as a way of working.

Suggestions

- Try green travel yourself. Through your own experience, you can better market it to others as well.
- Remember, sustainability and green travel not only mean reducing air travel but also much more.
- Let the participants in the mobility plan their own journey and look for different options.
- Money is a good consultant. Green travel is often a cheaper option and the mobility participant is left with more grants to spend on other activities.

²⁹ <https://www.healthyfutureproject.eu/about/>



4.4 Participation in democratic life, common values, and civic engagement

Short description

“The Erasmus+ Programme addresses the citizens’ limited participation in its democratic processes and their lack of knowledge about the European Union, and tries to help them overcome the difficulties in actively engaging and participating in their communities or in the Union’s political and social life. Strengthening citizens’ understanding of the European Union from an early age is crucial for the Union’s future. In addition to formal education, non-formal learning can enhance the citizens’ understanding of the European Union and foster a sense of belonging to it.

The Programme supports active citizenship and ethics in lifelong learning; it fosters the development of social and intercultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy. Priority is given to projects that offer opportunities for people’s participation in democratic life, social and civic engagement through formal or non-formal learning activities. The focus is put on raising awareness of and understanding the European Union context, notably as regards the common EU values, the principles of unity and diversity, as well as their social, cultural and historical heritage.

In the field of youth, a [Youth Participation Strategy](#)³⁰ has been designed to provide a common framework and support the use of the Programme to foster youth participation in democratic life. The Strategy aims to improve the quality of youth participation in the Programme and complements key EU Youth Policy documents, such as the EU Youth Strategy and the EU Youth Goals. The Youth Participation Toolkit¹ accompanies the Strategy and aims to, in practical terms, enhance the participation of young people in each of the actions of the Programme, by sharing know-how, recommendations, tools and practical guidance. The toolkit includes in its modules a special focus on how to cover the new horizontal priorities in the projects.”³¹

³⁰ <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/participation/ypstrategy/>

³¹ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/priorities-of-the-erasmus-programme>

Case examples

Europe Direct is an institute of the European Commission which operates at territorial level to give support and promote EU policies within young people, educational agencies, and social services. In Emilia Romagna Region Europe Direct is a very strong and participative reality, which promotes territorial projects and collaborates in particular with schools of different levels to make the European values more visible and attractive among students.

Europe Direct Emilia Romagna is also promoter of the European Mobility (Erasmus in particular) as initiative to increase awareness and cultural understanding of young people. Europe Direct offers every year some specific activities of training addressed to schools teachers and for youths in terms of laboratories and open discussion where youths can exchange, make practice, simulate, playing a role, and learn European values.

Among the best known activities of Europe Direct we can mention:

- [A Scuola d'Europa](#)³² is an initiative for trainers, thought to promote civic education in the schools; it can be done in e-learning or in presence and it is organised in modular contents;
- [L'Europa nelle Scarpe](#)³³ is organised with the collaboration of Istitute Parri in Bologna; it is a laboratory for young people (12 – 15 years old) and promotes knowledge of Europe in its geographical, historical and cultural elements, conveys some basic notions about the EU and promotes European citizenship;
- [Crossing Europe](#)³⁴ is a laboratory for young people of secondary level (16-18 years old) with the possibility to meet also experts of EU Policies; it is promotes the knowledge about EU institutions and integration of EU policies in the daily life.

Europe Direct in Emilia Romagna offers laboratories to prepare students before the mobility abroad on european citizenship; even also activities of simulation of the EU Parliament.

³² https://www.assemblea.emr.it/europedirect/formazione/a-scuola-d-europa/i-nostri-percorsi-didattici/percorsi-didattici-2019-2020/Docenti/A_scuola_Europa

³³ <https://www.assemblea.emr.it/europedirect/formazione/a-scuola-d-europa/i-nostri-percorsi-didattici/percorsi-didattici-2019-2020/studenti/europa-nelle-scarpe-2019-2020/europa-nelle-scarpe-2019-2020>

³⁴ <https://www.assemblea.emr.it/europedirect/formazione/a-scuola-d-europa/i-nostri-percorsi-didattici/percorsi-didattici-2019-2020/studenti/crossing-europe-2019-2020/crossing-europe-2019-2020>



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Suggestions

Activities of promotion of democratic life and participation and civic engagement seems to be mostly in charge of civic institutions, European institutions, public representances.

Nevertheless the aspect of social and civic engagement can be very important to:

- promote preparation of students before a mobility abroad in order to create the conditions for understanding non only Europe as institution but also as context of daily life and identity;
- promote follow up activities for students who have finished an international project or a mobility abroad to metabolise the learning experience abroad, and take awareness of the personal growth;
- use such contents as identity, cultural understanding, values, democracy, social engagement, climate change in a project of virtual mobility in order to create conditions for an exchange of opinions, ideas, perspectives. To be aware of the differences is a good educational basis for tolerance and respectful attitudes.



5 Tips for a new era of internationalisation

The Covid-19 crisis and Erasmus+ programme 2021 – 2027 opened new possibilities for VET providers. These last years represented a turning point for Internationalisation in VET.

In this last chapter, ToVET partners offer practical advice and ideas to take advantage of the new possibilities offered by new era of the EU fundings.

VET providers will find useful insights concerning the importance of networking activities and the relevance of creating long-lasting cooperation. Moreover, it stresses the importance to link the internationalisation strategy with the Erasmus plan when applying for the Erasmus accreditation in the field of VET. Finally, it will present a practical model to implement virtual and hybrid mobility and tips to start collaborating with VET organisation beyond Europe.

5.1 Networking

One of the objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme is to support the development of the European Education Area. Beneficiary organisations should seek to become active members of the Erasmus network, for example by hosting participants from other countries, or by taking part in exchanges of good practices and other contact activities organised by the National Agencies or other organisations.

As explained in the Programme, experienced organisations should share their knowledge with other organisations that have less experience in the Programme by providing advice, mentorship, or other support. Where relevant, beneficiary organisations should encourage their participants to take part in alumni activities and networks.

There are several national, European, and international networks for VET providers to participate.

Case examples

- One example of an active European network is European Forum of Vocational Education and Training, EfVET. It provides several platforms to participate both virtually and face-to-face.
- A practical example of sharing the knowledge is EfVET Coaches and Athletes initiative. The first round of this initiative was carried out in 2021. The topics included internationalisation at home, mobility, partnerships project and international strategy. Athletes applied to participate, and the teams were formed based on the needs of the athletes and were coached by two experienced coaches.
- National networks can also promote internationalisation and share good practises and serve as a platform for learning. There are eight global networks funded by Finnish National Agency for Education. Learn more at FINVET [website](#)³⁵.
- Peer review is a good and concrete way to share expertise and learn from each other. The peer reviewed organisation will get valuable feedback from Peers, who are often called also as critical friends. Besides, the organisation learns a lot when making the self-evaluation. More information available at³⁶ [Peer review Quality Areas in VET](#).
- There are also specific criteria made for internationalisation in Premier project. Peer review is criteria based and you can read more about the criteria at ³⁷[Premier](#).
- The training module can be found at ³⁸[Training materials for Peer review in internationalisation](#).
- International strategy workshops organised in TOVET project. You can find more information and the materials at ToVET project site.
- Active participation in webinars, sharing knowledge and expertise.

³⁵ <https://finvet.fi/en/>

³⁶ <https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications/european-peer-review-quality-areas-and-criteria-o>

³⁷ <https://luovi.fi/hankkeet/premier/>

³⁸ <https://peertrainingmaterial.wordpress.com/>



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Suggestions

- Invite your partners to participate in European networks and conferences and other events
- Be open to share your expertise among national and European networks
- Look for possibilities to act as a coach or a mentor, you will certainly learn a lot yourself, too



5.2 How to find partners and create long-lasting cooperation

Short description

Internationalisation requires good partners from abroad. Whether you want to promote mobility or do joint projects, a good partner is essential.

The partner can be an educational institution, a company, or an intermediary organisation. You can search for partners for example:

- Using contacts of personnel and students in your own organisation
- Other domestic schools and networks
- Info and training events organised by the National Agency
- Mailing lists and partner requests by NA
- Collaboration with companies
- e-Twinning and EPALE

Abroad you can search partners for example by:

- Participating in contact seminars
- Looking for accredited organisations in other countries
- Contacting intermediary organisations
- Joining in international networks as e.g., EfVET³⁹, NETinVET⁴⁰, Europea⁴¹, Xarxa FP⁴², Eurocities⁴³ and participating in their activities and events
- Contacting twin towns of your own town

Pros and cons of different cooperation forms

³⁹ <https://www.efvet.org/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.netinvet.eu/en/>

⁴¹ <https://europea.org/>

⁴² <https://www.xarxafp.org/>

⁴³ <https://eurocities.eu/>



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Collaboration with schools:

- + Reciprocity
- + Understanding students and their needs
- + Usually help also in finding accommodation and in organising programme for free time
- + Usually available also after the office hours
- Might not be the best choices for learning at working life
- Services vary a lot depending on the organisation

Collaboration with companies:

- + Possible synergy with domestic companies when building a study path
- + Even apprenticeship or other paid work might be possible
- Usually, no help with finding accommodation
- Usually, no help with students' free time
- No help in finding new work placement in case of problems

Intermediary organisations

- + They can be found in many countries e.g. Spain, Malta, Ireland, and UK
- + Full service as workplace, accommodation, airport transfers, maybe even programme for free time. That saves time and work from the sending organisation, but may cost more than collaboration with schools
- + Potential problems with accommodation or work easier to handle on the spot
- + Usually available also after office hours
- The level of service varies
- Companies working for profit
- + Check the services and prices always beforehand (ask for user experiences from others)



Case examples

Collaboration with schools

Cooperation between educational institutions is most useful when it is reciprocal. Kainuu Vocational College in Finland and Secondary Industrial School of Mechanical Engineering in Bratislava, Slovakia have had cooperation for 20 years. Finnish automotive sector students work in car workshops in Bratislava and Slovak students in metal companies in Kainuu. Both schools help in finding accommodation and organising free-time programme, too. Long-term cooperation facilitates practical arrangements.

Collaboration with companies

Ylä-Savo Vocational College from Finland has developed a study path model for students in the field of mechanical engineering in which students complete 35 % of their studies at Ponsse Plc's factory or its various services centres abroad. Students will get good opportunities to develop their practical skills in forestry machine maintenance abroad and at the same time they will learn to work in the different cultures with using other language than their own native language.

Collaboration with intermediary organisations

Collaboration with intermediary partners or mobility providers it is a good way to start international activities. Sometimes it is not easy for the school's coordinators to organise themselves the search of all companies abroad and it is not easy neither to search for accommodation in different destinations. Cooperation with intermediary partners helps all these processes for both schools and students. The intermediary partner is in charge of finding a suitable company for the students where they can do real job and they also take care of the mentoring and tutoring of the students.

Education & Mobility has been cooperating with Finnish partners since 2012. The trust always has been mutual and due to this large cooperation, many students from Finland have had the chance to do training in Spain and in the UK with successful result. During all these years, many Finnish students from the partner schools have got a job offer and decided to start a new experience abroad.



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Suggestions

- Make sure your own website is at good shape. The website is the easiest way to show who you are, what you do in international cooperation etc. It is good to have the main information of your own school in English.
- If the website of some possible partner is in the language that you don't understand, use web translators. They work surprisingly well.
- Be active on different occasions and meetings.
- Be honest and open, work transparently and sustainably.
- Remember reciprocity. While you are sending students and staff abroad, you also get an opportunity to receive staff and students. That is a good way to have internationalisation at home.
- Don't be too ambitious – start with baby steps!
- Remember that the work tasks are usually different compared to domestic practice due to cultural and linguistic differences

Finally, remember that the most successful elements of partnerships are mutuality, trust and understanding. Mutual trust can be settled by a specific agreement called Memorandum of Understanding which establishes the responsibilities and duties of every involved actor.



5.3 Link the internationalisation strategy with an Erasmus Plan and the accreditation process

Short description

In 2020 the European Commission launched, within the Erasmus+ Programme 2021 - 2027, the initiative of the Erasmus Accreditation for Mobility. Erasmus Accreditation gives accredited organisations the access to mobility opportunities in a easier and more structured way, allowing a long term planning of mobility activities and the development of actions which increase the quality of mobilities as well. The request for an Erasmus Accreditation requires having an internationalisation strategy as part of a whole organisation strategy not necessarily as official internationalisation strategy document.

An Erasmus Plan is a plan of activities connected not only with mobility but also with the international cooperation capacity of an organisation or a consortium of organisations.



Figure 7. Linking Erasmus Plan with the strategy

Linking an internationalisation strategy with an Erasmus accreditation it is necessary to describe strategic objectives and activities of the organisation in Erasmus Plan. Erasmus objectives and activities are described on a medium and long term, using gradual implementation of qualitative and quantitative results.



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The objective of the Erasmus Accreditation is to strengthen the European dimension of teaching and learning by:

- promoting the values of inclusion and diversity, tolerance and democratic participation
- promoting knowledge of Europe's common heritage and diversity
- supporting the development of professional networks across Europe

The objectives of VET contribute to the implementation of the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training and the Osnabrück declaration, the European Skills Agenda and the creation of the European Education Area by:

- reinforcing key competences and transversal competences, in particular language learning and digital competences
- sharing best practices and promoting the use of new and innovative pedagogical methodologies and technologies
- supporting the professional development of teachers, trainers, tutors and other VET staff
- equipping VET providers with the necessary capacities to implement high quality mobility projects and to build quality partnerships, while developing their internationalisation strategy
- making mobility a realistic possibility for every VET learner in initial and continuing VET, and increasing the duration of mobility
- promoting the quality, transparency and recognition of learning outcomes achieved in periods of mobility abroad, in particular by using European instruments to this end

Making the Erasmus Plan

Key Action 1 of the Erasmus+ programme provides learning opportunities for individuals and supports the development of educational institutions and other organisations involved in lifelong learning in Europe.

Funding from the programme should contribute to both objectives. This means that by organising mobility activities for your participants, you should also work to achieve the broader goals of your organisation. To achieve this, an Erasmus plan should be developed: a plan that combines mobility activities with the needs and objectives of your organisation.





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Your Erasmus plan should answer one key question: how do you intend to use the funding for Key Action 1 of the programme for the benefit of your organisation, all its staff and learners, whether or not they participate in mobility activities.

You should be able to address this question explaining in a holistic way how the funding that you receive will support the development of your organisation and the personal development of students and staff. The Erasmus plan consists of three parts which are objectives, actions and management planning, and resources.

Erasmus Plan objectives: The objectives the organisation wants to achieve by implementing programme activities. These should be clear and realistic, possible to track and evaluate.

The objectives must be linked to the needs of the organisation, with a concrete benefit for it.

Erasmus Plan activities: The activities your organisation would organise and participants you want to support with programme funding. **Erasmus Plan management and resources:** Explain how you will organise the work so that the quality standards are met.

Case Example

The Erasmus+ KA2 project “*From a Rookie to an Expert*”⁴⁴ focuses on increasing international competences of VET staff. One of the topics in training package is internationalisation strategy.

⁴⁴ <https://luovi.fi/en/international-activities/rex-vet-from-a-rookie-to-an-expert>





Figure 8. An example of strategic objectives in the internationalisation area

Every strategic objective can be linked to the Erasmus programme objectives, in particular:

- The objective 01 is a transversal one and it is a condition to develop a realistic and effective internationalisation strategy as well as an Erasmus Plan. In case of small mobility projects, it could be useful to have at least a project responsible and a coordinator of activities who are usually the same person, and administrative responsible.
- Staff competences can be an objective of an Erasmus Plan. They can be realised in many ways as mobilities, hosting experts from abroad, linguistic, technical, and pedagogical trainings and skills competitions.
- Marketing competences is a strategic solution to valorise, disseminate, make more visible the organisations and the expertise. Participating in networks' marketplaces, online or in presence networks' meetings, projects partnerships, are consistent activities the organisations have to take in consideration and integrate in the daily staff activities.



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- Partnerships can be developed in Key Action 2 Partnerships for cooperation projects. Mobility projects are based on strong partnerships between the sending and the hosting organisations.
- Transferring, re-using, re-elaborating, re-thinking specific best practices or specific expertise in own staff can be useful to participate in similar or parallel projects activity, partnerships, or even networks. Maximising energies and giving value to specific activities can become peculiar to reinforce the identity of an organisation.

Suggestions

An Erasmus Plan should be:

- Consistent and tailored for the organisation
- Self-made and original
- Specific when it refers to the background section, to the needs and challenges of own organisation.
- Strictly linked to the internationalisation strategy if it is attached
- Result of a joint work within your organisation.
- Realistic and feasible in terms of numbers, target, and activities
- Gradual and progressive over the time in terms of goals and activities to reach out
- Reflecting the whole organisation strategy but within an international framework



5.4 Virtual and blended exchanges

Short description

The year 2020 saw the unforeseeable stop of the learning mobility, one of the most powerful and impactful tools promoted by the Erasmus+ Programme to foster the personal and professional development of VET learners.

At the end of the first wave of the pandemic, in June 2020, a precise indication arrived from the European Commission inviting the Erasmus+ National Agencies to promote the integration of virtual mobility in the KA1 mobility projects. We started to talk about Blended Mobility, i.e., mixed solutions between virtual and geographic mobility in which the virtual part aims to enrich, integrate, and prepare the physical mobility.

But what is virtual mobility? What are the models to be inspired? And how can an authentic learning process be guaranteed within these experiences?

One possible answer is the Virtual Exchange.

Virtual Exchange is a methodology already existing in Higher Education and Youth fields to promote intercultural understanding and critical thinking. Erasmus Virtual Exchange was a pilot programme supported by the European Commission in the period 2018 – 2020 and addressed to European and South Mediterranean universities.

Virtual exchange is an exchange among peers who come from different cultural contexts and countries and use the learning dialogue to discuss topics of common interest supported by technologies for communication and a *neutral facilitation*.



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The six elements characterising the virtual exchange applied to the VET context are therefore:

- peer to peer approach
- transnationality dimension
- use of learning dialogue
- focus on intercultural and or vocational themes
- use of communication technologies and digital learning tools
- neutral facilitation by trainers from the language and/or vocational area to support the learning process.

Virtual exchanges can be conceived as complementary to geographical mobility activities. Therefore, they can be realized as blended mobilities involving virtual and geographical parts. But they can also be conceived as autonomous and independent initiatives from geographical mobility, as they aim at the acquisition of transversal and technical-professional competences in an international exchange context. They therefore increase the quality of the competences acquired in the framework of an internationalisation strategy "at home" of the educational organisation. These activities also potentially increase the number of young people involved in internationalisation activities, allowing training agencies and schools to diversify their offer.

Scuola Centrale Formazione proposes two virtual exchange models, which differ not in their methodological foundations but in their content:

- The intercultural model of virtual exchange, focused more on the acquisition of linguistic and digital skills, oriented to mutual knowledge
- and
- The professional model of virtual exchange focused more on the acquisition of skills connected with the VET sector.





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Case Example

The intercultural virtual exchange entitled "[My Identity in My Culture](#)"⁴⁵ can be carried out both bilaterally or multilaterally. To be virtual activity the transnational dimension can be realised not necessarily between two partners from two countries, but also between several partners from different countries. For this type of exchange, it is preferable to involve the whole class group.

They can then benefit from a learning experience based on themes related to own identity as who I am, where I live, what my passions are, my course of study, my favorite sport, my favorite music and own cultural identity as my traditions, my city of origin, and my food. The exchange activities are divided into synchronous, weekly online sessions between students and asynchronous tasks assigned weekly to prepare the synchronous session. For the realisation of the synchronous sessions the partners agree on the digital platform to be used, and possible digital tools to support relationship building among the learners. Telegram or WhatsApp can be used to support distance communication and to share possible tasks assigned - photos, videos, music, presentations. The exchange is based on the use of a common language, usually English.

Case Example 2

[This professional virtual exchange](#)⁴⁶ is taken by an experimentation done with automotive learners. A group of mechanics from Italy and France compared Italian and French safety rules in automotive companies of both countries. This is a preparatory module that can be used before a mobility which foresees the internship in a company and require a knowledge of rules and safety standards foreseen abroad.

The model is flexible and can be adapted to the needs of the school and to the specific learning outcomes foreseen for learners. An added value can be the reciprocity in mobility, that is, the possibility to build a mutual cooperation where different countries and partners send their learners reciprocally in different periods.

⁴⁵ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QQAKmonbyaITMdRCCh5ovtJzgHzVbQHj/view>

⁴⁶ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AVoRz6Z_ySe9JeQ4cQtAN7gIVYgkNRpY/view





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Suggestions

Usually, an exchange lasts a minimum of four weeks and a maximum of eight weeks. The first week is devoted to a cross-cutting activity for all exchanges, the "self-introduction" activity. As this is the first week of preparation for the first online session, the learners carry out a self-presentation task. They can decide to post a photo of themselves, a work of art that represents them, the lyrics of a song, prepare a video of their day.

The task is assigned by the teachers and facilitators three to six days before the online session takes place, to give the learners time to prepare. The activities for each week are agreed by the teachers from the schools involved usually before the start of the exchange for all planned weeks.

Teachers and facilitators have to take in consideration:

- Topics of common interest for the learners. Sometime topics can be suggested by learners and agreed with teachers and facilitators
- Activities to carry out in the synchronous sessions as ice-breaking and activation, thematic focus, role-plays, quizzes, etc.
- Tasks to assign in asynchronous sessions in preparation for the online session
- Learners must create a final product
- Learning outcomes

It is up to the teachers, each in their own context, to decide if learning outcomes will be assessed and recognized within the learners' formal learning pathways and with what methods as project work, questionnaire, etc.



5.5 International cooperation beyond Europe

Short description

European VET providers are often experienced in mobility in Europe. However, we should aim at preparing students for the global labour market. Erasmus program 2021-2027 makes it possible to have global mobility in VET. There is a growing interest among students for mobility overseas.

Coordinators of global networks ⁴⁷ for VET funded by Finnish National Agency for Education described international cooperation in a [webinar December](#) 2021⁴⁸.

“What kind of skills and competences VET providers need for global cooperation and mobility?”

First, you need courage to start. The global cooperation is not so different from European but there are many issues that must be considered. Because of that you also need more flexibility. It is important to know the education system in the partner country and its compatibility with your own country system.

The cooperation is in a huge role. Organising global cooperation and mobility needs national and international cooperation and partnerships. It is reasonable to use existing networks or build patiently new long-term networks for finding cooperation partners. That requires good networking and intercultural communication skills.

Cultural competence and understanding of the hierarchy are important. In many countries the management of the schools or educational authorities are needed to open the doors for the cooperation. Deep understanding and cultural sensitivity on the culture and sub-cultures are needed in all phases of the cooperation. Participants in the mobility should be carefully trained before the mobility. Safety issues should be included in the training. Long distances, different cultures, natural conditions, and phenomena require good orientation.

⁴⁷ Haapajärvi Auli, Hassinen Sirje, Hietala Mirja, Kukkonen Päivi, Lähde Anu, Ramula Heli, Riippi Juha, Ruusumo Heidi, Sandbacka Katarina, Virkkunen Risto

⁴⁸ <https://urly.fi/2yoW>

Starting with staff mobility makes sense. After that it is easier to continue with student mobility. It is good to note that it is possible that the placements of VET students might not match the vocational competence requirements but are still very valuable in getting cultural skills and other key competences.

Agreements are important but in most cases the templates of European cooperation can be used.

The global cooperation has many benefits in addition to European cooperation.

As mentioned, cultural understanding and competences are very important. Expanding global collaboration requires getting to know and adapt to different cultures. The cultures are different in e.g., working life, every-day life and religions. This brings more of new perspectives and a broader view of internationality. The global cooperation increases the importance of language skills. English language is not so widely spoken in many countries outside of Europe. Participants in global exchanges will gain a broader view of global challenges and opportunities. They will become citizens of the world with a broader attitude and understanding of many global issues.

Good practices of internationalisation at home from a global perspective

Internationalisation at home means the acquisition of international experience, language skills and knowledge of cultures without travelling. Internationalisation at home is a good practice which ensures that all students could have access to the international knowledge, skills, and competencies. Destinations outside Europe are often more difficult to reach, and mobility are more challenging to organise than within the EU for many reasons.

That is why it would be important to organise internationalisation at home activities. They could be e.g.:

- ✓ Cooperation with the students from different language and cultural backgrounds in own organisation. A good example is an event related to the food culture.
- ✓ Virtual activities and collaboration with global partners e.g., virtual classes and virtual competitions.
- ✓ Receiving exchange students and international guests. A good example is Canadian teachers' [chef tour in Finland](#)⁴⁹

⁴⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fO4DysKoQ9I>



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Case examples

Finnish National Agency for Education has recognized the importance of global action for the internationalisation of vocational education 20 years ago. It has considered network-like co-operation important and has funded the networks of Finnish vocational education institutions. They have developed cooperation and implemented a large number of global mobility. More information on the [website](#)⁵⁰.

[SAAM - Supporting Alliance for African Mobility](#)⁵¹ is a EU-AU funded project which creates a network between VET centers in Africa and Europe. SAAM's main goal is to create a bridge between Africa and Europe in VET context to promote the collaboration between several partnerships for the future projects and mobilities. SAAM has participants from 8 African and 16 European countries, and it is a pilot project for an incredible adventure of exchange, learning and give-and-take between two continents.

Suggestions

It is necessary to organise proper coaching for participants

Here you can find how two global networks organise coaching for global mobility participants. [FinnVET in China](#)⁵² and [Hanako Network](#)⁵³.

⁵⁰ www.finvet.fi/en

⁵¹ <https://saam.global/>

⁵² <https://urly.fi/2wqk>

⁵³ <https://urly.fi/2wql>



6 Conclusions and proposals

With this guide ToVET partners hope to support VET providers to start or give new boost to their "strategy journey" towards Internationalisation. Internationalisation is a process which needs to be continuously adapted to the changes that happen at local, national, and international level.

In the last two years educational institutions had to re-invent the vision of internationalisation, adopting new forms of international activities to keep internationalisation alive during the corona virus pandemic. Despite Covid-19, the final goal has not changed: make quality and borderless learning available for all, foster the international dimension of VET by promoting international cooperation and mobility opportunities for everyone in all forms and integrate the international dimension into the teaching and learning aspects of VET organisations to make students more competitive and prepared for a global future.

The contribution that ToVET partners offer with this guide are practical suggestions to be used to re-think and update Internationalisation Strategy after Covid-19 outbreak and to make international activities more responsible, sustainable, and inclusive.

Covid-19 has been both the reason to stop or slow down international activities and the opportunity to boost and develop new ways of internationalisation, such as virtual activities.

The project consortium has concluded that, despite the restrictions suffered in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, these last years have been a laboratory of good practices and opportunities for internationalisation.

But how could we benefit and re-start international activities after these tough years? ToVET project offers a compendium of practical suggestions and tips for building and supporting the implementation of an International Strategy for VET organisations as well as for putting in practice the principles and priorities of the new Erasmus+ Programme (2021 – 2027).

It seems to be clear from the approach of the EU policies and policy makers about lifelong learning programs that in the next future all VET organisations have to think at an internationalisation strategy to build and implement in their contexts. This represents an important opportunity for the VET system to catch!



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Internationalisation has different declinations:

- including international experiences in the training offer
- responding to the international and local labour market needs
- investing in human resources with specific competences in international activities management

Furthermore, it is now clear that internationalisation does not mean that every student or teacher must do a physical mobility abroad, but that VET pathways encompass and offer different kind of international experiences: internationalization at home, virtual cooperation and blended mobilities.

To be able to address this challenge VET providers must adopt strategic approach and strategic planning to be sure that internationalisation can benefit their students, teachers and, lastly, the society and the labour market.

Finally, internationalisation gives to the VET system a further chance in investing in key competences and soft skills, as it encourages a change of attitudes in learners as well as in teachers. The intercultural dimension of learning, often underestimated, appears nowadays as fundamental to face life challenges and engagement, both considered an important part of the personal and professional growth.





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