

# **WBL Pro**

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QUALIFICATION, OPEN RESOURCES & TOOLKIT  
FOR THE WORK-BASED LEARNING PROFESSIONAL

**WBL-PRO Project**  
**Qualification, Open Resources & Toolkit**  
**for the Work-Based Learning Professional**

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**ABBREVIATED**  
**SUMMARY**  
**of**  
**National Reports**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The following report shows an overview of the state of the art in the involved partner countries (Germany, Italy, Portugal, Bulgaria, Spain and Latvia) in relation to work-based learning (hereafter WBL). For that purpose, the partners have carried out two types of research. On the one hand, desktop research aiming to obtain a general picture about the relevant information extracted from different reliable sources. On the other, field research, where at least 20 organisations per country dealing with WBL were involved in the definition of the main challenges that the professionals involved (from education and companies sides) encounter, the main educational needs and support and/or supervision needed.

## 2. DESKTOP RESEARCH

### 2.1. NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES SUPPORTING WBL

In **Germany**, “the Federal Government is responsible for in-company VT, while the Länder [federal states] are responsible for VT in schools, and hence also vocational schools.” (Hensen-Reifgens & Hippach-Schneider, 2014) VET, e.g. in the dual system, can be started after having completed general secondary school (9 years of school) or intermediate school (10 years). The other education branch, grammar school, usually leads to higher education. There is a variety of vocation-oriented schools, such as vocational grammar schools (Berufliches Gymnasium), which are more directed to vocational education and the labour market with a focus on certain fields like social, technical, etc.

In **Spain**, there are two VET options: VET diplomas developed and implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (MECD), and professional certificates (RNCP) provided by the Ministry of Employment and Social Security (MEYSS), as part of the National Employment System and continuous vocational education and training (CVET). Finally, basic VET targets students aged among 15 and 17 years having completed their third year of Compulsory Secondary Education and without option to complete secondary compulsory education, whereas older students can access specifically designed ‘Adult Education’ programmes that lead to lower and upper secondary education certifications.

In **Latvia**, the procedure states that educational institutions organise and implement WBL for a student who is carrying out an individual WBL study plan, according to a licenced VET programme, with a business, institution, association, foundation, etc. (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016). In recent years, Latvia has developed cooperation with Germany, Austria and Switzerland in order to exchange information and experience on how to develop WBL. For instance, from September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 to September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 the project “WBL development: WBL supervisor training and WBL promotion (WBL supervisor

training)“ has taken place. It will help to coordinate the skills that are necessary with the requirements of the labour market, and raise the qualification of employees with the help of WBL development (LDDK, 2015).

In **Portugal**, WBL is an integrant part of the Curriculum Plan of any Professional Course and is indispensable for obtaining a Level 4 Professional Qualification Diploma. It was decided to adjust vocational training provision to the needs and priorities of the different socio-economic sectors, paying particular attention to the interaction between schools and enterprises. Thus, in 2013 the Portuguese Government created Portaria nº74-A/2013, de 15 de Fevereiro (February 15<sup>th</sup>). According to this law, guidance and orientation of the trainee throughout WBL is a responsibility of the VET School (which assigns a guidance teacher), and of the company (which assigns a tutor).

In **Italy**, school-work alternation was introduced in the Italian legal framework in different pieces of legislation since 2003. The State-Region Conference Agreement of 2012 set standards for certification of competencies within apprenticeship schemes, internships and traineeships, and the meaning of an apprenticeship was modified for the last time in the 2015 “Jobs Act”, being defined as “a permanent employment contract for youth training and employment.” Finally, with Law 107/2015, known as La Buona Scuola, school-work alternation became a structural element of the Italian school system.

In **Bulgaria**, amendments to the Vocational Education and Training Act, adopted in July 2014, increased the functions of the branch and sectorial employers’ organizations with regard to VET. Moreover, a number of initiatives have been developed, such as The Student Placement Project, which makes it possible for the business sector to be more actively involved in the development of curricula. In May 2014 a new “Youth Employment” scheme was approved which enables youngsters up to 29 years of age with secondary or higher education to participate in 6-month internships or WBL.

## **2.2. WORK-BASED LEARNING IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS**

In **Germany**, the apprenticeship duration in the dual system usually in most cases is designed for three full years. During this time trainees will spend 3-4 days/week in the company (work-based learning) and 1-2 days at vocational school. Companies have to follow the training regulations for the specific occupation which are issued by the state (Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, 2017). The accompanying VET is regulated by the curricula for overarching subjects (e.g. German, English, etc.) as well as curricula for the specific occupations (Staatsinstitut für Schulqualität und Bildungsforschung München, 2017). This means that VT not only includes theoretical parts, but also hand-on training in workshops etc. Vocational Schools are organised on Länder level and follow the curricula published by each state. There are other Vocational

Schools aimed at educational and health professions that provide IVET apart from the dual system, but they include several internships in different companies or organisations.

In **Spain**, the categories of dual VT range from exclusive training at the school (where only work is carried out at the company) to exclusive training by the company. In between, it can take place with practical help from the company (where the business provides the school with the installations or experts necessary to teach some modules), or in collaboration between the company (if officially certified to teach) and the school.

In **Latvia**, WBL has been defined as: “a VET form where at least 50% of the respective vocational education programme is being acquired in a real working environment.” (LDDK Research, 2015).

In **Portugal**, the WBL component appears in all the training modalities of the National Qualifications System (equivalent to the European Qualifications System) and aims to develop and consolidate skills in a training context by performing activities essential to professional exercise. VT has a structure organised by modules, which allows greater flexibility and respect for students’ learning rhythms. Thus, WBL amounts to 420h, in comparison with 1180h of school technical training and 1210h of theoretical subjects (ANQEP, n.d.).

In **Italy**, WBL can be implemented through apprenticeships in the following forms: 3/4-year vocational qualifications (15-25-y.-o.: regional VET); higher qualifications and research (18-29-y.-o.); job qualifications (18-29-y.-o.: contractual qualifications only). Moreover, internships/traineeships are also possible, whether they are included in an educational path or not. Within VET programmes, WBL can take different forms according to the field of study (e.g. alternation schemes, on-the-job training periods, on-site labs). School-work alternation integrates classroom acquisitions with workplace experience, and, over the last years, a new form of WBL has emerged: simulated enterprise projects.

In **Bulgaria**, according to the Vocational Education and Training Act (VETA, 1999) places where practical training can take place can be either training facilities or training and workshop facilities of schools and enterprises of legal and physical entities. Training practice takes place in school environments and in real-work environments. In order to provide such placements, the vocational school signs a contract with one or a number of employer organisations, according to which the employer should secure the necessary conditions for the production practice of the students. Neither trainees nor mentors, who are provided by the employers, receive remuneration for their work.

### **2.3. WBL FORMS/TYPES. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES**

In **Germany**, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB, 2017) highlights the three most important areas for work-based learning: 1) WBL at school, where practical on-site experiences are acquired in the educational institution

through projects in which "real life" is simulated or real projects from the working world are carried out; 2) dual system, which is a formal educational pathway combining training content between school and enterprise and leading to a nationally recognised educational qualification; 3) vocational schools with learning phases at the workplace, i.e. compulsory or voluntary internships of varying duration in enterprises.

#### Advantages and Disadvantages in Germany

Cooperation between secondary general school and the industry means that students take advantage of real work experience. Moreover, WBL can give them some concrete ideas about their future occupation. Thus, they are usually motivated to take part in this form of learning because the internship and the practical work is something completely different from the normal school day. For teachers, it can be interesting to see how students cope with these tasks. Apart from the extra work for teachers and the time missing for other theoretical contents, no disadvantages can be identified for WBL in cooperation between schools and enterprises.

In **Spain**, dual vocational training follows open experimental regulation (Homs, 2016). This has led each region to choose a different implementation model, the two extremes of which are represented by the Basque Country and Andalusia. In the Basque Country, the system basically aims to extend the period students were already spending in companies in the so-called "Workplace Training Module" — which already represented between 20% and 30% of the syllabus —, without further implications. In the case of Andalusia, the student may perform their activity in several companies, either by dividing their weekly time between the school and the company, or in consecutive continuous periods at school and the company. The rest of the Spanish autonomous regions present elements of both models with a wide dispersion of procedures and methodologies.

#### Advantages and disadvantages in Spain

As mentioned above, dual VET in Spain is quite new, and while some good news has been reported, there is currently a lack of experience within the different parties involved in these programmes, and also insufficient collaboration (Bassol & Salvans, 2016). Its hybrid management structure (among two ministries and the different autonomous regions) poses numerous problems, such as differences in how often programmes are launched. The role of companies in the dual VET programmes has also faced some criticism. Finally, there is no regulated training for those becoming tutors, and it appears companies struggle to identify, support and motivate them (Bassol & Salvans, 2016).

1. In **Latvia**, two types of WBL forms are mentioned in the Vocational Education Law: Qualification Training, where the final part of the VET programme is used to acquire professional skills, before the official examination for acquiring professional qualification; and Teaching Practice, where practical skills are

acquired in an educational institution or outside it (Saeima & President of the State, 1999)

#### Advantages and disadvantages in Latvia

In Latvia, WBL is seen as a way to prepare employees according to the requirements of employers and a way how to increase the productivity of a company. It is becoming more and more popular and prestigious; interest is growing each year. Cooperation between educational institutions and social partners, especially from sectors of different levels continues improving (Imanta, 2015). WBL main disadvantages are the uncertainties in the legislation, lack of motivation for students, and lack of professional WBL trainers in companies (LDDK Research, 2015).

In **Portugal**, WBL organisation and implementation obeys to an individual working plan signed by all the participating parties. VET Schools designate a guidance teacher (among teachers who are connected to Technical training courses), and the company, a tutor to guide and monitor the trainee. The courses culminate with the presentation of a project called the Professional Aptitude Test (PAP), conferring the level 4 of qualification of the National Qualifications Framework (and also EQF). Many learners use their PAP to develop products to be used in companies where they have WBL and often, when it happens, companies hire those learners to be its employees given the quality of the PAP.

#### Advantages and disadvantages in Portugal

Students are able to learn in a real working context that provides them with social and professional skills, autonomy and sense of responsibility, as well as the technical support needed for the labour market. As for companies, WBL trainees allow them to select future employees with new dynamics and ideas that respond to their actual needs. Their employees are involved and responsible for the integration of new trainees and presented to new processes and methodologies that appeal to their creativity and adaptability to new approaches. Regarding the challenges, companies sometimes have difficulties in meeting students and schools' high expectations because planning also has to respond to the company's business context at the time of WBL. On the other hand, not all trainees have the right attitude towards the company where they are developing WBL.

In **Italy**, WBL can include alternation schemes, on-the-job training periods, on-site labs, simulated enterprise projects, etc. However, VET programmes have the following common elements: the experiences are formalised and regulated; rights and obligations of the involved actors are regulated; WBL types always involve three parts; objectives and learning outcomes are clearly stated; tutorship and accompanying measures are provided; actors are involved as well with monitoring and evaluation tasks; assurance schemes are foreseen; and reimbursement or a small salary is often given to learners.

### Advantages and disadvantages in Italy

On the positive side, WBL allows individuals to acquire valuable work experience while improving their skills in line with employers' requirements; it is responsive to labour market change, and may even result in a job offer from the company where the training is completed. There are, however, some "open issues". Firstly, company-based supervisors should be both adequately trained and supported in their task. Connection between the different typologies of WBL is lacking, as well as companies interested in hosting learners. Moreover, more collaboration is needed among companies and educational institutions in the definition and adaptation of WBL. Finally, there is a bad perception of WBL: it is seen as a "second choice" for those who did not manage to complete the traditional education path, and it is not yet offered for innovative professions.

In **Bulgaria**, WBL combines training in a real-work environment under the supervision of a mentor after hiring the student to work in the enterprise and following completion of the education in the vocational schools.

### Advantages and disadvantages in Bulgaria

Training through work takes into consideration the specific features of the enterprise and the abilities of the trainees. However, the existing legislative framework does not encourage the participation of employers in the process of organizing practical training. Even so, the dialogue between the two parties has become more active in recent years, the vocational schools being the more active party. Bulgarian businesses are not yet convinced that they should actively participate in the process of education and are critical in most cases with respect to the quality of regular VT. This situation was the reason for the initiation of the Student Placement Project, whose implementation shows an increase in the activity of employers in ensuring placements for students' practical training.

## **2.4. KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES OF WBL PROFESSIONALS**

In **Germany**, the people responsible for planning and evaluating the curricula and working at the ministries will in most cases have an academic background, e.g. pedagogy, law or economy or, in the case of the chambers, from the specific industry, too. Regular teachers at vocational schools need a special academic degree (diploma, bachelor/master's) including pedagogy, a main subject with a special occupational focus and a minor subject. In order to solely teach specific occupation-oriented subjects there is a second (lower) qualification, which requests e.g. a Master Craftsman Diploma and 3 years of practical experience in the field. These two pre-conditions have to be completed with one-year training in pedagogy. Finally, the Vocational Training Act (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2015) in Section 30 lists two technical qualifications for in-house WBL professionals in the dual system. They need to hold the specific vocational

qualification and to have completed a special certificate for WBL professionals including a theoretical (3 hours) and practical exam (30 minutes).

In **Spain**, owing to the incipient state of implementation of WBL, curricula do not contemplate training in the competencies necessary for dual VT teachers. Nevertheless, it is already being considered within teachers' continuous training. With respect to secondary and VET teachers, the Spanish law 276/2007, of 23 of February establishes three main requirements. First, they must be in possession of a university diploma, or equivalent, and of a Master's Degree in Teacher Training in Secondary Education. Finally, for public VET centres, it is also necessary to pass a series of exams known as *oposición*.

In **Latvia**, the procedure for organising and implementing WBL in Latvia has been determined by Cabinet of Ministers Regulations No. 484. Point 10 states that a WBL training manager in a company needs to have two main qualifications: on the one hand, a craftsman qualification given out by the Latvian Chamber of Crafts and a craftsman traineeship certificate or VET in their respective field; on the other, personal pedagogical competency and experience meeting certain requirements (Cabinet of Ministers, 2016). Company mentors are not mentioned as "vocational education teachers" in regulations, so these qualification requirements do not automatically apply to them – for the time being (Anita Līce, 2016).

In **Italy**, some of the most important competencies and skills needed are: knowledge of the job market; understanding of emerging sectors and skills; personal and professional ability to train apprentices; ability to create network with companies and social partners, to involve employees in shaping WBL paths, to support apprentices in performing their tasks and to assess competencies and knowledge acquired; transversal skills; mentoring and orienting ability; knowledge of norms regulating WBL, of learning by doing, of the methodology of enterprise simulation and of health and safety norms.

In **Portugal**, WBL Guidance Teachers are responsible for elaborating the trainees' individual working plan, together with the course director and other teachers, as well as with the companies' tutors. He/she has to follow the execution of the individual working plan with visits to the companies where the WBL is being developed. Guidance Teachers assess and Tutors assess trainees' performance, help trainees with their WBL report and propose to the class board of evaluation a classification for the trainee, after listening to the tutor.

In **Bulgaria**, the main target users include VET teachers and trainers, career practitioners, human resources professionals, mentors, etc. There are online resources available, as well as blogs or training programmes offered, usually developed as part of European projects, which are related to the topic or address theoretically the multiculturalism and intercultural competencies as a whole.

### 3. FIELD RESEARCH

In this research, at least 20 organisations per country, both from the education and business sector, were involved in the definition of the main qualities and challenges of WBL. Focus groups were carried out with students and WBL professionals, and interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders. The main results are shown below.

In order to make the information as accessible as possible, the answers have been filtered into two categories: 1) if they were repeated by at least three partners, they directly appear under the respective epigraph; 2) if they only appeared in one specific report, they are shown under the country's name. However, the latter does not always happen, in which case, the name of that country is not included under the epigraph. This method allows to visually differentiate between more widespread comments and those situations specific to each country.

#### 3.1. WBL METHODS: ADVANTAGES

- Students experience and taste real work life and teamwork, gaining professional experience at the same time as theoretical training.
- They gain personal growth and responsibility.
- They also learn a lot about the specificities of certain professions and entities.
- Link between theoretical knowledge and practical competency implementation.
- Increase in employability.
- To be able to assess one's own knowledge and skills in a real working environment
- To work in team and learn how to practically solve problems and negotiate.
- Transfer between theory and practice.
- Personal contact of apprentice/trainee with colleagues and clients.
- Job security for the individual with updated knowledge for the market/company.

##### Germany:

- The dual system avoids disadvantages of purely VET school systems (with a major part of theory) or in-company VET training (imitating without background knowledge).
- Learning sequences of work assignments, work process and reflection in theory, both at school workshops and in companies.
- Soft skills are to be evaluated by the enterprise. No extra training is necessary after the exam and being hired as a regular worker in the same company.
- Exchange programmes with Erasmus+ to explore VET in other countries.

##### Spain:

- Interns transmit illusion and become very productive after the training.
- It is not the same to teach your colleagues than other people/clients. The latter case is much more connected to professional reality.

##### Latvia:

- Students have a chance to quickly assess their new profession.
- WBL is a way to change career/ profession quickly and relatively cheaply.

#### Portugal:

- Development of social and professional skills, autonomy and sense of responsibility.

#### Italy:

- Stepping stone into the labour market: apprentices receive recognised qualification.

#### Bulgaria:

- Work-based Learning has enormous effects for vulnerable people.

### **3.2. WBL METHODS: WEAKNESSES**

- The dual VT model is considered as complex by some students — e.g. some preferred full theoretical weeks to concentrating training hours into two days per week.
- Students do not generate confidence at the company owing to their young age or are assigned non-stimulating tasks, such as making photocopies.
- Insufficient theoretical classes.
- Possible lack of theoretical knowledge owing to a faulty combination with practice.
- Non-compliance of the school curricula with the real work/production processes.
- Out-of-date equipment and school instructors' knowledge.
- Teamwork challenges.
- On-the-job trainers/mentors/instructors should be adequately trained and supported.
- Influence of many external factors not directly related to WBL (company policies, motivation of learners and mentors...).
- Coordination of VET school and enterprise in training and assessment.
- Students sometimes lack motivation and the right attitude.
- Financing of the programme: added costs and time-consuming.

#### Germany:

- Rapid changes on the labour market.
- Industry 4.0 / automatisisation.
- Realisation and evaluation of competencies achieved.
- External conditions affect WBL, e.g. some kindergartens in rural areas only open for 3 hours, but WBL requires 6 hours per day (legislation).
- Sometimes it is not possible to implement theoretical knowledge in WBL situations. There might be a gap between school and enterprise which is difficult to overcome.

#### Spain:

- Sometimes the company considers students as cheap labour, thus limiting them.
- Companies' size. Sometimes they are too small.
- More trainers' dedication (traditional training plus direct/inverse shadowing phase).
- The trainer's figure must be recognized (through higher salaries or other conditions).

- Low adaptation of dual model to Spanish business culture. Either the company does not detect and select the best profiles to be tutors or they simply find it hard to assume the training of future professionals.
- Students' knowledge upon joining the company is insufficient: only 3 months of class.
- Company training is adapted to specific aspects, and not so much to the profession.
- It is best to have a single company tutor for the whole in-company training period.

#### Latvia:

- Narrow specialisation of students.
- Some of the companies were unable to provide WBL five days a week, so they adapted the 3 days at school, 2 days in a company principle.
- Communication with bigger companies is an issue.
- Sometimes company mentors do not have enough time for students' questions.

#### Italy:

- Lack of connection between the different typologies of WBL.
- Bad perception of WBL: it is seen as a "second choice" for those who did not manage to complete the traditional education path.
- WBL and apprenticeship are not yet offered for innovative professions.
- Although in Italy alternation schemes are compulsory, most schools do not recognise the learning outcomes of WBL; they value more theoretical activities and exams.
- Networks among schools and companies are lacking in Italy. For schools it can be very difficult to find companies which are willing and prepared to host students.

#### Bulgaria:

- Non-compliance of the school curricula with real work/production processes
- Lack of skills for implementing already acquired knowledge
- Lack of teamwork skills and taking responsibility for one's own results.
- Lack of skills to learn through work, etc.

### **3.3. EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION NEEDED**

- It would be necessary to implement very strong communication rules among the organizations that are participating in WBL, VET's and students. More synergies are needed between school and company tutors to adapt as much as possible learning to students' needs. The syllabus needs to be well planned and coordinated.
- More financial, human and material resources invested in the different programmes.
- Coordination of content: process analysis, process optimization, moderation of team meetings, quality circles, analysis of tasks and competencies, coaching concepts, organisation concepts for the dual system, assessment for WBL.
- Planning of theoretical contents in relation to practical parts of VET training.
- Better frame conditions and minimum standards.

- The ratio between trainees and trained staff should be strictly supervised since some companies try to employ apprentices as “cheap workers”.
- The mentor should be invited to the school lessons to get to know today’s teenagers.
- Convincing companies that time investment in training is part of the solution.

#### Germany:

- Internal practical workshops in companies.
- WBL training has to be implemented for WBL professionals in the companies not as “extra work”, but as part of the regular job and worktime.

#### Spain:

- Supervision and functioning of the programme:
  - Selection tests might be taken prior to the students’ enrolment in dual VT programmes in order to assess the adjustment of the model to their profile.
  - Further teamwork is needed, as well as coordination amongst school teachers.
- Needs of both company trainers and school teachers:
  - The ideal would be for the company tutor to have a mixed profile: company professional and teacher.
  - School teachers could move to the company to perform training observation, collaborate on joint projects, assess students’ work, etc.
  - Company tutors might transfer specific company knowledge to school teachers.
- Lack of time hinders students’ development of competencies. Paradoxically, the company preferably seeks competencies instead of theoretical and technical training.
- The student must have as much information as possible on the development of dual training and how their relationship with the company will unfold.
- In-company training is very focused on work methods specific to that organisation. More general training would be needed which goes beyond the needs of the company.

#### Portugal:

- Individualised monitoring of learners.

#### Latvia:

- It is more difficult to communicate with bigger companies as they have a lot of people there who work with just one student.
- It is easier to communicate with smaller companies as they only have one person who is responsible for students’ education in the company.

#### Bulgaria:

- Motivation of all participants in the process should be ensured.
- Appropriate organisation of the learning, incl. duration, planning of the aims and results, documentation of learners’ achievements and division of tasks are essential.

- Ensuring that the design of work-based learning schemes balances the interests of both employer and trainee is key to successful implementation.
- Well-qualified professionals both in their profession and in adult training.

### **3.4. COMPETENCIES, SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE OWNED BY WBL PROFESSIONALS**

**-All WBL professionals** should:

- Have communicative skills.
- Be able to set objectives and elaborate plans for period for the joint work.
- Have teamwork and coordination skills: it is fundamental to coordinate efforts and to improve processes.
- Provide students with role models and make them aware of their learning process.

**-Company tutors** (especially, but not only) should:

- Have experience in their field of work.
- Have specific training providing with flexible and engaging teaching methods.
- Be accessible for students and supportive.
- Provide with appropriate feedback and follow-up/evaluation.

Competencies, skills and knowledge needed in the **planning** of WBL programmes:

- Communication Skills.
- Teamwork and social competencies.
- Expert knowledge.
- Being familiar with the labour market (trends, training, future...).
- Level of WBL activity – Financial attractiveness.
- Reflection on aims (for development of curricula).
- Planning and analytical.

CSK needed in the **implementation** of WBL programmes:

- Communication Skills.
- Teamwork and social competencies.
- Expert knowledge.
- Knowledge about methodologies.
- Mediation / Conflict Management.
- Motivational, supportive.
- Ability to provide useful feedback to students.

CSK needed in the **evaluation** of WBL programmes:

- Communication Skills.
- Expert knowledge.
- Assessment on project performance.

#### Germany:

CSK needed in the **planning** of WBL programmes:

- Digital Skills.
- Being familiar with the labour market (trends, training, future...)
- Level of WBL activity – Financial attractiveness.  
CSK needed in the **implementation** of WBL programmes
- Digital Skills
- Supervision of relationship between employer and staff or among colleagues.
- Knowledge about possible sanctions/legislation.

#### Spain:

- The figure of the coordinator who carries out fortnightly follow-up is very useful. Aside from this, teachers contact professionals to perform objective assessment.
- Vocation and implication.
- Linking subject content as much as possible to future company activities.
- Granting students enough freedom for further learning to take place.

#### Latvia:

- Mentors should have motivation and time to correctly teach students.

#### Italy:

- Diversity management skills.
- Providing opportunities for participants to plan new steps as their WBL progresses.
- Encouraging the use of role playing, role reversal conversation, and other coaching techniques designed to integrate new learning into established patterns of behaviour.  
Monitoring the extent to which participants are learning as well as achieving task outcomes, as they progress with their work-based activities.

#### Bulgaria:

- Intercultural skills.

### **3.5. TRAINING FOR WBL PROFESSIONALS**

- Quality management in education.
- Updated knowledge in the field.
- Pedagogical competency.
- Digital skills.

#### Germany:

- According to the certification of the VET school, per year each trainer has to attend 1 training in pedagogy and 1 training in the professional field.
- Administration at VET schools.
- Administration of documents.
- Modern structures in administration.

#### Spain:

- More training both for regular VT school teachers and for employment trainers.

- Active participative methodologies and staff management.
- Communication and feedback with school teachers.

#### Latvia:

- Ability to adapt.
- Entrepreneurial skills.

#### Italy:

- Learn from EU best practices.
- Knowledge of economic sectors and the job market.
- Soft skills needed for each economic sector.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

WBL systems in Europe present the widest variety from one country to another — and even within countries themselves. This is reflected in the different types of work-based learning, which can also range from *practical* classes at school to *dual* VT, with the *hybrid* possibility of placements during a classic VT programme. All possibilities offer a varying mix of theoretical and practical competencies acquired during the teaching system.

More specifically, dual WBL involves a great deal of planning so as to integrate practical and theoretical skills. Therefore, WBL professionals' qualifications must combine theoretical and sectorial knowledge, pedagogical skills, and adaptability to WBL programmes. The field research carried out elaborates on all these points, as the interviewees are well aware of the special characteristics of WBL. For instance, a recurrent idea was that WBL is unequalled by traditional VET in some respects, as practical training has much more weight — even when the programmes of the latter have long placement periods. This fact provides students with experience and fundamental competencies for any future job — which may even be at their placement company.

Therefore, the advantage of a student having taken a WBL programme over a traditional VET student is obvious, of which students themselves are well aware. In the case of German respondents, they greatly appreciate the good mix of professional competencies and work stability of their dual VET system, which has a longstanding tradition.

As for possible challenges, coordination stands out as one of the key concerns of respondents. Those countries whose systems are better established — notably Germany — greatly stress that aspect, whereas those with a shorter history of WBL note that it is currently one of its main issues. A lack of coordination before, during or after teaching can hinder the correct functioning of the mix of theory and practice, which some respondents cite as a great challenge of the system. They would rather include more theory, especially since — as some students also note — the practical process sometimes involves very repetitive tasks which do not really help the students. The trainees also point out that they sometimes feel lost, especially at the beginning of the programme.

The knowledge, skills and competencies that a WBL professional must have also relate to this topic: proactive, adaptable and with communication, managerial and social skills. Pedagogical skills and a deep knowledge of their sector and WBL are also required.

Some of those skills are required in all three stages of the programme (planning, implementing and assessing it): social and communication skills, teamwork, etc. Planning involves more reflective knowledge and competencies: knowing WBL and the sector, management competencies; implementation, proactive skills: team management, problem-solving and active communication with the company; and assessment, much quality management: quality control, standardised questionnaires and protocols...

This reflects on the training needs quoted by respondents. Technical skills related to project management are greatly valued; notably, team management and ICT's in relation to WBL. Besides, more theoretical skills need to be taken into account: knowledge on the subject and the WBL system, while soft competencies need to be enhanced, too.

In conclusion, both the general functioning of WBL and each country's situation are depicted in depth in the field work: it has great potential, but the details of its implementation must be handled with care. Indeed, this report provides a great amount of information which, when analysed, can provide with useful solutions for the improvement of WBL programmes.

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