

WBL-PRO Professional Peer Network: The team talks with the professionals - Inga Šikova from Latvia

Today it is our pleasure to present to you one of the Latvian professionals we have contacted - **Inga Šikova**, deputy director in work-based learning and life-long learning fields in Vocational Education Competence Centre "Riga State Technical school", Riga, Latvia.



Please find below what she shared with our team:

1. Please share with us what the main advantages with respect to work-based learning are.

Work-based learning is a form of education that involves not only learning in the classroom but also provides an opportunity for students to quickly adapt to the labour market and, after an agreement between school and employer, acquire knowledge and skills that are needed in the company.

There is targeted implementation of personnel policy; employers, by coordinating individual plans, emphasize topical content issues of the company and ensure a quality training process for preparing future specialists in accordance with the specifics of the company.

Another important benefit is ensuring the quality of the education process; the learners have the opportunity to master the latest technologies, which in enterprises are being renewed faster than in educational institutions.

WBL is based on partnership, i.e. it is a cooperation between an educational institution and an enterprise. It excludes risks of choosing the company randomly, going through a low-quality internship or working in an unsafe workplace.

Moreover, it increases partners' co-responsibility in implementation process of VET program.

In EU WBL approach is recognized as one of the best ways to motivate a learner to get involved in vocational education, to encourage employment and ensure that the education corresponds to the needs of the job market.

2. Please share with us what the main challenges with respect to work-based learning area.

Latvia, following dual education and work-based learning experience in other European countries, also applied a new approach to acquiring VET qualification in our country that provides possibilities for VET institutions to offer VET programmes in cooperation with enterprises in a more flexible way; according to an individual plan that is created for each student.

WBL is a form of vocational education that allows a person to acquire practical skills and knowledge in a company alongside lessons in the educational institution. Following the growing need to adjust vocational education to real needs of job market, implementation of WBL and apprenticeship has become one of the EU priorities in VET field.

In national level one of the challenges is educating employers - acquiring pedagogical competences; however, currently it is happening successfully, and employers show a lot of interest.

In institutional level it is challenging to create a well-arranged, transparent, easy-to-use and easy-to-understand system for developing, carrying out and assessing WBL.

3. Please share what the most important knowledge, skills and competences for the work-based learning professional are according to you. What kind of trainings are necessary to acquire them?

Cooperation skills - they are essential in all types of communication (horizontal and vertical); it is important to be able to maintain positive communication. Ability to reach and address people, get them interested and persuasion skills are also important. Some other qualities that are necessary:

- Taking responsibility for one's own and team's work. Ability to organise teamwork;
- Precision;
- Stress management skills.
- Courage to say 'yes' to challenges and novelties;
- Solving issues at work without stress - the professional should understand that with each novelty there comes a possibility that the result will be different from the expectations; mistakes should be approached as new tasks that have to be solved and you should patiently move forward.
- Continuous cognitive and analytical work.

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