

WBL-PRO Professional Peer Network: The team talks with the professionals – Isabel Nunes, Lisbon, Portugal

Today we are very happy to present to you **Isabel Nunes** Director of Innovation at Citizens Projects-AEVA, Portugal (www.aeva.eu).



Please find below what she has shared with the WBL-PRO team about the HANDSON Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership for VET: Hands-on approaches to support learners with special educational needs to complete VET cycles and transit into the labour market:

"In Europe, recent estimates place the number of learners with special educational needs (SEN) at 15 million. Learners with SEN frequently leave school with few qualifications and are much more likely to become unemployed or economically inactive. The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2013) formulated recommendations relating to the four "patterns of successful practice" that are likely to improve VET system effectiveness and the transition to employment of learners with SEN. These patterns focus on the perspectives and roles of key stakeholders within VET, namely:

- (1) head teachers/managers of VET organisations (management pattern);
- (2) teachers/trainers/support staff (VET pattern);
- (3) SEN learners (learners' pattern);

(4) current and future employers/labour market representatives (labour market pattern).

Nowadays, VET managers are challenged daily to implement innovative and tailored solutions targeting SEN learners. At the same time, VET educators are requested to design learning activities in cooperation with companies to meet the labour market requirements. To face this reality, participating organisations in HANDSON project - United Kingdom, Cyprus, Greece, Finland, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden - have expressed common difficulties to face these challenges and recognise the importance of having new approaches and tools to improve their VET and WBL practices in order to increase out work placement opportunities for SEN learners.

In this frame, HANDSON is designed in response to such evidence. It will develop an inclusive production-based learning model and innovative didactic resources to support SEN learners to complete VET cycles and successfully transit into the labour market. To achieve this, the following objectives are defined:

- to undertake an extended national and Pan-European study and map success factors related with SEN and production schools in order to define the key elements to be included in the model;
- to develop a set of multilingual innovative approaches and ICT-based didactic resources to support the efficient implementation of the model;
- to create local workshops and apps for each one of the vocational areas target in each country, in line with future employers' needs and job opportunities;
- to do practical implementation, testing, validation and fine-tuning with end-users and final beneficiaries during the pilot trails;
- to mobilise a multi-disciplinary board of experts to participate in developments and provide legitimacy to the foreseen outputs;
- to engage associated partners, key-stakeholders and carried out dissemination and exploitation actions including the multiplier events in all participating countries, ensuring networking opportunities and a smooth appropriation and sustainability of the project and its outputs.

HANDSON will provides a set of tangible products for better support VET managers, educators, SEN learners and employers: a tailored inclusive production-based learning model, and supportive didactic resources - eManual, eKit, digital learning space and app generator. The project will benefit from the direct participation of 34 educators, 80

SEN learners and 72 key-stakeholders (VET managers, employers, experts) in activities related with the development of the outputs, including research, contents development, piloting, external validation. Moreover, 300 VET providers, educators, schools, universities, associations supporting SEN, municipalities, chambers of commerce, employers, employers' associations, public bodies, decision and policy makers, will attend the eight multiplier events in partners' countries. And more than 1000 stakeholders across Europe will be reached through the project dissemination activities.

HANDSON envisages to become a reference innovative model offering a successful path to improve VET system effectiveness, promote even more inclusive education and WBL programmes, and in this way to enhance the transition to employment of learners with SEN. We strongly believe that across Europe, other VET providers, but also adult providers, schools, high educations, institutions hosting SEN people and employers with SEN workers will feel inspired and interested in appropriate the project outputs. In addition, decision and policy-makers will also be invited to have a close look into HANDSON outcomes and challenges to mainstream at national level in specific initiatives and programmes."

Please feel most welcome to like our facebook page and join the linkedin group to get acquainted with many best practices and other useful materials, tools and resources supporting the high quality performance of work-based professionals around Europe and beyond its borders!

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