



Recommendations for cooperation between continuing education and the labour market

Project: Let's cooperate!

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INTRODUCTION

These recommendations were developed as part of the “**Let's Cooperate!**” project implemented under the **Erasmus Programme, Action 2: Strategic Partnerships – Small-scale Partnerships**. The recommendations were developed by the project team, i.e. **instructors** and **practical training teachers**, as well as **entrepreneurs** from the lift industry, based on the experience gained during the implementation of the project, i.e. visits to Polish and foreign companies, meetings with entrepreneurs, and the exchange of good practices. The recommendations were developed by the project team, i.e. instructors and practical training teachers, as well as entrepreneurs from the lift industry, based on the experience gained during the project, i.e. visits to Polish and Turkish companies, enterprises and vocational training institutions, meetings and discussions with employers, employees and directors of schools and vocational training centres.

Cooperation between vocational education institutions such as vocational schools, vocational training centres and continuing education centres and employers is a key element of an effective vocational education system. Graduates completing a vocational course or vocational school should not only have the theoretical knowledge to pass tests and final exams, but above all the qualifications and competences needed for the labour market, which will enable them to take up employment in their chosen profession.

This requires constant and systematic cooperation between vocational education institutions and the labour market, consisting of regular contact and joint efforts by both sides to match education to the needs of the labour market and the capabilities of education centres, joint action to improve the quality and usefulness of education in the face of dynamically changing employer needs, developing technologies and challenges in the field of future competences and qualifications.

Based on the information and experiences of entrepreneurs and representatives of vocational education gathered during participation in the **project** entitled “**Let's Cooperate**”. Following an analysis carried out by the project team with a view to establishing and developing cooperation between the vocational education sector and the labour market, we recommend the following forms of cooperation.

1. Continuous consultation and exchange of information on the demand for qualifications and occupations between employers and vocational education institutions.

- **Actions:** Establishment of a Vocational Education Council at the local government level with the participation of local entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, vocational education institutions and the Employment Office, which would hold regular meetings (twice a year) to determine the local labour market's demand for occupations and qualifications in a given period based on information provided by employers.
- **Result:** Increased **effectiveness** and **usefulness of vocational education**. Determination of the actual labour market demand for specific occupations and qualifications in a given period. Enabling vocational education institutions to adapt training programmes and courses to the actual and current needs of the labour market. Increasing the effectiveness of vocational education by implementing training programmes and courses tailored to the specific needs of employers, so that course graduates are prepared to immediately take up positions for which there is a real demand from employers.
- **Advantages and difficulties in implementation:**
Advantages: Eliminating staff shortages among local employers. Support for employers in recruiting qualified staff. Development of the local labour market. Increased effectiveness of vocational education. Improved quality of vocational education.
Possible difficulties: Stakeholders are not convinced that it is worth investing time, human resources and funds in developing this type of cooperation. Lack of awareness among the parties as to the effectiveness of this form of cooperation. The need for financial support for the development of this form of cooperation, particularly in the initial stage of development.

2. Joint (employers and vocational education institutions) development of vocational course programmes directed at the needs of employers.

- **Activities:** Creating curricula for vocational courses in cooperation with employer representatives, whose task will be to ensure that the curriculum allows participants to acquire the qualifications and competences currently needed on the labour market.
- **Result:** Participants in courses implemented according to curricula jointly prepared by employers and vocational education institutions develop the qualifications and competences actually sought by employers. Graduates are prepared to take up specific jobs in local companies. Employers do not have to make the effort to train new employees because this role is taken over by vocational education.
- **Advantages and difficulties in implementation:**

Advantages: Increasing the practical aspect of vocational education. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of vocational education. Supporting employers in recruiting new employees. Preparing new employees in vocational courses to take up employment in their profession immediately after completing the course.

Possible difficulties: Unconvinced employers to engage and invest in this form of cooperation. Costly recruitment of participants for specialised courses. The need to obtain funding for costly specialised vocational courses.

3. Involving specialists working in companies as lecturers in the teaching process on vocational courses.

- **Activities:** Implementation of part of vocational training by company employees and employers from a specific industry who have up-to-date and practical professional knowledge. An employee working in a given position has practical knowledge of current technologies, machines, equipment and software. Experts in specific areas of vocational training are able to teach students practical applications and implementations that they will encounter when working in their profession.
- **Result:** Increasing the practical aspect and usefulness of education. Ensuring that course participants receive useful, practical knowledge from a person who works on a daily basis in the position for which the course participant is preparing.
- **Advantages and in implementation:**
Advantages: Bringing vocational education closer to the requirements and realities of the labour market. Involving professionals from specific industries in the implementation of education.
Possible difficulties: Lack of widespread good practices in this area. Lack of systemic solutions. The need to acquire (supplement) qualifications related to knowledge transfer (pedagogical qualifications) by company employees who are lecturers on courses. The need for evaluation and mentoring of the quality of classes.

4. Completion of all or part of the vocational course at the employer's premises (in real conditions, in a specific job position).

- **Activities:** Completion of part of vocational training on a course in real working conditions, in a specific job position at the employer's premises.
- **Result:** This will increase the practical dimension and usefulness of the training. It will enable course participants to familiarise themselves with the machines, equipment, technologies, tools and software actually used, and will be introduced to the tasks and responsibilities they will encounter when taking up a job in a specific profession in a given position.
- **Advantages and difficulties in implementation:**

Advantages: A practical approach to vocational education. Training in a real workplace. Selection of future potential employees by the employer. Course participants have the opportunity to complete the practical part in real working conditions, which is an experience on the basis of which they decide whether to take up a job in this profession or not. For the employer, the opportunity to test employees in real working conditions already at the course phase, without the need to hire the person and bear the full cost of their training, is a great convenience and saves time and money.

Possible difficulties: The need to take some of the company's resources, i.e. employees, machinery and materials, out of current operations and redirect them to training purposes, and to bear the associated costs.

5. Regular training courses for lecturers/vocational teachers in companies related to the industry being taught.

- **Activities:** Organisation of regular internships/industry courses for practical vocational teachers. Exchange of experiences between vocational teachers and company employees. Regular updating of vocational teachers' knowledge and skills. Learning about new developments and trends in the profession being taught.
- **Result:** Practical vocational training teaching staff provide students with up-to-date technological and industry knowledge in the field in which they teach. Vocational instructors are up to date with the technologies, development trends and tools currently used by employers.
- **Advantages and difficulties in implementation:**

Advantages: Improving the quality of vocational education. Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of vocational teaching. Better adaptation of vocational teaching to the realities of the labour market.

Possible difficulties: The need to involve company employees in the process of training vocational teachers, which means that they cannot perform their professional duties during the course. The need for vocational teachers to set aside time for this form of training. Obtaining funding for the training of vocational teachers in companies.

6. Offering courses with guaranteed employment for the best participants

- **Activities:** Organising vocational courses tailored to the needs of local companies in a specific industry, after which companies declare their intention to establish cooperation (employment contract, contract of mandate, internship, etc.) with a specified number of the best course participants.
- **Result:** Promotion of industries that offer this type of training opportunity. Encouraging potential participants to take part in the course, increasing the motivation of course participants to learn.
- **Advantages and difficulties in implementation:**

Advantages: Support for local companies in recruiting new employees. Encouraging job seekers to develop and learn in industries offering preferential forms of support for course participants – employment immediately after completing the training.

Possible difficulties: Lack of good practices and examples of this type of cooperation. The need to inform and educate both employers and training centres about the advantages of this form of training.

7. Mentoring and expert lectures

- **Activities:** Inviting company representatives to classes on specific professional subjects, where they present the professional issues covered in a given training unit from a practical perspective (real-life use). Organising meetings entitled “Expert at school” during which professionals share their professional knowledge with participants. Introducing mentoring programmes in which company representatives advise and evaluate projects completed by course participants.
- **Result:** course participants learn about career paths in the profession they are studying, the requirements of the industry, and are inspired to further develop. They learn about the profession from a practical perspective. They establish contacts with employees of companies to which they can apply after completing their studies.
- **Advantages and difficulties in implementation:**
Advantages: Increasing the practical dimension of vocational education. Establishing professional relationships between course participants and future employers. Implementation of practical projects under the supervision of experts in the field.
Possible difficulties: Attracting companies to cooperate. Lack of model solutions in this area of cooperation. The need to coordinate this type of cooperation.

8. Evaluation and feedback system

- **Activities:** Research on the future of graduates, surveys among employers hiring graduates, annual evaluation of the effectiveness of activities.
- **Result:** Schools/vocational education institutions obtain feedback from employers on their satisfaction with the competences and qualifications of graduates, as well as the usefulness and effectiveness of the vocational education offered. They also obtain information on the demand for employees, which allows them to respond quickly to changing market needs.
- **Advantages and difficulties in implementation:**
Advantages: Collection and processing of up-to-date information from the labour market on the quality of education and employer satisfaction. Possibility to introduce changes and improvements to the education offered. Monitoring of labour market needs and adaptation of the education offer to them.
Possible difficulties: Costs of implementing the research and evaluation system.

9. Joint implementation of projects (e.g. job fairs, educational projects, patronage classes).

- **Activities:** Vocational education institutions cooperate with employers in the implementation of joint projects, such as: Implementation of educational projects under the supervision of experts from a given industry. Joint preparation of exhibitions and participation in educational and job fairs. Employers also sponsor selected classes in vocational schools by providing: additional vocational classes at the sponsoring company, internships and employment opportunities, joint development of curricula, internships and training for teachers, support for the purchase of equipment for vocational workshops.
- **Result:** Bringing schools/vocational education institutions closer to the labour market. Understanding needs, exchanging information, planning and implementing projects has an impact on the development of cooperation, improving the quality of education and adapting it to the needs of the market.
- **Advantages and difficulties in implementation:**
Advantages: Development of cooperation. Frequent contacts. Exchange of information. Mutual understanding of the needs and opportunities of both sides.
Possible difficulties: Lack of understanding of the need for cooperation between vocational education and the labour market. Lack of examples of solutions on which to base cooperation.