

Innovation Ecosystems for
Vocational Education and Training

Peer Review 1

Prepared by UPIT

This Report refers to the first 8 months of project implementation - 1st of November 2015 to 30th of June 2016.

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1. About the InEcVET project and the Multi-Stakeholders Knowledge Partnerships

“InEcVET: Innovation Ecosystems for VET” is a two-year project (1st of November 2015 – 31st of October 2017) financed by European Union’s Erasmus+ Program (Key Action 3: Support for policy reform - Forward Looking Cooperation Projects, ref. no.: 562126-EPP-1-2015-1-IE-EPPKA3-PI-FORWARD). The Consortium is composed of 10 institutions from 5 EU countries: Ireland (coordinator), Cyprus, Finland, Portugal and Romania.

The aim of the project is to simultaneously improve the contribution of VET to innovation in Member States while increasing the incidence of innovation in VET. The objective of the project is to define and pilot **an innovation ecosystem for VET** based on an agreed set of common elements and principles that can be applied as a framework for innovation in Member States. The function of this ecosystem should be to support the identification, testing, development and assessment of new innovative approaches in the VET sphere which have mainstreaming potential. Sustaining an innovation economy means evolving, adapting, re-imagining and reinventing to create and utilize new ideas and information into both existing and new educational products and services.

The proposed innovation ecosystems will be carefully aligned with, and informed by, local and regional economic development strategies in the participating partner countries. A network of key stakeholders drawn from VET (teachers and tutors, private sector providers, continuous professional development experts and education managers) and SME (business owners, entrepreneurs, business support and development agencies) will drive the development of the proposed innovation ecosystems bringing together the large and diverse array of participants, insights and resources that contribute to, and are necessary for, ongoing innovation in a modern economy. There is a marked trend in VET with new multi-stakeholder partnerships emerging and with enterprises acquiring a significant role in improving the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of training systems. The proposed network of stakeholders will work to proactively define future VET needs and priorities that can leverage growth and job creation.

The basic tenet on which this project is based is the need for greater cooperation between the worlds of work and education and this will be achieved through the establishing of the proposed **Multi-Stakeholder Knowledge Partnerships (MSKP)** in each partner country. MSKPs will comprise VET teachers and tutors, private sector VET providers, continuous professional development experts, education managers, business owners, entrepreneurs, business support and development agencies. These local partnerships will help to define current and future skill needs and will also be encouraged to look at the potential of different learning environments including work-based learning, online learning, etc. These partnerships will comprise the corporal structure of the proposed innovation ecosystem. Thus, MSKPs will define and drive the process and add weight to the outcomes where feeding the policy development process is concerned. The multi-stakeholder involvement will also ensure that potential cooperation between VET policy and other policy areas like employment, economic affairs, social affairs, etc. is identified and harnessed in support of the project objectives.

2. Current status of MSKPs in partner-countries

After the initiation of the project, in each partner-country the Multi-stakeholder Knowledge Partnerships have been established to inform and drive the VET innovation process. Information on their status, members' profile and number of meetings to date are briefly presented below, per country:

Country	Status	Members' profile	Number and date of meetings
Ireland	Created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses (such as construction, consultancy, food and retail) • National FET funding agency – SOLAS • Director of FET Teacher Training - University • Chamber of Commerce • Private Training contractors • FET trainers 	Two 01.03.2016 09.05.2016
Cyprus	Created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academics • Active entrepreneurs • Representatives from VET agencies • Representatives of the Department for Secondary Technical and Vocational Education from the Ministry of Education and Culture • VET trainers • Representatives from project partners • Representative from the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry • Representative from the Human Resource Development Authority 	Two 25.02.2016 24.06.2016
Portugal	Created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET teachers • VET coordinators • Technicians • Representative of business associations 	One 24.03.2016 20.06.2016
Romania	Created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET provider (6) • Policy makers at a national level (3) • Private enterprise community (3) • Implementers at a regional level (4) • Commission authorizing training providers (1) • Active Entrepreneurs (CETRINO) (2) • Academics in Innovation (UPIT) (1) • Project partner (4) • Academics in Education (UPIT) (2) • School Professionals (responsible with professional practice of students) (2) 	Two 23.03.2016 14.06.2016

3. Identified areas for Best Practices

In the discussion sessions during the MSKP meetings some ideas came up with regard to Best Practices. The most relevant ones are rendered below:

- Discussing and sharing ideas with all partners in the consortium by allocating time at our transnational meetings to discuss the progress of the MSKP meetings and sharing best practice. *(Ireland)*
- Implementing a program called “virtual companies” in schools through which children & young adults acquire useful business skills for the future and another one with the name “Getting to know the money” (but this is mostly for primary school students) aiming at introducing the participants in key concepts related to money. *(Cyprus)*
- Being action-oriented, networking, acquiring creativity skills, focusing training on important areas such as business skills; project management; risk assessment; growth, change and sustainability; innovation and creativity; ethics and social responsibility; interpersonal relations. *(Portugal)*
- Introducing courses of intrapreneurship within companies and taking over IT development; counseling for training at the work place; matching labor market with training and skills development for intra-/entrepreneurship; responsiveness to the needs of business sector; stimulating creativity, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship initiation; involving a large number of young people and keeping record of innovations; real collaboration between the economic sector and academia. *(Romania)*

4. Challenges and/or weaknesses

Discussions around challenges or weaknesses in project's implementation revealed the following aspects that partners have to take into consideration and pay attention, in order to provide appropriate measures and solutions:

Ireland:

- Helping stakeholders identify their role in the project;
- Maintaining stakeholder interest for the life of the project.

Cyprus:

- Foreseeing an adequate of time for dissemination and “absorption” of outputs;
- Contributing to the amelioration of the country's performance in entrepreneurship through the introduction of an innovation ecosystem in VET sector;
- Resolving the identified “innovation gaps” in soft skills and in areas, such as project management, leadership skills, teamwork, budget management, human resources, and risk assessment.

Portugal:

- Improving teamwork and adventure spirit, management of human and material resources, management metrics, time management, soft skills, languages and intercultural aspects;
- Stimulating innovativeness;
- Creating classroom environment situations on how to behave in certain episodes of real life;
- Providing students with “one year gap” for them to travel, meet different realities and do voluntary work

Romania:

- Knowing or identifying correctly the real needs of the innovation economy and thus appropriately designing the features of the innovation ecosystem for VET;
- Matching the time availability and interest of the stakeholders who are members in the MSKP.

5. Further recommendations

Overall, in the MSKP meetings that took place up to date, the stakeholders have recommended the following:

- Having an ongoing discussion forum on the website that partners can use to discuss issues, concerns or best practice in relation to their MSKP;
- Inviting representatives from the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, employers and industrialists to be part of the MKSPs;
- Betting more on EU funding for innovation, on some projects as the PMI (Project Management in schools), so there is a project management training for teachers working in areas such as Marketing and Leadership;
- Providing ideas and examples for learners and trainees regarding techniques and tools on how to create a company and a product;
- Updating legislation;
- Designing a Good Practice Guide;
- Broadening the dissemination of the project in mass media;
- Attracting new members in MSKPs.

6. MSKPs' activities within the next 6 months

An overview of the activities to be achieved within the next 6 months emphasized that the MSKP members will focus on:

- Introducing the Intrapreneurship Curriculum and getting feedback and recommendations;
- Identifying VET teachers/tutors to train in the Intrapreneurship Curriculum;
- Deciding on the format of the skunkworks;
- Deepening the concept of skunk works;
- Identifying the key strategic priorities for innovative developments within VET provision sector;
- Distributing the questionnaire for the 6-month evaluation survey, collecting and analysing the responses;
- Achieving the foreseen MSKP meetings (as in the chart below).

	<i>July</i> 2016	<i>August</i> 2016	<i>September</i> 2016	<i>October</i> 2016	<i>November</i> 2016	<i>December</i> 2016
Ireland						
Cyprus						
Portugal						
Romania						



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