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LINGUISTICREFORME

Linguistic REFORME

(Project no. 2011-1-DE2-LEO04-08867 1)

Summarizing analysis

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Resume / conclusions – BZB Krefeld



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Appendix A): SWOT-analysis

Appendix B): figures of recent mobilities of trainees, trainers, staff, VET-experts

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This group has occasionally been supported by specific experts from the project partners' organisations at the respective work packages.



Project

The project *Linguistic REFORME* aimed at analysing basic issues in the process of transnationally exchanging people in vocational education and training (VET) between companies, VET-centres and VET-schools in the range of REFORME, the European Construction Sectors VET-network; www.reforme.org. The project consortium differentiated between and considered EQF-levels, sending and hosting professionals and several analyse methods, like SWOT-, GAP- or ABC-analysis etc. The main steps have been:

- 1) Quantitative and qualitative surveys of the sent and hosted groups in the years 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 on EQF-levels within the REFORME-network
- 2) Survey, analysis and conclusions along participants, professions, countries, used languages, preparation, most common obstacles for the process coping with

- TRAINEES sent abroad (1. work phase)
- TRAINEES "hosting" others trainees (2. work phase) and VET-centres hosting trainees from abroad
- STAFF (VET-managers, VET-trainers, administratives) sent abroad (3. work phase)
- STAFF (VET-managers, VET-trainers, administratives) hosting the respective counterparts (4. work phase)
- CONCLUSIONS and paths to improve and optimize the processes in exchanges TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF EXCHANGES as well as the quality (for languages cannot be the obstacles to exchange knowledge, skills and competences), for an even higher satisfaction on all levels, which then will be the starting point of an even more sustainable process (5. work phase)

Linguistic REFORME provides with a multilayer offer for transfer onto other target groups and projects, since it has dealt with specific numbers and situations and not only with abstract and perceived obstacles. Therefore the project adapted several analysing methods to summarize the quantitative as well as the qualitative aspects of pros and cons on the supply and the demand side of the exchange "market".

Aims and objectives

The project focused on OBJECTIVES which has been dealt with in 5 subsequent work phases and 6 milestones in shape of 6 meetings:

- 1) Survey of the realized mobilities/exchanges within the scope of the REFORME-network (bilateral, multilateral)



- 2) Differentiated analysis of the quantitative and qualitative aspects in the pre-exchange-phases, the realisation-phase as well as in the post-exchange phase, which meant an evaluation and exploitation phases.
- 3) Extending the main focus from the mobile exchange-participants (the ones who travel) onto the in-mobile exchange-participants (the ones who host and accompany the mobile participants during their stay)
- 4) Explore the specific features and figures, when it came to different EQF-levels (trainees / level 2-3, trainers / levels 4-6, management / levels 3-6) and their input level related to language competences, cultural awareness and organisational openness.

The project addressed the following SUBJECTS:

- 1) Trainees in the role of outbound exchange participants
- 2) Trainees in the role of inbound exchange host or colleagues in VET-centres or on building sites
- 3) Trainers in the role of outbound exchange participants
- 4) Trainers in the role of inbound exchange host or colleagues in VET-centres or on building sites
- 5) VET- or building site managers in the role of outbound exchange participants
- 6) VET- or building site managers in the role of inbound exchange host or colleagues in VET-centres or on building sites
- 7) Administratives in the role of outbound exchange participants
- 8) Administratives in the role of inbound exchange host or colleagues in VET-centres or on building sites

The APPROACH to achieve these objectives was an analysing one with a clear definition of partners' tasks, presentations, considerations, summaries and conclusions for improved process (learn curve proceedings). The central elements were the six meetings as well as the five work phases.¹

Method (SWOT, ABC and GAP analysis)

All partners gathered a lot of data concerning the inbound and outbound mobilities of the addressed target groups in terms of specific features². The most important task after having finished the project work phases has been to analyse the achieved figures in terms of what are the specific conclusions and from that the recommendations to anticipate for future activities on that field.

¹ All presentations, meetings' minutes etc. are attachments to the final report and thus available to third parties

² Overall SWOT analysis covering the number of mobilities and the qualitative aspects → annex to the report and product of the project

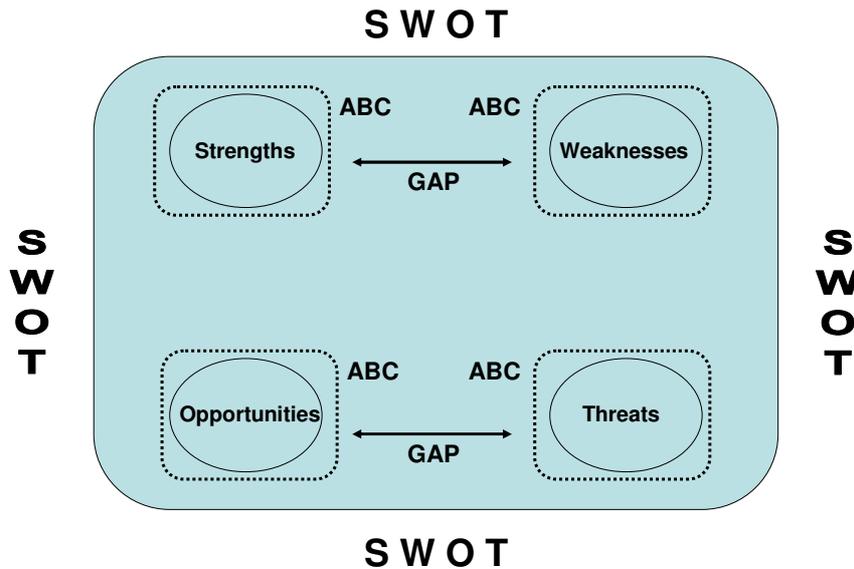
Therefore the partners decided to adapt the methods of

SWOT-analysis

ABC-analysis

GAP-analysis

Analytical spheres



SWOT-analysis

Taking into consideration the figures in transnational exchanges within the last couple of years, there have been detected a number of characteristics in terms of **Strengths** and **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities**³ and **Threats**. As the partners had not been engaged equally in all regards, their contributions to the respective work phases were of different intensity. – The reasons for having SWOT could lie in the individual, the organisations, the countries, the situations and the job specifications, though. Task of all partners was the identification and consideration, what is a Strength etc. and why it is a Strength etc. That led to a catalogue of features, which have to be assessed. Once having assessed them in terms of e.g. the degree of importance or similar⁴ one can think about how to bridge the gap between Strengths <> Weakness as well as Opportunities <> Threats; since keeping the strengths or extending them, but at the same time weaken and/or resolve the weaknesses is important to improve one's performance. The same stands for make use of the opportunities and coping with the threats and/or even avoid them if possible.

³ or „chances“

⁴ Referring to ABC-analysis



ABC-analysis

The ABC-analysis deals with an assessment of the importance of features from the SWOT characteristics.⁵ So consortia partners will conclude also what are the three most important Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, which had been detected by all partners in a specific work phase. E.g.: Formation PME will ABC-analyse the issue “trainees going abroad” summarizing and comprehending all partners SWOT-contributions. The others will do analogue.

We then have a result for every work phase summarizing all partners’ realistic examinations.

GAP-analysis

The GAP-analysis will examine the space between the antipodes, i.e. in this case the GAP between S and W, as well as O and T. When having a closer look at the antagonistic parts the consortia partners will convey recommendations and/or conclusions how to channel weaknesses or turn them into strengths, and respectively how to avoid or at least channel threats into opportunities. Overall that means how to cope with the negative aspects like weaknesses and threats, since their positive aspect is, to know about them and to face yourself, why this is negative and how you overcome them.

For all analysis parts, the draft on page 5 makes the spheres more visible.

Results → Trainees, trainers, VET-centre-staff, VET-experts

On the following pages you will find all project partners’ specific analysis in the particular field.

Trainees going abroad – Formation PME

Strengths:

- New practical competences and qualification will be acquired during mobility process. They will learn new techniques, new ways of working and using tools they do not know or use in their home country.
- Contact with other languages and cultures – they learn to adapt themselves to a new cultural, linguistic and social environments and they learn of it. It is also good value for their European citizen identity.
- Exchange of experiences – for the apprentices going abroad, for the hosting and sending companies, for the hosting and sending training centres. Each learns from the other and finds new techniques, new tools, and new ways of functioning, which they can adapt to their home environment. Professionals of each country contribute to development, modernization of their

⁵ Actually it originates from the business sector, but is adapted here accordingly



training environment and promote transparency of their training systems thanks to this mutual learning.

Weaknesses:

- Hardly any knowledge about other countries / about Europe. Many students taking part in mobility projects never went abroad before and face fears of the unknown.
- Little time for trainees to dedicate themselves to preparatory measures due to other scholar schedules
- Few language skills written/spoken for general use

❖ Preparation

A very important factor is to prepare young people **before** going abroad for a mobility experience. If they are well prepared, it gives them better self-confidence and less fear.

Cultural and language preparation is a key point in favour of cultural shock and to help students to overcome cultural and linguistic obstacles. Good preparation is essential to the success of a mobility experience and must be at the heart of a good project. To explore their opportunities, beneficiaries must have access to the information, must know the different possibilities of funding and benefit from advice to orientate their choice and answer practical questions. They must have all explanations about the benefits of a project be more open, and they need to know that their mobility will have many positive outcomes. The recognition of their work experience abroad is crucial. Units of learning outcomes can be officially recognised with ECVET. Obviously, mobility experience will be even more successful and the students will be even more easily convinced of its interest, if mobility project is well prepared and managed.

Preparation must contain:

- **An information session** for the trainers / accompanying persons. In fact, it is needed that the trainers are prospectors for the mobility, in the sector where they work. Accompanying trainers are part of a dynamic team who promote the project to the students and accompany them. This information session gives all of them the necessary information to promote the project.
- **A first information session for the students** before the selection to inform them about the opportunity to take part in the project and about the project itself as well as about the distribution of the promotion documents and the motivation record. The information document contains all the strengths of the mobility but also practical information about our partners, the work experience program, the selection criteria, etc. It also includes the



mobility coach's number who will answer all the questions the student will ask himself, at any moment.

- **A second information session for the selected students** during which the project and partners will be presented more thoroughly with the destination, the program, the pedagogical objectives, the competence to acquire, etc. The students but also their family and the enterprise ought to be involved to show, where they are realising their work experience. So all are invited to this session.

❖ **Linguistic and cultural preparation:**

- Trainer = native speaker.
Program → daily language, cultural aspects, technical vocabulary. Compulsory course. For some professions, define some prerequisites. During the lessons, write his/her CV and a competences' summary. Use the tools made up during Europeans projects.
- The participants need to do an evaluation in the target language before the departure. This test will have two aims: be sure that the student has sufficient language skills and, after the mobility, highlight the progress made during the immersion.
- A first linguistic preparation session (32 hours of English or Italian e.g.) plus use of an appropriate IT-language tool will be organised, as the first acquired competence (see Virtual Mobility)
- A second cultural preparation session about the welcoming region and also about the specificities of the professional sector in this region. Linguistic and cultural preparations will be combined.
- A third information session about the practical arrangements (travel, stay abroad, insurance, detailed schedule, horary), and the administrative and financial aspects
- During the third session, there will be an explanation to the student about the implications of the entire projects' stakeholders, all the aspects of the work experience abroad, the objectives of the mobility, etc.

It is important that the student has some cultural knowledge about the host country as to be able to identify the cultural differences and to adapt himself more easily to open up to the others. (integration factor).

A trainer will (in English, during the linguistic preparation) give the students general information about the host country and about the region where the work experience will take place (cultural,



social and economic past). For their part, the students will do some personal research and then will share it with the group. All lessons will be performed in English. This preparation is a key moment during the mobility process, because it will allow the students to be involved in their mobility before the departure and to prepare it effectively.

The various topics will be linked to the specific characteristics of the country as, for example, the geography, the history, the political system, etc. There will also be an approach of the specificities of the daily life (transportation, opening hours, polite guidelines, etc.). Everything will concern the whole country but even more specifically the town where the students will stay.

On the other hand, it is necessary to prepare the students to live in an intercultural environment. The cultural preparation needs to enable the student to interact positively with culturally different people.

So, it is important to break our mono cultural positions during this preparation (stereotype for example). Then, acquire intercultural attitudes (identify differences and adapt). And finally, strengthen the transcultural skills.

Virtual Mobility:

Furthermore, internet and IT allow the students to prepare their stay abroad, to discover the host country and its culture and also the host institution, to create direct contacts → VIRTUAL MOBILITY.

They will use the virtual mobility, which is a valuable tool and allows the students to create new relationships and open up to new cultures and also offers opportunities to enhance the "physical" mobility.

- To stimulate the prior contact between host institution, enterprise and student, he/she will send his/her CV (with his professional competences) and a PowerPoint presentation of the enterprise where he/she works in his/her home country to the host institution and enterprise abroad.
- Discussion via skype, facebook or others social media with the trainees from the host centre about the tasks that will be realised during the work experience abroad (competences selected in the ECVET process)
- The student from the host country will make a presentation of their training centre and of the enterprise where the guest students will work.

Virtual Mobility will also be used during and after the mobility:



- Contacts with the students that stayed in the home country during the stay via the blog. They will explain what they have learned during the days, on the professional level but also on the personal and cultural level.
- When they come back, the students will present a PowerPoint presentation about their mobility experience. This presentation will be used in many ways: during the Open Day, in the centre's hall, sent to the student's employer, presented to the students who will do a mobility the next year (presentation and exchange about the mobility experience to create a desire to go abroad)

Opportunities

During SWOT analysis within the project period, partners defined opportunities linked to apprentices going abroad for mobilities.

- A) Because of mobilities, apprentices acquire new technical skills, linguistic competences but also social competences (relationship and intercultural)
During exchanges apprentices discover other ways of working and technical practices; they use new equipment and materials, different to the ones they use in their home country.
Cultural aspects are also very important for most apprentices; they discover another culture than their own. That kind of trip, for most of them, is a first experience abroad.
- B) Partners would like to raise quality and number of mobilities. REFORME network constitutes a facilitator frame for those exchanges, because representatives already know each other. Organized meetings by the network result in discussion and analysis of difficulties before, during and after mobility. Cooperation within REFORME network is crucial to improve quality of mobility projects.
- C) Mobilities are positive experiences and added value for apprentices but also for training centers organising it.

Threats:

- A) Difficulties linked to linguistic and cultural preparation of apprentices. Lack of time in mobility. Lack of time devoted to the focus of linguistic apprenticeships during mobility aimed to solve eventual comprehension problems.
- B) Welcoming conditions are bad, apprentices do not receive correct companionship or the necessary attention from the hosting organisation during the stay is not appropriate. As far as the sending organisation is concerned, lack of specific team in charge of preparation, information, guidance or logistic, legal and financial aspects, is a high difficulty.



- c) Benefits of mobility are not properly / sufficiently recognized by enterprises (SME) and because of that, company owners are reluctant to let the apprentices go for the time of the exchange.

Preparation

Good preparation is essential to insure a successful mobility and must be the heart of every project at linguistic level⁶ (with languages trainings), cultural preparation, pedagogical and logistic. Each training centre should choose a mobility coach in charge of preparation and who will be the contact person between all mobility actors.

Different tasks to be realised during preparation have to be defined prior to the mobility to assure an efficient coordination for the project. As an example, any sending organisation should pursue the following tasks:

- project's promotion
- recruitment and selection of the students
- linguistic and cultural preparation
- contacts with the partners
- bookings
- set up of the schedule (with the host centre)
- monitoring and tutoring during the mobility
- evaluation
- individual and global reporting

The hosting centre will take care of:

- welcoming of the trainees
- booking of some facilities abroad
- set up of the schedule (with the sending centre)
- theoretical training during the stay
- selection of the hosting companies
- cultural visits during the stay
- work experience evaluation

⁶ La préparation linguistique est développée en page x



Particular attention has to be put on the development of validated programmes by both partners integrating ECVET. This European prerogative will be useful for students' evaluation but also for mobility recognition.

Valorisation of mobilities:

Results dissemination is for all involved actors a very important recognition and will be conducted as follows:

- evaluation of the work experience and valorisation of the partnership with the partner schools
- dissemination in the local newspapers
- dissemination within the concerned training sections of the group's experience
- dissemination via articles in the company/training centre newspaper
- give "EUROTUTEUR" label to companies welcoming students

Reinforce mobilities within REFORME network

Partners of the network appreciate the opportunity to meet each other frequently via other European projects and that closeness could permit to develop new partnerships for mobilities. Preparatory visits could also be promoted within the network. Tools in favour of languages learning have been developed in previous projects (ABC Construction for example) and their using will be widespread. Discussion with the partners will have to go on during network meetings on difficulties, good practices, welcome opportunities, etc. The network provides with the opportunity to valorise good experiences. Information on mobilities (articles, pictures, etc.) could also be presented on the website of REFORME network → <http://www.reforme.org> .

Hosting trainees – FLC Asturias

The contributions of the consortia partners in the **2nd Work phase, hosting trainees**, addressed in the meeting in Stockholm in August 2012, enables the consortium to jointly gather an important amount of data with regard to the inbound exchanges of this specific target group.

In the previous meeting held in Liege, it was agreed that each partner would undertake a **SWOT analysis** and **survey** on Trainees / VET-centres / VET-schools and companies **hosting trainees from abroad** within the years 2008, 2009 and 2010, considering:

- the trainees themselves (education, character and other pre-requisites)
- the influence of the companies
- the influence of the VET-centres
- the influence of the VET-schools



- the influence of the families
- the knowledge, skills and competences of the trainees and the staff of VET-centres, VET-schools and companies, basically in terms of language prior to the exchange
- countries of origin of the trainees hosted, clearly differentiating along occupations, number of participants, language choice of the participants and previous cultural preparation.

In the meeting in Stockholm, each partner presented in detail the above information, including a **written SWOT analysis**, from the point of view of each hosting organisation, of the inbound transnational exchanges of trainees undertaken in the years previously referred to. This information, equally shared by each partner, enabled the elaboration of a catalogue, which we have detailed below, of **common Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats** related to the **hosting of trainees**. Furthermore, we have structured this **SWOT analysis** according to an **ABC analysis**, which entails highlighting the **three most important Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats** detected by all the partners. After outlining our SWOT and ABC analysis, we will convey, thanks to the **GAP analysis** undertaken, the **recommendations** and **coping measures** which we consider necessary to bridge or overcome the **gaps** between the Strengths and Weaknesses, as well as between the Opportunities and Threats.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- 1.) The partners of the *Linguistic REFORME* project have a **broad** and **practical experience** in the organisation and hosting of trainees from other countries, especially in the scope of the REFORME network.
- 2.) The partners have a close, direct and intense contact with companies, VET-schools, VET-centres in the construction sector, thus permitting a **practical internship, tailored** to the training needs of the apprentices, in a wide variety of **construction qualifications**. Some of the hosting organisations also have their own workshops, classrooms, equipment, tools, machinery, teaching materials, trainers, etc.
- 3.) The hosting partners usually have the opportunity to propose and choose the most suitable construction companies, VET-centres, VET-schools and the best period for the trainees to undertake their practical training.
- 4.) The hosting organisations directly receive the trainees and the accompanying staff (mobility coach or tutor) of the sending country and they collaborate in the logistic support of their accommodation (for example, in their own guest houses, in youth hostels, etc.), meals, and



transport services to the different work centres. The hosting partners also offer the participants a work space in the training centre for the coordination, orientation, mentoring, monitoring and follow-up of the trainees and, when necessary, for the undertaking of theoretical classes to reinforce the practical training received.

- 5.) Furthermore, the hosting organisations assign a tutor specialized in transnational exchanges and who closely collaborates on a daily basis with the mobility coach of the sending centre in the management and organisation of the internship of the trainees, which includes the following: contacting and meeting with the company owners before the hosting takes place in order to clearly define the learning objectives, accompanying the trainees to the companies or to the VET-centres / -schools on their arrival, accompanying them to the youth hostels, helping them buy bus tickets, preparation of cultural activities, offering the trainees a general preparation tailored to their specific needs as well as covering cultural, linguistic and safety aspects, etc.
- 6.) The tutor contacts with the companies during the entire practical internship in order to obtain a continuous feedback on the trainees' adaptation and their learning progress, helping to resolve all those incidents or problems which may occur during their stay. The tutor also assures that the trainees have the necessary equipment, tools, teaching materials and other relevant information concerning their stay in the hosting country.
- 7.) At the end of the stay, the hosting and sending organisations, through their tutors, undertake an objective assessment of the trainees' learning outcomes and certify the practical training received; FLC Asturias, for example, **certifies** the practical training by making use of **European tools** like **Europass Mobility**.

WEAKNESSES

- 1.) Trainees hosted from abroad usually have very few linguistic competences in foreign languages and a lack of cultural knowledge of the hosting country.
- 2.) Some of the trainees who participate for the first time in a transnational exchange in a foreign country with customs, traditions and a language different to theirs, sometimes experience fears, a lack of self-confidence, a lack of motivation, homesickness and other adaptation problems.
- 3.) In general, there is a lack of linguistic skills of the staff of the hosting organisations, especially of the trainers of the VET-centres / -schools and the owners and employees of the hosting construction companies.



- 4.) Sometimes it is difficult to find suitable companies for the hosted trainees; some companies are not aware of the benefits that they can obtain from participating in these exchange programmes.
- 5.) The hosting organisations do not always have sufficient resources (example, lack of human resources, time and financial support) to organise and prepare the exchanges, including the accompanying of the trainees during their entire stay.
- 6.) Occasionally, there is a lack of information about the visiting trainees and their previous and current stage of education / vocational training.
- 7.) Occasionally the objectives and aims of the internship are not achieved due to different reasons.
- 8.) Sometimes the hosting organisations do not have enough facilities in their guest houses to lodge all the trainees received.
- 9.) In general, the hosting partners do not have much experience in the application of **ECVET** processes in training mobility contexts: the learning programmes used in these contexts should be described in terms of **units of learning outcomes** in order to facilitate the assessment, validation and recognition of the training received at European levels.

OPPORTUNITIES

The consortium has jointly detected the following **opportunities** to improve the organisation, preparation and management of the **hosting of trainees**, as well as the number of these exchanges:

- 1.) The partners are aware that they have the **opportunity** to undertake measures to improve the **motivation** of their own trainees, giving them the following messages:
 - that participating in exchange activities in other countries is positive and desirable for their training and qualification because they have the opportunity to learn **new work techniques** and **methodologies related to their trades**.
 - that through these exchanges the trainees can acquire **new linguistic skills, intercultural competences** and even **increment their social skills by meeting new people**.
 - that other trainees like them have positively and satisfactorily participated in prior mobility activities and that they take pride of the competences acquired during their stay abroad.



- 2.) The partners have the opportunity to **divulge** their experiences with regard to the hosting of trainees from abroad, as well as the advantages and benefits obtained from the inter-cultural and social relationships with the host countries. The positive mouth-to-mouth propaganda enables not only the reinforcement of the existing relationships but also the arising of new contacts and partnerships with companies, VET-centres and VET-schools. The partners can also make use of the REFORME network website (www.reforme.org) to communicate and divulge the positive outcomes of their mobility activities and also to advertise the image of their own organisations.
- 3.) In order to improve the **quality of the hosting of trainees**, the partners can make use of the **REFORME network meetings** to jointly discuss and analyse the difficulties and problems faced before, during and after these exchanges have taken place. The close cooperation and mutual sharing of common experiences will permit us to propose coping measures to continuously improve not only the quality but also the number of transnational exchanges.
- 4.) The partners also have the opportunity to continue fostering the **acquisition and improvement of language and intercultural skills and competences** of all those who participate in transnational exchange programmes. This includes not only increasing the linguistic and cultural competences of the **trainees** but also of the **staff** of the hosting and sending organisations, especially of those directly implicated in the exchange project (e.g. tutors, coaches, trainers, teachers, etc.). The improvement of these competences will surely facilitate the exchanging of professionals, thus improving the quality and number of future mobility activities.

THREATS

The consortia partners, through their SWOT analysis, have detected as possible **threats**, in the **hosting of trainees**, the following:

- 1.) Misunderstandings between the participants due to **language** and **cultural differences**. These barriers can sometimes mean the failure of the entire exchange programme and it could also suppose a threat to future exchanges between the hosting and sending organisations.
- 2.) The lack of linguistic skills of the company owners and employees of the construction sector is sometimes an obstacle to finding companies for the trainees coming from abroad.



- 3.) The lack of linguistic and intercultural competences of the hosted trainees, as well as of the trainers / teachers of the participating VET-centres / VET-schools who can also be an important obstacle to the trainees' learning progress.
- 4.) During the hosting of trainees, the following threats related to the **organisational** and **logistical aspects** are sometimes detected among the partners:
- Accommodation problems; scarcity of guest house facilities; bad housing conditions; bad meals.
 - Inadequate transport services during the mobility stay.
 - Lack of communication between the organisers of the exchanges.
 - Insufficient monitoring and guidance of the trainees in the host organisation.
 - The lack of interest, compromise, diligence, punctuality, etc. of the mobility coach / tutor can lead to the failure of the whole exchange programme, taking into account that this professional plays a crucial role in the integration and participation of the trainees during the mobility period.
 - Failure of some of the principles of the exchange project.
 - Sometimes the practical training period may not be a success due to an inadequate programme of activities on the worksites of the companies, VET centres or VET schools.

ABC ANALYSIS

After having undertaken this SWOT analysis of the hosting of trainees, the partners have determined their **degree of importance**, highlighting the following **three most important Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**.

The 3 most important strengths:

- 1.) The partners of the *Linguistic REFORME* project have a **broad** and **practical experience** in the organisation and hosting of trainees from other countries, especially in the scope of the REFORME network.
- 2.) The partners have a close, direct and intense contact with companies, VET-schools, VET-centres in the construction sector, thus permitting a **practical internship, tailored** to the training needs of the apprentices, in a wide variety of **construction qualifications**. Some of the hosting organisations also have their own workshops, classrooms, equipment, tools, machinery, teaching materials, trainers, etc.



- 3.) The hosting organisations **directly receive** the **trainees** and the **accompanying staff** (mobility coach or tutor) of the sending country and they collaborate in the logistic support of their accommodation (for example, in their own guest houses, in youth hostels, etc.), meals, and transport services to the different work centres. The hosting partners also offer the participants a work space in the training centre for the coordination, orientation, mentoring, monitoring and follow-up of the trainees and, when necessary, for the undertaking of theoretical classes to reinforce the practical training received.

The 3 most important weaknesses:

- 1.) Trainees hosted from abroad usually have very few linguistic competences in foreign languages and a lack of cultural knowledge of the hosting country.
- 2.) In general, there is a lack of linguistic skills of the staff of the hosting organisations, especially of the trainers of the VET-centres / -schools and the owners and employees of the hosting construction companies.
- 3.) In general, the hosting partners do not have much experience in the application of **ECVET** processes in training mobility contexts, in order to facilitate the assessment, validation and recognition of the training received at European levels.

The 3 most important opportunities:

- 1.) The partners consider that the most important opportunity is to continue fostering the **acquisition and improvement of language and intercultural skills and competences** of all those who participate in transnational exchange programmes. This includes not only increasing the linguistic and cultural competences of the **trainees** but also of the **staff** of the hosting and sending organisations, especially of those directly implicated in the exchange project (e.g. tutors, coaches, trainers, teachers, etc.). The improvement of these competences will surely facilitate the exchanging of professionals, thus improving the quality and number of future mobility activities.
- 2.) To improve the **quality of the hosting of trainees**, the partners can make use of the **REFORME network meetings** to jointly discuss and analyse the difficulties and problems faced before, during and after these exchanges have taken place. The close cooperation and mutual sharing of common experiences will enable the partners to propose coping measures to continuously improve not only the quality but also the number of transnational exchanges.



- 3.) The partners are aware that they have the **opportunity** to undertake measures to improve the **motivation** of their own trainees and of the staff that participate in mobility activities (trainers, teachers, tutors, coaches, company owners and employees, etc.).

The 3 most important threats:

- 1.) Misunderstandings between the participants due to **language** and **cultural differences**. As we have already mentioned, these barriers can sometimes mean the failure of the entire exchange programme, also supposing a threat to future exchanges between the hosting and sending organisations.
- 2.) The lack of **linguistic skills** of all those who actively participate in mobility contexts (i.e. the trainees, owners and employees of the hosting companies, trainers, teachers, tutors, coaches of the participating VET-centres / VET-schools, etc.
- 3.) Threats related to the **organisational** and **logistical aspects** of the exchange programmes.

GAP-ANALYSIS

The **SWOT analysis** of this **2nd work phase** and the assessment of these **SWOT** in terms of their degree of importance, has permitted the partners to make the following **proposals, recommendations** and **conclusions** on how to cope with or avoid the weaknesses and threats surveyed and / or how to turn them into strengths and opportunities respectively. These recommendations could prove to be of great value for future activities or projects related to the **hosting of trainees**.

- 1.) Intensify the undertaking of **specific programmes** in order to foster the **acquisition** and **improvement of language and intercultural skills and competences** of all those who participate in transnational exchange projects (i.e. trainees, trainers, tutors, coaches, managers, company staff, etc.). These programmes could include **blended language or intercultural courses** directly aimed at the **specific needs** of each of these target groups, the use of **existing linguistic tools** developed within the REFORME network (“**Multilingual and Illustrated Dictionary on Construction**”, “**ABC of Construction**”, “**L`éventail du professionnel-Construction**”, the “**Construction Vocabulary Learning Platform**”, the “**Partition and Masonry Wall Simulator**”), the development of new, dynamic and interactive linguistic and intercultural tools, etc.
- 2.) Make the construction companies, VET-centres and VET-schools aware of the **importance** and **benefits** of hosting trainees from abroad. This can be done by sharing with them the



positive experiences and best practice models in the hosting of trainees of other companies and organisations. We have to divulge, for example through information campaigns, the positive idea that trainees do not only come to the hosting country to learn and to acquire new skills and competences, but also to actively participate in the production process and to share their knowledge of the work techniques and methods used in their country of origin. Furthermore, for the companies and / or for the VET-centres / -schools, having trainees from abroad can be very motivating for their own staff, managers, trainers, trainees, etc. because they have the opportunity not only to share their know-how and expertise with these apprentices but also to acquire or improve their language, social, intercultural and leadership skills.

- 3.) In order to increase the **number of mobility activities** as well as their **quality**, it is necessary to undertake measures directly aimed at improving the **motivation** of the **trainees** and to reduce their fears and lack of self-confidence when it comes to participating in exchange programmes. As we have already specified in detail when addressing this issue, we have to transmit the message, especially through other trainees who have positively undertaken their internship abroad, that these mobility activities are important for their **qualification** and for the acquisition of other competences (linguistic, intercultural, social skills, etc.) that are highly valued by the companies which will contract them in the future in their own countries or in other countries.
- 4.) Promote the application of **ECVET processes** in training mobility contexts in order to improve the **evaluation** and **recognition** of the **apprentices' learning progress**. The learning programmes used in mobility contexts should be described in terms of **units of learning outcomes** in order to facilitate their assessment, validation and recognition at a European level. The definition of the **units of learning outcomes** should not only describe the **professional but also the personal competences** to be achieved during the practical training.
- 5.) The partners are aware that the success of an exchange programme largely depends on the compromise, diligence, intercultural, linguistic and leadership skills, etc. of the **mobility coach / tutor**. Considering that this professional usually is the key to achieving an active participation and a positive adaptation of the trainees during their mobility period, it could be very important for each hosting and sending partner to assign, when possible, someone from within the organisation with the adequate skills to always take charge of the preparation and logistical organisation of the exchange programmes, as well as to undertake the monitoring, guidance, accompanying and evaluation of the trainees and of the quality of the overall training period. This could improve future exchange projects (including the logistical aspects such as accommodation, transport, etc.), permitting a



common scenario of assurance and development of quality standards. The tutor / mobility coach can also be crucial for the enhancement of the communication and collaboration between the participating partners, reducing possible misunderstandings during the mobility.

Trainers/staff going abroad – CENFIC

PME Formation never organized mobility for STAFF including trainers and technical staff. The SWOT analysis was based on the experience of mobility of a group of trainers from another center of IFAPME.

For a week, a group of six construction industry and public works trainers were part of a mobility project in France. There had been visits to a number of companies in the French construction industry and public works as well as exchange experiences on new techniques; new materials were selected as some of the strengths.

Even though PME Formation did not organize some mobility for trainers, it was selected as weaknesses in its analysis, the lack of motivation of trainers in learning other languages. Taking advantage of the participation in this project, Formation PME found the opportunity to launch the mobility group of trainers in the near future.

When not having an easy availability of trainers for a week due to his/her daily occupation, at this point that is a threat for the realization of mobilities.

CENFIC based its analysis on the mobility of trainers, which took place in Zurich / Switzerland in a Training Centre in Sursee.

A course for trainers was integrated in the Portuguese / Swiss project, which has been realised between 30th of August through 24th September 2010. With a total of 160 hours, it addressed the following topics:

- opening trenching
- planking
- plumbing
- masonry
- screeds
- coatings
- reinforced concrete
- formwork
- iron armor



The Portuguese / Swiss project was established on 28th February 1992, between these two countries; so it is a lasting experience throughout many years. The project aims are mainly conducting courses in Portugal for Portuguese workers in Switzerland. Promoting improved the construction techniques in this country.

The funding of the project is in charge of Swiss entities of Construction and Public Works, one of them is the *Société Suisse des Entrepreneurs - Zurich (SSE)*".

Some important strengths in the analysis are:

- exchange of experiences
- learning other techniques
- knowledge of other materials
- knowledge of other cultural and social habits
- team spirit
- different mealtimes and the different food

Weakness:

- difficulty in understanding the German language

Opportunities:

- acquisition of practical and theoretical knowledge to provide training courses in Portugal
- getting to know other cultures
- meeting other countries in the field of vocational training
- exploration of a new labor market
- making new friends

Threats:

- difficulty of getting in touch with the Swiss population due to communication problems
- lack of studying the host country prior to the visit

BZB Krefeld has sent 14 trainers abroad in the last 5 years; 9 took part in 4 weeks courses in Ethiopia, Mongolia and Sierra Leone for training of trainers, 5 were accompanying in mobility contexts for about 3 weeks in Italy.



From these experiences, BZB highlighted some major strengths and weaknesses, which were supported in the trainers' feedback and reports.

Strengths:

- the trainers emphasized the fact of having new experiences which enable them to:
 - o improve practical and cultural competences
 - o enrich their general English skills
 - o support them in the regular further education

Weakness:

- mainly related to the difficulties adapting foreign language (English or other, from the host Country) and to a new culture and habits.

BYN's analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of mobility projects was based on interviews done to 3 VET-centres with experience in mobility projects for trainers. The interviews focused mainly on the interest of trainers in mobility projects, preparation of trainers for those projects and outcomes and evaluated experiences.

From their answers, BYN could highlight the strengths, opportunities and threats of mobilities.

Strengths:

- real development of competencies among staff
- participants experience
- personal development and inspiration for his/her work at home
- teachers' higher competence and inspiration creates better learning environment for students

Opportunity:

- mobility projects are best practice examples to influence managers and directors at schools and companies to support the continuation of such projects

Threat:

- limited economic budgets

FLC Asturias has based its analysis on the mobilities, which have taken place in 2010 and 2011:

44 construction managers and 11 VET professionals visited other countries. The host countries were Italy (Rome): visits of some buildings and participation in a transnational seminar. Visit to



Germany (Cologne): visit of venues/premises about *Energy Saving Building Technologies* like *Passive House* and *Low Energy House Technologies* and *First Centre of Competence for Energy and Renewable Energy* in Münster; Etrium / Ecofys is a passive house office building and an example of the Introduction to energetic modernization of multifamily residences (Friedrich-Karl-Höfe in Cologne). Another visit has been realized to Portugal (Lisbon) at the *EuroSkills – Lisbon 2010*.

Trainers spent of around one week abroad and all of them received a language and cultural preparation of 70 hours of English language in blended learning mode.

Highlights are three points in the SWOT analysis done by FLC Asturias, namely:

- Strength – FLC Asturias works together with its European REFORME partners on improving the quality of their mutual training mobility projects.
- Weakness – Host partners should guarantee that the activities taken place at work are related with the competences to be acquired by the professionals abroad.
- Opportunity – FLC Asturias applies periodically to the European Programs Calls for mobility projects. It also participates in European projects aimed to develop the Quality of the training mobility.

Hosting trainers/staff – BYN

Sharing knowledge

When it comes to receiving trainers and staff it is very important to have in mind that visitors have different experience of for example how to handle modern equipment and knowledge about technical standards. Also the expectations in what to learn during the visit and requirements vary from one specific group to another.

If an organization is in a context with high level of standards at staff, it will probably get the opportunity to host visiting groups, who are heading to learn from the hosting organisation. This gives the host an opportunity to spread knowledge to others which is over all supporting the construction sector. Increased knowledge and a higher status of the different professions in construction, such as teachers, tutors, management and staff, improve quality in building. This will be achieved through a smaller gap between countries and organizations.

Are there any risks in this mission to spread knowledge and reduce the gap? In case the visitors are expected to handle equipment, they have never used before, there will be a situation, where one has to put in a lot of effort to get them going safe and competent. On the other hand, if the



visitors have had very high expectations that will not will fulfilled, the mobility project will be experienced as quite unsuccessful.

To meet the challenge between having a successful and an unsuccessful hosting situation, there are some issues to consider already in the phase of planning. Clarify the expectations from both sides - visiting and hosting organization. What does the host intend to learn during the visit, what is the host interested to show, topics for discussion in workshops, study visits, work site practice etc.? And of course the counterparts: what are the expectations of the visitors? The more of a matching situation you could reach between the organizations, the better.

It is also of interest to find some space in the agenda for letting trainers, staff and managers meet their colleagues from the other country to discuss their certain matters in their daily work to increase their own competence.

Hosting at a training center

The visits will be performed in different ways. If it is taking place at a training center, it will probably be easier to organize. It will be easier to control the activities and carry out workshops, organize the hosting teachers and staff etc. A teacher can make up a plan for the visitors to take part in a certain lesson that will be of interest for the visitors. All of this together makes it more convenient to host a visit. Upon that, if the visit will be located at a work site, there is less control and it can even disrupt the production of the company.

If this increases the number of mobility projects, it will be fine, but on the other hand, there will be a weakness in the visit, if you are not able to meet the “reality” and meet the men and women whose are particularly working in the sector. As a part of an educating organization it is always important to have knowledge about what the students will meet when they finish school. An exchange with the industrial life gives quality into the education. If the visit is limited to take place only at the training center there will be a lack of important parts.

To meet the companies and arrange some activities on a work site, from the hosts there have to be early preparations and planning for the visit. Hosts should put effort in organizing the agenda where visitors can meet companies and work sites. It is quite important to communicate with the companies about the visitors and the expectations.

The language issue

Hosting trainers and staff most probably involves using another language than one’s native language. Using another language when holding a presentation, discussing different topics etc. will



most probably enhance the language skills or motivate to learn more. It can also widen peoples' understanding of each others' cultures and working processes.

It will be a weakness to be forced to use another language, if you do not understand or speak the actual language fluently. There might occur misunderstandings in the communication and it takes a long time before the messages from both sides are completed and really understood. Over all the experience of the hosting/visiting partner can be affected in a negative way.

To overcome such problems and disappointments it might be a good idea to make preparations before the visitors arrive. First step is to decide that everyone is willing to try and challenge themselves. If there is an opportunity to get some lessons and practices in the actual language, it will be even better. Another step could be to get so much information from the visitors about their language skills and other important conditions, and pass that information on to the hosting staff. It is valuable to arrange the visit in smaller groups. In smaller groups it is easier and quicker to break down barriers and get to know each other which seems to ease up the communication in another language.

Resume / conclusions – BZB Krefeld

Over the period of two years and an intense dealing with the issue of mutual-cross-border professional exchanges of various groups of people, plenty of details have come up, which might be interpreted in this or that way. The perception of the coordinating unit – BZB Krefeld – and the project partners is presented hereafter and is thus handed out for discussions and considerations; not only within the REFORME-network, but among all interested stakeholders.

When also following the analysis methods, which have been adapted by all project partners during the project life cycle, we will present here a concluding SWOT-, GAP- and also ABC-analysis of perceptions, claims and recommendations for future activities to be regarded as measures and emphatic actions to intensify the engagement for transborder mobilities in professional contexts.

Considering REFORME as a lasting VET-network there is a strong base of mutual trust. All network partners have numerous and sustainable contacts to a vast number of SMEs in the construction sector throughout Europe. Each partner owns or has access to modern facilities, i.e. workshops, classrooms, guest houses, etc.

At the same time there is a crucial lack of language skills at all levels, mainly trainees and trainers, as well as a scarcity of intercultural skills due to certain reasons.⁷ Often there is a change of staff,

⁷ The project presentations provide with a more detailed analysis of that.



which stands as an obstacle for continuity, when it comes to organization of mobilities.⁸ The different consciousness of the (mostly younger) trainees and the (mostly older) trainers focussing on the mobility, including preparation and post-processing, is quite hindering obviously; as the older ones are more mature, they are the ones to move towards the younger ones.

REFORME partners, but also other third parties have to be even more aware, that the raising of motivation at the target groups for mobilities is crucial. As we address young people in most cases, i.e. digital natives, the VET-centres are to involve more “modern” techniques to reach the people; a classical approach will not work any more. Install anybody with continuous responsibility to benefit from synergies when accompanying the entire administration process; some partners made excellent experiences with “mobility coaches”.

Stakeholders in transnational professional mobilities will definitely lose the game, if they stay on the path of traditional approaches in exchange measures. Not leaving the opportunity to certify the foreign internship and the gained competences with ECVET credits will be another minus in that process. And not least: be aware of your companies (often SMEs)! SMEs are the base for recruitment of the target groups for exchanges.

Summarizing the before mentioned selected Strengths and Weaknesses as well as the Opportunities and Threats the project *Linguistic REFORME* recommends:

- take measures to motivate the target groups (trainees, trainers, VET-centres and companies) on their specific field of action; pick them up from where they are and not from your point of perception!
- Integrate “new media” and “social media” at all stages of the process; the traditional way will not work any more; classical features are present
- Go on with language and cultural training, but adapt it to modern/social media standards

Eventually this leads to a development to bridge all these gaps in form of a comprehensive new approach in REFORME, which could be a project like *SoMEx – Social Media in Exchanges*, where all the presented and considered features might be involved in and brings the transborder professional mobilities in the construction sector to an updated quality and thus a higher number of participants.

⁸ Sustainable and lasting contacts are base for mutual understanding and living of contexts and thus stand as a quality feature in professional exchanges



BZB

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Attachments

Appendix A): SWOT-analysis

Appendix B): figures of recent mobilities of trainees, trainers, staff, VET-experts



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