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UK CORVET Reflection Report 2013 Italy Workshop

Reflections

The UK Team (Christine, Pao and Rajesh) at European Learning network Ltd (ELN) had the pleasure of participating in the Italian Workshop IV focusing on CORVET - The Common Approach and Survey Results.

We arrived on Monday 22 March 2013, delayed slightly enroute due to trains from Bologna and reached the venue just as the afternoon workshop had started. Our partners from Germany, Italy and Turkey all came out to greet us enthusiastically and the welcome was a pleasant surprise as the shaking of hands and hugs started on the road outside the venue! With pleasantries set aside we settled in grabbing our coffees and drinks for the introduction to the workshop by our great coordinator Dr. Marc Buetner who always manages to accommodate everyone in the discussions making the CORVET project a most inclusive of all events that the team from ELN has experienced among all its projects so far.

Later it was the turn of the partners to give their short presentations of Chances and Problems in Career Orientation in their respective countries. From UK, Career Orientation popularly known as Career Education, Information And Guidance (CEIAG) was shared with the partners and how CEIAG has become very important considering the closures of Connexions network and reduction in Career Education across many state schools and colleges. The UK view is supported and encouraged by many studies and the ongoing debates on CEIAG such as Leitch Review (2009), STEM Audit (2010), Wolf report (2011), and various media surveys e.g. Guardian Education (2012). From all these various studies and reports it is clear that the employers in UK are looking for skills that only VET could provide and therefore its importance cannot be avoided, though the current government and all the past governments have used education as a political agenda rather than the benefit for the nation. Employers in UK clearly want:

- Business Focus
- Taking responsibility
- Motivation and resilience
- Continuing Learning
- Building relationships



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

- Communicating
- Problem Solving
- Organising and delivery quality
- Acting with Integrity

which can only be achieved by a robust VET supported by a comprehensive CEIAG within the education system. Key drivers for the change were explained and the roles schools need to play in CEIAG in their institutions and how they manage career aspirations of their learners. While cost-cutting and austerity measures from the government has had its impact on career services across UK, there are pockets of excellent examples where career orientation is given emphasis and where the learners achieve their full potential, especially in regions where Connexions networks have been saved or strengthened through collaborations and partnerships e.g. Central London Connexions (CLC) made up of nine London boroughs.

In Italy, Career Orientation may be divided into two distinct stages:

- Last years of middle school (age 13/14)
- Secondary school orientation (age 17-19)

The secondary stage includes “Licei”, “Technical” and “Vocational” education sectors where the services of a psychologist are made available to learners and guide them along their career paths. In all these institutions, Career Orientation takes the form of Open Days, Conferences, and visits by professional speakers. Learners are also offered online support and all partners agreed that there were similarities of such approaches in their own countries.

Turkey has had to deal with a number of changes in its education system as the government grapples the issues of catching up with Europe and its own ascension to the EU. As of September 2012, turkey implemented the 4+4+4 system matching many of its counterparts in Europe offering 12 years of compulsory education. At the end of their 8th grade, students across Turkey take the stringent SBS examinations which decides the type of schools they can attend and hence the beginning of their career path. Depending upon their results in SBS examinations learners can choose from:

- General High School
- Vocational School
- Anatolian High School
- Science High School

It would seem that once the results of the SBS are out, learners are stuck with their choices and are not able to transfer “concepts, abilities and skills” from a general academic course to the world of work. Besides this prescribed curriculum, school managers lack the autonomy to adapt to the changing needs of the Labour markets and what the employers demand; very much similar to the prescribed National Curriculum concept in UK where schools have to follow the political agenda rather than meet the needs of the learners. In Turkey, as in Italy and UK, there is a need for flexible education system that integrates formal and non-formal learning pathways built around



a broader curriculum that takes into account learners' needs of basic skills and knowledge.

At the end of the first day, the participants were treated to a lovely tour of Modena city centre and dinner at a typical Modenese restaurant serving their local delicacies. The partners were pleasantly surprised that this was hosted by the Italian partner ISCOM.

The next day, results of the survey were shared by the German partners Dr. Marc Beutner and Rasmus Pechuel. There were many similarities among partners and for some e.g. Italy and UK funding has become an issue and career orientation is affected at all levels including the delivery point. However, as in UK the Italian educators did their best to give the future generations as much as they could to keep their learners as competitive as possible in the global market place.

There was a resounding response from learners and teachers and trainers where 87.9% gave a very high level of importance to Career Education and Orientation within schools and colleges prior to transition to work. Another 87.7% of learners said they needed general information about job opportunities and future career prospects delivered in schools and colleges to be able to make sound decisions. These learners also thought that this information should come from their teachers and trainers within the school education system. It would seem that the findings of several studies in UK (Leitch, 2009; STEM, 2010; Wolf 2011) are in alignment to the results of our Europe-wide survey (Germany, UK, Italy and Turkey) within the partnership which indicate a need for a better, coordinated Career Orientation at the point of delivery.

Visit to the Vocational School founded by the car giant Ferrari group in Maranello and another in Modena also confirmed the need for a coordinated Career Orientation if Europe should stay ahead in the skills gap with emerging regions such as Asia. Learners in their group meeting also concluded that free learning opportunities are important when choosing a career path. They felt that career choices matching their skills and personal competencies were important and that teachers in schools and colleges ought to be able to guide the future generations in the right directions armed with appropriate knowledge. On the other hand, the survey revealed that teachers felt they needed more data and information to be able to guide their learners in the right direction when choosing a career. The evening was kept free for participants to explore more of the lovely city of Modena.

The following day Dr. Marc Buetner emphasised on the need to prepare papers for each country so that these could be published and disseminated to a wider audience. "A Common Approach to Career Orientation" was discussed with a possibility of applying for new projects and developing other ideas such as a Transfer of Innovation programme so the results could be shared among more countries within the EU27 membership. These ideas, it was agreed, would be discussed further during the final meeting in Paderborn, Germany.

