

REPORT of the ECVET Tour II workshop

16th April 2013

Venue

- Private Hotel Academy HOST, Riazanská 75, 831 03 Bratislava

Aim of the workshop

ECVET Tour II workshop was a part of the project ECVET Tour II (Transfer of VET innovation in the field of gastronomy and hotel management).

The workshop served to identify key knowledge/skills/competencies that are relevant for classifications of a cook and a receptionist. Competence matrices describing all levels of general competence areas of both qualifications have been used for this aim.

Workshop's objectives were as follows:

1) To evaluate the competence matrices

- To answer questions like: *"Are the competence areas sufficiently described? Can they be used for Slovak vocational education and practice in these fields? Are there any competence areas missing? ", etc.*

Note: Competence areas reflect the key activities in daily work of a cook/receptionist (not necessarily the curricula or State educational programme).

- To evaluate whether individual competence areas include all levels of competence development during the study.
- To determine whether a particular level of competence development adequately describe the process of development of a concrete competence and relative difference between following levels.

2) To identify specific learning unit of each profession usable for student mobilities

3) To create a space for discussion and cooperation among workshop participants - networking

- Schools, employers, social partners and organizers of the project

Workshop participants

The workshop was attended by 23 participants.

The participants - Representatives of participating schools:

- Alžbeta Štefančíková (Head teacher of vocational education, Secondary Vocational School Stará Ľubovňa)
- Katarína Ondrejková (Teacher of english language and vocational subjects, Secondary Vocational School Stará Ľubovňa)
- Miroslav Knap (Deputy Director for practical training, Secondary Vocational School Stará Ľubovňa)
- Michal Stašenko (Deputy Director for theoretical education, Secondary Vocational School Stará Ľubovňa)
- Soňa Bočáková (Executive Director, Private Hotel Academy HOST, Bratislava)

Transfer of VET innovation in the field of gastronomy and hotel management

- Eva Hrdá (Teacher of informatics subjects, Private Hotel Academy HOST, Bratislava)
- Edita Antalková (Teacher of vocational subjects – hotel and gastronomy management, Private Hotel Academy HOST, Bratislava)
- Jana Kosírová (Teacher of vocational subjects – services in tourism, Private Hotel Academy HOST, Bratislava)
- Jana Maslová (Teacher of vocational subjects – cook, Private Hotel Academy HOST, Bratislava)
- Iveta Stavrovská (Deputy Director, Private Hotel Academy HOST, Bratislava)

The participants - Representatives of employers/social partners:

- Zdeno Michálek (Chef, Restaurant of Bratislava Hotel; <http://www.hotelbratislava.sk/>)
- Daniel Hrivňák (Chef, Aucafe Restaurant, Bratislava; <http://www.au-cafe.sk/>)
- Josephine Swift (HR manager, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Bratislava)
- Zuzana Dúžeková (General secretary, Slovak Association of Cooks and Pastry Cooks)
- Darina Valentovičová (Head of reception, ÚVS Bratislava; <http://www.uvs.sk/>)

The participants - Representatives of the project partners:

- Barbara Buchsbaum (SMC)
- Monika Auzinger (3s Research Laboratory)
- Hana Erlebachová (EDUcentrum)
- Vladimír Benko (APEL)
- Dana Kršáková (APEL)
- Michal Ivantyšyn (APEL)
- Ladislav Šatka (APEL/ŠIOV)
- Dagmar Václaviková (APEL)

Other personnel

- Alexandra Nováková (interpretation/Preklady MH s.r.o.)

Workshop Programme

Time	Duration		
7:30	25min.	Registration of participants	
8:00	20 min.	Project ECVET Tour II	APEL (Michal Ivantyšyn)
	5 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcoming of participants - Introduction of the project and its partners 	
	15 min.	Introduction of workshop participants	Workshop participants
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief introduction of workshop participants 	
8:20	75 min.	ECVET system and competence matrices for the professions of COOK and RECEPTIONIST	
	10 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction into the ECVET problematics - Best practices examples – Slovak ECVET projects 	ŠIOV (Ladislav Šatka)

Transfer of VET innovation in the field of gastronomy and hotel management

	30 min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction of two competence matrices for the professions of COOK and RECEPTIONIST 	3s (Monika Auzinger) SMC (Barbara Buchsbaum)
	5 min.	<p>What are the needs of employers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A short summary of a phone survey about the needs of employers in the professions of a cook and a receptionist in practice 	APEL (Michal Ivantyšin)
	30 min.	<p>DISCUSSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employers about competence matrices (feedback to the presented matrices) 	
9:35	20 min.	Coffee-break	
9:55	125 min.	<p>Competence matrix - COOK</p>	
	5 min.	<p>Results of EDUcenter's workshop in the Czech republic – view of schools and experts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feedback of Czech schools and experts on the competence matrix of Cook 	EDUcentrum (Hana Erlebachová)
	90 min.	<p>Competence matrix - Cook</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - active work with the competence matrix - open discussion 	3s (Monika Auzinger) SMC (Barbara Buchsbaum) and all workshop participants
	30 min.	<p>Final summary/Networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a summary of workshop results, determining of next steps and tasks, future deadlines, etc. 	APEL (Vladimír Benko, Dagmar Václaviková), participating schools, project partners
12:00	45 min.	Obed	
12:45	120 min.	<p>Competence matrix – RECEPTIONIST</p>	
	90 min.	<p>Competence matrix - Receptionist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - active work with the competence matrix - open discussion 	3s (Monika Auzinger) SMC (Barbara Buchsbaum) and all workshop participants
	30 min.	<p>Final summary/Networking</p>	APEL (Vladimír Benko,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a summary of workshop results, determining of next steps and tasks, future deadlines, etc. 	Dagmar Václaviková), participating schools, project partners
--	--	--	--

The course of the workshop

In the introduction of this workshop its presenter (Dagmar Václaviková, APEL) welcomed the participants and introduced the aim and agenda of the workshop, emphasized the necessity of asking questions - especially in relation to the work with competence matrices and gave participants basic organizational aspects of the event.

Subsequently she invited the statutory representative of APEL (Michal Ivantýšyn) and its project partners to present basic information about the ECVET Tour II project.

After this part, participants were asked to introduce themselves, in order to know each other and to get an idea about main activities of present schools. The presentation of Austrian partners followed with aim to explain the competence matrices - what do they serve for, how to work with them, and how to properly understand their design. The original Austrian project was also introduced in detail, since the ECVET Tour II project is based on it. In this way, participants have got to know a deeper connection between the projects and the reason for using presented competence matrices.

After this introduction, presentation about the results of a telephone survey among employers from hotels and restaurants for both qualifications (cook and receptionist) followed. The main aim of this survey was to obtain an objective view from employers on the competences of graduates in practice in order to provide the image of real situation on the labor market in the sector of cooks and receptionists to the participating schools.

Survey among employers pointed out these facts:

- the vast of majority of employers cooperate with school in the profession of a cook (74% of respondents); in the profession of a receptionist it is 7% of respondents
- average rate given by the employers related to students' readiness to practical work was 3 out of 5 (for both professions);
- according employers, students (in both professions) are *not used to work, neither flexible, they have only small interest for the chosen profession – lot of expectations but small desire to work actually, they are not ready for practice, they can't work independently and have problems with communication in foreign languages;*
- recommendations from employers are more practice lessons for both professions;
- recommendations from employers **for receptionists** – *to learn more about reservation systems and improve communication skills in foreign languages and also interaction with clients;*
- recommendations from employers **for cooks** – *to get theoretical basics of cooking, to learn how to zest food, to be creative and flexible, to get to know modern trends and news in gastronomy and to learn how to be independent in work*

The survey was followed by a lead discussion of workshop participants - representatives of employers vs. representatives of schools.

Results of the discussion:

1.) Lack of practice

As the biggest problem according to the employers a lack of practice in schools was identified. From a group of 35 graduates, employers would choose to employ potentially only one. In other words - one, maybe two seniors are usable in practice.

According to the representative of the Slovak Association of Cooks and Pastry Cooks, the problem has broader roots. Even at ministry level, gastronomy didn't have a lot of attention for many years.

2.) Foreign language skills weakness

Employers often asked how students can work abroad, if they can't communicate in other language good enough on the basic practical level at least? Several representatives of employers agreed that much depends on approach of students themselves - *"some of them work on themselves and are good, others are not."*

3.) Behavior of students towards clients – not interactive

Some workshop participants mentioned that some graduates have the *"charm of prison guards"* which implies that the person at the reception should be definitely trained how to interact with people, how to deal with stressful situations and how to pleasantly communicate with clients. It is a sad fact that these people are often very impersonal (and so is the first contact with a customer). The result of this behavior is *"decreasing and worsening of overall impression of the restaurant/hotel."*

However, *"we need to see the bigger picture, it can not be generalized."*

Ms. Swift (Crowne Plaza Hotel) also commented that they would prefer to have the third or fourth graders (certainly not younger students) on practice, because younger students are still "only" children, and so it is very difficult to work with them seriously.

4.) Teachers of vocational practice – not up to date practices

Representatives of employers see also a problem in teachers of vocational practice, who often teach a 20-year-old practices and do not develop their own knowledge. Positive information in this regard gave the Slovak Association of Cooks and Pastry Cooks - several schools have contacted them with the requirement of learning and informing their practice teachers about new trends in gastronomy.

Many employers are convinced that schools/teachers should cooperate with restaurants' chefs. *"This is indeed happening today, but not as much as in the past... and even practice teachers can't substitute chefs with years of experience."*

Another important thing is the presence of vocational practice teachers on the practice in hotels/restaurants for the whole day which leads to a strong interaction between hotels, schools, and students.

5.) State educational programme - rigid

According to the schools, problems with lack of students' experiences (among other things) *"belongs to a society as a whole. A lot of demands fall on teachers in terms of paper work/administration."*

There are often changes in the State educational programme which have to be incorporated in school curricula each and every time. Also *"State educational programme provides the exact number of hours of practice,"* which is often not enough.

Ms. Bocakova, Private Hotel Academy HOST in Bratislava: *"Our students who have practice in travel agencies are really well prepared and can immediately work with reservation software. However, this is only due to a hard work of teachers, who teach at the expenses of their private time with own families."*

Regarding languages - there is a similar problem connected to testing of students. *"They can receive a high school diploma only after achieving a certain score on grammar tests. Therefore, communication skills are not sufficient. "*

6.) Motivation of students

Also results of the survey mentioned this problem – small motivation of students to work not only on the practice but after graduation as well. Some schools try to motivate students with some kind of "pocket money". Some amount of this symbolic money is given to hard-working students after their practice in a hotel or a restaurant. However, employers see problems there. In Bratislava it can be a good way how to motivate students but in other regions of Slovakia it can be a big problem due to a social situation.

Sometimes another reason for lack of motivation can be *"replacing regular employees by students on practice"*. This way, a really bad work environment is created which does not help either party.

Another point of view: *"Why should I pay to the student who does not want to work? I just want to hear from them (after compulsory hours of practice) – "Could I remain here a little bit longer?" or "I want to learn more."*

Unfortunately, this happens only few times a year – students rather go home immediately than work and learn something more. On the other hand, here is also a positive feedback: *"We participated in a competition at the very last minute with one really clever and good student. Paradoxically, he became the absolute winner of the competition after(only four hours preparation with the chef. "*

This all only proves that the individual approach is one of the key interests which both parties should work on.

7.) Foreign interships

For all reasons mentioned above, the participants believe that foreign interships are very beneficial for students. Not only because of possibility to improve their communication (foreign language) skills, but especially because of possibility to know the different approach to work and work discipline.

After the discussion the results of the workshop in the Czech Republic were presented as follows:

- Competence matrices for professions of a cook and a receptionist provided by the Austrian partners are usable for Czech school/educational environment
- Secondary Hotel and Gastronomy School from Prague, Hotel School Poděbrady and Secondary School from České Budějovice confirmed their interest to participate on the ECVET Tour II project

Consequently, participants started to work with competence matrices Cook/Receptionist. Two mixed groups of representatives of employers, representatives of schools and the Austrian partners were created.

For both matrices, the participants had to answer following questions:

1. Does the matrix include the relevant competence areas? Is there any competence area missing?
2. Does the matrix include the relevant steps of competence development for each competence area? Are there any steps of competence development missing?
3. Would you consider the amount of detail and precision ('granularity') in the matrix appropriate?
4. Is the scope of the individual steps of competence development appropriate? Are any steps of competence development too broad, or too narrow?
5. Are the competences consistently written in relation to the work process and always align with the core work tasks within this particular occupational field?
6. Do the descriptions of the steps of competence development show a clear progression on horizontal level (from left to right)?
7. Do the descriptions sufficiently include examples so as to provide necessary information to characterize the work context (level of demand of a work task) and the different competence levels (to fulfill these work tasks)?
8. Training providers: Would you be able to use this matrix to develop an organizational profile of the relevant VET (vocational education and training) programme provided at your school/training institution?
9. Training providers: Would you consider the competence matrix and organizational profile as feasible tools for the organization and preparation of student/trainee mobilities?

Working with the competence matrices proceeded without major problems. Groups of participants compared their views and responses to individual questions presented above.

The result of this interactive group work are modified competence matrices, which are annexed to this report. All changes were agreed by all workshop participants. Preliminary proposals of specific learning units, which can be used in project mobilities, have been talked about.

The proposal for the profession of a receptionist is to learn more about the reservation systems (software). The proposal for the profession of a cook is preparing of all kind of regional dishes.

Final summary of the workshop

In conclusion, all involved parties evaluated the workshop of the ECVET Tour II project very positively.

The workshop achieved participation of all relevant parties - representatives of academic sector, employers and other social partners - the State Institute of Vocational Education and the Slovak Association of Cooks and Pastry Cooks .

The workshop program was carried out according to the planned agenda. Very dynamic and interactive part was (to the satisfaction of all involved) an open discussion about the needs of employers, which actively engaged not only the representatives of employers, but also the representatives of participating

schools. We believe that both sides of this discussion have achieved valuable information for their future work.

Based on the work of participants, we can conclude that the Austrian graduates of vocational schools are much better prepared for practice than Slovak students. This fact was especially visible during the work with the competence matrices. The work with the competence matrices served greatly to identify a difference between the needs of employers in practice and a reality of educational process in schools generally.

Employers, as well as schools, expressed a positive attitude towards their eventual use of matrices. All participants agreed that after a minor adjustments on presented matrices, they could imagine to work with them even at their institutions. Schools can imagine to change some parts of their curricula according to this matrices and employers see these matrices as a feasible tool for preparation of student vocational practice mobilities.

Final conclusions of the workshop based on the workshop objectives are:

- 1a.) Provided competence matrices were accepted by all workshop participants as a good and usable tool for modification their working environment and approaches.
- 1b.) Competence matrices will be modified according to the comments from the workshop participants and sent for a final approval to all workshop participants.
- 2.) Schools were asked to determine (to confirm) specific learning units in which they would like to organize mobility activities and which they can offer to foreign schools participating on the project.
- 3.) Networking – the workshop participants appreciated the opportunity to talk and interact freely with the other involved parties. They would be really glad to find another platforms like this to solve long-terms problems in gastronomy and hotel management sector.

The workshop was closed by heartfelt thanks to all participants for their time and willingness to participate and especially for valuable information which they brought to the ECVET Tour II project.

Annexes:

1. *Modified competence matrix COOK*
2. *Modified competence matrix RECEPTIONIST*
3. *Materials for participants (presentation)*
4. *Photodocumentation*