

**VT<sub>e</sub>COACH - Competences assessment and improvement tool for VET  
learners and teachers for new working demands**

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**WP3- Transference of VETWORKS Project Results**



**Name of the Result: Transfer Strategy**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Vocational education and training methods require constant transformations due to the changes in the global division of labour, changes in the structure of the domestic economy, changes in production technologies and changing society's demographic.

In face of all these changes it is not unreasonable to say that employees and citizens face the need of adaptation of their skills and competences several times in their professional life. If this is true, expectations may be wrong that people early in their life (probably before mid-twenties) acquire all necessary skills and competences. People will need to be ready to adapt and learn much longer in their life and this justifies the focus put by the European Commission on the significance of *life long learning – LLL*.

Life long learning takes place in various settings (formal, informal and non-formal), but it is difficult to deny that the special role belongs to formal education institutions as they employ educational professionals that are responsible not only for teaching specific skills, but also for “teaching to learn”, that is helping pupils and students to understand the need for continuous (life long) learning and forming competences necessary to learn.

The concept of VTeCOACH has been proposed as an answer to the need of identifying and defining those attitudinal or behavioural competencies, indispensable in new working environments.

The intention of the VTeCOACH project is to transfer the main approach and results achieved by the VETWORKS project mainly to other sectors and learning environments.

The transfer of VETWORKS approach will help to develop the VTeCOACH assessment tool that will provide relevant feedback to the learner about the specific competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning practices.

The implementation of the VETWORKS project allowed research on the application of a comprehensive assessment of existing training networks in a way that all participants were systematically involved, contributing to the improvement of those networks and assuring higher levels of quality in VET processes. The same participative approach, included in the VTeCOACH project in the form of 360° assessment, will be applied to a very specific educational environment, which is vocational training. This way, previous analysis and the whole VETWORKS approach will be applied for the development of a new tool that will focus on evaluating students' core competencies and, more precisely those linked to behavioural competencies and essential for the new working environments.

The former participating countries will benefit from the transfer of the VETWORKS results to the evaluation of key competences from VET learners (the previous approach evaluated the training process, and the new approach will focus on training results). Moreover, the transfer will include new social and educational realities by researching and testing developments in countries not previously involved, such as Romania and Italy.

VTeCOACH methodology will focus on re-designing the concept of classes, promoting attitudinal changes both on learners and teachers. The interaction of the learners with the other agents included in their network is one of the key elements of this methodology, accelerate the use of those key competences (team work, emotional intelligence, critical skills, communications skills) necessary in the VET centre, and essential in the further working environment.

The VTeCOACH project will focus on adapting the essential elements of VETWORKS project concept (training process participative evaluation) to the relevant key competences and to the definition of the transfer methodology that will allow partners to create the competences recognition and participative evaluation tool.

In this short document we will indicate the basic methodological criteria drawn from the VETWORKS experience whose adaptive application would increase the likelihood that VTeCOACH project would achieve its goals and contribute to the improvement of vocational education in European countries.

This document will also formulate some useful milestones that might be of operational use for VTeCOACH project partners.

## 2. About the VETWORKS project

VETWORKS was a project which has aimed at improving teaching capacities by developing an innovative tool for quality assurance in the networks of vocational education and training.

What was the VETWORKS project about? VETWORKS was a TOI programme centered on an innovative tool for strategic planning, self-evaluation and knowledge networking called SPEAK. VETWORKS succeeded in adjusting SPEAK to the specific needs of VET projects realized at the network level.

SPEAK can be considered a system tool, but it is based on the support of a specialized (dedicated) software. The project partners created a new SPEAK module that refers to the quality assurance (QA) in VET networks, which in shared opinion is currently the most important issue within the European VET sector. This module has been the subject of mainstreaming - it has been disseminated through the VETWORKS Scorecard, uploaded on the project website. Specific goals of VETWORKS comprised:

- 1) Exploitation of SPEAK as a tool for strategic planning, self-evaluation and knowledge management in VET projects/institutions/networks;
- 2) Identification of the problem of quality assurance in VET Network, especially the implementation of CQAF/EQARF recommendation;
- 3) Comparison of various tools of QA for VET Networks;
- 4) Dissemination of good practices and experiences with SPEAK implementation.

The new SPEAK version with the QA module was implemented in 6 different countries: Austria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Spain and Poland, in 5 different language versions. Moreover, the SPEAK tool, which, as should be reminded, is a combination of software and methodology, in each country was implemented in the different parts of VET sector: social economy, small and medium businesses, transport and "learning regions". This allowed the partners to identify a set of good practices, but on the other hand, created a variety of networking environments for SPEAK implementation process.

As a result there have been created 5 different language versions in 6 countries: Austria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Spain.

An additional result of the project was the VETWORKS Scorecard. VETWORKS Scorecard is a "stand-alone" version of the QA in VET Networks module of SPEAK software. It

describes 3 main dimensions of quality assurance in VET Networks: partnership, participation and progress. Every single institution/ network can assess its quality according to these measures..

Another product of VETWORKS was Best Practice Guide. This is a document that provides information about European recommendations on QA in VET and introduces the issue of quality in VET networks operating in different sectors and countries. Then it describes the SPEAK methodology and SPEAK software and presents the relations between CQAF/EQARF and SPEAK methodology. In the final part of the guidebook, there are descriptions of several good practices with SPEAK implementation from different countries (experiences with SPEAK implementation). Good practices were based on first two parts of the evaluation cycle ("Establishing priorities" and "Resource audit"). The last part of the Best Practice Guide is a summary of good practices from VETWORKS partners. The guide is published as an interactive document on the project website, as well as on the partners' websites. Best Practice Guide presents various experiences with SPEAK and QA in VET Networks, both positive and negative.

The project launched a Facebook "VETWORKS - QA in VET Networks" profile enabling on the one hand VETWORKS partners to share their experiences and good practices with SPEAK as a tool for QA in VET Networks, and on the other hand any VET institution/network to get knowledge/information about the process of quality management with special focus on quality assurance in their organizations.

The main goal of VETWORKS was to support quality assurance in VET networks. The design process for SPEAK was informed by an understanding of quality assurance needs and challenges; insofar as these applied to partners implementing SPEAK in the variety of VET networking situations.

When implementing the VETWORKS projects partners identified the following challenges:

First challenge related to the definition of quality and quality assurance in VET networks. It was important, in the first instance, to establish a common meaning and understanding of quality assurance: specifically what is understood as QA within VET networking. In establishing a focus and working understanding for this discussion, the following points were agreed amongst partners.

The task for VETWORKS was not about QA in general, or in all of VET activities. It was not for example, about assessing or demonstrating quality at a higher level of VET policy; neither was it about assuring quality in delivery of VET activities (preparation and delivery of training courses for example).

It was about learning more about how approaches to quality assurance can be applied to networking amongst VET providers and/or key VET stakeholders. Building networking partnership and working alliances amongst a range of key stakeholders is recognised as being essential in efforts to address a wide range of VET demands, needs and changing trends. Effective cooperation amongst trainers, educators, VET policy makers, regional development agents, NGOs, employers, even course participants contributes to a more responsive and successful delivery strategy.

The VETWORKS project allowed for the development of an evaluation framework (SPEAK) in a range of different organisational settings. A key focus for VETWORKS was on efforts to establish how *QA in VET Networking* can be accommodated within the SPEAK system. All partners were developing SPEAK in a situation where networking takes place. Each had a number of working methods which commits the organisation or project to networking, and to working in partnership, with a range of other stakeholders. For example, the Polish SPEAK application had working methods including: policy design and lobbying; building awareness amongst institutions; setting up new working groups; and setting up new networks.

All working methods required the agency to network with other (external) stakeholders. It was on these networking activities (and not to the other range of activities each agency engages in) that efforts to understand QA in VET Networking were concentrated.

A framework was developed to assist with the collection and comparison of partner feedback. A set of issues or criteria were used to ensure a focus on quality in networking. Sets of indicators related to QA in networking were grouped under three broad criteria headings (or three 'Ps'): Partnership, Participation, and Progress Review.

- **Partnership** refers to quality in building and maintaining effective working relationships in partnership with other agencies and stakeholders.
- **Participation** refers to quality in the breadth and depth of involvement in networking by all relevant stakeholders.
- **Progress Review** refers to quality in the capacity to continuously understand results from networking; to learn from networking actions; and to use this understanding to influence future networking activities.

Possible indicators for measuring and assuring quality of networking under each of these headings were developed, and partners were asked to comment on the relevance of these indicators to their own networking site or application in VETWORKS. They were specifically asked to comment on issues and challenges they saw as relevant in the process of incorporating QA criteria in their own versions of SPEAK.

The criteria considered in relation to assuring quality in partnership-building in VET networking were about:

- *Vision*: partners in networking share a common vision. The mission and rationale of the network is sufficiently understood by all partners;
- *Coverage*: all necessary partners are involved to address networking needs;
- *Focus*: Targets are specified and understood by all Partners;
- *Clarity*: Roles and responsibilities are understood by all partners;
- *Depth*: Partnership is with an the organisation, not just one person;
- *Commitment*: Partners value networking and engage actively;
- *Flexibility*: partnership arrangements are not too rigid as to impede responsiveness;
- *Openness*: there is trust in networking amongst partners (even within competitive conditions).

In analysing responses from partners, an assessment was made of the capacity of SPEAK to incorporate QA needs identified. A summary under each criteria heading is provided below, together with an indication of the capacity of the SPEAK system to collect data.

These criteria were seen as relevant to their particular networking situations by all partners. Indicators suggested by partners regarding the criteria relate to:

- The extent to which the involvement in the network has been incorporated into the policy statements and plans of specific partners and stakeholders.
- The scope or extent of involvement that has been afforded to representatives of specific partners: is this broad enough in each case to correspond with the overall network vision?
- The ability and willingness of partners to accurately communicate and publicise the meaning and overall goal of the network.
- The level of consensus (around vision and central network focus) that is evident in network discussions and exchanges.

When assessing labour market situation and educational and training needs of the students one has to solve the problems of collecting information. They comprise:

- The possibility that partners provide incomplete reports, or do not make full reports available to the network.
- The absence of core funding for the network will act as a barrier to supplying reports and feedback on a sufficient basis.

- Involvement by partners matches the issues/challenges addressed by the network.
- Partners assigned to the network have a sufficient knowledge of target group needs
- Partners assigned to the network have a sufficient knowledge of VET issues
- There is sufficient regional (geographical) coverage from stakeholder VET organisations.
- Partner activities in the network focus on target groups and issues as specified in overall networking goal.
- Partners engage in review to ensure that this focus is maintained
- Compatibility between actions taken by the signatories of the networking Pact and actions that were actually planned and carried out.
- Job descriptions associated with the network clearly defined
- Clear instructions exist about the content and the extent of exchange between partners.

Besides the relevance of information the VETWORKS partners discovered the value of the criterion named *partnership commitment*. Indicators suggested by partners regarding this criterion relate to:

- o Constancy and frequency of contacts between coordinator and network members
- o Other forms of communication consistent (e-mail, phone etc.)
- o Quality of information delivered to other partners
- o Number of common initiatives undertaken
- o Participation levels in meetings

As well as being reliable, the partnership has to be flexible. Indicators suggested by partners regarding this criteria relate to:

- o The extent to which network partners have been able to adopt their practices and approaches according to changing understanding of external circumstances and challenges.
- o Partner organisations are able to respond to specific needs of named target groups.

The criterion of partnership openness was seen as fully relevant to their particular networking situations only by some partners (namely in Germany and Austria and Hungary). Indicators suggested by partners regarding this criteria relate to:

- o Changes in the way sensitive information is more openly shared;

- Protocols are in place to ensure sensitive information (and competitively sensitive information) can be safely shared;

By analysing responses from partners, an assessment was made of the capacity of SPEAK to incorporate QA needs identified. A summary under each criteria heading is provided below, together with an indication of the capacity of the SPEAK system to collect data.

The criterion of proactivity was seen as relevant to their particular networking situations by all partners. Indicators suggested by partners regarding this criteria relate to:

- Pact signatories sharing information about taken actions and expected results
- Every partner contributes according to their stated commitments
- Partners suggest and volunteer new actions and directions (not just what was originally planned)
- Additional efforts volunteered by partners
- More than one representative of partner organisation contributes

Data and feedback in relation to these indicators can be collected via:

- Analysis of quarterly reports prepared by the coordinator (SPK)
- Annual reports from all mentioned organizations (SPK)
- Commitment of different partners to assigned tasks (SPK)

Constraints and challenges identified here were in relation to:

- The possibility that partners provide incomplete reports, or do not make full reports available to the network.
- The danger that many partners are 'more interested in product than process'. Sometimes little value can be placed on participation as a learning process.

The criterion of communication in participation was seen as relevant to their particular networking situations by all partners. Indicators suggested by partners regarding this criteria relate to:

- Partners receive all relevant information in a timely way;
- Results of network activities are communicated in a way that is accessible to all levels of target groups;
- Clear definitions and agreement about core concepts exists.

The criterion of openness in participation was seen as relevant to their particular networking situations by Austrian and Hungarian partners. Indicators suggested by partners regarding this criteria relate to:

- External partners are easily invited into network activities where necessary
- Other levels of involvement are possible from organisations participating in the network (apart from the main representative).

The VETWORKS project was developed dynamically and iteratively, with creative adaptation and discoveries of new challenges. These dimensions will be developed in the subsequent part of this document.

### 3. SWOT analysis of the VETWORKS project

Below we summarize the experience of VETWORKS project showing its achievements and drawbacks in a format of SWOT analysis.

<b>Strengths</b>	<p>Building awareness of training quality amongst VET institutions</p> <p>Helping partnership for quality in building and maintaining effective working relationships in partnership with other agencies and stakeholders.</p> <p>Building trust in networking amongst partners (even within competitive conditions)</p>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<p>Assuring that the involvement in the network has been incorporated into the policy statements and plans of specific partners and stakeholders;</p> <p>The ability and willingness of partners to accurately communicate and publicise the meaning and overall goal of the network.</p> <p>The level of consensus (around vision and central network focus) that is evident in network discussions and exchanges.</p>
<b>Threats</b>	<p>Assuring that partners assigned to the network have a sufficient knowledge of target group needs.</p> <p>Assuring that there is a sufficient regional (geographical) coverage from stakeholder VET organisations.</p> <p>Ensuring process to update understanding of appropriate focus by partners.</p>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<p>Setting up new working groups;</p> <p>Increasing clarity of a complex VET process;</p> <p>Increasing the durability and depth of commitment of all organizations: independently of single organization's member commitment.</p>

#### 4. Transference approach

The transfer of the achievements of the VETWORKS Project is not likely to be a simple extrapolation, but rather a smart adaptation which takes into consideration the VETWORKS quality assurance mechanism and sets it within the context of new goals and functions.

The intention of the VTeCOACH project is to transfer the main approach and results from the VETWORKS project mainly to other sectors and learning environments. At the same time, the tool to be developed shall be adjusted in a way to incorporate core elements of the "European Common Assurance Framework (CQAF)".

The implementation of VETWORKS project allowed to research on the application of a comprehensive assessment of the existing training networks in a way that all the participants were systematically involved, contributing to the improvement of those networks and assuring higher levels of quality in VET processes. The same participative approach, addressed in the present project in the form of 360° assessment, will be applied to a specific educational environment, namely vocational education and training. This way, previous analysis and the whole VETWORKS approach will be applied for the development of a new tool that will focus on evaluating students' core competencies and, more precisely those linked to behavioural competencies and essential for the new working environments.

The former participating countries will benefit from the transfer of the VETWORKS results to the evaluation of key competences from VET learners (the previous approach evaluated the training process, and the new approach will focus on training results). Moreover, the transfer will include new geographical realities by researching and testing developments in countries not previously involved, such as Romania and Italy.

Finally, VETWORKS transfer includes the development of an assessment tool running not only in an online environment (as the previous one) but also to be possibly loaded in different computers in the form of a CD.

The implementation of VTeCOACH project will be based on the learning and results from the VETWORKS project:

1. SPEAK assessment tool, is the tool adapted and developed in the previous project. This tool integrated the participative assessment approach, including instruments that allowed all the

stakeholders involved in the specific training network and providing marks in a way that improvement measures can be designed for guaranteeing the quality of the network.

In this new project, we will adopt the 360° assessment approach, with the aim of making all training participants evaluate others performance, and in the same way, providing marks and (this is one of the innovative aspects) specific recommendations based on a coaching paradigm. By developing this new project, partners will transfer the assessment of a process to the assessment of performance, in vocational education contexts.

This way, we will incorporate added value to this new tool:

- Partners will identify and define key competences demanded in the new professional environments that will serve as basis for the construction of the new tool.

- The new tool will include action recommendations to evolve towards a coaching instrument.

2. The best practice guide contained specific information on the assessment processes of training networks, theoretical basis for the assessment and examples in the use of Speak tool. As stated before, the new project will overcome the process evaluation to focus on performance evaluation. Partners will seize this document and will adapt to the new tool and learning environments.

The added value of the guide is that will be adapted and completed in a way that will include a common framework of competences linked to the labour market, and the specific results of the tool testing in vocational training centres. This will be one of the main elements that contribute to the recognition of competences and transparency of the VET systems by providing practitioners at EU level with references for the use of the tool in their own national realities.

3. VETWORKS Scorecard is published in the project website as a means for interested users to check their position in relation to other users. The same approach will be used with VTeCOACH tool, however, positioning users in relation to the defined competences and the success average ranks as agreed in relation to the labour market demands.

The main added value of this new approach relates mainly in the integration of the labour market demands references.

## 5. Guidelines for the VTeCOACH software

Although capitalizing on the achievements of VETWORKS, the VTeCOACH will generate new results and new methods. Below we indicate what we believe should characterise the new VTeCoach software.

- ✚ The VTECOACH tool should be developed in free software.
- ✚ The cyclical framework promoted by SPEAK should be also used in the VTeCOACH project: meaning each user can repeat the evaluation process as many times as they wish.
- ✚ The VTeCOACH tool should avoid the principles of “marks” and “grades”. The evaluation results should not appear in the form of numbers or statistics.
- ✚ The VTeCOACH tool should be developed in a format of Website; however it should also be available for mobile devices.
- ✚ The tool needs to be based in 3 major key concepts.

WICKED COMPETENCES FOR LABOUR MARKET

360° ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

ELECTRONIC COACHING

- ✚ Division of the contents in a public and private partner to improve the experience of the learner

PUBLIC PART	PRIVATE PART
<p>This part should contain information about the project, the selected wicket competences, and information and benefits of the application of coaching. It should include resources, documents, good practices, etc.</p> <p>In order to access this part it is not necessary to be registered in the platform.</p>	<p>The private part of the tool should be elaborated as an individual space for each user. In order to have access to this space each user (learner or trainer) needs to register in the platform.</p> <p>The individual space should enable the user to go through the all pathway of 360° evaluation+ coaching planning.</p>

## 6. Conclusions

It is highly probable that the results of VTeCOACH project will not only extend the achievements of VETWORKS, but will produce an innovative tool of utmost importance for VET institutions.

To achieve it, VTeCOACH partners should not only focus on the technical side of a new software, but also on diffusing the culture of learning and constant focus on improvements in the way VET institutions fulfil their missions.

VTeCOACH partners should also make sure that their partnership is focused on project goals and that activities developed are monitored for their quality.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### Project Promoter



### Project Coordinator



### Project Partners

