

European guidelines

for the development of mechanisms/tools
supporting the individual demand for
training through use of **training Vouchers**

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Preface

These European Guidelines have been developed within the Transfer and Adaptation of Training Vouchers project and are based on the experience of transferring a regional training voucher system from Trentino¹, Italy, to Western Macedonia, Greece. They are designed to provide practical support to regional authorities and training providers who are considering the development of their own training voucher system.

The Autonomous Province of Trento successfully carried out a training voucher system which focused on raising the skill levels of priority groups, including unemployed, socially and economically disadvantaged and migrant workers. Between 2003 and 2008 some 36000 vouchers were issued and 2510 training courses delivered, primarily in languages and IT. The system has 11 local offices located all over the provincial territory with training delivered through a network of different providers commissioned through an open tender process.

The Transfer and Adaptation of Training Vouchers project (TAV Project), carried out within the Lifelong Learning Programme, Leonardo da Vinci sectoral programme, action for multilateral projects for the Transfer of Innovation, used the training voucher system adopted in Trentino for a pilot activity to transfer the training voucher system to Western Macedonia, Greece.

TAV project partners are:

- Autonomous Province of Trento, Italy (lead partner)
- Region of Western Macedonia, Greece
- Individual Learning Company, United Kingdom
- EUROMASC – European Masters of Skilled Crafts, Norway
- University of Barcelona, Spain

More information about the project is available on the project website: www.transfervouchertrentino.it

An electronic copy of the these European Guidelines is available on the project website: <http://www.transfervouchertrentino.it>. The website also contains additional supporting information, copies of the documents used during the project. These working documents provide useful templates for application in a wide variety of situations.

¹ Trentino = Area of the Autonomous Province of Trento

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1. INTRODUCTION

Employment and vocational training policies represent one of the major expenditures in Europe, in particular due to the support to vocational training as part of an active labour market. For this reason, the attempt was to improve the system as much as possible through the personalization of the training offer. In this view, many European countries have adopted tools based on the use of training vouchers.

Over the last few years, the Autonomous Province of Trento has developed a training voucher system with co-funding from the ESF; these initiatives achieved positive results from 2003 to 2008 when over 36000 training vouchers were issued also encouraging access to the training system of a target group that would be difficult to identify with the traditional training offer.

This system led to an improvement in the population's linguistic and computer skills through a "catalogue of training opportunities" including over 300 language courses, as well as over 450 computer courses spread all over the territory, in order to encourage attendance also of those parts of the population living in peripheral areas of Trentino.

Starting with these results, the TAV project intended to transfer the training voucher system to Western Macedonia (Greece). Special attention was paid to all the constituent aspects (training vouchers, catalogue of training opportunities and guidance services), since they are part of an integrated mechanism entailing an innovative methodological approach with respect to the individual training demand.

The TAV project is based on the transfer of a voucher system, proving how the training voucher system developed in Trentino is adaptable to other countries or regions. It is necessary however to consider what features and characteristics of each territory should be taken into account and what can facilitate or hinder the implementation of a voucher system.

This document aims to be a guide for organizations interested in adapting the vocational training voucher system in their territory, showing the steps to follow and providing useful tools. The document is based on a multidimensional model for the transfer of vouchers that is one of the outputs of the TAV project.

1.1. Why this guide?

The purpose of this guide is to provide a set of essential considerations, steps and tools for those institutions seeking to adopt a voucher system for vocational education and training. This guide aims to introduce a system of mechanisms that could help plan and develop the voucher system.

Essential mechanisms in this guide are:

- useful information to decide whether to adopt a training voucher system or not;
- analysis of the transfer experience from Trentino to Western Macedonia to see to what extent the system developed is transferable to other territories, countries, etc;
- process to implement a training voucher system in a local setting (country/region), considering those aspects that depend on the intrinsic characteristics of each territory;
- useful resources and tools to plan and develop the voucher training system.

1.2. Who are these guidelines for?

This guide can be useful for educational institutes, training organizations, companies, sectorial or regional organizations, social partners, authorities and stakeholders of vocational and adult education interested in adapting and implementing the voucher system in their territory.

This guideline is especially intended for all those public entities that manage vocational and continuous training. Thanks to this guide they can learn about the administrative process involved in the implementation of the voucher system. This can facilitate their decision whether to implement the system or not, considering that the results should compensate the organizational complexity of the implementation.

This guide is also addressed to the training centres that at some point are considering participation in a training process managed through vouchers. The guideline could allow them to understand the characteristics of the system, what it involves, and decide whether to participate or not.

1.3. When to use the guidelines?

The guidelines cover all aspects of the system, from its design and implementation, to monitor and evaluate the activities and decisions to take into account during the development of the training voucher system.

In particular, they can be useful when decisions must be made regarding:

- the choice of mechanisms and tools used to implement a voucher system;
- the transfer of mechanisms/tools;
- the collection of elements which could be useful for the monitoring process;
- objectives of experiences (best practice, voucher system, individual learning...).

1.4. How to use these guidelines?

The aim of the guidelines is twofold:

- to analyze the experience of the transfer system from the Autonomous Province of Trento to the Region of Western Macedonia, and the level of adaptability of the system from one country to another;
- to provide practical, step-by-step guidance on how to design and implement a training voucher system.

The guidelines are divided into three main parts:

Part one: Foundations

- Theoretical background of a voucher system.

Part two: TAV Project

- The vocational voucher system in Trentino and the transfer experience from Trentino to Western Macedonia.
- From the experience to the formal approach “multidimensional model of transfer”.

Part three: Transfer guidelines

- The implementation of a training voucher system.

Further considerations about the use of the guidelines:

The guide also includes:

- descriptive information;
- tips.

Part one: Foundations

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE VOUCHER SYSTEM

2.1 What is a voucher system?

In general, vouchers provide access to pre-defined goods or services. They can be exchanged in designated training provider centres and markets. Vouchers may be supplied either in cash, commodity or service value. These are described respectively as value-based, commodity-based or service-based vouchers (CE, Dec. 2009). Vouchers can also be defined as “a subsidy that grant limited purchasing power to an individual to choose among a restricted set of goods and services” (Steuerle et al., 2000, 4)

The use of vouchers has rapidly grown over the last few decades, applying them to the educational, social, innovation and vocational training contexts.

The first, most popular and extended type of vouchers were educational vouchers. The analysis and evaluation of this kind of voucher was carried out using extensive literature (Levin, 1980, 1987 and 1998).

Innovation vouchers and training vouchers have been applied in the field of development and lifelong learning. The first type allows companies to contact universities and research centres in order to access scientific and technological knowledge. The second type gives eligible individuals the opportunity to choose among a very broad set of providers, with the only restriction being a minimum quality standard. Individuals use the vouchers to pay training providers. The use of voucher systems for the vocational and occupational field is relatively recent. The TAV project can involve these types of vouchers.

2.1.1. Experiences in the vocational field

While vouchers are known in other fields of public services, the approach is relatively new in the active labour market policy. In the different UE countries, the provision of further training has been contracted by private, public and both public and private providers. The main difference between contracting-out and vouchers is the fact that, in the first case, the public purchasers select the training providers, while in the second case, people can select their providers in the market. Furthermore, providers can access the market more easily than in a contracting-out system, where the range of providers is limited by the public purchaser.

In the literature on vouchers, consumer choice and provider competition are seen as the main arguments in favour of their introduction, and are believed to lead to a higher level of efficiency (Steuerle et al., 2000). The trend towards increased client choice is international and Alford (2002, 337) summarizes it as follows: “Undoubtedly, the customer is sovereign for government reformers at the end of the century”. This new freedom should, theoretically, allow individual jobseekers to express their preferences optimally and hence maximize their utility. In Hirschman’s (1970) terms, a voucher system gives clients an exit option if services are not delivered satisfactorily, rather than the limited voice they had before. This increased freedom of choice for clients may make providers more responsive to jobseekers.

However, it is often argued that consumers of public services cannot be directly compared to those in a private market (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993). If “the customer is the one who pays”, consumers of public services are severely constrained in their consumer sovereignty. Voucher systems change this relationship, since they empower jobseekers by providing them with direct purchasing power (Fountain, 2001).

This type of client empowerment is restricted by information asymmetries on the client's side, which can lead to "failure by preference error" (Lowery, 1998, 147). Such a failure occurs if consumers lack sufficient information to make choices that truly reflect their preferences. Therefore individual information capacity is an important factor in choosing the most efficient way to deliver a service. Blank (2000) argues that limitations on individual decision-making competence, e.g. through information asymmetries, may make contracting-out more efficient than a voucher system, since in a well-designed contracting-out system, a well-informed purchaser chooses the best provider.

According to the political proponents of the training voucher, the increased selection of providers, combined with unrestricted market access (subject only to minimum quality standards), should also increase provider competition. This potential for increased competition means that the vouchers adhere to one of the main tenets of new public management (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). The theoretical justification for such an arrangement is the notion of the contestable market (Baumol, 1982), which has also been applied to the delivery of labour market services (Fay, 1997). According to this theory, the efficiency of a market does not depend on its actual number of competitors. Since training providers can enter and exit the market without undergoing a lengthy tendering process or entering into long-term commitments, the new system would seem, on first inspection, to resemble a contestable market. Furthermore, the disappearance of the old preferred supplier regime means that market access is no longer limited to the capacities already contracted, which facilitates access for small providers. However, we should consider that intangible factors, such as popularity and brand names, are also barriers to entry and are probably more important than tangible investments or contract costs.

For authors like Bruttel (2005) or Savas (2000), the training voucher system can be used as a tool for the privatization of the delivery of employment services in a number of ways. Perhaps the most extensive experience of a training voucher application is the one that has been taking place in Germany, since 2002. But this *Vermittlungsgutschein*, or German placement voucher has little practical relevance as transfer reference to other southern countries (Bruttel, 2005, 394). First of all, the private recruitment sector in Germany tends to concentrate on the high-skill segment of the labour market and does not currently have the know-how to work with more problematic groups. Second, flat-rate placement payments of € 2000 are too low to encourage private providers to assist difficult jobseekers in particular. Additionally, payments to providers are triggered by outcomes only. Obviously, this policy shifts the whole risk on to the recruitment agencies. As a consequence, they have little incentive to invest much time in individual jobseekers. This author alerts us to initial evidence that suggests that information asymmetries, a lack of providers in certain areas and restricted opportunities for policy coordination, are obstacles to fully achieve the positive effects hoped for by proponents of the training voucher.

2.2. Considerations about the decision to apply the voucher system or not

An important number of lessons have been learnt thanks to these experiences and methods. These considerations will help policy makers to decide whether to apply a voucher system or not.

Founded on West's contribution (1996, 1997), the strengths of the voucher system can be summarized below.

The first strength regards consumer choice. The second regards personal advancement. People want to shape their own destinies. The opportunity to choose and to decide stimulates interest, participation, enthusiasm, and dedication. Many government programmes subsidise the individual recipients with services (i.e., social security, welfare, health programmes, student loans). Vocational vouchers extend this principle to education. The third strength is the promotion of competition. Vouchers present a challenge that can lead to competition which brings lower costs, increased average quality and dynamic innovation. The fourth principle is to grant low-income users access to private centres and finally to improve efficiency of providers/markets.

Further considerations add elements to the decision whether to implement a voucher system or not:

Choice: The voucher system aims to increase personal decision-making in two ways:

(a) by subsidising vocational training costs so that more individuals can afford their qualification process, and

(b) by giving individuals direct purchasing power to choose providers which best meet their needs.

Accessibility to private centres for individuals with low income and low qualifications: vouchers are offered to people to pay for tuition fees at private centres. One of the objectives is to improve accessibility to these centres among individuals with low-income or low qualifications. However, research studies (Levin, 1998, Lee and Wang 2002) have showed that people with more skills have better opportunities of finding information about the provider and its quality and therefore, choose the best centres.

Need for guidance services: the implementation of the training voucher system should run side by side with the development of guidance services. The relation between work and training is deep. It is necessary for the person to have the opportunity to carry out his/her own professional development plan. This plan has to be focused on in the medium term, not only as an immediate job seeking strategy. This counselling service can only be carried out with professional assistance and is totally necessary for trainees in order to decide the training option that better suits their professional development plan.

In conclusion, voucher systems can provide an effective tool to achieve specific objectives. The implementation of a particular system can have a significant impact on the results achieved. This will depend on the target population, on the type of training supported, on the providers engaged and on the subjects covered, as well as on the needs, circumstances and motivation of the individuals engaged.

Part Two: TAV Project

3. THE VOCATIONAL VOUCHER SYSTEM IN TRENTO AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TRANSFER FROM TRENTO TO WESTERN MACEDONIA

Starting from the experience in the field of training vouchers carried out in the Autonomous Province of Trento and from the other best practices adopted in the other partner countries, the TOI TAV project aimed to implement and transfer the training vouchers tool to other national and regional contexts, first among which, Western Macedonia.

More in general, the project aimed to increase the participation of European citizens in training activities, in line with the Lisbon strategy as regards a knowledge society, an active citizenship and social inclusion, satisfying the ever growing individual training demand through innovative systems.

The project started on 1st October 2009 and ended on 31st October 2011 and was divided into the following phases:

- recollection of partner experiences in terms of tools and ways to support individual training demand and evaluation of existing needs in different contexts, by involving local stakeholders;
- identification and implementation of the best tools and their adaptation and transfer to other contexts, with a pilot experimentation phase in the Region of Western Macedonia;
- validation of the tools adopted and of the quality of the transfer carried out and following definition of European guidelines for the development of tools to support individual training demand;
- dissemination of the activities carried out.

3.1. The voucher system experience in Trentino

The Autonomous Province of Trento is located in the north of Italy and covers an area of 6,207 km² and includes both mountainous and rural areas. It has a population of 521,779 people (2009) with an employment rate of 58% for women and 75% for men with an average GDP of €28,756 – which is slightly higher than the national Italian average.

Starting from 2003, the Autonomous Province of Trento organized a voucher system allowing people living in the region, between 16 and 64, to participate in specific courses and improve their IT and foreign language skills. A total of 2510 courses were organized between 2004 and 2008.

The training voucher system in Trentino was born to respond to specific training needs in its own area, and also to facilitate access to training of a large amount of the population through training vouchers. Based on several surveys conducted to understand the socio-economic situation of this region, the Autonomous Province of Trento was interested in creating specific paths to make its citizens more competitive in the labour market and gain innovative skills.

Responding to innovation and labour market needs, attention was paid to two specific training topics: foreign languages and Information Computer Technology (ICT).

The Trentino voucher system was founded on a preparatory phase (involving need analysis and goal setting) and an operational phase (involving the selection of training providers, the creation of the training catalogue, voucher promotion, collection of application forms and training delivery). A final phase involved the evaluation of the activity carried out.

3.1.1. Process description

The implementation of the voucher system in Trentino went through a series of phases and steps that are outlined below:

a) Preparatory phase

Need analysis and goal setting

The voucher system of the Autonomous Province of Trento was organized considering social, legislative, administrative, political and organizational peculiarities. A special report is periodically prepared in Trentino to evaluate the territory's socio-economic situation. The last report, written before vouchers were introduced, reported that:

- there was lack of graduated workers;
- most of the people were working in the tertiary sector;
- most workers lack ICT and foreign language skills.

On the basis of this analysis, the Province decided to activate a voucher system paying particular attention to foreign languages and IT courses, with the main aim to:

- put citizens at the centre of their own education;
 - simplify the cost statements system;
 - offer services rather than money;
 - offer courses all over the territory, allowing people to be skilled close to home.
- The target group included population between 16 and 64 years of age. The Province decided to give priority to specific categories:
 - A1 category: individuals at risk of social exclusion (such as alcoholics, immigrants, prisoners and former prisoners, the unemployed, individuals with physical and mental disabilities, individuals belonging to ethnic minorities, nomadic people, the HIV-positive and former prostitutes);
 - A2 category: employed people over 45;
 - A3 category: individuals with low qualifications;
 - A4 category: women.

b) Operational phase

- Launch of a call for tenders in order to select the training courses and providers.
- Once the call for tenders was closed, the Province of Trento prepared a catalogue containing the ICT and foreign languages offer. This catalogue was available both in electronic and paper format.
- Activation of a specific guidance service to give general information about the courses and then help each person choose the most suitable one. The Autonomous Province of Trento

used its 11 local guidance and training services spread across the territory (local desks), created with the support of the ESF office.

Location of the local offices



- Once the catalogue was ready, citizens were informed of the opportunities and the courses available. For this reason, a significant advertising campaign through the main media of the territory was carried out, and course catalogues were handed out all over the province.
- In order to benefit from the voucher system, citizens had to go to their local guidance and training services and fill a specific application form.
- Every month, the Province elaborates a list with the names of voucher beneficiaries.
- Once selected, each beneficiary receives a paper form consisting of three different tear sheets. One part has to be delivered to the local service responsible for the voucher and another part has to be delivered to the course provider selected, in order to formalize a mutual engagement. The last part is for the beneficiary who has six months to use the voucher after being selected.
- Beneficiaries can select and attend any course included in the catalogue.
- At the end of the course, the training provider will invoice its service to the Province in respect of specific predefined commitments. In particular, courses can be activated only if a minimum of 6 participants take part and to consider the course valid and refundable, participants must attend at least 70% of the total amount of hours and training.

C) Evaluation

An evaluation of the voucher system was made two years after it was introduced in Trentino to investigate the levels of satisfaction of the beneficiaries. For this reason, in mid 2005, a phone call survey was carried out on a sample of more than 5000 individuals who benefited from one or more language and/or IT vouchers. First of all, considering their levels of satisfaction with reference to the voucher system, results were positive, since 64% of the people interviewed were very satisfied with the voucher system in general. As regards their level of satisfaction with reference to the courses attended, results are also definitely positive, since 95% of the people interviewed declared being very or quite satisfied on the whole. As regards their achievement of the goals set, more than 40% of the people interviewed declared

having totally fulfilled their objectives, 46% declared having sufficiently achieved their goals and 15% declared having scarcely or not at all fulfilled their goals. 6 people out of 10 were able to use the skills acquired during the courses in their personal activities and hobbies, while 37% of them declared they used them on the job. The reasons that urged beneficiaries to study, on the other hand, only refer to a residual amount of participants. Among those who declared using the skills acquired at work, more than 8 out of 10 believe the course was actually useful for them to carry out their duties at work, while others declared having changed duties at work thanks to the course, but only a few managed to change jobs completely.

Strengths of the voucher system:

- participation of members of the population never previously involved in training;
- greater involvement of citizens living in peripheral areas of the Province;
- not only does it consider training aspects but also a wider vocational guidance of the people involved;
- thanks to the voucher system, the public Authority was able to save an extra 50% of resources compared to courses that do not involve the use of vouchers;
- clear management of public resources (citizens do not receive money but a voucher).

Aspects that could be improved:

- first of all the procedure, by changing parts of the system that do not allow it to be very flexible in real situations and by reducing the number of unused vouchers as well as the waiting lists, with special attention towards the training voucher offer and courses in peripheral areas of the territory;
- the involvement of training providers, offering incentives, where possible, for competition and the draft of recommendations to improve the openness and quality of courses;
- attention towards the opportunity of making users more responsible through their co-participation towards the payment of voucher system costs and by rising awareness around the importance of vouchers;
- finally, it was suggested to extend vouchers to fields other than IT and languages.

3.2. The Macedonia transfer experience

The Region of Western Macedonia, like the rest of Greece and Europe, is facing the consequences of massive economic constraints. Improving skills of the workforce is a major priority for future recovery: however, only 2% of adults participate in learning (against a European average of 10% and a European Commission target of 15% by 2020). This means that the local learning culture and infrastructure (in particular information, counselling and guidance) is not particularly developed. Until two years ago, unemployed people who took part in training activities received money. The end of this system has significantly reduced motivation in many individuals to train. The Greek government has recently introduced a policy to support a widespread use of training vouchers. The pilot action is a good opportunity for the region to demonstrate how this policy can be successfully implemented.

As established in the TAV project, the transfer of the Trentino training voucher system to the Region of Western Macedonia was carried out through a pilot action. This was a challenging task that showed how citizens in Western Macedonia were interested in taking part in training courses. For this reason, the pilot action only concentrated on ICT topics.

3.2.1. Implementation of the Voucher System in Western Macedonia: the pilot action

The process of implementing the voucher system in Western Macedonia was divided into the following phases:

a) Preparation of the transfer model and tools

The Autonomous Province of Trento, lead partner of the project, elaborated a complete set of tools, procedures and resources regarding its voucher system in order to transfer it to the Greek region.

Need analysis and goal setting

In Greece, the survey for the training needs of the territory is conducted by the General Secretary of Lifelong Learning which belongs to the Ministry of Education and Lifelong Learning.

Nowadays, there is a substantial change in the way training activities are planned and performed. According to the latest version of the new Lifelong Learning Policy in Greece, a forthcoming law will introduce new standards for lifelong learning. The region will also play a significant planning role in the regional lifelong learning programme in relation to the national programmes. Other relevant aspects will be the introduction of the Individual Learning Accounts, National Committees for Lifelong Learning and their connection with employment, and a Euro-passport with the certified qualifications etc.

According to the new law for lifelong learning, each Region will be responsible for the elaboration of its own strategy on Lifelong Learning closely related to its characteristics and needs. The new legislative framework gives some clear hints of how the training system will work from now on, it introduces certain procedures which strengthen the training system and improves the role of the region to that end. The new system should take place in 2011.

Vocational Training Centres in Greece are certified by an official authority as regards their ability to implement training activities.

The pilot action aims at applying the Trentino training voucher system to a target group of about 100 potential trainees from 18 to 64 years of age with the aim to increase their IT skills that are considered strategic for the development of the territory. The different locations of the trainees and the representation of their different profiles were taken into consideration. For this reason, potential trainees were selected according to the following criteria:

- educational level (min. end of basic studies);
- age from 18 to 64;
- at least 30% unemployed;
- at least 40% women.

b) Operational phase

- The Region of Western Macedonia launched a specific call for tender in order to ask local training providers to submit course proposals.
- The proposals were assessed by an expert panel and selected in order to form the training courses catalogue. Further to the evaluation, 5 different training providers were identified spread across the region: 2 of them are located in Kozani, 2 in the Florina district and one in the town of Kastoria.
- Citizens were informed of the catalogue through the regional media (TV, newspaper, radio and electronic media). In addition, the invitation was disseminated to regional training providers that could include in their websites and inform potential trainees.

The kick-off phase required greater administrative and secretarial support than the preparatory phase. In particular the following activities were carried out:

- a) preparation of the application form;
- b) creation of the database to gather applications;
- c) collection of application forms;
- d) voucher delivery.

c) Evaluation

An evaluation of the experience was carried out at the end of the pilot action. The main outcomes of the survey were:

- vouchers are a generally accepted way of performing a training programme. They offer beneficiaries the chance to choose and address their real training needs;
- vouchers can be broadly used in training programmes that the population and potential trainees are very interested in;
- they cannot prescind from an initial evaluation of the skills of the potential trainees. The skills achieved shall be certified and considered in a lifelong perspective;
- they can be used to build on the skills a person already has;
- they should be broadly carried out in regions e.g. as part of the general planning of training programmes and offer many possibilities for the beneficiary to actually train in fields of strong interest;
- they can better respond to training needs following a bottom-up training needs attestation;
- they can be used to discourage non-professional training providers;
- they should be used to 'open open up the training market to a larger number of training providers, including universities, research institutes, technical schools etc.

- they should be organized in a way to check the quality of the services provided (providers, trainees, managing authorities etc.).

3.3. Adaptability of the Trentino training voucher system to Western Macedonia

In general, we can say that to adapt one model to another, it is only possible to use a model that already has years of experience. The model of the Autonomous Province of Trento can be considered mature.

The Trentino training voucher system presents two important elements:

a) One vocational training voucher model. Designed in response to specific economic, political, social and technical realities in the Province of Trento.

This document shows there are a lot of options in designing a transfer system (from the kind of transfer, the value of the voucher, the requirements of the training providers, the administrative and legal support, the political vision of the vocational services, etc.).

b) One technical framework. Designed (within the TAV project) to help transfer experience (in this case to Western Macedonia) so that each region would develop its own training voucher system based on its economic, political, geographic, human and social reality.

This framework comprises agreements, documents and tools that allow operators to apply the voucher system and manage vocational training in the region.

3.4. Learning outcomes of the pilot action

The pilot action, which experimented with the application of the Trentino voucher model to the Greek reality, produced some relevant learning outcomes that will be commented upon below.

a) Tangible: tools, procedures, processes designed to describe the application of the system. All these elements are objectives, tangible and guarantee the knowledge of key issues of the model. We can summarize that the tangible elements of the model are description, examples and suggestions.

b) Intangible: factors that support the flexibility, adaptability and capacity to create, develop and innovate the model and its framework and make it transferable to a different context. We can say that the intangible elements of the model are coaching², supervision and feedback.

The implementation of the intangible elements can only be possible if all parties involved in the project share the same commitment and motivation. Thanks to the abovementioned intangible elements, the Autonomous Province of Trento was able to

² These three elements are illustrated by the role of the UK partner, Trentino Partner and the whole communicative process.

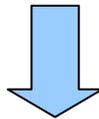
share information with the Western Macedonia partner that was able to discuss doubts and questions with the Trentino team.

The catalyst of all of these elements are essentially human relations based on commitment, mutual respect and motivation to share and achieve the successful adaptation of the model.

In general an important element of the adaptation and transfer of a model from one region to another, meaning a training voucher system, is a theoretical model. In this case a “Multidimensional model of transfer” was adopted (Battistelli, 2010).

WHICH TYPE OF THEORETICAL MODEL FOR TRANSFER OF INNOVATION

***Transfer of innovation is not simply an adaptation
of product/service from one to another context***



***is analysing the new context in
all the aspects, understanding all
the opportunities of the product/service
to be transferred, creating all the conditions
to transfer, developing the product/service
to be implemented in the new context***

4. FROM THE EXPERIENCE TO THE FORMAL APPROACH: “MULTIDIMENSIONAL MODEL OF TRANSFER”

The TAV project worked on two issues: the voucher system and the transfer process. In the following pages, we will explain the theoretical approach that was formulated upon the analysis of the transfer experience.

According to the experience carried out, it is important to highlight that the transfer of one model emerged from a particular context is applicable to another if specific conditions exist. The adaptability of the model involves its capacity to be general and specific at the same time. General, meaning the structure, procedures and tools should be usable in different situations and contexts. Specific, meaning that the structure, procedures and tools should respond to specific situations. For example, in this case, the objectives of the voucher system are general: to reach a large amount of the population, to offer a training course able to improve quality in work, to create a system able to make citizens autonomous and responsible of their own training, to offer different training opportunities all over the territory, to put authorities in the position to manage and control the training system and to make the investment in training worth while.

The adaptation and transfer of a model was carried out through a multidimensional theoretical transfer approach. Such approach includes five dimensions: cultural, political, economic, organizational, Human Resources.

4.1. Cultural dimension

The cultural dimension concerns the culture of education and learning that exists in a specific context. This means that in a culture where the education and learning are under “shared responsibility” of different stakeholders, including the citizens, the participation in decisions regarding education and learning plans is effective. In this context, education and learning are “values”, and a training model, like the voucher system, can be very effective. Emphasis on the personal choice, the freedom, the competitiveness or the social responsibility can be analyzed from the cultural point of view and offer important elements to understand the feasibility of one specific training model.

So, analyzing some political and organizational decisions from a cultural point of view, allows us to understand whether one training model is adaptable and transferable or not. To rise awareness and understand the needs and priorities raised upon these cultural elements is essential when deciding to implement a specific voucher system.

4.2. Political dimension

This dimension concerns the Authorities’ choices about the training system, the relationship between public and private in the education and training system, and in general, the mission of the National and/or Regional Government. The decisions at this level determine the training measures, meaning they exert considerable influence over the quality and price of further training measures and do not let them develop under the influence of free market forces.

4.3. Economic dimension

When considering whether a vocational voucher programme is a feasible alternative to the existing financing schemes, the following factors have to be taken into account:

- (a) the costs of vocational voucher programmes: both the value and number of vouchers will have cost implications, including administration costs;
- (b) the cost of publicity/promotion of the education voucher programmes, selection and transportation of beneficiaries;
- (c) the potential cost of a failure in reimbursements due the early drop-out of a participant;
- (d) the cost of qualified trainers.

We must specify that as regards the experience in Trentino, the administration and managerial costs of the system were a lot lower than those of other existing training programmes.

4.4. Organizational dimension

This dimension concerns organizational constraints and opportunities at the institutional and organizational level. According to experience in Trentino, the public administration and local desks created a voucher management system that made it possible to correctly manage the entire process also thanks to the active participation of training providers.

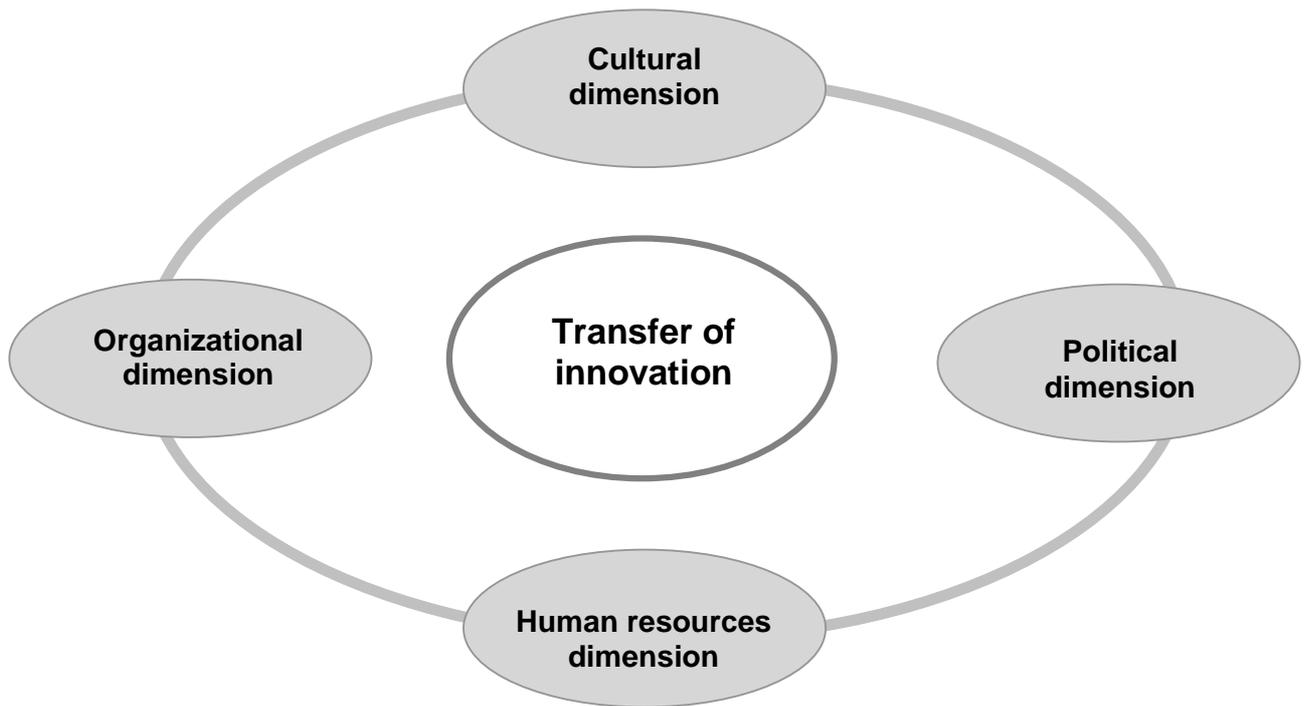
In the Trentino system, the introduction of training vouchers is accompanied by a quality management approach that regulates relations with local services and training providers. The approach also foresees widespread information and constant support to trainees.

4.5. Human Resources³ dimension

The system needs different skills and capacities. For example, at the level of the authority responsible for the voucher system, it is necessary to have skills to design, plan and manage the architecture of the system. At the operational level (local services) it is necessary to have skills and capacities to interact with training providers and participants.

Training providers should have skills in the design and management of the courses. As regards course participants, they must plan their own vocational development.

³ These human resources involve staff of the authority responsible for the voucher system, staff of the local services, training providers and trainees.



Part three: Transfer guidelines

5. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A TRAINING VOUCHER SYSTEM

On the basis of the pilot action carried out in Western Macedonia, the process to implement a training voucher system can be divided into the following phases:

1. Need analysis
2. Goal setting
3. Selection of training courses and creation of the catalogue
4. Voucher promotion and collection of voucher application forms
5. Evaluation

5.1. Need analysis

This first step of the process is necessary on one hand to understand the relevant labour market needs in the geographical area in which the voucher system is to be applied, and on the other hand to detect the educational attainment and gaps in knowledge and skills of the population.

More in detail, this analysis helps to determine the target group the voucher system is directed to and the type of skills and knowledge that are not covered in the labour market.

5.1.1. Objectives and actions

The objectives are:

- to define the relevant needs of the labour market;
- to identify skills required through the analyses of the economic context;
- to identify citizens' socio-demographic characteristics especially concerning socio-educational status and skill needs.

In order to reach the above mentioned objectives the *actions* must be:

- to collect data from different sources;
- to summarize the data in reports;
- to transform the need analysis in training objectives.

5.1.2. Tools:

- surveys and analyses;
- focus groups and interviews with stakeholders;
- questionnaire on a representative sample of citizens/employees of the target population.

5.1.3. Tip

Involve as many stakeholders as possible in the need analysis in order to define the best framework as possible.

5.2. Goal setting

This phase allows to define the goals of the system in relation with the target group - the people involved in the voucher system, the potential trainees chosen through specific analyses (need analysis, surveys, questionnaires, etc.); the training courses - knowledge and skills to supply; the training providers - schools, learning centres, academies, etc. that will provide training.

5.2.1. Objectives and actions

The objectives are:

- to identify the beneficiaries;
- to identify priorities and selection criteria;
- to define training topics (skills);
- to identify procedures for the selection of providers.

The actions related to the priorities and criteria are:

- the definition of the criteria for the assignment of vouchers (for instance: young people aged between 18 and 30 entering the labour market, women, the long-term unemployed, disadvantaged people, chronological order of application, etc);
- the formalization of the characteristics of the target groups, the priorities and selection criteria.

The *actions* concerning training courses and their levels are:

- the definition of the training topics that satisfy specific skill needs;
- the decision of course characteristics: type and levels of qualification, training contents, training methods, outcomes in term of skills acquired, time and prerequisites, etc;
- the formalization of the characteristics of the training course.

The *actions* concerning the training provider selection procedure are:

- the decision regarding the requirements training providers must fulfil to qualify for the tender (i.e. to employ qualified trainers);
- the possible decision regarding the pre-selection procedures for participation in the tender.

5.2.2. Tips

- It is recommended to choose only a few training topics, differentiated by various levels in order to respond to the needs and the knowledge of the potential trainees. This makes it possible to guarantee a vast selection and the participation of all the people involved at the right course level.
- It is important to guarantee a suitable number of hours needed for the trainees to achieve the skills expected.
- Good experiences are born from innovative projects with clear objectives (participants are motivated and know what they want) and when participants have a common and clear opinion of what results they foresee.
- Good planning and real involvement of all participants also seem to be crucial for a successful transfer.

5.3. Selection of training courses and creation of the catalogue

This phase concerns the selection of the training courses and providers, as well as the creation of a training course catalogue.

The main procedure to select the course providers is the call for tenders. The call for tenders must be open to training providers who fulfil the requirements.

As regards the call for tenders, the training providers introduce course proposals that are assessed and selected by an appointed evaluation committee.

5.3.1. Objectives and actions

The objectives are:

- to select training courses and providers;
- to create a catalogue of courses.

The *actions* are:

- the preparation of a call for tenders, with the specification of the selection criteria and the creation of the documents that define the legal, technical and economic framework to be used for the selection of better offers (such as the technical training proposal, the economic proposal, the contract with the providers, etc.);
- the selection of training courses and providers;
- the creation of a course catalogue.

5.3.2. Tips

- It is suggested to produce a paper and electronic course catalogue;

- It is important that the training providers issue a certification where possible (such as the ECDL).

5.4. Voucher promotion and collection of voucher application forms

Once the catalogue is ready, it is necessary to advertise it.

First of all, it is necessary to choose the best strategy to reach as many people as possible and the best media to use (i.e. TV and radio advertising, posters, newspapers, bus and train advertising boards and banners, etc.). It could also be useful to adopt direct and digital mail advertising, social network advertisements, workshops, etc.

Secondly, it is necessary to have a dedicated office where citizens can enquire about the voucher system. This dedicated office must be able to inform and guide interested people in the voucher system, so they understand it and will be able to start the procedure to obtain the voucher.

During the first meeting, the office employee will recommend the potential trainee the best training path fitting his/her needs (which doesn't necessarily have to be the voucher system). If the right training path corresponds to the voucher system, the employee will ask the potential trainee some questions and to fill in the application forms (that will be entered into a database).

A ranking of the applications is periodically published online and in paper of the beneficiaries of the voucher system.

Successful applicants must go to the local desks to collect their voucher and choose their training course among the ones listed in the catalogue. They must then go to the training provider and communicate their decision. Courses are offered only to voucher system participants and will start only after reaching the minimum number of participants foreseen.

Once selected, each participant receives a paper form consisting of three different parts. One part will be handed in to the local service responsible for the voucher, another part will be delivered to the chosen course provider and the last part is for the participant.

Please note: in order to consider their course valid, participants must attend a minimum amount of predefined hours.

5.4.1. Objectives and actions

The objectives are:

- to advertise and disseminate the system among citizens, guaranteeing them equal opportunities;
- to issue a voucher.

The *actions* are:

- the decision and preparation of the different advertising and dissemination strategies;
- advertising activities;

- the preparation and creation of specific offices;
- the collection of the application forms;
- the assignment of a voucher to citizens.

5.4.2. Tips

- The local services should be spread all over the territory;
- Guarantee the skills of local services staff;
- Be sure to have a system able to register the exact time of application (when the application date a criterion for the assignment of a voucher).

5.5. Voucher system evaluation

It is necessary to evaluate courses to identify strengths and weaknesses of the system and improve it. This evaluation can be carried out through different ways such as questionnaires, interviews, phone interviews, etc.

It is also important to collect data in order to make a quantitative assessment of the process.

5.5.1. Objectives and actions

Objectives are:

- to evaluate whether the goals of the voucher system have been achieved;
- to evaluate results in terms of the dissemination and information regarding the system;
- to partially correct the process with the aim to strengthen the system.

The *actions* concerning the evaluation of the voucher system are:

- the preparation and collection of data regarding the application forms;
- the preparation of interviews for a sample of training providers and trainees;
- the summary of the results.

5.6. Summary of steps for the implementation of a training voucher system

STEPS	ACTIVITIES	TOOLS ⁴
1. Need analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyse the economic context and the labour market and identify skill needs - Identify socio-educational status of the target population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus group framework employers, unions, administration officials, experts - Interview framework for employers, unions, administration officials, experts - Questionnaire on a sample of citizens/employees representative of the population involved
2. Goal setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify the target group, priorities and further selection criteria - Define the training topics that satisfy specific skill needs and their levels - Prepare a document with course characteristics, type and levels of qualification, training contents, training methods, outcomes in terms of skills acquired, time, and prerequisites. - Select providers through identified procedures, such as a call for tenders. It will be necessary to decide which criteria to use and which characteristics the providers should have in order to participate in the call (e.g. accreditation, location, ...) 	Methodological introduction (framework of the system and explanation of the local needs that require the training voucher system)
3. Selection of training providers and creation of the catalogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare a specific call for tenders to select providers, specifying all the selection criteria - Select training providers - Create a catalogue of courses including courses offered by successful providers, in paper and electronic version 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Proposal - Technical Proposal - Contract with the Training Providers - Trentino catalogue
4. Voucher promotion and collection of voucher application forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare the strategies for the dissemination of the voucher system. These strategies should guarantee equal opportunities to all target citizens - Create information and guidance offices as well as the organization to initiate the process of obtaining/giving a voucher, allowing the trainees to choose a provider and attend a training course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - model of application form - model of voucher
5. Voucher system evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluate whether the goals of the voucher system are accomplished and verify if the process to obtain a voucher worked thanks to interviews with a sample of training providers and trainees - Evaluate results in terms of exploitation of the system and draw up a synthesis of the results - Partially correct, if necessary, the process to strengthen the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phone interview for trainees in order to investigate the rate of employment after attending courses (two years after the start of the training voucher experience) - Satisfaction survey for training providers

⁴ Samples of tools are available in the following website: <http://www.fse.provincia.tn.it>

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