

Internationalisation and Mobility into the Student's Curricula

International Pilot Report

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1. Introduction

The INtheMC pilot is part of the European Leonardo da Vinci project “Internationalisation and Mobility in the Students’ Curricula” (INtheMC). The INtheMC project and its outcomes are designed to promote both internationalisation and mobility in vocational education and training (VET) by offering VET-institution and teachers internationalisation information and assignments ready-to use in daily teaching situations to stimulate students’ interest in mobility and practical preparation for going on placements abroad (Menica/Megaw 2012).

The INtheMC programme’s main aims were to encourage and support more VET schools and teachers to get higher numbers of VET students¹ involved in internationalisation and mobility programmes, preparing them for the opportunities and requirements of the modern European workforce. This also aims to meet a key goal of the European Commission (ibd.).

Therefore several partners from European countries were invited to join the project and bring in their field of expertise. The partner from the Netherlands, Spain, Scotland and Lithuania are experts in the field of professional experience in Vocational Education. An input from the site of the entrepreneurs will be provided by a second partner from the Netherlands and a partner from France. The partner coming from Poland is an expert on the field of psychological influences on mobility and equal opportunities. The German partners bring experience in research into student mobility and the impact on a European level.

The pilot programme was conducted to allow a number of participants in each pilot country to put the designed programme and tools into practice and to evaluate the suitability and usability of the programme towards the desired aims. Therefore the pilot phase started with a workshop introducing INtheMC products. After this a pilot phase started in which the participating teachers tried to integrate the products into their daily teaching routine. At the end all participants came together again and reflected on their experiences.

The pilots were conducted in France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK between September 2011 and March 2012. The Pilot aimed to test and implement the core products of the INtheMC project:

- INtheMC Teacher Manual
- INtheMC Student Assignments and Certificate
- INtheMC Curriculum Planner
- INtheMC National Report
- INtheMC 1st International Report
- INtheMC website

¹ The Expert Forum on Mobility of the EC (2008) proposed 15% /900,000 of young people to be involved in mobility actions by 2012, 30% by 2015, 50% by 2020 or 3.5% of all VET students.

This second international report is based on the feedback from all piloting countries. It is based on observations, contact and talks during and after the pilots. This project planned for up to 20 staff to participate in the pilot with 10 providing all the feedback requirements. All pilot participants were asked to fill out evaluation questionnaires including an extensive one provided by the project external evaluators PIXEL.

In Spain, Scotland and the Netherlands participants were asked to complete a course diary, charting their progress and actions in the programme and to carry out a course evaluation questionnaire covering all the products they have had contact with including the project website.

The only partner who did the piloting with entrepreneurs instead of teachers and managers from VET schools was the partner coming from France. This partners' task was to adapt the tools that were initially dedicated to VET teachers for a special target group: entrepreneurs (to be).

2. Workshop

The purpose of the kick off workshop was to introduce and test the INtheMC project, its tools and the way they are used. The aim of the second one at the end of the piloting phase was to evaluate the tools and talk about the experience with the participants. Before starting the workshop the French, Spanish, and Lithuanian partners translated the used tools (Teacher's Manual, Curriculum Planner, Management summation, Students assignments) into their national languages.

2.1 Introduction of the pilot group

To recruit the participants for the piloting all partners started by contacting a number of national VET centres and staff possible for disseminating the project, its programme and its tools. The representatives from VET were invited to join the INtheMC project website to receive the newsletter and to get a first chance to browse through the pages to find out more about the project, its background and the partner involved.

Each piloting country recruited a pilot group consisting of teachers and managers from VET institutions. Several sectors were represented within this pilot group.

Most of the participants already had experience in internationalisation and mobility. The Scottish participants were aware that the benefits of internationalisation and mobility are essential to their learners (MCGregor 2012). In the Netherlands the teachers' motivation to join the pilot group were as follows:

- to bring the student closer to exchanges
- new tools/products in the curriculum
- to promote/develop internationalization
- to prepare students better before they go abroad for their work placement

- to coach and prepare students
- practical possibilities and materials to use with students (Kroese 2012).

2.2 Introduction of the materials

In the workshops (except in France) the following products were introduced:

- The project website
- National Report
- International Report
- Curriculum Planner
- Teacher Manual
- Student Assignments with guidelines
- Student Certificate

The French Partner introduced the products to colleagues who would be conducting the workshop with entrepreneurs.

The **project website** is a resource of information and materials. It contains information about the INtheMC project its products and the partners involved. It gives the possibility to subscribe to the INtheMC - Newsletter. All project products can be downloaded from the website for free.

Every partner country wrote a **national report** on internationalisation and mobility in VET. Those reports give an insight into the current situation on internationalisation and mobility within VET.

The **international report** sums up the outcomes of the national report. Furthermore it gives information on European instruments for promoting internationalisation in VET. The report also contains research on target groups such as teachers, students, vocational schools and VET companies. In the international report general recommendations for being mobile and international are given as well as examples of best practices from the different partner countries. Obstacles one can encounter when going abroad are discussed in the report. Before ending the report with conclusions and proposals in the report the question is discussed “How to improve internationalisation and educational mobility in order to obtain desired outcomes in VET?” (Egetenmeyer et al. 2011).

The **Curriculum Planner** is a step by step methodology for integrating the topics of internationalisation and mobility into daily teaching. This step by step plan is only a suggestion. It gives a first idea on how to plan international activities and integrate them into the classroom. Since the French partner is working with entrepreneurs they could not use the curriculum planner.

The **Teacher Manual** gives you a ready to use methodology to integrate the topics of internationalisation and mobility into daily teaching routine and gives information on

important aspects related with these topics. It provides background information dealing with:

- The benefits of internationalisation and mobility for students, teachers and organisations.
- A discussion on the psychological aspects of being abroad and being involved in internationalisation and mobility.
- A description and further information on EU funding possibilities.
- A step by step curriculum planner.
- A description of student assignments.

The main target group of the manual are teachers in vocational education and training. The manual could be read cover to cover which would provide a good overview of the topics of internationalisation and mobility. Alternatively it can be used as a work reference on which aspects or different sub areas of internationalisation and mobility can be found. Furthermore, the manual includes a reference list with important websites and addresses useful for further research into internationalisation, mobility and EU funding.

The **student assignments** are usable for four professional educational levels and sectors. They focus on four different themes:

- General Background
- Looking Abroad
- Working Abroad
- Work Placement or Studying Abroad

Each assignment comes with a guideline, explaining exactly what the student is required to do. The assignments are usable with minimal preparation. These assignments are structured in a way that all teachers/trainers in all European countries can use them. The project partner from France only introduced specific assignments that fitted their target group. A special version for entrepreneurs was designed by Aline Gaucher, project manager for France as entrepreneurs do not have the same time as students to invest in the assignments and to make the assignments more accessible or recognizable for entrepreneurs, using a different language. This led to the creation of ASSIGNMENT 11 (Duquenne et. al 2012).

The **student certificate** is a confirmation for the students that they have passed the student assignments. When they apply for a placement abroad they can use this certificate as proof of having experience in internationalisation and mobility. It could also be combined with the EUROPASS curriculum vitae.

2.3 Evaluation and proposals

After introducing all products the participants were asked right away about their first impression of the different products.

Project website was generally well received. The structure of the site is easy to follow and it is easy to find the way through it. Participants from Spain did not like that before downloading the materials they have to put in their names and country (Menica 2012). The participants from the Netherlands mentioned that “the banner should not be in the picture of the website” (Kroese 2012).

The **national reports** and **the international report** were evaluated as useful for the teachers as background information but not usable for the students. The teachers estimated that they will not use the reports during the pilot phase. Some of them thought that it is too much to read.

To start implementing internationalisation in their organisation, the teachers find the **curriculum planner** very useful even though they had the opinion that they will need it more after the piloting when they have more information on internationalisation and mobility and when they are pre planning a new school year.

The thoughts on the **teachers’ manual** are as follows: it is a good resource of background information but too much to read. A summary would be helpful.

The **student assignments** with guidelines were very well evaluated. The teachers thought that they were very useful. Especially because of the clear guideline that comes with each assignment.

The reactions of the teachers on the **student certificate** were that it is a good way to make clear that they gain something when passing the assignments. To combine it with the EUROPASS curriculum vitae was appreciated. The teachers from Scotland to develop the certificate further to credit it to the European Qualification Framework or in case of Scotland to the Scottish Qualification Framework.

3. Pilot phase

The pilot phase took place in every piloting country with the piloting teachers. The teachers now used the INtheMC products in their work routine. They tested the student assignments with their students. During this phase the Spanish and the Scottish teachers made a course diary to monitor their experience during the testing. The participating teachers gave feedback on their experiences.

3.1 Numbers of teachers/ trainers/students involved

This is an overview of the all pilot groups from all participating countries. The number of participants, number of VET centres involved, estimated number of participating students and the different VET sectors represented. Although teachers were asked to record and report the numbers of students in contact with assignments, it was difficult to compile exact numbers of participating students. However, combining all the information from the pilot, the pilot diaries and the feedback from the workshops the following estimates were compiled per country:

Table 1: INtheMC Pilot Results (FR, LT, NL, SCO, ES)

	France *	Lithuania	Netherlands	Scotland	Spain
No. of participating staff	N/A	20	19	15	25
No. of VET Centres	N/A	1	16	1	21
No. of participating students (estimated)	30 entrepreneurs	45	122	82	232
VET Sectors Modules	Entrepreneurs Project holders Managers	Furniture makers/Cabinet makers, Shop assistants Bartenders Catering Building & Construction	Tourism; Health care; Commerce; Business administration; Secretary; Marketing; Retail; Media design; Information Technology ; Graphic design; Languages	Hospitality & Tourism, Business & Administration, Information Technology, Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy, Agriculture Sport & Fitness	Marketing and Commerce Mechatronics I.T. Environmental Chemistry Technical English; Enterprise and Entrepreneurship; Professional orientation

* The Pilot Programme in France was adapted and introduced to Entrepreneurs

3.2 Evaluation of assignments/ teacher manual/ management summation

Student Assignments:

All in all, the student assignments were received very well. The teachers said they are easy to integrate into the classroom routine.

In Scotland most curriculum areas focused on assignment 1, 2, 4, 7 and 9. The Scottish teachers also find the EQF levelling appropriate as well as the estimated working hours for each assignment. The assignments were easy to follow and would provide students with insight looks and understanding of internationalisation. Furthermore the teachers from Scotland gave the Feedback that the competences described in the guideline were not always suitable (McGregor 2012).

In Spain assignment 10 was rated as top assignment because it increases the motivation to go abroad. The teachers coming from Spain also mentioned that assignment 9 is not precise enough. Furthermore they gave the feedback that the levelling was not clear enough, it would be easier to understand to have them separated. The competences students can gain with each assignment were mentioned as too ambitious. All in all they said that the assignments do work better in small groups (Menica/Megaw 2012).

In Lithuania the teachers decided to use the assignments in their future work for preparing the students that go abroad. But not only had the teachers given feedback on the assignments the students did as well. They mentioned that by doing the assignments they deepened their professional knowledge by visiting enterprises, shops and by talking to managers from their professional field. Furthermore the students learned their professional terms in English. The students who wrote assignments on preparation for mobility also improved the knowledge of foreign countries. To sum up: from the Lithuanian point of view the assignments are most useful for students who are really going abroad on a work placement (Zygmantaitė/Zableckinė 2012).

The teachers and managers from the Netherland gave the feedback that in general the assignments are ready to use in the classroom to give a broader perspective on aspects of internationalisation such as cultural differences and similarities and raising awareness. It would be easier if the assignments came with advice on which courses or lessons the assignments can be used best. Like in Scotland the Dutch teachers mentioned the estimated working hours as suitable but if one sets the aimed results at a high level more working hours will be needed. Some assignments need more specific guidelines and do not handle the mentioned themes. Like in Scotland and in Spain the teachers coming from the Netherlands gave the feedback that the competences one can gain from one assignment are too much (Kroese 2012, p. 6).

The most popular assignments in terms of quantitative evaluation provided from feedback questionnaires were 4, 5 and 10.

Teacher Manual:

The feedback on the teacher manual coming from the Scottish teachers was that for new lecturers it is an informative resource of benefits of internationalisation and mobility, EU funding and how to apply. They stated it will be very useful for those who wish to further explore European opportunities for their students. Some of the teachers said that the manual was too much to read and that they would prefer a summary (McGregor 2012)

The Spanish teachers said that the information in the manual were too general and did not help them with the implementation of the student assignments in the classroom. Other teachers found it very useful to help their training in the field of internationalisation (Menica/Megaw 2012).

The comments on the teacher manual coming from Lithuania were positive. They stated that the manual will be useful in the future when preparing the students for a work placement abroad (Zygmantaitė/ Zableckinė 2012).

In the Netherlands the teachers found the guidelines that come with each assignment more useful than the teacher manual. However the teachers who function as international coordinators or similar position found the manual useful (Kroese 2012, p. 6).

In France the most interesting result generated from the Manual were the many questions and discussions between teachers and participants about mobility for entrepreneurs and the benefits they could get from it. They were very interested in the opportunity for mobility offered by the “Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs” programme which many of them came into contact with for the first time (Duquenne 2012).

Management summation:

Management who gave feedback to the Management Summation said that the document was an attractive and effective product that initiated good discussion on internationalization at management level. Some constructive criticism mentioned that the text could be shortened and a different image used to steer away from the one of a traditional classroom setting.

3.3 Best practices

The project partner who conducted the piloting where asked for best practice examples that popped up during the feedback of the teachers. Here are some examples out of the many the teachers came up with.²

Best practice example from the Dutch partner:

“Landstede Zwolle, sector Tourism – Marcella Withagen made a new ‘LWP’ (=complicated task) of the set of assignments. She designed an Interactive student task that combines parts of INtheMC assignments together. Two students were testing this electronic assignment in March 2012. Themes are:

1. *Internationalisation in your own country*
2. *Other cultures in your own country*
3. *Looking across the border*
4. *Internationalisation in Tourism*
5. *Mobility”* (Kroese 2012)

Best practice example from the Scottish partner coming from the Hospitality & Tourism/ Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy sector:

“Lecturers used assignment 9 to assist in the selection of students who would undertake a two week work experience in Tenerife. Students had to provide reasons for wanting to visit this country and provide information on how to get there, where to stay, how to get around when they were staying there and what places they would like to visit. The 12 students that were selected also completed assignment 7 to further develop their language skills for a two week work experience.” (MCGregor 2012).

² For further best practice examples go to www.inthemc-project.org and have a look at the second national reports on pilot.

Example for best practice from the Lithuanian partner:

“Student Romena (shop assistant) making assignment No.6 found very much information about the shops in her town. As later she told the teacher it was very to useful to gather the information, she went to many shops, had conversations with managers, found out useful things for herself, because soon she will search for job herself. So the assignment was very useful in terms of searching for job” (Zygmantaitė/Zableckienė 2012).

Best practice example from the Spanish partner:

“The most enthusiastic teacher was one who had used these assignments who her first year students in order to increase their very low interest in mobility programs abroad. The result has been very positive. Her students have realized that Europe is not so far away, that spending some time abroad may not be so “complicated” and many of these students feel now motivated and have already applied for an internship in Europe next school year” (Menica / Megaw 2012).

An example for best practice coming from the French partner who did the piloting with entrepreneurs:

“David, who dream to visit the floral cultures in the Netherlands but didn’t even suspect that such programmes existed for adults, he knew about student mobility programmes but he couldn’t participate because of his low level of studies” (Duquenne et al 2012).

Best practices from all countries convey genuine appreciation of the practical and useful nature of the Assignments.

4. Conclusions and proposals

The Scottish participants of the pilot could see the benefits of internationalisation for their students. Most of them found a way to integrate the student assignments into the curriculum. They intend to further integrate the materials into their teaching. Some could not integrate them due to curriculum limitations. For raising the students’ and staff interest in internationalisation the pilot was seen as very useful (MCGregor 2012).

“The Further Education (VET) Sector in Scotland is seeing unprecedented financial cuts that are having an enormous impact on curriculum. This project (and the development of Internationalisation) requires further investment in staff knowledge and skills, resources to support delivery and mobility and delivery time within the curriculum. With this in mind all products need to be made more available on-line where students can access them more readily. Additional on-line learning resources need to be developed to support this flexible delivery. As a result of the project and taking into account the above conclusions/ recommendations, the number of staff and students engaging in internationalisation and mobility will increase and the knowledge and skills needed to work in the EU will be developed” (MCGregor 2012).

In Spain the teachers who participated in the pilot stated the assignments including the guidelines were the most useful materials because they were ready to use and easy to integrate into their lessons. They pointed out critically that 10 assignments take too much time due to schedules limitations and the most popular assignments were assignments 4, 5 and 10. The HETEL (private network of VET schools) decided to use assignment 10 for the selection and preparation for students who wish to go abroad (Menica / Megaw 2012).

The proposal coming from the international coordinator of HETEL is to work on the assignments with students in their first year to raise interest on internationalisation. The following assignments could be easily implemented in the compulsory transversal modules of Technical English: 1,2,3,4,9 and 10. Assignments 5,6,7 and 8 could be implemented in Labor Orientation (Menica / Megaw 2012).

The partner coming from Lithuania is going to use the Teachers Manual when writing the application for 2012/13 mobility projects and for the preparation of the students going abroad they use the student assignments (Zygmantaitė/Zableckienė 2012) .

“After the project more teachers will be able to use a structured internationalisation programme for preparing students to study or learn on the job in a foreign country. Owing to this programme, numbers will increase and therefore students will have the opportunity of developing skills and competences necessary to be competitive in the EU job market.” (Zygmantaitė/Zableckienė 2012)

The proposal coming from the Lithuanian participants of the pilot is to look at the assignments as an example for teachers. That way teachers get the chance to adapt the assignments to their subject needs (Zygmantaitė/Zableckienė 2012).

In the Netherlands every participant involved in the pilot was eager to use the project products, especially assignments with guidelines, management summation, and brochure. But still the assignments need available teaching hours and managers need money to invest more time in implementing internationalisation and mobility in their institutions (Kroese 2012).

Landstede (partner coming from the Netherlands) *“implements the students assignments in the e-environment (e-TO) [...] meaning that all students/teachers in all Landstede institutes on levels 2,3, and 4 have access to the assignments [...] when e-TO is the educational environment for Landstede”* (Kroese 2012, p. 8).

Another VET institution in the Netherlands Zwolle *“C (Anne-Martine Vahl, institute belonging to Landstede Group), officially implements the project products directly after the pilot, it starts using the student assignments with the Office and Management classes from April until the end of June 2012”* (Kroese 2012 , p. 8).

The Friese Poort College has committed to implementing the project products into the curricula. In August 2013 the “Internationalisation Handbook for students in VET” implements the products as well (Kroese 2012).

The feedback of the French partner (who was the only partner who did the pilot with entrepreneurs instead of VET students) was that the workshop originally made for students was totally adaptable. In France the participants considered the workshop efficient in raising awareness of internationalisation and mobility. Through the pilot they learned a lot about European programmes for mobility for adults and moreover for entrepreneurs. The main obstacle for the entrepreneurs was the language barrier when thinking about work placements abroad.

The proposal coming from France is that it is very important to disseminate the project products into all programmes of support for entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs. Furthermore the benefit for this *“specific audience of entrepreneurs”* was that *“every partner became richer of the other’s reflection. This collaboration shows that this reflection about entrepreneurs could be introduced in other programmes for students.”* (Duquenne et al 2012)

All pilot partners in their National Reports made suggestions to revise details of the assignments such as specifying the aims of each assignment more clearly or narrowing the competence achievement list.

One can see that the INtheMC products were seen as very useful to integrate the topics internationalisation and mobility into VET institutions as well as to institutions for entrepreneurs and to raise the awareness about them. Especially the student assignments with the guidelines were used much and will be implemented into the curriculum in most of the piloting countries.

All the feedback coming from the piloting was discussed by the project consortium meeting in Bilbao Spain in April 2012. Several changes and adaption of the products were made based on this feedback so that now the final versions of all products are available on the INtheMC project website www.inthemc-project.org. The title Teacher Manual was changed to Internationalisation Guide for Teachers in Vocational Education and Training.

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