



# TAKE TECH

## General project information



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

**Graz, July 2012**

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## Introduction – What is Take Tech?

Take Tech is a highly successful and sustainable initiative of the Styrian Business Promotion Agency SFG, which was launched in the year 2009 on behalf of the Economic Department of the Government of Styria. Take Tech gives companies the opportunity to inform students about the broad scope of activities and excellent career prospects offered by them in technical and scientific professions. Young people aged between 8 and 18 from all types of schools in Styria are provided with a wider, more sensitive and more objective view that will help them to make informed decisions on their professional future. Furthermore, the initiative intends to counteract current trends leading away from traditional apprenticeships, which is widely supported by the media.

Through Take Tech companies can present themselves as attractive and future-proof employers with manifold training and career opportunities. In doing so, they have almost unlimited possibilities to arouse students' enthusiasm for their business activity and philosophy and win them over. If requested, all proposed measures are professionally supported by Take Tech. There are no limits to creativity.

Summarising, it can be stated that Take Tech is an excellent opportunity to bring the worlds of young people and economy together, dissolving both prejudice as well as existing constraints. The initiative with its numerous measures and methods marks an important step towards strengthening the innovation capacity and long-term competitiveness of Europe's economy.



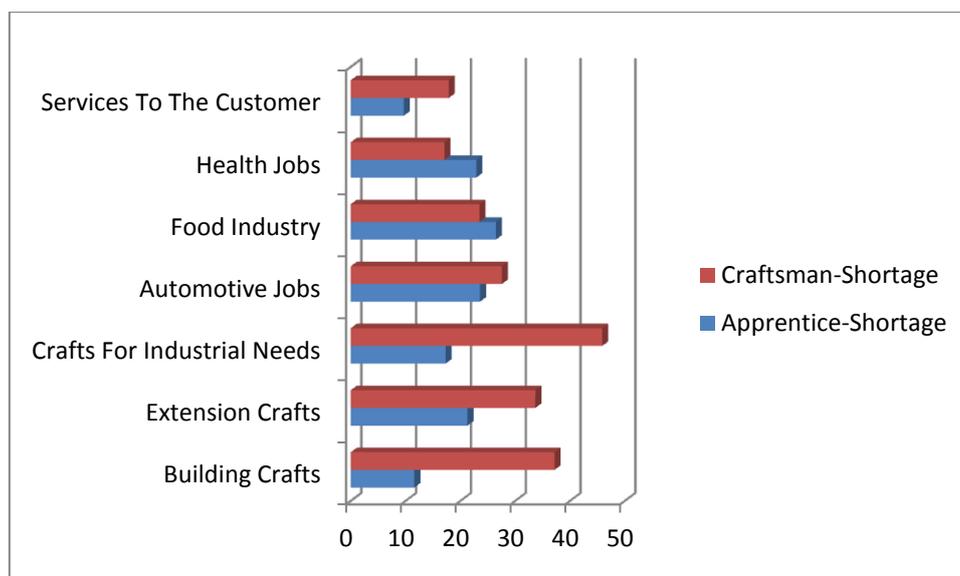
Source: <http://www.sfg.at/>

## Why was Take Tech developed?

Among the greatest challenges on the way to secure the long-term competitiveness of Europe's economy are the development and realisation of marketable innovations and the acquisition of suitable employees who put these innovations successfully into practice. In the province of Styria alone there is a current shortage of 1,000 young professionals in technical and scientific professions. 60% of the province's companies report that they have problems finding the right person for the job. These are only regional figures, but unfortunately they are highly representative of a Europe-wide trend.

For several years, there has been a shortage of well-trained technicians and science oriented staff in many areas of the European economy. Therefore, skilled professionals are very sought-after in many companies, not only in Austria (see figure below). But when we look at the current shortage of apprentices, an improvement of the situation is not in sight in the near future. Since this development is also noticeable in many other European regions, it is high time to counteract this negative trend.

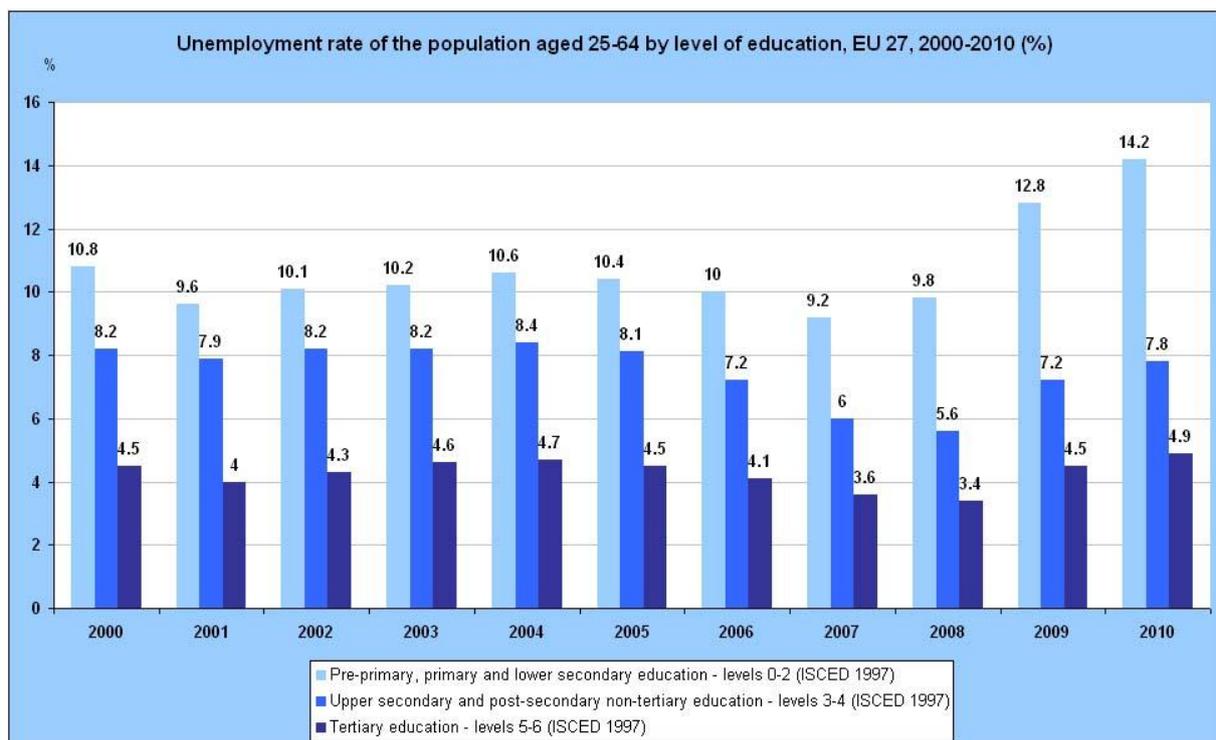
**Shortage of skilled labour in Germany, 2007**



Source: <http://dhi.zdh.de>

Another field that holds enormous potential of action are the rising unemployment rates among people who have not acquired any qualification beyond compulsory schooling (primary and secondary level I, see figure below). Especially in the past years, compulsory school graduates have been increasingly affected by unemployment. In some groups, unemployment rates are more than twice as high as among graduates with higher education.

### Unemployment rate of the population aged 25-64 by level of education, EU 27, 2000-2012



Source: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu>

Primary and lower secondary education levels have an enormous untapped potential of human resources that need to be made available to the European economy. This "orphaning" of countless school-leavers on the employment market roots mainly in the lack of contacts between schools and enterprises. Such contacts should already be established during school time, so that the potential employees of the future can be offered an apprenticeship or a job that corresponds to their skills and interests. The high and still increasing rate of compulsory school graduates could further be absorbed by a better choice of schools and timely information campaigns as well as aptitude and interest tests.

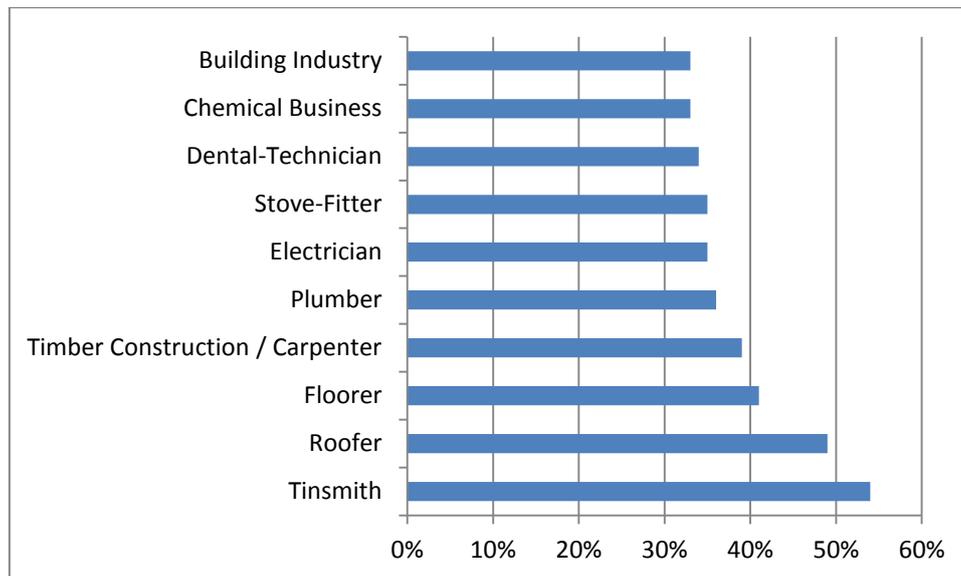
The largely loose or even missing contacts between schools and enterprises, or in other words, between education and economy are another reason why a well-coordinated matchmaking between schools on the one hand, who dispose of the potential craftsmen of the future, and the economy on the other hand, that could offer them profitable, interesting and promising jobs, is so important. Only a smooth cooperation between education and economy can secure a region as an industrial location.

In many countries such forms of cooperation already exist, but only in the form of loose partnerships between schools and individual companies. They are mainly based on the initiatives of individual teachers or companies and often limited to annual company visits or occasional contacts in connection with final papers, etc. Far-reaching and above all target-group specific partnerships aiming at sustainable recruiting schemes are still very rare, although especially central Europe faces a severe shortage of skilled workers.

When we take Austria as an example (see figure below) we can see that the number of commercial and handicraft enterprises who suffer a shortage of skilled labour amount to much more than a third of all companies. As a result, the Austrian economy is lacking both suitable apprentices and skilled workers, who are crucial for maintaining a company's innovation capacity and competitiveness. If this trend continues and the shortage worsens, this will have a bad impact on Europe as a business location because the EU will lose innovative power in the medium and long term.

Only a sound mixture between young and experienced employees guarantees a maximum of innovation. The young need the old and the old need the young. If the balance is destabilised by external factors, which are currently influencing many areas of the European economy, the effects on Europe as a business location will be extremely negative.

**Share of Austrian trades suffering a shortage of skilled labour**



Source: <http://derstandard.at>

The current shortage of apprentices and skilled labour and the lack of contacts between schools and companies were the decisive factors for the formation of Take Tech in 2009. Take Tech was founded by the Austrian Business Promotion Agency SFG on the initiative of Styrian Economic Department of the Government of Styria and is based on the absolute necessity to counteract Europe-wide trends on a European level. Specifically targeted, well-coordinated and sustainable matchmaking activities, combined with specific training contents for both teachers and enterprises are the ideal solution to bring the fields of economy and education together.



Source: <http://www.sfg.at>

Summarising, the following facts can be stated. At present, many business sectors and regions of the European economic landscape are facing massive problems in finding suitable apprentices and – as a result – skilled labour for technical and scientific jobs. Maintaining Europe's common economic area as an innovative, ecologically sound, future-proof and long-term competitive business location requires flexible and high-quality human resource management ensuring a sound mixture of young and experienced employees which are well-trained, highly motivated, have good future prospects and the will to contribute to the success of their company.

The EU project Take Tech has been established to create an adequate tool to achieve this goal and address the above mentioned problems in a sustainable way. The methodology, which has evolved from a regional initiative, will help dissolve prejudice and existing constraints and enable both schools and companies to enjoy the advantages of the symbiotic relationships that will be generated. While schools will be able to intensify their practical orientation, companies can win the interest of young potentials in their work and mission. The win-win-situation that is generated will be of utmost importance for Europe's future as a business location.

## How does Take Tech work?

In its entirety, Take Tech consists of a number of individual measures, e.g. seminars, workshops, company visits, etc. The proceedings of traditional matchmaking activities as part of Take Tech company visits that take place during the regular "Take Tech Action Weeks" shall only be discussed here in short. Each year in June/July, companies have the opportunity to register with Take Tech and inform the organisers about their individual focus and special demands. During the summer months, preparation work and a pre-selection of schools matching the demands of the respective companies are carried out.

Schools interested in Take Tech can register at the beginning of the school year. They too have the opportunity to present their content-related and technical focus to the organisers at this early stage. The general rule here is that the earlier and the more detailed all information and individual demands are communicated, the more success can be achieved.

After that, the matching stage begins. At this stage, the wishes and demands of schools and companies receive special attention. In the time before the Action Week, both sides can prepare for their joint work in the future, supported by personal coaching, numerous preparation workshops and seminars as well as networking events.



Source: <http://www.sfg.at>

Company visits take place regularly in November, as part of the Action Week. During and after this week, interested students can post comments on the Take Tech Facebook site where they can also take part in a competition. Also companies have the opportunity to present themselves on that Facebook site and get in touch with students, teachers and other companies.



Source: <http://www.sfg.at>

Support by the organising body continues after the Action Week in order to consolidate the contacts established and prepare both schools and companies for the extension of their networks. This way, Take Tech accompanies its partners throughout the entire year, forming a closed circle that will pursue its course farther into Europe.

## Goal of the initiative

Through Take Tech students to gain an insight into different companies and get to know technical or scientific professions. They further learn first-hand about training and career opportunities in these professions and the companies who offer them. This will arouse their interest in all forms of education and training for technical and scientific professions where employees are so desperately needed in the European economy.

In this context, the annual "Take Tech Action weeks" take place. These Action Weeks concentrate on priority actions in matchmaking and mark the beginning of intensive long-term contacts between schools and companies. Furthermore, seminars for teachers and representatives of companies as well as networking events are held on a regular basis. All measures are designed to help the two partners adapt to their respective target groups and thus achieve the best possible outcome.

Companies, in turn, can present themselves as attractive employers and raise their profile among the potential young professionals. Here it is important that their presentation is appropriate for young people. This does not mean to merely demonstrate a certain level of coolness, but to keep the target group in mind when combining information and form of presentation.

This way, young people overcome their reservations regarding skilled trades in technical and scientific fields and receive useful information about different occupations, training possibilities, career prospects and, above all, possible incomes in the respective companies.

The goals of Take Tech can be summarised as follows (step by step):

- Provide information and training opportunities for teachers of all grades to help them with the preparation and follow-up of company visits
- Provide information and training opportunities for representatives of companies to facilitate target-group specific preparation, execution and follow-up of company visits for students
- Promote communication and cooperation between schools and companies
- Eliminate prejudices against apprenticeships and other forms of professional training in technical and scientific fields
- Raise awareness in companies for the power and relevance, but also for the needs of students as "resource"

- Increase the quantity and quality of students who wish to enter a career in a technical or scientific field
- Increase the density of qualified staff in companies
- Securing innovative power and thus competitiveness within the European economy in the medium and long term

Summarising, it can be stated that Take Tech is a collection of various concerted measures that form an ideal tool to strengthen the European economy by giving companies access to the important resource "student". Therefore, Take Tech represents the perfect symbiosis between schools and companies, which is of immense importance for Europe as a business location.

## Services for schools

Take Tech offers a great variety of measures and possibilities for schools and their teachers. In Austria, activities connected with Take Tech have been approved as school-related activities, which means, that company visits can be made during teaching time.

The services for schools are designed to help schools prepare for successful company visits and include the following activities (free of charge):

- Personal support with the preparation of company visits
- Workshops for the preparation of company visits, partly in cooperation with national training facilities for teachers
- Networking meetings with companies from the region to establish contacts and promote partnerships
- Working documents and lesson plans for classes with and about Take Tech



Source: <http://www.sfg.at>

## Services for companies

With Take Tech, companies can decide which potential young employees they would like to welcome at their premises and which exciting programme they would like to present to their visitors. As regards the programme, the following rules apply:

- No limits to phantasy
- Maximum organisational freedom



Source: <http://www.sfg.at>

To support the preparation, execution and follow-up of successful company visits for a specific target group, Take Tech offers the following services:

- Personal support with the preparation of company visits
- Basic workshop "Target group: students – How to organise exciting company visits."
- Advanced workshop for companies with creative ideas and the latest tips and tricks
- Networking meetings with teachers from the region to establish contacts and exchange ideas
- Working documents for the organisation of company visits for young people

## Case study

### Take Tech in the regional context: Styria

As already mentioned, Take Tech has its roots in the Austrian province of Styria, from where it is exported to other parts of Europe. In Styria alone, about 90 companies and 2,000 students have participated in the Action Week each year and these numbers are constantly on the rise. In 2009, the first year of the project, a total of 100 company visits were carried out during the Action Week. In 2012 it was 125 and in 2011 an astonishing 142 visits were held.

The leading organisation behind this package of measures, which has been extremely successful on the regional level, is the Styrian Business Promotion Agency SFG. As part of the Take Tech initiative, SFG has created a network of educational facilities and companies that is steadily expanding and has increasingly close ties between its members. Therefore, it seemed only natural that SFG will act as lead partner of the EU project Take Tech and share its experiences with its European partners.



Source: <http://www.sfg.at>

The region benefited greatly from Take Tech because it gave companies the opportunity to gain coordinated access to qualified and motivated students from different school types and age groups and present themselves as potential future employers with excellent career prospects, training possibilities and income opportunities.

This promotes and ensures innovative power and secures the region as business location, benefits that shall now be extended to the partner countries that take part in the EU project Take Tech.

## The EU project Take Tech

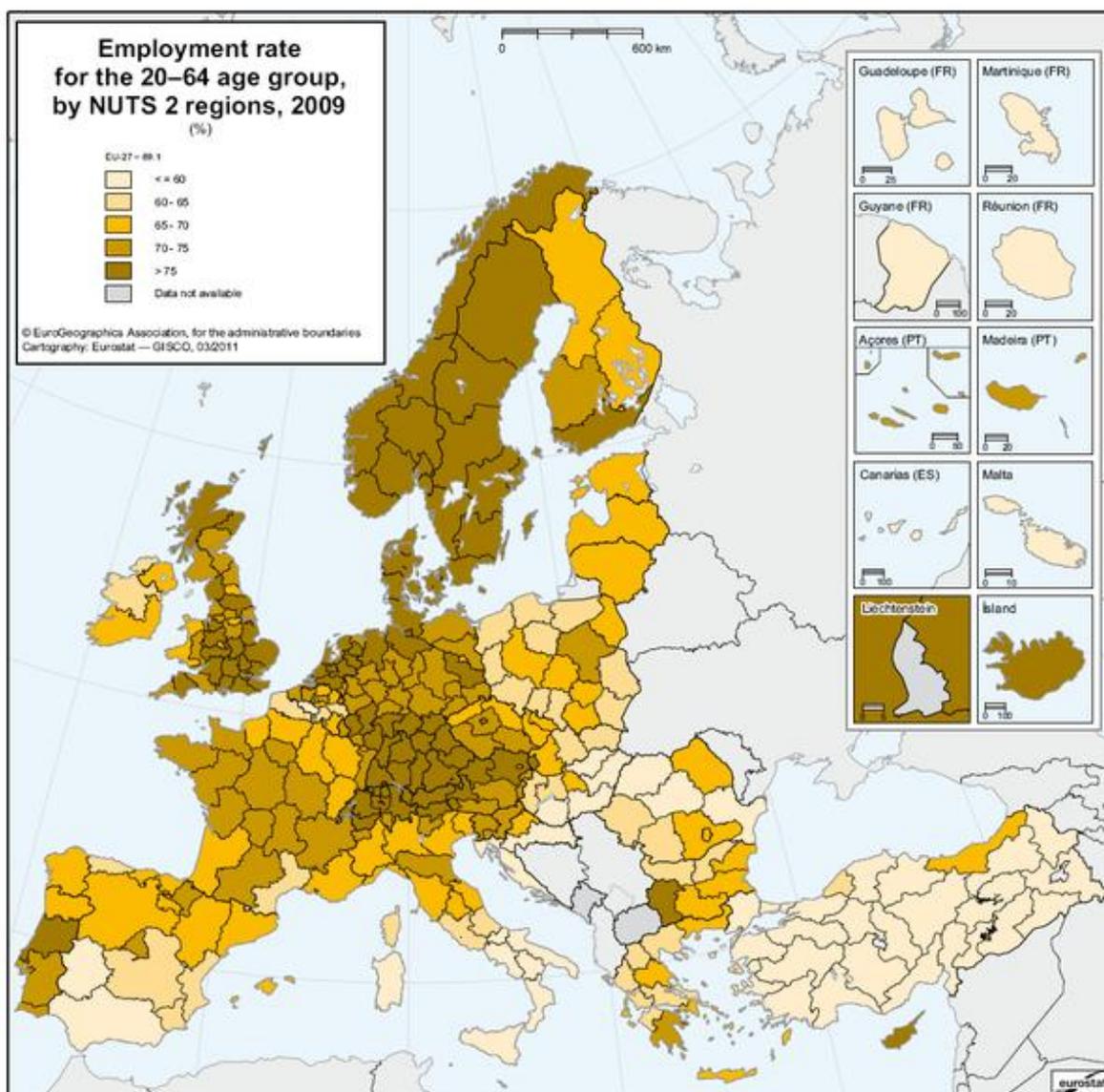
Due to the overwhelming success of Take Tech on the regional level it was decided to expand the initiative to other European regions. With the goal to establish and spread Take Tech on the European level, the EU project Take Tech was developed in cooperation with a number of partner institutions. It is part of the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme and aims to strengthen Europe as a business location by, as it was already mentioned, bringing companies and schools together and getting young people interested in technical and scientific professions. As a result, well-trained young people will be more inclined to pursue apprenticeships and further trainings in the presented companies or occupational fields.



Source: <http://ec.europa.eu>

There is, of course, a great variety of types of employment and occupational fields in Europe and exactly this variety with its small differences and nuances has coined the European Economic Area (see figure below). When looking at the statistical map it is very tempting to assume that the current shortage of skilled labour is only relevant to central Europe, due to the high employment levels in these regions, but this is a wrong assumption. It would be a simple conclusion but it is simply not true.

Even in areas with extremely high unemployment rates, especially those located in the peripheral regions of the EU, Take Tech can help to promote the economy on a sustainable basis. It is easily explained how: By targeted matchmaking Take Tech helps employers to find young personnel with the best possible qualification and training. This way, also companies from these regions can increase their innovative capacity and consequently their economic potential and competitiveness.



Source: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu>

Based on this insight, a multi-professional project team with members from countries with very different economic structures was established. The task of this team is to ensure the long term success of the project and achieve the highest possible level of quality. One important consideration when putting together the team was to include partners from the aforementioned peripheral regions. The project team consists of the following members:



The Styrian Business Promotion Agency SFG from Austria and "inventor" of Take Tech operates as lead partner and is responsible for project management and project coordination. Since it plays an active role in almost all areas of the project, SFG guarantees smooth processes and the best possible project results.



The Styrian Economic Society (STVG) from Austria maintains a close partnership with SFG and has carried out numerous Take Tech measures in cooperation with SFG. The Styrian Economic Society has at its disposal personnel with a high level of pedagogical expertise and is therefore mainly responsible for educational matters.



The Union of chambers of commerce of Veneto (EIC) from Italy disposes of a vast network within the Italian economy. With its ability to open the doors to Italian enterprises and facilitate successful cooperation with them, EIC is an essential partner for Take Tech.



The same applies to the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Dobrich (CCI Dobrich), although it has to be mentioned that, apart from its close ties to Bulgaria's national economy, CCI Dobrich disposes of recognised experts in marketing who bring their expertise into the project.



The Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency (KDRIU) is a regional facility from Hungary which is mainly dedicated to the promotion of economic development. With its vast know-how it will provide training for trainers.



The youth centre in Kalamata is the main project of the Greek youth organisation K.A.N.E. Its strength lies in its expertise regarding young people and their everyday lives and experiences. Therefore, K.A.N.E. plays an essential role for the success of the project and is primarily responsible for "Take Tech in schools".



Junior Achievement EESTI (JA) is an Estonian organisation which offers a variety of trainings for teachers. With its focus on teachers, JA covers the third side of the "Take Tech triangle" between students, companies and teachers and thus ensures a holistic project approach.

To sum up, it can be said that the project team comprises partners from all relevant areas, young people, schools and economy, who all join efforts to achieve the best possible outcome and spread the philosophy and methods of Take Tech to ensure both the long-term success of the project and the continued use of the results at least at regional and national level.

Roughly speaking, the EU Project Take Tech focuses on two main aspects:

- a) Further development of the existing Take Tech modules in specific areas
- b) Transfer of the Take Tech methodology to the partner countries

a) Further development of Take Tech

As part of the EU project two separate modules, "Take Tech in schools" and "Take Tech in companies", will be developed in addition to this general project information. They will be based on the existing working documents, extended by numerous tools and methods and then form part of two handbooks, which will serve as basis for the actual knowledge transfer.

b) Transfer of the Take Tech methodology

The core and main purpose of the entire project is the transfer of the existing methodology to the following partner countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Italy and Hungary. Therefore, a centralised training programme for trainers will be developed. Most importantly, all teaching and learning materials for both schools and companies will be made available in all languages of the partner countries. Consequently, the courses can be held on national level in the partner countries, transferring the Take Tech philosophy in other regions of Europe.

To conclude, the EU project Take Tech pursues the objective to sustainably strengthen the European economy by giving all enterprises access to the most suitable employees of the future.

## Dissemination of Take Tech

Since Take Tech primarily works on the basis of personal contacts, it is essential to spread it as far as possible among the individual target groups. In this case, the target groups are first and foremost students, teachers and companies. Therefore, its effective dissemination requires a mixture of different media, an aspect the project team has given particular attention to.

- Take Tech in the world wide web 

With the website [www.take-tech.eu](http://www.take-tech.eu) a platform has been established that informs about Take Tech's contents and goals and provides support for those involved in the project. It has been translated in all languages of the partner countries, maintains its own download area and provides a list with useful contacts to national partners.

- Take Tech movie 

The Take Tech movie is available in the download area of the website and informs about the project and its goals. It can either be used in an educational context as inspirational opening video for teaching units or shown as part of Take Tech events and trainings as well as seminars and workshops.

- Take Tech information folder 

In order to reach all target groups, the information folder too has been translated into all languages of the partner countries. The folder contains general information about the project and its goals as well as contact details of all national partners.

- Take Tech events

During the entire course of the project and afterwards Take Tech will be presented at various events in order to familiarise the educational and economic landscape with its goals and contents and raise awareness for the necessity of the project. Therefore, the presentations are available in all languages of the partner countries.

- Take Tech on  Facebook

In the run-up to the project, an Austrian Facebook site <http://facebook.com/sfg.taketech> was installed where schools can present themselves and users can post comments and inform themselves about Take Tech companies. The site can also be used to prepare students for company visits. Furthermore, companies have the chance to present themselves to the students as attractive future employers with excellent career and training opportunities.



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