



**VETWORK - Network to strengthen the relation
between VET and the world of work at the
governance and implementation level**

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

Project acronym: VETWORK

Project title: Network to strengthen the relation between VET and the world of work at the governance and implementation level

Project number: 527826-LLP-1-2012-1-BE-LEONARDO-LNW

Sub-programme or KA: Leonardo da Vinci Multilateral Network

Project website: VETWORK.eu

Reporting period: From 01/11/2012
To 31/03/2014

Report version: v.1

Date of preparation: 18/05/2014

Beneficiary organisation: CAMARA OFICIAL DE COMERCIO E INDUSTRIA

Project coordinator: José A. Ivars Sánchez

Project coordinator organisation: CAMARA OFICIAL DE COMERCIO E INDUSTRIA

Project coordinator telephone number: 0034-958 53 61 52-264

Project coordinator email address: jivars@camaragranada.org

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.

© 2008 Copyright Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency.

The document may be freely copied and distributed provided that no modifications are made, that the source is acknowledged and that this copyright notice is included.

Executive Summary

VETWORK is a Network, which has been approved within the Leonardo da Vinci Programme. The project started up on October 1st 2012 and will last for three years.

The partnership is composed of key stakeholders of the VET system: two major networks representing VET at EU level and guaranteeing an EU-wide coverage - EVTA (BE) and EVBB (DE). A third network, MENON (BE), is involved and made responsible for dissemination given its solid networking capacity. The Chamber of Commerce of Granada (ES) represents the world of work. Scinter, than substituted by SOPHIA R&I (IT) represents the world of research and brings in its longlasting experience in policy analysis in the field of VET and its experience in benchmarking design in the field of learning. FiaTest (RO) is a training and consultancy company focused on quality management and Quality Assurance for VET.

The VETWORK project aims to contribute to innovate and improve the integration between VET and the workplace by providing benchmarking systems, guidelines, recommendations and suggestions on the design, implementation, assessment and certification that will address methodological, functional, content and organisational innovation in line with the priorities and strategic objectives of the Bruges Communiqué for new skills for new jobs.

The project foresees the establishment of a multi-stakeholders' network as a necessary condition for sustainability of project outcomes and results at two levels:

- 1) The governance level through stakeholders' systematic collaboration (on e.g.: identification of new skills for learners, VET and in-company trainers, definition of agreed quality criteria and processes, etc.) and;
- 2) The implementation level to maximise effectiveness and impact of mixed/blended VET/workplace training paths. To do so, the project implies three main components: research, development and networking. The focus area of the project will be the area of training integrating WBL and VET providers training and support services.

Table of Contents

1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES	5
2. PROJECT APPROACH.....	6
3. PROJECT OUTCOMES & RESULTS	8
4. PARTNERSHIPS.....	14
5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.....	15
6. CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES.....	17

1. Project Objectives

VETWORK aims to contribute to innovate and improve the integration between VET and the workplace by providing benchmarking systems, guidelines, recommendations and suggestions on the design, implementation, assessment and certification that will address methodological, functional, content and organisational innovation in line with the priorities and strategic objectives of the Bruges Communiqué and new skills for new jobs.

The **specific objectives** are:

- to provide a set of **success stories of integration between VET and the world of work** focusing combined VET/workplace training for young people and adults to reduce the implementation gap existing between what is learnt through VET and what is applied (and needed) at the workplace;
- To design, **develop and test a benchmarking system** matching the micro-meso needs of companies, employers and VET providers (measuring effectiveness in reducing the implementation gap and assisting them in strategy redefinition for performance improvement) and the macro-needs of European VET as expressed in the Bruges Communiqué (methodological and organisational innovation, excellence, quality assurance, assessment and certification of formal and informal learning, mobility);
- To launch, maintain and make sustainable a **consensus building exercise** through an on-line Learning Community involving networks representing relevant stakeholders in VET and the world of work on challenges and recommendations for the innovation of European VET (representatives of social partners, enterprises, education and training providers, trainers, employment services, public authorities, research organisations, learners and will contribute) through thematic discussions on: methodological and organisational innovation, excellence, quality assurance, assessment and certification of formal and informal learning, mobility;
- To provide of a **set of recommendations and guidelines to policy and decision makers for VET innovation** in a more integrated perspective between VET and the world of work addressing the policy as well as the implementation dimension.

2. Project Approach

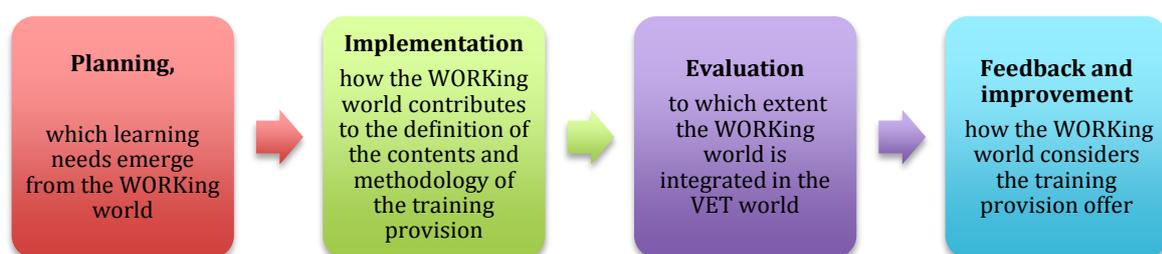
VETWORK is a EU network to strengthen collaboration between VET providers and the world of work. Although the project is expected to last for three years, the objective is to create a dynamic network, which can keep collaborating in the future.

VETWORK aims to offer a larger initiative where different actors involved in VET, employment and territorial strategies can work together in a sustainable perspective to ensure a strong impact to their common actions, in line with the priorities and strategic objectives of the Bruges Communiqué for new skills for new jobs and as a necessary condition for sustainability of project outcomes and results at two levels:

1) The governance level through stakeholders' systematic collaboration (e.g.: identification of new skills for learners, VET and in-company trainers, definition of agreed quality criteria and processes, etc.) and;

2) The implementation level to maximise effectiveness and impact of mixed/blended VET/workplace training paths. To do so, the project implies three main components: research, development and networking. The focus area of the project will be the area of training integrating Work Based Learning (WBL) and VET providers training and support services.

The project builds on previous work done in the field of quality assurance in vocational training. In particular the overall approach integrates the previous experience of BEQUAL project, which allowed practical application of the CQAF in VET through the use of online benchmarking tool and best practice database, whereas VETWORK project aims at quality in VET-WORKing world relationship. The VETWORK benchmarking system has been therefore based on Deming's quality approach and translates on four operations related to quality processes, namely:



The VETWORK methodology is thus threefold and based on:

1. Analysing previous experience in the field

50 cases have been collected at EU level responding to the main following criteria: 1) to represent one of the geographical cluster areas identified (northern, eastern, southern Europe); 2) to show potentially interesting elements concerning the integration of VET/workplace training. Out of the 50 identified cases, 20 have been selected that show particularly interesting, transferable and innovative elements for

practices integrating VET/workplace training and thereby reducing the so called “implementation gap” and have been analysed in depth through desk research and questionnaires.

2. At defining the benchmarking system

The focus areas, criteria and indicators have been defined; thanks to the partners experiences integrated with the good practice analysis results. These are: methodological and organisational innovation, excellence, quality assurance, assessment and certification of formal and informal learning, mobility and will imply for instance analysis of: the role of mentor/tutor at the workplace; the contribution of a better integration between VET and the world of work to the attractiveness of VET systems; the contribution of a better integration between VET and the world of work to workers’ productivity; the role of mobility in enhancing a better integration between VET and the world of work.

3. At connecting the VET and the WORKing world

The third step is the one to be implemented in during the incoming months. Building on the results of good practice analysis and of benchmarking and integrating these with the discussions held within the Stakeholders Roundtable on challenges related to increasing integration between VET and the workplace a set of guidelines will be produced for integrated VET/workplace training planning, implementation, assessment and certification. Along this, a set of recommendations will be produced for policy and decision makers to facilitate the connection between VET and the world of work.

The innovating elements of this approach are:

1. The provision of a benchmarking system and tool (validated by educational institutions and companies) measuring the effectiveness of integration between VET, in-company training and WBL;
2. The provision of practical guidelines and policy recommendations jointly developed with the direct beneficiaries to support the training sector; educational institutions, companies and decision makers in effectively improving the levels of integration, with positive effects on individual empowerment and mobility of learners, as well as on VET attractiveness and innovation closer to the world of work.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

During its 18 months of activity, VETWORK has produced the first four milestones:

- 1) The **good practice report** highlighting success stories of integration between VET and the world of work focusing on combined VET/workplace training for young people and adults and highlighting the most common joint activity areas between the two worlds -VET and WORK, which are: i) the joint identification of the learning needs; ii) the joint identification of the competences to be achieved, Established dialogue VET/ employers, iii) the elaboration of joint qualifications; and iv) the provision of joint support to the learners. While the other areas, i.e. the joint quality assurance; the joint monitoring employability outcomes; the joint assessment; the respective roles in innovation policy; and the trainers exchanges are less represented.
- 2) The **VETWORK web site**, a key dissemination tool that will also host the on-line benchmarking tool;
- 3) The alfa **VETWORK on-line benchmarking tool** (temporary: www.sophiaconsulting.it/vetwork and than www.vetwork.eu/benchmark), which is going to be tested in May 2014 and than piloted among a larger group of users towards the final validation. A more detailed description follows below.
- 4) Also the stakeholders' engagement process to set up the **stakeholders' community** has been started up and will continue during the next 18 months, as a key sustainability-enabling factor as well as inspiring and validating the benchmarking indicators. The stakeholders' roundtable is in fact not a traditional steering committee, meeting physically a few times (4 times in the project) but a broader set of stakeholders consulted both in face-to face. Workshops and online to generate feedback on project outcomes and directions for further developments.
The stakeholders' community involves representatives of VET and the world of work as well as other relevant stakeholders aiming at discussing and proposing suggestions and strategies for an improved integration between VET and the world of work. So far the stakeholders roundtable met during the General Assemblies of EVTA (27-28 June 2013, Toulouse), EVBB (Athens 23rd October 2013) and during the workshop on the benchmarking indicators held in Frankfurt on November 5th in coincidence with the 3rd partners coordination meeting.

Apart from these major results, the project has produced other outcomes, namely:

- The **methodology report** and tools to give an overview on current knowledge and practices, thus building the basis to decide for the most relevant methodologies and tools to use in improving the integration between VET and work. This knowledge has provided the utilities with the possibility to learn about their own practice while at the same time learning from other practices. The utilities' common goal is to search for best management practice in linking VET and work world, in search of best practice that optimise solutions for their business.

- An intermediate **quality and evaluation assessment** that identifies strengths and weaknesses, as well as risks and opportunities of the VETWORK approach.
- A number of **communication and networking outcomes**, such as the project dissemination plan and materials, website (<http://www.vetwork.eu>), presentations at conferences.

From the VETWORK Benchmarking System to the Benchmarking on line tool

The VETWORK consortium is developing an on-line benchmarking tool to allow self-assessment and measurement of integration effectiveness between VET and the world of work.

The tool will help users to assess to which extent training as delivered by VET providers integrated with WBL is applied and used at the workplace, thereby also measuring the so-called “learning gap” and “implementation gap” and enhancing a reflection on strategies to be adopted to improve integration.

The benchmarking tool contains questions that have been elaborated based on a set of general and specific indicators. By replying to the questions posed by the benchmarking tool, the users will get an assessment of their performance as well as a highlight of the weak areas that shall be addressed to enhance integration.

The tool as such is the result of a benchmarking exercise implemented through the desk and the field research and the testing of the indicators. Once the results of the benchmarking have been produced and analysed, the final step concerns the design of a clear framework, a precise action plan and to convert the results and benchmarking efforts into improved processes and organisational change.

Plans for changes should be realistic and include clear steps over time. Obviously while the focus of the benchmarking system will determine the immediate and long term action plan, short and long term goals to improve performance should be identified, and detailed action plans agreed upon to adopt good practices found in other VET/ WBL providers.

Integrating benchmarking into strategic planning, conducting benchmarking systems as a regular practice, and introducing new topics for benchmarking will support on-going organisational evaluation and retaining a competitive edge.

The VETWORK benchmarking system is based on 4 categories of indicators:

1. Input indicators
2. Process indicators
3. Outcomes indicators
4. Institutional context indicators

For each category a set of general and specific indicators has been detailed. The translation of the indicators into a questionnaire - using a Lickert scale to measure the processes performances – allows VET provider organisations to conduct self-assessment and to compare themselves with other VET providers active in the same field; it also allows to identify best performers on each indicators and to establish collaborative learning groups among organisations and working teams at international level.

Here follows two **tables** summarising **i) the four categories of indicators** (as validated to date through three major workshops in Toulouse on the 27-28/06/2013, Athens on the 23/10/2013 and Frankfurt on the 4-5/11/2013) and **ii) a scheme showing the process of the VETWORK benchmarking as it is structured in the piloting phase**, with the sequence of interactions between participating VET providers and the VETWORK team/community.

VETWORK BenchMarking categories of indicators

Category 1: Input indicators (I)			
General Indicators	Specific Indicators (observable/measurable)	Levels	Score
I.1. Existing VET-WORK relations	I.1.1. Presence of industry stakeholders and professional unions in the board of VET organisations	· None	0
		· Implemented, but not effective	1-4
		· Implemented and effective	5
	I.1.2. Level of influence of industry/companies in VET organisations	· None	0
		· Limited to some fields	1-4
		· Very substantial and effective	5
	I.1.3. Extent of recognition by the local employers	· None	0
		· Partially	1-4
		· Fully recognised	5
I.2. Teachers/Trainers with previous work experience	I.2.1. Number of specific trainings/conferences, workshops for each T/T of VET organization in last year	· None	0
		· 1 to 4 in average	1-4
		· More than 4 in average	5
	I.2.2. Existence of criteria on trainer recruitment related to his/her work experience, such as: number of years in the field, expertise in the field	· None	0
		· Only for some groups of teachers/trainers	1-4
		· Yes, practically for all teachers/trainers	5
	I.2.3. Percentage of T/T with practical experience in the specific field, not only in education area	· Less than 20%	0
		· 20% to 50%	1-4
		· More than 50%	5
I.3. Technical Equipment and use of company resources	I.3.1. Up-to-date technical equipment used in VET org.	· No	0
		· Only partially	1-4
		· Yes	5
	I.3.2. Access to technical equipment from local industry granted to VET org.	· No	0
		· Only during internships	1-4
		· Both during internships and planned practical sessions during the study program	5

Category 2: Process indicators (P)

General Indicators	Specific Indicators (observable/ measurable)	Levels	Score
P1 Joint learning needs identification	P.1.1. Frequency of processes to identify learning needs	· Never or very seldom	0
		· Every two-three years	1-4
		· At least every year	5

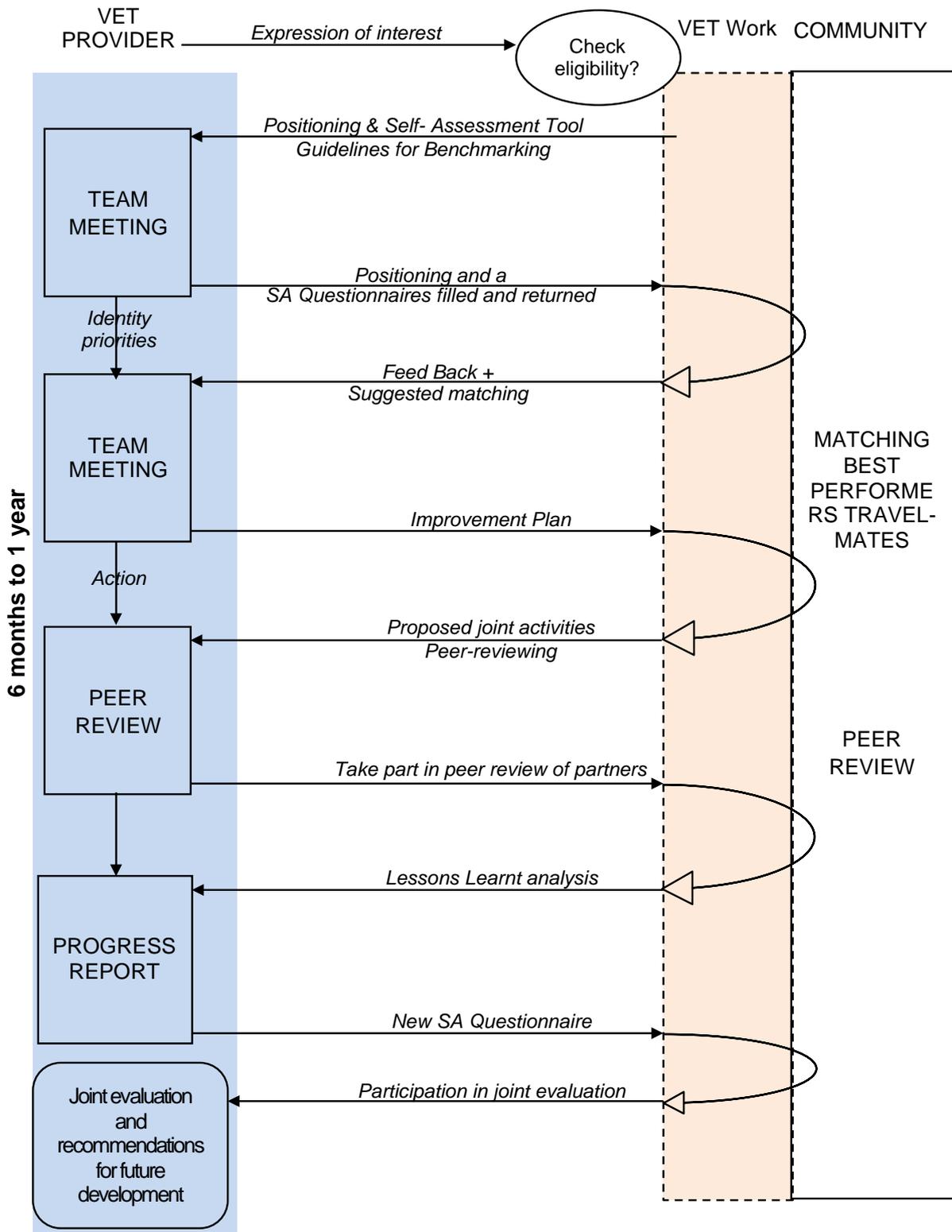
Category 1: Input indicators (I)

General Indicators	Specific Indicators (observable/measurable)	Levels	Score
I.1. Existing VET-WORK relations	I.1.1. Presence of industry stakeholders and professional unions in the board of VET organisations	· None	0
		· Implemented, but not effective	1-4
		· Implemented and effective	5
	I.1.2. Level of influence of industry/companies in VET organisations	· None	0
		· Limited to some fields	1-4
		· Very substantial and effective	5
	I.1.3. Extent of recognition by the local employers	· None	0
		· Partially	1-4
		· Fully recognised	5
I.2. Teachers/trainers with previous work experience	I.2.1. Number of specific trainings/conferences, workshops for each T/T of VET organization in last year	· None	0
		· 1 to 4 in average	1-4
		· More than 4 in average	5
	I.2.2. Existence of criteria on trainer recruitment related to his/her work experience, such as: number of years in the field, expertise in the field	· None	0
		· Only for some groups of teachers/trainers	1-4
		· Yes, practically for all teachers/trainers	5
	I.2.3. Percentage of T/T with practical experience in the specific field, not only in education area	· Less than 20%	0
		· 20% to 50%	1-4
		· More than 50%	5
I.3. Technical Equipment and use of company resources	I.3.1. Up-to-date technical equipment used in VET org.	· No	0
		· Only partially	1-4
		· Yes	5
	I.3.2. Access to technical equipment from local industry granted to VET org.	· No	0
		· Only during internships	1-4
		· Both during internships and planned practical sessions during the study program	5

Category 2: Process indicators (P)

General Indicators	Specific Indicators (observable/ measurable)	Levels	Score
P1 Joint learning needs identification	P.1.1. Frequency of processes to identify learning needs	· Never or very seldom	0
		· Every two-three years	1-4
		· At least every year	5

VETWORK BenchMarking Process in the piloting phase



4. Partnerships

The composition of the consortium ensures the representation of the key stakeholders and target groups involved in VETWORK. The presence of key networks incorporating stakeholders and target users representatives will play a strategic role in terms of dissemination, valorisation and exploitation. The partnership is indeed composed of key stakeholders of the VET system: two major networks representing VET at EU level and guaranteeing a EU-wide coverage. This is expected to have a positive, cascade effect on dissemination and exploitation.

→ **EVTA** – the European Vocational Training Associations based in Belgium and

→ **EVBB** - the Europäischen Verbandes Beruflicher Bildungsträger based in Germany, which is represented by BFI and IB, as members of EVBB working with relevant European stakeholders and regional companies to validate and test the evolved benchmarking tool. BFI and IB have an operative role in benchmarking piloting and validation. EVBB has involved BFI and IB as main contributing members in the project-consortium. BFI and IB will conduct the piloting of the common results in close cooperation with companies.

→ A third network, **MENON** – based in Belgium, is involved and made responsible for dissemination given its solid networking capacity.

→ The **Tavistock Institute**, member of MENON, provides its experience as a research and evaluation organisation. The **Chamber of Commerce of Granada** (Spain) represents the world of work. Scianter, now substituted by **SOPHIA R&I** based in Italy, represents the world of research and brings in its long-lasting experience in policy analysis in the field of VET and its experience in benchmarking design in the field of learning. **Fiatest** is a Romanian training and consultancy company focused on quality management and Quality Assurance for VET.

5. Plans for the Future

The future activities of the project will be developed into two different directions:

- a) The **implementation one**, including the completion of the benchmarking tool, therefore its testing and piloting towards the final validation.
- b) The **mainstreaming one** – both vertically and horizontally, that will promote the use of the tool through the stakeholders roundtable and the on-line community and aiming at encouraging debate and further promotion of VET/workplace integration also through a set of recommendations for policy and decision makers.

During the next 18 months, therefore the project will implement the following steps:

a) IMPLEMENTATION AREA:

→ The first step to be finalised is the **testing of the benchmarking tool**, as it has been developed so far. This will be done during the Focus Group that will be held in Wien on May 28th and which is involving the partners' representatives, and the target users: 5 representing the analysed good practices and 5 representing external organizations/companies, not involved in the good practice activities.

This will allow getting a feedback from users on the user friendliness and usefulness of the tool and to refine questions in case they are not clear to the target group plus identifying new questions, criteria and indicators to be introduced.

→ The second step will be the finalisation of the **on-line help desk** to assist users when necessary and the **guidelines** for the use of the benchmarking system.

→ Once the two previous phases are completed, the **piloting and validation phase** will start, from June 2014 and the benchmarking on-line tool will be made available on the project web site. At least 10 "groups" of at least 3 institutions and companies will be invited to use it. The Piloting groups will be identified through the 3 main networks involved in the project piloting. It will mainly consist in the use of the benchmarking tool, helpdesk and on-line learning community services to assess the effectiveness of the system provided in supporting improvement of VET-WORK collaboration for effective training of resources.

→ The results of the piloting will lead to the **validation of the benchmarking tool** that will be made public on the project web site. A piloting and validation report will outline the process and results of piloting and validation, showing the changes made and the eventually new features introduced.

B) AWARENESS RAISING AND MAINSTREAMING ACTIVITIES

→ VETWORK will be organising an **international Conference** within the first 6 months of 2015 in Brussels and organised by EVTA, which will represent a key "public moment" of the project and the launch of the validated Benchmarking tool and approach. In parallel, a number of dissemination activities will make sure that the

results of the project will be broadly known to the following stakeholders groups: VET providers, companies/employers, social partners, chambers of commerce, confederations of industries, quality assurance agencies, trainers, trainees, public authorities.

Additionally, all the activities foreseen both at the research and implementation level imply a direct involvement of target users and stakeholders' representatives. This has shown a positive, cascade effect on dissemination and exploitation, for instance, companies and VET providers using the on-line benchmarking tool and learning community and finding them useful will suggest their peers to use them as well. Project partners are indeed acting as "valorisation facilitators" of the outputs, tools and communities developed by organising on-line and face to face events aimed at the promotion of innovative cooperation models between VET and the world of work and at discussing adaptation of the benchmarking system and guidelines to national and sector specificities even beyond the project end.

→ To this respect the partnership will produce a set of **guidelines and recommendations**, building on the results of the piloting and aiming at increasing integration between VET and the workplace, through joint training planning, implementation, assessment and certification. Along this, a set of recommendations will be produced for policy and decision makers. The two major networks will be involved in the definition of an **exploitation and mainstreaming strategy** focussing on the adaptation of the benchmarking tool and guidelines to the specific needs of different industrial and service sectors as well as the possibility to elaborate new models for VET/workplace training integration thanks to the use of ICT for learning.

As a **BRIDGING TOOL** between the implementation steps and the mainstreaming ones, the partners already started up the development of an **on-line learning community**. It will allow experts and practitioners to interact "around" the VETWORK results. It will be a virtual discussion place addressing primarily target users (VET institutions, organisations and companies employers) as well as all relevant stakeholders, and will serve several purposes:

1. to **enhance a benchlearning exercise**, meaning that the users of the benchmarking tool will be able to comment and discuss the results of their benchmarking in a constructive perspective (with exchange of good practices and sharing of experiences)
2. to **support thematic discussions** among members on the focus areas identified by the project
3. to **function as a virtual meeting place for the members of the Stakeholders Roundtable** who will be able to follow up the discussions of the foreseen Stakeholders' meetings.

The community will also have a key role in ensuring exploitation of project results and sustainability of the project in the long term, as the plan is to keep it alive beyond the contractual end of the project.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The project is relevant to the overall modernisation agenda of European VET, by analysing and providing good practice collections, instruments for benchmarking and collaborative environments for VET providers and representatives of the world of work. It is particularly coherent with the employment policy of the EU and the European Alliance for Apprenticeship, due to its focus on collaboration (including joint design, delivery and assessment of training programmes) between VET and enterprises. It also specifically addresses the theme of validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal learning, one of the pillars of EU recent policy in the field of Lifelong Learning. Finally and more specifically, it helps to address several of the areas for EQAVET further development as identified by the recently published evaluation of EQAVET implementation (January 2014). The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011- 2020 issued a set of current and future challenges to be addressed to respond to the emerging and future economic and social needs of Europe. Particular emphasis is put on individual development and empowerment, in a Lifelong Learning perspective. **A well performing VET, which enables learning on and off-the job on a part-time and full-time basis can thereby also strongly contribute to social cohesion in our societies**". In this context, the Communiqué calls for "cooperation models [between VET and] companies and professional branch organisations" and states that "work-based learning carried out in partnership with businesses and non-profit organisations should become a feature of all initial VET courses.

On the governance side, recognising the achievements of the Copenhagen Process in raising awareness on the importance of VET at national and European level and in developing tools (Europass, EQF, ECVET and EQAVET), principles and guidelines that are helping to increase transparency and transferability of qualifications and to improve the flexibility and quality of learning, the Communiqué calls for a better and more intense communication "to involve the stakeholders: social partners, VET providers, civil society and learners" in the innovation and upgrading process of VET. In relation to this issue, one of the key strategic objectives set is to "**promote partnerships between social partners, enterprises, education and training providers, employment services, public authorities, research organisations and other relevant stakeholders** in order to ensure a better transfer of information on labour market needs and to provide a better match between those needs and the development of skills, knowledge and competence (...). The development of a common language aimed at bridging the world of education and training (..) and the world of work (...) should be continued (...)".

The VETWORK system has been designed to address the above-mentioned challenges as set out in the Bruges Communiqué and to contribute to the above mentioned strategic priorities. **VETWORK addresses both the implementation and the governance dimensions related to the relation between VET and the world of work focusing on the area of training integrating work-based learning (WBL) and VET providers teaching and support services.**

