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**CAPE – Careers Advice and Pathways to Employment**  
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## **IO8**

### **GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT**

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## THE GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

### Description

The Guide to Effective Employer Engagement is a tool that builds on feedback from Employers at employer forums and networks, and on the research carried out under the needs analysis of employers and VET schools on the matter.

It provides good practices, case studies regarding effective employer engagement and makes recommendations on how best utilise employer led activity and embed it into the careers and vocational curriculum.

This Guide targets decision makers, practitioners (teachers, tutors, counsellors) and employers, helping decision makers to establish school policies and practitioners to put policies into practice in cooperation with employers.

Through employers' engagement with VET schools and a close cooperation between them, **VET schools** can embed employer led activity into educational programs to better prepare learners for the labour market, and **employers** can be involved in the preparation of highly qualified labour.

The Guide to Effective Employer Engagement will be available in digital form on the website of the project for download (<http://cape-project.eu/>), in the languages of CAPE project's partners: English, Portuguese, Spanish, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian and Italian.



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## Context

“Business have an important role to play in partnering with schools (...) to raise ambition and achievement and improve performance. By providing young people with work experience and becoming involved with career guidance, employers can spell out the value of the skills and knowledge developed in school and open pupils’ eyes to career opportunities”

*(Changing the Pace – CBI/Pearson education and skills survey, 2013)*

This is the baseline for the Guide to Effective Employer Engagement: possible solutions for a close relationship between employers and VET schools, resulting in greater involvement of companies in both structured and informal educational programmes, preparing learners to meet job market needs, either through their contribution in educational programs or in Career Advice and Guidance services, promoting learners’ employability.

This Guide is a practical tool to be used by employers and practitioners that also provides policy makers with some suggestions on measures to be developed to promote their cooperation. It is based not only in the Needs Analysis Report on Employers and VET Schools regarding what competencies and skills are expected to be present on learners, but also on the importance that Career Advice and Guidance services have on the development of those competencies and skills. It suggests what can be done to improve those services and gives case studies provided by employers and practitioners that mirror the reality of successful cooperation between VET schools and companies as an example to follow.

With the constant changes that occur in both learning and work, flexibility, self-reliance, entrepreneurship and career management skills will be required from young people when entering the labour market. Issues regarding skill gap worry not only VET schools but also employers, who see it as a threat regarding the creation of a thriving economy.

Poor career advice creates disconnection between the information given to young people in VET schools and the reality of today’s job market. A good quality career education and advice is important for learners to get the skills and qualifications they need, and inspiration by future possibilities.

OECD research studies (*OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training*, 2010) suggest young people value information on jobs and career if obtained in a real workplace and through contacts with working people. Enrolling in apprenticeship



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programs while in school appears to improve training completion rates and provide employment opportunities for many young people who lack contacts in labour market.

In some countries, the education system is not keeping pace with the needs of business and the job opportunities available. To make it happen, and to ensure learners leave VET schools ready to work, employers and VET schools need to work together.

Employers' engagement with VET schools can offer:

- ✓ Career advice;
- ✓ Work placements;
- ✓ Staff mentoring;
- ✓ Assignment of real life projects;
- ✓ Demonstration about the relevance a curriculum has to the real world.

It is important to know what employers think they can bring to educational programmes in order to better prepare learners for entering the job market, how can contacts between VET schools and companies be developed for their engagement and how employers see the work done by VET schools in preparing learners for the labour market, giving suggestions on how to improve it.

Employers' insights regarding labour market needs, skills needed to answer to those needs, what the main areas of employability are, what has to be develop with learners in VET Schools to better prepare them for work are issues to be discussed.

In addition, it is important to realise how practitioners see the work done by Career Advice and Guidance services with learners and what they think that can be improved.

## SUMMING UP!

- ✓ A good quality career education and advice is important for learners to get the skills and qualifications they need, and inspiration by future possibilities;
- ✓ Enrolling in apprenticeship programs while in school appears to improve training completion rates and provide employment opportunities for many young people who lack contacts in labour market;
- ✓ Employers' engagement with VET schools can offer career advice, work placements, staff mentoring, assignment of real life projects and demonstration about the relevance a curriculum has to the real world.



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## Needs Analysis Report

### Main results on Employers' Needs

The content of the Needs Analysis Report on Employers is based on an interview made to employers from the countries that compose CAPE project's partnership (Spain, Netherlands, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Poland, Italy and Cyprus), belonging to companies that provide work-based traineeships to learners in a given period of their training.

They were asked questions regarding, among other issues, the educational background of their new employees (employed in the last 5 years), which career competences they expected to find in new young employees and also the ones they really find (using a table with specific skills) and the skills participants think young people lack when applying for jobs.

Participants were also asked about the importance they think Career Advice and Guidance services have during trainees' education, how could these services be improved and what role could employers play in that improvement.

Below is a summary of the results of these interviews, which shows the needs of employers regarding the skills of new employees and the role they can play in VET schools through their engagement with practitioners and Career Advice and Guidance services:

### **Impact on Learners/Trainees who benefited from Career Advice and Guidance services**

For Employers, these learners/trainees seem more integrated and capable to learn more once they feel more comfortable. They show knowledge regarding business reality and also a good performance. For participants, these services guaranties that learners choose adequate paths for their professional future once their career decision is based on the information given by Career Advice and Guidance services.

Learners/trainees who did not benefit from these services needed additional support and felt lost, employers stated.



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### **Suggestions on how to improve Career Advice and Guidance services in VET Schools**

- ✓ More mentoring sessions with learners;
- ✓ Career-orientation as an obligatory subject, teaching work-skills and work-behaviour to learners (e.g. arriving on time, follow the instructions strictly...);
- ✓ Work-place practice at different areas during the school-years;
- ✓ Better organized obligatory 50 hours voluntary work;
- ✓ Greater focus on the development of the fields of social and practical-communicational skills;
- ✓ More engagement with companies/entities and the world of work, with guided visits to factories, shops, offices, and lectures from different professionals;
- ✓ Better managers/mentors dedicated to the integration of trainees;
- ✓ Having someone in Career Advice and Guidance Services who could have business knowledge (professional experience in the area);
- ✓ Development of career planning skills, job searching skills, soft skills (e.g. communication, customer care) and specific attitudes (seriousness, an increased level of responsibility in the workplace);
- ✓ Career Advice and Guidance Services to learners/trainees to benefit from, at least during the final school years, personalized and linked to the real labour market situation at local level, not only limited to theoretical approaches and aptitudes tests;
- ✓ Workshops strengthening students' self-confidence and motivating them to improve their professional competence;
- ✓ Learners/trainees should be offered more in-depth information on characteristics and requirements of different jobs as well as characteristics on different industries;
- ✓ Learners/trainees should be trained to set measurable goals and to develop self-confidence and social skills.

### **Role employers and companies can play to improve Career Advice and Guidance Services**

The majority of companies involved in this research (56%) does not offer these services. Nevertheless, participants made some suggestions on how they could improve Career Advice and Guidance services, and what could be its role within their companies:

- ✓ Support the development of curricular contents in schools and also promote partnerships with them;
- ✓ Welcome intermediate trainees and not only the ones who are at the end of the courses, providing their integration in the company;
- ✓ Employers should keep career counsellors in educational institutions informed about their staff needs so the counsellors could make recommendations to learners/trainees;



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- ✓ Employers could organize short-term practical trainings/job shadowing;
- ✓ Companies should observe whether young employees are satisfied with their position and, if not, guide and support them in finding the right position;
- ✓ Delegation of many different job tasks;
- ✓ Coaching / Learning by doing;
- ✓ Encourage learners to take initiatives and have more tolerance to mistakes.

**Career management competences employers expect to find in their new young employees and the ones employers do find when new employees/trainees start working in their companies**

The majority of employers interviewed (30%) stated they expect to find on their new young employees the 8 Key Competences (Communication in mother tongue, Communication in foreign language, Mathematical competence and basic competence in science and technology, Digital competence, Learning to learn, Social and civic competences, Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and Cultural awareness and expression).

29% of the participant employers indicated Personal and Social Skills (Self-confidence, Stress management, Problem solving, Analytical thinking, Teamwork, Decision making and Taking initiatives).

Organizational awareness (22%) and Job Awareness (19%) also have great importance for them.

The Needs Analysis Report shows that there is a match between what employers expect and what they find in their new employees when they start working in their companies.

To know more detailed information about the specific competences employers expect in their young employees and the ones that young employees actually have, please consult the Needs Analysis Report (pp. 37 onwards).

Employers also specified other competences relevant for their companies:

✓ Openness to new ideas	✓ Ethics
✓ Development of practical solutions	✓ Information sharing
✓ Critical thinking	✓ Self-evaluation
✓ Oral skills	✓ Tolerance to team diversity
✓ Writing skills	✓ Risk management
✓ Empathy	✓ Setting goals
✓ Negotiating skills	✓ Creativity and flexibility



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## SUMMING UP!

- ✓ For employers, educational institutions should support learners develop not only soft and career planning skills but also practical skills needed in the field they would like to work;
- ✓ VET schools should be more engaged with the job market, promoting guided visits to companies, lectures from different professionals, mentoring sessions with learners and workshops to strengthen their self-confidence and motivating them to improve their professional competences;
- ✓ Career Advice and Guidance services should have someone with business knowledge and career counsellors should develop partnerships with the employers in order to organize internships within the companies;
- ✓ All learners should benefit from Career Advice and Guidance services at least during the final school year and those services should be personalised and connected to real labour market situation.



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## Needs Analysis Report

### Main results on VET Schools' needs

In what regards to the collection of needs of VET schools, the Needs Analysis Report is based on a questionnaire presented face-to-face, by telephone or using Skype.

The great majority of these participants were teachers and tutors working in VET institutions, but there were also school managers and career counsellors and psychologists who work in Career Advice and Guidance Services.

The questionnaire included two sections: questions about institutions with Career Advice and Guidance Services (the majority of institutions involved in the Needs Report) and about institutions that do not provide these services.

These are the main findings that result from participants' answers:

#### **Impact on learners/trainees who benefit from Career Advice and Guidance services**

According to participants, the main beneficiaries from Career Advice and Guidance Services are learners and, in some cases, they foresee some support to learners' parents and teachers.

The impact these services have on its beneficiaries vary between the improvement of learners' capacities, competencies and self-development and a change in their behaviour, interest and attitude. The number of employment offers tend to rise and these services help learners to be more conscientious of their work, prospects for the future and the need for further education.

#### **Suggestions on how to improve Career Advice and Guidance services in VET Schools**

- ✓ Use of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary methods;
- ✓ Psychologists who work in these services should go to classrooms more often to give learners more information on how to prepare for professional life;
- ✓ Focus on interpersonal, social and soft skills;
- ✓ Development of more projects in the area of Career Advice and Guidance;
- ✓ More investment in human and material resources;
- ✓ Collaboration with specialists from diverse activity fields and educational partnerships with specialized institutions;
- ✓ Exams on learners' aptitudes;
- ✓ Chance for learners to change their educational paths;
- ✓ Closer relationship between teachers and learners when supporting in Career Advice and Guidance services.



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### **Competences developed by Career Advice and Guidance services**

As in the part of the Needs Analysis Report on employers, in VET schools' report the competences worked by Career Advice and Guidance services were divided by: 8 Key Competences, Personal and Social Skills, Job Awareness and Organizational Awareness.

The majority of institutions represented on the Report focus their services on developing Personal and Social Skills (32%), followed by 8 Key Competences (29%), Organizational Awareness (23%) and, for last, Job Awareness (16%).

To know their sub-categories and percentages regarding the most and less developed competencies/skills by Career Advice and Guidance services, please consult Needs Analysis Report (pp.11 onwards).

Regarding the practitioners who participated in the Needs Analysis Report and who work in institutions without Career Advice and Guidance services, they have an idea about what kind of competences should be developed on learners and the results are very much like the ones referred above.

### **SUMMING UP!**

- ✓ For practitioners, the collaboration with other professionals such as psychologists or social counsellors would be profitable for them to acquire and develop skills to foster learners' motivation and self-awareness;
- ✓ Need to develop more structured services and activities covering theories and practical skills useful for learners' careers, which could be fostered by a close relationship and collaboration with companies;
- ✓ The impact Career Advice and Guidance services have on learners vary between the improvement of their capacities, competencies and self-development and a change in their behaviour, interests and attitudes.



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## Employers' engagement on partners' countries

There is no doubt about the openness of employers in engaging with Career Advice and Guidance services in VET Schools, and vice-versa.

However, it is important to know how that engagement process can be started between them, how the contacts are made, what kind of activities are developed and what benefits they can bring to learners.

All partners from this project had the opportunity to collect examples on how an effective employer engagement is made in their own countries through a questionnaire elaborated to gather information for this Guide. The participation from employers and practitioners was asked since they are the best source of information.

These were the questions made to:

### Employers

- ✓ What are the advantages companies get by working in cooperation with VET Schools?
- ✓ Does your company contact VET Schools to create partnerships?
  - If **yes**, please describe how that contact is made?
- ✓ Does your company provide consultancy/help on building curricular modules in VET Schools offering learners the possibility for contacting with the world of work?
  - If **yes**, please describe what kind of information your company provide to VET Schools that enrich curricular modules
  - Do you think those curricular modules meet learners' needs? Please, develop your answer
- ✓ Do VET Schools develop activities to create/foster networking with your company?
  - If **yes**, what kind of activities are developed?

### Vet Schools (Practitioners)

- ✓ What contributions can Companies give to VET Schools by working in cooperation?
- ✓ Your VET School contacts companies to create partnerships?
  - If **yes**, please describe how is that contact made?
- ✓ Are there curricular modules in your VET School that offer learners the possibility of contacting with the world of work and which were built with help/consultancy of companies?
  - If **yes**, please describe these curricular models.



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- ✓ Do you think these curricular modules meet learners' needs? Please, develop your answer.
- ✓ Do Companies develop activities to create/foster networking with your VET School?
  - If **yes**, what kind of activities are developed?

In the end of the Questionnaire, participants were also asked to describe a case study that would illustrate the cooperation between Employers and VET Schools.

## **Results from the Questionnaires applied to Employers (Companies)**

### **What are the advantages companies get by working in cooperation with VET Schools?**

A list of sentences with possible answers to this question was given to employers in order to know which of them is the main advantage on working with VET schools, in their opinion. These were the answers chosen, organized from the most answered to the least answered

- ✓ Helps to ensure a source of skilled labour;
- ✓ Provides access to innovative ideas for the business sector;
- ✓ It allows an active participation of companies in the construction of educational programs, allowing their integration on activities and projects that prepare learners for the job market;
- ✓ In the presence of trainees, companies' employees are encouraged to seek training that will enable them to be up-to-date with the companies' needs.

Some of the employers who accepted to participate in the questionnaire mentioned other advantages:

- ✓ The company learns from students and the school, both profiting from knowledge and sometimes making use of school facilities to create work, and thus it works in synergy".
- ✓ "(...) cheap workforce and also good social security conditions".



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### **Does your company contact VET Schools to create partnerships?**

All employers confirmed their companies contact VET schools for partnerships, showing their interest in cooperating for learners' preparation to the labour market!

The contacts are made in many ways: there are companies that have Human Resources Offices to contact VET schools which provides training in the area related to the companies' business core to ask for trainee. There is a company that approached a VET school to become an accredited work placement company and works in cooperation since then.

### **Does your company provide consultancy/help on building curricular modules in VET Schools offering learners the possibility for contacting with the world of work?**

The majority of participant employers stated their companies are not involved in the construction of curricular modules, but mentioned they would like to be whenever VET schools need it.

Only one employer stated his company "does not interfere in the curriculum but request to VET centre their needs and suggestions. The company selects students for internship, so it is detected what the school need to improve in their curriculum. Also, the company detects the train workers who need to complete competences through training cycles, professional training and tailor-made courses, so in that case, the Human Resources office contacts the VET centre to answer their needs. The company responds to the requests for collaboration that come to it".

Not all participants could say if they think those curricular modules answer to learners' needs, but there were employers who said:

"Yes, it is very important to prepare students to enter the labour market. To do it, teachers need to acquire and develop students' soft skills, mainly. (...) VET students need to have the demanded skills for the labour market. During the period of the internship, the company trains company's specific skills. The module "Personal and social skills", clearly, focus on the need of improving the students' skills. (...) The most important is the practices, activities of the module";

"Yes (...) These modules will contribute to their knowledge related to the soft skills needed at the work placement, and also how to motivate students to develop their own abilities (...)".



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### **Do VET Schools develop activities to create/foster networking with your company?**

Most employers confirmed the existence of activities developed by VET Schools to foster the relationships with their companies.

The activities described were: lectures about the company/work, and then regular contact with the student supervisors from the school during placements of students; meetings to explain their labour needs to hire an internship in a given VET school; invitation to school events, which leads to further exploration and building of relationships...

One of the employers stated “Meeting whenever necessary, and work together to meet both requirements of the company and of the VET centre. The teachers come to the company to know directly the technology, the conditions, the skills needed to develop the work satisfactory, so then the VET centre adapts the curriculum”.

### **SUMMING UP!**

- ✓ According to employers, the biggest advantages with cooperating with VET Schools are that it helps to ensure a source of skilled labour and it provides access to innovative ideas for the business sector;
- ✓ All participants stated their companies contact VET Schools for partnerships. The aim is common to all: to provide internships to learners from professional courses in their area of business;
- ✓ Despite not being involved in the construction of curricular modules, most employers would be available to do it by request from VET Schools. For them, these curricular modules are important to help teachers design the Career Management and they should develop soft skills on learners, preparing them for the labour market. As for the technical skills, some employers mentioned they could train it on companies during internships;
- ✓ Employers feel that VET Schools like to develop activities with them to create or even foster networking. These activities range from lectures about their companies to their participation on the adaptation of VET curriculums.



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## Results from the Questionnaires applied to Practitioners (VET Schools)

### **What contributions can Companies give to VET Schools by working in cooperation?**

In a list of possible answers regarding the kind of contributions participants think companies can give to VET schools by working in cooperation, these were the items chosen, organized from the most answered to the least answered:

- ✓ Give the learners the opportunity to follow an employee in the workplace giving them an opportunity to be aware of what is done in a given sector;
- ✓ Give learners advice about their industry and experience;
- ✓ Help in the realization of workshops that explain the importance of skills such as communication, personal presentation, time management and organization;
- ✓ Work with teachers to prepare challenges or projects for learners based on actual work situations;
- ✓ Mentoring a student by helping him develop academic and personal skills or by choosing a higher education area and ultimately helping schools develop mock interviews that give real responses from employers and help students improve their skills to the interviews;
- ✓ Give inspiring lectures on the employer's career;
- ✓ Become a mentor to the teacher, helping him/her to learn more about the sector, what job opportunities exist and to prepare a curriculum that has application to the real world.

There were participants who described other contributions resulting from this cooperation, stating:

“All contacts should be promoted, there is more to be gained than is currently happening”

“We could also work with learners and teachers on employability aspects that employers will be looking for in applicants, hold workshops with various learners where employers from different industries facilitate the workshop on the culture of their industries and the requirement for working in each industry/sector”

### **Your VET School contacts companies to create partnerships?**

All participant practitioners stated VET schools contact companies to create partnerships.

Bellow, some descriptions on how that contact is made:



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“Our school works with many companies where students do **internships** and companies collaborate with our school in some **projects**”

“There are many ways; we have a specific “bpv-bureau” or **internship/work placement office, where staff contacts companies** (...). Then, there are also **teachers who contact businesses or individuals**, inviting them to give guest lectures, presentations, focus group representing businesses, and to think along with the course or education content or special activities”

“Through the **creation of advisory committees who are composed of both academics and business people**. Their aim is to bridge in the optimum way VET Schools with the industry by securing that specialties provided by VET schools correspond to industry needs”

“Usually **when organising different international or local projects**, [we invite] them for conferences, organising practical trainings for learners, etc.”

“In our school there is a **special expert who deals with outside workplaces and existing and new partners**. The Chamber\* and the recommendations of the old partners are very helpful in finding partners” (\*Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

“The first contact is usually made by the **Professional Courses’ coordinators**. After that, there are more formal contacts with companies (through meetings, by email or telephone) to stablish the **terms of the partnerships**.”

**Are there curricular modules in your VET School that offer learners the possibility of contacting with the world of work and which were built with help/consultancy of companies?**

The majority of participants referred that there are no curricular modules dedicated to the labour market in their VET schools built with help and/or consultancy of companies that offer learners the possibility of contacting with the world of work.

In one VET school “There are parts of lessons which are devoted to this subject, such as introduction to work placements, but not entire modules” and in another “In the curricula, there is a module, called “Training in Labour centres” where [learners] receive



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some training about the labour market, about the internship, and some general information. The curriculum is official and cannot be changed by the company”

However, there are VET schools that have those modules, which are described by participants from those schools as:

“According to VET studies, students have to spend from 250 hours till 700 in companies to get their final degree”

“The module depends on what level the student is starting from. It is an individualised model – assessment, work programme, review and evaluate learning. Each participant will have a case file and individual learning plan against which assessment will be made throughout the period and also at the end of the project”

“Work based learning modules, where learners from the second school year develop their technological project in companies and in the third year [final] they develop their traineeship and the Proof of Professional Aptitude. (...) Work based learning modules allow learners to have contact with the labour market.”

These particular participants believe these curricular modules meet learners’ needs because “teachers feel that, for the development of work/activities proposed for these modules, learners have a daily contact with companies looking for information, products and procedures they use and that will later be presented not only to teachers but also to other colleagues, which represents an enrichment at all levels for them.”. Other participant stated that these modules “allow learners to know the technicalities of a given task related to their training area, as well as to practice the way to perform those tasks.”

### **Do Companies develop activities to create/foster networking with your VET School?**

Participants from VET schools stated companies don’t usually develop activities to create/foster networking with their VET schools. On the contrary, “they are happy to accept offers, but are more passive and wait for the school(s) to take the initiative”.



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However, there is one participant who has a good example about the activities developed by companies with his VET school, describing them as “Work placements, shadowing, mentoring/coaching and on the job training – Learning by doing”.

### SUMMING UP!

- ✓ According to practitioners, the two of the most important contributions that the cooperation between VET schools and companies can provide are: to give the learners the opportunity to follow an employee in the workplace, giving them an opportunity to be aware of what is done in a given sector, and to give learners advice about their industry and experience;
- ✓ VET schools usually contact companies, using several methods to promote cooperation between them: creation of advisory committees composed by academics and business people; search for companies by teachers followed by visits to develop partnerships; direct invitations to employers for the development of projects, conferences and practical training for learners...
- ✓ In some countries there are no curricular modules in VET schools that offer learners the possibility of contacting with the world of work and/or that were built with help/consultancy of companies. However, in the ones that were, practitioners stated these modules are an individualised model – assessment, work programme, review and evaluate learning – or work based learning where learners can put in to practice what they learn in theory and learn the practicalities of the tasks they have to perform professionally ;
- ✓ Practitioners stated companies do not usually develop activities with VET schools, meaning they are not often the ones giving the first step towards cooperation.



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## Case Studies

For the collection of Case Studies, all participants (employers and practitioners) were asked to describe an activity/method their entity has developed, focusing on target implementation, how the connection is made, what kind of activities are developed, target-group and impact on the target-group.

From all the cases studies collected, only the best ones were chosen to give examples on how the engagement between companies and VET schools can be made.

They are a complement to all methods and activities described throughout this Guide to Effective Employer Engagement by employers and practitioners, and a suggestion on what can be done in and by VET schools and companies:

### **CASE STUDY A**

**(Reported by a VET School)**

“A nice example of a temporary cooperation, linked to the Bank and Insurance course qualification. (...) It began with the bank visiting the school and providing a number of hours of explanation and training on the subject, and learners subsequently go to the bank to explain to existing customers how it works. The aim was to learn how to approach customers and gain confidence in interactions with customers, and the aim of the bank was to communicate instructions and information about their new product in an easy manner, and encourage/stimulate the use of internet banking. The idea grew out of work placements. (...) The target group within school was VET level 4, and the bank target group was mostly older persons. Learners could also do work placements there, and train in customer contact, and reported back in the school, explaining the sort of questions they were asked, such as “what is a mouse?”

Learners returning to school after this experience had more work experience, and as a result were more self-confident and happy to explain to others what they had done/ achieved.”



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## CASE STUDY B

(Reported by an Employer)

“The company is called Onderwijs in Bedrijf Holding (in English, Education in Company Holding). (...) In 2007, they started with a “Leerhotel en Klooster”, a Learning Hotel and Monastery – a real hotel with paying guests where students gain practical work experience, both course-related and more general working skills. (...) The result of setting up this Learning Hotel was that this course became very popular with students.

They also managed to reduce the number of dropouts from the course, down to around 20-30%, which is usually significantly higher for horeca (hotel restaurant café) courses. This was the motivation for the school to say they wanted to implement a similar system for other sectors as well. (...)”

## CASE STUDY C

(Reported by a VET School)

“A career day is organized by VET colleges once a year and brings together VET teachers and students and companies. Industry representatives present opportunities for both internship and employment, inform on present and future job vacancies, provide students with their contact details and encourage them to apply. In addition, they inform students about the skills required to find a job and pursue a successful professional career in each field. College students (usually aged from 17-22) take part in this event and for some fields in high demand, such as the culinary arts, the majority of students get an employment offer on that day”



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## **CASE STUDY D**

**(Reported by an Employer)**

“First an informative meeting took place at school. Then, the representative of company conducted the conversation with 5 students willing to learn professional skills in the company.

In this case, three students mutual expectations were more or less similar. These three students, together with their teacher, signed a contract. Students had to participate in short schooling and job shadowing.

They were acquainted with the position of the work ( tools, materials) and with the rules of safety of work. The chart of employments was also set. One of the employees was appointed as the tutor of students in the company. Employments in the company took place one day per week.

Such student can be prepared to work especially according to needs of the company. From the beginning, student is acquainted with specificity of the work on this position.

Besides, the position of company is stronger in the region by cooperation with schools.”



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## Recommendations

All eight countries involved in CAPE Project have their own methods to promote the engagement between Companies and VET Schools. In some countries, this cooperation is more developed than in others, but this Guide to Effective Employers Engagement aims to give some suggestions on how to improve it and/or to promote it.

Besides the tips and suggestions made throughout this Guide, here are some recommendations based on suggestions and comments left by employers and practitioners who participated in the questionnaire elaborated for its construction:

### To Policy Makers

There are some measures that can be developed and directed to the partnership between educational and professional sectors to promote economic and employment growth.

Here are some suggestions:

- ✓ Revision of the training offers in VET schools to respond to local and regional labour needs (e.g. professional courses on sectors with more job offers in order to help local and regional companies to develop their businesses);
- ✓ Promotion of work based learning through the application of a legal framework, as in Portugal, outlining the rules for the organization, operation and evaluation of professional courses and defining the conditions for the realization, organization and development of work based learning;
- ✓ Awarding companies that commit to develop activities with VET schools, as done in Poland where an award is given to employers (including Police, Museum and Bank) for their cooperation with schools, for engaging in supporting young people and schools by organizing practices for them, internships and other professional activities;
- ✓ Some participants in the project suggested tax benefits to companies that excel in engaging with VET schools to prepare learners for the labour market;
- ✓ VET schools that have their learners developing work based learning in companies can offer them training to their employees in order to help companies motivate their staff and maintain them up-to-date on the competencies needed for a good working performance.



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## To VET Schools

Employers' engagement with VET Schools can offer career advice, work placements, staff mentoring, assignment of real life projects and demonstration about the relevance a curriculum has to the real world.

VET Schools usually contact Companies to promote cooperation towards traineeships for their learners, but there are many other activities that can be developed.

In order to reach companies, Career Advice and Guidance services can make a list of those whose sector of business is connected to the courses provided by its school, locally or regionally. After the list is done, the first thing to decide is whether the contact should be made by email, telephone or in person with the representative of the company and/or its manager. Whatever the method chosen, the important is to engage the company in the activities in mind for that particular cooperation, showing interest in having their inputs for its development and an open mind for their suggestions.

A list of topics to be discussed can be made based on the activities to be covered by the cooperation between entities and an agreement can be signed stating the responsibilities of all those involved, with indication of the activity to be developed, to whom it is intended, how it will be developed (location, necessary material, main objectives, roles of those involved in the activity...). Bear in mind that the activities to be promoted and developed has always to benefit learners' growth, both personally and professionally.

According to an Employer who participated in the questionnaire, "Teachers have not the control of the labour market, because they are not connected with the enterprise. They have a curriculum to cover and that is all." Thus, teachers can also be included in the process of contacting companies, they can also ask for visits and/or even talk to employers about the labour market needs and what should be approached in classes, with learners, to help them prepare for the future.

Employers are always interested in participate in their possible future employees' education, they have always something to teach and VET Schools have always something to learn. Therefore, it is essential to establish a deep cooperation, which will not only benefit the company, but will contribute to better prepare the students and, consequently, to facilitate their incorporation into the world of work.



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## To Employers

Employers need to have in mind that, even though there are those who believe cooperating with VET Schools “provide cheap workforce and also good social security conditions”, this cooperation is, above all, a way to ensure companies have access to high skilled labour force, that deserves recognition and support to show its strengths and improve eventual weaknesses (e.g. soft skills, as mentioned before).

Being engaged with VET Schools is a way to contribute for the education and preparation of potential young employees, helping practitioners to maintain or boost the learners’ motivation to continue studying, promoting the prevention of early school leaving and making learners aware of what they can expect when they go from a school environment to a working environment.

By receiving trainees in their companies for work based learning, companies can share knowledge and resources as well as the possibility to select future employees with new dynamics and ideas that answer to real needs of the companies.

Companies’ employees can be involved in the integration of trainees thus, get to know new processes and methodologies that appeal to their creativity and adaptability to new approaches.

Employers are usually open to VET Schools’ contacts for a cooperation, but with all the benefits this cooperation can bring to them, they should also engage in contacts with VET Schools, promoting several activities that can be planned with practitioners to meet not only learners’ needs, but also companies’ needs.

To know VET Schools’ training offer that matches a company’s business sector, employers (or their Human Resources offices) can look for sites of VET Schools, information from the Ministry of Education, and organizations or associations connected to VET Schools.

After finding the information to get in contact with a specific VET School, Employers can propose a meeting with the school Director or with Career Advice and Guidance services in order to get to know the school, the professional courses developed and the learners’ profile to engage in possible activities that will lead to a cooperation.

Both VET Schools and Employers are interested in working together, but sometimes they need more motivation or more information on how to stablish the first contact.



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Hopefully, the information given in this Guide for Effective Employer Engagement will help them to take the first step towards a fruitful relationship involving employers, teachers, tutors, counsellors and learners for the sake of an improvement on educational programs and learners preparation to enter labour market.