



# Final recommendations report and guidelines

Intellectual Output 3

Drafted by “Consorzio di cooperative sociali EVT”



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## INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

The third intellectual product is the [EFT project](#)'s final output. The first chapter revisits the activities, the methodology and outputs of the previous project phases. Moreover, it analyses the Work Based Learning (WBL) theories and meanings.

The EFT project also produced a specific WBL training model (see [Intellectual Output 1](#)) to be used with disadvantaged people with learning difficulties when using traditional teaching methods. Chapter One contains the synthesis of this model, that is also useful as a strategy for facilitating integration processes into the labour market and in to social contexts. A specific Belgian example - *Entreprise de Formation par le Travail* (EFT – Training Enterprise through Work) – is discussed and used as a reference model for designing and implementing further WBL practices.

The EFT project also developed a skills profile for trainers engaged in Work Based Learning projects and services, which is an original output of the project (see [Intellectual output 2](#)). It is not a finished product, as specifications and contents will be formulated by taking into consideration the next trials and training practices. Key activities of trainers operating in Work Based Learning contexts and related skills of this vocational role are resumed in Chapter Two.

Based on the results of these previous project phases, a specific training session was planned and carried out. Trainers, tutors, educators and social workers belonging to the partner organisations of the project, attended these training activities. Strategies, contents, methodological choices and tools of this joint staff training session are explained in Chapter Three. During the training session, several visits to significant experiences inspired by the Work Based Learning methodology were carried out. The Report also contains a combination of the main remarks and suggestions that trainers, attending the training session, expressed about the visits.

Finally, in Chapter Four some recommendations and guidelines are formulated. They specifically refer to the WBL training for trainers and to Work Based Learning activities and projects. These recommendations aim to create better future initiatives adopting a WBL approach.



## **1. EFT PROJECT METHODOLOGY**



## 1. EFT PROJECT METHODOLOGY

In the development of the project, each phase of activities ends with the production of a specific output.

The [first intellectual output](#) was the development of a common framework of Work Based Learning, that concluded the Research activity<sup>1</sup>. IO1 took into account the larger debate about Work Based Learning in Europe today, referred to both as initial and continuing vocational education and training. The research found out and analysed some best practices of WBL in the countries participating to the project. In conclusion, IO1 produced:

- *A synthesis of terms of reference about WBL*, selected from European sources (e.g. CEDEFOP, EC) is taken into consideration during the implementation of the EFT Model. It is a kind of key words list, a glossary of the most important terms (i.e. adult education, competence, lifelong learning, on the job training...) used in Work Based Learning activities and projects;

- *EFT (Experience For Training) Common Work-Based Learning Model*. Considering the relevant aspects of national contexts and the great variety of WBL experiences, the EFT proposal on WBL is a hybrid model. It brings together different examples of WBL described in the best practices and analysed within the project. The common framework elaborated is flexible to different national contexts (in terms of goals, legislation, rules, etc.). By using the model's general guidance on how to achieve an EFT approach to WBL, trainers should be able to develop EFT programmes customized to their own needs and specific contexts. One of the main goals of the model is social inclusion of low-skilled/ unemployed/marginalized adults and/or young people. The EFT model is founded on 6 key elements which we resume below;

- *Some advice for the development and implementation of further WBL actions*. In the perspective of WBL training programme development, the advice assumed four main challenges:

1. Target group to consider: unemployed, low-skilled and marginalized groups);
2. Various models, methodologies, methods, practices of WBL to adopt;
3. The current economic crisis affecting some countries creates difficulties in finding funding to ensure the financial sustainability of a EFT programme and/or social enterprise;
4. There is a potential lack of proper legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> Intellectual Output 1 titled "[Research and Common Framework](#)" was produced by BEST, the Austrian partner. It is available in partners' languages on the project website: [www.eft-project.eu](http://www.eft-project.eu)



The [Intellectual Output 2<sup>2</sup>](#) aimed to develop a skills profile of a trainer working in Work Based Learning environments, that includes a skills checklist. The checklist was assumed as a common reference point to compare different professional practices, to understand what is specific to each one, but also what they have in common.

To “translate” the results and main elements of IO1-IO2 in the training session’s contents, partners decided to provide a [questionnaire](#) to their trainers, social workers and tutors, in order to better understand the methodological and organisational aspects of their daily activities, which the training for the trainer could be concentrated on. Answers to the questionnaire (information, opinions, suggestions...) led to four areas of interest to be looked at in more detail during training activities:

*Branding:* Implementing (singly or in a team) productive activities considering educational aspects as well as technical and economic obligations.

*“In progress” skills assessment:* evaluation of trainees at the beginning and during their training pathways.

*Job placement:* Strategies to organize and implement trainees’ integration in to the ordinary labour market, focusing on relations with third parties.

*Work based learning methodology:* Strategies and actions that enable people to learn in real work places. Structured work experience that allows to develop formally recognized skills (certification).

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<sup>2</sup> Intellectual Output 2 titled “[Professional Skills Profile For Work-based Learning](#)” was produced by AID, the Belgian partner. It is available in partners’ languages on the project website: [www.eft-project.eu](http://www.eft-project.eu)



## **2. WORK BASED LEARNING: STRATEGY, THE EFT PROJECT APPROACH AND THE BELGIAN MODEL**



## 2. WORK BASED LEARNING: STRATEGY, THE EFT PROJECT APPROACH AND THE BELGIAN MODEL

### 2.1 WBL AS STRATEGY OF INTERVENTION FOR TRAINING AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Work Based Learning is a training and educational approach more and more frequently used in training activities with adults and young people. In Europe, there is a large range of activities, projects and services using WBL to facilitate inclusion pathways and integration processes in the labour market. Specific attention is aimed at disadvantaged people.

WBL encompasses several types of learning processes:

- learning in formal/informal contexts;
- intentional/spontaneous learning;
- formal training/ non-formal training;
- “classroom” training/ on the job training

WBL is different from other similar approaches, highlighting the importance of the work in the learning process. We can recall some approaches:

- *Workplace Learning* is a learning process that happens daily in the job place. In their workplace, workers develop competencies to solve problems or achieve expected outcomes. No formal recognition is previewed for the learning process;
- *Work Related Learning*, is referred to "planned activities that use work context to develop knowledge, skills and realize their purpose on the job. This includes learning through work experience and learning of the skills for the work" (QCA,London, 2003);
- *Problem Based Learning* (PBL) integration of real work (and social) projects into VET or high school curricula;
- *Work Based Learning (WBL)* is a structured working experience leading to skills certification and diploma.

WBL is today a fundamental aspect of the vocational training<sup>3</sup>; it is directly linked to the mission of VET to help learners acquire knowledge, skills and competences which are essential in working life.

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<sup>3</sup> For more details: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/vocational-policy/doc/alliance/work-based-learning-in-europe_en.pdf)

It combines learning acquired in formal contexts (school system or VET) with learning acquired through experience in non-formal or informal contexts on the job.

Work based learning may be integrated into the personal and cultural heritage of the trainee. It is evaluated and leads to the acquisition of competences, or qualifications.

WBL may be used in different ways (Owens-Rutherford, 2007, pp. 361-366):

- As part of higher education or academic curricula. In these cases, the prior learning of adult people is recognized by higher education institutions or Universities as valid way of learning (Gray - Cundell - Hay - O'Neill, 2004);
- As part of an organized learning programme to foster employment;
- As an action of individual or collective responsibility in a work setting.

The three most common forms of WBL in Europe (in IVET – Initial Education and Training) – as already stated in the [IO1](#) of our project – are:

- a. apprenticeship;
- b. on-the job-training in companies;
- c. school-based programmes with integrated WBL (EC 2013, 6).

For *apprenticeship* the German, Austrian, and Swiss “dual systems” are always referred to as best practices. Also in the EFT project, we referred to the experience of the Austrian partner is relevant. The definitions/terms associated with apprenticeship differ in European countries; in any case, apprenticeship is always a long-term and full-time form of WBL.

*On-the-job training* includes internships, work placements and traineeships that are incorporated as a compulsory, or optional element into VET programmes, which lead to formal qualifications. They typically represent around 25-30% (but can be less) of the training programme. Depending on the country and programme followed, they may be a prerequisite for successfully completing a VET course. Many companies, in particular SMEs, still perceive taking on interns/trainees/apprentices as a burden, as administrative procedures for appointing trainers, cooperating with VET schools etc., is time consuming and costly.

WBL is *integrated into school-based programmes* in the form of on-site labs, workshops, junior/practice firms, virtual or real business/industry project assignments.

These can either be part of the school's existing infrastructure, or separate commercial initiatives established by the school to support the creation of certain facilities (such as an onsite commercial restaurant staffed by students). The aim is to create "real life" work environments, to establish contacts and/or cooperation with real companies or clients, and develop entrepreneurship skills. Trainers design learning activities in cooperation with companies.

## 2.2 EFT PROJECT APPROACH

In the EFT project, *Work Based Learning* is conceived in these terms: "WBL programmes are organized programmes that are wholly, or predominantly, based in a work setting, i.e. in a work-based context or in the workplace itself. They aim at developing knowledge, skills and competences that are – in a broad sense – relevant for the world of work. Work and work tasks are used as the predominant context for learning" (EFT, [IO2](#)).

Considering this definition, the EFT project produced a common Work-Based Learning model ([EFT Model](#)). The framework of the model identifies the following six key features of the training:

1. *It targets "marginalized groups" for whom traditional training, work placements and standard paths to employment are no longer an effective solution for integration into the labour market. These trainees may need specialized support to address wider barriers, such as support to build confidence and self-empowerment, or to rebuild social networks and relationships;*
2. *It uses non-public funds.* This is because the economic crisis has led to a decrease in public funding and resources for education and training throughout Europe. Other sources and models of funding are thus essential to support training programmes, with a focus on non-public funds (for example by strategically linking vocational training to industry);
3. *Training activity is intrinsically linked to a production activity;*
4. *It follows European (and broader) developments in WBL;*
5. *It is an accepted and recognized activity in all partner countries and operates in line with the legislation; and current practices in these countries (information on this was gathered in the best practices);*
6. *The Belgian Best practices should serve as a role model for the wider EFT model.*

### 2.3 THE BELGIAN MODEL

The *Entreprise de Formation par le Travail* (EFT – Training Company through the Work)<sup>4</sup> is a training company aimed at the integration of disadvantaged people into the labour market. It is founded on three main elements: economic, social and pedagogical.

The project, in fact, includes several possibilities, strategies and interventions:

- Inclusion (social dimension), in order to develop relational skills and self-awareness, oriented to the integration of people in the labour market;
- Work and production (economic dimension), increasing technical skills and knowledge;
- Training, for the development of social and technical skills (pedagogical dimension).

Trainees have the status of apprentice and can receive social aid. They are considered “learners (people in training)” and they are not “workers”. They are at least 18 years old, they are looking for a job, they do not have a secondary school diploma and they have been unemployed for at least 24 months.

On a pedagogical level, the hypothesis is that people learn better through a real and concrete productive experience, than in simulated situations.

The EFT project chooses the Belgian model as a positive reference for the implementation of further examples. It needs, of course, to adapt this model to the specific elements of different countries.

### 2.4 “TRAINER IN WORK-BASED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT” SKILLS PROFILE

The adoption of a WBL approach requires the development of specific skills by the trainers. They are required to establish a different and effective pedagogical relationship with various groups, or individuals, to facilitate their knowledge and skills acquisition, and the development of attitudes and behaviours appropriate to their professional performance.

Referring to the Belgian experience of EFT, the WBL approach adopted by the project is based on three levels of objectives: social, pedagogical and economic objectives. The WBL trainer should

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<sup>4</sup> See documentation in [http://emploi.wallonie.be/Pour\\_Vous/Associations/EFT.html](http://emploi.wallonie.be/Pour_Vous/Associations/EFT.html) [www.aid-com.be/presentation\\_reseau.php](http://www.aid-com.be/presentation_reseau.php). EFT are carried out with an institutional collaboration with FOREM, the employment and for vocational training public service

develop skills related to these three dimensions and objectives. In IO2, introducing the professional profile of the “WBL trainer”, we considered different functions. The WBL trainer therefore at the same time ([IO2 – EFT project](#), p. 7):

- transmits and evaluates knowledge, skills and competences;
- Sets in place conditions that contribute the smooth implementation of training courses.

The WBL trainer is a technician of a specific economic sector (who understands professional skills and follows changes) and a producer of quality goods and/or services. He/she establishes links between the trainees and the social services; between trainees and the external internships and/or employment. Finally, he/she collaborates and communicates effectively and positively with all services and workers of the training centre to meet the social purpose of the training centre.” These different missions are specified in the skill checklist, organized in 7 key activities. For each Key activity, there are some specific skills (having different relevance, from “optional” to “core skill”).

#### Key activities

1. Lead and implement training activities;
2. Take part in the assessment of the training scheme and in the specific training activities;
3. Be involved in the organisation and in the team;
4. Be involved in the organisation’s ongoing training policies;
5. Contribute to the production activity;
6. Accompany trainees on their path to social and vocational inclusion;
7. Transversal skills.

The skills profile produced as [intellectual output 2](#) was used during the joint staff training as a reference and a guide to describe the Italian experiences visited.



### **3. JOINT STAFF TRAINING SESSION**





### 3. JOINT STAFF TRAINING SESSION

Fourteen trainees came from the partner countries (UK, Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Turkey and Italy), including professional coaches, trainers, tutors, people who work daily in the training sector, and those working in the field of the Work Based Learning approach. During the training session, several experts came from Italian VET centres, social and non social entrepreneurial sector.

The main aim of the training session was to familiarize the trainers with methodological work-based learning approaches. Furthermore, participants were invited to discuss and reflect upon the contents of the project, developed under in [IO1](#) and [IO2](#).

The training contents had been decided based on trainers' and tutors' answers to the project [questionnaire](#) (Chapter 1, pag. 4) and through a discussion among national managers of the partner organisations.



The idea behind the organisation of the training week was the use of an “active approach”, founded on learning by direct experience. The training week began with an introduction on [WBL overview](#) and [Italian social enterprises](#), an overview of previous findings and the main results of the previous phases of the project, and a visit to the Le Torri training restaurant. In the following three days, one study visit was organized each day, to different organisations, with a final debriefing activity, in order to develop contents and to share opinions among participants.

A final evaluation session was planned to combine the main elements, related to the 4 areas of interest “red line”, arisen from the analysis of the trainers' questionnaire:

1. Branding;
2. In progress skills assessment;
3. Job placement;
4. Work based learning methodology.

The training session programme was developed following this “red line” and each visit was selected taking into consideration its relevance toward the 4 topics and the link with Consortium EVT:

<b>BRANDING</b>	Training restaurant “Le Torri” Consortium Fare Comunità
<b>IN PROGRESS SKILLS ASSESSMENT</b>	SILL Faenza Officers’ Club Training restaurant “Le Torri”
<b>JOB PLACEMENT</b>	SILL Faenza Social cooperative CEFF IRECoop
<b>WBL METHODOLOGY</b>	Training restaurant “Le Torri” Social cooperative CEFF Officers’ Club IRECoop

*Table 1 - Original distribution of the study visits, following the 4 main topics of the training session*

During the session, several training methods were used, in relation to different training activities and the participants were required to take notes during the visits, lectures and workgroups, referring to the four areas of interest indicated above. Their personal notes were later discussed in group and used in the development of this intellectual output.

### 3.1 VISITS AND EXPERIENCES

For each visit, a short description of the organisation and a synthesis of the main interesting aspects, listed by participants, are available below. These elements arose during participants’ work groups, following each visit. The symbol “+”, besides each sentence, indicates the number of persons that agreed with the remark, reminding the four different areas of interest proposed for the session: “Branding”, “In progress skills assessment”, “Job placement”, “Work Based Learning methodology”.

#### 3.1.1 TRAINING RESTAURANT LE TORRI

Le Torri is the first training restaurant in Italy. It was created by CEFAL, a vocational training organisation belonging to the regional training system of Emilia-Romagna and linked to the social cooperative It2, member of Consortium EVT.

The restaurant is based in Bologna, close to the centre; it has a large dining room for 100 persons and a kitchen, where up to 15 trainees can work. People working at the restaurant – young people and adults at risk of social exclusion - are formally trainees and they are integrated in to a real business, with real customers. During the last year, 80 trainees of CEFAL’s cooking training pathways worked at the restaurant Le Torri, following a specific training on Bolognese cuisine.



The restaurant staff includes three professionals: a chef and two kitchen-dining room assistants.

Participants highlighted that this learning environment allows a job rotation of trainees, who can experience all different professional roles involved in the restaurant management (+++). It is a real work place, with real clients coming from the area, but protected and supervised to guarantee a good learning process for trainees, who in this way can increase their skills in autonomy and feel more responsible for their job and daily activities (+++). The debriefing activity carried out at the end of the work day between the trainer and trainees in groups, is an interesting case of skills assessment (++).

Some participants also highlighted that it could be difficult to transfer this kind of experience to other European countries, because it requires a proper legislation and available resources to make this type of investment (++).

### **3.1.2 SIIL FAENZA (INTEGRATED WORK INCLUSION SUPPORT)**

[SIIL](#) is a service dedicated to disadvantaged people, in particular those with a disability . It belongs to the Consortium Fare Comunità, member of EVT network. It aims to assure a “focused” placement of the person, thanks to “mediated inclusion” paths, according to the 68/99 Italian law.

SILL is for:

- disabled persons with mental health issues;
- physical and sensory disabled persons who need support;
- socially disadvantaged persons.

Some types of personal plans are tailored for the disabled people, including:

- Training courses: security, ICT, cooking, and more services of requalification for replacement, assessment of skills, flexibility and new skills;
- Counselling and professionalizing paths;
- Monitoring-educational projects;
- “Mediation” for work projects;
- Projects aimed at supporting employability.

The “Mediator” is the professional who oversees many aspects of the service.

He/She manages operational groups, establishes and maintains the network with social health services and specialized services. He/She consults all the individuals involved in an individual pathway: beneficiaries/families/trainers/enterprises/social and health services. In partnership with the enterprises, he/she is engaged with consulting and monitoring (supervising) processes.

SILL manages about 350 individual projects and about 80 hiring every year.

The most interesting aspects for training participants related to 2 of the 4 topics that constituted the session’s red line: “In progress skills assessment” and “Job placement.

*In progress skills assessment:*

- Consulting and mentoring (extensive interviews) done at the beginning of the design process of the individual pathway, in order to figure out which course/job the disadvantaged person can follow; this technique could prevent drop-out ++
- This initial phase of knowledge of the person could guarantee a sort of transparency and recognition of competences to be implemented ++

Job placement:

- SILL tries to develop new courses, or update those already existing, involving local enterprises, in order to fulfil their needs as much as possible ++
- SILL helps unemployed, disabled, socially disadvantaged people to find a job; it originated in and still has a strong social orientation toward local community ++
- Depending on the initial evaluation and assessment phase of the person, it is possible to start a careers requalification process ++

### **3.1.3 CONSORTIUM FARE COMUNITÀ (BAGNACAVALLO, PROVINCE OF RAVENNA)**

It is a local development agency for community welfare and fights against social exclusion. [Consortium Fare Comunità](#) has 10 members, all based in the Province of Ravenna: social cooperatives (5), cooperatives working in the field of research/services and territorial development (2), Vocational Training Centres (3).

Profit enterprises and Public Authorities have more and more difficulties in answering complex needs of the community. Consortium Fare Comunità tries to contribute to the satisfaction of some of these needs, favouring social and work inclusion processes of disadvantaged groups and implementing paths and networks for social innovation. Consortium Fare Comunità carries out specific activities:

- projects/services for work inclusion of disadvantaged people;
- projects, researches and supports activities related to: Economic Sustainable Development, Social Cohesion, Citizens' participation in the creation of community welfare.

Through research and project management, Fare Comunità and its partners plan development processes favouring a shared/participated community welfare actively, involving citizens, Public Authorities and private enterprises. Fare Comunità's projects can be divided in 5 categories: social communication, social economy, ethical finance, social tourism and employment services.

During the last day's debate, almost all participants (+++++) categorized this experience under the *Job Placement* topic, underlining Fare Comunita's capacity to create synergy into the community and to use common resources.



According to the trainers' ideas, this "territorial approach" for community welfare and the fight against poverty and social exclusion is something to be kept in mind when they need to redesign and update internal strategies and missions of their organisations.

### **3.1.4 SOCIAL COOPERATIVE CEFF FAENZA**

[CEFF](#) (*Cooperativa Educativa Famiglie Faentine*) "Francesco Bandini" ONLUS is a social cooperative, member of EVT consortium, providing social-health and educational services (A type) and producing goods and services (B type), according to the Italian law 381/91. It was founded in 1977 and it operates in the province of Faenza with disabled and disadvantaged people.

CEFF manages two social and educational services, in agreement with the Social Services of the Municipality of Faenza:

- "Il Sentiero", a protected workshop, where the effective skills of the persons are checked and individual projects are defined. The service is focuses on young people and adults with medium/strong physical, mental, psychical and sensory disabilities;
- The Integrated Workshop is a training service aimed at job placement. People with a medium/low level disability and disadvantaged persons participate in the training and in the social and educational activities of the centre.

CEFF offers two kinds of training services:

- ❖ Educational services, with individual projects defined taking into consideration the personal capabilities of the disabled people;



- ❖ Productive work activities in several sectors: mechanical, environmental, gardening, cleaning, art and creativity. These activities – working in collaboration with many economic, institutional and social partners - aim to include disabled and disadvantaged people in the ordinary labour market.

A very interesting WBL element which arose during the debriefing activity was the “integration of able people and disabled people (physical and mental disability). The environment related to the education services (type A) is protective, but the social support, training activities and work production are all under the same roof, like in the Belgian model’s triangle” (+++).

Participants also stressed the importance to “organise some activities alongside work, such as theatre, ceramic workshop, trips, etc., that make people feel actively involved” ++++.

The message that participants kept with them was to be in a real business, that does not market the fact that they are “social”, but links their success or failure on the quality of their products (+++). This aspect could allow them to survive even in the absence of public funds, being more sustainable (++).

“The strong relationship and the staff’s professionalism are key elements that can help disadvantaged people in their training path and job placement process” (++).

### 3.1.5 “CIRCOLO UFFICIALI” (OFFICERS’ CLUB)



Officers’ Club has a restaurant located in Bologna, in the historical Palazzo Grassi. It has three dining rooms for a maximum of 150 people; events and banquets are organized on invitation.

The [restaurant](#) began on September 2016, thanks to the collaboration among the Military Command of the Army - Emilia Romagna, the company Armonia Living and the VET centre FOMAL, a social, educational and training organisation promoted by the Diocese of Bologna, linked to one of EVT members: social cooperative FANIN. Inside the regional training system, FOMAL offers training activities, courses, orientation pathways, tailored projects of job integration for young people, disabled people and unemployed adults at risk of social exclusion.

At the Officers' Club a training course of "Kitchen technician" (formally a "fourth year" in the regional training curriculum) has been carried out. The course is prepared in collaboration with partner enterprises; the training model is the "training enterprise", where trainees learn to work in a normal market situation. The course lasts 1000 hours: 500 in the "training enterprise" Officers' Club and 500 hours in other partner restaurants. The experience is inspired by the German model of apprenticeship. Trainees stay two days at the Officers' Club and 3 days in partner enterprises.

The unusual collaboration among different persons, such as the Command of the Army, the Training Centre, Companies, allows – on one side - to use and to highlight a smart and important location in the town and – on the other side – to carry on the aims of social inclusion, training innovation and job creation for young people.

The agreement between FOMAL VET centre and 20 local enterprises of the local catering&food sector and their involvement in the design and organisational phase of training contents were seen by participants as a strategic WBL and Branding approach, useful for the local development and interesting for a possible transfer in other countries (++++). Participants appreciated the importance given to the communication between trainers and trainees and the capacity to find compromises and solutions for trainees' needs: for example, at the beginning of the activities trainees can ask about the possibility to cover a specific role for that day (kitchen, bar, dining room, etc.) and they discuss with their trainer the reasons for a YES or a NO, discussing them in term of skills assessment.

The agreement mentioned above facilitates good organisation of the work experience part of trainees' training path, because students know from the very beginning in which company will be hosting them during that period (++) . This approach is linked both with branding and job placements in participants' opinions and guarantees good trainees' preparation for the internship (+++).



In a WBL vision, FOMAL provides training to hosting companies (seminars, workshops, meetings) on different topics, to help them in dealing with youngsters, during the period they would have to spend in their organisations (++++).

### 3.1.6 IRECOOP

IRECoop is a training organisation in the Italian world of cooperation.

During the meeting with the participants two projects, linked to WBL approach, were presented. As there was not the possibility to visit them, but only to assist in a presentation of the activities and results, the final debriefing was organized differently, as a large scale debate among the partners.



#### **Scoop – Cooperiamo a scuola**

[This project](#) carries out awareness and training workshops for trainees and trainers on the development and spreading of the “cooperative culture”.

It is a project in schools, which invests on cooperative education in order to:

1. help nurture a new generation of young people engaged in cooperative experiences;
2. foster the diffusion of cooperative culture and cooperative enterprises in social environment;
3. create strong links between schools and the cooperation system.

The experience involved 2500 students and 25 schools from 2007 to 2015. The project carried out 180 training courses for a total of 2200 hours of training.

Different kinds of activities were included in the project:

- Awareness and training: 27 pathways (12 hours each) in high schools; 2 pathways (25 hours each) at the University;
- Simulation of the constitution of a cooperative: 4 pathways (30 hours each one);

- Capacity building for trainers: training workshops;
- Communication: development and use of a common brand, production of a video, Storytelling of the activities.

**Simulated Enterprise: Project- School Cooperative Association – Institute “Calvi” Finale Emilia (MO)**

[Another project](#) was promoted by IRECoop in collaboration with a Vocational Training Centre, the Institute “Calvi”, located in Finale Emilia (Province of Modena). Seven students with some trainers founded a cooperative in the field of agriculture (hop, beer, nettle production) and breeding of endangered bird species.

The project has some clear training objectives:

1. To develop cooperation learning processes;
2. To increase students’ cognitive skills through concrete problem solving;
3. To increase the level of autonomy and self-confidence.

In the general framework of the project, a tutor is responsible for different functions:

- a. to accompany students in the different working phases;
- b. to foster students’ choices respecting their autonomy;
- c. to create a network inside the school and between the school and the social sector, involving different public and private bodies to support the cooperative experience.

Participants considered these two projects as interesting for a transfer in their countries: the creation of a “bridge” between the training sector and the third sector is an innovative element, that could create new professional profiles and types of social entrepreneurship for youngsters.

### 3.2 TRAINING SESSION RESULTS



During the study visits, participants took personal notes in their notebooks, following proposed indications. During the discussion trainers shared the observed elements. We can now read these notes and opinions organized in four areas of interest defined as most important for partner organisations:

*Work based learning methodology, Branding, In progress skills assessment, Job placement.*

At the end of the workgroups dedicated to the debriefing of the visits, participants were required to indicate how much the visits had been significant regarding the four dimensions of the analysis adopted. In the table below, the numbers in the boxes indicate participants' preferences.

	JOB PLACEMENT	BRANDING	SKILLS ASSESMENT	WBL	TOTAL
Training restaurant <b>Le Torri</b>	0	3	5	6	14
<b>SIIL Faenza</b>	7	0	7	0	14
Consortium <b>Fare Comunità</b>	12	2	0	0	14
Soc. coop. <b>CEFF</b>	5	1	3	5	14
<b>Officers' Club</b>	4	1	2	7	14
<b>IRECoop</b>	1	5	1	7	14

Table 2 - Participants' categorisation of the study visits during the last debriefing session

	JOB PLACEMENT	BRANDING	SKILLS ASSESMENT	WBL	TOTAL
Training restaurant <b>Le Torri</b>	0%	21,44%	35,7%	<b>42,86%</b>	100%
<b>SIIL Faenza</b>	<b>50%</b>	0%	<b>50%</b>	0%	100%
Consortium <b>Fare Comunità</b>	<b>85,7%</b>	14,3%	0%	0%	100%
Soc. coop. <b>CEFF</b>	<b>35,7%</b>	7,15%	21,44%	<b>35,7%</b>	100%
<b>Officers' Club</b>	28,55%	7,15%	14,3%	<b>50%</b>	100%
<b>IRECoop</b>	7,15%	35,7%	7,15%	<b>50%</b>	100%

Table 3 - Percentage of the participants' categorisation of the study visits during the last debriefing session

### 3.2.1 WORK BASED LEARNING METHODOLOGY

By analysing several visits and projects presented, trainers focalized some important elements concerning the Work Based Learning approach. We can distinguish among different dimensions:

- ❖ *On the general WBL strategy*, trainers note the “triangle” of Belgian model: “To link three aspects of EFT WBL: training, economic production and social inclusion”. They also consider that “WBL favours employability and work inclusion of vulnerable target groups”. This note is coherent to one of the fundamental elements of the EFT Work Based Learning training model, focused on the needs of disadvantaged people.
- ❖ *On training model based on work*, trainers appreciated the fact that “A long training path (3-4 years long) can personalize the path of each student, who can try different roles and tasks, and then specialize himself/herself”. The WBL model offers learning opportunities in a real work context, where all the activities are managed at the same time. A work environment allows “To assure a holistic approach: all have experience in all areas (dining room, kitchen, etc.)”. The WBL approach foresees a specific learning organisation that can be describe as “training + internship in enterprise”, to maintain a work based environment also in the training component (example: Officers’ club);
- ❖ *On the learning process*, some elements were indicated by participants as relevant. First, it is important (as seen in the project of “Le Torri” Training Restaurant) “to give students the possibility to develop their skills in a protected environment”. The protected situation allows learning in terms of times, relations and growing complexity of the activities and skills required. This kind of work protected environment allows also “to involve students in decisions related to their training pathway”. The work situation is protected, but nevertheless real; it offers learning opportunities and it develops skills (technical, social, relational) through relations with colleagues, managers and customers: “To pay attention on the relationships with the customer: inter-relational skills, social skills”.
- ❖ *On trainers*. A WBL training model, in fact, asks trainers (tutors, educators, social workers) to increase their skills and develop new ones. So, participants noted as relevant: “To create a real or simulated economic activity, trainers have to improve their skills: they need both technical and educational skills”. Trainers have to work in direct contact with the businesses, to prepare and manage training pathways for learners, they try to overcome

the traditional gap existing between training and work: “Trainers and businesses have to work together to fill the gap between the business/labour market and school”.

- ❖ *On working with enterprises.* Considering the need of working between trainers and enterprises, it needs also “To train enterprises (involve them in seminars or workshops) on how to deal with youngsters” to foster common training projects on the job.

### **3.2.2 BRANDING**

Study visits offered participants some ideas and models for getting more branding strategies. Analysing the Italian experiences and sharing the practices in their countries, participants expressed some suggestions to foster branding activities. Some strategies may be addressed to customers: “For branding is useful to make more visible the production process (ex. the customer can see students in the kitchen)”, or in a social/training enterprise is a good idea to inform the client on the specifics of the business (eg. letter to each client on the table of the Officers’ Club to explain the training experience they are carrying out)”. In general, they suggest that it’s important “Talking about Branding, to valorise services and goods production linked to social aspects”. WBL projects need new branding strategies, so participants consider it important to “Be creative, to offer new services (through social enterprise), discovering new potential market sectors (ex. services in the tourism sector)”.

### **3.2.3 IN PROGRESS SKILLS ASSESSMENT**

This dimension has been analysed by the participants, who found several elements of interest in the visited experiences:

*Aims of the skills assessment,* addressed “to requalify the student’s professional profile” and – at a training level – “To help students to develop social and transversal skills”. Trainers stress that “The training on the job done in a training context (ex. training enterprise) permits a first assessment of student’s competences, preparing a better match with local businesses for the internship”.

*At the beginning,* during the initial stages of the learning projects, it is important to “Pay attention to carrying out a good interview/assessment, to determine what trainees (in particular adults) could and could not do, to tailor the programme on the individual”. For example, a strategic choice

is the “Involvement of main people in the life of the trainee (family, social services, psychologist, etc.) in the first phase of tutoring and skills assessment”.

*During the training pathway*, to assure a necessary “ongoing skills assessment (tutors can do it)”, trainers suggest including daily assessment of the activity “To foresee specific time for the debriefing/evaluation of daily activities with students”, “To make a daily skills assessment (at the end of the day)”. About the ways to use for the “in progress skills assessment”, the trainers note that may be useful “To involve students in all types of activities developed in the enterprise (example: job rotation of Le Torri Training Restaurant)”, in conjunction with the WBL approach, founded on the learning resources existing in the work organisations.

### **3.2.4 JOB PLACEMENT**

The debriefing of the visits made by participants focused on the important dimension of the job placement for trainees. The group found out some strategies of intervention: a great importance was given to collaboration with the businesses. The trainers suggested “To plan courses according to the local/enterprises’ needs” and, moreover “To create a large network of relationships with local companies to guarantee better employability of disadvantaged persons”. Protocols (“Protocol with local companies”, “Protocols between vocational training centre and stakeholders”) are considered as useful tools to put in to practice the collaboration strategy.

Furthermore, another strategy for developing actions of job placement, in line with the WBL training approach, is “To have a “real work environment” (kitchen, time checking, staff room) every day”.

Finally, a recommendation is made regarding the importance of the length of the training and to the following job placement: “Monitoring for a long period (12 months) after the trainee’s entry into the work market helps to ensure a sustainable outcome”.

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It is interesting to underline that *Table 1* reflects the organizers’ original idea of distribution of the visits concerning the four main topics. As described in the document, the final results, obtained from the final debriefing discussion, confirm or completely change this vision for certain visits.

	<b>BEFORE TS</b>	<b>END OF TS</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
<b>BRANDING</b>	1. Training restaurant “Le Torri” 2. Consortium Fare Comunità	1. --- 2. --- 3. IRECoop	CHANGE CHANGE CHANGE
<b>IN PROGRESS SKILLS ASSESSMENT</b>	1. SIIL Faenza 2. Officers’ Club 3. Training restaurant “Le Torri”	1. SIIL Faenza 2. --- 3. Training restaurant “Le Torri”	CONFIRMED CHANGE CONFIRMED
<b>JOB PLACEMENT</b>	1. SIIL Faenza 2. Social cooperative CEFF 3. IRECoop	1. SIIL Faenza 2. Social cooperative CEFF 3. --- 4. Consortium Fare Comunità 5. Officers’ Club	CONFIRMED CONFIRMED CHANGE CHANGE CHANGE
<b>WBL METHODOLOGY</b>	1. Training restaurant “Le Torri” 2. Social cooperative CEFF 3. Officers’ Club 4. IRECoop	1. Training restaurant “Le Torri” 2. Social cooperative CEFF 3. Officers’ Club 4. IRECoop	CONFIRMED CONFIRMED CONFIRMED CONFIRMED

Table 4 – Summary of study visits’ distribution, following the 4 main topics, after the last debate of the training session (TS)

To conclude the analysis, on the first day of the training session, participants responded to the question: “Among the 4 topics, which the session was built on, what is/are the most important/s one/s for your daily activities and your organisation?”. All trainers indicated “WBL methodology” and “In progress skills assessment” as the most important themes.

It was interesting to ask the same question at the end of the training week, because the answer was completely different: after 5 days of study visits, debates and work groups, participants identified “Branding” and “Job placement” as fundamental for their jobs.



They concluded that the 4 topics are of course strictly linked together and important for the organisations’ survival, but “WBL methodology” and “In progress skills assessment” are more related to their daily job with trainees, meanwhile “Branding” and “Job placement” can be considered both

“activities” and “objectives” that their organisations should achieve.



## **4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES**





## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES

The training session allowed the sharing of experiences among partner trainers involved in WBL activities and projects. They had also experienced some local Italian examples, analysing them in relation to some quality aspects: Work Based Learning project, branding, in progress skills assessment and job placement. The whole training session offered several elements useful both for implementing services and projects inspired by the WBL perspective, and both for preparing participants' future training activities.

### 4.1 ON WBL TRAINING APPROACH

The elements of analysis produced by the trainers and discussed during the visits and work groups allowed for better definition, principles and tools of WBL training approach. It was already considered in the [IO1](#) (debate on WBL and fundamental aspects) and translated into a hypothesis of EFT skills profile of WBL trainer ([IO2](#)).

A first element that the training session confirmed is the validity of the fundamental aspects of this model. It means that – analysing the experiences visited and sharing information and suggestions about other experiences in their countries – trainers recognized the presence of the main aspects of the EFT model, with a specific reference to the Belgian model.

WBL is described – in the EFT project - in these terms: “WBL programmes are organized programmes that are wholly or predominantly based in a work setting, i.e. in a work-based context or in the workplace itself. They aim at developing knowledge, skills and competences that are – in a broad sense – relevant for the world of work. Work and work tasks are used as the predominant context for learning” ([EFT, IO2](#)).

Keeping in mind, in the combination of , the general framework and specific elements of the EFT work-based learning model, some additional notes regarding each element coming from the training activities during the session:

1. *WBL targets "marginalized groups"* usually excluded from the traditional training pathways and from the labour market. In this sense, WBL approach offers opportunities of training in protected training and work environments, using specific methodologies and tools. A

great part of the local Italian experiences visited, or presented, are carried out with disadvantaged people;

2. *In some cases, WBL uses private funds.* It would be necessary to increase the use of private funds, in consideration of the resources reduction dedicated to the welfare policies all over Europe. In this phase, many organisations use public funds (above all financing training activities), meanwhile they develop activities and services “on the market”. The important experiences last for a long time and are sustainable with their economic activity;
3. *Training activity is intrinsically linked to a productive activity* that generates income (i.e. the EFT sells its products and/or services on the market). This element is strictly linked to the former, as done by several local Italian experiences visited;
4. *It follows European (and broader) developments in WBL.* Sharing and comparison among the WBL experiences in partner countries of the EFT project confirm this orientation. Specific characteristics exist in the national contexts, but we can also find common elements in the application of the WBL approach;
5. WBL is an *accepted and recognized activity* in all partner countries (Austria, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Turkey and the United Kingdom) and it operates in line with the legislation and the current practices in these countries (information on this was gathered in the BPs). This aspect was confirmed during the training session; elements of the Italian law on social cooperatives and training and educational system were deepened, as well as the Belgian legislation on providing work for disadvantaged people;
6. *The Belgian best practices should serve as a role model for the wider EFT model* (Enterprises de Formation par le Travail).

During the training session, principles, strategies and tools of the Belgian model were considered in relation to the specific conditions of the Italian experiences. Similar aspects were also identified in relation to other national contexts. This analysis confirmed the possibility to adapt the main elements of the Belgian model to different situations, considering the specific contexts at cultural, social, institutional and legislative level. The link among the three dimensions – social, pedagogical and economic – is fundamental and we found it in specific forms, in the Italian examples visited, or in other projects carried out in different countries.

## 4.2 ANALYSING WBL TRAINERS' PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Contents and activities of the training session for WBL trainers were decided also taking into consideration the skills' profile developed in the previous phase of the project.

We have already explained that this "skills check list" does not represent a formal and definitive professional profile, but it can be used as a reference to deepen, to modify and to integrate. We remind also that the trainers' skills were defined in coherence with the EFT WBL model developed, referring to the Belgian experience of EFT.

In IO2, introducing the professional profile of the "WBL trainer", we considered different functions ([IO2 – EFT project](#)):

- To transmit and to evaluate knowledge, know-how and behaviours (pedagogical function);
- To implement the relational conditions facilitating learning in real work situations (pedagogical and organisational dimensions);
- To assure a high level of production/service for the market, according to the skills of the people involved as learner (commercial, organisational and pedagogical dimensions);
- To establish and to maintain a social link between the trainee and the social services (social dimension);
- To accompany the trainees towards external internships and / or employment (social and pedagogical dimensions);
- To collaborate and to communicate effectively and positively with all the services and workers in the training centre, to meet the social purpose of the training centre (social dimension).

These different functions were specified in a skills checklist, including 7 key professional activities and some more transversal activities. For each Key activity, there are some specific skills (having different relevance level, from "optional" to "core skill"). In the following paragraph we summarize, for each key activity, the main elements that came out from the training session activities.

### *Key activities*

#### *Leading and implementing training activities (Key activity 1 – IO2)*

This activity implies the use of several skills, all considered as “core skills”. Visiting local Italian experiences and analysing them during the debrief, trainers confirmed the relevance of these skills. For instance, it is important for the trainer to be able to “Implement a training activity in one’s specialist field”. He/she is, in fact, an expert trainer in a specific field; he/she can not only follow professional activities, but also has to prepare and manage training pathways for the trainees (“Putting the trainee in a learning situation that is linked to their training project”). Above all, he/she can “Implement a work-based learning methodology”, choosing activities, tools, timing... adapted to the personal and the group characteristic of the trainees and of the professional environment. This key activity and its related skills are clearly the core part of the professional profile of the WBL trainer.

#### *Taking part in the assessment of the training scheme and the specific training activities (Key activity 2 – IO2)*

The responsibility of the training assessment is an important activity for the trainer. During the training session, a specific aspect considered by the trainers was the continuous assessment of the trainees’ skills. This is an essential function they should manage, that requires specific skills, as: “Facilitate continuous improvement of the training course on the basis of opinions/comments/criticism expressed personally and in collaboration with the colleagues” and “Together with the other persons involved, take part in assessing the training scheme in all its dimensions (it means in formal and informal situations, regarding for example technical or social aspects)”.

#### *Contribute to the production activity (Key activity 5 – IO2)*

This key activity is innovative for the trainer’s skills profile. He/she requires some skills belonging to a strictly conceived dimension of production, as: “Ensure contact with the customer while the work is being done” or “Ensure the customer’s quality standards are met”. But the trainer must also consider as important the pedagogical and social aspects of the WBL activities, so he/she is required to be able to “Implement the production actions while respecting the educational aspect, as well as the technical and economic constraints”. The personal and collective development of the

visits, carried out during the training session, confirmed the relevance of these skills to the professional development of the trainers.

*Accompany the trainees on their path to social and vocational insertion (Key activity 6 – IO2)*

The trainee's skills assessment throughout the project implementation is a tool that helps the trainer in his/her function of accompanying the trainee. The analysis of visited experiences, considering the dimensions of "Job placement" and "In progress skills assessment", highlighted the relevance of the skills related to this key activity. The training session confirmed as core skills: "As part of a team, work to foster the social and vocational integration of the trainees (e.g. guidance, mentoring, the teaching of technical skills, etc.)" and "Ensure that the training practices for all trainees foster individual and collective social emancipation". This important skill implies a fundamental "political" dimension of the training and the social inclusion of disadvantaged people.

Two remaining key activities of the WBL trainer's skills profile – "*Being involved in the organisation and the team*" (Key activity 3 – IO2) and "*Be involved in the organisation's ongoing training policies*" (Key activity 4 – IO2) were less considered during the training session, more focalized on training, pedagogical, economic and social aspects.

Several core skills included in *transversal activities* (Key activity 7 – IO2) were confirmed as relevant by the trainers, taking into consideration the analysis elements of the local Italian experiences. We intend, for instance, some core skills as: "Master the technical skills linked to the specific sector of activity (through initial training and/or proven experience)", "Have the skills for teaching to learn", "Have the necessary social, citizenship and psychological skills to maintain positive and healthy relationships with the other's environment (trainees, colleagues, line management, partners...)".

### **4.3 WBL TRAINING FOR TRAINERS: ADVICES AND SUGGESTIONS**

At the end of the training session, considering the analysis elements that come out, we can formulate some advice in order to prepare and to carry out future training activities for trainers. We distinguish between a "content dimension" and a "methodological approach".

*Content dimension*

Regarding this aspect, some contents are important to train trainers on work based learning perspectives and they could be strengthened in future collaborations:

- Definition and approaches on WBL: distinction from other similar approaches, as Learning by doing, Work Related Learning, Learning on the job;
- Fundamental elements of Work Based Learning methodology and, particularly, of models as EFT - WBL training model;
- Aims, strategy and ways of validating experiences, as the Belgian model Enterprises de Formation par le Travail;
- Laws, rules regulating training, WBL, job placement in different countries;
- Specific training aspects and WBL with disadvantaged people: difficulties, resources, opportunities and strategies;
- WBL trainer's skills profile: an in-progress check list of vocational activities and related skills.

#### Methodological approach

Some methodological choices (activities, methods and tools) showed positive outcomes during the training session, so we can recommend using them again in the next training activities:

- Visit some experiences and meetings with professionals (trainers, , tutors and trainees) involved in WBL project and services. Visits need a following debriefing activity, to analyze and discuss them;
- Experts' lectures offer useful knowledge to understand study visits;
- Use observation tools (journals, notebooks...) for taking notes during the visits, work groups, lectures. Written notes can be used later for sharing and group analysis;
- Workshops and work groups allow to share experiences, opinions and evaluations; they need a specific facilitation function with appropriated tools;
- Active training methods (discussion, production of common documents, interviews) have positive effects on the participants' involvement in the training activity;
- Analysing together, during the training session, documents of the project, or related to national experiences, facilitates a deeper common knowledge;
- (In case of transnational training activities) to adopt a unique work language (in this case, English) planning a translation support service, if necessary.

#### 4.4 WBL PERSPECTIVE: FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Regarding the wider dimension of the Work Based Learning methodological approach, the EFT project generated significant content outputs, useful for future activities and projects:

- At a theoretical level, Work Based Learning may be considered a specific approach, different from other similar ones as “work related learning”, or “workplace learning”. WBL is specifically defined by the deliberate training using real work environments for learning. WBL is a general methodological perspective in the frame of the “Experiential Learning”; it includes various models and ways of intervention. All of these are centred on the learning process and aim to overcome the traditional distinction between work and training.
- At an operational level, some concrete conditions are required in order to carry out WBL activities, projects and services. First of all, the WBL strategy is centred on the person in learning; it means that contents, modalities, times and teaching solutions have to be defined in consideration of the personal characteristics, capacities, resources and difficulties of the people involved. Furthermore, WBL is founded – as typically in the Belgian model *Entreprise de Formation par le Travail* – on the combination of training, educational, social, organisational and economic aspects. Different environments and types of organisations are involved. Specific agreements (common documents, protocols, contracts...) need to be prepared and adopted in order to facilitate the collaborations.
- WBL represents an innovative methodology that gives value to real situations, environments and work practices. This perspective is suitable for disadvantaged people, who usually do not succeed in learning in a traditional scholastic way.
- Taking into consideration the relevance of the reality in the WBL approach, organisational and economic aspects become strategic. As shown by the Belgian experience, the training enterprises put together educational, social, organisational and economic elements. All these aspects require to be monitored by the project management, or by the organisations involved.
- Trainers (teachers, educators and other social workers) working in a WBL change their vocational roles significantly. They carry out new strategic activities, not only belonging to the traditional pedagogical dimension, but also referred to economic, organisational and communicative aspects. Therefore, they are required to develop specific skills. The WBL

trainer's skills profile produced by the project represents a useful reference to be detailed, adapted and integrated by different organisations during future procedures .

- Some aspects are very important for the positive outcome of WBL projects and activities. The EFT project focused on four specific elements: methodological aspects of the WBL, branding strategies, job placement of trainees and skills assessment during the training path. Suitable themes for implementing these strategies in future projects and in other organisations are essential.
- It is important to plan monitoring and evaluation systems of the WBL experiences. Furthermore, it is important to provide documentary evidences of the experiences and to communicate the outcomes produced by the projects in a wider social context. The legislative aspects, such as initiatives promoting innovative law on training and social inclusion, are strategic for the future support of the WBL approach.

The pedagogical context of trainers in WBL is thus very specific:

1. educational, economic and social dimensions;
2. immersion in the economic context;
3. trainees with specific issues;
4. etc.

As a result, trainers are called upon to develop contents and methodologies for specific learning, coaching and evaluation processes. It therefore seems to us that the provision of continuing training for these trainees must be adapted. It must be coherent and in tune with their needs and professional reality. This training offer seems to us to be not developed well enough, and special attention should be paid to it.



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