

## Good Practice: EE GP1

Kai Pata  
Nele Kalf



## "Work Embedded Vocational Education"

Main features of the GP programme:

Type of programme	Type of organisation	Field of practice for organisation	Programme scope	Programme duration	Programme occurrence/frequency	Type of funding for GP
Vocational education, work-embedded learning	Vocational school	Education	National, across all vocational schools	Continuous, but long term project based	Usually 4 times a year	Funding from Ministry of Research and Education, allocated from European Union Structural Funds

Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship (EduMAP) is a Horizon 2020 research project focusing on adult education among young adults at risk of social exclusion. Particular attention is paid to educational policies and practices needed to foster active citizenship among vulnerable young people.

© EduMAP, 2018

The sole responsibility of this working paper lies with the author/s. The European Union is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

## 1. What – Focus (theme, orientation)

The work embedded vocational education is provided nation-wide by different vocational schools jointly with workplaces. The vocational schools, enterprises through the Employers association (<https://www.employers.ee>) and the Ministry of Education offer certain curricula in a work-embedded mode. Studies are largely conducted under the guidance of mentors at workplaces, additionally one week per month or one day per week at vocational schools. The digital or paper-based portfolios are used for reporting the success. The learners can use digital learning environments where learning resources are shared. The programme is tailored to the priority goals related to preparing competent staff to the job market and promoting entrepreneurship. This vision mainly supports socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions of APC. The programme is based on vocational competence standards and ends with a qualification exam. 40% of the places are reserved for young adults without basic education or qualification.

## 2. For whom – Target group(s)

Different target groups could benefit, such as NEETs, unemployed, individuals with special education needs. The age limit is not set, although, there is an intention to offer it more to the younger than elderly learners' group.

## 3. Requirements and access

The traditional practice is to take in groups of students four times a year, the size of the group is usually 10-15 students; however, it is possible to open the programme also for a single student and to tailor the programme to individual needs. The person needs to have basic education or higher, depending of the curriculum. The person should also have a working place or alternatively the school together with the Vocational board could find the placement.

## 4. Elements of good practice

The programme provides young adults with lower education more suitable and flexible study forms, granting professional qualifications to people at workplaces, and it can introduce young adults to their first jobs. Regardless of mother tongue, students are provided with equal opportunities to access education and cope in the labour market.

The students are engaged with a three-sided study contract that guarantees the training. 2/3 of the studies are work-embedded and 1/3 organised at vocational institutes (to study theory). 15-50 % of teaching is conducted by mentors during actual work practice, students attend vocational schools once per month or once per week depending of the model agreed by the school and the enterprise.

The programme is based on vocational competence standards and ends with a qualification exam. The students are mediated both by the vocational school as well as by the working place mentors. The schools have contracts with workplaces that provide students with mentors. The mentors have received special training and their

activities are orchestrated by the mentor coordinator from the school who keeps track of all the students.

The studies are module-based – usually including career planning, economy and entrepreneurship modules. The studies are blended with digital materials, but the face-to-face mode is preferred and Moodle is used (not in all vocational institutes) to maintain a portfolio approach for reporting the progress of learning competences at workplaces. In many cases learners use paper-based practice diaries instead. Learning at vocational institutes is group-based, and particular learning needs are considered. Some young adults attend workplace learning under the guidance of personal helpers (students coming from special simplified learning programmes).

The programme mentor monitors keenly the students who take care of their children while studying and help them keep on track if they seem to be falling out. The students are also provided with additional language lessons if needed. The successful vocational institutions organise studies among several enterprises, who provide different type of practice. Students under the age of 21 get free school lunch support. Additional 60-euro grant for good study results is provided – about 60 % of students receive this.

The national program develops practices and distributes different practice models for job embedded vocational training. Central training programmes for coordinators in vocational schools are arranged. At vocational institutions, there are some practical trainings to target vulnerability issues – mainly how to cope with special education needs, language minorities etc. Training for workplace mentors is mandatory, including how to fill in feedback and how to assess competences.

The practice-based learning at work helps young adults from vulnerable backgrounds to develop important aspects; they get salary while studying, work experience and have better understanding what they want to do in their life, improve their self-organization competences, widening of their social arenas; better understanding of how the society functions.

## 5. Perceived challenges

Requesting contracts with workplaces before the studies start is hindering the unemployed young people to enter to the programme. Better orchestration between different institutions employers, employers' associations, unemployment offices and VETs is needed to provide practice places for unemployed youth. Some vocational institutions organise studies with several enterprises that provide different types of practice. This mode fits those without workplace, but may later on not guarantee a job in those enterprises.

The programme should be more flexible regarding the size of study groups. One of the problems is that the vocational schools usually only open groups if there is a certain number of participants.

Sometimes the practice offered does not fit the vocational competence needs and learners end up doing other tasks.

Some students complained that the teaching is too theoretical and even unnecessary for the work. The lecture based learning does not support young people in work-embedded education; rather active group tasks should be preferred.

The mentors at work are not trained to handle issues of vulnerable learners.

The general programme targets diverse language learners, however, in reality the training is mostly in Estonian or Russian. Some students at specified curricula get additional language lessons in Estonian, some resources are tailored to non-mother tongue students. Learners think that there is a lack of providing socio-cultural and civic-political competences, for example learning language to be more open and self-confident in discussions.

## 6. Testimonials

Participants claimed they have learnt the practical competences, and they now know what working means in reality. They have experience from work interviews. They see better, where they fit with their competences and have wider future aspirations – they feel like finding themselves.

Students who received work through the programme feel they are more independent because they receive salary. Students with special educational needs feel more confident in life, but still rely heavily on the help of their personal assistants in coping with taxes, contacts etc.

Participants learned to monitor themselves better, became more self-organized, self-confident, and started to value themselves more as part of society.

They also learned to communicate better. Language skills remain an issue for some students.

They do not see that they should participate in civil and political life, since their voice is not considered.

The students appreciate they have been better involved in the society, having been on field trips during the programme. They have made more friends.

## 7. More Information

EduMAP project's publications:

[Books and articles](#)

Academic publications that address key themes of the EduMAP project

[Deliverables and reports](#)

EduMAP's official deliverables, related reports and publications

[Good practice cases](#)

Key features from 40 'good practice' cases from 20 countries

[Working papers](#)

A selection of findings from desk and field research in 20 European countries

[Other resources](#)

Other types of resources made for the project (illustrations, comics etc.)