



**ReSeCo**  
RETAIL SECTOR COMPETENCIES



Programm für  
lebenslanges  
Lernen

Summer | 13

## Newsletter 2

### **Retail Sector Competencies (ReSeCo)**

Developing self and social competencies in vocational education and training for the retail sector.

## **1. Background to the project**

The primary aim of the ReSeCo project is the qualitative improvement of vocational education and training programmes in the retail sector to adequately prepare young people on these programmes for the range of tasks and activities in the retail sector. ReSeCo is a cross-national comparative project funded by the European Commission. The project involves partners from Germany (University of Cologne), UK (University of Southampton), Italy (University of Bergamo) and Poland (Pedagogical University of Cracow).

The project focuses on particular personal and social competencies:

- Team competency
- Time management
- Dealing with criticism
- Self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses

These competencies have been the focus of four specific teaching units devised for the project.

The ReSeCo innovation transfer project is based on the already completed research project “SeSoko-fit”, which was originally developed for the eighth grade of secondary schools in Germany. As part of this former project, four teaching and learning arrangements (learning materials referred to as the TLAs) were developed, tested and evaluated to promote personal and social competencies in German schools. The ReSeCo project is a follow-on project that transfers these learning materials into the context of retail education and training in the four European countries..

## **2. Key phases of the project**

The project was divided into different phases during which specific goals were to be achieved by the project partners. During the planning stage of the project, it was recognised that transfer of these materials in different countries would require obtaining an understanding and appreciation of particular requirements specific to each

country represented in the project. Therefore, during the first phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders (social partners, regulatory bodies, educational institutions) in each country. These interviewees offered deep and meaningful contributions regarding the development and adaptation of the four TLAs in each country.

Following from the key recommendations made by the stakeholders in each country, the four TLAs were adjusted and adapted to meet the specific needs of the retail sector. The four TLAs were adapted at the supranational level and subsequently these were translated into the national languages. Whilst on the one hand the supranational version was essential to maintain the spirit of the pan-European initiative, some fine-tuning of the materials was also permissible to accommodate the essential country specific requirements. Each project partner took the lead on adapting one of the four TLAs. 'Team Competency' material was developed by the English partners, 'Dealing with Criticism' by the Germans, 'Time Management' by the Polish, and 'Self Evaluation of Strengths and Weaknesses' was led by the Italian counterparts.

A central aspect of the project was the implementation and evaluation of the four TLAs in vocational education institutions in the four countries. The TLAs were implemented in at least three different institutions in each participating country. Teachers were encouraged to teach each of the materials as per the suggested guidelines indicated in the TLAs. However, the teachers had the discretion of adapting and selecting the materials according to the specific needs of their classes/students. Whilst in some cases the same teacher implemented more than one TLA, in other instances, each material was taught by a different tutor in each college.

The evaluation process was comprised of obtaining feedback from teachers as well as students. One to one interviews were conducted with teachers whereas student feedback was gathered through questionnaires. Standardised templates for teacher interviews and student questionnaires were used in each country.

The feedback and comments from teachers were summarised by each project partner for all the four TLAs. A collective summary sheet was created by the project leaders

from Germany to highlight the inputs obtained from teachers from all the four countries. Likewise, the responses from student questionnaires were inputted into a standardised template for each of the four TLAs in each country. The inputs from each project partner were collated by the project leaders into a single data sheet.

The key points from the teacher evaluation from all countries were compiled in the form of a list to highlight the suggested amendments and adaptations to be made for each of the TLAs. As each of the project partners had previously assumed responsibility in developing one of the learning materials, the same partners took lead in adapting their TLAs based on the recommendations made on a pan-European basis and not simply based on the preferences highlighted by the teachers in their home countries. This enabled the compilation of a supra-national version of the TLAs.

A final meeting between the project partners was held in Germany to discuss the TLAs and to discuss any further suggestions or recommendations. Any minor amendments suggested during the meeting have been incorporated and the supra-national version of these materials has now been agreed and finalised.

### **3. Project Dissemination**

The findings from the project were presented at a specialist conference (Journal of Vocational Education and Training Annual Conference, Oxford, UK, 5-7 July, 2013). The paper highlighted some of the findings from the project based on student as well as teacher feedback on the TLAs from England and Germany. The paper also offered a cross-comparative analysis of the different contexts of vocational education and training in England and Germany.

The supra-national version of the TLAs will be published in English and country specific versions of the materials will be available in German, Italian and Polish. The English version of the TLAs will encourage and enable different schools and colleges across Europe to have access to the TLAs. It is very much hoped that the teachers will find these materials helpful and the students will be able to benefit from these TLAs .

#### **4. Future steps**

Following on from the success of the ReSeCo project, a follow-up project has been planned by the project consortium. This follow-up project (subject to being successfully funded) will draw upon the experiences gained during the implementation of the project and will be focussed on designing tools and providing ease of access to the teachers in order that they can easily incorporate these materials into their teaching.