



ReSeCo
RETAIL SECTOR COMPETENCIES



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Newsletter

Retail Sector Competencies (ReSeCo)

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

1. Aims and objectives

Potential employers commonly complain about young people's lack of 'readiness' for vocational education and training, both in terms of their occupational knowledge and skills as well as in terms of the required self and social competencies. The gap between employer expectations and apprentices' competencies often leads to the young people dropping out of apprenticeships.

In this context, 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. The project focuses on particular self and social competencies:

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

These competencies are taught through particular teaching units, which at the same time provide trainers and teachers with a specific tool for promoting personal and social competencies.

An underlying aim of the project is to promote the trainees' identification with the tasks and activities as well as with the firm. This is usually achieved through higher levels of responsibility, as well as motivation and enthusiasm. In turn, dropping-out rates may be improved and opportunities in the labor market enhanced, as young people complete their programmes.

Thus, while the initial concern is to introduce the adapted learning units in the colleges of Further Education, a key aim is to improve vocational education and training in retail so as to provide young people with long-term prospects in the sector.

2. Background

Given the current difficult economic situation in Europe and the complex and challenging environment for young people entering the labour market, the project is concerned with improving vocational education and training in the retail sector. By promoting the learners' personal and social competencies, the project seeks to adapt vocational education programmes in retail to the current requirements of the labour market. The 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. Here, four teaching-learning arrangements (TLAs) were developed, tested and evaluated to promote personal and social competencies at grade eight (team competencies, dealing with criticism, time management, self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses). The present project builds on this in the European context. In a first step, the four teaching-learning arrangements will be translated from German into English. The project will kick off with a meeting in London to discuss the organisation of the project and next steps. In the first phase, semi-structured interviews will be conducted in order to identify the specific needs of each country with regard to the four teaching-learning arrangements. Thus, the development and adaptation of the teaching-learning arrangements to the new target group (trainees on vocational programmes in the retail sector) and country specific feature can take place. The next step involves the adjustment of the teaching-learning arrangements based on the identified national and international needs of key stakeholders (e.g., social partners, regulatory bodies) in the retail sector. Accordingly, the four teaching-learning arrangements will be adapted at the supranational level and then translated into the national languages. At the same time, a nationally specific fine-tuning is possible. In a further step, the implementation and evaluation in vocational colleges of the partner countries will take place. It is planned to implement the teaching-learning arrangements in at least three different institutions in each country. The research partners will provide the necessary material and carry out the subsequent evaluation. The TLAs will subsequently be revised in the light of the findings of the evaluation. The final step involves the analysis of the evaluation and the optimization of the results at national and international level. The TLAs will be disseminated by electronic media as well as a printed publication.

3. Project Design

In a first step, the 4 teaching and learning arrangements (TLAs) developed in the original project were translated into English. In this way it was ensured that the content of each TLA was clear to the project partners.

The project entails 3 meetings to ensure a level of personal face-to-face communication. In the context of the supranational goals, this is of particular importance to the project.

The first project meeting in London was concerned with getting to know each other and to co-ordinate the design and working phases of the project.

The first phase was concerned with establishing the framework conditions and national contexts of the participating countries in order to identify country-specific particularities and requirements with regards to the 4 TLAs. This was done through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (including representatives of the social partners, colleges, and regulatory bodies). In this way it was ensured that the TLAs were developed and adapted in line with each country's needs. The findings were analysed and written up and complemented with a review of the relevant literature to place them within the national context of each country.

The next phase involved the adaptation of the TLAs on the basis of the findings.

Accordingly, the TLAs were adapted at supranational level before being translated into each national language. At the same time, country-specific minor adjustments were made.

4. Next steps

In the next phase, the TLAs will be implemented into training providers /colleges of each partner country with a subsequent evaluation. It is planned to implement all 4 TLAs into a minimum of 3 different institutions per country in order to ensure differentiated and more representative results. In order to do this, the research partners will provide the TLAs and associated material and will introduce them to the teachers/trainers. They will subsequently be responsible for conducting the evaluation, i.e. a survey of students/trainees and interviews with teachers.

The final phase includes the analysis of the evaluation findings, on the basis of which the TLAs will be revised once more, both at the national and the supranational levels. A major output will be the publication of the TLAs in printed form.