SSPICEIT!

Sustainability Skills Program for International Catering Operators and Entrepreneurs through Integrated Training

Project n. 2022-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000086771

Guidelines for the integration of sustainability modules in VET courses

Città metropolitana di Roma Capitale · AKMI THE LEADER IN EDUCATION · CIPFP CAMINO DE SANTIAGO ESCUELA DE HOSTELERÍA & TURISMO DE LA RIOJA · POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ European think & do tank · Escola Profissional AMAR TERRA VERDE · WORK'S · iED Institute of Entrepreneurship Development · CAPITALE LAVORO
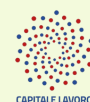
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INTRODUCTION

The integration of sustainability modules into Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses is an increasingly urgent need given the environmental, social and economic challenges faced globally. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlights the importance of education that promotes environmental awareness and prepares future professionals to act sustainably in their areas of work. However, the implementation of such modules faces significant barriers due to the complexity of educational legislation and the need for curricular adaptation.

This document addresses guidelines for the integration of sustainability modules into VET courses, highlighting the main legislative challenges and proposing strategies to overcome them.

1. The importance of sustainability in professional training

Sustainability transcends environmental issues, encompassing social and economic aspects. Integrating this perspective into VET courses not only contributes to training more aware and prepared professionals, but also meets the needs of the labour market, which values sustainable business practices. Sectors such as construction, industry, technology and food/catering require professionals with skills focused on reducing environmental impact, energy efficiency and ethical practices.

Therefore, the inclusion of sustainability modules in curricula represents an opportunity to align professional training with market needs and global principles of sustainable development.

2. Guidelines for integrating sustainability into VET courses

2.1 Initial diagnosis

• Curriculum mapping: Before integrating sustainability modules, it is necessary to evaluate existing curricula to identify gaps and possible integration points.

• Stakeholder consultation: Involving teachers, students, sustainability experts and representatives of the productive sector is essential to ensure that the modules are relevant and applicable.

2.2 Structuring the modules

• Definition of key competencies: Modules must address competencies such as efficient use of resources, circular economy, environmental management, renewable energy and social responsibility.

• Interdisciplinarity: Sustainability must be treated transversally, connecting to existing disciplines, such as project management, engineering or economics.

• Practical approach: It is crucial to incorporate case studies, real projects and partnerships with companies to contextualize learning and make it more relevant.

2.3 Teacher training

Teacher training is an essential pillar for the success of sustainability modules. It is necessary to offer continued training on topics related to sustainability and active pedagogical methods, such as project-based learning.

2.4 Monitoring and evaluation

Establishing performance indicators is essential to measure the impact of sustainability modules on student training. Monitoring may include project evaluation, practical reports and feedback from workers on the performance of graduates in the job market.

3. Integration difficulties due to legislation

3.1 Rigidity of regulated curricula

In all partner countries, the curricula of technical and professional training courses are regulated by government and/or regional bodies, such as the Ministry of Education (MEC). This regulation often makes it difficult to include new content, due to the limited working hours and the need to meet a national/regional curriculum basis.

3.2 Lack of specific guidelines

Although sustainability has been mentioned in legislative and educational documents such as the National Curricular Guidelines in Portugal, recently there are no planned guidelines on how to implement the topic in VET courses. This leads to varied interpretations and a lack of standardization.

3.3 Insufficient training of education professionals

Many educators do not receive adequate training to teach sustainability-related topics, which limits their ability to address the subject effectively. Furthermore, the supply of continuing education courses is not always sufficient to meet demand.

3.4 Misalignment between public policies and institutional practices

Although there are public policies that promote sustainability, their practical implementation in educational institutions faces many challenges, such as lack of financing, technological infrastructure and resistance to change.

4. Strategies for overcoming challenges

4.1 Dialogue with regulatory bodies

It is essential that educational institutions, in partnership with civil society organizations and businesses, promote dialogue with regulatory bodies to make curricular guidelines more flexible and include sustainability as a mandatory topic in VET courses.

4.2 Financial and structural incentives

Governments and private entities can offer financial incentives for educational institutions to implement sustainability modules, including subsidies for teacher training and development of teaching materials.

4.3 Public-private partnerships

Establishing partnerships with companies committed to sustainability can provide resources and expertise for implementing the modules, in addition to promoting the connection between students and the labour market through the learning contract.

4.4 Update of educational policies

It is necessary to review and update national and regional educational policies to include sustainability as a central element in professional training curricula.

Conclusion

Integrating sustainability modules into Vocational Education and Training courses is an essential step towards aligning education with the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. However, current legislation still presents significant barriers to its implementation. Overcoming these difficulties requires a joint effort from governments, educational institutions, civil society and the private sector.

Building a sustainable future begins with education, and vocational training courses play a strategic role in preparing a workforce capable of acting in an ethical, innovative and environmentally conscious manner. Therefore, it is essential to continue advancing in the development of policies, practices and partnerships that promote sustainability in technical and professional education.

Appendix

Project Information

PROJECT NUMBER: 2022-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000086771

PROGRAMME: Erasmus+ KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training

DURATION: 01/11/2022 - 28/02/2025 (28 months)

PARTNERS FROM 6 COUNTRIES:

1. CITTA' METROPOLITANA DI ROMA CAPITALE - Italy (Rome)
2. POUR LA SOLIDARITE ASBL - Belgium (Brussels)
3. AMAR TERRA VERDE LDA - Portugal (Vila Verde)
4. INSTITUTE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT - Greece (Larissa)
5. CENTRO INTEGRADO PÚBLICO DE FORMACIÓN PROFESIONAL CAMINO DE SANTIAGO – Spain (Santo Domingo De La Calzada)
6. AKMI ANONIMI EKPAIDEFTIKI ETAIRIA - Greece (Athenes)
7. WORK´S QUALITY - Romania (Bucharest)

OBJECTIVES

SSPICE IT! intends to:

- increase the awareness of teachers and students in vocational education about the relevance of sustainability,
- update curricula, integrating green and digital skills,
- increase the capacity to assess these skills;
- create a long-term partnership between VET providers and research centers, businesses and public authorities at different levels.

IMPLEMENTATION

The 7 partners of the SSPICE IT! project, representing the world of professional training, research and business from 6 EU countries will:
- Develop a training programme on sustainability to develop green and digital skills of future operators/entrepreneurs of the food/catering sector;
- Develop a game-based career guidance and assessment tool to assess green, digital, and entrepreneurship skills;
- Create a community of practices involving key stakeholders in the food/catering sector.

RESULTS

- Increasing the level of green, digital and entrepreneurship skills of VET students;
- Increasing the level of green awareness and skills of VET teachers;
- Development of enhanced dialogue and cooperation between VET centers and key stakeholders;
- Increasing the attractiveness and responsiveness of VET curricula to the needs of the labour market.

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