

PRO-YOUTH: strategic cooperation for more efficient international work based learning schemes in the field of heritage tourism

Partners: Germany, Italy, Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria

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Most recent Eurostat data show that in the European Union there are almost 17 million young people that are neither in employment nor in education or training: the so called NEETs; policymakers are increasingly concerned by the economic and social consequences of their disengagement. This strategic project is needed to give an answer to EU youth for qualified work-based education inspired by the successful German model and at the same time to limit brain-drain, that strips Eastern and Southern EU countries from human capital that is a fundamental growth factor.

Work-based experiences have been proved to be leading to employment even in countries with high unemployability rates. Furthermore, PRO-YOUTH focuses on a specific growing sector in Eastern and Southern EU regions, where labour market offers concrete possibilities of employment: the tourism industry, with a particular focus on hospitality and cultural heritage. Recent OECD statistics indicate a huge potential for cultural tourism to continue to thrive in the industry. In Eastern Europe price competitiveness is a strength, but the sub-region has not yet invested enough in cultural resources.

PRO-YOUTH general objective aims accordingly to enhance the competitiveness of regions with high unemployment rates of NEETs, through addressing key tourism policy and management issues such as quality assurance through developing work based learning schemes focusing on linking culture, tourism and destination attractiveness.

Project results have the specific aim to: offer better chances to young people (NEETs) to be better trained and to be more competitive in the tourism job market of their region; enhancing and assuring the quality in the field of tourism by the introduction of work based learning schemes tailored on local needs and opportunities; fostering a strong link between tourism and culture; strengthening the regional economic development through increasing competitiveness of local communities and assets.

Countries affected by high unemployment rates are looking for ways to improve the transition between school and employment and are increasingly turning their sights on German WBL schemes. PRO-YOUTH model will outline innovative solutions for work-based learning through collaboration with companies and employers, thus training trainers to be able to offer more effective on the job training. Innovative intellectual outputs produced will be tailored on the needs of the countries where strategic partners are located: Croatia, Romania, Southern Italy and Bulgaria.

As a first step PRO-YOUTH methodological framework will be designed and developed. It will lay out how to implement work-based learning schemes tailored to the needs of the local/regional labor markets in the field of hospitality and heritage tourism. Its design will be based on transnational and intersectoral cooperation, creating joint responses to reconcile the needs of the labour markets with the acquired skills and competences. The created methodology will be applicable and replicable by other organisations/regions/countries outside of the current partnership: other actors can easily follow the designed framework and adapt it according to their needs and implement it on site.

In the next stage the methodology designed will be put to test by the means of designing learning modules, organizing regional pilot trainings in the tourism industry and including transnational mobility of professors, teachers, trainers, educational and administrative staff working in participating organisations. During the training, participants will have a chance to experience how the work-based learning/training activities are organized in Germany, where this learning scheme has a long tradition. Final learning modules will be produced in several EU languages.

After pilot testing of the methodology and learning materials, PRO-YOUTH Practical Handbook for introducing work-based learning schemes, aiming to reintegrate unemployed youth in the labor market in the field of tourism, will be ready. Relevant stakeholders will be involved at local/national/EU level to adopt innovative WBL tools and contribute to dissemination of results and sustainability strategy.

Policy Recommendations will be the core of a wide mainstreaming strategy, aiming at making transition from education to work in the tourism industry smoother for NEETs and furthermore fostering a strong link between VET, tourism industry and culture.

The new approaches developed thanks to strategic transnational cooperation will support competitiveness and youth employment in particular at regional and local level. Those innovative WBL schemes, addressing prospective trainers of NEETs and fostering a strong link between tourism industry and cultural heritage will moreover contribute to strengthening the regional economic development through increasing competitiveness of the involved regions as locations to live, visit, work and invest in.