



TALENT MATCHING – VOCATIONAL MENTORING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FOR I-VET IN EUROPE’S CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

REPORT

Transnational Research Study - Policies, Systems and Needs Analysis

Executive summary

Talent Matching Europe (TME) is an EU-funded strategic partnership programme which aims to design, test and validate a new training programme and competency framework for Vocational Mentors who support young disadvantaged people, including those from multicultural society, into employment, enterprise and apprenticeships in the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs). The Vocational Mentor is a newly emerging occupation, integral to supporting young people not in employment education or training (NEET) to access opportunities in the CCIs, one of Europe’s most rapidly growing and successful employment sectors.

The partnership brings together VET providers with specialist experience of how creativity and culture can re-engage young people in learning and career development opportunities. The project partners are Collage Arts and Rinova (UK), CEPS (Spain), MULAB (Italy), ARTeria (Poland), EASP (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and Prostor Plus (Croatia).

Six of the seven TME partners worked together in a previous Leonardo da Vinci programme, the European Cultural Learning Network (ECLN), led by Collage Arts, which developed accredited training and learning materials for “Cultural Learning Practitioners” working in informal learning settings. This exposed the need to integrate cultural learning more closely with the changing needs of the EU labour market through the professional development of the occupational figure of Vocational Mentor in the CCIs. This objective aligns closely with EU policy imperatives for updating the competences and profiles of VET trainers and teachers outlined in the 2010 Bruges Communiqué and with the development of a coherent EU policy on the Cultural and Creative Industries.

This Transnational Research Study: Policies, Systems and Needs Analysis partnership report, provides a baseline of information and knowledge to support the development of the Vocational Mentor Occupational Profile, Competency Standards and Modular Learning Guide. The Study combines the ‘Country Reports’ produced by the partners in the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Poland, FYR Macedonia and Croatia.

Key findings

Role of the Vocational Mentor

Across all six countries there is common agreement that the role of Vocational Mentor has potential to be a key figure in supporting young people into employment and careers in the CCIs. The UK Talent Match programme has met with great interest as an applicable model to be adapted to different national contexts.

However, currently, the role of Vocational Mentor in the CCIs is not a defined or recognised role in any of the partner countries. There is no consistency in the context for this role with the result that it has no commonly accepted nomenclature. Its key competences are understood and practised in a range of different contexts. All partners comment on the lack of appropriately focused qualifications and training.

The report brings together a wide range of views from different stakeholders on the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience for a Vocational Mentor, which provide a basis for the development of an Occupational Profile and Competency Standards.

Many practitioners working with young people in the roles of employment or careers adviser, mentor or youth worker are generalists. They frequently expressed that they did not fully understand the creative industries and, unless they had direct experience of a creative field, they felt that they were challenged to provide appropriate advice and guidance. This group would benefit from specialist training support and learning materials.

A second group of creative practitioners with specific artform skills and expertise operate in the role of mentor, trainer or tutor in informal learning settings or within creative institutions and VET institutions. This group often see their role as being to support human and creative development and learning. They would benefit from training support in skills to engage with employers and support young people into work.

Creative and Cultural Industries context

The findings revealed that there is no consistent definition of the Creative and Cultural Industries across the partner countries. The definition of the CCIs as a coherent industry sector was only recently established in the UK in 2001, and similar models are still not deeply rooted in other European countries. The diversity of the sub-sectors within the CCIs also made it difficult to find a common definition and understanding of the role. Because of the complex and distinctive nature of the CCIs, the reports stress the importance of developing mentors and advisers who have a specialist understanding of the sector. Some respondents believed that long experience of the CCIs was necessary. However, it was felt to be unrealistic that a mentor role could encompass the full range of CCI sub-sectors.

The report collates data from each country which provides underpinning evidence of the growth and economic importance of the CCIs with a detailed breakdown of opportunities in different sub-sectors. It shows that the innovative and entrepreneurial characteristics of the “creative economy” are being recognised at a policy level across European countries, with research from Italy showing that investing in creativity by businesses leads to increased turnover. In Macedonia, the TME project takes place against a background of deep reforms

to the VET system and a strategy for the CCIs led by the Ministry of Culture which aim to integrate and adapt EU practices as a preparation for EU membership. However, most countries note that CCI policy is not being translated into effective practice, there is a lack of mapping of the market and specialist provision in the CCI sector and old paradigms remain stubbornly in place. In the UK, the CCIs face uncertain consequences of the referendum decision to leave the EU, including its potential impact on transnational collaboration and mobility of artists and jobs.

Issues connected with entrepreneurship were often considered the largest deficit area, considering the high proportion of self-employment and freelance work in the CCIs. It was widely accepted that the training for Vocational Mentors should include specific elements relating to entrepreneurial skills relevant to the nature of careers and business start up in the creative and cultural sectors. In the metropolitan areas of Rome, London and Barcelona there is an infra-structure of support for business start up and entrepreneurship, but little in the way of formal accreditation for these skills within the VET sector. Reports from Poland, Croatia and FYR Macedonia point to entrenched systemic barriers to entrepreneurship training in these countries.

CCI Employers needs and entry to the labour market for young people

This report provides detailed insights into the labour market for young people at national and regional levels. It shows a consistent pattern of high youth unemployment across the six countries. In Macedonia the unemployment rate of young people (aged 15-24) is 55.3%, double the rate of adults. In Spain, youth unemployment (20 to 24 year olds) is at 44%.

The country reports detail some of the policy responses to this situation including the Work Programme in the UK which represents the public policy context against which the alternative Talent Match “Journey of Change” model is being compared, and the operation and impact of the EU Youth Guarantee in Spain and Italy.

The country reports provide evidence that many employers across industry sectors are positive about employing young creatives –recognising benefits in innovation and competitiveness. As the growth of creative occupations is forecast to continue, there will be a high demand for creative workers who have the ability to transfer their skills to new contexts. However, the country reports also highlight a range of barriers that face young people outside education and employment seeking to enter the CCIs. Formal routes into the industry favour graduates with high levels of education, experience is often prized over knowledge and skills and informal networking and word of mouth remain key to gaining entry to and developing a career. There remain gender inequalities, particularly for women in some technical fields. CCI employers suggest that Internships can be an effective recruitment option to overcome these barriers and level the playing field. The reports identify the need to overcome perceptions that some of the traditional CCI artistic sub-sectors such as crafts, arts and theatre are often not seen as viable careers, and show evidence that creativity and artistic practice, the growth of new digital media, gaming, co-working and web resource offer opportunities that play to young people’s strengths.

Yet, there is a recurring theme that VET provision is far from being relevant and adapted to the fluidity, dynamism and complexity of the new CCI economy. Even in the Barcelona area, where the new sub sectors linked with digital real and new technologies are booming,

formal VET organizations are not covering the needs effectively. As a counter-balance to this general picture, the report includes case studies from each country of organisations and programmes which are seen as emerging models of good practice.

Qualifications and occupational standards for the Vocational Mentor

In all six countries the role of Vocational Mentor in the CCIs is not recognised within the standard occupational classification systems. Formal occupations for generalist careers advisers/counsellors operating in public sector, education and the private sector provide a framework for such a role in most countries. However in the East European countries these systems are often distrusted by young people. Each country proposes different ways of adapting the role to their national and regional context. This presents a challenge to the integration of an occupational profile for the Vocational Mentor within VET systems.

There was extensive agreement on the need for training and recognition of the role of Vocational Mentor specialising in the CCIs. The partners were unable to identify existing appropriate qualifications for a Vocational Mentor or similar “talent matching” role supporting young people into careers in the CCIs. Generally speaking, to perform the role of ‘talent matcher’ a professional working with young people is likely to have a degree for example in Spain as ‘Educador Social’ (a youth practitioner) or in Pedagogy or Psychology or Social Work. In Italy there is an informal Mentoring Association. The UK has developed vocational qualifications specific to the CCIs and schemes such as the Arts Award, but none that specifically integrate VET mentoring with support into employment and enterprise.

Summary Conclusions

The study confirmed the need in all the participating countries for further professional development of the specialist role of Vocational Mentor in order to integrate vocational and educational training (VET) for young people more effectively and flexibly with the rapidly changing needs of the emerging CCIs. The findings of the study highlight that VET providers specialising in the CCIs operate in a fluid and fragmented environment of policy and practice. Each country report provides detailed evidence and description of how countries and regions are adapting in different ways to the relatively recent emergence of new labour market environment and growth opportunities represented by the CCIs. The consultations have revealed in all countries that there is a recognition of the need for change in the alignment of VET to this new labour market environment.

Training and recognition of the role of vocational mentor in the CCIs is seen as offering a positive and applicable model in supporting young people to develop careers in the CCIs. The gaps that are exposed in these reports present real challenges, but can also be seen to represent a landscape of opportunity.

To avail of that opportunity, the report provides in-depth analysis from the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders into the skills, knowledge and experiences required for the role of Vocational Mentor, which provide a robust foundation for the development of an Occupational Profile, Competence Standards and a learning programme in the next stages of the Talent Matching Europe project.