

CoTraiNewsletter

Improving the quality of dual training



Why launch a project on the creation of collaborative training networks?

Attempting to overcome the problem of skill gaps is one of the main objectives of the current VET policy. Even after a dual training, apprentices who apply to an employer other than the one involved in their apprenticeship will sometimes (or often) find that the skills they can offer may not fit the requirements of the new employer.

Why? Mainly because the “training” company activities or/and its labor organization does not allow to cover all the activities or skills of the occupational profiles. This is especially true if the field of activity is mainly composed of SMEs. Several issues can be identified:

- Employers cannot find the skills they need to develop their company;
- Youths are not completely trained and find themselves in a weaker position on the job market, even though although their vocational training is completed;
- Training centers staff face difficulties in finding companies that really fit the training requirements, and have to compensate themselves;
- Policy makers face more difficulties in making concrete and efficient decisions concerning lifelong learning and, through them, in driving the economic development.

The problem often lies with the “classical” dual training model: one youth, one company.

Several countries (Austria, Germany, Switzerland...) have developed efficient alternative and complementary models by implementing collaborative trainings. A collaborative training means that a company provides vocational training together with one or more firm(s).

The [CEPAG](#) (Belgium) took on the challenge to put together German (inab) and Austrian (öibf) partners which will coach Italian (Centoform) and Belgian partners (IFAPME and CEFA) building collaborative training pilot projects. We are all participating in the development of the system in our countries. We are also collaborating to produce a methodology guide and a didactic video. These tools will be available by spring 2019.

Currently in a diagnostic phase, we are trying to understand our current models and requirements in order to implement experiments in September 2017, in four selected sectors: metal industry, catering, administration and wood industry.

We are carrying out this project thanks to Erasmus+ program. We would also very warmly thank Cedefop, which organized a conference on engaging SMEs in apprenticeships in autumn 2015. It offered us a great opportunity to build this ambitious partnership.



Collaborative training : the core of the project

In Germany and in Austria, a collaborative training means that a company provides vocational training together with one or more another firm(s), as their core activities complement each other. This allows covering all of the skills required by the profession. Often, one company is the primary provider of in-house vocational training and the second company only takes charge of the learning content that the first is unable to provide. For example, a restaurant is able to instruct a trainee cook in everything except the subject of “large-scale events”. The trainee therefore switches to a hotel restaurant for training in this area. In this case, the restaurant signs a training contract with the trainee and appends a written agreement with the hotel to it.



The CoTraiN pilot projects

In Italy, a Vocational education and training Centre working on post-secondary VET and Adult/Continuing Training will work along with regional companies and the Regional VET authority on implementation of CTNs related to professional profiles connected to the economic and industrial regional backbone in order to facilitate employment at the end of experimentations.

We will focus on learners attending **post-secondary VET training courses** (namely ITS, IFTS in Italy) on mechanical subjects. The testing region, Emilia Romagna, northern Italy is characterised by a technical backbone made of mechanical industries (packaging, engines, metal work, mechanical engineering) representing the main employment sector.

We have been conceiving and discussing with local companies and our Regional VET authority on 3 kind of CTNs applied to different post-secondary EQF levels, in order to choose the most significant and sustainable for the testing phase since September 2017.

- **CTN 1 ITS** Training profile: Automation Technician - Packaging > 19 years - EQF 5
- **CTN 2 IFTS** Training profile: Mechanical Designer > 19 years - EQF 4
- **CTN 3 ESF** Training profile Mechanical > 19 years old - EQF 5 - or **CTN 3 ESF** Training profile Energy manager for industrial production and circular economy > 19 years old - EQF 7

A second CTN under discussion might be on under 17 years old vocational learners. The Regional VET Authority, pushed by innovation brought by CoTraiN principles, agreed on experimenting a CTN on the IVth and last year of compulsory regional vocational training named IeFP for students **aged 17 years old**. In order to experiment the rotation of students in companies a second regional VET centre, owned by public authorities, and delivering IeFP courses from 15 to 17 years old will be involved, on own contributions, thanks to the regional authority support. The professional profile is mechanical and the vocational subjects are shared with Centoform IFTS in post-secondary education in order to ease the **interaction and transition between different educational levels on a WBL asset**.

In the Regional vision the experimentation will ease the merging between Secondary Level (IeFP) and Post-Secondary Level (IFTS) with a stronger WBL element in both educational cycles, giving to students a more complete skills preparation, a wider knowledge of work based settings and hopefully shortening the time of transition from education to work.

On the whole the second CTN in Italy might be on:

- **CTN 4 REGIONAL VET COURSES (IeFP)** Training Profile: Technician for maintenance of mechanical automatic plants. 17 years old. EQF 3

The innovative rotation in companies suggested by CoTraiN through Centoform was welcomed positively by the Emilia Romagna VET Regional authority.

The new ESF call for proposals for the delivery of IFTS, ITS and IVth year IeFP 2017-2018 was issued awarding extra evaluation points for VET providers that include in their educational proposals “alternative and innovative methods of management of mixed internships/WBL experiences in companies either in supply chain and in micro-networks of local companies”.

In Belgium, two dual training centers are involved in the project. One active in the field of education, and the other in the initial vocational training field. They have several issues in common but also different ones linked to their institutional framework. Here are the occupations they have chosen to work on and the reasons why:

- **Baker-pastry chef** (IFAPME – EQF 4): There is a lack of apprentices for the whole field, because of the low attractiveness of the occupation for apprentices (very early working hours). The closing of a bakery/pastry shops may lead to a loss of social dynamism. It would also seem, locally at least, that many managers of small bakeries/pastry shops are nearing retirement age, but are unable to find takers to replace them.
- **Welder** (CEFA): Youths are very often trained in only one specific welding process, even though the sector requires more skills to hire. Compensation in training centers does not allow youths to get enough practice hours to reach the level required in employment. As there is a shortage of welders, employers may have difficulties to allow youths to achieve their training in another company.

- **Office desk auxiliary (CEFA):** Youths are very often confined to administrative tasks, and not trained in tasks specific to reception work, such as contacts with clients, suppliers, users... whether it is on the phone or in person. It should be beneficial to vary learning/working environments; from a large administration to a small heating company for example. The CEFA has a convention with the real estate sector within which it should also be beneficial to vary working environments, for ex.: a real estate agency followed by a property management company.
- **Restauration (IFAPME – EQF 4 & CEFA):** Training within a single company often does not cover kitchen and service skills, for different reasons:
 - It depends on the company type, for ex. seafood caterer: the occupation requires knowledge of more than seafood, and catering requires skills other than simply cooking. Youths cannot really be trained in main service types (French-style, Russian-style, English-style), even if this could be seen as a second issue, or learn the specific skills to serve breakfasts for big events. Youths can learn these skills in the training center, but doing it one or two times is not enough.
 - Employers are sometimes reluctant to have apprentices go from the kitchen to the service, or the other way around. Sometimes for ex., the men will all be in the kitchen, and the young women in service...
- **Carpenter (IFAPME – EQF 4):** Apprentices mostly work in frame placement or as *kitchen fitters*. However, carpentry skills also cover the creation and placement of staircases, mortices and keyways, tenons... In addition, the local business community in the training center area is quite widespread, and the training center does not organize the 2nd and 3rd years of training. CTN could solve mobility problems, and in so doing issues of workforce, allowing the center to cover the 3 years of training. Moreover, there is a disparity between the employers' needs and the technical and environmental stakes: building wooden-framed houses requires carpenters to be duly qualified.

In Belgium, the training centers will launch the pilots in September 2017.

We think that testing CTNs on two different target groups: Belgium under 18 years old, Italy mainly over 18 years old, on different economic sectors and typology of enterprises might represent an added value for monitoring, evaluation and assessment of final impacts of CTNs in the two countries with a more appealing and complete transferable outlook to other European regions in future.

We believe a system of collaborative training can make a difference

In the French-speaking part of Belgium, dual training is mainly organized by (very) small companies, with a high proportion of individual entrepreneurs. Moreover, the unemployment rate is high. We are all aware of the rule: a high level of unemployment leads to an increase in the level of skills employers look for. This is mainly for two reasons: (1) a greater availability of qualified personnel, (2) employers attempting to reduce hiring risks. The latter issue is both a barrier and an opportunity for the implementation of collaborative training. A barrier, because employers hiring apprentices may not want to see youths making a part of their dual training within another company... where they might be hired. An opportunity, because in the second company, youths are directly “work ready”. If youths come back in the first company, it is even better for this company.

In Italy, an ambitious Dual Training reform was started in 2015 on a national basis. The main challenge is to create collaborative partnerships between VET and Business, inspiring positive changes in entrepreneurial mindsets, opening companies to WBL experiences for learners. Innovation given by CTNs might pave the way to experimentation and the role of social partners like union of industrials, social trades and VET policy makers along with VET and general education providers might play a key and pivotal role in bringing structural changes in the long term.

The principal challenges at this time

Implementing the pilot projects implies that the partners involved must have a good understanding of how the German and Austrian models work. The coach-partners also need to have a good understanding of the needs of the pilot-partners and the training system in their countries to be able to guide them. Working within a system, understanding it and explaining it to other people with the perspective of implementing its principles are not the same things. CoTraiN is not a copy-paste project. Contexts, dual training legal and institutional frameworks, stakeholders, economic fabrics... are different in all countries. All of this make the pilot projects and the coaching more difficult, but at the same time enriches the methodology the CoTraiN partners will produce.

The CoTraiN methodology

In order to offer a transferable methodology on how to create collaborative networks, CoTraiN is based on action-research, in which the SWOT tool has a central position. The SWOT is a dynamic matrix identifying internal issues as Strengths and Weaknesses, and external issues as Opportunities and Threats. In these four slots, partners identify parameters allowing for a better understanding of their country's system, with specific attention given to the pilots' feasibility and to prerequisites of sustainability. For example, the above-mentioned elements as an opportunity or a barrier are elements of the SWOTs; the Belgium (French-speaking part) legal framework finally fits with the project in its pilot phase. It is more difficult for the Italian partner. In Italy, there is a more binding legislation related to apprenticeship, for example, seen by companies as a de-facto job contract rather than a training period for apprentices. The different steps of our action-research are the ones usually found in this type of project: diagnosing, planning action, taking action, evaluating, specifying learnings.

The main CoTraiN productions and the agenda

A methodology guide accompanied by a didactic video are the principal outputs partners will produce. They will reflect the coaching and the pilot implementations and share their results and our conclusions with vocational training professionals, companies, social partners and policymakers who would like to take on the challenge of creating collaborative training networks. The didactic video will also target youths. CoTraiN partners have chosen to work with a peer-to-peer approach: companies will address companies, apprentices will speak to apprentices, trainers will address trainers... This is a very effective way to underline the outcomes of a project. It is not an easy challenge with a project lasting 36 months: we will have to construct the outputs while making things work together.

Partners will always have to keep in mind that we work in order to (help) build the pilot projects and create a transferable methodology available in two formats. The guide and the video will be downloadable free from each partners' CoTraiN webpage.

We will also broadcast two short video clips on the web. One will give the floor to employers and the other one to youths, respectively speaking to their peers.

The three Belgian partners will organize a final conference in spring 2019.

This Newsletter gives you the opportunity to follow the progress of the project, step by step, all the way to its final achievement.

The next step

While writing this first CotraiN newsletter, partners are preparing for a five-day training session in Germany. This training will also aim to produce a draft of the tools required to implement the pilot projects (it will be an active training). Coaching partners will deliver in depth explanation regarding both the German and Austrian collaborative systems, the first being company-based and the second center-based. The BiBB will join the coaches to share its well-known expertise in vocational training. Italian and Belgian partners will also explain their systems. We will all work together to identify the tools required to launch the pilot projects.

The training agenda is ambitious:

- What are the main collaborative training (CT) models, between companies and also at national level (for ex. specific network in Germany) ;
- What is specific to CT regarding dual contracts, conventions between companies ;
- How are certain obligations shared (insurance, retribution, training pathway... issues) ;
- How does the assessment work; what is the role of the stakeholders: training centers, tutors, chambers, social partners, policymakers, administration...
- What are the quality criteria; how to tackle barriers and reinforce levers...also considering issues of mind-sets ;
- Etc.

All this and much more is part of the program, including study visits in Maas Profile GmbH (a local company active at an international level) as well as meetings of experts from the BiBB, IG Metall and a local collaborative training network. Coaches will share but also receive a lot of information upon which to react and give advice.

The second CoTraiN-Newsletter will give you feedback on this, in autumn 2017.



The partnership

The [CEPAG](#), *Centre d'Education Populaire André Genot*, is a recognized continuing education organization, which develops a training and animation dynamic for the working class public, and coordinates 9 federated regional structures. It also develops international cooperation, particularly in French-speaking Africa.

The CEPAG deals with different issues in the fields of education and training, culture, employment and unemployment, economy, retraining cells, environment, mobility, non-discrimination, public services, citizenship...

The organization publishes analyses, studies and brochures, organizes debates, conferences and communication campaigns, co-organizes a certificate with the Free University of Brussels, and directs and produces videos broadcasted on the public TV channel as well as on Youtube (CEPAG TV and Regards Emissions TV).

The CEPAG coordinates the CoTraiN project, more specifically the action-research, and helps coordinate the pilots in Belgium.

The [ÖIBF](#) is a non-university research institute. öibf's mission is to carry out high-quality research and development in order to support and promote activities and policies concerning vocational education and training (VET). In its work, it focuses particularly on innovation in education and the interrelation of education and the labour market. öibf is active both on national and international level and delivers services for various organizations in Austria and Europe.

öibf possesses 40 years of research experience in the fields of VET and in-company training, especially related to training of apprentices. The institute has executed numerous research and development projects as to different aspects of practice-oriented in-company training; e.g. on the following topics:

- Forms of teaching and learning in VET
- Quality in VET
- Train the Trainer
- Lack of training positions and skills shortages
- Development and prognosis of the apprentice market
- Qualification needs of enterprises and qualification profiles of young people interested in in-company training
- Transition from school to in-company training.

Projects range from qualitative and quantitative analysis, to system and impact analysis, monitoring and evaluation up to development of curricula, methods and measures in the field of VET. Particularly in the context of international projects (ERASMUS+, LLL, LdV, ESF) Öibf coordinated the development of models, manuals, guidelines and toolboxes as well as new measures such as peer reviews in VET.

In the project, the öibf acts as a coaching partner for the piloting countries and contributes its expertise in the legal, organizational and financial framework of training associations.

INAB is a 100 % daughter company of the bfw group. The bfw group is with ca. 1.800 employees one of the leading providers of training and education in Germany, owned by the German trade union confederation DGB. As a recognized non-profit provider of vocational training and education, the bfw group has been committed for more than 60 years for securing sustainable jobs as well as to cover professional requirements through training, counseling and placement. The also nationwide active inab - training and employment corporation of the company bfw mbH has been a part of the bfw group since 1990. This subsidiary company specializes in services on the educational topics of transition from school to work, job preparation and initial vocational training. Main target groups of inab are youngsters until 25 years of age, migrants and refugees and people involved in trainings for these young people.

Clemens Körte represents inab in the partnership, gives input on the dual system in Germany and practical issues related to it, and brings a coaching expertise in creating CTN.

[CENTOFORM](#), set up in 2001, is a Vocational and Education Training Centre (VET) for Adult/Continuing Training working in 2 Italian Regions: Emilia Romagna, northern and Apulia Region, southern.

Centoform designs and manages training programs for unemployed and employed people working on ESF regional funds and interprofessional funds. We have been delivering since 2013 Post Secondary Level training with 30% of Work Based Learning (WBL) on Mechanical issues through IFTS courses EQF4 (post-secondary level) implemented with Universities.

We deal with apprenticeships for young people and other forms of in-company training. During period 2007-2016 a total of 2.168 apprentices and 425 trainees were involved and more than 1.500 companies contacted for creating a positive match for employment.

Our interest in Erasmus CoTraiN project is represented by the innovativeness of Collaborative Training Networks practice implemented in lighthouse countries like Germany and Austria. It is for Italy a challenging practice to be studied, tested through experimental CTNs and disseminated at policy makers level and entrepreneurial level. In Italy the entrepreneurial mind-set is the main feature to be tackled in order to welcome such a new perspective on mobility of interns and apprentices for companies 'competitiveness development and new horizons for employment policies.

We are supported by our Regional VET authority ready to host innovations in VET brought by CoTraiN results and outputs.

Since 2016 we are an official member of EAfA – European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

[IFAPME](#) is a regional public body for apprenticeship, entrepreneurship training and continuous training for SME's in the French community in Belgium.

The IFAPME network is composed of a central administration and decentralized units located inside training centres (or in very closed premises) in all Wallonia (8 Training Centers – 15 sites).

Its main missions are:

- Organize and promote apprenticeship and entrepreneurship training, training for self-employed and small businesses;
- Identify apprenticeship training needs and coordinate operators to optimize the response to those needs;
- Approve, coordinate and subsidize courses organized by the Training Centres and ensure educational assessment;
- Watch the progress of the practical training in a company;
- Organize and promote educational development and develop methodological tools;
- ...

IFAPME possesses over 100 years of experience in vocational training and for the year 2015-2016, we deal with:

- 4.341 apprentices;
- 12.262 people involved in entrepreneurship training;
- more than 9.600 companies ;
- 3.071 trainers (working professional);
- nearly 200 different professions and many sectors.

IFAPME and more specifically the Mons-Borinage-Centre (MBC) Training Center is involved in the CoTrain project and will build one of the three local CTN-pilots.

CEFA of Court-St Etienne is a centre d'éducation et de formation en alternance, in the vocational education field. It is located in the Brabant wallon region, not far from Brussels. It delivers a part-time education at school and part-time inside companies, to around 500 pupils.

The CEFA is active in the following fields:

- Carpentry,
- Building,
- Restauration and hotel (horeca),
- Metal,
- Healing,
- Office desk,
- Sale,
- Service to people.

Depending on the occupation targeted, the CEFA organizes education in the secondary education level, from year 5 to year 7.

The CEFA :

- Has developed a strong network of companies,
- Collaborates with joint bodies,
- Organizes individual guidance and supervision,
- Promotes the sectoral dual traing contracts (CAI),
- Includes training plans and monthly assessments,
- Gives access to new technologies...

The CEFA will develop a collaborative training pilote in 3 of its professional areas, directly collaborating to the tools that the project aims to develop as part of the methodology.



For further information, please visit [our webpage](#)

Would you like to receive the CoTraiN-Newsletter?

Please send an e-mail to cotrain@cepag.be indicating “Yes, I want to receive the CoTraiNewsletter”.

Eager to ask questions?

Please send an e-mail to cotrain@cepag.be, asking your question(s). We will reply shortly.

For further information about our partners or to contact them :

- **Austria - öibf :**
[CoTraiN webpage with information in English and German](#)
- **Belgium - IFAPME :**
Contact : info@ifapme.be– meline.wilmart@ifapme.be
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Contact : ec.cefa.court@skynet.be
- **Germany – INAB :**
Contact : koerte.clemens@inab-jugend.de asking your question(s).
Mr Koerte will shortly respond
- **Italy – CENTOFORM :**
[CoTraiN webpage with information in Italian and English :](#)