

Draft

## Train-the-trainer program III for university lecturers and innovation promoters for SMEs

Work Package 4.3 – Activity 5.1

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## 1. Schedule for a one and a half day training session

As the testing of the training program takes place with lecturers and advisors of the project partners who already know the CVET programs and study programmes well, the testing takes place for one and a half days.

### First half day

Topic	Sched- uled time	Issues and Notes	Manage- ment by
Module A Introduc- tion	30 minutes	Welcome Goals and implementation of the training Introduction of the participants: Name? Activity? Experience? expectations? Questions	PP1 Hanse-Par- lament  All partici- pants
Module B Motivation	45 minutes          15 minutes	Why are dual study programs and promo- tion of innovation for SMEs important? Presentation and consultation of central challenges and the contributions to over- coming bottlenecks through dual study programs. Discussion and clarification of questions. Bilateral exchange on individual motiva- tion to implement dual study programs.	PP1 Hanse-Par- lament          Small groups

### Second half day

Topic	Sched- uled time	Issues and Notes	Manage- ment by
Module C Compari- son of education sys- tems with regard to interlocking of theory and practice	60 minutes	Presentation of concepts and models for courses of study with integrated vocational education and further training. Explanations of the central idea and the interlocking of theory	PP2 Berufl- iche Hoch- schule Hamburg

[illegible]

### Third half day

[illegible]

	60 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation and reflection</li> </ul> <p>Discussion and clarification of questions Advice on implementation options in the respective COVE</p>	
Module F Action and reflection phase	120 Minutes	<p>Work in small groups and in plenaries in three phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of examples for interlocking of theory and practice</li> <li>• Exchange phase: Finding of commonalities and differences</li> <li>• Presentation and discussion phase: Ideas and Examples for interlocking of theory and practice.</li> </ul>	<p>PP2 Berufliche Hochschule Hamburg</p> <p>Mixed COVE working groups</p> <p>Plenum</p>
Module G Completion of the training	15 minutes	<p>Questions and final discussion Feedback &amp; evaluation</p>	<p>PP1 Hanse-Parlament All participants</p>

## 2. Concept

### Aim and target groups of the course

The aim of this course is to introduce teachers from further education institutions, advisors from SMEs Promoters and university lecturers for the implementation of dual bachelor's degree courses as well as innovation promotion and R&D projects in and with SMEs. The attention will be paid to motivation, fundamental terminology, dual study programs, innovation promotion, pedagogic issues mentoring, and coaching.

The important goal of the train the trainer seminar is also to present the possibilities of interlinking vocational training and academic education in the different project partner countries on the basis of comparable criteria.

The target groups of this course are teachers from further education institutions, advisors from SMEs Promoters and university lecturers.

The target group in such a seminar should consist of representatives of vocational and academic education with extensive experience in the planning and design of vocational education programs and academic study programs. As experts in their organizations, these representatives are generally familiar with the diverse administrative, legal, organizational, curricular, didactic and other framework conditions when planning and implementing measures, courses or complete educational and study programs. This makes them ideal for analyzing, reflecting on and assessing the possibilities for improving qualifications in the fields of business administration, human resources and workplace innovation by interlocking theory and practice. In addition, based on experience, they can assess which framework conditions can and must be changed locally for such an improvement in qualifications.

### Duration of the training

The training usually lasts 1 1/2 – 2 days. For participants with less previous knowledge and experience, three days can be scheduled. For participants with extensive knowledge and experience in continuing vocational education and training and the implementation of dual study programmes, a one and a half day training may be sufficient. As the testing of the training program takes place with lecturers and advisors of the project partners who already know the CVET programmes and study programmes well, the testing takes place for one and a half days (see capital 4).

### Methods and Facilitations of the course

Varying methods will be used, e.g., lectures and presentations, group works, discussions, practices, self-studies, data searching etc. The aim is to give the trainees an experience of as many methods as possible.

For the training a room that is big enough for all the participants and trainers, and smaller rooms or other space for group works, will be needed. In addition to rooms, following equipment is recommended:

- Video projector with the most common plugs for connections with presenters' laptops
- A computer and internet connections for those presenters who do not have a laptop of their own.
- An opportunity to wireless connect to internet for all participants is also recommended.
- Paper, pens, post-it pads, whiteboard or blackboard in the classroom and flip charts in both the classroom and group-workrooms are necessary too.

If a trainer needs some special equipment or resources, he / she should inform the facilitator in advance about these needs.

## Contents of the course

The training consists of 11 modules. The necessity and significance of dual bachelor's degree programs, alternative forms of combining practice and theory as well as the integration of vocational training and continuing vocational education are dealt with. The dual courses of study "Human Resources and Business Administration", the three modules on workplace innovation and a trial Bachelor's degree program with integrated vocational training and further training in workplace innovation are comprehensively presented and advised on, as well as their possibilities of realization under different national conditions and legal regulations. A program for the promotion of innovations in SMEs will be presented and discussed, which can be optimally and precisely combined with the implementation of R & D projects according to the specific conditions of the companies. Finally, pedagogy, coaching, and mentoring will be discussed.

The “Train the Trainer” program includes following topics, which are not necessarily in the same order in the implementation:

### Module A: Introduction

- Greetings
- Objectives and execution of the training
- Self-presentation of the participants
- Determination of the participants' previous knowledge and their expectations of the seminar

### Module B: Motivation

By presenting serious bottlenecks and challenges and the important contributions of dual study programs to overcoming these problems, participants will be motivated to implement dual study programs with integrated vocational training. Such challenges concern for example:

- Tackling urgent tasks in workplace innovation.

- Overcoming the high and growing shortage of skilled workers and entrepreneurs.
- Aligning qualifications with the conditions and needs of SMEs.
- Strong increase in the attractiveness of vocational education and training.
- Establishing complete permeability between vocational and academic training.
- Crediting of already acquired competences.
- International recognition of educational qualifications, especially in continuing vocational education and training.
- Significant reduction of drop-out rates in study programs through the combination of practice and theory.
- Achievement of IVET and CVET degrees for students who do not achieve a Bachelor's degree.
- Increasing innovation, productivity and competitiveness in SMEs.

### **Module C: Interlocking of theory and practice: Measures, Challenges and Transferability**

Various points of connection to the previous lectures will be established and supplemented with further reflections on the dovetailing of theory and practice by using the example of the idea of study-integrated training at the Berufliche Hochschule Hamburg (BHH).

Explanations of the central idea and the interlocking of theory and practice in study programs at the BHH.

The BHH was founded in 2020 to upgrade vocational education in the education system. In many federal states, young people would rather study than do a state-recognized apprenticeship. Apprenticeship places therefore often remain unfilled.

The BHH as a public higher education institution is pursuing a new concept to strengthen vocational and academic education. Many young people are faced with the decision of study or recognized apprenticeship (vocational training) after the general school system. The question cannot always be answered clearly and leads to uncertainty. BHH provides a remedy and offers a path that combines study and apprenticeship (legal recognition). With the study-integrated training model, both options go hand in hand.

Young people can obtain a double qualification by studying for a Bachelor's degree in combination with an apprenticeship (examination and certification), and this in a period of only four years. Achievements at three places of learning (university, company and vocational school) are mutually recognized (learning places). The interlocking of contents reduces inefficient duplication in different courses and enables a workload that is oriented towards the classic five-day week.

One of the most important features of study integrated apprenticeship (special type/modification of dual study program) is the combination of demanding practical skills in the teaching company, broad knowledge of the entire vocational field at the vocational school, and academic skills and scientific methods at the university. The phases at the three places of learning are largely structured in coherent blocks and



some university afternoons. Organizational and curricular coordination is one of the most important tasks between the different learning places.

In the course of module C, the above outlined approach of the BHH will be briefly introduced in a 10–20-minute input. The BHH’s approach, particularly within its business-related study programmes, serves as an example of how theory and practice can be systematically connected in vocational education. This is regarded as a workplace innovation, as the “Studienintegrierende Ausbildung” (SiA) approach (linking three learning venues) represents an innovation in itself and, at the same time, stands for an innovative way of addressing training in the partner companies.

Building on this example, the workshop is designed to create space for exchange among partners. The focus lies on sharing experiences and perspectives, discussing possible challenges, and reflecting on ways to strengthen the integration of theory and practice. The exchange will be organized in an interactive way, supported by guiding questions to provide orientation without limiting the discussion.

Possible Guiding Questions (as a flexible framework):

- What objectives are being pursued with such measures?
- Which target groups are addressed?
- What kinds of challenges may arise (e.g. legal, financial, organizational, personnel)?
- What solutions or approaches could help to address these challenges?
- To what extent might such measures be transferable to other contexts, and what conditions would need to be in place?

As participants bring their own experiences with the design and implementation of measures linking theory and practice, the exchange may provide varied insights. The workshop is intended to encourage the sharing of perspectives, the identification of challenges, and the discussion of practices that have been tried in different settings.

## **Module D: Three modules on workplace innovation for integration into existing Bachelor's degree programmes**

Overview of the contents of the three modules

- Content of the modules
- Target groups for the implementation
- Cooperation with SMEs
- Use of the study modules for further education
- Procedure for the integration into existing Bachelor's degree programmes
- Implementation and reflection

## **Module E: Further Training program *Commercial Specialist in Sustainable Management***

The program is designed as a further training course based on German crafts regulations, targeting participants with prior vocational training. It has a total of 600 hours, structured into five modules. The modular structure allows both full-time (15–20 weeks) and part-time (approx. 50 weeks) implementation, thus resembling the flexible character of dual study programs. The competence-oriented design reflects practical workplace situations and follows the cycle of planning, execution, and control, ensuring strong links between theory and practice.

### **Modules and Content of the Further Training Program**

The curriculum is divided into five modules:

1. **Competitiveness of sustainable companies** – strategic development, legal frameworks, and start-up support.
2. **Sustainability-oriented marketing** – CSR/ESG, digital marketing, customer relationship management.
3. **Business accounting, controlling, finance & investment** – financial/cost accounting, liquidity and investment planning with sustainability focus.
4. **Human resources and leadership** – personnel planning, employer branding, development, remuneration, and leadership models.
5. **Qualification of trainers in SMEs** – planning, implementation, and completion of vocational training.

Examinations combine written and oral parts, emphasizing the solution of business-related sustainability challenges.

### **Target Groups for the Implementation of the Training Program**

The program addresses employees with commercial vocational backgrounds aiming to take over management and administrative responsibilities in SMEs, especially in the crafts sector. Due to open admission pathways, participants are expected to be heterogeneous in age, formal qualifications, and professional experience.

### **Cooperation with SMEs**

SMEs are the central partners, as the course content is directly linked to their sustainability challenges. Cooperation is essential in terms of case studies, training implementation, and the qualification of in-company trainers. SMEs benefit by strengthening competitiveness, innovation capacity, and workforce skills in line with ecological and social demands.

### **Use of the Study Modules for Further Education**

Beyond the training itself, the modules are designed as building blocks for lifelong learning. They can be reused in other qualification frameworks, professional development programs, and as standalone modules for targeted upskilling in areas like

sustainable marketing, digitalization, or human resource management. This modularity ensures transferability into further education contexts.

## **Implementation and Reflection**

The program emphasizes action- and competence-based didactics, aligning content with real workplace processes. Supporting materials (e.g., OECD reports, EU and ILO guides, case studies on SMEs) provide international perspectives and practical tools. Reflection is encouraged through examination design, participant feedback, and continuous adaptation to SME needs. Overall, the program aims to embed sustainability as a core business principle, equipping future commercial specialists with interdisciplinary and practice-oriented competences.

## **Workshop Concept**

Building on the example of the *Commercial Specialist*, an exchange between the partners will be methodically facilitated, the participants will be grouped and their discussions will be guided by questions such as how the program (particularly its curriculum) relates to the topic of workplace innovation or to what extent it represents a workplace innovation itself, and what further points of connection can be identified.

In line with the approach taken in Module C, this section emphasizes the interactive exchange among the project partners. Particular attention will be given to the perspectives of entrepreneurs, exploring their motivations for offering the training program to junior staff and the factors that might encourage them to engage in cooperation.

## **Module F: Action and Reflection Phase (Group Work)**

### **Workshop Concept: Development and Implementation of an Innovative Training Program ‘by design’**

This workshop provides participants with the opportunity to explore how training programs or comparable products in the broader context of VET can be developed and introduced by using innovative methods. The overall focus is on the interlocking of theory and practice, while also taking into account aspects of entrepreneurship, curriculum design and cooperation with SMEs. Depending on the interests and backgrounds of the participants, different thematic areas can be applied.

## **Introduction**

The workshop begins with a short input session (10–15 minutes), which introduces the participants to a selected theme and relevant approaches or models. This input provides general orientation and background for the subsequent action and reflection phases.

## **Group Work**

Participants are divided into small groups, depending on the actual number of workshop attendees. The groups may work on a prepared case study or, alternatively, on a business model or training program of their own choice. The task is to explore and

sketch out a concept that combines innovative and practice-oriented elements. The Business Model Canvas serves as a guiding framework to support the structuring and visualization of ideas.

### **Exchange and Reflection**

In the next phase, the groups share their results in a gallery walk. Participants explore the flipcharts or canvases of other groups, identify commonalities and differences, and highlight particularly innovative approaches. Where possible, perspectives of entrepreneurs and other stakeholders may be included to reflect on the relevance and feasibility of the concepts.

### **Implementation Phase**

Participants then reflect on possible approaches for how their ideas or training programs could be further developed and introduced into practice. They discuss potential challenges at organizational, legal or market level, as well as opportunities for cooperation and transfer. Experiences from practice – both positive and challenging – may be included in the discussion. In addition, participants are invited to consider relevant tools and approaches that could inspire further innovative thinking.

### **Presentation Phase**

In the final phase, each group briefly presents its ideas or mini-concept to the plenary. These presentations may outline initial curriculum ideas, business models or possible implementation steps. The emphasis is placed on showing links between theory and practice, market relevance and sustainability orientation, as well as possible ways to strengthen cooperation between academic institutions and SMEs.

### **Conclusion**

The workshop emphasizes interactive exchange between project partners, the use of entrepreneurial and innovative approaches in curriculum and product development, and the reflection of workplace innovation. Rather than producing finished solutions, the format illustrates possible pathways and provides inspiration for how innovative and sustainable educational products might be developed through systematic exchange, reflection and cooperation with SMEs.

### **Module G: Completion of the training**

- Materials for everyday use
- Contacts for assistance
- Final debate and course evaluation

### **Conclusion and outlook**

An essential and very demanding goal of the Train the Trainer workshop is to improve the mutual understanding of the two multi-layered constructs (academic) theory and (business-related) practice by the respective representatives. This is accompanied by the search for one or more connecting elements, how the view of theory (academic

education in science with its self-understanding) can be constructively connected with the view of practice (vocational education in practice with its self-understanding) for a joint qualification in study programs. For this connection, the various overarching criteria on theory and practice in particular served in the training, which clarified the differences, commonalities and future potentials of the two qualification systems.

Special mention must be made of the extremely committed cooperation of the participants who had to deal with the other qualification systems and the partly very different requirements in a dialogue exchange several times during the training. The challenges were not small. A good working atmosphere and the creation of team spirit, which could already be built up in the run-up to the training, are effective for the success of such training. Care should be taken to ensure that all participants first understand the other perspective from theory or practice, so that they can then recognize and appreciate it. In this way, a common basis can be created to break down any existing hurdles and resistance and to build up or expand a complementary educational offer.

The number of participants depends on the characteristics of the training (e.g. whether the training includes practical modules or not), the goals to be achieved, the care and comfort for participants and lecturers. The standard training group consists of no less than 15 people and no more than 25 people. The optimal number of trainees with active training is approx. 20 people.

The development of the contents of a dedicated training (closed) should be carried out in cooperation with the target customer, whereby the open training program is usually based on economic, social, pedagogical and institutional environment analysis and is developed by corresponding experts.

The critical factors in the preparation and execution of high-quality training can be the selection of a competent trainer and/or the quality of the training materials. A trainer should use different learning techniques (e.g. teamwork, discussion, role play, case analysis) and presentation of content (e.g. lecture, videos, best practice examples).

Evaluation of the training by the trainers and the trainees' perspective can be used to improve both the content and the organization of the training.

To develop the necessary competencies, it is essential not only to impart knowledge, but also to develop analytical skills and positive attitudes among the participants.

To meet these requirements:

- some parts require the active participation of the participants (presentation, flip-chart presentation, discussion, feedback to other participants),
- the participants should work individually and in groups,
- the participants should learn on the basis of varied material: case study of a real crafts enterprise, best practices from business practice, secondary data collection and analysis on the basis of critical thinking,
- participants work in and outside the classroom,
- participants receive feedback in the training environment, face-to-face feedback.

The effectiveness of all education systems depends crucially on the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms, workshops, laboratories and other places where education takes place. While excellent trainers (including tutors, coaches etc.), dedicated students, well-designed courses, appropriate facilities and sufficient resources are required, they alone are not enough to ensure an excellent education.

Specifically, we need to understand more clearly how best to involve certain types of learners so that they can carry out learning to achieve the desired professional results. This is the essence of what can be understood as vocational education. The findings indicate that serious consideration of pedagogy in vocational education and training is largely lacking. In the present train the trainer concept of three most important topics will be analyzed:

First, the essence of vocational education and training, further education and higher education is presented. In general, a trainer's teaching is only as good as his/her ability to use the types of learning that reliably lead to the desired results. Without this process of thinking about the relationship between the desired results and teaching design, neither teaching nor learning is good enough. In this approach, decision-making will consider several key areas to be able to guarantee the best possible decisions on pedagogy. Choices to be made are e.g., the role of the trainer, the type of activities, the type of knowledge, the attitude to knowledge, the organization of time, the organization of space, the approach to tasks, the visibility of processes, the proximity to the trainer and the role of the learner.

Secondly, in all three stages of vocational education, the desired results that vocational training is trying to achieve must be examined. Six results are important in the entire vocational training: a development of work competence, routine experience, ingenuity, functional competence, craftsmanship and other skills for personal and professional development.

Thirdly, it must be argued that trainers need a clear understanding of the diversity of learning methods that lead to different learning outcomes. It is clear that vocational training must be taught in the context of practical problem solving and that high-quality vocational training usually involves a mix of methods. Mostly, the best. By and large, the best vocational learning is practice-oriented, practical, experience-oriented, realistic and often simultaneously with feedback, questioning, application and reflection and, if necessary, with theoretical models and explanations. In the present training, the advantages of effective learning and teaching methods in vocational education and training, further education and higher education should be demonstrated, such as learning through observation, learning through imitation, learning through practice, learning through feedback, learning through conversation, learning through real problem solving, learning through critical thinking, learning through coaching, through simulation and role play.



### 3. Background and teaching material

The teaching material is an example showing how the topics of this course could be presented. Each teacher should adjust this to the circumstances of his/her own country, considering the local regulation the level and skills of the trainers participating to the course, and the level, state and possible study program of their students / trainees / coaches / mentees; are they studying, finishing initial or further vocational training, are they entrepreneurs or working in the enterprise etc. Each program may require different weightings and highlights, and it is on the responsibility of each teacher to consider these special needs.

The following freely accessible background and teaching materials are published on the project website <https://win4smes.eu/> and can be downloaded free of charge:

- Module B & C: Objectives and strategies for vocational training in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region
- Module B: Strategien für die künftige Gestaltung der beruflichen Aus-, Weiter- und Hochschulbildung
- Module C: Concepts and models for courses of study with integrated vocational education and further training
- Module C: Ausbildungsintegrierende duale Studiengänge
- Module C: Studienintegrierte Ausbildung an der neuen Beruflichen Hochschule Hamburg
- Module D: Three modules on workplace innovation for integration into existing Bachelor's degree programmes
- Module E: Three stage dual study program “Workplace Innovation”
- Module E: Guide and checklist for the offer and implementation of seminars
- Module F: National and legal conditions and alternative solution models
- Module G: Evaluation of Trainings or Consulting Processes