



VET SQUARED

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



VET Mobility Safeguarding Quality Charter

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use that might be made of the information contained therein.
PROJECT NUMBER: 2020-1-UK01-KA202-079153

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Contents

Project Partners	3
Project Summary.....	4
Introduction	5
VET Mobility Safeguarding Quality Charter	6
Context.....	6
Definitions	6
Inspiring Minimum Requirements.....	7
BEFORE DEPARTURE	9
DURING THE STAY.....	10
AFTER RETURNING HOME	10
Conclusion.....	11
References:	12



Project Partners



Eurospeak Language Schools Ltd



MAGENTA CONSULTORIA PROJECTS SL



FORTES Impresa Sociale Srl



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INSTITUTE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP
DEVELOPMENT



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Project Summary

The VET SQUARED (VET²) project **focuses on the initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, with a specific focus on an area of VET which is largely overlooked as a topic relating to HR or organisational policy and management and generally integrated as a small part of operational policy and compliance measures.** The project addresses this priority by upskilling and providing continuous professional development opportunities in the field of VET mobility, by providing a bespoke safeguarding quality charter for application during VET mobility activities.

The project also aims to develop European level partnerships aimed at putting in place the necessary support mechanisms as well as contractual frameworks to promote the safeguarding of VET learners during mobility periods led by VET organisations, teachers and mobility leaders. The project's dissemination and exploitation plans aim to promote strong internationalisation through effective safeguarding procedures and sets of standards before, during and after the learner mobility process, by informing, motivating, preparing and facilitating the knowledge and skills of VET organisations and teachers in host and sending countries.

The project is targeted towards identifying best practices, creating a standardised set of safeguarding and scaling up safeguarding these measures within the area of the Erasmus+ VET mobility. Our project focuses on developing a set of practical standards and guidelines for implementation, along with the development of safety and security protocols for transnational mobility group leaders taking students abroad, as well as an e-course, community of best practice and a resource bank for VET practitioners; with the ultimate goal of maintaining safe and secure mobility programmes for young students travelling abroad to undertake a period of study or vocational work placement.

The VET² project objectives are:

- To implement the safeguarding best practices amongst VET mobility organisations on a wider, Pan-European scale.
- To develop an holistic, European strategy for effective safeguarding and promotion of quality mobility of VET learners under the age of 18.
- To lay the foundations for the implementation and uptake of a single European VET Mobility Safeguarding Policy at a higher/systemic level.
- To raise awareness of the importance and ongoing need for safeguarding awareness and review within mobility activities.



Introduction

Within the first intellectual output of this project developed a Safeguarding Best Practices e-Book and the current a Safeguarding Charter which will set out the minimum requirements that VET institutions need to meet in order to consider themselves safeguarding focused.

The output will help VET providers to develop an institutional culture which better understands the importance of safeguarding being at the forefront of all organisational activities, as well as the range of differing approaches found in contemporary society. The output's findings will be informed by national reports, policy documents and regional and local implementation practices from across Europe.

This approach will be complemented by research into developments on the European level, as well as approaches and best practices in European countries not included within the partnership. Therefore, the final charter will be informed by a European perspective.

The eBook includes provisions in HR policy and staff training, course design, facilities offered, and student support services. Fortes as the partner leader for Intellectual Output 1 and Eurospeak, the project coordinator, used the results of the national reports to produce a Safeguarding Best Practices e-book. The first part of this eBook consisted of a summary of the into safeguarding approaches carried out by partners. This produced by Eurospeak and focused on the commonalities, differences, needs and areas of innovation found across Europe.

The second part of the eBook includes all the best practices collated by partners. To maximise the impact of these, Fortes produced an introduction to the best practices, summarising the approach taken and emerging themes found. This includes a SWOT analysis on the state of safeguarding initiatives relating to VET mobility in Europe.

Meanwhile, Fortes and Eurospeak used the findings from the research to form the minimum requirements needed to produce a truly all-encompassing safeguarding-focused organisation.

To aid transferability and usage, the final and the main context of the charter (apart from introduction etc.) is no more than 2 pages in length.



VET Mobility Safeguarding Quality Charter

Context

The charter includes examples found within the best practices and aspirational points and case studies found within the field research. In order to ensure that the charter is as user friendly as possible, the minimum requirements are categorised in line with different activities of a VET institution (e.g. HR policy, facilities, course design, staff support and training, student engagement etc.).

Focusing on the quality aspects of mobility to maintain safe and secure mobility programmes for minors travelling abroad to undertake a period of study or vocational work placement, the Safeguarding Charter constitutes an inspiring set of minimum requirements that VET Institutions need to meet in order to consider themselves safeguarding focused.

Ensuring a safe preparation, implementation and follow-up of mobility activities is essential for a successful project. This Charter is designed to support all actors involved to ensure a successful experience and the minors' well-being during their stay abroad: VET providers, sending organisations, children, parents, hosting partners/companies, accompanying persons.

Definitions

Safeguarding: For the purposes of this document, we are using the terms 'safeguarding' and 'to safeguard' to describe the preventive and precautionary approach to planning and procedures needed to protect children and young people from any potential harm. Child protection is one important aspect of safeguarding;

Children: young human being below the legal age of majority.



Inspiring Minimum Requirements

Our desk and field research made clear that there's a strong NEED for a policy action, as the context doesn't have a clear framework under most participating countries' law, especially regarding the definition on minors and the frames around mobility/minors.

From HR side of view:

According to the result, we came up that child safeguarding is the responsibility when organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children. In other words, they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and any concerns the organisation has about children's safety within the communities in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities. "Do no harm" is a principle that has been used in the humanitarian sector but can equally be applied to the field of development. It refers to organisations' responsibility to minimise the harm they may be doing inadvertently as a result of their organisational activities. In volunteer hosting, not only the physical safety is important, but also the mental wellbeing of the young people. In the follow-up phase, participants' involvement is the most important.

Legal framework side – Organisations' support:

The legal framework under which all organisations operate in most of the participating countries is very sensitive and a clear set of definitions is needed. Acknowledging risks and implementing measures to address them is fundamental to organisations' strategies and governance. The more this is recognised, the more risks can be prevented.

To achieve this, the organisations participating on mobilities with minors needs to consider:

- where, when and how their organisation affects children and what risks this presents;
- what policies and procedures are needed to prevent harm and how to respond to concerns appropriately;
- who is the appropriate designated person/s to act as the focal point in an organisation to receive and manage any safeguarding concerns and subsequent inquiry/investigation;
- what safeguarding induction and training is needed to ensure staff knows what the organisation expects of its people and what to do if they have a concern;
- a clear code of conduct so that all staff understand its professional boundaries when working with children and what is and is not characterised as an acceptable behaviour;
- how to recruit safely.



Student/organisation engagement:

All interviewees put a great emphasis on the selection process. Depending on the target group of the mobility, organisations use well-developed methods and systems to collect, analyse and decide on issues regarding applications. For instance, the interviewed school uses an in-depth scoring system to evaluate the applications. It is important to get multi-directional assessment about the mobility. Understanding the expectation and background of the participants is essential in order to have a safe mobility experience, as well as training them before departure, with non-formal and informal ways. In most cases, the first time they leave their family is when they are very young, so they need support, because they do not know what to expect.

Organisations should consider incorporating more evaluation processes at each stage of mobility so that they can later improve the mobility experience.

Staff support and training:

During the mobility, continuous availability is the key as it came up from the research in all countries. Mobility professionals (accompanying teachers, group leaders, project managers) are available at any time in case of any problem, concern or crisis.

Some of the participating research organisations proposed the development of an internal Handbook-Manual where all the responsibilities, behaviour and rights of the participants will be explicitly mentioned and signed by the interested parties.

Risk prevention: there are many ways a child safeguarding concern can arise; sometimes it is difficult to know when you need to ask for advice and take some action. A concern may arise because of poor organisational practice or because someone is putting a child at risk. Regarding the protection of personal data, organisations must always be prepared and informed of anything new that arises.

Course design:

All projects and programmes course context must be designed to minimise the risk of harm to the children they come into contact with or impact upon directly or indirectly by taking sufficient account of child safety, whatever the focus of the work. A child safe project/course must ensure that it takes account of the environment, context and impact (intended or unintended) on the children and communities it is engaged with.

All organisations must therefore determine the context in which they are working and adopt an approach that includes risk assessing all proposed programmes, adapting programmes so they



become safer for children and including additional safety strategies during the implementation phase.

By summarising all the above information and any other relevant it was gathered during the research period, the two-pages Minimum Requirements that organisations, parents, students should follow in order to participate on E+ mobilities has been designed in detail below in 3 stages (before departure, during the stay, after returning home):

BEFORE DEPARTURE

- A. Roles and responsibilities: Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each actor should play their full part by providing access to clear and reliable sources of information and guidance, specifying roles and responsibilities. Commitments: sign a quality commitment document to confirm the responsibilities of each party and ensure the best quality standards;
- B. Put in place clear communication procedures, that ensure accountability and transparency at all stages of the project;
- C. Recruitment phase: the selection should be based on a global judgment on General criteria related to the following factors (motivation, parental support, open-minded personality, self-reliance, academic ability); should take into account the needs of the disabled or those with different needs, disability or vulnerability; Identifies and selects host families, including visits to the potential families/companies. It is recommended to carry out a criminal record check of all adult members of selected host families;
- D. General preparation: A children-centred approach will ensure that your organisation and those you work with create a culture of openness and honesty by providing participants with general preparation tailored to their specific needs and covering linguistic, pedagogical, legal, health, cultural or financial aspects;
- E. Set up clear policies on Confidentiality, Sharing Information, Whistleblowing and Complaints so that children, parents and the other actors involved are aware of how to act if they are giving, or have been given, confidential information and would allow members and users of the organisation to complain or report any aspects of the organisation or individual;
- F. Set up a Risk assessment and health and safety policy, Crisis action plan (Basic emergency procedure, Medical emergencies, Psychological emergencies, rules of conduct....);
- G. Management - monitoring and tutoring - Accompaniment and support. Acting as sending organisation, you need to reflect and decide on what kind of support is needed to create the spaces that are most conducive to participants' well-being and learning, and whether this is best done by sending an accompanying person along or relying on the support provided by the hosting environment.



DURING THE STAY

- H. Children need to know that they are supported when they take part in international projects. International projects are designed to thrust young people into challenging situations where they can learn from their experiences. Supports need to be tailored to meet the requirements of the participants, the environment where the project takes place, and the nature of the project.
- I. Ensure participants know how to get help if required, for example from mentors, support teachers, host parents, their peers, their families....;
- J. Build in structures where participants can express any concerns they may have, such as planned meetings, peer-to-peer supports, and family connections;
- K. Provide an opportunity for reflection. Good safeguarding practice involves implementing structures to ensure those who work with participants are themselves supported and supervised throughout the process;
- L. to take the necessary measures to protect the health and safety of young people and ensure they are implemented based on a risk assessment of their work.

AFTER RETURNING HOME

- M. Make time for evaluation and reflection: this is crucial so that all involved can learn from the experience and adapt future plans;
- N. Evaluate the outcomes of the stay with the children on both a formal level (academic outcomes, according to the requirements in the Learning agreement) and an informal one (personal outcomes);
- O. Reintegration: Provide the pupil with any support needed to ensure smooth reintegration into the home environment. Give him/her the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the experience and to build on it.



Conclusion

Summing up, this VET Mobility Safeguarding Quality Charter, presents the minimum requirements that VET institutions need to meet in order to consider themselves safeguarding focused. It contains an inspiring set of minimum requirements that VET Institutions need to meet in order to consider themselves safeguarding focused. Ensuring a safe preparation before departure, a secure implementation during the stay and follow-up of mobility activities after returning home, are important elements for a successful project highlighted in this Charter. Even though the VET Mobility Safeguarding Quality Charter commits holders to carry out mobilities of quality and safety, National Agencies are responsible for ensuring that VET Mobility Safeguarding Quality Charter holders respect the qualitative standards on a continuous basis.



References:

- Desk Research conducted within the PROJECT NUMBER: 2020-1-UK01-KA202-079153 - VET Mobility Safeguarding Quality Charter for Europe;
- RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 18 December 2006 on transnational mobility within the Community for education and training purposes: European Quality Charter for Mobility;
- Handbook on Quality in learning Mobility, Council of Europe and European Commission, April 2019;
- Keeping it Safe – Safeguarding Standard and implementation Guidance, National Council for voluntary youth services.

