



A report analysing the development and implementation progress of the “Better Building – Certifying VET teachers as energy saving advisers. A transfer system into three different European societies” project within the target countries (i.e. Italy, Slovenia and Turkey)

Energy consumption and the increase of energy prices is rapidly becoming a vast problem all over the world. Excess energy use is a huge issue, especially for Europe. Therefore it is essential that all countries realise how this is presently affecting the planet and understand that if changes are not made, there will be a colossal impact on future generations. Every sector is affected and is thus also responsible for the environment, including all individuals, businesses, organizations and educational bodies.

Changes are taking place to try and rectify these difficulties through projects such as: “Better Building – Certifying VET teachers as energy saving advisers. A transfer system into three different European societies.” This project, which was launched in 2007 and will be completed by 2009, focuses on three EU member states- Italy, Slovenia and Turkey. These countries have in the past, struggled with energy efficiency and currently also have a low ecological balance. The main focus of this development is to prepare teachers and trainers of vocational educational training (VET) to pass on the knowledge they gain from “Better Building” to learners in schools, colleges and businesses. In the long run this enhanced perception will increase the understanding of environmental protection. The redevelopments and reduction of energy consumption within existing buildings, heating appliances and insulation systems are all key aspects of the scheme.

Main benefits of the projects include saving money by consuming less energy and educating the future population who will have a more thorough environmental awareness and a wider knowledge of technical expertise.

Furthermore, it will facilitate the possibility for closer conformity to the guidelines set out in the Kyoto Protocol - a protocol developed by United



Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to reduce carbon emissions and greenhouse gases across the world. 22% of greenhouse gas emissions are produced by the EU so it is important that all European countries try to follow this protocol. Developed and developing nations are "annexed" (split) across three main groups (annex I, annex II and non-annex countries I) with different commitments to emissions targets. Italy, Turkey and Slovenia are in Annex I.

Through "...a modular training approach based on the division of cross-disciplinary technical knowledge and skills into sub-topics, in order to examine specific, no-general objectives and content" the "Better Building" concept has a European dimension which allows Italy, Slovenia and Turkey to have the same objectives and learning content. Each country has been provided with modular guidelines and advice as well as learning materials and real life situations to train respective target groups on a horizontal level. However how they use these guidelines is open to personal interpretation. A "Train the Trainer"- Qualification" syllabus is used in the relevant native language and has been adapted to meet specific logistics and environmental conditions within each of the three countries. Through this it is possible to draw a comparison as to how the project has been embraced and see how the didactic guidelines have been implemented in each society. These initial steps to increase comprehension in regard to energy saving ecological factors, should work as disseminators in raising awareness in technical expertise.

The development phase has had a series of initial responses from each country. Feedback from Italy has ranged from approval of the projects successful and efficient communication throughout advisory activities and management skills; to positive comment in that the project has a very effective technical and detailed format. However, criticism was voiced concerning the guidelines, which were felt to be too broad and to have been developed on a national point of view. This resulted in too specific guidelines in some local cases which were not adaptable to all Italian building situations. Alterations which were suggested include changing the duration of some of the units, for



example: increasing the time spent on legislation and communication, reducing the time spent on technical units and further reducing the number of units by combining some of them.

Feedback from Turkey included positive responses towards the materials provided by the “Better Building” didactical guidelines. These stated that they were simple to use and very practical as well as praising the link between the social approach and technical information. No weaknesses were stated although it was mentioned that the development of technology would require programmes to be updated yearly. In addition to this statement a comment was made saying that the modular curriculum and teaching materials have been adapted and customised for the Turkish VET system. Therefore documents regarding the energy saving course can be web based and used throughout Turkey with only some small changes being unavoidable.

In Slovenia, where a questionnaire has been created to evaluate participant’s responses, 49 participants took part (67,7% male and 32,6% female with an average age of 30,7 years). 91,8% of participants were satisfied with the content of the modular curriculum, 89,8% acquired new information and 96% felt the content was interesting. The results also showed that practical experiences in an outside environment where learners could witness real situations and the acquirement of wider knowledge in a certain field through a new way of learning were seen as strengths. The results also showed that some areas needed more explanation due to lack of ground knowledge. A more detailed approach was needed by working through training materials to obtain a clearer picture. The possibility of giving objective feedback would be welcome.

In order for this project to have taken place and to continue to be successful Italy, Turkey and Slovenia have invested various financial resources. Public incentives by ministries and organisations on governmental levels (department of environment, department of education, department of agriculture, department of health, etc.) and organisations on international



levels (EU, UNEP, OECD, etc) have invested funds. This public appreciation is extremely important and ensures private companies have awareness of this project. That it is possible for businesses to simultaneously save money and help the environment by using energy efficiently is a significant reinforcement of the projects importance.

“Better Building” takes into consideration that as well as financial factors, time management is crucial within all businesses and organisations. Each country has the option to tutor with an intensive training course that allows a shorter version of the program to be undertaken, for example in a lunch hour, or an extra occupational course which lasts up to two and a half hours which can be carried out at any point of the day. Both options cover an introduction, theory, practical experience and follow ups.

Each country has to follow the EU laws set out to protect the environment specifically focusing on water, air, waste, soil and nature policy protection. Adhering to European environmental policies is fundamental; however each country also has their individual laws and regulations which have been developed to improve environmental awareness and reach targets. Italy states that problems arise because: “National laws can be very general, only providing a basic framework which depends on further legal and regulatory texts at the national and regional levels. This nested structure very often ends in many vague laws without adequate practical measures.” This is an issue which needs to be addressed to ensure that the guidelines from “Better Building” can be implemented throughout the country- nationally and regionally level.

For the “Better Building” initiative to succeed and continue to develop, drivers which promote the project on a national as well as international level have to be implemented. These drivers include new laws which each member state implements to accommodate demands to save energy within the field of construction plus promoting public awareness. The guidelines have outlined different stages which need to be completed by each country for the project to be successful. These stages include, the Training Process, which defines the



aim, the contents, the methods and instruments within the project. The Learning Process, which describes the main learning context, including suggestions for the trainer about activities which contribute to a good learning environment. The third process embodies the analysis of different needs covering activities, competences and some operative instruments. The outline of didactic methods is talked about in the fourth process which covers main didactic methods and focuses on individualisation and personalisation. The fifth includes the evaluation of the training process, covering elements regarding the evaluation of a course's quality and the value of training. The final process is 'consultation' which discusses all the processes and the steps which have been taken to complete them.

As well as following the six processes set out in the guideline, Italy, Slovenia and Turkey have acknowledged the need to nationally promote the project through websites, handbooks, leaflets and bills. Additionally they have stated that copyright laws and the cost of publishing articles in newspapers and publicity through other media is an important aspect to take into account. Slovenia in particular stated that it is crucial to be detailed when deciding which books, websites and other sources are used when producing publications.

Generally the response to the "Better Building" project has been very positive. It is an initiative which will make the Member States increasingly aware of energy consumption. Ultimately, the goal of this project is to educate Italy, Turkey and Slovenia about how to build more energy efficient buildings, resulting in money being saved in the long run. Italy stated: "Better Building is a one time opportunity to save money for everyone from one household to a big company. Through the renovation and regeneration of buildings expenses regarding energy costs can be minimized, e.g. if you insulate an old building the costs for heating or air condition will only be a small percentage of usual costs."



Turkey's report concluded positively by stating that: "The outcome of Better Building can be seen if we take a close look at the insulation topic. Households spend about three quarters of energy costs on heating. If you start renovating and exchanging your old materials you should be able to save up to 20% of your usual energy consumption." Slovenia's final comment was: "...every big company, factory and organisation should start thinking about how to create buildings that save energy. The bottom line of all those energy saving measures is saving MONEY!"

With the positive progress that Italy, Slovenia and Turkey have shown already, the "Better Building" project is only the beginning of a development which will educate many communities in European Member States. A record is being kept of this scheme's continuous progress and within the year 2010 a website will be launched documenting the ongoing movements.

This report has been written by a research assistant who works for BEST (BEST- Institute of Continuous Vocational Qualification Training and Personnel Training Ltd, Vienna/ Austria) and also works in the VET field of education. The research was carried out on a scientific basis but personal experiences and discoveries were also included. The 'Better Building – Certifying VET teachers as energy saving advisers. A transfer system into three different European societies' project is only one of many international projects which BEST organises and coordinates. Many more can be found on their official website (www.best.at) with detailed information towards each project.

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Resources:

“Better Building – Certifying VET teachers as energy saving advisers. A transfer system into three different European societies.” *Implementation Concept and Guidelines- ITALY* 2009. [online] Accessed: 11th November 2009, Available at: <<http://www.better-building.eu/en/products>>

“Better Building – Certifying VET teachers as energy saving advisers. A transfer system into three different European societies.” *Implementation Concept and Guidelines – SLOVENIA* 2009. [online] Accessed: 11th November 2009, Available at: <<http://www.better-building.eu/en/products>>

“Better Building – Certifying VET teachers as energy saving advisers. A transfer system into three different European societies.” *Implementation Concept and Guidelines – TURKEY* 2009. [online] Accessed: 11th November 2009, Available at: <<http://www.better-building.eu/en/products>>