



**CULINART:** Designing a Joint VET Qualification in Culinary Arts  
and Pilot Pathways for Continuing Training  
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# STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING THE JOINT QUALIFICATION'S PRODUCTIVITY IN THE VET INSTITUTIONS

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## Introduction

The strategy for enhancing the joint qualification's productivity aims to supply the educational institutions who decide to offer it with guidance and additional instruments to ensure the high quality and sustainability of the joint VET qualification for the occupation "Chef" and career development of the learners after finishing their training. The document is designed especially for VET centres and other educational institutions (VET schools, professional colleges, etc.) that provide VET training equal to EQF 4 and 5. They can add the joint VET qualification for the occupation "Chef" to widen their educational offer with business-oriented training and to attract non-traditional students and trainees.

The strategy offers several steps that the VET institutions are advised to take to ensure the joint qualification's productivity. These steps are as follows:

- Defining the learners' profile
- Choosing approaches for the qualification's promotion
- Preparing learner-focused training approaches
- Identifying career pathways
- Providing services for career management
- Setting up career counselling services and employment mediation
- Planning mentorship and future training opportunities

## Learners' Profile

VET centres and other education institutions who decide to offer the joint VET qualification for the occupation "Chef" shall define the profile of prospective learners before the start of promotional campaigns. In that way, they will be able to prepare the communication messages, identify target audience and the most appropriate channels for promoting the training.

In the promotion phase and selection of prospective learners, VET institutions should impose specific entry requirements for ensuring the smooth training process and reaching the predefined learning outcomes as well as complying with the national requirements embedded within the applicable legislation.

The joint VET qualification for the occupation "Chef" is designed to a specific profile of the future learners. Depending on the national context, learners must have completed secondary education or professional qualification (EQF 3 or 4). The preliminary experience and training of the prospective learners guarantee the upgrading of skills, knowledge and competences during the training modules.

The VET centres and other educational institutions who decide to offer the joint VET qualification can impose additional requirements to their learners. It is advisory, the prospective learners to prove:



- Previous education or training in cooking/culinary arts with practical elements or minimum time spent in the culinary industry (practical experience in a real working environment). The education institutions are advised to conduct a practical exam to prove the minimum competence of the learner to enrol the qualification course. VET providers could also offer pre-training modules allowing the applicant to acquire the minimum needed for admission to the course. In doing so, they need to plan the period of the pre-training in a way that it does not overlap with the start of the core VET training for the qualification.
- Minimum age. The developed joint VET qualification is designed to be offered to learners with a minimum age of 16. If the VET provider is interested in offering the qualification for learners under the age of 16, some of the modules shall be adapted, and also the national regulations for work-based learning shall be observed to guarantee that learners will be able to complete the foreseen work-based training in real work environments during the course of delivering the qualification. Since the learners' mobility is also foreseen within the joint VET "Chef" qualification developed under the CULINART project the VET providers may apply higher minimum age of the candidates for the qualification course (for example a minimum age of 18 years) thus avoiding complications related to the international trips and the need of parental consent for younger participants.
- Language. The joint VET qualification is developed in English and translated into Bulgarian, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Turkish and French. Nevertheless, the learners should possess a good command of English (as a minimum B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) as the qualification contains also mobility components, which will be provided in the partners' countries in English language. Moreover, the WBL components when delivered in a country different then the country of origin of the trainee will require a vast knowledge in English.
- Additional requirements on a country basis. They include documents, certificates, health reports, etc. according to the national legislation and requirements in the country/ies where the training will be delivered.

Additional selection criteria for the candidates in the qualification course could be agreed among the VET providers and WBL-hosting organizations (companies) for each particular course depending of the: course training contents and duration, the established learning objectives for the course, the training environment and conditions, etc.

The enrolment of well-prepared and motivated learners will guarantee the smooth training process, the implementation of mobility schemes (e.g. international mobility), reaching the intended learning outcomes, facilitating work-based learning activities and future employment of the graduates. Hence, VET providers should extensively and explicitly describe the entry requirements during the qualification's promotion.

## Qualification's promotion

The promotion of the joint VET qualification for the professional occupation "Chef" is an imperative element in the work of the VET centres and other educational institutions



who decide to include it in their training offers. These institutions could add in their promotional activities the following basic information for the qualification:

- International origin and context: The joint VET qualification is designed upon identified skills and training needs from national analyses of six European countries (Bulgaria, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey). Further, the qualification is delivered by an international consortium – CULINART Alliance – and in addition to the mobility possibilities gives also opportunity to develop skills and competences recognized across the partner organizations and across Europe in general.
- Mix of training approaches: The curriculum includes learner-focused training approaches – a mix of theoretical, practical and e-learning methods, as well as work-based learning and mobility element.
- Preparation for the market: Work-based learning approaches and international mobility envisaged prepare learners to be adequate and well-prepared professionals on the international labour market. In addition, the qualification for “chef” is developed following a wide consultation with the business representatives and following their requirements toward the professionals and the latest trends and innovations in the industry.
- Professional perspectives: The joint VET qualification can be considered as a shortcut to professional career compared to other formal educational offers. It also gives a wide range of competences which could be considered key and transferable to other occupations in the industry.

The joint VET qualification for the professional occupation “Chef” should correspond to the strategic vision, goals and objectives of the VET institutions in order to be fully included in the profile of these organizations. Hence, the promotion of the joint qualification could be facilitated if the respective VET provider already offers other VET programmes in the field of tourism and hospitality (usually an accreditation is required). If this is the case, the VET centre can use the established channels and partnerships with business and social partners to promote the new programme.

Because of the specific character of the qualification, it is advisable to be promoted directly to potential learners, currently employed in the tourism and hospitality sector, employers and unions of employers (chambers and employers’ associations). The VET centres should use a mix of communication channels, e.g. social media, digital and traditional advertising, as well as, tourism and hospitality conferences, career and educational expos and other special events, on which they can emphasize on learner-focused training approaches and work-based learning experience envisaged in the course of the training.

## Learner-focused Training Approaches

To deliver high-quality VET training and ensure the future employment of the graduates, the joint VET qualification places the learner in the centre of the training experience.

The joint curriculum for delivering the VET qualification is set out to transform the expected learning outcomes into training modules. The curriculum is designed in nine



modules, which encompass learner-focused training approaches. Every module includes six training approaches: lectures; seminars/exercises; self-study activities; training practice (in VET institution); work-based learning (in a company); and e-learning components. Additionally, the joint qualification is designed in Units of Learning Outcome, which allows for the viability of the ECVET implementation and for the independent delivery and assessment of separate training units/modules. The modular structure allows the curriculum to be adapted for the international mobility of learners.

The joint VET qualification in the professional occupation "Chef" envisages work-based learning approaches as an integral part of the training. Work-based learning approaches allow learners to acquire real work experience during their vocational training. Depending on the learning module, the work-based learning can take the form of paid or unpaid apprenticeship, internship, mentorship, job shadowing, business field trips, and service-learning. Hence, VET centres and other educational institutions who decide to offer it shall put an effort to supply the trainees with opportunities to implement short-term training in a company.

*Apprenticeships* are "a particularly effective form of work-based learning in vocational education and training that eases the transition from education and training into work"<sup>1</sup>. They can lead to a nationally recognised qualification. Usually, apprenticeships are set through contractual relationships between the learner (apprentice), the employer and the VET provider, and the apprentice is paid/compensated for his/her work.

In the context of the joint VET qualification for the professional occupation "Chef", VET centres should involve business and social partners in the delivery of the training to ensure a strong work-based dimension and whenever possible coupled with international experience. In attracting small- and medium-sized organisations and establishments, VET centres could provide additional support (to in-company trainers, matching services, training guidelines, etc.), especially for the companies, which do not have experience with apprentices.

*Internships and traineeships* are other opportunities for work-based learning. The learners can individually look for such work experience according to their preferences and/or with the mediation of the VET centres (career counselling services). However, many VET providers offer traineeships abroad under the Erasmus+ Programme. It is advisory for the VET centres who decide to offer the joint VET qualification to expand their networks of potential foreign employers to tourism and hospitality sectors.

*Mentorship* is a relationship-based learning method, in which learners can acquire knowledge and receive guidance from a professional in the respective area. It is advisable mentors to possess a professional qualification in their occupation. Hence, VET providers can create a network of graduates from the professional occupation "Chef" who will act as mentors for the next learners. Additionally, mentors should be

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<sup>1</sup> COM (2017) 563 Final.



supported to update their skills and competences to train apprentices. This could be achieved through short-term courses and training.

*Job shadowing* is a career exploration activity, in which the learner is paired with and observe the workday of a professional in the same occupation. By providing an up-close look at a particular occupation, the learner can inform him/herself on possible career paths after the completion of the joint VET training. The VET providers can attract business partners who are interested in offering apprenticeships or job positions to participate in job shadowing activities in the course of learners' training.

*Business field trips* are planned work-based learning experience for a group of learners, which allows them to explore and observe professional occupations. These trips should be carefully prepared by VET providers to ensure a quality educational experience and build positive relations with respective business partners. It is advisory learners to be exposed to careers and occupations in the actual work settings, gain realistic perspectives on job expectations, be acquainted with the workplace requirements and receive informal personal interactions and conversations with their guide from the company.

*Service-learning* is another work-based learning opportunity, which combines experiential learning and community service. VET centres can offer such initiatives together with their social partners. Learners can be engaged in community services and volunteering and apply the acquired skills, knowledge and competences in a real work environment.

VET providers can use different approaches to ensure the quality of work-based learning activities. In the initial stage of promoting the joint qualification, VET providers should contact businesses and social partners to enlarge their capacity to offer work-based learning programmes. The development of additional practical tools and services (e.g. personal portfolios of the learners, self-assessment sheets, matching based on personal strengths and weaknesses, etc.) can assist both enterprises and learners. Some VET providers can also use external services for supervision of work-based learning in companies.

## Career Pathways

The graduates in the joint VET qualification for the occupation "Chef" will fully cover the skills, competences and knowledge of a chef-cook, namely, a wide range of mastered cookery skills and sound knowledge of kitchen organisation and management to guide a team of cooks and kitchen workers in preparing food and menu items. The graduates will be able to work with considerable independence, and in cooperation with representatives at other managerial levels, developing and managing the implementation of work plans, policies and procedures to guide work activities.

The successful completion of the joint qualification provides a pathway to work as a chef-cook in various establishments such as restaurants, hotels, clubs, pubs, cafés, coffee shops, etc. Still, the types of organisations and establishments, where learners



can work and build their careers, vary depending on the national labour legislation and context.

Every VET provider or other education institution who decides to offer the joint qualification should research the respective national context and make a list of possible job occupations of its learners. Such occupations might be managers of public catering establishments, self-service restaurants, sweets/coffee shops, bars, restaurants, catering; heads of departments in a restaurant, saloon managers, restaurant inkeepers, cooks, chefs, sous-chefs, industrial chefs, saucier, etc. The joint VET qualification is also designed to answer the workforce needs related to emerging new job positions such as a food blogger, food innovator, food designer, personal chef, etc.

This information can be provided during the promotion of the qualification to attract more learners who seek a professional career in a concrete occupational path. On the other hand, VET providers will be able to contact such establishments and organisations to include them in work-based learning of the joint qualification. VET providers should create a database with current and potential business and social partners who can offer apprenticeships, traineeship, mentorship, job shadowing, business field trips and service-learning. The work-based learning should cover as many types of jobs and occupations during the training to ensure that the learners will have a clear and comprehensive knowledge of their future career paths.

## Career Management

Undoubtedly, learners who enrol in the joint VET qualification will be predominantly interested in their future career. The growing demand for well-qualified workforce makes them excellent candidates with the right mix of theoretical and practical skills, international experience and work-related practice.

The joint VET qualification is designed in such a way to address one of the identified gaps in delivering of VET training – the acquisition of career management skills. In the course of learners' studies, they will be introduced with the management and entrepreneurship in the culinary business (Training Module: Culinary Business Management, Tourism and Entrepreneurship), during which they will develop their knowledge and skills for career self-management. They will be familiarised with the functioning of the culinary business and be able to position themselves in the dynamic environment of tourism and hospitality business. Learners will acquire skills, knowledge and competences how to start an entrepreneurial endeavour in the culinary business or to choose the career path, which most suits their professional expertise.

VET providers can assist learners in their career management in two ways: through work-based learning during the VET training and by career counselling services and employment mediation upon their graduation.

VET centres can provide career counselling services to learners when deciding on their apprenticeships or other forms of gaining experience in a real business environment. The opportunity for work-based learning can help learners to orient themselves in



different work environments and to explore the opportunities for long-term employment after the completion of the joint VET qualification.

The established relations with local and regional businesses who seek for such employees can serve not only when the VET centre is preparing the training offer of work experiences (apprenticeships, job shadowing, business field trips, etc.) but also when organising career fairs and other events, which will facilitate the informal and formal meetings between practitioners, businesses and learners.

## Career Counselling Services and Employment Mediation

Career counselling services and employment mediation can contribute to enhancing the qualification's productivity. The placement and follow-up are benchmarks for the quality of VET delivery and measurements for the quality and productivity of any VET training. If the VET centre already offers career counselling and employment mediation, the employment perspective from graduating VET qualification for the occupation "Chef" should be added in those services.

The VET provider shall consider additional training for its career counsellors if the joint VET qualification for the professional occupation "Chef" is the only training offer in the tourism and hospitality sector. If organising career fairs or other events for introducing the trainees with potential employers in the same sector, the VET centre shall prepare a list of potential employers to be contacted and familiarised with the training modules and learning outcomes from this training.

Furthermore, it is advisable VET centres to perform employment mediation and to monitor the first six months after employment of the learners. Through feedback forms from both employers and alumni, VET centres can review the practical relevance of the training modules and update training materials and approaches if needed.

VET centres can use different practical tools to ensure that learners are properly selected and matched with workplaces. Involving the employers in the selection process can avoid situations, in which learners are not motivated or interested in the specific employment offer (incl. work-based learning activity). Some of the practical tools can be as follows:

*Skills checklists for employers:* Before the start of the selection process, the VET centre's career counsellor should develop simple skills checklists for employers to determine what their expectations of teaching the learners are (in the case of apprenticeship, traineeship, etc.), or what they seek in their future employees.

*Professional values checklist for learners:* Learners have different expectations about their future work environment, nature of tasks and duties, and work relationships. The VET centre's career counsellor can develop professional values checklists for learners to identify suitable companies and employers who can partly or entirely answer learners' expectations. For instance, learners can appreciate the opportunity for



further training or work-related travelling. Hence, the counsellor should look up for international companies who are offering such perspectives to their employees.

*Self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses for learners:* Another tool is the self-assessment tests of strengths and weaknesses, which VET career counsellor can analyse in the process of employment mediation. The joint VET qualification for the professional occupation "Chef" offers different career pathways, which can be explored during the work-based learning activities and self-assessment of the acquired skills, knowledge and competences can help learners to determine the most suitable occupation for them.

*Self-assessment tests for the readiness of international mobility for learners:* As the joint VET qualification foresees periods of international mobility, career counsellors shall evaluate the readiness of the trainees to move, live and work in an international and intercultural environment. This service can be applied to graduates who are looking for a professional career abroad.

*Integrating work-based learning into the organisation:* It is possible some companies to experience problems in identifying the needs and relevant training for prospective learners who will perform their work-based learning in the form of an apprenticeship or internship. In that regard, the VET centres are advised to develop methodological guidelines for work-based learning in companies and also to offer short-time training for the mentors/employees who will be responsible for learners' tasks and daily workflow in the company.

## **Mentorship and Further Training Opportunities Offered by Employers and Their Sectoral/Professional Organisations**

The VET centres and educational institutions who have developed relations with sectorial organisations (such as trade unions/chambers/employers' associations in tourism and hospitality) can offer the joint VET qualification for professional occupation "Chef" directly to employers who seek for short-term training opportunities of their staff members.

The employers can provide not only prospective learners but also to be included in the delivery of the VET training as partners. The VET qualification for the professional occupation "Chef" is designed to allow learners to progress and return to education and training, to be able to upgrade and complement their skills. Hence, many employers who maintain seasonal staff members can enrol their employees for some courses, part of the joint VET qualification, in inactive seasons. However, this opportunity depends on the flexibility of the VET provider.

The cooperation with employers and their sectoral/professional organisations is a valuable asset for the quality of VET provision, in general, especially when practical training is foreseen in companies. The development of partnerships with companies is a long-term process that requires continuity and networking. VET institutions who



decide to offer the joint qualification could perform a series of activities to develop relations with the prospective partner companies. These activities include:

- Invitations to employers and companies to events, presentations of the joint qualification, visits to companies
- Engagement with chambers and employers' associations
- Planning joint work-based learning activities, contractual arrangements between trainees and employers
- During the work-based learning in companies, the VET centres should provide individual learning plans for the trainees, documenting the process with training protocols of in-company tutors and training diaries of trainees
- Performing self-evaluation by trainees and in-company tutors, an ongoing exchange between VET institution's teachers and trainers and supervisors in the company
- After the end of the work-based learning period, VET centre should perform evaluation and improvement measures

Moreover, the sectoral/professional organisations and chambers may be a valuable source of information on the latest trends in the labour market, changing skills needs and related needs for adaptation of curricula of the VET qualification. Representatives of these organisations can be offered to become mentors of trainees and graduates from the joint VET qualification, which will boost their career development opportunities and the overall qualification's productivity.

## Additional resources

- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (2009/C 155/01)
- European Commission (2017) Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships, COM (2017) 563 Final.
- Cedefop (2015) *Handbook for VET providers. Supporting internal quality management and quality culture*. Luxembourg: Publication office of the European Union. Cedefop Reference Series; No 99.

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