1,2,3 of Policy

Linking your Erasmus+ Vocational Education and Training Project to National and European Policy
Erasmus+ Policy Series
What is policy?

Policy is the set of values and objectives that guide the work of organisations and bodies. This includes, for example, the Irish Government and the European Union.

Why is policy important?

Policy is important because it tells us what certain organisations and bodies plan to achieve and how they will be guided in their work.

Take Government policy for example: Government policy tells us what the Government’s priorities are and what it plans to accomplish. It sets out the commitments it is making on a range of different issues.

For example education and training, employment, mental health, the rights of people with disabilities, migration and so forth.
National Policy

National VET Policy

Our Government has a number of important policy documents that set out what it plans to do in the field of VET in Ireland. The main policy documents are:

**Further Education and Training Strategy (2014-2019)** is the Government’s first five-year strategy in the field of Further Education and Training (FET). The overall aim of the Strategy is to develop a world-class integrated system of FET in Ireland, which will promote economic development and meet the needs of all citizens. The Strategy has five main goals:

**SKILLS FOR THE ECONOMY**: FET will address the current and future needs of learners, jobseekers, employers and employees and will contribute to national economic development

**ACTIVE INCLUSION**: FET provision will support the active inclusion of people of all abilities in society with special reference to literacy and numeracy

**QUALITY PROVISION**: FET will provide high quality education and training programmes and will meet the appropriate national and international quality standards

**INTEGRATED PLANNING AND FUNDING**: FET provision will be planned and funded on the basis of objective analysis of needs and evidence of social and economic impact

**STANDING OF FET**: ensure a valued learning path leading to agreed employment, career, developmental, personal and social options.
National Skills Strategy 2025 - Ireland’s Future
sets out the Government’s plans for improving and using
skills for sustainable economic growth. It aims to ensure
increased access to high quality and relevant education
and training and skills development opportunities.

Objectives of the strategy include, but are not limited to:

• Education and training providers will place a stronger
  focus on providing skills development opportunities
  relevant to the needs of learners, society and the
economy

• The quality of teaching and learning at all stages of
  education will be continually enhanced and evaluated

• People across Ireland will engage more in lifelong
  learning

• There will be active inclusion measures to support
  participation in education and training and the labour
  market.

Action Plan for Jobs (2018) outlines the
Government’s joined-up approach to maximising
employment across Ireland. Aims of the 2018 Plan
include:

• Ireland’s enterprise base remains successful amid the
  uncertainty of Brexit

• All parts of the country achieve their potential in
  terms of job creation

• Those entering, re-entering and in the workforce have
  the incentives and skills needed to prosper

• Ireland’s enterprise base remains successful with a
  focus on competitiveness, productivity and innovation.
The Plan includes reference to the Regional Skills Fora and their role in linking companies with higher education, further education and training institutions, encouraging collaborative solutions to skills needs.

Pathways to Work (2016-2020) has two main objectives including working with unemployed jobseekers, particularly people who are long-term unemployed; and working with people, who, although not classified as unemployed jobseekers, have the potential and desire to play a more active role in the labour force. The Plan includes six strands:

**STRAND 1:** Enhanced engagement with unemployed people of working age

**STRAND 2:** Increase the employment focus of activation programmes and opportunities

**STRAND 3:** Making work pay: incentivise the take-up of opportunities

**STRAND 4:** Incentivise employers to offer jobs and opportunities to unemployed people

**STRAND 5:** Build organisation capability to deliver high quality services to unemployed people

**STRAND 6:** Building workforce skills [a new strand reflecting the need to ensure that reforms underway in the education and training sectors are closely aligned with the needs of employers, workers and jobseekers, providing them with the opportunities to gain the knowledge skills and competencies for employment].
How does your Erasmus+ project link to national policy?

The projects and activities that take place as part of Erasmus+ can help to achieve national policy objectives in VET. For example:

- Erasmus+ prioritises projects focused on inclusion (National Skills Strategy, FET Strategy)

- Erasmus+ projects provide an opportunity for those in the education system to exchange practice and experiences with peers that can contribute to improving quality of teaching and learning (The National Skills Strategy 2025)

- Erasmus+ projects can develop new and innovative ways to ensure that VET provision is meeting the needs of learners, employers, workers, and jobseekers (National Skills Strategy, Pathways to Work, Action Plan for Jobs).
European VET Policy

Similar to our own Government, the EU also has a number of important policy documents in the field of VET. These documents set out the EU’s priorities and commitments on VET in Europe. Some of the main policy documents are:

**Europe 2020** is the EU’s plan to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth. It sets targets for employment, research and development, climate/energy, education, social inclusion, and poverty reduction.

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**Education and Training 2020** is the EU’s plan on education and training. It aims to achieve different objectives including: making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training.

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**Bruges Communiqué (2011-2020)** sets out a number of objectives for European VET systems by 2020 including:

- Attractive and inclusive VET
- High quality initial VET
- Easily accessible and career-oriented continuing VET
- Flexible systems of VET, based on a learning outcomes approach
- A European education and training area
- Substantially increased opportunities for transnational mobility of VET students and professionals
- Easily accessible and high-quality lifelong information, guidance and counselling services.
Riga Conclusions (2015) set out five priorities in the area of VET between 2015 and 2020 including:

- Promote work-based learning in all its forms
- Further develop quality assurance mechanisms in VET
- Enhance access to VET and qualifications for all
- Further strengthen key competences in VET curricula
- Systematic approaches to/opportunities for, initial and continuous professional development of VET teachers, trainers and mentors in both school- and work-based settings.

The New Skills Agenda for Europe (2016) sets out 10 actions to make the right training, skills and support available to people in the EU. The actions are designed to:

- Improve the quality and relevance of training and other ways of acquiring skills
- Make skills more visible and comparable
- Improve information and understanding of trends and patterns in demands for skills and jobs to enable people make better career choices, find quality jobs and improve their life chances.

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is a framework for the transfer, recognition and accumulation of an individual’s learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification. It aims to:

- Make it easier for people to get validation and recognition of work-related skills and knowledge gained in different systems and countries, so they can count towards vocational qualifications.
• Make it more attractive to move between different countries and learning environments

• Increase the compatibility between different VET systems around Europe, and the qualifications they offer

• Increase the employability of VET graduates and the confidence of employers that each VET qualification requires specific skills and knowledge.

How does your Erasmus+ project link to European policy?

The projects and activities that take place as part of Erasmus+ are an important way of helping to achieve the aims and objectives of the EU policies listed above. Just some examples:

• Erasmus+ prioritises projects that address the issue of inclusion (Europe 2020)

• Erasmus+ supports people to spend time abroad to train and upskill (Education and Training 2020, Bruges Communiqué 2011-2020, Riga Conclusions 2015)

• Erasmus+ projects provide opportunities for different organisations to collaborate in order to develop new methods to improve information, quality and relevance of training (New Skills Agenda for Europe 2016)

• Erasmus+ provides opportunities to gain knowledge and skills in different systems and countries (linked to ECVET).
Connections between national and European policy

We can see that our own Government and the EU want to realise similar things in VET. For example:

- Social inclusion and equality of opportunity
- Providing quality teaching and learning in VET
- Ensuring needs-based provision of VET
- Improving the standing of VET and its attractiveness to employers.

Your Erasmus+ VET project can develop new and innovative ways to achieve the priorities that are set out in national or EU policy, helping to make positive changes in VET, be that at a local, national or international level.

Get in touch

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