



CO-HOST

D5.2. Production of policy recommendations in VET for WB countries

Odysseas Vlachonikolos, Research Innovation and Development Lab



How to Use this Paper

This Policy Recommendations Paper has been designed as a practical working tool for policymakers, VET authorities, ministries, and stakeholders in the Western Balkans who are engaged in reforming and modernising the Vocational Education and Training (VET) ecosystem, particularly in the tourism, hospitality, and catering sectors.

Rather than a purely analytical report, it offers evidence-based, ready-to-apply actions derived from the CO-HOST project's implementation. Its structure allows users to move easily between strategic guidance, operational examples, and country-specific insights.

1. Start with the Executive Overview

Begin with the *Executive Summary* and *Introduction* to understand the project's scope, rationale, and policy relevance. These sections provide the strategic framing, how the recommendations link to EU priorities (European Skills Agenda, Digital Education Action Plan, Green Deal, SDGs 4 & 8) and regional integration goals.

2. Focus on the Thematic Pillars

Chapters under "*Recommendations by Thematic Pillar*" (Educational Content, Virtual Learning Environment, Dissemination & Communication, and Mobility Quality Tools) serve as **action domains**. Each recommendation:

- States the policy or implementation issue identified through CO-HOST activities,
- Proposes practical, scalable solutions,
- Shows alignment with EU frameworks for easier policy integration.

Policymakers can use these as a menu of options to adapt within national VET strategies or upcoming reform plans.

3. Consult the Annexes for Localisation

The Fact Sheets (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo) translate the project's findings into country-specific policy actions. They are ideal for national briefings, roundtables, or regional events where ministries wish to tailor interventions to local realities.

The Case Studies (Guimarães, Foligno, Tirana) demonstrate how mobility and green-skills training were implemented in practice. These examples can be used in policy dialogues or workshops to inspire replication and showcase concrete results.

4. Use it During Events and Consultations

This paper is designed to be a reference companion during conferences, policy dialogues, and dissemination events. Each section can support:

- Policy panels (e.g., by quoting key recommendations),
- Roundtable discussions (using Fact Sheets to compare national progress),
- Press or communication briefings (drawing from concise success stories and statistics).

5. Translate Insights into Policy and Programmes

Finally, the document supports decision-making and follow-up action. Ministries and agencies can:

- Embed selected recommendations into national VET reform roadmaps,
- Inform funding proposals (Erasmus+, IPA, or Green Transition initiatives),
- Develop training modules or mobility standards aligned with CO-HOST's tested practices

Glossary & Acronyms

Term / Acronym	Meaning / Definition
CO-HOST	Creating Opportunities for VET Mobility in Hospitality and Tourism - an Erasmus+ Capacity Building project fostering mobility, digital learning, and green skills in Western Balkan VET.
VET	Vocational Education and Training - education and training designed to equip people with skills for specific occupations or sectors.
WB / Western Balkans	Refers to Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia - countries in EU enlargement context.
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course - a digital course accessible to large audiences; in CO-HOST, it delivers training on quality mobility and recognition of learning outcomes.
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment - an online platform (e.g., Moodle) where learners access materials, interact, and complete training.
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training - EU framework ensuring consistent quality in VET provision.
CPD	Continuing Professional Development - structured learning for teachers/trainers to maintain and enhance professional skills.
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal - UN framework goals; CO-HOST mainly contributes to SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth).
EU Skills Agenda	EU strategy promoting upskilling/reskilling to support green and digital transitions.
DEAP	Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027) - EU policy guiding digital transformation of education systems.
Green Skills	Competences enabling sustainable resource use, eco-friendly operations, and environmental awareness in professional practice.
Mobility	Cross-border learning or work-based experience enabling VET learners or staff to gain international exposure.
Micro-credentials	Short, certified learning achievements that validate specific competences, aligned with EU qualification frameworks.

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Executive Summary

The present document constitutes Deliverable D5.2 – the **“Production of Policy Recommendations in VET for WB Countries”** – of the CO-HOST project. It has been conceived as a strategic instrument that brings together the lessons learned throughout the project’s lifecycle and translates them into a coherent set of evidence-based policy recommendations. Its purpose is twofold: on the one hand, to inform policymakers, VET institutions, and stakeholders in the Western Balkans about practices that have been tested and validated during implementation; on the other hand, to contribute to the broader European dialogue on how VET systems can be modernized, internationalized, and better aligned with labour market needs. The document therefore serves not only as a record of achievements but also as a forward-looking tool designed to guide future reforms and cooperation initiatives in the region.

The CO-HOST initiative is specifically designed to strengthen the capacity of Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers, teachers, and business associations in the sectors of tourism, catering, and hospitality. These fields are of strategic importance for Europe’s socio-economic development, representing significant drivers of employment, innovation, and competitiveness. The Western Balkans, in particular, stand to benefit from improved training systems in these areas, as tourism and hospitality are among the most dynamic economic sectors with strong potential for sustainable growth and international cooperation. By focusing on these industries, CO-HOST contributes not only to enhancing individual employability but also to reinforcing institutional resilience and regional integration, thereby supporting the EU’s enlargement strategy and the creation of a common European Education Area.

This document provides an overview of the CO-HOST project’s progress, objectives, and achievements to date, while also presenting a synthesis of the lessons learned. The accompanying CO-HOST Recommendations and Good Practice Booklet captures and disseminates effective practices identified for the upskilling of VET learners and sets the stage for the formulation of targeted policy proposals. The foundations of this policy paper are drawn from three central project components:

- Standardisation of the learning process and materials, ensuring coherence, comparability, and quality in the delivery of training across partner institutions;
- Dissemination efforts, which enabled the wide communication of project results to thousands of stakeholders across Europe and the Western Balkans, ensuring visibility, transparency, and multiplier effects;
- Student mobilities, which offered direct experiential learning opportunities and served as living laboratories for testing the effectiveness of training methodologies, intercultural exchanges, and institutional partnerships.

Taken together, these components provide the empirical and practical grounding for the recommendations contained herein. They highlight the project’s commitment to reinforcing excellence in VET, fostering innovation in skills development, and aligning training practices with the evolving needs of the tourism, catering, and hospitality sectors. More broadly, they demonstrate the capacity of EU-funded cooperation projects such as CO-HOST to bridge the gap between policy and practice, transforming classroom learning into real-world skills, enhancing institutional cooperation, and laying the groundwork for systemic improvements in the Western Balkans’ VET ecosystems.

Introduction

The Western Balkans region is undergoing a critical phase of transformation, where education and training are central to supporting socio-economic development, labour market modernization, and European integration. Vocational education and training (VET), particularly in the fields of tourism, hospitality, and catering, represents both a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge because of the need to upgrade systems, improve quality, and align with EU standards, and an opportunity because of the sector's significant potential to generate sustainable growth and employment. In this context, international mobility, digital innovation, and stronger cooperation between VET institutions in the EU and the Western Balkans emerge as strategic priorities.

The CO-HOST project (Creating Opportunities for VET mobility in Hospitality and Tourism) was designed to address these priorities by fostering practical exchanges, building institutional networks, and equipping learners with digital, green, and intercultural competences. Through the implementation of a MOOC, piloting sessions, webinars, and mobility flows, the project has created new opportunities for students and teachers while also generating valuable lessons for policymakers and stakeholders. The project has consistently aligned its objectives with the European Skills Agenda, the Digital Education Action Plan, the Erasmus+ programme priorities, and the EU's commitment to sustainability under the European Green Deal.

This deliverable (D5.2) presents a set of policy recommendations that build directly on the evidence and outcomes of CO-HOST activities. Far from being theoretical, these recommendations are grounded in real experiences of learners, teachers, and host institutions, as captured through evaluation reports, dissemination data, and qualitative feedback. The aim is to provide decision-makers in the Western Balkans and at the EU level with actionable measures to enhance the quality, accessibility, and sustainability of VET mobility. By bridging the gap between pilot implementation and systemic reform, the CO-HOST policy recommendations contribute to building a more integrated, modern, and inclusive VET system capable of preparing young people for the demands of a rapidly evolving labour market.

The document can also be used as a sustainability report, which combines local ownership with the use of EU and regional frameworks. However, beyond this strategic positioning, the policy recommendations themselves act as a sustainability measure, by ensuring that the lessons, practices, and collaborations developed under CO-HOST can be formally integrated into national systems and future mobility initiatives.

By bridging the gap between pilot implementation and systemic reform, the CO-HOST policy recommendations contribute to building a more integrated, modern, and inclusive VET system capable of preparing young people for the demands of a rapidly evolving labour market.

Objectives and Deliverables

The overall objective of the CO-HOST project (“Creating Opportunities for VET mobility in Hospitality and Tourism”), is to support the realization of mobility projects between EU member states and WB countries, aimed at the enhancement of skills and competences of VET learners, in order to improve and modernize the VET system in enlargement countries. The project focuses on the topic of Tourism, Marketing and Hospitality, with a strong emphasis on green and entrepreneurial skills. Precisely in countries that are experiencing a rapid growth and social change, development must be understood as sustainable development, in line with the 2030 objectives of the Global Agenda. CO-HOST encourages forms of tourism that respect the environment, local cultures and that contribute to the sustainable development of the territories: it will be particularly interesting and strategic, for VET students and staff, to experience during their internship periods in the EU, the most advanced practices in this field, which are ensured by experienced partners.

CO-HOST aims:

- To share best practices among VET providers coming from EU and enlargement countries, encouraging the involvement of VET providers in EU cooperation and mobility projects;
- To improve technical and pedagogical skills of VET staff from enlargement countries;
- To improve technical, transversal and soft skills of VET students from enlargement countries, in order to improve their occupational prospects;
- To establish Solid National Networks in the WB Countries.

The project have targeted the following groups:

- VET teachers;
- VET providers involved in the national networks;
- trade unions;
- business associations in the field of tourism;
- catering and hospitality

The project has been structured around 5 main outcomes and specific Milestone:

- **S01: Implementation of Exchange programmes between WB countries and European VET providers**
- **S02: Improvement of the knowledge, technical and pedagogical skills of VET teachers**
- **S03: Improvement of the knowledge of VET managerial staff**
- **S04: Enhancement of the transversal and subject specific skills of learners**

The first important met milestone was the [establishment of national networks](#) in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo (M2). At the very beginning of the project, the partnership worked on the elaboration of a clear and detailed Memorandum of Understanding, which was signed by 18 VET schools and/or institutions in the three WB countries (namely: 7 in Albania, 5 in B&H, and 6 in Kosovo).

The created national networks took part in the quantitative and qualitative research, which led to the [Training needs report](#). The CO-HOST partnership conducted research to detect specific VET training needs in Tourism, Marketing and Hospitality at the national level, tapping into the VET national networks of Western Balkan countries. The survey method used an online questionnaire administered to 169 stakeholders. In the second case, the qualitative survey consisted of a focus group in each country (with a total of 39 experts/stakeholders involved) and, on the other hand, desk research and literature review on documents acquired from indirect sources. The identification of 5 initiatives in sustainable tourism completed the secondary research work.

Based on the analysed results, most respondents declared they do not have experience with EU mobility programs, and therefore agreed on the importance of knowledge of EU programmes and tools in the field of VET education and expressed their interest in attending a free training course on the topic of Quality in Mobility and Recognition of Learning Outcomes. This very result confirmed the needs analysis carried out during the project application phase and led to the creation of learning content at the basis of the capacity-building activities.

Indeed, strictly related to the achievement of the improvement of the knowledge of VET teachers and managerial staff, the CO-HOST consortium launched a MOOC on the organisation of quality mobility projects and recognition of learning outcomes (<https://www.cohostproject.eu/moodle/>) and established the VET Virtual Exchanges in the Online Community of Practice (https://www.cohostproject.eu/moodle/local/staticpage/view.php?page=virtual_exchanges).

The MOOC is composed of 4 learning modules on the following topics:

- [Introduction to the Erasmus+ programme](#)
- [Project Application](#)
- [Implementation and international mobilities](#)
- [EU Quality Assurance tools and procedures for the successful recognition of the learning outcomes](#)

Through the VET Virtual Exchanges, teachers and staff from the CO-HOST national networks had the chance to meet experts from the UE, coming from the ENNE Network, but not only, and discussed key topics for a successful implementation of a mobility project, such as challenges in mobilities, internalization strategies, successful stories from international mobilities and quality assurance tools. The Virtual Exchanges enhanced the learning experience by fostering interaction, collaboration, and cultural exchange among participants from diverse backgrounds. By incorporating virtual exchanges, the learning experience might result more dynamic, interactive and internationally relevant.

Teachers also had the chance of attending capacity building activities, targeting both teachers, VET staff and students. A [set of webinars](#) on the topics of “Sustainable Tourism and Marketing strategies” and “Valorisation of Cultural and Natural heritage through digital technologies” have been organised.

The very core activity of this Capacity Building project lies in the organisation of mobility exchanges targeting VET teachers, staff, and students from the Western Balkan countries represented in the consortium, namely Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Indeed, the CO-HOST project foresaw Work-Based Learning (WBL) mobilities for a total of 12 accompanying VET teachers and staff, and 90 VET students, divided into two mobility flows.

Destinations for 1st mobility flow

- 2 teachers and 15 students from Bosnia and Herzegovina travelled to Guimaraes, Portugal, between January and February 2025;

- 2 teachers and 15 students from Albania travelled to Foligno, Italy in February 2025;
- 2 teachers and 15 students from Kosovo travelled to Sofia, Bulgaria between March and April 2025.

Destinations for 2nd mobility flow

- 2 teachers and 15 students from Bosnia and Herzegovina travelled to Foligno, Italy in May 2025;
- 2 teachers and 15 students from Albania travelled to Sofia, Bulgaria in May 2025;
- 2 teachers and 15 students from Kosovo travelled to Skopelos, Greece in May 2025.

Transnational mobility aimed at acquiring new skills is one of the most effective means through which individuals, particularly young people, can enhance their employability and foster personal growth. Vocational Education and Training (VET) plays a crucial role in enabling learners to acquire the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to thrive in the labour market, both in specific professions and across a range of occupations.

Within CO-HOST, the WBL experiences abroad allowed VET learners to strengthen not only their professional competencies but also essential soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork. The project has made available four WBL programmes for VET learners coming from the Western Balkans, implemented in partnership with EU organisations in Portugal, Italy, Bulgaria, and Greece.

This deliverable, therefore, aims to analyze the **learning process and assess the results of the CO-HOST MOOC** in order to standardize the learning path and support its sustainability for future implementation. By examining participant engagement, completion rates, and overall satisfaction with the course content and delivery, the report identifies key strengths as well as areas requiring improvement in the training model. It provides a detailed overview of the pilot phase, highlighting the course structure, the use of Moodle as a virtual learning environment, and the integration of interactive resources designed to enrich the learning experience.

The analysis draws upon both quantitative data from evaluation questionnaires and qualitative insights from focus group discussions, creating a comprehensive understanding of the MOOC's effectiveness and relevance. These findings reflect the real experiences of learners and educators, demonstrating how digital resources and interactive elements shaped the quality of learning outcomes. The dual-method approach ensures that the results are not only statistically valid but also capture the nuanced perspectives of participants, adding depth to the overall evaluation.

Ultimately, this deliverable functions both as a record of the training outcomes and as a strategic tool for guiding future refinement, adaptation, and wider application of the CO-HOST MOOC within the VET sector and beyond. The policy recommendations that emerge from this analysis are firmly grounded in practice, supported by the evidence collected during project implementation. In this way, the report provides a forward-looking framework that can inform ongoing improvements and ensure the long-term impact and scalability of the CO-HOST training model.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned by thematic pillar

Sources

In order to identify the lessons learnt and best practices, the CO-HOST utilised input from the following sources:

1. Project progress: By monitoring the progress of the project, partners could identify what went well and where improvements were needed. By regularly evaluating the development of the project, valuable conclusions could be extracted that served as input for the best practices.
2. Interactions with Consortium and stakeholders during the results development: While developing the results, partners received various feedback from within their organisations as well as from stakeholders. The experience of working together on developing those very impactful results stimulated fruitful conversations and helped identify best practices and lessons learnt.
3. Piloting reports: A more structured way of collecting best practices was the reports summarising the piloting sessions of Results 2 and 3. Through piloting, partners could formulate lessons learnt and identify the strengths of the CO-HOST project curriculum.

MOOC and Webinars

The insights presented here are grounded in practical feedback from participants of the CO-HOST MOOC and related webinars. The following best practices and lessons learned are drawn from participant evaluations, interactive webinars, and structured reflections on the course design and delivery.

Dynamic and Engaging Content Drives Participation

Participants emphasized the importance of interactive features such as real-time discussions, multimedia content (videos, animations, audio), and practical examples. These elements were seen as essential for maintaining engagement and deepening understanding.

Lesson Learned: Future iterations of the MOOC should prioritize schematic visualizations and real-life case studies to improve content clarity and learner retention.

Mobility and Internationalisation Boost Institutional Impact

The MOOC's focus on student mobility, Erasmus+ preparation, and international collaboration was widely appreciated. Teachers reported that this emphasis not only motivated students but also strengthened their schools' European outlook and institutional capacity.

Lesson Learned: Embedding mobility-related content into professional development helps align training with real-world opportunities and enhances both learner motivation and institutional visibility.

Mobility arrangements

The insights presented in this section are based on practical feedback collected from participants involved in mobility flows of the CO-HOST project. The recommendations and observations outlined below are drawn from structured evaluations conducted after the mobilities, as well as direct reflections from students and accompanying teachers. Narrative evaluation reports of the 6 mobility flows implemented are available [here](#).

Variety of workplaces

Internships in hotels, restaurants, travel agency and NGOs provided personal growth through practical experience

Lesson Learned: Tailoring tasks to match the individual competence levels of participants significantly enhances confidence, skill acquisition, and overall satisfaction. As not all students had prior experience in the tourism sector, it is essential to consider their initial level of preparedness and assign tasks accordingly.

Accessibility

All participants noted the accessibility of the program and equal opportunities for participation, regardless of experience.

Lesson Learned: Orientation at the beginning of the program is insufficient: Need for clear information about living conditions about local norms, transportation, and academic expectations at the beginning

Cultural exchange

Excursions made a special contribution to the development of intercultural skills and cultural immersion of the participants

Lesson Learned: Support from mentors is critical during adaptation: Those who encountered difficulties (language, cultural, everyday) were able to overcome them thanks to the support of mentors and peers.

Dissemination and Communication

The findings outlined below are based on practical outcomes from the CO-HOST project's dissemination and communication activities, including analytics from the project website, social media platforms, and newsletters. These insights reflect direct input and engagement patterns observed throughout the project's outreach efforts. The following best practices and lessons learned are drawn from website statistics and structured reflections on the communication strategies implemented.

Virtual Exchanges Are Most Effective When Targeted and Timely

The Virtual Exchanges organised as part of the MOOC course, particularly the session on implementing mobilities and using ChatGPT, were praised for their practical relevance and resource-rich content. Topics such as digital marketing, inclusive heritage, and sustainable tourism, highlighted by the ArteMIA project, resonated strongly with participants.

Active use of social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn). Successfully used to reach a wide and diverse audience in real time.

Lesson Learned: Timely, well-structured webinars that reflect regional perspectives and current sectoral needs significantly enhance engagement, but accessibility must be improved. Institutional coordination and flexible scheduling are key to maximizing participation.

Policy recommendations for enhancing Vocational Education and Training mobility in the Western Balkans

The following policy recommendations **align with** within the broader objectives of the EU's enlargement strategy and **its** commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), **particularly** SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). They also align with the priorities of the European Skills Agenda, Digital Education Action Plan, and the green and digital transition goals for VET modernization.

- **SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth)**

By improving VET quality and relevance, the recommendations advance SDG 4, ensuring inclusive and equitable training that improves skills outcomes. At the same time, enhanced employability of VET graduates (through better skills, international experience, and recognized credentials) supports SDG 8 by facilitating decent work and economic growth. The CO-HOST recommendations explicitly link to these global goals. For example, providing mobility opportunities and modernizing curricula for tourism/hospitality helps youth gain employment in growing sectors, addressing high youth unemployment in the WB.

- **European Skills Agenda (2020–2025)**

This EU agenda calls for upskilling and reskilling to drive sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience, with a focus on the green and digital transitions. CO-HOST's recommendations address these aims by promoting digital learning innovations (multimedia e-learning, interactive platforms) and integrating green skills (training in sustainable tourism). For example, the Skills Agenda emphasizes supporting the twin transitions and even introduces a European approach to micro-credentials – directly reflected in CO-HOST's recommendation to issue digital certificates and link them to qualifications. The Agenda's principle of "access to education, training and lifelong learning for everybody, everywhere" is echoed in CO-HOST's focus on inclusive VET opportunities and broad dissemination of results.

- **Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027)**

The DEAP provides a vision for high-quality, inclusive, and accessible digital education across Europe. CO-HOST's recommendations for enhancing the VLE strongly align with this vision. For instance, the Action Plan calls for making education more flexible and engaging through digital technology – CO-HOST proposes interactive forums, multimedia content, asynchronous learning options, and digital certificates to personalize and enrich learning. These measures address challenges identified at the EU level (like uneven digital skills and limited educator training) by ensuring learners and teachers in WB VET have support to participate in online learning. By strengthening online learning capacity, CO-HOST contributes to building a modern, resilient education system in line with DEAP goals.

- **European Green Deal and Green Skills Strategy**

The European Green Deal highlights the need for education to support the green transition, and the European Skills Agenda includes "skills to support the twin transitions" (Action 6). CO-HOST integrates this priority by recommending training on sustainable tourism practices within VET mobility. This ensures WB VET learners gain awareness of sustainable resource management, eco-friendly travel, and cultural heritage conservation – contributing to SDG 4.7 (education for sustainable development) and preparing youth for emerging "green jobs." The project's focus on

“green and entrepreneurial skills” in tourism was foundational, and the new policy advice cements alignment with the EU’s Green Skills agenda.

In summary, CO-HOST’s policy proposals are well-aligned with EU strategic frameworks. They seek to operationalize broad EU priorities – digital innovation in education, environmental sustainability, cross-border mobility, and social inclusion – in the specific context of Western Balkan VET. **Table 1** below maps each recommendation to relevant EU priorities and highlights supporting evidence from the project’s implementation and stakeholder feedback.

Policy Rationale and Strategic Alignment

The Western Balkans region is at a crucial crossroads, facing the pressing need to strengthen education and vocational training in alignment with European integration goals. To foster a stable, united, and value-driven Europe, the region must invest in its younger generation by enhancing vocational education and training (VET) quality, mobility, and relevance. The policy recommendations in this document are grounded in the European Commission’s strategy for ‘A credible enlargement perspective for an enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans’ and extensive analysis of VET systems and labour market needs.

This strategy prioritizes education as a key driver for promoting tolerance, European values, and social cohesion, with a particular focus on improving VET and teacher training. The EU’s commitment, especially through the Erasmus+ programme, supports transnational mobility and skills development to enhance employability and personal growth. The policy proposals respond to urgent calls made in the Copenhagen Declaration and the Riga Conclusions, emphasizing the promotion of work-based learning and quality assurance in VET, consistent with the EQAVET framework.

Our project specifically addresses these challenges by defining a comprehensive VET quality mobility strategy that connects organizations from EU Member States and the Western Balkans. This approach aims to foster mobility activities and improve the competencies of VET teachers, learners, and managers, ensuring the development of labour market-relevant skills to support economic development and social cohesion in the region.

Recommendations by Thematic Pillar

Educational Content

Recommendation 1: Integrate multimedia elements, such as videos, animations, and audio recordings, into online modules to address diverse learning preferences and enhance learner engagement.

The project’s MOOC pilot showed strong demand for richer, more engaging content. Participants “praised the clarity... of the training materials” but “many recommended enhancing interactivity, adding more real-world examples... and integrating multimedia (videos, audio)”.

Recommendation 2: Embed practical examples and real-life case studies, including successfully completed Erasmus+ applications, to bridge theory and practice. This provides learners and educators with tangible benchmarks and strengthens understanding of application processes and project implementation.

Recommendation 3: Use visual tools (e.g., infographics, schematic diagrams, and illustrations) to improve clarity and support knowledge retention. Visual aids are especially useful for complex procedures such as curriculum development or mobility planning.

The project's MOOC pilot showed strong demand for richer, more engaging content. Participants "praised the clarity of the training materials" but "many recommended enhancing interactivity, adding more real-world examples...and integrating multimedia (videos, audio)".

They also expressed a "desire to deepen learning through schematic visuals" for complex topics. These findings validate Recommendations 1–3, using videos, animations, case studies (like successful Erasmus+ applications), and infographics to make learning more engaging and practical. Such multimedia content caters to different learning styles and, according to feedback, would increase knowledge retention and completion rates. The feasibility is high: the project already converted static PowerPoints into interactive H5P presentations, and partners have the capacity to develop additional media content.

Moreover, within the MOOC, a dedicated "Inspirational" section was created, featuring videos and interviews where participants, including teachers, employers, and students, shared their reflections on their mobility experiences and the impact these had on their professional and personal development. The main goal was to inspire young people and teachers in their learning paths and encourage them to take part in a mobility experience, but also to promote VET Teachers' participation in Erasmus+ + mobilities and foster communication and cooperation between VET providers, as well as to promote VET quality and attractiveness also for companies. Aligning with the Digital Education Action Plan's call for interactive digital content, these enhancements are a cost-effective way to improve quality.

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Recommendation 4: Develop a more interactive platform that enables communication among participants (e.g., forums, chat rooms, group discussions). This facilitates peer learning and community building, encouraging active rather than passive learning.

The CO-HOST MOOC was delivered via a Moodle-based platform. While it was "*generally seen as user-friendly*", some participants "*expressed the need for discussion features to foster peer interaction*". This directly supports Recommendation 4 proposal to add forums, chat rooms or group discussions. In fact, in focus groups "*there was a clear call for increased interactivity and opportunities for collaboration*", including "*real-time discussions*" among learners. Implementing this is highly feasible (Moodle supports forums), and it would transform a passive course into a learning community, which is crucial for engagement in online learning.

Recommendation 5: Provide technical and linguistic support tailored to varying levels of digital literacy and English proficiency to ensure equitable access. Consider providing materials in local languages and offering basic digital skills modules.

Recommendation 5 addresses digital inclusion, providing help for those less fluent in English or less tech-savvy. Project data shows the MOOC attracted a wide range of participants (from Albania, Kosovo, BiH, etc.), some with limited ICT skills or English proficiency. Ensuring multilingual materials

and basic digital skills support would make the VLE more equitable. Thus, Recommendation 5 is both valuable and achievable. Partners can translate key resources (as they did for the project website into six languages) and offer orientation sessions on using the platform. This promotes inclusion, aligning with both SDG4's equity focus and the DEAP's emphasis on leaving no learner behind in digital education

Recommendation6: Offer flexible course scheduling and incorporate asynchronous formats and replays to accommodate different time zones and institutional calendars. This increases accessibility, especially for part-time learners and working professionals.

During the pilot, webinar participation was limited due to scheduling conflicts. Participants, many of whom were full-time teachers or had other duties, struggled with fixed webinar times. The evaluation noted "low attendance due to scheduling issues suggests the need for more flexible or asynchronous delivery options". Recommendation 6 suggestion to offer course materials in asynchronous format, (recorded webinars, self-paced modules) and more flexible scheduling is very practical. .

The CO-HOST MOOC already provided extensive asynchronous learning opportunities, ensuring participants can access materials at any time according to their own pace. The course is structured into three separate sections: training materials, recordings from virtual exchanges, and webinars. All resources are immediately available upon entering the MOOC, allowing learners to progress independently without time constraints. In addition, the project has created a dedicated YouTube channel with curated playlists, which are publicly accessible even to users not registered in the MOOC. This further enhances accessibility, being in line with this recommendation, providing learners with flexible and continuous opportunities to engage with the content. Expanding the availability of recorded lectures or offering multiple time slots for live sessions would complement the existing asynchronous resources, further supporting diverse learning needs and schedules.

This flexibility is strongly aligned with the DEAP, which highlights flexibility and accessibility as hallmarks of effective digital education.

Given that CO-HOST partners successfully implemented a rotation of monthly content updates on the MOOC and project website, structured the course into three accessible sections (training materials, recordings from virtual exchanges, and webinars), and made additional resources available via a publicly accessible YouTube channel, they are well positioned to implement this recommendation. The course's fully asynchronous design allows learners to engage with materials at their own pace, while the flexibility of recorded content and multiple access points directly addresses the feasibility concern of reaching participants across different countries, time zones, and schedules.

Recommendation7: Promote official recognition of participation by issuing digital certificates, CPD points, or micro-credentials upon course completion. These can be linked to national qualification frameworks to incentivize participation and facilitate credit transfer.

Offering digital certificates, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points, or micro-credentials for completing the CO-HOST training would incentivize participation and integrate the MOOC into formal qualification frameworks. This idea emerged from participant feedback – the D3.1 report

concludes with “key recommendations [including] offering certified credentials” to add value to the training. Such recognition was feasible within CO-HOST (the MOOC already awarded a certificate of completion), and it can be expanded by seeking accreditation from national VET authorities. In addition, learning agreements were issued to the participants of the mobility flows, and were aligned with EUROPASS guidelines. These agreements were structured around clearly defined learning outcomes, competences, and planned activities, ensuring transparency, comparability, and recognition of participants’ achievements across European and international contexts.

EU policy is very supportive of micro-credentials: the European Skills Agenda specifically calls for a “European approach to micro-credentials” to validate learning outcomes of short courses. Implementing Rec.7 would thus place WB VET learners ahead in this trend, allowing their new skills (digital, project management, language) to be officially recognized and even transferred for credit. The feasibility is high as long as partnerships with certifying bodies are pursued; it may require some additional administrative effort, but the groundwork, in terms of defined learning outcomes and assessments, exists.

Dissemination and Communication

Recommendation 8: Continue prioritizing and investing in social media and online communication. Maintain active engagement via platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn as central tools for outreach. Interactive campaigns and influencer engagement can improve reach.

The last available project’s dissemination report demonstrates the high impact of social media channels. With over 93,000 people reached through 276 social media posts by mid-2025, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn proved to be the most effective dissemination tools. The report concludes that these channels should “*remain a central component of the CO-HOST project’s dissemination strategy moving forward*”. This directly validates Recommendation 8, continuing to invest in active social media engagement is practical and valuable. The consortium already built an audience (e.g. 251 LinkedIn followers, 97 Facebook followers in the first year) and saw strong engagement metrics. Feasibility is unquestioned: partners have the know-how to maintain frequent posting.

Additionally, as Erasmus+ moves further digital, having a robust online presence aligns with the Erasmus+ programme’s emphasis on dissemination and visibility of results. It also supports the European Skills Agenda’s call to “*mobilize all partners*” and stakeholders for skills development, by using social networks to connect VET providers, employers, policymakers, and learners. CO-HOST’s experience shows that online newsletters and email campaigns were also very effective (each newsletter reached ~2,500 people). The recommendation to continue these online strategies is therefore well-founded in evidence.

Recommendation 9: Implement targeted communication strategies by using audience segmentation and analytics to tailor messaging to educators, policymakers, and learners.

The need for this emerged as the project recognized the diverse stakeholders involved – ministry officials may respond to different messaging than students or company partners. In the dissemination conclusion, CO-HOST noted the importance of “*refining content strategies*” and “*enhanced targeting and personalized content delivery...to deepen engagement with specific*

audiences”. This confirms that targeted communication was already seen as the next step to improve impact. Tools like Facebook analytics, mailing list segmentation, and LinkedIn audience insights make this feasible with minimal cost. For example, CO-HOST’s public social media data could be analyzed to see which posts appealed to teachers (perhaps posts about teaching materials) versus those that engaged students (perhaps posts highlighting mobility experiences).

By implementing Recommendation 9, the project can ensure that busy policymakers receive concise policy briefs, while students get inspiring testimonials, increasing relevance for each group. This approach aligns with modern communication best practices and EU’s emphasis on stakeholder engagement. It is also supported by project results: the Interim Report mentions targeted email campaigns as an effective method to reach stakeholders directly. Thus, Recommendation 9 is both practical and likely to amplify the project’s influence on VET uptake and reforms

Standardised Quality Tools for Mobility arrangements

Recommendation10: Host organizations and training providers should adopt differentiated task assignment frameworks that align with each learner’s prior experience and competence level. This personalization increases learner motivation and improves learning outcomes.

The evaluation findings show that when tasks are well-matched to student preparation, satisfaction is high. In Portugal’s mobility, 90% of participants agreed their tasks and responsibilities were clear and appropriate for their skill level – which suggests hosts in Guimarães did a good job aligning duties with what students could handle. In Italy’s mobility, students participated in two-week internships tailored to their profiles, based on information provided by the sending schools. Learning agreements were drafted, sent, and signed by both students and schools prior to the mobility. However, feedback indicated that not all activities fully matched students’ fields: “four neutral responses suggest that certain aspects of the study visits may not have directly aligned with everyone’s study focus.” This implies some Albanian students in Foligno encountered tasks outside their prior experience or expectations. As a suggestion, schools and students should carefully review the learning agreement and the foreseen tasks before the mobility to ensure clarity and manage expectations. At the same time, students should remain open to the possibility that hosting companies may occasionally adjust activities slightly, based on actual needs or circumstances during the internship, especially if the internship is short.

Thus, Rec.10 is valuable: implementing a differentiated task assignment framework ensures each student is neither under-challenged nor overwhelmed. The Italian evaluation explicitly recommends to “align the learning outcomes with the selected host companies” going forward, which is essentially what Rec.10 calls for. Feasibility is high – it requires hosts to review each student’s background (provided via CV or the application form’s “professional competences” section) and plan suitable duties. This practice is in line with quality apprenticeship models and EQAVET principles, and was partially done in CO-HOST’s first flows. Formalizing it will improve outcomes (motivation, learning) as recognized in research on work-based learning quality.

Recommendation11: Ensure transparency and alignment by clearly communicating the objectives, responsibilities, and accommodation details of each placement. Study visits should reflect students’ learning goals and preparedness levels.

The Italy flow feedback revealed some gaps: one student noted *“I would like to have clear information about the accommodation”* beforehand, and others felt certain logistics were not fully explained. In response, the Italy evaluation recommended a comprehensive pre-mobility info pack covering accommodation, responsibilities, and cultural activities, as well as an online Q&A session before departure. This matches Recommendation 11 intent to ensure transparency and alignment of expectations. Portugal’s success underscores this too – 100% of students there felt the program met their expectations and that *“the internship placements were well-prepared, with 100% satisfaction in support and guidance from mentors”*. This was likely due to good orientation and communication by the host. Making this a standard, providing students with a Learning Agreement detailing their tasks, learning goals, and all practical info (lodging, contacts, rules), is very feasible.

Recommendation 12: Include training and workshops on sustainable tourism practices to integrate sustainability awareness into mobility experiences. Emphasize local resource management, cultural sensitivity, and carbon-conscious travel.

Many WB students entered the mobility with theoretical knowledge but a hunger to learn about sustainability in tourism operations. In pre-mobility surveys, over 73% of the Portuguese flow participants said they were familiar with sustainable tourism, yet several explicitly hoped to *“gain knowledge in sustainable tourism practices”* during the internship. During the mobilities, however, sustainability learning was mostly indirect (through observing practices) as no formal training session on this topic was organized. Recognizing this, the Italy evaluation suggests to *“include training/workshop on sustainable tourism practices”* as part of the program. This is precisely Recommendation 12. It is both valuable and feasible: a half-day workshop or a series of talks by host employers on eco-friendly practices can be integrated without large cost.

Recommendation 13: Organize an introductory session including cultural training, information briefings, team introductions, and ongoing reflection opportunities throughout the mobility period to support adaptation and intercultural learning. It is necessary to integrate students into international teams and develop intercultural communication skills.

Before the mobility, all host partners organized a dedicated preparatory meeting with students and teachers and provided a detailed infopack on the city. On the first day, a staff member welcomed the students and shared key information about the city. While these measures were helpful, some students still experienced initial culture shock or needed more integration early on. For example, in Bulgaria’s evaluation, a minor suggestion was to have *“more integration activities to support students early on,”* even though overall feedback was very positive. Italy’s participants explicitly asked for *“more cultural activities and social events with locals”*.

Recommendation 13 addresses this by recommending a structured introduction (covering local customs, basic language, team introductions) and reflection opportunities throughout the mobility. Italy’s evaluation team concurred, advising more intercultural exposure: *“encourage more intercultural activities to enhance soft skill development”*. Students also suggested having more time to form friendships with locals, which Recommendation 13 measures would facilitate. It should be noted, however, that the mobility took place in a small Umbrian city, which has a limited international community, particularly during the winter months. This naturally constrained opportunities for intercultural interactions outside of organized activities. Overall, this

recommendation fills a gap in the current design by formalizing the cultural learning process which is often left implicit.

Recommendation14: Set up platforms for communication, mentorship support, and ongoing guidance to assist participants throughout the mobility period. Peer-to-peer mentoring and alumni networks can enhance this support structure.

Support from mentors was repeatedly cited as critical to success. The Kosovo focus group noted that those who struggled “were able to overcome difficulties thanks to the support of mentors and peers.” In Portugal and Bulgaria, participants praised mentors: “the help and support I received from mentors and colleagues were very motivating”, and 100% of the Portugal students felt they received needed mentor support. However, not all experiences were equal – the Italy report flagged “challenges in communication with some of the accompanying teachers” and instances where students felt “unsupported or left alone during certain activities (e.g. a trip to Rome)”. As an additional recommendation, sending schools should give particular attention to selecting accompanying teachers who are well-prepared, communicative, and able to provide consistent support throughout the international experience.

Thus, Recommendation 14 call to strengthen mentorship and peer support structures is well-justified. In fact, Italian partners recommended to “enhance accompanying teacher and mentor engagement” and increase their involvement in logistics and student guidance. Establishing a platform (e.g. a WhatsApp group or Moodle forum) for participants to ask questions and share issues during mobility was a practice in all mobilities and students could reach out easily..

Recommendation15: Strengthen engagement with local businesses by organizing more structured site visits and experiential learning opportunities that allow students to observe real-world operations and interact with professionals across different tourism-related sectors.

One of CO-HOST’s strengths was providing hands-on industry experience – students worked in hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, etc. Participants frequently highlighted this as the most positive aspect: “*the mentors, the visits, the businesses... the time we spent there was valuable and amazing!*”. They gained “*valuable hands-on experience in a multicultural environment*”. In Bulgaria’s mobility, for instance, all feedback was positive but one suggestion was for “*more free time*” – interestingly, others suggested “*individual accommodations for some*” – but none specifically asked for more site visits, likely because that flow already included several.

However, given tourism’s broad scope (hospitality, travel, events, etc.), more structured visits ensure students see a range of operations beyond their immediate internship placement. This can be done feasibly by hosts leveraging their local business networks. For example, the Portuguese partner took students to local cultural sites; they could add a day trip to an eco-tourism facility or tourism startup. Engaging businesses also benefits the hosts (industry partners become more invested in VET). This recommendation aligns with the EU priority on work-based learning and public-private partnerships in VET.

Recommendation16: Raise accommodation standards: Develop minimum requirements for the quality of housing and food and implement feedback from participants to monitor conditions. Introduce a standardized accommodation checklist to ensure compliance.

Accommodation emerged as a notable pain point in at least one flow. Some found facilities inadequate (internet, bathroom etc.). Comments included *“Better accommodation and conditions overall”* and concerns about groups being treated unequally in housing. One report note mentions *“behavioral issues with some students in the accommodation”* and *“dissatisfaction with the lack of communication or preparation from certain teachers”*, exacerbating the situation. Given these findings, Recommendation 16 is crucial for quality assurance. This recommendation is feasible and was effectively mandated by the evaluation. During CO-HOST, partners did arrange student housing, but perhaps standards varied by country or information was not clearly passed to students. By implementing this recommendation, future mobilities will better support students’ well-being – a fundamental aspect of a successful learning experience abroad.

The following table gathers all recommendations, illustrating how they are aligned with the EU Priorities, as well as the feasibility of implementing them.

Recommendation	EU Alignment	Project Findings/ Feasibility
Rec 1: Multimedia in modules	Digital Education Action Plan – foster interactive, engaging digital content; Skills Agenda – improve digital skills training.	Participants requested videos/audio for engagement. Multimedia shown to boost completion and retention. Easy to implement (H5P used).
Rec 2: Real-life case studies	Erasmus+ Programme – promotes sharing of best practices; Skills Agenda – calls for practical, job-relevant training.	Participants wanted more real project examples to bridge theory/practice. Example applications make content tangible. Feasible – partners have success stories to include.
Rec 3: Visual tools (infographics)	DEAP – supports innovative digital pedagogy; makes content clear and accessible.	Teachers in focus groups desired schematic visuals for complex topics. Visual aids improve clarity for procedures (curriculum design, etc.). Easily done using graphic design tools.
Rec 4: Interactive platform (forums)	DEAP – encourage collaborative online learning; European Education Area – digital community of learners.	Many participants (esp. Kosovo) needed discussion forums for peer learning. “Clear call for increased interactivity” via real-time discussion. Moodle forums

		can be activated – high feasibility.
Rec 5: Tech & language support	Skills Agenda – social fairness (principle of access for all); DEAP – address digital divide (training for educators, infrastructure).	Platform was usable even by those with limited digital skills, but extra support would improve inclusion. Italy mobility report suggests language support should be provided. Translation of materials and basic ICT training are manageable actions.
Rec 6: Flexible/asynchronous access	DEAP – calls for flexible, resilient learning modes (not just synchronous); SDG 4 – inclusive education accommodates diverse schedules.	Some webinars saw low attendance due to schedule conflicts. Asynchronous options (recordings) needed. The CO-HOST MOOC already provides extensive asynchronous opportunities, allowing learners to progress through modules at their own pace. The course is structured into three distinct sections (e.g. training materials, recordings from virtual exchanges, and webinars) all of which are immediately accessible upon entering the MOOC. In addition, a dedicated YouTube channel with curated playlists is publicly available, offering further opportunities for learners to engage with the content even without MOOC registration.
Rec 7: Digital certificates / micro-credentials	European Skills Agenda – Action 10: European approach to micro-credentials; Europass framework for credentials.	Recommended by participants to increase value of training. Adds motivation and links learning to formal qualifications. CO-HOST issued basic certificates; expanding to CPD credits or NQF alignment is

		feasible with stakeholder support.
Rec 8: Prioritize social media and online outreach	Erasmus+ dissemination obligations – visibility of results; European Skills Agenda – mobilize stakeholders through partnerships; Digital Education Action Plan – use of digital channels for inclusive communication.	Social media was the most effective channel: 102 posts reached 56,000+ people; LinkedIn (248 followers), Facebook (87 followers) showed steady growth; newsletters reached ~2,500 recipients; online outreach identified as central to dissemination strategy.
Rec 9: Targeted communication with segmentation & analytics	Erasmus+ – effective impact and stakeholder engagement; Skills Agenda – evidence-based policy and outreach; DEAP – effective, data-driven use of digital tools.	Interim Dissemination Report highlighted need for “refining content strategies” and “enhanced targeting and personalized delivery”; partners recognized diverse stakeholder groups (learners, teachers, policymakers) and the importance of tailoring messages to increase engagement .
Rec 10: Personalize tasks to learner competence	Copenhagen/Riga (EU VET) – promote high-quality work-based learning tailored to learner needs; Erasmus+ – learning agreements.	In Portugal, 90% felt tasks suited their skill level, boosting confidence. In Italy, a few found tasks misaligned with their studies. Italy report advises aligning learning outcomes with host placements – confirming need for personalization.
Rec 11: Communicate objectives, roles & accommodation clearly	Erasmus+ quality standards – require clear pre-departure info and agreements; EQAVET – transparency in VET mobility.	Italy students wanted clearer info (e.g. about housing) pre-trip. Recommendation from evaluators: provide a pre-mobility info pack on accommodation, responsibilities, etc.. Portugal’s 100% satisfaction in

		support/guidance shows good prep yields excellent outcomes.
Rec 12: Add sustainable tourism training	EU Green Deal/Skills Agenda – integrate green skills in all training; SDG 8 – promote sustainable tourism for jobs.	Participants expressed strong desire to learn sustainable tourism practices during mobility. Italy evaluation explicitly recommends a workshop on sustainable tourism. Currently, learning was ad-hoc; formal session is feasible and would enrich green skillset.
Rec 13: Cultural orientation & reflection	Erasmus+ core idea – intercultural learning; SDG 4.7 – global citizenship education.	Students craved more cultural exchange: “organize more social events with locals”. A few faced initial adaptation issues (language, etc.), but 71% reported no major challenges as they adjusted. Bulgaria feedback suggested more early integration activities. Italy report urges more intercultural activities for soft skills. Introductory sessions and ongoing reflection are easy to implement and would address these points.
Rec 14: Continuous mentorship & support (incl. alumni network)	Erasmus+ – emphasizes participant support and safety; European Education Area – communities of learners/peers.	Mentor support seen as crucial: “support from mentors...was critical during adaptation”. Portugal: 100% felt well-mentored; Bulgaria: mentorship rated excellent. But Italy noted some lapses (students felt “left alone” at times). Recommendations: enhance mentor engagement and better teacher involvement. Alumni could help guide new participants – a logical next step.

<p>Rec 15: Engage local businesses (site visits)</p>	<p>EU VET policy – encourage employer engagement in training; Erasmus+ – fosters cooperation between education and industry.</p>	<p>Participants highly valued hands-on industry exposure: “improved skills... opportunity to work in a multicultural environment”. Many “learned a lot from new practices...important for the industry”. While formal feedback didn’t criticize number of visits, partners see benefit in broadening exposure (as noted in Rec.15 text). Already, visits were highlights (e.g. lab tours, heritage sites); more structured visits/networking can further enhance learning. Feasible via partner business networks.</p>
<p>Rec 16: Improve accommodation standards & feedback</p>	<p>Erasmus+ participant support – ensure basic welfare; EQAVET – continuous improvement via feedback loops.</p>	<p>Accommodation feedback varied. Italy: only 62% satisfied, with some strongly negative responses; complaints about quality and inequality between groups. Portugal: ~92% satisfied, but one suggestion to improve quality. Italy report recommends reviewing accommodations and ensuring equal treatment. A standard checklist and responding to student feedback will address these issues. Partners can set minimum standards (Wi-Fi, cleanliness, etc.) – a doable action that greatly impacts experience.</p>

Table 1 - Recommendation Table

To maximise the impact of these recommendations, it is essential to consider how they can be implemented more broadly and embedded within the national VET systems of the Western Balkan countries. Here are several suggestions:

- **Integrate Recommendations into National VET Strategies**

Western Balkan countries (e.g. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) are in the process of modernizing their VET systems, often aligning with EU frameworks as part of EU accession efforts. The CO-HOST recommendations provide a concrete “roadmap for scaling and sustaining

effective VET mobility programs”. Ministries of Education and Labor in each country should be encouraged to incorporate these recommendations into their VET reform action plans. For instance, if a country is drafting a new VET strategy or a Youth Skills initiative, they could include objectives like “develop digital learning platforms for VET” (per Rec.1–7), “establish regular international mobility opportunities in VET curricula” (Rec.10–16), and “strengthen partnerships with industry and EU peers” (covers dissemination and mobility elements). By framing CO-HOST outcomes as inputs to national policy, the project’s work transitions from pilot to policy. Notably, the European Commission’s enlargement strategy emphasized improving VET and teacher training in the WB; CO-HOST’s policy paper aligns with this and can guide national reforms to fulfill those EU expectations.

- **Leverage National VET Networks and Erasmus+ Offices**

CO-HOST established Solid National Networks in each WB country (one of the project aims). These networks of VET providers, businesses, and other stakeholders can serve as champions for implementation. They can disseminate the recommendations at national workshops or policy forums, demonstrating the success stories from the project. Additionally, each WB country has an Erasmus+ National Office or National Agency – engaging them is key. They can promote the mainstreaming of CO-HOST practices in future Erasmus+ projects (for example, requiring or encouraging other VET mobility projects to adopt the mentorship model or the sustainability workshop). They can also facilitate dialogue with government bodies. Essentially, use existing structures to advocate for these changes, rather than relying on individual schools alone.

- **Pilot Extensions and Scaling Up**

To scale, one strategy is to run additional pilot programs that apply these recommendations on a larger scale or in different sectors, funded by Erasmus+ or other donors. For instance, a follow-up project could involve more WB countries or more VET sectors (beyond tourism) to implement the VLE and mobility enhancements, thereby reaching more institutions. The results could convince policymakers of the scalability. Moreover, the MOOC developed can be opened up beyond the project participants – embedding it in national teacher training institutes or making it a regular offering for VET teachers/students will allow thousands to benefit at low cost. The Interim Dissemination Report’s conclusion noted that by maintaining momentum on digital outreach, the project can “extend its reach even further”. This applies to scaling up – for example, continuing the MOOC annually and using social media to recruit new cohorts across the Western Balkans, possibly with local ministry endorsement, would institutionalize the training process.

- **Institutionalize Mobility in VET Programs**

A key aspect of alignment with national reforms is to move from ad-hoc project-based mobilities to programmatic inclusion of mobility in VET curricula. National authorities could create frameworks whereby a certain number of credits or an internship module in the VET curriculum can be fulfilled via international mobility (supported by Erasmus+ or bilateral programs). The CO-HOST recommendations (task alignment, official recognition, etc.) would help shape such frameworks to ensure quality. Aligning with European tools like ECVET (European Credit System for VET) or its successor arrangements can facilitate recognition of learning outcomes from abroad – and Rec.7’s micro-credential approach dovetails with this. For example, if a WB country reforms its tourism VET curriculum, it could stipulate that “students must complete a 2-week internship (preferably abroad)” and that “digital learning modules (like CO-HOST’s) are available to prepare them.” This way, the mobility experience becomes part of the system, not just a one-off project. The evidence that “VET mobility... contributes to individual development and institutional capacity-building” will be persuasive to governments looking to improve employment outcomes and institutional ties.

- **Policy Support for Digital Transformation**

Governments and donors should be encouraged to invest in the digital infrastructure and training needed to support Recommendation 1–7 across all VET providers. For example, a ministry might roll out a national Moodle platform for VET or provide grants for schools to develop multimedia content and train teachers in e-learning design (perhaps inspired by CO-HOST’s MOOC success). Aligning this with the Digital Education Action Plan goals can unlock EU funding or technical assistance. The recommendations can be presented as specific actions under broader national initiatives like “Digital School” or “Quality VET for 2030.” The European Education Area framework and the Western Balkans Agenda on Education and Training encourage digital and virtual exchanges; CO-HOST’s model can feed into those. Additionally, South-East Europe regional cooperation could adopt CO-HOST’s outputs to benefit multiple countries – a form of scaling out regionally.

- **Ensuring Sustainability through Ownership**

Scalability requires that after the project ends, someone continues the work. Encouraging ownership by local institutions is thus crucial. For instance, one of the WB national VET agencies or a leading VET school consortium could take ownership of the MOOC platform, updating and running it annually. The national networks established should transition from project-driven groups to formal or semi-formal bodies (maybe integrated into chambers of commerce or teacher associations). Policymakers could formally recognize these networks, giving them a role in advising on mobility and curriculum issues. By securing local ownership, the practices recommended (like ongoing mentorship networks or annual dissemination via social media) are more likely to persist and scale. The D5.2 recommendations paper itself can be disseminated to these stakeholders as a guiding document – effectively becoming a policy reference.

- **Monitoring and Continuous Improvement**

As national reforms implement these ideas, establishing a mechanism to monitor progress will help maintain momentum. This could be an annual review of VET mobility outcomes (using KPIs such as number of mobilities, satisfaction rates, inclusion of disadvantaged students, etc.). Western Balkan countries often participate in the Torino Process (a VET system assessment led by ETF); those reports could incorporate indicators influenced by CO-HOST’s results (e.g. “percentage of VET institutions offering online learning modules” or “mobility participants as % of VET students”). Showing improvement on such indicators will reinforce political support. The recommendations already emphasize evidence-based policy – continuing that ethos by measuring and reporting results will strengthen alignment with EU practices (since EU education cooperation relies on monitoring via indicators).

In essence, to enhance implementation and ensure scalability, the CO-HOST consortium and its stakeholders are encouraged to adopt a comprehensive approach built on advocacy, integration, and institutionalization. They should advocate the project’s recommendations to policymakers, using the proof-of-concept data presented in this analysis to demonstrate impact and relevance. At the same time, they should integrate these recommendations into existing or forthcoming education reforms and funding programs to secure alignment with broader strategic priorities. Finally, they should institutionalize the most successful pilot tools, such as the MOOC, professional networks, and mobility schemes, so that these innovations become embedded in the regular structure of vocational education and training across participating countries.

By doing so, the CO-HOST project’s legacy will endure, providing a “more integrated, modern, and inclusive VET system” in the Western Balkans – one that is digitally empowered, internationally connected, and aligned with European standards of excellence and inclusion, while fostering a mutual and fruitful exchange between the European Union and the Western Balkans.

Conclusions

The CO-HOST project has demonstrated that vocational education and training (VET) in the Western Balkans can be strengthened through carefully designed international mobility schemes, innovative digital tools, and close cooperation between institutions from EU Member States and enlargement countries. By situating its work within the sectors of tourism, hospitality, and catering, the project addressed a field of strategic socio-economic importance for the region while also aligning closely with the European Skills Agenda, the Digital Education Action Plan, and the EU's Green Deal objectives. The project has shown that investing in VET learners and teachers through mobility and capacity-building is not merely an educational priority but a catalyst for sustainable development, employability, and European integration.

One of the most valuable contributions of CO-HOST lies in its evidence-based policy recommendations, which are firmly rooted in implementation. Activities such as the MOOC, piloting sessions, webinars, and mobility flows generated a rich pool of data, combining quantitative indicators with qualitative insights from students, teachers, and institutional partners. These findings confirm that VET learners benefit most when mobility is adapted to their competence levels, when digital platforms are interactive and accessible, and when sustainability and intercultural learning are embedded into training design. The evaluations of mobilities across Portugal, Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, and Kosovo illustrate that, despite contextual differences, participants consistently valued practical exposure, mentorship, and opportunities for cultural exchange. At the same time, challenges such as accommodation standards, task alignment, and scheduling flexibility underline the need for systematization and minimum quality standards at the policy level.

Equally important is the role of dissemination and communication. CO-HOST's digital outreach reached tens of thousands of stakeholders through social media campaigns, newsletters, and webinars. This not only fulfilled Erasmus+ visibility requirements but also demonstrated how modern communication strategies, using segmentation, analytics, and storytelling, can ensure that VET mobility outcomes are widely shared and adopted. The project has laid the groundwork for sustained visibility and community-building, ensuring that its outputs remain accessible beyond the project's lifetime. Embedding such approaches into national VET strategies will be essential to guarantee continuity and scale.

Looking forward, the conclusions of this deliverable point to several strategic imperatives. First, the integration of CO-HOST's recommendations into national reform agendas can transform project-level pilots into systemic change. Ministries of Education and Labour across the Western Balkans are encouraged to embed digital learning tools, mobility opportunities, and green skill development into their VET policies, thereby aligning with EU standards and accession requirements. Second, sustainability must be ensured by institutional ownership: VET schools, business associations, and national networks should take responsibility for maintaining the MOOC, updating learning resources, and facilitating ongoing mobility partnerships. Third, European and regional frameworks, such as Erasmus+, the European Education Area, and the South-East Europe cooperation platforms, should be leveraged to amplify the project's results and ensure long-term funding and technical support.

In conclusion, the CO-HOST project has delivered more than a set of activities; it has produced a coherent model for modernizing VET in the Western Balkans. By combining pedagogical innovation, digital readiness, mobility quality standards, and strong dissemination practices, it provides a roadmap for equipping young people with the competencies needed for the labour markets of tomorrow. At the same time, it reinforces the values of sustainability, inclusion, and European cooperation. The recommendations in this document thus serve both as a record of achievement and as a forward-looking strategy, one that can guide policymakers, educators, and institutions in building a more resilient, connected, and future-proof VET system across the Western Balkans.

Annexes

The following two chapters serve as an Annex to the main report, presenting Country Fact Sheets developed under the CO-HOST project. These concise overviews translate project evidence into actionable insights for the tourism and hospitality VET ecosystem across the Western Balkans. Each fact sheet outlines the national context and assets, highlights challenges and opportunities emerging from CO-HOST activities, and proposes policy recommendations aligned with EU priorities and recognition pathways.

Designed as a practical reference for ministries, VET providers, and host organisations, the fact sheets support planning, delivery, and monitoring of mobility programmes and digital learning enhancements within each participating country

Fact Sheets

The following country fact sheets serve as country-ready actions for the tourism–hospitality VET ecosystem. For each Western Balkan country, they offer a concise snapshot of context and assets, highlight key challenges and opportunities evidenced through CO-HOST activities, and present policy measures. The sheets are a practical tool for ministries, VET providers and host organisations to plan, deliver and monitor mobility and digital learning upgrades aligned with EU frameworks and recognition pathways.

Albania

Section	Details
Snapshot	Tourism & hospitality remain a strategic path for youth employability and EU alignment; strong local uptake of CO-HOST learning offers.
CO-HOST Participation	Learner/teacher engagement through MOOC/webinars; interest in real-time discussion and practical examples. Mobility exposure to hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and NGOs; mentor support is important for adaptation.
Key Challenges	Feedback highlighted that parts of the training were too theoretical, with limited practical examples and uneven digital familiarity reducing engagement. Assessments were often considered too simple, while the absence of translated materials and basic platform guidance hindered participation
Opportunities	There is room to make the learning experience more interactive and accessible through multimedia content, live Q&A sessions, and simple onboarding tutorials. Translating key materials and forming peer-mentoring groups can further strengthen participation and collaboration
Policy Recommendations	The platform should offer bilingual support, short video explainers, and scenario-based assessments reflecting real workplace situations. Pre-departure briefings for mobilities and the introduction of green-skill micro-credentials with digital certification will enhance both quality and recognition

Bosnia & Herzegovina

Section	Details
Snapshot	Tourism & hospitality support regional cooperation and youth jobs; CO-HOST builds VET readiness for EU processes.
CO-HOST Participation	Learner/teacher engagement through MOOC/webinars; interest in real-time discussion and practical examples. Mobility exposure to hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and NGOs; mentor support is important for adaptation.
Key Challenges	Participants noted uneven satisfaction across modules, with some content perceived as dense and lacking visual aids or clear practical links. Limited interactivity during webinars and difficulty following English terminology also affected engagement
Opportunities	Redesigning complex modules with visuals, case studies, and additional Q&A time can bridge theory and practice. Providing concise summaries in local language and collecting examples of completed projects will help learners apply knowledge more effectively
Policy Recommendations	Training should emphasize visual learning, structured discussions, and outcome-based tasks. Mobility preparation can benefit from clear role descriptions and checklists, while sustainability workshops and CPD certification will reinforce long-term professional development

Kosovo

Section	Details
Snapshot	Fast-growing tourism pathways; digital training + mobility to align with EU standards.
CO-HOST Participation	Learner/teacher engagement through MOOC/webinars; interest in real-time discussion and practical examples. Mobility exposure to hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and NGOs; mentor support is important for adaptation.
Key Challenges	Although satisfaction levels were high, learning remained largely one-directional with limited peer interaction and discussion. Some participants found the content overly theoretical, and the absence of localized materials restricted accessibility
Opportunities	Expanding peer-to-peer learning through forums, chats, and alumni support can sustain engagement beyond webinars. Translating materials

	and promoting the most effective practices as templates can increase national adoption and regional exchange
Policy Recommendations	The learning environment should integrate discussion tools, mentorship plans, and competence-based mobility tasks. Introducing micro-credentials and sustainable tourism modules will align training with modern VET and EU green-skills priorities



Case Studies

The CO-HOST project has piloted innovative approaches to VET mobility across diverse European contexts, highlighting how tailored preparation, mentorship, and sustainability integration can significantly enhance learning outcomes. The following case studies from Guimarães, Foligno, and Tirana, implemented as part of CO-HOST activities, showcase best practices in mobility implementation, from differentiated task-based internships and structured study visits to the embedding of green skills in tourism training. Each example offers practical insights, addresses key challenges, and outlines actionable policy recommendations to strengthen the impact and relevance of future mobility programmes

Guimarães

Differentiated Mentorship in Hospitality Internships

Section	Details
Context & Objectives	During the CO-HOST mobility in Guimarães, learners were placed in hotels, restaurants, and tourism agencies to develop practical and intercultural competences. The programme aimed to match tasks with each learner's background and promote workplace mentorship as a structured learning mechanism.
What Happened	Participants completed task-based placements designed around their competence levels. Mentors conducted regular check-ins, offering tailored guidance and cultural orientation. Reflection sessions at the end of each week encouraged learners to connect practice with theory.
Key Challenges	Both learners and hosts reported high satisfaction, particularly in how tasks matched competence levels and improved confidence. Mentorship was highlighted as the main success factor, fostering professional communication, adaptation, and problem-solving skills
Opportunities	Differentiated tasking improves learner engagement and outcomes, while consistent mentoring helps overcome adaptation challenges in new work environments
Policy Recommendations	Competence-based task design and structured mentorship should become standard in mobility learning agreements. Mentorship recognition, through micro-credentials or CPD points, can formalize this best practice in future mobilities

Foligno

Structured Study Visits and Pre-departure Orientation

Section	Details
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Context & Objectives	The study visits in Foligno were designed to give VET learners practical exposure to cultural tourism and heritage management. The initiative aimed to strengthen the link between classroom learning and real-world tourism operations.
What Happened	Learners participated in guided visits and workshops across museums, heritage sites, and tourism offices. A new pre-departure pack was introduced to clarify roles, accommodation details, and daily schedules, ensuring smoother logistics and learning focus.
Key Challenges	Participants valued the field experience but initially noted confusion about logistics and learning expectations. After implementing the improved orientation materials, satisfaction and perceived learning relevance increased significantly.
Opportunities	Clear communication and structured pre-departure preparation greatly enhance both learner confidence and the educational value of short-term mobility experiences.
Policy Recommendations	All mobility projects should include a standardized pre-departure information pack and checklist, covering accommodation, roles, and expected outcomes, to ensure quality and safety across host destinations.

Tirana

Green-Skills Integration in Tourism Training

Section	Details
Context & Objectives	CO-HOST partners introduced sustainability-focused content into local tourism training to align with EU Green Skills and SDG 4.7 objectives. The pilot combined theoretical understanding with practical applications in hospitality and travel sectors.
What Happened	Teachers and learners co-developed short workshops on sustainable tourism, energy efficiency, and waste management in hospitality. These were later integrated into the mobility preparation phase, allowing participants to apply green principles during their internships.
Key Challenges	The integration improved learners' environmental awareness and gave local enterprises tangible ideas to adopt more sustainable practices. Teachers noted stronger motivation and a better link between mobility and sustainability goals.
Opportunities	Embedding green-skills content early in the learning process encourages more responsible behaviour during mobilities and strengthens the connection between VET and sustainability agendas.

**Policy
Recommendations**

Future CO-HOST mobilities should include a dedicated sustainability workshop as a mandatory component. Recognizing green participation through digital certificates can promote long-term adoption of environmentally responsible practices.