

MULTINA - Internationalisation@ Home with Multinational Practice Enterprise



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MULTINA

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Multinational Practice Enterprises

MULTINA Guide

MULTINA Guide (D3.1)

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Practice Enterprise and Multinational Practice Enterprise concept

The MULTINA - Internationalisation@Home with Multinational Practice Enterprises project aims to design and develop an innovative and inclusive model of the Practice Enterprise concept by creating multinational Practice Enterprises for vocational education and training (VET) trainees to experience an internationalisation@home.

trainees will work and learn together with peers from other countries, strengthening international cooperation, language and digital skills, getting a better understanding of how an international market works and enabling trainees to work together in an international environment.

In order to be able to understand the goal of the project and the way in which internationalisation@home strategies are planned to take effect, it is important to introduce the key terms that are connected with the concept.

A **Practice Enterprise (PE)** is a trainee-run enterprise that runs like a real business silhouetting a real enterprise's business procedures, products and services and resembles a real company in its form, organisation and function. The concept is also known as a Virtual Enterprise or other national language variation in some countries.

In the traditional understanding, Practice Enterprises are separated into physical departments where trainees work in teams undertaking the particular tasks. Departments follow the makeup of a real company and may include: Finance, Purchasing, Administration, Human Resources, Sales and Marketing. The Practice Enterprise concept is however a very flexible methodology that can be adapted to fit the needs of various contexts, target groups and learning goals.

In recent years, the concept has also begun to move more towards a competency and skill based approach rather than a strict departmental approach. This is due to the changing landscape of the labour market as well as newly arisen expectations of both employees and employers. There are some specific forms and types of Practice Enterprises that are worth mentioning.

A **Remote Practice Enterprise** is a Practice Enterprise that operates from more than one location (trainees in different locations) or operated fully online. This is also an ever more present job form that is being offered and increasingly demanded by employees. On job search portals, candidates can choose whether they are looking for on-site, hybrid or remote opportunities.

The next type of PE is also the key term of this MULTINA project: A **Multinational Practice Enterprise** is one where trainees from more than one country working for the same PE as one business unit, separated across borders either by departments, posts, or commercial responsibilities.

When speaking about the project aim, the reference to the **Internationalisation@home** is very frequently mentioned. This refers to the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for trainees within domestic learning environments. It offers trainees global perspectives within their programme of study, whether or not they spend time abroad.

The benefits of this concept is its focus on **inclusive learning** which is a central piece of the learning by doing methodology. It is a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates acceptance of, and belonging for, all trainees, regardless of backgrounds, needs or abilities.

Founded on the belief that all trainees can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, effective teaching and appropriate resources. Inclusive learning allows trainees to be a part of the learning experience and to overcome any obstacles that might be challenging for them.

1.2. Organisational structure of the international PE network

Today, PEN Worldwide administers an international network of 7,000 Practice Enterprises (PEs) in schools, universities, vocational training institutions, companies and training centres in 40 countries around the world.

Through their membership in PEN Worldwide, Central Offices (who are also partners in the MULTINA project) from member countries exchange best practices, maintain international contacts to support international commerce and trading, as well as hold trainee and trainer exchanges. The Central Offices and also individual Practice Enterprises are located in 40 countries around Europe, North and South America, Asia and partially Africa and these are all connected through the Practice Enterprise network.

The main actors within the concept are Central Offices, trainers, trainees and real business mentor companies. The Central Office staff provide all essential macro-economic functions and support operations which are expected to be available to the business world to create a complete economic simulation for Practice Enterprises in their country.

This includes offering some of the commercial and regulatory services which are expected to be accessible to the business world, for example: virtual banking, customs and taxation, utilities and a post office.

In a Practice Enterprise, trainers adopt the role of a workplace facilitator, coach or mentor. The trainer facilitates all the Practice Enterprise activities: motivating, challenging and supporting the trainees as they take on roles and responsibilities that are often very different from their usual learning activities.

In a Practice Enterprise environment, the trainees are the ‘employees’ and ‘managers’ of their business. They work in teams undertaking the tasks required by a particular PE department, such as Finance and Purchasing, Administration, Human Relations, and Sales and Marketing. Once they have been inducted into their business, they spend time in each department, or in one targeted department or focus on skill-based learning outcomes and train to be adaptable and flexible by trying out different tasks and projects within the Practice Enterprise. They learn the business procedures, tasks and skills required to ensure their business is viable.

Like real employees, they not only demonstrate their ability to complete a wide range of tasks, they also learn the importance of teamwork, business communication, goal setting, business planning, time management, and the numerous skills required to improve employability. These transversal skills are vital for future employers and ever more in hybrid and remote work environments.

Another extremely important actor in the Practice Enterprise concept are the business mentors. Most Practice Enterprises are in contact with a company that comes from the real business world and functions as a business mentor. The business mentor gives advice and ideas to the trainers and trainees about the processes and how a business is run.

The business mentor can provide the real-world products and services for sale within the virtual environment. In some cases, business mentors are involved in the recruitment and evaluation process of the trainees.

The standardised Practice Enterprise methodology can be easily adapted to suit different ages, groups, abilities and can take place as in-person training, digitally or as a hybrid option. As the concept and methodology itself is very flexible and there are individual learning pathways opportunities, it can be adapted to various different target groups.

Among the target groups that are trained with the practice-based learning method, there are for example trainees of secondary and VET education, University trainees, job-seekers, aspiring entrepreneurs or participants with disadvantages.

Especially for some of these mentioned target groups, the internationalisation@home strategy is an extremely important factor as the international work-based learning and ‘non-standard’ mobilities are increasingly becoming an integral part of the VET school-to-work learning process. Multinational Practice Enterprises can serve as an alternative product for trainees to get an international experience close to one they would have in a traditional mobility.

Work-integrated learning in such a multinational PE can include trainees undertaking ‘real’ work in school in collaboration with colleagues from different countries, as well as international business training in the Practice Enterprise workplace learning environment. This offers a flexible and inclusive opportunity to allow an alternative internationalisation strategy, which is especially suited for trainees with disadvantages.

Through the MULTINA internationalisation@home strategy, it allows them to overcome geographical, physical or socio-economic barriers and provides them with opportunities that might otherwise not be available to them.

1.3. Internationality of the PE experience

According to the OECD, Global Competence is a multidimensional construct that requires a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values successfully applied to global issues or intercultural situations. Developing global competence is a life-long process, but it is one that education can shape. Global competences are not “new skills” but they are now being applied in a global context. The Practice Enterprise provides an ideal environment for building the knowledge and cognitive skills trainees need to confront problems related to global and intercultural issues.

The multinational Practice Enterprise methodology effectively addresses the development of global competence. It develops cultural awareness and multinational interactions, prepares for the world of work by training in effective communication and teamwork and using technology on a global scale.

According to the 2022 Bloomberg Global Citizens Report, the keys to multinational learning are global engagement, global knowledge and cultural understanding. For VET trainees, there are various challenges of the international labour market confronting young people today as they seek to make a transition from education to employment. These include digital skills mismatches, digital competency segmentation and an increasing demand for graduates with work-based global competences including socio-emotional skills and attitudes and multinational business competency and skills experience.

Instead of a fixed job-specific candidate profile, employers strive to acquire flexible candidates who are familiar with work-based global competencies and are eager to refine them. The reality is an ever growing need to develop oneself and a continuous learning path which does not end when entering the global labour market.

The Practice Enterprise helps respond to these challenges with a flexible, inclusive and multinational Practice Enterprise experience. The methodology is in a continuous state of development to maintain its relevance with the ever-changing global business environment. This is especially true in today’s world of global business realities, with new ways of multinational team-based project work and interconnected commercial operations.

Global work-based learning is increasingly becoming an integral part of the VET school-to-work learning process. Practice Enterprise training can serve as a forum for trainees to get a global experience close to one they would have in a multinational corporation. Work-based learning in such a global environment can include trainees undertaking 'real' work in a Practice Enterprise environment in collaboration with colleagues from different countries, as well as global business training in the Practice Enterprise learning environment.

The Practice Enterprise also offers an internationalisation-at-home opportunity for trainees through online connections with other Practice Enterprises from around the world, creating a realistic multinational learning environment. The global dimension of the Practice Enterprise experience is extremely important. This innovation is especially relevant at this time, as VET institutions are experiencing difficulty in mobility activities for trainees due to changes in institutional mobility planning caused by the recent worldwide health crisis.

The Practice Enterprise, through its internationalisation@home opportunities, gives trainees with geographical or economic barriers or trainees from remote areas the chance to participate in multinational activities. It also provides an inclusive model for trainees from different economic and social environments by offering the possibility of individualised global learning pathways, allowing trainees to advance at their own pace and level of competence.

With the multinational Practice Enterprise, VET institutions can offer similar experiences to traditional mobilities and a learning environment that fosters the acquisition of global work-related competencies. The MULTINA model provides additional opportunities for the engagement of trainees by enabling them to take part in more transnational in-person and online activities and making the experience of the global community of the Practice Enterprise more inclusive.

One of the most important benefits of the Practice Enterprise concept is the trade with other Practice Enterprises on the national and international market. Trainees have real external contacts with other national and international trainees. Trainees train their foreign language skills and cross-cultural understanding, they get to know the economic and business cultures of other countries and acquire practical knowledge about contract modalities, payment transactions and legal provisions.

The positive consequence of these business relationships between Practice Enterprises are joint projects, institutional partnerships and even trainee exchanges with foreign-speaking countries. It gives Practice Enterprise trainees the unique opportunity to gain practical experience and competence in international trade within a network of 7,000 Practice Enterprises in 40 countries.

2. The changing face of mobilities

2.1. Transforming mobility practices - In-person, online, blended mobilities

The pandemic led to innovation and change in mobility practices, due to necessity. From concerns about safety to countries closing their borders, the pandemic made it necessary to find new ways to carry out mobilities. Short-term mobilities were postponed, cancelled, undertaken digitally, or planned for neighbouring countries that might have fewer restrictions for travel between them. The situation has sped up some of the processes which had to be undertaken in order to adapt to the new realities.

Now that there are less travel restrictions and travelling has resumed to its pre-pandemic level, some of the best practices have stayed in effect, such as more online/digital contact and participation in hybrid or online mobility. Online participation in parts of a mobility program allows trainees who are unable to travel for various reasons to join mobility initiatives and thereby gain some intercultural competencies and skills.

Mobility is ever-changing because the world, policies, and technology are in continuous adaptation and they impact the ways in which mobilities are being done. Currently, across Europe and the western world, there is a focus on sustainability which includes both the environment and the climate. This focus is bound to change mobility practices one step at a time as well. More and more individuals and companies are looking at aspects such as the carbon footprint they are leaving and this information is also becoming a part of the travel information provided.

2.2. Current work-based learning mobility practices

As to the current situation, the mobility scene is mostly back to what it was prior to the pandemic, though online elements are still being used as part of the preparation and processing of mobilities and mobility experiences, so digital tools are adding value even to traditional mobility experiences. The blending of both offline and online elements is a natural process taking place not only in the workplace but should also be reflected in education and its approach to mobilities.

As mentioned above, mobilities are changing so the best practices of today are already different to those of tomorrow. First of all, the educational world needs to stay up to date, meaning updating the existing curricula and/or having new areas added to curricula. Politically in many countries there currently is a focus on digitalization and sustainability, these changes are already being processed by the educational sector and once it is in the curriculum it will also become part of the mobilities as educational institutions adopt green and digital values.

How work-based mobilities will change depends on what happens in the world, which themes and values are at the given time important and relevant for society (this of course may also differ depending on the geographical context). Policymakers can change laws on mobility or decide about thematic priorities for national curricula, which is true on both the EU and national level.

The challenge related to new policies is that the decision are often implemented with a delay, compared to what happens in real life and at educational institutions, where you have to keep up with new technologies and world events, as an example educational institutions are currently dealing with what to do about chat gpt where policy makers are trying to ensure that new policies are balanced and future-proof while also dealing with the problem.

There are also changes happening in the EU which may change mobilities. For one thing the EU has the DigComp for digital competencies. Then there is the fact that the EU as an organisation is also always adapting and changing based on what is happening within and outside the union. With the green and digital focus, it is feasible that the EU within years will acknowledge digital mobilities.

2.3. The Internationalisation@Home environment

2.3.1. Opportunities & challenges

Virtual mobilities present new challenges and opportunities. The challenges can be split into three main groups: practical, didactic and policy.

Practical challenges are about ensuring that the tools for virtual mobilities are available. Current IT equipment is a necessity along with access to relevant programs/learning platforms and a good/stable internet connection. These can be substantial challenges in some areas or schools and can further lead to the increase in the already existing digital divide.

Didactic challenges are resistance to change, limited digital skills of the trainer, digital skills of the trainee and curricula not being adapted to existing realities of a highly digitalized interconnected world. When things change and approaches are introduced, it is natural that there will be resistance to the change. The resistance can be based on the lack of time, lack of digital skills or simply habits of the individual people. The next part is the curriculum, if it is not adapted to a digital globalised world, it will be harder to change the mobility experience and get it recognized nationally.

Policy challenges are mostly about having policy makers understand that virtual mobilities should be accredited and recognized as widely as in-person mobilities. Policy makers should also ensure that improving digital skills becomes a priority, this would give trainers and trainees alike better options for completing virtual mobilities in a meaningful way.

On the other hand, there are many benefits to mention when organising virtual mobilities and many great opportunities when making use of the multinational Practice Enterprise concept. Some of the key areas and reasons for doing virtual mobility projects lie in the areas of accessibility, flexibility, interactivity, diversity, inclusion and reduced environmental impact.

Accessibility

One of the greatest benefits of virtual mobilities is that they are inclusive and accessible to a wide group of participants. Unlike traditional mobility programs which may require significant financial resources and the physical capabilities to travel, virtual mobilities are accessible to all trainees regardless of their backgrounds. For example trainees with a physical disability or from low income households may be unable to participate in a traditional mobility but be able to join a virtual mobility from their own home or school.

It should be noted that good technical equipment and a smooth internet connection is a necessary element in virtual mobilities and these are still not accessible to all.

Flexibility and individual learning pathways

Virtual mobilities offer flexibility in terms of pedagogical scheduling, which becomes easier for trainees with reduced mobility due to economic, social or geographic reasons. It is also easier to fit a virtual mobility into a curriculum timeline as there is no travelling or setting-in time.

They also offer increased opportunities for individual learning pathways, given the fact that mobility activities can be tailored to a trainee's field of study and competency development, with a focus on capacity-building based on his/her needs and pace.

Interactivity

Virtual mobilities offer opportunities for interactive learning and collaboration. trainees can participate in virtual tours of facilities, attend online lectures and engage in collaborative projects with trainees from other countries. If a group of international trainees work together on a project they can develop their cross-cultural skills and competencies through improving their teamwork and communication.

Diversity

This partially goes together with inclusivity and accessibility. Since a broader range of trainees can get a chance to participate in mobility projects, these will then in turn become more diverse, which increases intercultural competencies as well as bridging gaps between people from different social backgrounds and with different challenges.

Reduced environmental impact

Virtual mobilities eliminate the need to travel and can help reduce carbon footprint compared to traditional mobility programs. This helps build a more sustainable mobility practice and support the transition towards a green economy. It can also offer a solution where certain parts of the mobility can be done online while the others can still take place in person. This means that there is also a bigger focus on blended learning and the opportunities it offers.

2.3.2. Pedagogical objectives and experiences

When creating a virtual mobility course, it is important to choose a format that fits with the platform and, where you can gain real experiences even though you are participating virtually. The Practice Enterprise concept is a methodology that fits very well in the context of virtual mobility, as it can include both in-person and virtual participation.

When a trainee enters a multinational Practice Enterprise and experiences a virtual mobility, they will learn about business processes, strategies, and practise a variety of professional skills, all in collaboration with their peers.

Depending on what the pedagogical goal is, it is possible to learn about business areas such as marketing, purchasing, sales and finances while also strengthening digital skills and online collaboration. It would be up to the trainer setting up the virtual mobility to decide which area a trainee would benefit more from participating in. The testing and trying out different roles can lead to a future job candidate with transversal skills and a well-rounded knowledge of all aspects.

In addition to Practice Enterprise activities, it would also be possible to set up webinars to supplement other learning activities and fulfil other objectives.

On top of that, Practice Enterprise trainees learn how to work in a remote environment and how to best collaborate with a multinational team. This is also the reality of today's way of working, team culture and job application and job search procedures. In the next chapter, the important gained transversal and intercultural skills are mentioned and elaborated.

2.3.3. Social objectives and experiences

It is mostly the social aspects that are to a certain degree missing in virtual mobilities, the meeting people face to face and doing a cultural exchange where you learn about the country and eat the local foods. Some of the social aspects are harder to recreate in a virtual mobility but some elements could be adapted and included in the virtual mobility experience. This could be for example an online cooking class, virtual tour of the city or an informal quiz about the country's history and cultural values.

In a Practice Enterprise virtual mobility course, the first step could be to learn about business culture in the target country, and experience it at the same time while working with trainees from that country in the enterprise.

Coffee talks between colleagues and collaborative tasks and events would be part of practising social skills in a multicultural and global environment which can prepare them for the reality and way of working that they might face later on in life. These can also include special online team building activities which focus on strengthening the team work and spirit between the Practice Enterprise trainees.

3. Work-Based Training with Multinational PE Activities

3.1. What is the added-value of multinational PE activities

Acquiring transversal/cross-cutting skills provides wide-ranging benefits to trainees as it best prepares them for the entry into the real business world. They will be able to find employment in the international labour market, new job opportunities will arise and they will be able to use the skills they have acquired to deal with situations in everyday life. In a world of constant change, trainees will be at an advantage in dealing with and adapting to unforeseen situations.

Aware of their acquired skills and knowledge, they will be able to accept new opportunities with a lesser degree of stress. Their work potential will be much higher than they would have achieved in the absence of transversal skills. The knowledge, skills and competences important and necessary for a multinational work environment are language competences, communication skills in general, presentation skills, readiness to learn, adaptability, digital skills and intercultural competences.

Practice Enterprise supports the comprehensive acquisition of professional knowledge, skills and competences in the field of financial and business literacy and promotes leadership skills and entrepreneurial learning. Multinational PE stresses the readiness and advantage it gives them to feel comfortable to work in multinational companies in the future. The added value of multinational PE activities includes acquiring knowledge and skills through work in a diverse, multicultural and multilingual environment, with trainees of other nationalities and cultures.

The world is rapidly changing and therefore it is important for successful entrepreneurs and managers to share their experiences, especially with individuals in the field of education. The trainer and the trainee all should and have to continuously learn, follow legislation and technological developments and improve in all the competencies already mentioned - transversal skills. The trainer helps the trainee to learn to make decisions and understand different situations and ways of dealing with these. His/her task is to prepare the trainees for different stressful situations and to cope with difficult periods, for example when a trainee's personal situation reduces their possibilities for in-person mobilities due to economic, social or geographical reasons.

Awareness of this role is an essential challenge for the trainer in his/her self-education. Their thinking must be adapted to the rapidly changing context. When a trainer can manage and understand this, then he or she will be able to pass on the necessary, even vital, information to the trainees. This is a positive aspect and adds value for the trainer himself/ herself as it will help them to also stay up to date and get acquainted with new ways of working and teaching.

A big part of it does not only refer to the acquisition of knowledge but most importantly to the changing of the mindset of the trainer - the key element just as for trainees is the openness and willingness to undergo continuous learning and to be adaptable and flexible. A very crucial aspect is also the realisation that one does not need to know everything and trainees and trainees will be more familiar with some topics (e.g. digital skills). A good leader does not have to have all the knowledge but should learn how to delegate tasks and be open to learning from his or her trainees as well.

Transnational PE activities provide trainees with transversal skills in a comprehensive way. This is done in both a conscious and subconscious way. The cross-cultural format enables trainees/trainee development in every dimension. Trainees are able to use the acquired experience, knowledge and skills, apply them to different situations and also to themselves. As a result of these processes, they are able to assess their experiences and knowledge in line with their goals and values.

The trainee but also trainer have to communicate in a foreign language, make decisions, have to be flexible, work as team players, draw conclusions, make decisions, present and of course to be digitally but also financially literate. It is possible to train all of these aspects in a virtual mobility environment. In the ever faster moving, unpredictable and global environment of the 21st century, our communication world is changing fast. The speed of information transfer has increased, distances are shortening, global connectivity is ensured by the use of new technologies and various platforms and all of these processes have been sped up by the recent pandemic.

Many companies have started to work online, which has made it even easier to connect companies across countries. The reality of the way of working in the real business environment is varied - these can range from full remote office, flex-office or in-person. This requires acquiring, training and improving all the aforementioned knowledge, competences and skills so that people can adapt to changing conditions in the future, including the emergence and disappearance of certain professions.

It also gives future employees a larger pool of opportunities for employment and thus the readiness to work remotely across borders. This means that they can also have a bigger say in terms of the set-up (remote, flexi or at the office) they want to work in, this is especially true for some in-demand jobs. This also means that employees are more than ever shaping the way of working and employers have to adapt to this reality if they want to attract talent.

Transversal skills can have a major impact on young people's ability to cope successfully with the turbulence that they may encounter in the transition from school to the world of work and then throughout their working careers. Transversal skills give them a better position on the job market and can thus best leverage their position and find advantages for themselves in their future career.

3.2. Building international cooperation between trainers

National PE Central Offices regularly organise PE trainers' training, from which the Central Offices could select and refer trainers to the international network. At the international level, PEN Worldwide coordinates the network of trainers. PEN has the opportunity to organise online sessions on current topics at the request of member countries. The most important aspect of the international cooperation between trainers is the exchange of best practices and development of multinational activities among them. The trainer connection is crucial to the success of the multinational Practice Enterprise activities.

Erasmus plus programs provide very good opportunities for international links, partnerships and transfer of experience. Schools, trainers and trainees use them extensively. Successful projects have the opportunity to build on each other and constantly improve the activities started through new projects. As part of the Erasmus+ program, online digital platforms have become the primary communication space, which has provided education and individual learning for over two years.

In the new program period, this trend was transformed into the provision of "mixed mobility" in all sectors of education, explicitly in the area of higher education in the form of a new activity. This means that it is important to blend in-person and online activities experience together to be complementary to one another.

The national Central Offices in each country have a list of trainers who are proficient in the subject matter and can pass on their experience, for example, to new trainers or even to those who are already advanced. One option is to train trainers in the form of online seminars organised by the Practice Enterprise Central Office and inviting experienced trainers to act as trainers. This can also be done on an international level where trainers from different countries could be training each other and the active trainer list could be maintained for trainers in the worldwide Practice Enterprise network. In terms of the experience and know-how in the network, there is a lot of pooled potential which is a big benefit of the concept and a big added value to multinational activities.

The Erasmus+ programme seeks to cover the issues of know-how and exchange of experience through projects. Supporting young entrepreneurs through the Erasmus+ programme is an international mobility programme. It helps budding and future entrepreneurs to acquire the skills needed to manage and develop a small business by working with an experienced entrepreneur in another country for one to six months. It increases the know-how of entrepreneurs and promotes the mutual exchange of knowledge and experience across borders. This is directly linked to the Practice Enterprise concept and

can increase and improve connections between Practice Enterprises, trainees and also trainers - a good example of this is the ongoing MULTINA project.

The programme has shown a positive impact in stimulating innovative business practices, the development of new products and services and expansion into new foreign markets. As part of the preparation of new projects, we suggest planning more online international exchanges that can complement regular exchanges within the Erasmus+ program.

3.3. Skill and competency development training

Practice Enterprise worldwide connections are maintained by the national Central Offices around the world and by the international Practice Enterprise Network Coordination Centre of PEN Worldwide. Through this link, trainers and trainees have the opportunity to collaborate on international projects. These support trainee mobility to acquire global competencies, including social-emotional skills and attitudes, and transnational business competencies and experiences which together make up a good foundation of transversal skills. Participation in international PE fairs is another venue for opportunities to acquire these skills and test their knowledge.

Online mobility is also a new trend. Graduates who have undergone training in foreign traineeships have flexible skills and are more applicable to the labour market. By working in multinational Practice Enterprise, they are given the opportunity to acquire global skills and knowledge. The role of the Central Offices should also be to coordinate the training of lecturers to introduce the methodology of working in multinational companies so that trainers know how to use the right methods and forms in the teaching process to build trainees' global knowledge and cognitive skills.

The timetables of the Practice Enterprises in each country must be aligned so that they can communicate with each other online at any time during the Practice Enterprise class. In cooperation with real multinational and international companies, we will prepare possible variants of the work of multinational PE. The basics of how to work in multinational and international PE is that the multinational PE must have the same timetable in all the countries where they operate, so that they can interact online at any time during the PE activities.

Some of the elements to be trained in multinational PE activities are matters such as differing business communication and business etiquettes, understanding of different time zones and of course refining communication with peers from other countries in foreign languages.

In the context of multinational PE, it is important to put emphasis on language competences, digital competences and intercultural competences (respect for cultural differences) in addition to transversal skills. In the international environment, there is an increasing emphasis on cross-cutting, transferable, transversal competences, i.e. competences that are not linked to a specific field of study or profession, but are universally applicable to different professions.

Key competences that are not tied to any particular activity open up the possibility of working in many roles and positions and of successfully coping with changes in working life. The application of these skills and competences contributes to the effective functioning of trainees in the labour market. Trainees who have completed an internship in a multinational company are able to possess not only specific knowledge and skills in their field of study, but also creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial skills in an international environment.

4. Pedagogical recommendations for multinational PE activities

Communication and commercial exchanges between PE partners within a national network is an important part of the daily routines of a PE. In the course of extending these exchanges to other PEs located and operating in other countries through the MULTINA program, all participating trainees will be able to develop and apply new skills such as the use of a foreign language for both written and oral communications as well as familiarising and adapting themselves to a sometimes different business environment and culture. Expanding the activities to multinational ones is especially important as it mirrors the global interconnectedness and the reality of working in an increasingly globalised world.

Below are some types of commercial relationships that can be established through Multinational Practice Enterprise activities, presented with some examples of services given as an illustration followed by a process summary of the approach recommended which will be described more in detail in the next phase of the MULTINA project - in the Toolkit section.

4.1. Commercial services (multinational PE activities)

Some activities of a PE require the services of other PEs geographically located outside the usual national network of PEs especially for services provided abroad. These could be for example in the fields of manufacturing, transportation or warehousing.

Best practices (recommendations & tips)

- a) PE trainers and/or trainees will first start by identifying the key commercial services that their PE may be in need of and that require the services of an international commercial service provider;
- b) Once the needs are identified, they can research potential international partners through their own National Office or the PEN Worldwide website databases;
- c) They will then establish communication by email, phone or video conferencing with these selected possible partners in order to assess their availability, capability and responsiveness;
- d) They will then negotiate the terms of an agreement (pricing, payment terms, delivery, etc.);
- e) They then draft and finally sign a formal contract;

f) Once the order is placed, they will keep track of the logistics handling;

g) Throughout the partnership, they will be monitoring and evaluating the overall performance, whether their needs and expectations are met, and make any and all necessary adjustments to improve it going forward.

4.2. Commercial outsourcing and subcontracting (multinational PE activities)

Some of the PE activities that would normally be performed in-house could also benefit from being outsourced or subcontracted with another multinational PE. These could be for example in the fields of finance, marketing, foreign market outreach, etc.

Outsourcing or subcontracting specific tasks or projects to other multinational PEs not only enhances the educational experience for trainees but also prepares them for the global business landscape. By engaging in this collaborative process they will benefit from cross-cultural experiences that would otherwise not be part of their overall PE learning experience.

In the process of interacting with other multinational PEs, they will be confronted with different cultures, different languages and different work ethics which will help them develop their cross-cultural understanding and communication skills which are essential for success in a globalised world. Also, by establishing new connections with other trainees in multinational PE activities, they will be able to expand their professional networks which in turn can be valuable for future career opportunities and collaborations.

Outsourcing or subcontracting allows PEs to tap into the expertise and resources of other organisations, thereby improving efficiency and leveraging the strengths of each enterprise. In the process, trainees will learn to identify areas where external support can yield the most significant benefits. Collaborating with other multinational PEs on simulated real-world projects will allow trainees to further develop their problem-solving, critical thinking and decision-making skills as they will have to navigate more complex and multifaceted business challenges.

By being exposed to diverse business practices, they will observe and learn from different management styles, methodologies, and strategies in place in other multinational PEs. This exposure will broaden their perspectives and enhance their adaptability in various professional settings. Also, by working with multinational PEs, trainees will gain valuable insights into global market trends, customer preferences, and cultural nuances. This experience will improve their ability to conduct international business and marketing. This prepares them for the collaborative nature of modern workplaces.

Best practices (recommendations & tips)

The Trainees will follow the Best Practices given in 4.1, with special attention given to points d, e, f and g adding there the language required for the service delivery, also expected for other deliverables and the quality supervision thereof.

4.3. Commercial representation (multinational PE activities)

PEs not able to send trainees to in-person Trade Fairs abroad can partner with a PE in a different country or can be represented by their partners within a multinational PE. This would offer the trainees a great opportunity for cross-cultural learning and teaching as well as learning business etiquette with a substantial preparatory work of analysing and passing on one's own company's ethos, values, image and practices to be thus best represented.

Best practices (recommendations & tips)

To encourage this type of activities and services, it would be recommended to have a listing of such companies able to commercially represent other PEs and/or to have multinational PE representatives attend the fairs or events in the respective countries where they are located. There could also be a list of open opportunities directly linked to the Trade Fair where the Trade Fair organisers would act, before the event date, as some kind of matchmaker between different foreign PEs wanting to be represented and local PEs attending the event and which would accept to represent them.

Before the event, several online exchanges will need to take place to hand over all necessary commercial and marketing materials, explain the processes and rehearse sales pitches with the PE which will be acting as a representative.

After the event, the sales report will also require several follow-up exchanges between the two PEs to allow the integration of the performed sales in the ERP system and the sharing of new contacts made during the event. This can also be a great way for the two PEs to build up ongoing collaboration and increase exchanges between one another in the future.

4.4. Multinational events

These international and multinational events are being regularly organised by PEN-Worldwide. All trainees who are a part of Practice Enterprises in the Worldwide Practice Enterprise Network are welcome to participate and train their skills and competencies in an international environment.

→ Enterprise Competitions

These events are organised with a focus on different operational aspects of the Practice Enterprise and its departments at a multinational level. There, trainees are put to the test and evaluated on different skill

sets and competencies especially important for their entry into the real business world such as entrepreneurship, public speaking, teamwork and leadership skills. Some examples of such competitions: sales pitch competitions, business plan or marketing competitions, etc.

→ Team Challenges

This type of event provides an opportunity for trainees to develop team-building, communication and presentation skills as well as to showcase their critical thinking and problem solving capabilities. Participating in multinational Team Challenges offers an excellent networking opportunity with trainees from Practice Enterprises from around the world, with business representatives from mentor companies and with other professionals who serve as judges. They learn how to communicate across different cultures, languages and PE target groups and how to most efficiently collaborate together.

→ Commercial Trading Events

Focused on increasing the volume of international trade between Practice Enterprises, these events include Intensive Trading Events and Practice Enterprise Trade Fairs. Trainees are able to test their sales pitch and negotiation skills and the commercial processes of order processing. They get to experience different languages, cultures and business etiquettes. The interactions teach them soft skills that can readily be put to use in the real world of business.

→ Social Media Events

Interactive and engaging, these events are designed for trainees to test their creative design skills and their knowledge of the different social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn. Within a designated time frame in which the posts or stories are being evaluated (hashtags to be used, entities and stakeholders to be tagged), the assessment criteria usually include the creativity and quality of the design and post itself, the number of likes and shares.

Best practices (recommendations & tips)

- Prior to an event, each PE needs to connect with its national CO to verify its international Practice Enterprise code to avoid last-minute technical challenges for their participation.
- The FAQ page on the PEN Worldwide international events website can help with most questions trainers/trainees might have prior to events. ([FAQ page – PEN Worldwide Events](#)).
- Trainees need to verify the time zone for the event to avoid missing the event.
- All international Practice Enterprise events are regularly shared on the [Worldwide Practice Enterprise Events Calendar](#) and/or are shared by the national Central Offices.
- Make sure that Practice Enterprises read and are aware of the newsletters being sent out by the PEN Worldwide Coordination Centre as that is a great way to stay up-to-date with all the international activities & events.

5. Recognition and accreditation of Multinational PE as a mobility

5.1. Recognition of online and blended mobilities

The Erasmus+ Guide states that all physical mobility activities of learners can be combined with virtual activities (blended format). The specified minimum and maximum durations apply only to the physical mobility component. This means that, at this moment, the Erasmus+ programme in Key Action 1 does not foresee and take into consideration mobilities that are only virtual, except during the pandemic period, due to force majeure.

However, it must be emphasised that the most common approach by the European National Agencies was to allow a postponement of physical mobilities, guaranteeing an extension of the duration of the projects and greater flexibility in covering the exceptional costs incurred to ensure the organisation in mobility safety. This underlines that, within the Erasmus+ programme, the "on site" component of mobility experiences remains a very important prerogative; the "virtual" component is recognized and valued since it is complementary and preparatory to the physical one.

5.2. Skills evaluation and assessment systems

In the Erasmus+ Guide it states that Erasmus+ supports EU tools for transparency and recognition of competences, skills and qualifications, in particular Europass (including the European Digital Credential for Learning), Youthpass, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO), the European Credit Transfer and accumulation System (ECTS) and the European Quality Assurance reference framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

One of the common purposes of these tools is to ensure that competences, skills and qualifications can be recognized and understood more easily, within and across national borders, in all education and training systems and in all the labour market sectors, independently whether they have been acquired through formal education and training channels or through other learning experiences (e. g. work experience, volunteering, online learning).

In Erasmus+ projects, it is recommended to use skills recognition tools such as:

The ECVET System (European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training) allowing the establishment of partnerships and long-term cooperation networks that will be able to carry out projects and initiatives, involving the competent Institutions of the partner Countries for certification of competences, through the phases of:

- Definition of learning units
- Delivery of the training course
- Evaluation of learning outcomes
- Validation and recognition of learning outcomes.

Europass Mobility is a document describing the skills developed during a specific mobility experience. The document may include information on the role, responsibilities, job skills, language skills, digital skills, organisational and managerial skills and communication skills. The sending partner and the hosting organisation (i.e. the one where the mobility takes place) are responsible for filling in the necessary documents for certification.

Youthpass is another document describing the competences acquired, using the classification of the eight key competences for lifelong learning of the 2018 European Council (Literacy competence; Multilingual competence; Maths, science, technology and engineering competence; Digital competence; Personal, social and learning to learn competence; Citizenship; Entrepreneurship; Competence in cultural awareness and expressions).

Once experienced the mobilities, it is also useful if trainees, supported by their trainers/trainers, update their Europass CV with the experience done and acquired/enhanced skills and competences; this will certainly constitute an added value for the entry into the labour market. As a business world task it could be interesting to ask trainees to translate the CV into the English language to apply the language skills acquired and/or enhanced during the mobility and update it from an European/international perspective.

5.3. Accreditation of international mobility experiences

Currently there is Erasmus+ accreditation (VET Mobility Charter) reserved for educational and training Institutions organising mobility projects.

Short-term learner and staff mobility projects are feasible for all organisations, they are accessible also for non-accredited institutions.

Long-term mobilities, on the other hand, mainly concern accredited organisations. Accredited projects for trainee and staff mobility are in fact reserved only for organisations holding an Erasmus accreditation in the field of vocational education and training (VET Mobility Charter). This special funding line allows accredited organisations to receive funding for mobility activities on a regular basis.

As mentioned above, the European Commission encourages a blended mobility approach, to be intended for a phase of virtual mobility abroad to be combined with a phase of in-person mobility which must respect the minimum duration. Only in exceptional cases, the duration of the in-person mobility phase may be shortened or cancelled, and replaced by an extension of the virtual mobility period.

There is therefore no specific accreditation for online mobility, however both phases (virtual and physical) are valid for the purpose of recognizing learning outcomes, also in the form of ECTS credits (European Credit Transfer and accumulation System).

The key issue is what skills can be recognized after an online/blended mobility experience, particularly within a Multinational Practice Enterprise, as emerged from the first online roundtable in the Partners' Countries, the most important skills to be recognized are the social and life skills.

The roundtables with employers and trainers in Italy showed that, while recognizing the importance of technical skills such as an in-depth knowledge of the company products and processes, the distinctive skills are above all the transversal ones, some of which are basic competences (communicating in foreign languages, using digital and web tools) other ones are related to the personal skills (self-confidence, motivation, curiosity, flexibility, teamwork and cooperation, sense of belonging and identity).

They also highlighted the need to share common practices and experiences, which have to be carried out in person whenever possible, and online when not (blended model). A Multinational PE could be an effective tool to develop technical and transversal competencies in a global dimension.

The roundtable in Denmark focused on specific transversal skills as language, motivation, self-confidence, cultural understanding and flexibility, and suggested some online tools to favour their acquisition, such as Language cafe, Informal meetings or Training games and quizzes.

The roundtable by Slovakia and PEN Worldwide focused on other important skills such as Presentation skills, Readiness to react & be available, Digital skills, Testing & trying out new things, Cross-cultural competence emerged. The important aspect to take into consideration is also business etiquette from different countries - influenced by culture overall and the focus on respect for these diverse cultural values.

The roundtable in France underlined the crucial importance of the soft skills, but also highlighted an interesting issue about the language skills: in fact, some trainees originally come from Eastern European countries or Arabic speaking countries, and these multinational activities could make use of their particular skills in the PE, giving them, who are sometimes isolated from the others, an important role within the PE.

It has been highlighted that the most important skills are the soft ones, all the Partners concluded that a Practice Enterprise is an ideal environment for their achievement and development.

A Multinational PE can certainly support to strengthen such skills and, above all, develop the ability to approach one's work globally, internalising the international identity of the company (each branch must have the name of the multinational Practice Enterprise) and belonging to a multicultural community.

As regards the eligible costs for online or virtual mobility activities, during the "virtual period" the participant does not receive any grant (for individual support) but the beneficiary organisation receives the unit cost of organisational support for each participant. Once the period of physical mobility has begun, the participant acquires the right to receive the normal funding.

Therefore, the travel costs, the contribution for individual support and course registration fees are not applicable for virtual activities. On the other hand, online linguistic support must be provided in all cases, as well as the costs for supporting the special needs of one or more people, and the exceptional costs for the purchase or rental of equipment.

Mobility should be an integral part of an internationalisation strategy training path, which also leads to a review of training curricula from an European/international point of view (as already highlighted in this Guide). It might be interesting to accredit VET organisations joining European online platforms such as EPALE and eTwinning. In particular eTwinning allows VET providers to create joint virtual classrooms and carry out projects with other VET providers and other partner organisations; so, it seems to be particularly suitable for a Multinational Practice Enterprise experience.

Country specific context for MULTINA

What are the specific elements for each country's context to take into consideration to implement multinational activities with MULTINA for your target group/ country specific needs?

Denmark

Specific setting & background in the network for internationalisation activities

In the Danish Network trainees have limited options for multinational activities. When the MULTINA project started, the Danish Practice Enterprises did not have much experience working internationally. Now we see more enterprises starting to trade internationally and having contact with enterprises in other countries, the next step will be to have enterprises participate in international activities that have a social component such as online Trade Fairs or similar events. One of the reasons for joining the MULTINA project was the hopes of using it to ignite an interest in working internationally and increasing international activity in the network.

Target Group of Practice Enterprises in Denmark

The main target group are VET trainees who finished their basic VET school education but did not manage to secure an internship with a company as part of their education. Instead they go to a Practice Enterprise where they still apply for internships at companies but otherwise they can complete their education at the Practice Enterprise. This means that the majority of trainees in Danish Practice enterprises are younger than 30 with some exceptions, they often have various challenges that makes it harder for them to get an internship at a real company.

Current internationalisation@home needs & expectations

- To develop the intercultural and technical competencies for the current and future labour market, our trainees need to be allowed to participate online and in a safe environment because many of them have various difficulties.
- Regarding their expectations, they are very low or non-existent but the interest seems to have been ignited and the international activity has been slowly increasing over the past year. We hope that by learning from the consortium and stakeholders in other countries there can be an increase in the interest and demand for internationalisation@home in the Danish network.

France

Specific setting & background in the network for internationalisation activities

Although all French PEs have commercial activities, their main tasks are on the side of administration and accounting rather than being strictly commercial. Commercial activities are mostly happening in a national context and in the French language. French PEs are increasingly opening up to international commerce, towards French-speaking countries (Switzerland, Belgium, Canada) or towards European countries (Germany, Spain, Italy, Denmark...) in the English language, using online PE tools such as which limit communication in foreign languages by automating commercial transactions.

Current internationalisation@home needs & expectations

The French network's expectations would be to find tools or methods to encourage commercial practice and multilingualism. Simple and short-duration activities that motivate trainers and engage learners would be preferred. Commercial competence and bilingualism in mastering administrative skills are widely sought by employers.

Assessment of English language competence and mastery is mainly done through TOEFL and TOEIC. The French network currently does not use any tool to measure commercial competence and mastery.

Target Group of Practice Enterprises in France

Out of about 100 PEs in the French network, about 12% are in schools and the rest are in training organisations for adult job seekers. These latter French PEs welcome job seekers with a low initial level of education (end of the compulsory education level which is set to the end of high school), with numerous social challenges (especially in 2023) such as low income, disability, senior age, migrant public, single-parent with child, youth with disrupted education and family ties, health problems (addiction). These groups are welcomed in adult vocational training centres, both public and private, which offer professional support, training, accreditation for work experience as well as social support (job search techniques, pedagogy of social and citizenship skills, medical-social assistance).

This public mainly uses PEs to train in secretarial and administrative assistant jobs, with the dual objective to take a short and professionalising training (about 500 hours of training over 4 months at the PE centre and 1 month of practical training in a real company) and to gain the certification of the acquired skills, allowing them to find or returning to employment.

French PEs operate with 3 training sessions per school year:

- from September to December with practical training in January
- from January to April with practical training in May
- from May to August with practical training in August, traditionally a month of vacation for the teaching team and the training organisation.

The French PE public and PE Trainers are not very open to international commerce and English language practice.

Current internationalisation@home needs & expectations

- The French network's expectation is to find tools or methods to encourage commercial practice and multilingualism in its PEs. Reactive and rapid tools and procedures, simple and short-duration activities that motivate trainers and engage trainees would be very fitting.
- Finding non-France based PEs that accept communication in French language.
- Generalising the use of automatic translators in PEs in a common way and simplifying them for learners.
- Finding sustainable funding for international activities, particularly for fairs. (Erasmus+?)
- Improving and imposing a bi-annual update of contact data for all PEs (such as email, online store, video conference, telephone...) to improve motivation of trainees and trainers.
- French PEs do not express any specific demand or need for international trade and relations (with a few exceptions - which then appears a bit paradoxical or marginal - particularly when the title, diploma or certification of professional skills sought relates to international trade or foreign languages).

Italy

Specific setting & background in the network for internationalisation activities

In Italy the majority of schools and vocational training centres, which have been carrying out PEs, have relaunched their international activities, and particularly the exchange programmes (Erasmus+) but not necessarily for the same classes which participate in PE.

Some of the PEs within the most active schools/centres also hold conferences and meetings online with foreign PEs, and/or participate in international trade fairs (especially Prague, Vienna and Brussels).

The majority of Italian PEs currently work at national level, and one of the goals for the next years of our network is to increase the interest and the participation of Italian PEs to international activities, maybe starting with the online ones which are easier to take part (like Monthly trade days, the Marketplace, the international certification system and so on).

Target Group of Practice Enterprises in Italy

In Italy (Programma Simulimpresa) we have about 250 PEs a year. About 70% are in Upper Secondary, 25% in Vocational Training Centres, 3% in University and 2% in Lower Secondary.

The PEs which are in the Upper Secondary Schools (especially the ones oriented to International Relationship and Management) and in the University courses are mostly focused on internalisation, and interested in improving their international activities. Only very few of them have a real “policy” (a programme with expected goals, specific teams, evaluation criteria and so on) for internalisation.

Current internationalisation@home needs & expectations

The main needs and expectations are the followings:

- increase trade relations among PEs in different Countries
- improvement of the existing PE platforms that have to be completed to work in a realistic way
- opportunities for international internships in foreign PEs (for individuals)
- opportunities for “school exchanges” to share experiences among PEs (in-person or blended)
- opportunities of international meetings for trainers, aimed to share their experiences
- possibility to visit foreign real enterprises to know their organisation and business experts
- International Trade Fairs should be held in hybrid format, giving a wider date choice (spring is the best time for Italian schools and vocational training centres).

Slovakia

Specific setting & background in the network for internationalisation activities

Many schools organise internships for their trainees, in foreign companies, so that in addition to the language, they also get acquainted with the work ethic and mentality of that country. Slovak Practice Enterprises mainly participate online in other international Practice Enterprise Trade Fairs.

Target Group of Practice Enterprises in Slovakia

PEs are established in 90 per cent of secondary vocational schools in Slovakia. As of 2023, Practice Enterprise is taught in 46 Business Academies, 107 Secondary Schools, 1 Grammar School. In addition, PEs also operate at 3 universities.

Current internationalisation@home needs & expectations

- With the rapid development of technology and AI, at a time when new professions will be created and some will disappear, it is important to communicate and collaborate globally. For this reason, it is important for young people to be internationally oriented during their studies.
- They expect to gain experience for future practice from internationalisation activities. The goal is the acquisition of competences that will ensure a successful start in their future employment.
- Also improvement of foreign language skills and communication, the development of international and intercultural competences, and the acquisition of quality education.
- Decisive factors when choosing an educational path, especially education abroad, is the possibility of good employment and earnings.