Sector Skills Alliance Pilot

Internationalisation Strategy and Action Plan

Index

Acronym List

Abbreviation	Meaning
PoVE-Water	Platform of Vocational Excellence Water
CoVE	Centre of Vocational Excellence
VET	Vocational education and training
EU	European Union
VPET	Vocational and professional education and training
iVET	Initial vocational education and training
cVET	Continuous vocational education and training
R&I	Research & Innovation
PR	Public relations
CPD	Continuous professional development

Introduction

There are growing needs for vocational colleges to prepare students for the disruptive changes to business models that are expected to have a profound impact on the employment landscape in the coming years within the water industry.

Pilot PoVE-Water is a transnational project that draws on existing and emerging vocational competences and skills needs in the water sector, translating them into an approach of vocational excellence. This ensures upward convergence of VET with (EU) knowledge triangles and a strong engagement with the regional economic and social ecosystems. The project intends to create the infrastructure necessary to embed vocational excellence in the water sector in Europe, thus laying the grounds for vocational curriculum development and consequently competence development of VET students.

State of Play

During the Erasmsus + project *Pilot PoVE-Water* (Project n° 612632-EPP-1-NL-EPPKA2-SSA-P) twelve different partners pertaining to VET institutions; the water industry; research centres; higher education; (semi-) governmental institutions and water sector representatives from 5 regions have worked together to pilot an innovative approach to support of growth, competitiveness, and innovation of the water sector. The project served as a testing platform to understand how different players with direct or indirect interest in the water sector can collaborate to ensure a qualified and dynamic workforce. Furthermore, this pilot project was critical in establishing the basis and fundamentals for a scaled-up platform of vocational excellence in Water that extends beyond the project. The aim is that the platform grows organically and is sustainably after the end of the project.

The key outputs of the project include:

1. The establishment of Vocational Excellence Scanning tools that have been used to identify the existing systems of Vocational Excellence of the participating organisations.
2. Setting up of five Centres of Vocational Excellence Water that act as regional 'Skills ecosystems'
3. Deployment of an online Platform of Vocational Excellence Water, making transfer of knowledge, skills, and competences accessible across Europe.
4. Deployment of an upscaling strategy, for the PoVE Water to grow and create a critical mass and sustainable ground for further development.
5. The implementation of a dissemination strategy.

During the PoVE-Water pilot project an impact evaluation study was conducted to measure cooperation among institutions in the water industry, innovative potential of VET schools, competences of VET students and internationalization in the sector. There were three stakeholder groups from all partner countries. The three groups were: teachers and managers from the VET schools and universities; students from VET schools and universities and triple helix (companies, schools, governmental organizations). 10 representatives from every stakeholder from each partner country (United Kingdom, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Czech Republic) evaluated current state of art in their region.

Perception of internationalization on the participants own institution varied significantly among stakeholder groups and among different countries.

The following are some important findings in individual stakeholder groups that will support the strategic vision:

- *Triple helix representatives were asked to assess their international connections. For not at all relevant found the international connections 5% of the respondents, 9% found it slightly relevant, 18% as moderately relevant, 33% as relevant and 18% as very relevant. The results are showing potential for improvement in internationalization of triple helix.*

- *Teachers and school management evaluated the same as the triple helix representatives, namely, international connections of their institutions, the answers were formulated though little bit more directly to evaluate the institutional internationalization strategy: in 17% of the cases it was seen as very good, 42% as good, 19% as fair, 11% as poor, 8% as very poor.*

- *Students were asked how often they have had a lecture given by foreign expert and the answer distribution was follows: 41% answered never, 21% very rarely, 11 % rarely, 21% occasionally and 18% were having often lectures from foreign experts. Students were also asked whether they have visited VET school abroad or are going to in the future. 20% said that they have not visited VET school abroad and they are not going to do it, 54% have not up to now visited, 11% planning to visit, 9% have visited VET school abroad once, 6% have been visiting VET schools often.*

- *Within the VET schools and participating universities only 20% teachers and school managers see their international connections as poor or very poor, thus the internationalization is for 80% percent on fairly good level. This result contrast answers by students, where 41% never had a foreign expert as lecturer at the university and another 32% had rarely or very rarely such experience. 20% of students as mentioned above have never been on VET school abroad and they are not planning to do it, only 15% have visited school abroad.*

Figure 1- Student Responses related to student mobility.
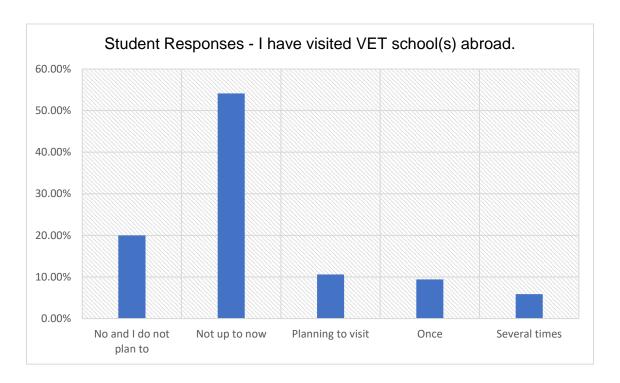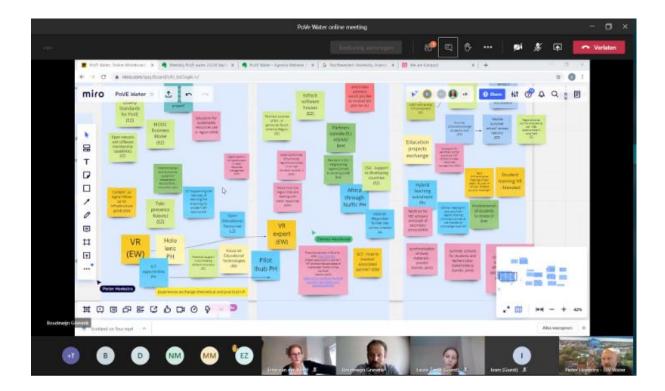
The results clearly demonstrate in the current state of play there is a need for an increased drive in internationalization of water education within the regions under investigation. To this extent a robust strategy needs to be created to create a clearly pathway and support frameworks to increase the interactions on the regional level but most of all on the European level.

The PoVE-Water Internationalization Strategy

This internationalisation strategy and action plan presents the priorities, activities and focus energy that must be adopted to ensure maximum sustainability and uptake of resources upon the pilot PoVE-Water project completion. Furthermore, it ensures that consortium partners are working towards common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes and results.

The PoVE-Water internationalisation strategy is divided into two main sections. The first section identifies where the consortium would like to place itself when it comes to globalization, setting out the goals to ensure viable growth. The second section looks at the deliverables and respective actions that need to take place to ensure that this strategy comes to fruition.

This strategy was drafted in challenging times during which the Covid-19 pandemic has halted any form of international mobility. A conservative approach was taken when determining future mobility actions between the members of the platform. The strategy focuses on sustainable cooperation frameworks, which will nurture further modernisation of VET providers and stakeholders.

Strategic Direction

Focus of the Strategy

This overarching strategy identifies main initiatives, key stakeholders, and some form of flexible timeline. The principal focus of the strategy is to establish sustainable cooperation frameworks, which will nurture further modernisation of VET providers and stakeholders, support mutual learning, facilitate mobility of learners and staff and eventually lead to *de facto* recognition of qualifications. The strategy aims to ensure maximum sustainability and uptake of resources upon project completion.

Goals

The key goals of the strategy are the following

1. To establish sustainable cooperation frameworks with present and future partners within the PoVE-Water.
2. To bridge the skills gap present in the water industry on a regional and European level through a better prepared workforce.
3. To facilitate mobility of learners, educators and water professionals.

Achieving the goals

The three main goals shall be achieved through four fundamental strategic directions which in turn shall be governed by a series of initiatives. The proposed strategic directions namely are:

1. Academic Endeavor and Opportunity.
2. Stakeholder Engagement.
3. Reputation Building & Embedding Internationalization in the Centres of Vocational Excellence.
4. Becoming a globally recognized VPET hub in water related studies.

Strategic Direction 1

Academic Endeavor and Opportunity

The PoVE-Water establishes itself through the strong connections between water professionals, educators and students (iVET and cVET) regionally and across Europe. The fulcrum bringing these stakeholders together lies within strong links between the industry needs and programmes of study. PoVE-Water recognises the need to maintain a strong and constant drive in its academic endeavour in order to offer industry relevant education to its students and to be able to discover and take up the opportunities that present themselves globally.

ID	Initiative	Description
I 1.1	Development of futureproof curricula aligned to job profiles pertaining to the water industry.	- Increase the provision of bespoke programme of studies to cater for the needs of the European water related industries. - Use innovative approaches in the design and delivery of study units. - Allow for flexibility in the delivery of courses. - Introduction of 'hybrid teacher' concept. - Implementing and ensuring adequate and timely Quality Assurance processes for all programmes placed in the international sphere. - Programmes to encourage students to engage themselves with the water industry both locally and abroad.
I 1.2	Strengthening research and innovation in water VET education.	- Establish strong partnerships that contribute to international research that addresses water education, in particular, within the VET domain. - Pilot innovative teaching and learning methodologies as applied to water education and publish findings in academic papers.
I 1.3	Enhanced learning environments through EdTech.	- Looking into integrating disruptive learning technologies to enhance the learning process. - Create a personalized learning approach to ensure that the students' learning trajectory is complemented. - Development, implementation, and evaluation of emerging teaching and learning systems
I 1.4	Erasmus+ and other exchanges	- Harmonize Study and Work Placement mobilities for students, lecturers, and water professionals. - Continuous professional development mobility experiences for lecturers and
I 1.1		

ID	Initiative	Description
		professionals working within the water sector.
		▪ Applying for and engaging in more externally funded programmes, such as Erasmus +, that are in-line with the PoVE consortium's vision and mission.
I 1.5	Online learning platform	▪ Promotion of the PoVE-Water online platform to increase usage and strengthen collaboration between stakeholders in the network.
		▪ Further development of the PoVE-Water online tool.
		▪ Looking into embedding technologies on the online platform to make learning and transfer of knowledge a more immersive experience.
I 1.6	International Summer Schools	▪ Running of co-developed intensive water summer school programmes on specific topics in the field of water and water technology.

Strategic Direction 2

Stakeholder Engagement

An effective stakeholder engagement strategy is vital for the platform of vocational excellence water to thrive. This strategy seeks to address ways on how to communicate with stakeholders effectively to ensure that a solid network is developed in an organic fashion and is maintained in a sustainable way. The key actions will include the continuous analysis of different stakeholders; clarity in the definition and communication of the PoVE Water purpose; and the identification of the best strategies and tools to engage and communicate with each group of stakeholders.

ID	Initiative	Description
I 2.1	Stakeholder outreach.	▪ Establishing strong connections beyond the existing twelve PoVE partnership.
		▪ Connecting ideas or practices developed and adopted by the PoVE to the efforts of other organizations, groups, specific audiences and/or the general public.

		▪ Reaching out to potential new stakeholders for the platform to grow in an organic and sustainable way. ▪ Engage with other European PoVEs to build a knowledge sharing bridge on innovative VET practices.
I 2.2	Effective cooperation with internal and external stakeholders.	▪ Analyse stakeholders to ensure that the right communication channels are in place for them to be adequately informed and consulted. ▪ Setting up agreements, memberships and affiliations directly with key institutions and organisations that can lead to mutual exchange of knowledge, specific insights and of best-practice, for the benefit of parties working within the PoVE. ▪ Embark on joint projects, such as EU funded projects, that can facilitate mutual knowledge and expertise sharing.
I 2.3	Direct resources collaboration	▪ More Direct collaboration through the sharing of resources. ▪ Collaboration will extend to include the sharing of human resources through staff exchanges. ▪ Exchange of tangible physical resources, such as equipment, and organisational resources.

Strategic Direction 3

Reputation Building & Embedding Internationalization in the Centres of Vocational Excellence.

Creating a strong PoVE-Water brand that ties off with the work conducted during the pilot PoVE-Water will enable the consortium to better advocate its mission and vision on the international sphere. The brand will seek to build up a solid reputation to facilitate the promotion of the PoVE in the global context.

ID	Initiative	Description
I 3.1	Learning together through Cultural Diversity.	▪ Tackling local and cross-border water related challenges by sharing lessons learnt within different regions. ▪ Embedding aspects of Cultural Diversity within the cross-border activities as part of the PoVE.
I 3.2	Strengthening the PoVE-Water 's global engagement.	▪ Reaching out and collaborating with other Global networks and organisations with a shared a common interest. ▪ Being a reliable and effective contributor to VPET development by providing global access through technology.
I 3.3	Raising the global profile and reputation	▪ Engaging in activities that lead to global recognition and promoting the progress and growth of the PoVE consortium globally. ▪ Participation in European and international events and conferences. ▪ Sharing of insights and lessons learnt through the pilot PoVE-Water project.
I 3.4	Creating a sustainable PoVE water 'brand' which is strongly marketed.	▪ Create a PoVE brand and in turn a Brading strategy. ▪ Improve on the visual branding image of the PoVE Water across different communication and media channels. ▪ Consolidate and streamline the social media presence. ▪ Promote and make present the PoVE brand in identified untapped international markets.

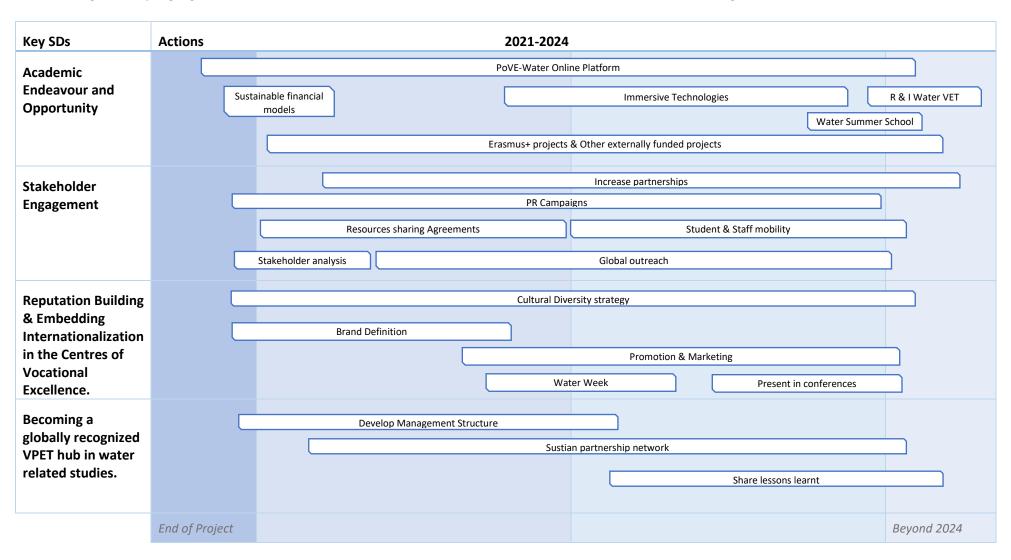| I 3.5	Increasing the student intake in water related programmes of studies.	▪ Use of the Worlds of Technology/ Beta Tech mentality approach, that starts with the motivations of students and leads to concrete material and recruitment campaigns.

Strategic Direction 4

Becoming a globally recognized VPET hub in water related studies.

This strategy component aims to promote the PoVE-Water partnership to become a Global point of reference and excellence for Teaching and Learning in water education.

ID	Initiative	Description
I 4.1	Optimization of PoVE-Water management structures and resources.	▪ Develop the necessary management structures and administrative systems to handle PoVE-Water going global. ▪ Adapt and improve internal systems and processes to ensure maximisation of opportunities to engage internationally with prospective stakeholders.
I 4.2	Identification of potential markets to support and operate within.	▪ Sustain regional CoVEs and European linkages built during the pilot PoVE. ▪ Explore new markets, regions to operate within. ▪ Endorse new working partnerships. ▪ Develop robust processes for evaluating prospective partners and approving agreements, including monitoring of existing partnerships. ▪ Focus on setting up a partnerships' network.
I 4.3	Outreach to attract other international stakeholders.	▪ Engage in effective marketing strategies. ▪ Develop effective agreements with partners that facilitate collaboration. ▪ Online presence and social media.
I 4.4	Engaging successful CoVEs in marketing the concept.	▪ Creating a platform and the necessary tools to promote CoVE success stories and lessons learnt. ▪ Provide PoVE-Water members the tools to endorse the institution through testimonials, events, fairs and representation.

Action Plan

The following roadmap highlights the actions to be taken for the fruition of the PoVE-Water's internationalization strategic vision.

Key SDs	Actions	2021-2024
Academic Endeavour and Opportunity		PoVE-Water Online Platform Sustainable financial models Immersive Technologies R & I Water VET Water Summer School Erasmus+ projects & Other externally funded projects
Stakeholder Engagement		Increase partnerships PR Campaigns Resources sharing Agreements Student & Staff mobility Stakeholder analysis Global outreach
Reputation Building & Embedding Internationalization in the Centres of Vocational Excellence.		Cultural Diversity strategy Brand Definition Promotion & Marketing Water Week Present in conferences
Becoming a globally recognized VPET hub in water related studies.		Develop Management Structure Sustian partnership network Share lessons learnt

End of Project　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*Beyond 2024*

Project Responsibility chart

The following project responsibility chart illustrates the short, medium and longer term activities that will be held after the

Partner Responsibility Matrix legend:
- MA - Major Contributor (Leading role)
- MI - Minor Conrtibor
- IC - Informed &/or Consulted

Partner key: P1 = FC, CIV Water | P2 = PBT | P3 = Vitens | P4 = LHF | P5 = GCC | P6 = OMTK | P7 = RTU | P8 = MIAST | P9 = WSC | P10 = CREA | P11 = MENDELU | P12 = EfVET

PoVE-Water Internationalisation Strategy & Action Plan

Actions / Activities	Aug-21	Sep-21	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Beyond Oct-22	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Leeuwarden Water Week		X														MA	IC		IC	MI	MI	MI	MI			MI	
Water Summer School													X	X	X	MA				MA	MA	MA	MA			MA	
Joint Application 2021 Erasmus+ call on Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE)	X	X	X													MA	MI	MI	MI	MI	MI	MI	MI	MI	MI	MI	MI
International Seminar on Water Education & VET							X									MI	MI	MI	MI	MA	MI	MI	MI	MI	MI	MI	
One-to-one Information Sessions with potential new consortium partners	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	
Case Study Publication - Lessons learnt pilot PoVE Water project			X	X												MA	IC	IC	IC	MA	IC	MA	MA	IC	IC	MA	MA
Information & Exposure Campaign					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				MA	IC	IC	IC	MA	IC	MA	MA	IC	IC	MA	MA
Augement Reality Interactive Experiences								X	X	X	X	X	X			MI				MI	MI	MI	MA			MI	
Development of more blended learning modules on PoVE platform			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	MI				MI	MI	MI	MA			MI	
CPD mobilities of staff			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	CPA	IC
Development of a brand building strategy		X	X	X												MA	IC	IC	IC	IC	IC	IC	IC	IC	IC	IC	MI
Hybrid teacher showcase						X	X									MI				MA	MI	MI	MI			MI	

16