

NEARVET

NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE FOR APPLIED RESEARCH IN VET

education

research

The Nearvet Community of Practices

management

network



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the European Union

Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

The NEARVET consortium comprises the following organisations:



What is a Community of Practice?

A Community of Practice (CoP) is...

- a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfil both individual and group goals
- a group of people who care about the same real-life problems or hot topics, and who on that basis interact regularly to learn together and from each other (Wenger et al., 2002).

Aim of the NEARVET CoPs

The primary aim of the NEARVET transnational and local Communities of Practice was to create a collaborative space for VET professionals to facilitate knowledge exchange, capacity building, problem-solving, and innovation in applied research within VET.

These CoPs served as dynamic space to **facilitate the design and implementation of NEARVET outputs and deliverables**, fostering a sustainable and inclusive learning community for VET professionals EU wide.



Community of Practice (CoP): A Framework for the Future

Key Principles

- Concept-focused, not project-focused.
- Replace traditional “meetings” with co-creation workshops
- An overarching methodology designed to be **flexible and adaptable** to diverse contexts

Characteristics

- Not merely “the target group of the action,” but actively involve the target audience.
- Begin with partner representatives as participants (Practitioners)



Why? Community of Practice (CoP) in NEARVET

Contextual Suitability

According to our partnership, the CoP approach was particularly suitable given the context in which we operated - Applied research in VET:

- A largely fluid and developing field, not yet well-established.
- Knowledge Triangle context: Emphasizing the importance of peer collaboration among VET, research, and businesses.



Who?

Transnational CoP

50 experts/VET practitioners in total

Local CoP

120 VET practitioners - approximately 30 per country cluster (Sweden, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, and Spain) - organized local CoPs, which provided opportunities to focus on local or country-specific issues and held workshops and seminars in national languages.

Regular **interaction between local and transnational CoPs** ensured the exchange of best practices, methodologies, and innovative approaches. Local insights informed global strategies, and vice versa.



Who are the CoP Practitioners - Examples

- NEARVET partners' staff who are involved and becoming experts on the topic
- VET trainers, facilitators...
- VET organizations managers, coordinators...
- VET experts at research and policy level (local and EU wide)
- Company managers and trainers involved in VET
- Some VET students at higher level
- Etc.



Challenges

- Our shift to CoPs captures the **zeitgeist** - **post-Covid**, digital and online participation
- Applying the notion of CoPs in our work is a **mindset challenge**
- Applying the notion of CoPs in our work needs to be done flexibly, carefully and sensibly



Local Communities of Practice

The local Communities of Practice (CoPs) were actively engaged in networking and involved relevant local actors such as VET practitioners, businesses, and research staff to advance applied research within their respective countries. They achieved this by implementing project-specific actions:

- 1 Designing and testing learning resources
- 2 Organizing Applied Research Seminars
- 3 Organizing Action Research Project Contests



Involvement of Stakeholder in the LOCAL COP

Adopting a **concentric circles approach** encouraged active involvement and collaboration among stakeholders at all level:

- **Inner Core:** Focus on developing learning materials.
- **Larger Circle:** Test learning resources and participate in seminars.
- **Outermost Circle:** Engage in contests and broader community initiatives.



Learnings from the use of COPs in NEARVET

1. Enhanced Collaboration Across Sectors

Fostered meaningful dialogue and cooperation among VET practitioners, businesses, and researchers.

Promoted mutual understanding within the Knowledge Triangle framework.

2. Flexibility and Adaptability

The CoP model proved versatile, adapting to the fluid and evolving nature of applied research in VET.

3. Creation of a Non-Judgmental and Horizontal Space

The CoPs provided a safe, non-judgmental environment where participants could freely exchange ideas and engage in constructive dialogue.

Encouraged horizontal and transversal interaction, breaking down hierarchical barriers and fostering peer-to-peer collaboration.

Enabled discussions on sensitive or complex topics that might have been challenging in traditional, formalized settings.



Thank you



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