

EXPLANATORY NOTE:

PROMOTING PARTICIPATORY AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING IN VET



Explanatory Note: Promoting participatory and inclusive learning in VET*

Skills for Jobs (S4J) project supports participatory and inclusive learning. The project vision is to make blended learning mainstream to all in VET partner providers, with students and teachers making use of technology in their everyday working. S4J project follows a systemic and gradual approach to introducing ICT in education taking into account vocational skills development (VSD) delivery at the micro level. The project aims at changing how teaching & learning will be delivered, by introducing step by step solutions and coaching based on modern teaching approaches by making use of ICT (mobile devices, social media).

Pedagogical design of S4J has proven to be effective. Blended learning is an approach to learning that combines more traditional classroom teaching (face-to-face) and digital (online) learning tools. Some common approaches implemented in VE schools with the support of the project are the *rotation model* which allows students to rotate through stations on a fixed schedule, where at least one of the stations is an online learning station and *flipped classroom model* which utilises technology in order to maximise the effectiveness of valuable face to face time in the classroom. In a flipped classroom model, students are encouraged to access digital learning materials via MesoVET platform during their own time. Resources such as digital learning materials, videos, recordings, and articles would be provided to transfer the main bulk of the necessary knowledge from teacher to student before each class. In addition to improving engagement and attainment, introducing blended learning can also open new learning opportunities and enables teachers to engage with students in new and exciting ways.

S4J has invested in enabling infrastructure in terms of environments to support learning (blended learning classes, labs, infotheque, training firm) making best use of common learning spaces and providing accessibility to persons with diverse abilities. The majority of teachers from partner schools now have access to laptops in support of their current work activity (preparatory and teaching). Aiming the sustainability of investments, a detailed audit has been performed while coaching on financial management and preparing investment plans has been provided. *A new model was piloted in the Economic School of Tirana, where few classrooms were equipped with fixed stations, one PC and a smart TV. The model proved successful as it boosted the use of MesoVET for teachers while lowering the costs of investments in infrastructure. We replicated the model in 5 more VET partner schools. The investments need to be followed by action plans and coaching to harvest results.*

MesoVET, the digital learning platform introduced by S4J since 2018 has played a key role in supporting interactive and online learning of all students. Developing an uploading digital learning material in Mesovet has helped to overcome the **challenge** of lack of printed textbooks, illustrations especially in practical theory subjects. The digital materials available in MesoVET can be also downloaded by teachers and used as printouts for the students with no access to MesoVET due to limited internet connection or lack of adequate devices. The use of digital learning platforms such as MesoVET is also a great opportunity for **disadvantaged youth**, who do not have access to ICT or devices (approximately 1 of 20 students do not have access to a smartphone and 1 of 10 students do not have a stable or have no internet connection). Disadvantaged youth can have access to ICT through peers and/or in common spaces in their school, such as infotheque and/or IT labs. The exposure of disadvantaged youth to ICT through peers and common spaces is very beneficial for them as they learn how to use technology boosting their digital skills which will serve them later in life to access the labor market.

e-VET@Albania 2030 - *the Roadmap to ICT-supported modernization of Albanian VET was developed based on a bottom-up approach relaying on good practices and challenges experienced by selected VET providers and contextualised to the system level to further develop a modular approach with digital solutions that can fit different stages and readiness level.*

The lack of ICT infrastructure and the limited digital skills, both for teachers and students, are one of challenges in terms of ensuring the effectiveness of digital learning materials and learning process overall. **The design of MesoVET platform and S4J pedagogical approaches** take into account that there is a minority of students that do not have digital access nor digital skills. The project does so:

- **By using a rich variety of (non-) digital media** such as hard copies of the digital learning material. Teachers could print the digital learning material from the platform and distribute copies of it to the students.
- **By providing different forms of independent and supported access** to MesoVET such as:
 - Peer-assignments for pairs of students
 - Access to computer rooms with coaches
 - Organize the work in groups, where at least one member has an ICT device and better digital skills.
- **By implementing offline features for MesoVET app** for students with smartphones but with limited or no internet access.
 - *The upgraded version of MesoVET and the development of a dedicated App will allow students and teachers alike to use the majority of the platform features and all digital learning materials in an off line modality and through smartphones.* Students can read materials, complete assessment, use the forum etc.
- **Introducing and coaching** students to the effective use of devices and different internet sources (peer learning, coaching support)
- **Coaching teachers to apply blended learning and make use of open education resources**
 - *Step by step coaching of teachers in practice on how to implement different models of Blended Learning.*
 - *Practical guideline for teachers and school management on how to make use of available infrastructure to implement blended learning*
 - *Short course on open education resources made available to all teachers*