"Intendenza Scolastica per le scuole in lingua Italiana" (Italian-language School Superintendency) of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, which deals with the Italian-language schools in the region.

## 2. The comparative analysis

After this overview of the underlying features of the SWORD project, the next step is a comparative analysis of the experiences acquired in this field by the partner countries and regions/provinces.

This has led to the production of the first report of the SWORD project - called Intellectual Output 1 - developed according to the objectives outlined and shared at project design stage.

The comparative analysis is a useful tool for defining the **"reference background" against which the subsequent stages of the project will be developed,** within which the actions for achieving an (even transnationally) applicable integrated approach to work-based learning will be modelled and tested.

The report is based on the comparative analysis of the documents (regional reports) developed by the project partners that describe, according to a common framework, the single VET systems and school-to-work transition processes, including any forms of duality and alternance deemed useful for further developing the project (see Chapter 3).

The analysis came up against the difficulty of obtaining comparable evidence due to the presence of differently organised educational systems and different legislative frameworks and regulations, that cannot be compared in full.

Each system we analysed has its own specific "coupling/mix" of some characteristic elements taken from the dual system which have been blended with the existing education and training system. This practice, which appears at first glance reductive - given the complexity of the consolidated dual system, is instead probably the only way to gradually implement the dual system in different local contexts (as pointed out by the conclusions of the work of Prof. Dr. Dieter Euler 2013[1]).

Despite the substantial differences between the country cases, our comparative analysis showed that:

- in countries where the dual model has not been developed yet, the education and training system has paid little attention to the school-to-work transition, or has not yet produced adequate results;
- SWORD starts from the consideration that even in countries with a well established dual system, there are critical issues concerning in particular in the relationship between the VET systems and processes regarding work-related interaction;
- one of the most critical issues in countries with an established dual system concerns the role of vocational training schools, in relation to the preparation and management of the school-to-work transition (e.g. transferable vocational education and relevant social skill development as part of an Individualized Education Plan);
- a further critical element is the involvement of schools and training bodies in the transition activities (to avoid the risk of losing the balance between educational purpose and the needs expressed by companies or their intermediary bodies;

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[1] Prof. Dr. Dieter Euler, *Germany's dual vocational training system: a model for other countries*? A study commissioned by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh, 2013

the training role of enterprises as well as their responsibility for in-company training, is a source of tension both in countries with a strong tradition of dual training as well as in countries where the introduction of the dual system is in a preparatory phase. The dual vocational training system requires the willingness of companies to host and train young people on a contractual basis: this is one of the "building blocks" of the entire model and perhaps also its most delicate corner stone. In many SWORD country reports we can clearly see that companies cooperate in apprenticeship schemes only if they perceive a clear economic advantage;

in all systems we examined the integration of theory and practice and "on-site education" is considered the key for a transferable vocational education. It is increasingly common for school-based programs to include periods of practical training in companies or at sites that serve multiple companies (in accordance with the "dual principle" of combining theory and practice). From an educational point of view, the ultimate problem to solve concerns the way in which the integration of theory and practice can be realized within schools. The question is how to provide students with transferable vocational education and relevant social skills already in the school curriculum. This question probably explains the increasing relevance of Worked Based Learning – WBL. WBL is attracting more and more interest and is creating high expectations. This is why we decided to treat this topic separately in a dedicated chapter (see Chapter 4);

many vocational training systems are "mixed systems" that include a certain percentages of dual training variables (training body vs. company) and school-based learning (e.g. schools vs. company);

the dual system has good traditions even outside the borders of Germany. Since 1955 the dual system is one of the two channels of the vocational training system of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, an instrument created by the post-war reconstruction and with youth employment parameters and acquired skills that are in line with the German ones;

apprenticeship in Italy and Germany do present some similarities but are characterized by important differences: Germany knows only one kind of apprenticeship: an alternating learning situation vocational school / work - while in Italy there are currently three types for apprenticeship schemes: (a) apprenticeship for the qualification and the professional diploma, to acquire a vocational qualification diploma recognized at national level (adolescents of 16 and 18 years without a professional qualification), the upper secondary school diploma and the certification of upper technical specialization; (b) a professional apprenticeship to obtain a labour market qualification (recognized by collective agreement and enterprises) - the contract can be signed by employers of all productive sectors, including professional organizations and Trade Unions. People involved are between 18 and 29 years old; (c) apprenticeship for higher education and research, a contract addressed to people aged between 18 and 29 years with a degree who want acquire a diploma released by the education system, at secondary or tertiary level, or a doctorate degree;

while in well established dual systems within a strong economy, companies tend to offer an apprenticeship only to students who have completed their schooling with excellent results, in countries like Italy apprenticeship is intended as a tool to fight school drop-out (a long-standing problem) aiming at a target group that is diametrically opposed to the German one.

## 3.   Description of the regional contexts

In the following chapters there is a detailed presentation of the characteristic elements of the transition pathways from vocational school / training to work in the different regional contexts. This analysis is based on regional dossiers, edited by each partner.

This chapter provides a synoptic overview of the main elements that have resulted from the analysis. The aim was to find out what dual system elements have a potential for being transferred to different local contexts (in our case to the four geographical areas that are developing their own approach to the dual model: Autonomous Province of Bozen, Autonomous Province of Trento, Autonomous Province of FVG and Poland), as well as the critical factors and possible improvements that can elevate the quality of achievable results.

To better and more uniformly understand how the different dual approaches are structured in each region, we have highlighted the following:

the legislative and institutional background (chapter 3.1);

the socio-economic situation and the labour market (chapter 3.2);

the connection between the dual system and professional schools: an overview by region (chapter 3.3);

the monitoring and assessment system (chapter 3.4);

the opportunities for inclusion (chapter 3.5);

the role of the social partners (chapter 3.6);

the competences of trainers and teachers (chapter 3.7);

the limits, opportunities and challenges (chapter 3.8).