WP3 Milestone 9

Workplace Innovation for SMEs Template Best Practices

June 2025

Satakunta Educational Federation (Sataedu), PP7

Compiled by Laura Poikkeus

Contents

Introduction

WIN4SMEs is a European development initiative that brings together vocational education providers, higher education institutions, and business support organizations to strengthen workplace innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The project builds a broad learning network that merges research, practical skills, and business development expertise to elevate workplace innovation across Europe.

SMEs make up 99% of all businesses in the EU and provide around 70% of all jobs. However, they face increasing pressure from technological change, globalization, and demographic shifts. WIN4SMEs respond to these challenges by enhancing collaboration between education and industry, fostering skills development, entrepreneurship, and innovation rooted in real workplace needs.

At the heart of the project is Workplace Innovation (WPI) – a concept that integrates human resource management, inclusive practices, process development, and employee well-being to create smarter, more adaptive organizations. With 20 partners from 9 countries, WIN4SMEs is establishing Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) in 7 countries. (WIN4SMEs, 2025)

The project directly addresses key challenges:

- Shortage of skilled workers and young entrepreneurs

- Low participation in vocational education and training (VET)

- Skills mismatch and misalignment between training and SME needs

- Weak collaboration between universities and SMEs

- Limited internationalization of SMEs and VET providers

  (Regional and International Education Partnerships, 2025, Appendix I)

The goal is to build a more innovative, sustainable, and competitive future for European SMEs by embedding a workplace culture that values collaboration, adaptability, and continuous learning.

The aim of this task was to identify, analyze, and compile a collection of ten transferable best practices that can be implemented by SMEs across different European countries. In the long term, the overarching objective is to promote workplace innovation at an international level by adopting, adapting, and disseminating proven, high-impact practices. Through this process, SMEs will be equipped with practical tools, insights, and support to effectively implement these innovations within their own organizational contexts.

The outcomes of this work package are pivotal to the overall success of the project. The selected best practices will be piloted in real business environments, serving as the foundation for the development of tailored training materials and targeted workshops. These activities will further enable knowledge transfer and capacity building, strengthening the innovative potential and competitiveness of SMEs throughout the participating regions.

This document describes the process used to identify and select the best practices, covering the key phases of collection, evaluation, and final selection. In the end of the document the 13 Best Practices are presented.

Methodology and definition of workplace innovation

The primary objective of Work Package 3, Activity 1 (WP3.1) was to collect, analyze, and prepare ten to fifteen best practices that can be transferred to SMEs across different countries. The long-term goal is to foster workplace innovation on an international scale by adopting, enhancing, and disseminating proven practices. SMEs will also receive support and guidance to successfully implement these practices.

A variety of methods were used to carry out this task, including surveys, interviews, evaluations, and workshops. The following section outlines the WP3.1 process in detail.

The concept of Workplace Innovation (WPI) is broad and multidimensional. The project intentionally avoided a narrow definition to encourage creativity. The following definitions were used during the project:

- **Academic Definition**: Workplace innovation refers to the implementation of new and combined interventions in work processes, organizational structures, and practices, aimed at improving organizational performance, enhancing employee engagement and well-being, and fostering adaptability and innovation within the organization.

- **Practical Definition**: In SMEs, workplace innovation refers to non-technological approaches that aim to enhance organizational performance and improve the quality of working life through changes in work organization, human resources management, and employee involvement.

Here are some examples of workplace innovation

Photo1. Examples of workplace innovation (WIN4SMEs 2nd Online Workshop, 2025)

Best practices selection process

The elaboration and selection of the best practices followed a structured four-step process:

STEP 1: Understanding Workplace Innovation, preliminary data collection

- **Objective**: To understand how each partner defines workplace innovation and to create a well-designed survey form for collecting best practices.

- **Method**: A Word document was created by CoVE Finland and sent to all partners via email, with a request for each CoVE to submit one consolidated response. The completed forms were collected and are included as Appendix 1.

- **Deadline**: 30th of November 2024

By the end of the submission period, nine responses on workplace innovation had been received. Each CoVE completed the Word document, offering insights into their national and organizational perspectives on workplace innovation. Based on these contributions, a refined survey form was developed to facilitate the collection of best practices.

STEP 2: Collection of Best Practices

- **Objective**: To collect four Best Practices related to workplace innovation from each partner.

- **Method**: Data was collected using an E-form, and the results were compiled into an Excel template. Both documents are included as Appendix 2 and 3.

- **Deadline**: 9th April 2025

All partners submitted their entries via the E-form. By the deadline, a total of 78 best practices had been collected. Visual summaries and graphics of the results were created. Here are three bar charts based on the partners' responses.

Country

Absolute distribution of the responses
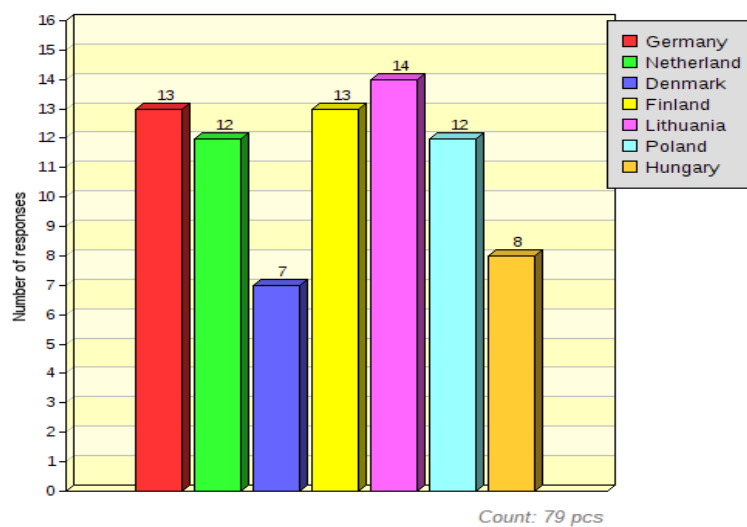
Bar Charts 1. Number of Best Practices per country

Partner reporting the case

Absolute distribution of the responses
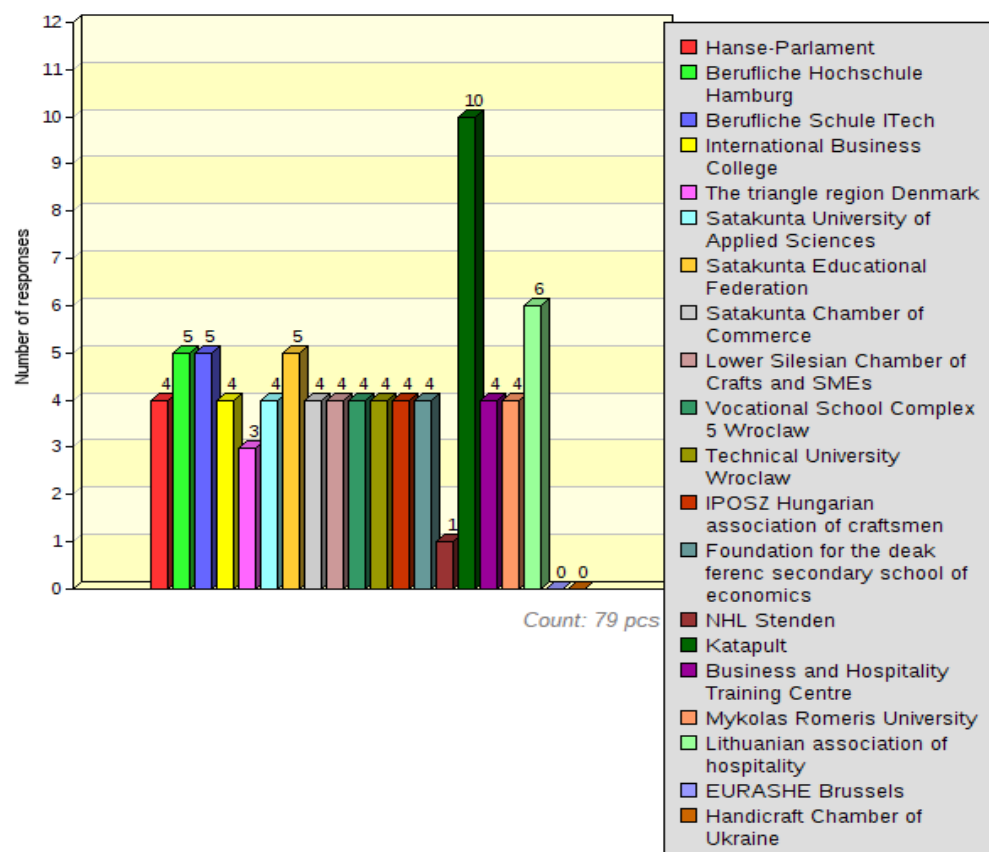
Bar Charts 2. Number of best Practices per partner

Category

Absolute distribution of the responses
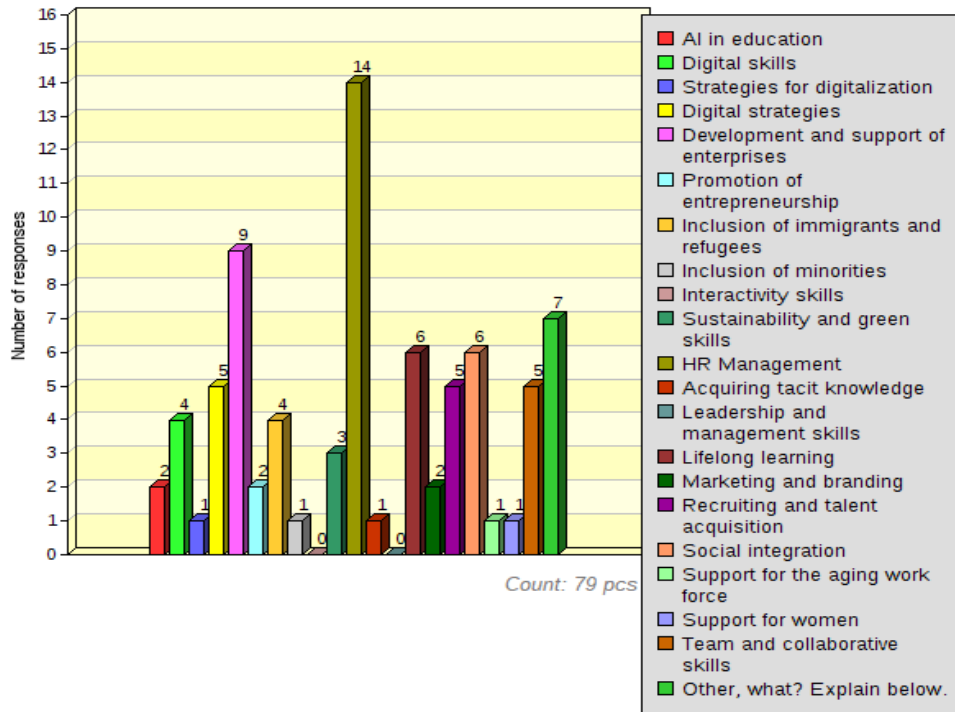
Bar Charts 3: Number of best practice categories

STEP 3: Pre evaluation

- **Objective:** To select 20–30 best practices for final evaluation at the project meeting in Kolding.

- **Method:** A pre-evaluation was conducted by partners PP6, PP7, and PP8 (CoVE Finland). Each partner independently reviewed all submissions and selected 20 practices based on agreed evaluation criteria. The group then convened to jointly select the top 25 practices. The evaluation table is attached as an appendix 4.

- **Deadline:** 24th April 2025

The submitted best practices varied significantly in both content and format, indicating that the project partners did not share a common understanding of the concept of workplace innovation. Furthermore, some of the questionnaire responses were difficult to interpret due to their ambiguity.

As a result, the originally planned numerical scoring matrix could not be applied. Instead, a qualitative and holistic content-based evaluation approach was adopted. This assessment was carried out in close collaboration with the Finnish COVE partners (PP6, PP7, and PP8). Each practice was reviewed jointly, and based on pre-agreed evaluation criteria, the 25 most impactful and relevant practices were selected.

The selection of the 25 most promising best practices was guided by a set of comprehensive evaluation criteria. These criteria ensured that the selected practices were not only innovative and

impactful but also transferable across different organizational and national contexts. The criteria were as follows:

- **Clarity and Concreteness of the Description**
  Is the description sufficient to clearly convey the core idea and value of the practice? Clear and concrete descriptions enabled meaningful comparison and impact assessment.

- **Uniqueness and Innovativeness**
  How unique and innovative is the case? Particular value was given to novel or rarely seen solutions that contribute fresh perspectives to current discussions.

- **Transferability**
  Practices were selected based on their potential to be applied in other organizations and countries. High transferability was essential to ensure broad applicability and scalability.

- **Enhancing Organizational Performance**
  The selected solutions had to contribute to improved efficiency, quality, or competence development within the organization.

- **Promoting Employee Well-being and Engagement**
  Practices that strengthened employee participation, motivation, and job satisfaction were prioritized. The human-centered aspect of innovation was considered a critical success factor.

- **Balanced Representation Across Partner Countries**
  Efforts were made to ensure fair representation of practices from different countries and sectors, reflecting the diversity of the partnership.

- **Variety and Topical Relevance of the Practices**
  The final selection aimed to showcase a diverse range of practices across various themes such as leadership, skills development, and diversity. Current challenges, such as the nursing shortage were also taken into account.

STEP 4: Final selection workshop in Kolding

- **Objective**: To select the final 10–15 best practices.
- **Method**: A workshop was held during the project meeting in Kolding.
  The voting e-form is attached as Appendix 5, and the voting results are attached as Appendix 6.
- **Date**: 6th May 2025
- **Duration**: 2 hours

All partners were informed in advance and asked to review the shortlisted best practices. The 25 selected best practices were invited to prepare a short presentation (30-second elevator pitch) for the workshop in Kolding.

Workshop:

➢ **Introduction**: PP7 presented the selection process, evaluation criteria and the workshop methodology. This took about 15 minutes.

➢ **Pitch Session**: Each shortlisted practice gave a 30-second pitch. These were pre-submitted and compiled by Hanse Parlament to ensure smooth transitions. The duration of the session was 50 minutes.

➢ **Group Review**: Participants had 30 minutes to review the practices using a shared Excel file.

➢ **Voting**: Each partner voted for their top 5 practices via an E-form. Voting was open for 15 minutes.

➢ **Results**: Thirteen best practices received at least three votes and were selected for further development and piloting.

Following the voting results, PP7 requested more detailed information on the selected Best Practices

The selected 13 Best Practices

AEC Hackathon session

Reporting partner: Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Poland

Brief description:
A hackathon is a short-term event where programmers and other IT professionals gather to solve a problem together. The word hackathon comes from a combination of the English words 'hacking' and 'marathon'. The AEC Hackathon Wrocław Edition was a three-day innovation event uniting professionals from architecture, engineering, construction, and IT. Its goal was to co-create digital solutions to real-world challenges in the built environment.

Key Benefits:

• Accelerate Innovation through rapid prototyping using AI, BIM, IoT, and other tools.

• Foster Interdisciplinary Collaboration by forming diverse, cross-functional teams.

• Promote Creativity in a supportive, experimental setting.

• Support Skill Development via hands-on learning and mentoring.

• Strengthen Industry-Academia Links through active participation of students and researchers.

• Enable Talent Discovery by connecting companies with emerging professionals.

• Advance Sustainability with projects focused on energy efficiency and waste reduction.

Expected Outcomes:

- 5–10 functional prototypes addressing AEC challenges.

- Enhanced digital skills and awareness of emerging technologies.

- Increased engagement, networking, and talent recruitment opportunities.

Impact Measurement:

- Participation metrics (diversity, team formation, submissions).

- Engagement in workshops and mentoring.

- Feedback from participants and stakeholders.

- Skill growth (pre/post assessments).

- Innovation output and real-world potential.

- Long-term project development and collaboration.

Implementation steps:

1. Preparation (6–8 months): Define goals, secure partners, launch outreach.

2. Organization (5–2 months): Recruit mentors, finalize logistics, share briefs.

3. Execution (Event Days): Kickoff, team formation, mentoring, prototype development.

4. Post-Event: Present results, share outcomes, support further development.

Challenges:

Logistics, technical access, team diversity, time constraints, and stakeholder coordination were managed through proactive planning and collaboration.

Conditions for transfer:

The hackathon model is adaptable across sectors (e.g., healthcare, manufacturing, education) with success depending on strong academia-industry collaboration, relevant challenges, and a flexible format.

More information:

AEC Hackathon Wrocław edition website: *https://hack.creoox.com*

The AEC Hackathon community: *https://hackaec.com/*

tomasz.nowobilski@pwr.edu.pl

Additional information about this Best Practice is available in the attached appendix 7.

AI-Supported knowledge transfer and learning management

Reporting partner: ITECH, Germany

This innovation focuses on AI-assisted learning and knowledge retention within companies. It helps prevent the loss of critical expertise when subject matter experts retire by recording and analyzing expert interviews. The system automatically generates tailored learning modules, especially useful for onboarding new employees.

Key Benefits:

- Significant time savings through AI-powered processing of expert knowledge
- On-demand, flexible creation of learning content for diverse target groups

Implementation Steps:

- Careful planning and execution of expert interviews
- Defining needs and processes with the support of Platform3L

Conditions for transfer:

- Access to Platform3L services and tools
- Commitment to thorough preparation of expert content

Challenges:

- Expert interviews must be well-prepared to ensure quality and relevance

Example of Use:
Applied successfully in a construction company covering civil engineering and track construction.

More information:
Patrick Krüger – patrick.krueger@falkenhahn.de
Jan Stöcker – jan.stoecker@falkenhahn.de
Jannik Jung – jannik.jung@falkenhahn.de

- Website: Platform3L
- Company: Falkenhahn AG
- Gabriele Riedmann de Trinidad – gabriele.riedmanndetrinidad@platform3l.com

Anti-stress management training

Reporting partner: Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

Brief Description:

The university organizes regular online training sessions focused on stress reduction and wellbeing. Topics include stress and time management, supporting students with special needs, and updates on internal IT tools (e.g. anti-plagiarism systems, Moodle updates, library resource use). These sessions aim to ensure staff feel confident using new systems and managing their workload. Additional support includes access to psychological consultations and a university chapel for personal reflection.

Key Benefits:

- Increase awareness of university systems and support services
- Improved knowledge of modern stress management techniques
- Assurance that help is available when needed

Implementation Steps:

- Staff receive regular invitations to participate in online sessions, with recordings available afterward
- The main challenge is creating high-quality, engaging content that fits into busy schedules

Conditions for transfer:

- A dedicated content development team
- A team focused on engaging delivery methods
- An organizational culture that supports open communication and continuous learning

Challenges:

- Low participation due to time constraints or limited interest

Example of use:
A lecture titled *"Psychological Crisis and Suicide Risk: Understand – Recognize – Act"* was offered both in-person and online. It covered how to identify and respond to signs of psychological crisis

and suicide risk. The session was led by an experienced psychologist and psychotherapist, Ivona Suchodolska-Miškinė.

Note: Training materials and recordings are available internally for university staff only.

More information:

Psychological Counseling Department

Community Welfare Center

Mykolas Romeris University

Ateities g. 20, Vilnius I LT08303

pks@mruni.eu

Additional information about this Best Practice is available in the attached appendix 8.

Buurtzorg

Reporting partner: Katapult, Netherlands

Organisation: Buurtzorg

Brief Description:

Buurtzorg is a Dutch homecare organization founded in 2006 that revolutionized community nursing by introducing self-managed teams of nurses. Instead of working under a traditional hierarchical structure, small autonomous teams (6-12 nurses) provide holistic care to clients, focusing on promoting independence and reducing unnecessary care.

Buurtzorg's model of care: The Buurtzorg onion model starts from the client perspective and works outwards to assemble solutions that bring independence and improved quality of life.

1. Self-managing client

2. Informal networks

3. Buurtzorg team

4. Formal networks
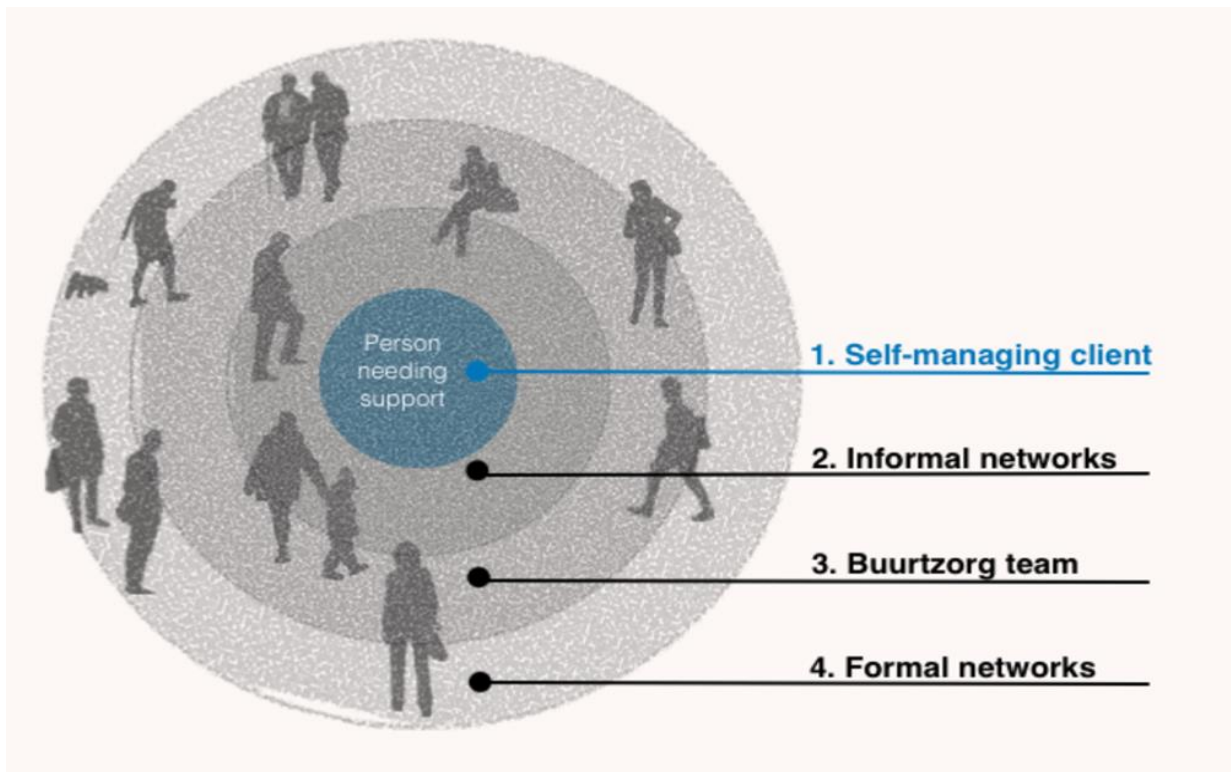
Key Benefits

- Enhanced patient satisfaction and health outcomes through personalized, holistic care.
- Increased nurse autonomy and job satisfaction.
- Lower administrative burden and operational costs.
- Quicker patient recovery and reduced need for long-term care.
- International recognition as a benchmark for efficient, human-centered healthcare.

Implementation Steps

- Establish small, self-managing care teams.
- Provide training in autonomous work, coaching, and holistic care planning.
- Flatten organizational hierarchy, centralizing only essential functions.
- Utilize digital platforms (e.g., BuurtzorgWeb) for coordination and communication.
- Build strong partnerships with local healthcare providers and communities.

Conditions for Transfer:

- Willingness to shift from hierarchical to decentralized organizational culture.
- Availability of qualified nurses capable of working autonomously.
- Adaptation to local healthcare regulations and insurance systems.
- Investment in training and support for self-management principles.
- Basic digital infrastructure for coordination and reporting.

Challenges:

- Resistance from traditional management structures and stakeholders.
- Difficulty in scaling the model while preserving autonomy.
- Adapting the model to different healthcare financing systems.
- Ensuring consistent quality and accountability without traditional oversight

Exemple of use:

In Sweden, Buurtzorg partnered with local organizations to implement its model in Stockholm. Pilot teams showed increased patient satisfaction and reduced care costs, inspiring broader adoption. Similar success stories exist in Germany, the UK, and the US, where the model has been adapted to local needs. International partners - Buurtzorg International

More Information:

Official website: https://www.buurtzorg.com
International partners - Buurtzorg International
The Buurtzorg Model - Buurtzorg International

info@buurtzorg.org

Improving office layout to support communication and coordination in teams

Reporting partner: Berufliche Hochschule Hamburg (BHH), Germany

Brief Description:
This best practice is based on a case study examining how office design affects internal communication and coordination in SMEs. It focuses on implementing a multifunctional room concept to enhance teamwork.

Key Benefits:

- Improved team productivity through better working conditions

- Enhanced internal communication and collaboration

- Increased mutual support among employees

Implementation Steps:

1. Assess team needs for the workspace

2. Divide office space based on functional requirements

3. Select ergonomic and flexible furniture (e.g., height-adjustable desks, mobile smartboards)

4. Furnish each area according to its function

5. Test the setup and gather feedback

6. Optimize layout based on feedback

Conditions for transfer:

- Budget for ergonomic and multifunctional furniture

- Time and staff to carry out the six steps

- A company culture open to experimentation and continuous improvement

Challenges:

- Coordination issues when workstations are limited

- Risk of reduced communication due to remote work

- Need for a designated coordinator to manage workstation use and promote the concept

Example of use:
The concept was successfully implemented and evaluated in a BHH partner company as part of a student project. Due to confidentiality agreements, specific names are not disclosed.

More information:

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Additional information about this Best Practice is available in the attached appendix 9.

Introduction of trust-based working time

Reporting partner: Berufliche Hochschule Hamburg (BHH), Germany

Brief description:
This best practice focuses on the gradual implementation of trust-based working time in SMEs. In this model, employees have the autonomy to decide when and how long they work, as long as agreed results are achieved. The approach supports work-life balance, increases employee satisfaction, and shifts the focus from time control to trust and responsibility.

Key Benefits:

- Improved employee satisfaction and retention

- Enhanced work-life balance and productivity

- Greater flexibility in aligning work with personal needs

- Strengthened trust between employees and management

Implementation Steps:

1. Assessment & Goal Setting – Analyze current workflows and define clear objectives.

2. Stakeholder Engagement – Involve managers and employees early to build trust.

3. Framework Definition – Set guidelines (e.g. core hours, availability) and target agreements.

4. Pilot Phase – Test in selected teams, gather feedback, and adjust.

5. Training & Change Management – Provide training and support for new work practices.

6. Monitoring & Optimization – Use KPIs and feedback to refine the model.

Conditions for transfer:

- A business environment that allows flexible service delivery

- Investment in IT infrastructure and communication tools

Challenges:

- Cultural shift from control to trust

- Need for structured change management and training

- Ensuring performance and wellbeing through clear goals and regular check-ins

Example of use:
The model was successfully piloted in a BHH partner company and evaluated through a student project. Due to confidentiality agreements, specific names are not disclosed.

More information:

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Additional information about this Best Practice is available in the attached appendix 10.

Language Buddies at Work

Reporting partner: Katapult, Netherland

1. **Brief description:**
    "Language Buddies at Work" is a workplace language support program that pairs non-native speakers with Dutch-speaking colleagues for one hour of weekly language practice. The goal is to improve communication, foster inclusion, and support onboarding. Practicing language in a real work context helps newcomers understand tasks, safety instructions, and workplace culture more quickly. The program benefits both employees and employers by reducing turnover, improving productivity, and strengthening team cohesion. Over 45 companies in the Netherlands, from SMEs to multinationals, have adopted this approach.

    The process steps of Language Buddies at Work:
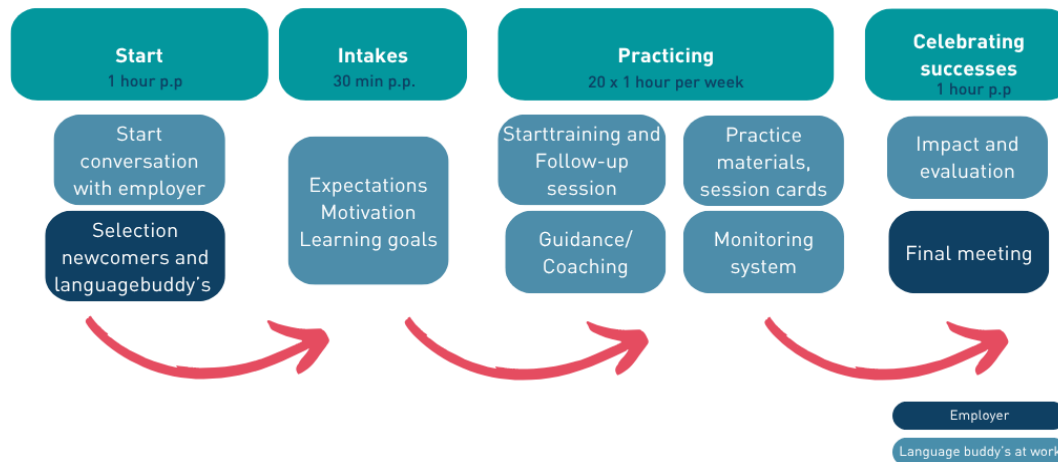
2. Key Benefits

-   Faster onboarding: New employees understand their roles and safety protocols more quickly.

-   Improved communication: Fewer mistakes and misunderstandings.

-   Stronger sense of belonging: Employees feel more connected and engaged.

-   Business impact:

    -   30% faster productivity

    -   50% lower turnover

    -   Reduced recruitment costs (€8,000–€50,000 per replacement)

    -   Fewer safety incidents (30% linked to language barriers)

3. Implementation Steps

-   Partner with a language school or volunteer organization.

- Recruit employers and train language buddies.

- Match buddies and conduct intake, mid-term, and final evaluations.

- Use structured materials like session cards or the *SpreekTaal* method (developed with Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam).

4. Conditions for transfer:

- A host organization must believe in language as a tool for inclusion and develop evidence-based materials.

- Assign a program manager and coordinator.

- Secure initial funding (e.g., from ministries or foundations) to pilot the program.

- Conduct impact research to validate and promote the model.

5. Challenges

- Changing migration trends: Requires flexibility and policy awareness.

- Public funding cuts: Emphasizes the need for visibility and advocacy.

- Increased competition for private funding: Calls for stronger fundraising strategies.

- Volunteer engagement: Maintaining public support is key—storytelling and positive narratives help.

- Team continuity: Invest in HR and knowledge retention.

- Financial oversight: A dedicated controller ensures transparency and accountability.

6. Example of use: IKEA Utrecht

At IKEA Utrecht, Dutch-speaking employees meet weekly with non-native colleagues to practice language in real work situations. The program enhances personal development, team spirit, and business performance. **A video example is available on YouTube** (with English subtitles).

Other organizations using this practice:

- Public sector: COA, Gemeente Rotterdam

- Healthcare: Vecht en IJssel

- Retail & hospitality: IKEA, McDonald's, Vermaat

- Industry: Scania, WIL-group

- Cleaning: RAS, Niessen

- Finance: ABN-AMRO

- Tech: ASML, Philips

- Transport: Arriva, NS

> Recycling: Het Goed Sittard

More information:

Photo : Taalbuddies at work

- *www.taalbuddy.nl*
- *www.hetbegintmettaal.nl*
- *https://www.hetbegintmettaal.nl/vime/*
- *Taalbuddy's op het werk - Stichting Het Begint met Taal*

Quote Language buddies at Scania:
- Adam and Dennis: "You gain a better understanding of the challenges your colleagues face, and you grow together as a team."
- "Working in a busy factory is challenging when you don't yet speak the language well. This was also true for Adam, who faced this challenge daily at Scania. Through the "Language Buddies at Work" program, he had the opportunity to practice the language together with his Dutch-speaking colleague Dennis in a safe and informal setting."

Program manager 'language buddies at work': Eline Dragt, e-mail address: eline@hetbegintmettaal.nl or Director Het Begint met Taal Sylvia de Groot Heupner sylvia@hetbegintmettaal.nl

Additional information about this Best Practice is available in the attached appendix 11.

LEGO's diversity & inclusion strategy

Reporting Partner: Triangle, Denmark

Brief Description:
LEGO's Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Strategy fosters an inclusive, equitable workplace through initiatives supporting gender equality, cultural inclusion, disability access, and LGBTQ+

representation. Diversity is also embedded in product design and marketing to promote inclusive values from an early age.

Key Benefits:

- Employee Experience: Higher satisfaction and engagement.

- Innovation: Diverse perspectives enhance creativity.

- Representation: Improved retention and leadership diversity.

- Customer Alignment: Inclusive products resonate globally.

- Brand Reputation: Strengthens LEGO's image as a responsible leader.

Implementation steps:

1. Develop a comprehensive D&I policy.
2. Deliver unconscious bias and inclusivity training.
3. Support employee networks (e.g., women, LGBTQ+, minorities).
4. Integrate diversity into product and marketing design.
5. Monitor progress using KPIs and feedback.

Conditions for transfer:

- Strong leadership commitment.

- Training infrastructure and internal networks.

- Data systems for tracking diversity metrics.

- External partnerships (e.g., UNICEF).

Challenges:

- Addressing unconscious bias and cultural resistance.

- Maintaining long-term engagement and innovation.

Example of use:
LEGO's inclusive product redesigns and marketing campaigns have received global media praise and strong customer feedback, reinforcing internal morale and brand loyalty. Similar strategies are seen in companies like Microsoft, Google, and Unilever.

More Information:

- *LEGO D&I Report lego.com/fi-fi/diversity*

- *LEGO Newsroom – Inclusion Initiatives*

- *UNICEF Collaboration on Inclusive Learning*

- *info@lego.com* | *+45 79 50 60 70*

Additional information about this Best Practice is available in the attached appendix 12.

Mentoring Development Program

Institution: Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Career Services Office, Poland

Brief description:

The Mentoring Development Program is a flexible, year-round initiative that connects students and doctoral candidates with experienced alumni mentors. The program supports participants in developing professional competencies, navigating career paths, and preparing for the job market.

This structure ensures personalized, accessible mentoring aligned with both student needs and mentor availability.

Key Benefits:

For Students:

- Career Readiness: First-hand insights into industry expectations and workplace culture.

- Skill Development: Support in building both technical and soft skills.

- Strategic Planning: Help in setting career goals and identifying relevant learning paths.

- Confidence Building**:** Strengthened professional identity and communication skills.

For Mentors:

- Leadership Development: Opportunities to enhance coaching and communication abilities.

- Community Engagement**:** A meaningful way to give back to the university and support future professionals.

Conditions for Transfer:

The program is highly adaptable and can be implemented in other institutions or countries with minimal resources. Key conditions for success include:

- Engaged Alumni Network: A committed group of volunteer mentors.

- Dedicated Coordination Team: A career services unit to manage operations and provide support.

- Clear Program Structure: Defined processes for applications, matching, and communication.

- Effective Promotion: Communication strategies to attract and inform participants.

- Digital Tools: An online platform for mentor profiles, applications, and scheduling.

- Voluntary Participation: Mentors contribute without compensation, motivated by community impact.

- Contextual Flexibility: The program can be tailored to different academic and industry environments.

Challenges:

- Awareness: Students may not initially recognize the value of mentoring for career development.

- Engagement: Encouraging proactive participation, especially in technical fields, can be difficult.

- Mentor Availability: Maintaining a consistent pool of mentors requires ongoing outreach.

- Matching: Ensuring compatibility between mentors and mentees may require manual oversight.

- Sustained Participation: Long-term engagement is supported through regular communication and success stories.

- Expectation Management: Clear communication of roles and goals is essential to avoid misunderstandings.

Example of use:

A notable success is the return of former mentees as mentors. These individuals, having benefited from the program early in their careers, later rejoined to support new students—demonstrating the program's long-term impact and sustainability. Mentoring programs are successfully implemented by other higher education institutions in Wrocław that are integral parts of the Lower Silesian Career Offices Network.

More information:

https://biurokarier.pwr.edu.pl/student/mentoring/

https://biurokarier.pwr.edu.pl/absolwent/zostan-mentorem/
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=650997484449615&set=a.114805644735471&locale=pl_PL

Katarzyna Sławińska-Oleszek
Head of the Career Office
✉ *katarzyna.slawinska-oleszek@pwr.edu.pl*

Additional information about this Best Practice is available in the attached appendix 13.

Practical job interview

Reporting partner: Satakunta Chamber of Commerce, Finland

Brief Description:

A regular job interview doesn't always work. If you're recruiting for a practical job, for example in production, the interview situation can feel strange and exciting, making it difficult to assess the person's skills and suitability for the job. That's why an industrial company has used another method: going to production with the applicant, looking at the production line and machines, discussing them and at the same time assessing the applicant without a formal interview situation.

Key Benefits:

- Reduces interview anxiety, especially for hands-on workers.

- Reveals practical skills and knowledge that may not surface in formal interviews.

- Provides applicants with a realistic view of the job and workplace.

- Enhances mutual understanding between employer and applicant.

Implementation Steps:

- Organize a guided factory tour for the applicant.

- Replace the formal interview with informal, on-site discussions.

- Train recruiters to assess candidates in a less structured setting.

Conditions for Transfer:

- Open-minded HR personnel.

- Willingness to provide access to production facilities.

- This practice is highly adaptable and easy to implement in various contexts.

Challenges:

No significant challenges have been reported so far.

Example of Successful Application

Companies within the Satakunta Chamber of Commerce network have recently adopted this method with positive results in the industrial sector. Several industrial companies in the Satakunta region, through the Chamber of Commerce network.

More Information

minna.nore@satakunnankauppakamari.fi

laura.koivisto@satakunnankauppakamari.fi

Recruitment of young talent / trainees through authentic company presentation

Reporting partner: ITECH, Germany

Organization: SWS Malermeister GmbH

Brief Description:
To address the challenge of attracting young people to craft occupations, SWS Malermeister GmbH developed a video-based approach that authentically showcases everyday working life in the company. Instead of polished marketing content, the videos present real, unfiltered insights into the work environment, tasks, and team dynamics, building trust and interest among potential trainees.

Key Benefits:

- Authenticity: Young viewers trust real-life portrayals more than traditional advertisements.

- Positive Company Image: Viewers notice the good atmosphere and team spirit.

- Recruitment Impact: Several viewers have inquired about apprenticeships after watching the videos.

Implementation Steps:

1. Analyze the target group (empathize phase of Design Thinking).
2. Create a simple storyboard based on real work scenarios.
3. Organize equipment, schedule, and staff.
4. Film a typical workday.
5. Edit and format the video for online use.
6. Publish the video on accessible platforms.

Conditions for Transfer:

- No major resources required—basic filming tools and planning suffice.

- Key requirement: A genuinely positive work culture. Without it, authenticity may backfire.

Challenges:

- The only barrier is ensuring the company culture is strong and positive enough to be shown authentically.

Example of use:
SWS Malermeister GmbH has successfully implemented this approach. Their videos have
generated interest and led to direct apprenticeship inquiries.
Website: https://sws-maler.de

More Information:

Samim Shirzad
✉ *samim@sws-maler.de*
📍 *Meiendorfer Straße 97, 22145 Hamburg*

The "No-Punishment for Error Charter" – Air France

Reporting partner: Hanse Parlament, Germany

Organization: Air France

Brief Description:

Air France has introduced a forward-thinking initiative to transform its workplace culture around
errors. Recognizing that mistakes are a natural part of work but often stigmatized, the company
implemented the "No-Punishment for Error Charter." This charter promotes learning and
improvement rather than punishment, distinguishing clearly between unintentional errors (due to
flawed processes or human oversight) and intentional faults (resulting from negligence or
misconduct).

A key component of the initiative is a confidential reporting platform where employees can safely
share information about errors and malfunctions. In return, they are assured that no sanctions will
follow. This framework fosters trust and encourages transparency, laying the foundation for a
healthier and more innovative work environment.

Key Benefits:

The charter offers significant advantages for both employees and the organization:

- Psychological safety: Employees are more willing to report mistakes, reducing stress and
  fear.

- Improved workplace climate: Open communication enhances trust and collaboration.

- Organizational insight: Management gains a clearer understanding of recurring issues,
  whether human or systemic.

- Continuous improvement: The organization can take targeted actions—such as training,
  procedural updates, or technical fixes—to reduce future errors.

Implementation Steps:

1. Co-creation: The charter is developed with input from employee representatives to ensure
   relevance and buy-in.

2. Confidential platform: A secure space is established for error reporting.

3. Transparent rollout: The charter and platform are introduced to all staff with clear communication.

4. Cultural shift: HR plays a key role in promoting the initiative and encouraging participation.

5. Ongoing analysis: Reported data is reviewed to identify trends and root causes.

6. Action and feedback: Findings are discussed with employee representatives, and corrective actions are taken.

7. Evaluation and revision: The charter is regularly assessed and updated to remain effective and aligned with organizational needs.

Impact:

The charter has led to:

- Increased employee engagement and trust.

- A more open and constructive workplace culture.

- Better identification and resolution of operational issues.

- Enhanced organizational performance through reduced errors and improved processes.

Conditions for Transfer:

This best practice is highly adaptable and can be implemented in various organizational and national contexts. Key conditions for successful transfer include:

- Leadership commitment: Active involvement from management and HR.

- Employee participation: Inclusion of staff in the design and feedback process.

- Resource allocation: Investment in human resources and communication tools.

- Scalability: The model can be tailored to fit different company sizes and sectors.

Example of use:

- This best practice has been developed and successfully applied by the French airline company Air France.

More information:

- Newsletter of the French Ministry for Public Action, the Civil Service and Simplification:
  https://kiosque.bercy.gouv.fr/alyas/search/print/frvisionrh/15110

- Consulting and training company "Innovation managériale": https://www.innovationmanageriale.com/quand-les-entreprises-sinterdisent-de-punir-les-erreurs-air france/#:~:text=C'est%20le%20cas%20notamment,de%20punir%20les%20fautes%20intentionnelles
- Additional information about this Best Practice is available in the attached appendix 14.

The Practice Enterprise

Reporting partner: Ferenc, Hungary

Brief description:
The Practice Enterprise (PE) workshop is a simulation-based educational method where students operate fictitious companies in a classroom setting equipped with office and IT tools. It bridges theoretical knowledge with practical experience by rotating students through key business departments such as HR, finance, sales, and administration. While no real goods or money are exchanged, students engage in realistic administrative tasks, document handling, and business communication.

The PE system fosters experiential learning, enhancing students' understanding of business processes, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. It also emphasizes sustainability and digital document management. The program is supported by an online platform (taniroda.hu), available in multiple languages, and is already in use across several European countries.

Key Benefits:

- Practical understanding of business processes
- Use of real documents and current regulations
- Improved accuracy, communication, and teamwork
- Experience in international business using English
- Development of creativity and problem-solving skills

Implementation steps:

1. Theoretical instruction in business functions and documentation
2. Simulation of six departments within a fictitious company
3. Rotational work experience across departments over two academic years
4. Use of the online PE platform for company creation and operations

Conditions for transfer:
Basic IT and office equipment, internet access, and the *tanioroda.hu* platform (available in multiple languages). A multilingual manual supports implementation abroad.

Example of use:
The Deák School has mentored schools in Romania, Slovakia, and Germany through ERASMUS projects. The model is part of the global PEN Worldwide network, with nearly 100 student enterprises in Hungary.

More information:

https://taniroda.hu/

https://penworldwide.org/

www.deakgyor.hu

https://www.facebook.com/deakgyor

Ágnes Kovácsné Zimborás: project manager, expert, instructor *igazgato@deakgyor.hu*

Additional information about this Best Practice is available in the attached appendix 15.

Conclusions and recommendations for future development

In general, the process was carried out successfully. Collaboration with project partners was smooth and constructive, and the timeline was well maintained. The support and guidance provided by the lead partner played a crucial role in ensuring the smooth execution of the process and facilitated task implementation at all levels. All stakeholders were kept informed of the process through regular email updates as well as both online and offline meetings.

During the process, a multi-step selection procedure was developed with the active involvement of all project partners. The use of the E-form platform proved to be an effective and efficient tool for collecting, evaluating, and voting on best practices. It enabled transparent and inclusive data collection across the entire partner network.

The final evaluation workshop, held in Denmark, was both successful and engaging. Despite the limited presentation time of 30 seconds allocated to each of the 25 pre-selected best practices, the elevator pitches fostered an inspiring and collaborative atmosphere among participants. After the pitches, participants had the opportunity to explore the practices in more detail using an Excel overview. However, the presentations could have been more impactful and the evaluation process easier if all pre-selected practices had prepared a PowerPoint presentation or a video. This would have provided a clearer and more visual overview than the tabular format alone. Due to time constraints, this was not feasible in this round, but it is an important recommendation for future projects.

The outcome was a diverse collection of best practices covering various aspects of workplace innovation, including:

- Digital innovation (AI-supported learning, Hackathons)

- Workplace culture (No-Punishment Charter, Anti-Stress Management, Improving office layout)

- Inclusion and diversity (Buurtzorg, Language Buddies, LEGO's D&I Strategy, Trust based working time)

- Talent development (Mentoring, Practice Enterprise)

- Recruitment innovation (Practical Job Interviews, action – based recruitment videos)

The concept of Workplace Innovation (WPI) proved to be multifaceted and challenging. In practice, it was interpreted in two ways: either as innovations emerging within the workplace or as innovations aimed at improving working conditions and enhancing efficiency. The official sense, which comes from the European Union, is the latter, and the meanings overlap to some extent

This conceptual ambiguity posed challenges, particularly in organizations with hierarchical leadership cultures and significant power distances. It may also have contributed to the inclusion of some practices that were more accurately described as "innovations at the workplace" rather than workplace innovations as defined by the EU.

A key challenge was the varying understanding of the WPI concept among partners, despite joint discussions held before the process began. Defining innovation is inherently complex, and it is important to recognize that what is considered innovative in one country may be commonplace in another, for example remote work. This increased the complexity of the evaluation process too.

Despite these challenges, the process was both inclusive and systematic. A total of 13 high-quality best practices were successfully identified and selected from an initial pool of 78 submissions. The main selection criteria were diversity and practical applicability. The selected practices offer a broad and inspiring perspective on the development of working life.

Next steps

To ensure the successful transfer of best practices to SMEs, all partners will share a coordinated effort to engage with and advise at least 60 SMEs during the project period. This process will involve continuous collaboration among the partners to share knowledge, refine strategies, and provide tailored implementation advice to SMEs.

PP1 has created a standardized template to streamline this process, enabling consistent documentation and communication across all partners. The results of this process will be included in the final deliverable WP3 D3.1 D7.

The transfer testimonial is attached in Appendix 16.

Sources

WIN4SMEs – Workplace Innovation for SMEs. www.win4smes.eu. (2025, May 20)

WIN4SMEs Project (2025, January 17). *2nd Online Workshop*.

Regional and International Education Partnerships. (2025). Appendix I: Partnership agreement: Regional and international education partnerships for workplace innovation in SMEs.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Word document for preliminary data collection

WORKPLACE INNOVATION - BEST PRACTICE COLLECTION FORM

This form is designed to collect Best Practices in Workplace Innovation, focusing on practices that may include, but are not limited to; employee engagement, enhancing productivity and motivation, continuous learning and skill development health and well-being, digital integration, and innovation across various organizational settings.

The Best Practices are collected within the WIN4SMES COVE Framework.

Please fill out each section with as much detail as possible to help others understand and replicate successful practices.

1. General Information

Name of the Innovation Practice: _____

Institution/ Organization/Department: _____

Contact Information: _____

2. Description & Objectives

Brief Description of the Practice:

Primary Goals (e.g., improve productivity, enhance employee well-being, work life balance, skill development etc.):

3.Expected Outcomes

List expected improvements in areas like productivity, quality, skill development, employee engagement, well-being, and retention:

4. Measurement of Impact

Describe the metrics or KPIs used to measure the impact of this practice, such as productivity metrics, employee satisfaction scores, or quality improvements:

5. Implementation steps

Provide a short overview of steps which need to be taken to implement, introduce the Best Practice

6. Additional Comments or Resources

Provide any additional information, resources, or links that may be helpful in understanding this practice:

Thank you!

Appendix 2: e-form Collection of Best Practices

E-Lomake -
Collecting the best pra

Appendix 3: Best Practices in Excel template

Case name or Brief case description	Institution/ Organization / Department in wh
Education in Practice Enterprises	Foundation of Deák Ferenc Secondary School of E
More space for the practice of religion	Satakunta University of Applied Sciences
Dual higher education - workplace learning!	NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences
RoboAi Academy	Satakunta University of Applied Sciences
UAS Fellowship	Satakunta University of Applied Sciences
SAMK Partner	Satakunta University of Applied Sciences
Pioneering!	NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences
Gas Erop!	Saxion University of Applied Sciences and 50 sme
VANDAAG	TNO
Icares	Icares
PRO6 managers	PRO6 managers whole company
Kesselaar	Organisation
Buurtzorg Nederland	Buurtzorg
Life Skills Initiative	UAB Electrolux
Inclusive Hiring Initiative	ManoGuru
International Conference on Practice Enterprises	GYSZC Deák Ferenc Secondary School of Econom
OpinKoti Pilot Project: Practical Nursing Studies in Attendo's Senior Service Ho	Attendo Kuninkaanhaka Senior Service Ho
Cooperation between school and SMEs (Dualmode Vocational Schol)	Challenges and Solutions in Communication Betw
K. Geco prekybos imone	Palanga Life Balance SPA Hotel
The "green office" - sustainability	GYSZC Deák Ferenc Secondary School of Econom
International Trade Fair	GYSZC Deák Ferenc Secondary School of Econom
Hackathon PoVE Water	Katapult – international team
Leraning network: Dual learning in higher education.	Platform Talent for Technology / Katapult
Using AI and digital skills in innovating work places in hospitality sector	restaurant "Monai", restaurant chain "Momo Grill'
Using Digital skills in innovating work places in hospitality sector	restaurant "Monai", restaurant chain "Momo Grill'
Enhancing Turkey's Reputation – A Successful Collaboration Between Länsi Kalkkun	Sataedu
A Sustainable and Inclusive Workplace	Social enterprise "Miesto Laboratorija"
We'RHERE - Peer-to-Peer Coaching for Inclusive Workforce Integration	We'RHERE
MeWet Home - Multifunctional environment for Well-being enhancing technology	Sataedu
Practical Job Interview	Satakunta Chamber of Commerce member
Real-time survey on employee experience	Satakunta Chamber of Commerce member
POC (Proof of Concept) as a learning tool	Satakunta Chamber of Commerce member
Pedagogy of internal accounting	Sataedu
AI Hr-assistant	Satakunta Chamber of Commerce member
Inclusive learning through practical experience	VU Botanical Garden
Experiences ala Michael	IBC (Denmark)
Using Digital skills in innovating work places in hospitality sector	Vytautas Mineral SPA Hotel
Employee Annual Service Package in the Hotel Industry	Vytautas Mineral SPA Hotel
Taalbuddy's op het werk/ Language buddies at work	Het Begint mety Taal
Employee Referral Program with Financial Incentives	Vytautas Mineral SPA Hotel
Production - optimize	Danfoss - cooling thermostat
New building (School)	IBC-Kurser (Denmark)
Develope new product department	IBC-Kurser (Denmark)
Digital Technology Best Practice – Bockholdt GmbH	Bockholdt GmbH
No-punishment-for-error charter	Air France
Improving office layout to support communication and coordination in teams	Anonymous - Data is available to BHH
Talent Communities for Social Inclusion through Somali Sambusas	Multifoods
Applied research by VET students - AIRinVET	AIRinVET project
Diversity & social inclusion - LEGO	The Lego Group
Sustainability at Energinet	Energinet
AI use for marketing purposes	company is known
Collaborative vocational preparation	Hamburger Energienetze
Recruitment of young talent / trainees through authentic company presentation on	SWS Malermeister GmbH, Painting Company
Introduction of Trust-Based Working Time	Anonymous, the data is available to BHH.
Introduction of Trust-Based Working Time	Anonymous, the data is available to BHH.
Increasing customer satisfaction in sales at small and medium-sized enterprises	Anonymous, the data is available to BHH
The innovation is AI-supported learning and knowledge management in the company	A company in the construction industry with vario
Development and implementation of VR training on handling hazardous goods	Forwarding company / haulage company
financing employees educational processes	whole institution Lower Silesian CHamber of Craf
participation in open events organized by the company	Lower Silesian Chamber of Craft in Wrocław
team meetings	department projects&promotion
hybrid work system	Lower Silesian Chamber of Craft in Wrocław
Retention Programs in Private Healthcare	THURY DENT Kft.
Onboarding for the Successful Integration of IT Professionals	Asura Technologies Zrt.
People-Centered Leadership	HR-Evolution Kft.
Implementing a Flexible Work Schedule to Improve Work-Life Balance	Delego Személyzeti Szolgáltató Kft.
Electronic Document Management System (EZD) – Document Identification and Tra	Wrocław City Hall
Electronic Working Time Registration Using City Cards (Urbancard)	Wrocław City Hall
Monthly Verification of Student Assessment and Attendance – A Monitoring Report	Vocational School Complex No.5 in Wroclaw
Digital skills for university staff	MRU
Anti-stress management trainings	MRU
Real business case related student thesis	MRU
New staff integration	MRU
Grow Up Tech – Boosting Early-Stage Innovation in SMEs through Structured Suppor	Academic Entrepreneurship Incubator of Wroclav
Networking events for students and local business representatives	Business and Innovation Centre Wroclaw Univers
Hackathons sessions	Faculty of Civil Engineering of Wrocław University
Mentoring Development Program	Career Services at Wroclaw University of Scuienc

Appendix 4: The evaluation table of selected 25 Best Practices

3 VOTES Case name	Organization	Country
Diversity & social inclusion – LEGO	Triangle	Denmark
Opinkoti	Sataedu	Finland
RoboAI	Samk	Finland
Taalbuddy´s op het werk/ Language buddies at work	Katapult	Netherland
We'RHERE - Peer-to-Peer Coaching for Inclusive Workforce Integration	Katapult	Netherland

2 VOTES Case name	Organisation	Country
Introduction of Trust-Based Working Time	BHH	Germany
AEC Hackathon Wrocław	Wroclaw University of Scuience and Technology	Poland
AIR FRNACE No -punishment-for-error charter	Hanse Parlament	Germany
Anti-stress management trainings	MRU	Lithuania
Buurtzorg	Katapult	Netherland
Collaborative vocational preparation	Hamburger Energienetze, ITECH	Germany
Education in Practice Enterprises, tanirodai.hu	Ferenc	Hungary
Employee Referral Program with Financial Incentives	Vytautas Mineral SPA Hotel,LVRA	Lithuania
Inclusive Hiring Initiative, Mano Guru	BHTC	Lithuania
Mentoring Development Program	Career Services at Wroclaw University of Scuience and Technolog	Poland
More space for the practice of religion	Satakunta University of Applied Sciences	Finland
Practical Job Interview	Satakunnan kauppakamari	Finland
The innovation is AI-supported learning and knowledge management in the company.	ITECH	Germany
Using Digital skills in innovating work places in hospitality sector, www.dasata.lt	Vytautas Mineral SPA Hotel, LVRA	Lithuania

1 VOTE, Case name	Organization	Country
Improving office layout to support communication and coordination in teams	BHH	Germany
MeWet Home - Multifunctional environment for Well-being enhancing technology	Sataedu	Finland
Multifood/ Talent Communities for Social Inclusion through Somali Sambusas	Triangle	Denmark
People-Centered Leadership	HR-Evolution Kft. IPOSZ	Hungary
Pioneering!	NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences	Netherland
Recruitment of Young talent/treinees through autentic company prensentation	ITECH	Germany

Appendix 5: Voting e-form

E-form- voting_ Best
practices evaluation.p

Regional and International Education
Partnerships for Workplace Innovation
in SMEs

WIN4SMES

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Appendix 6: The final voting results

Votes	Case	Organization
8 votes	No-punishment-for-error charter	HP
8 votes	Recruitment of young talent / trainees through authentic company prese	Itech
7 votes	The innovation is AI-supported learning and knowledge management in t	ITech
7 votes	Hackathons sessions	TUW
6 votes	Introduction of Trust-Based Working Time	BHH
6 votes	Taalbuddy's op het werk/ Language buddies at work	Katapult
5 votes	Practical Job Interview	SCC
4 votes	Anti-stress management trainings	MRU
4 votes	Diversity & social inclusion - LEGO	Triangle
4 votes	Improving office layout to support communication and coordination in te	BHH
3 votes	Buurtzorg Nederland	Katapult
3 votes	Education in Practice Enterprises	Ferenc
3 votes	Mentoring Development Program	TUW
2 votes	Talent Communities for Social Inclusion through Somali Sambusas	Triangle
2 votes	Employee Referral Program with Financial Incentives	LVRA
2 votes	Using Digital skills in innovating work places in hospitality sector	LVRA
2 votes	Inclusive Hiring Initiative	BHTC
2 votes	More space for the practice of religion	SAMK
2 votes	OpinKoti Pilot Project: Practical Nursing Studies in Attendo's Senior Service	SEF
2 votes	People-Centered Leadership	IPOSZ
1 vote	Pioneering!	NHL Stenden
1 vote	MeWet Home - Multifunctional environment for Well-being enhancing techn	SEF
1 vote	Collaborative vocational preparation	ITech
0 votes	RoboAi Academy	SAMK
0 votes	Using Digital skills in innovating work places in hospitality sector, restauran	LVRA

Appendix 7: AEC Hackathon session

Hackathon sessions_TN (1).pdf

Appendix 8: Anti-Stress management

Antistress_MRU Best practice.pdf

Appendix 9: Improving office layout to support communication and coordination in teams

Improving office layout to support com

Appendix 10: Introduction of trust based working time

Introduction of Trust-Based Working

Appendix 11: Language buddy's at work

PDF
Language buddys at
work DEF.pdf

Appendix 12: LEGO's Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

PDF
LEGO - Best practice -
uddybet.pdf

Appendix 13: Mentoring development programme

PDF
Mentoring
Development Program

Appendix 14: The "No-punishment for-error charter" Air France

PDF
HP_Detailed
description BP Air Fra

Appendix 15: The Practice enterprise

PDF
Answers for
questions Deak.pdf

Appendix 16: Template for Testimonials

PDF
Templates for the
Best Practices Testim