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ACTIVITY NO. 1:
INTERACTIVE REPORT

Environmental

CHALLENGES AND CLIMATE ACTION

PART 4
FOCUS GROUP STUDY WITH
VET STAFF (POLAND AND ITALY)

Within the project:
VEforCA

Prepared by:
**Fundacja „Fundusz
Inicjatyw”**
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What Vocational Education can do for Climate Action (VEforCA)

Action 1: Interactive report: environmental challenges and climate action

SUMMARY REPORT

Research, Part 4

Focus group study with VET Staff – Poland and Italy

Language version: English

Prepared by:

Fundacja “Fundusz Inicjatyw” (“Initiative Fund” Foundation)

PROMETEO

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What Vocational Education can do for Climate Action (VEforCA)



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Introduction

The focus group study with the VET staff was carried out as part of the project „What Vocational education can do for Climate Action” (VEforCA) by the “Initiative Fund” Foundation and PROMETEO. The focus group study is the third part of the research under the project (apart from desk research, surveys, direct interviews with experts). Focus group study consists of two focus meetings in each country (in Poland and Italy) – with VET learners and VET staff. This report covers the results of focus groups that took place in Italy and Poland with a group of VET staff.

The objectives of the research within the project, including the focus group study, are:

- To identify the environmental issues perceived as particularly urgent and serious by the local communities.
- To identify the environmental challenges which have a direct impact on citizens’ daily life.
- To collect climate action case studies related to existing successful initiatives taken in each partner country to involve VETs in climate actions.
- To discuss the relevant case studies (i.e. environmental challenges and related actions) identified through the desk research and inputs collected through the surveys.
- To analyse strengths, weaknesses and potential for replicability of citizen science approaches.
- To identify methods used in VET education in each local context to open up science and boost citizens’ participation, in order to understand impact on engaging VETs, especially those with a disadvantaged background and parents, with environmental issues.

The focus group study with VET staff in Italy was conducted on October 3, 2022 in Varallo. 5 representatives of VET staff took part in the study as participants. In the further part of the report, the focus participants will be assigned numbers according to the following rule: Teacher 1 - representative of the VET staff in Italy no. 1, Teacher 2 - representative of the VET staff in Italy no. 2, etc. to the number: Teacher 5 - representative of the VET staff in Italy no. 5.

The moderator of the focus study in Italy was Mr. Carlo Smaldone Villani.

The focus group study in Poland with VET staff of the sector took place on December 9, 2022 in Lublin (Okopowa Street 5). The focus lasted 1 hour and 20 minutes. It started at 3:30 p.m. and ended at 4.50 p.m.

The participants of the focus group were 5 people (women) - VET staff (trainers, career advisors, employment agent, managerial and administrative staff of training institutions, including coordinators of training and labour market projects).

In the further part of the report, the participants of the Polish focus study will be assigned numbers according to the following rule: Staff 1 - representative of the VET staff in Poland no. 1, Staff 2 - representative of the VET staff in Poland no. 2, etc. to the number Staff 5 - representative of the VET staff in Poland no. 5.

The moderator of the focus in Poland was Ms. Agnieszka Stawiszyńska. The assistant moderator was Dominik Kubas PhD.

Main points of the focus meeting in both partner countries:

1. The moderators welcomed the participants.
2. The participants signed the attendance list and information clauses regarding the processing of personal data.
3. Introduction of participants to the project by the moderator (project objectives, target groups, planned results) by the moderators.
4. Presentation of the objectives of the focus meeting to the participants (research objectives, participants, how the data will be used).
5. Explaining to the participants the concept of a “citizen science approach”.



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6. Conducting a discussion on 6 main topics.

General conclusions from the focus group study with VET staff in Poland and Italy

Several conclusions can be drawn from the focus group study conducted with the staff of the VET sector in Poland and Italy.

Firstly, in both countries, the participants of the focus group (VET staff) indicated quite unanimously that currently the most urgent environmental and climate issues are: air pollution, water pollution, climate change, including global warming, droughts, but also floods and violent atmospheric phenomena. The staff also emphasized the problems with insufficient segregation of waste by Polish and Italian societies and the insufficient level of waste recycling. The staff pointed out that one of the reasons for the large amount of waste is contemporary consumerism, excessive shopping, often due to fashion or whims.

Secondly, in terms of what the VET sector and staff can do in the fight against climate change, focus participants in both countries agreed that the VET sector can play an important role. The staff pointed out that the starting point must be raising citizens' awareness of environmental threats and possible everyday actions for the climate. The participants of the study also listed pro-environmental activities/initiatives that can be implemented in the VET sector, e.g. ecological training modules, ecological gadgets - seedlings of shrubs/trees, repeated use of plastic identifiers, less paper documentation, training activities outside / in the field, limiting artificial lighting in training rooms, using reusable dishes during catering, ordering vegetarian catering.

Third, among the issues that VET staff consider to be a hindrance/obstacle to citizen engagement in climate action and participation in citizen science initiatives, participants agreed that people's awareness, available time, willingness to act, taking small steps and changing daily habits are the most important things. The contemporary fast pace of life for everyone, without exception (including learners, staff), was emphasized, and thus the lack of time for pro-ecological activities / participation in civic initiatives, and often even for reflection in this aspect. The Italian staff also drew attention to the dissemination through social media, especially among young people, of bad, non-ecological habits and activities.

Fourthly, in terms of the possibility of using citizen science initiatives in the VET sector, the staff pointed out that it is not easy to implement in VET institutions from the bottom up. VET institutions implement training programs that have already been developed, often training programs are defined in detail in the proposals/projects. In addition, the VET staff do not have the appropriate educational and exercise materials to implement such issues in the current classes. The Polish staff pointed out that in order to successfully implement ecological initiatives of citizen science in the VET sector, it would have to be defined top-down, even imposed on VET institutions. At the same time, VET institutions and staff would need to be provided with appropriate tools and educational materials to use during training. The Italian staff also drew attention to the difficulty of ensuring the safety of participants / students during training activities as part of citizenship science (e.g. classes outside the training room).

Fifthly, the VET staff in both countries had the opportunity to participate in pro-ecological actions. The following actions were listed: replacing e-waste with tree / plant seedlings, selective waste-sorting, limiting purchases/shopping, buying used things instead of new ones, repairing broken things instead of throwing them away, giving away or selling used things instead of throwing them in the trash, refilling printer toners instead of throwing them away after one use, putting a Christmas tree in the



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ground after Christmas to keep it growing, using public transport. The staff also mentioned organized ecological campaigns carried out on a larger scale, such as: “Let's clean Up the World”, the “Vegetable garden in conduct” project.

Sixth, in terms of possible practices and tools to open the VET sector to citizen science and pro-environmental activities, VET staff in both countries agreed that the starting point is to increase environmental awareness and knowledge, both of trainers and the public. VET staff can sensitize training participants to climate change and environmental issues. Polish participants indicated that top-down support for such initiatives, e.g. political support, would be beneficial. At the same time, in order for VET staff to be able to implement such initiatives themselves, they must be trained and have access to appropriate tools and training/exercise materials. In order to promote citizen science and open it up to greater citizen participation, larger-scale actions, such as media awareness campaigns, would be needed. Small-scale pro-environmental activities that could be implemented bottom-up by VET institutions were also pointed out, such as: segregation of waste in training rooms, use of reusable dishes in catering, ecological gadgets for learners, reduction of paper and toner consumption.

The course of the study

The main part of the focus study began with covering the most urgent environmental issues and climate change, including in the local environment of the Participants.

Question no. 1

What is the most urgent issue from your point of view related to climate change? Supplementary questions: What are environmental issues perceived as particularly urgent and serious by the local communities? What are environmental challenges which have a direct impact on citizens' daily life?

Conclusions

As the most urgent environmental and climate issues, the VET staff indicated: air pollution, water pollution, climate change, including global warming, droughts, floods and violent weather events. Participants of the focus pointed to the problems with insufficient segregation of waste by both societies and the insufficient level of waste recycling. The Polish staff noticed that a large amount of waste nowadays is the result of consumerism, excessive buying, often of unnecessary things, e.g. clothes due to fashion.

Responses from the Polish staff:

Staff 5:

- “Smog, air pollution, burning inappropriate things in furnaces”,
- “Excess exhaust fumes in the air”.

Staff 4:

- “Excessive consumerism, there are piles of e.g. electrical devices in landfills, people replace equipment too often because something is new and fashionable”,
- “Lack of awareness that we don't need everything”.

Staff 5:

- “Consumerism is related to fashion, e.g. clothes change all the time. We throw things away, and every now and then we reach for the same things”,
- “There is an ornithological path near Puławy, and there is an accumulation of garbage, plastic bottles, landfills”.

Staff 2:



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- “The problem with segregation of waste, recycling. We are unable to segregate waste, e.g. in training rooms there is one wastebasket where we throw all the waste”.

Staff 3:

- “We do not use reusable packaging during training”.

Staff 2:

- “There is a belief that why segregate waste if then everything goes to one container or garbage truck”.

Staff 5:

- “People are aware of the consequences of climate change in the future, but they push these thoughts away”.

Staff 2:

- “Awareness of climate change is increasing, children in school are being taught about segregation, fewer people are questioning the greenhouse effect”.

Staff 1:

- “Air and water pollution, climate change”.

Responses from the Italian staff:

Teacher 1:

- “Doing recycling correctly”.

Teacher 2:

- “Doing recycling correctly”.

Teacher 3:

- “Air pollution (microplastics)”.

Teacher 4:

- “Avoiding waste in all environments”.

Teacher 5:

- “Water pollution”.

Teacher 1:

- “Garbage collection is an urgent matter, and it is not only necessary to inculcate it in children but more importantly to re-educate adults on a more sustainable lifestyle”.

- “The most urgent environmental challenge, at the risk of repeating myself, is still environmental collection, understood as re-education. Until it is clear that the commitment of the individual is crucial and that responsibility must be shared, it will be impossible to make people understand that even one piece of plastic thrown in the wrong place creates a chain problem”.

Teacher 2:

- “Properly sorting the garbage and leaving the environment clean, as we are in a place where nature gets everyone's attention, as respect for the city takes precedence over everything. From a teacher's perspective, the challenge is to get students to internalize the issue of waste separation and take care of the environment themselves. It's also about fighting against the hectic pace of life that leads parents to use one bag because it's convenient and so they don't set a good example for their children”.

- “Disastrous events such as floods have an impact on the lives of citizens”.

Teacher 3:

- “Climate changes such as floods and droughts”,

- “Proper recycling collection”,

- “Reduction of polluting gases”,

- “Culture of non-waste and reduction of technological waste”,

- “Culture of environmental protection”.

Teacher 4:

- “Extreme environmental events”.



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Teacher 5:

- “Periods of severe drought, excessive heat, cloudbursts and hailstorms. Challenge to proper waste disposal. Extreme weather events. Respect and care for the environment and protection of flora and fauna. Excessive use of means of transportation”.

The next point of the meeting was to discuss the role that the VET sector and staff can play in the fight against climate change.

Question no. 2

Do you think that VET education can play a role in fighting against climate change? Supplementary questions: Do you know any climate actions - successful initiatives - taken to involve VET staff and VETs in climate actions? Have environmental actions or environmental education been implemented in your organisation? What actions can a VET educator take (and what would be a VET provider's actions) in this regard?).

Conclusions

Participants in both countries agreed that the VET sector can play an important role in the fight against climate change. The staff pointed out that the starting point is to raise citizens' awareness of environmental threats and climate action that can be implemented by each of us on a daily basis. Focus participants listed examples of pro-environmental initiatives that can be implemented in the VET sector, e.g. ecological modules in vocational training, ecological gadgets for participants - seedlings of shrubs/trees/plants, repeated use of plastic identifiers, less paper documentation, training activities in the field, limitation of artificial lighting in training rooms, use of reusable dishes, vegetarian catering.

Responses from the Polish participants:

Staff 5:

- “In each training, devote a fragment (e.g. 5 minutes) to the topic of ecology, make participants aware of it”,

- “In our foundation, we used ecological gadgets - seedlings of shrubs/trees. And here, by the way, you can say something about ecology, watch a short film. We ask participants for photos so that the training participant can send how they planted the seedling. You can make a competition for the best seedling”.

Staff 4:

- “Trainers can promote ecological solutions, e.g. to repeatedly use plastic name badges during successive / different trainings. Use the same identifiers for subsequent training groups, not once. So that the participants do not take the badges home, but return them to the organizer after the training”.

- “Conduct training activities outside / in the field”.

Staff 2:

- “Speaking to the participants of the training in the language of benefits, e.g. let's limit artificial lighting in the room, because then we think better, our brains work better”.

Staff 5:

- “Use reusable dishes during catering in training session”.

Staff 2:

- “Ordering vegetarian catering, e.g. once a week, explaining to participants that we don't have to eat meat every day”.

Staff 3:

- “Paper documents could be made more sparingly, e.g. attendance lists for several days of training on one sheet of paper, and not attendance lists for each day on a separate A4 sheet”.

Staff 1:



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- "It is worth introducing pro-ecological elements during the courses: less printed materials, if they are needed, let them be printed on two sides/reused, etc. You could „smuggle” content on ecology during trainings”.

Responses from the Italian participants:

Teacher 1:

- "Of course, education and instruction is crucial! We need to start from the very beginning to train people who are aware that their actions reflect (positively or negatively) on everyone”.

Teacher 2:

- "Absolutely, because properly training students means properly training future generations”.

Teacher 3:

- "Yes”.

Teacher 4:

- "Definitely yes, with examples given by us”.

Teacher 5:

- "Yes”.

Teacher 1:

- "Yes, various projects related to the topic of recycling collection have been done”.

- "Yes, certainly”.

- "Definitely setting a good example and being the first to do what they tell others”.

Teacher 2:

- "Environment-related projects on recycling collection”.

- "Yes”.

- "There are certainly many useful actions that the teacher can take when it comes to raising students' awareness of these kinds of issues”.

Teacher 3:

- "Yes, recycling collection”.

- "Environmental protection course (river protection)”.

- "Yes, part of citizen education programming”.

- "Raise awareness through stimulating activities such as watching videos”.

Teacher 4: *She did not respond.*

Teacher 5:

- "When we cover citizen education, great space is given to environmental education. At school last year, a project was organized for the purpose of learning about the river as an environment to be protected, and wildlife was explained”.

In the next step of the discussion, the moderator moved on to issues that constitute a hindrance/obstacle to engaging in climate action/participating in citizen science initiatives.

Question no. 3

What are the biggest obstacles from your point of view to participating / engagement in citizen science / environmental protection activities?

Conclusions

VET staff in both countries agreed that the most important obstacles to citizen engagement in climate action and participation in citizen science initiatives are insufficient awareness of the issue among people, fast pace of life and lack of time to engage in such activities. The staff pointed out that at the beginning of the process, it is necessary to be willing to act, take even small steps and change one's everyday, non-ecological habits. The contemporary fast pace of people (including training participants, educators) was emphasized, and thus the lack of time for pro-ecological activities,



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participation in civic initiatives, and often even for reflection in this aspect. The Italian staff also drew attention to the dissemination through social media, especially among young people, of bad, non-ecological habits and activities.

Responses from the Polish staff:

Staff 5:

- "It depends on the awareness of the participants, many people in society do not think about climate issues on a daily basis. At work, we once had an action not to use plastic water bottles and to collect bottle caps".

Staff 1:

- "Participants do not have an educational goal in the field of ecology when they come to the training / project".

Staff 4:

- "People's habits, even if it's something positive for the environment, we do it for a short time and then we go back to old, bad habits".

- "There is a belief that I alone will not change anything and my actions do not make sense".

Staff 5:

- "We used to use paper lunch bags at work instead of foil/plastic. The paper turned out to be impractical, the sandwiches were getting wet. A large number of people in the company did not comply with this measure".

- "People do not feel that their individual actions have an effect on the environment".

Staff 1:

- "The repetitive pattern is that we think we can't change anything on our own. If everyone changed something in their actions, then the sum of those actions would make a difference for the better".

- „We breathe bad air".

Staff 5:

- "The greatest pollution comes from large production plants. We need to educate the public, put pressure on politicians so that there are more pro-ecological activities".

Staff 2:

- "It is necessary to tighten legal regulations in the field of ecology. The Polish state does not do much by itself, only what the EU imposes".

Staff 4:

- "In single-family homes, people burn anything [for heating]".

Staff 5:

- "The pandemic has made ecological issues recede into the background".

Responses from the Italian staff:

Teacher 1:

- "Definitely limited time, commitments related to daily living, and the tendency to throw away waste where it is quickest to do so and not where it is right to place the waste".

Teacher 2:

- "The hectic pace of daily life that leads to choosing convenient solutions rather than reasoned solutions, in addition to the bad habits ingrained in us".

Teacher 3:

- "Lack of engaging or inadequately disseminated proposals",

- "Lack of time or personal or family issues".

Teacher 4:

- "Bad habits observed in adults around students in addition to the bad example set by mass media and social (Instagram, Facebook)".



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Teacher 5:

- “Frantic pace, lack of time, laziness. Unpositive role models shown by television and on social media such as Facebook”.

The next point of discussion was to discuss the possibilities of using citizen science initiatives in the VET sector.

Question no. 4

Could such or similar initiatives be implemented in your organisations, during lessons with VETs? Supplementary questions: What are the strengths and weaknesses of these actions? Why could/could not they be implemented in the VET sector/your organisations? Have you had a chance to be a part of any citizen science activity (of what sort)?

Conclusions

The staff of both countries indicated that the bottom-up implementation of citizen science initiatives in the VET sector is not easy. Here, the Italian staff pointed out the difficulties in ensuring the safety of participants/students during a citizen science training activity outside the training room. The Polish staff emphasized that VET institutions already implement training programs developed and approved in the projects and their modification with ecological or citizen science elements is not possible. Participants of the focus group also pointed out that the VET staff in Poland do not have the appropriate educational and exercise materials to implement such issues into the currently conducted classes. The Polish staff also pointed out that the implementation of ecological initiatives as part of citizen science in the VET sector should be regulated top-down, even imposed on VET institutions. At the same time, VET institutions and staff should be given access to appropriate educational tools and materials.

Responses from the Polish participants:

Staff 2:

- “Some behaviour of environmentalists, such as pouring soup on paintings in a museum, means that environmental scientists are not taken seriously in society”.

Staff 5:

- “Participants in the ICT training could take part in citizen science - data collection using IT applications”.

Staff 3:

- “In ICT training conducted on desktop computers, it would be difficult to implement the elements of citizen science. Training on smartphones is a different thing. However, not all participants of computer training, especially people aged 50+, could find themselves in a training using smartphones instead of computers”.

Staff 5:

- “Participants must have basic knowledge of smartphones and apps to take part in a citizen science (data collection) action”.

Staff 2:

- “Even when Participants are eager and willing to learn new things and engage in citizen science, our training programs are already developed (included in the project application) and do not include smartphone learning or applications as part of citizen science”.

Staff 3:

- “The regulations of the competitions would have to include provisions to include elements of ecology in projects (trainings) free of charge for people - there would have to be a top-down entry / order”.



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Staff 2:

- "It would be necessary to introduce program guidelines for training/projects that there must be an ecology module in the training, because the VET institutions themselves and their staff will not implement it bottom-up".

- "In our company, the trainer is responsible for turning off the computers in the room after the training, turning off the lights - these are some ecological actions".

Staff 3:

- "Some participants of training projects do not want to spend time on ecological modules, they go from training to training for a scholarship - the profession of training participant".

- "If it were imposed in the project that a certain number of hours of classes must be devoted to ecology, then the VET institution would do it, and the participants of the training would have no choice but to participate".

Staff 5:

- "In the course of 80 hours, a 30-minute ecology module could be given".

Staff 4:

- "If something is imposed in the rules of the competition, then everyone can interpret it differently. The trainer would have to have guidelines and training materials in ecology, which he/she can use later during the training. The trainer must have a schedule of classes, exercise materials".

- "People don't know about the applications available in citizen science initiatives, and that's why they don't get involved. You would need to reach people with this information, then some people would be willing to get involved, e.g. retirees who have time".

Staff 1:

- "Incorporating elements of citizen science could be very engaging and beneficial. However, it would be necessary to consider what exactly could be done and what would be the justification for this in the context of vocational training".

Staff 5:

- "When writing a project, you should write in the application that there will be an ecological module in the vocational training".

Staff 3:

- "It would help if competitions for ecological modules in projects included bonus criteria in the evaluation of applications".

Staff 2:

- "Now, every VET institution enters in the application forms that there will be two-sided printing of paper materials, saving light, toners - everyone writes it in the applications for competitions, and not everyone actually implements it".

Responses from the Italian participants:

Teacher 1:

- "Yes".

Teacher 2:

- "Yes".

Teacher 3:

- "Yes".

Teacher 4:

- "Definitely yes, and we need to make sure that everyone is actively and consciously and responsibly involved".

Teacher 5:

- "It is possible but it needs to be organized very precisely and in every detail".

Teacher 1:



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- “Strengths: Leading by example, as I said before, is crucial, and sometimes the world of education becomes the only educational hub for certain people: all the more so as it becomes even more important to educate and make people think”.

- “Weaknesses: definitely the safety regulations that set limits”.

- “Yeah”.

Teacher 2:

- “Strengths: Reflect on details that are taken for granted or that students don't know about, and take advantage of the area's potential”.

- “Weaknesses: safety regulations that often pose limitations in managing educational outings”.

- “Yeah”.

Teacher 3:

- “Weaknesses: constraints related to compliance with safety regulations and outing management (authorizations and permits)”.

- “Strengths: diverse environment that allows for experiences and reflection”.

- “Involvement: touching on various aspects”.

- “Yes, ‘Vegetable garden in conduct’ project”.

Teacher 4:

- “Weaknesses: constraints related to compliance with safety regulations. Possibility of injuries”.

- “Strengths: Reflection, natural richness and outings in the area”.

- “Yes, ‘Vegetable garden in conduct’ project”.

Teacher 5:

- “Weaknesses: constraints related to safety regulations in outing management”.

- “Strengths: the natural richness of the environment in which we live, rich in environmental stresses”.

- “Yes, ‘Vegetable garden in conduct’ project”.

In the next step of the meeting, pro-environmental actions / activities in which the VET staff had the opportunity to participate were discussed.

Question no. 5

What was the most impressive thing or activity related to environmental issues that you took part in?

Conclusions

VET staff in both countries have participated in pro-environmental initiatives in the past. The participants listed such activities as: replacing e-waste with tree and plant seedlings, selective waste segregation, reducing purchases, buying used things instead of new ones, repairing broken things instead of throwing them away, giving away or selling used things instead of throwing them away, refilling printer toners, planting a Christmas tree after Christmas, use of public transport. The Italian staff also mentioned specific environmental actions carried out on a larger scale, such as: “Let's clean Up the World”, the “Vegetable garden in conduct” project.

Responses from the Polish VET staff:

Staff 3:

- “Exchange of e-waste for tree / plant seedlings - I often participate in this, instead of throwing it in the garbage, I change it for seedlings”.

Staff 5:

- “Collection points for different types of waste are scattered throughout the city”.

Staff 2:

- “E-waste in my commune is collected once or twice a year”.



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Staff 5:

- "Selective waste collection points work during hours when I am also at work, I don't even have a way to take it there".

Staff 4:

- "Once, when I was working abroad, I learned how to properly segregate waste. I even peeled off the labels from plastic bottles".

- "I buy a lot of used things, and give away or sell a lot of things I don't need to avoid the production of waste."

Staff 2:

- "At my daughter's school there is a place where you can return used toners to the printer",

- "Printer toners can be refilled once instead of buying a brand new one - less waste".

Staff 3:

- "The rules of sorting waste are changing, and people act out of habit, they do not update their knowledge about segregation".

- "Every year after Christmas I plant a real Christmas tree in the ground so that it will continue to grow".

Staff 1:

- "I try to act pro-ecologically every day - I segregate garbage, limit consumption, repair equipment, instead of buying new one, I use public transport".

Responses from the Italian VET staff:

Teacher 1:

- "Aside from devoting time to instilling respect for the rules on recycling, no, I have not taken part in anything else".

Teacher 2:

- „Let's Clean Up the World," a project in which students go with gloves and garbage bags among city streets to clean up trash left on the ground. What impressed me-as a teacher-was to find little trash in the most visible places, such as a square, and instead to find literally „everything" just around the corner".

Teacher 3:

- "'Vegetable garden in conduct' project".

Teacher 4:

- "Recycling, as it saves our planet. Activity related to the preservation of the river".

Teacher 5:

- "Activity related to the discovery and protection of the river environment and 'Vegetable garden in conduct' project".

The last point of the focus discussion was the discussion of possible practices and tools within the VET sector in order to open it to citizen science and pro-environmental activities.

Question no. 6

What methods/tools can be used in VET education to open up science and boost citizens', especially those with a disadvantaged background and parents, participation in actions related to environmental issues?

Conclusions

VET staff in both countries agreed that the starting point for opening the VET sector to citizen science and pro-environmental activities is to increase environmental awareness and knowledge, both



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among trainers and in the society. The Italian participants emphasized that VET staff can undoubtedly sensitize training participants to climate change and ecological issues. The Polish participants of the focus study pointed to the benefits of top-down planning of such initiatives, e.g. by public institutions. It was noted that VET staff need to be trained and given access to appropriate training/exercise tools and materials. The importance of the media in promoting citizen science and opening it up to greater citizen participation, through e.g. information campaigns, was underlined. The Polish staff pointed out pro-environmental initiatives that could be implemented bottom-up by VET institutions, such as: sorting waste in training rooms, using reusable dishes, ecological gadgets for training participants, reducing the use of paper or toners.

Responses from the Polish participants:

Staff 5:

- “The average person would like to participate in actions in the field of environmental protection, but there is no political support for such initiatives”,
- “Trainers would like to improve their knowledge in the field of teaching ecology”.

Staff 3:

- “Coaches would have to be forced to conduct ecological modules”,
- “You can segregate garbage in training rooms”,
- “Use reusable catering dishes instead of disposable ones”,
- “Gadgets in the form of plants / seedlings instead of other items for participants”,
- “Interesting films about ecology from the Internet to be shown to participants to intrigue them”,
- “There could be animated films about ecology on TV”,
- “Trainers would need to create a database of educational materials / videos that they could use during the training”.

Staff 2:

- “Ecology in some companies is a bit for show, companies boast that they are ecological, that they use ecological practices. Some companies, for example, have 4 printers in the office, whereas just one would be enough for them”.
- “The sign of a coach who has given up paper business cards. He has a QR code on his smartphone and that's how he leaves his contact details”.

Staff 3:

- “We pay more for ecological things than for classic (less ecological) things. The price of organic products would have to be close to the price of a traditional product, then more people would buy an organic product”.

Staff 2:

- “The same company produces one product in an ecological (glass) packaging and another product with the same application in a non-ecological (plastic) packaging. Even if we buy an ecological product, we still support the same company financially”.

Staff 5:

- “Trainers and VET organizations would need to be sent / made available training materials, recommendations in the field of training and ecological activities, so that they know how something like this can be done in their company”.

Staff 1:

- “First of all, it would be necessary to make the staff and vocational training organizers aware that there are such initiatives as citizen science. Not everyone has heard of it at all”.

Responses from the Italian participants:

Teacher 1:



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- “Any medium: the important thing is that the topic can speak to them immediately. I show documentaries and then ask them to draw what struck them the most. This gives them a chance to grow within themselves sensitivity and a habit of confronting themselves and the world around them”.

Teacher 2:

- “If it comes to teaching, any tool or methodology is useful, just find the right mode to empathize with students and touch them deeply”.

Teacher 3:

- “Practical examples such as workshops and field trips”.

Teacher 4:

- “Take for example the correct behaviour and brainstorming method to raise awareness”.

Teacher 5:

- “Practical and concrete examples of respect for the environment. Real conversations and examples in the family”.



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