

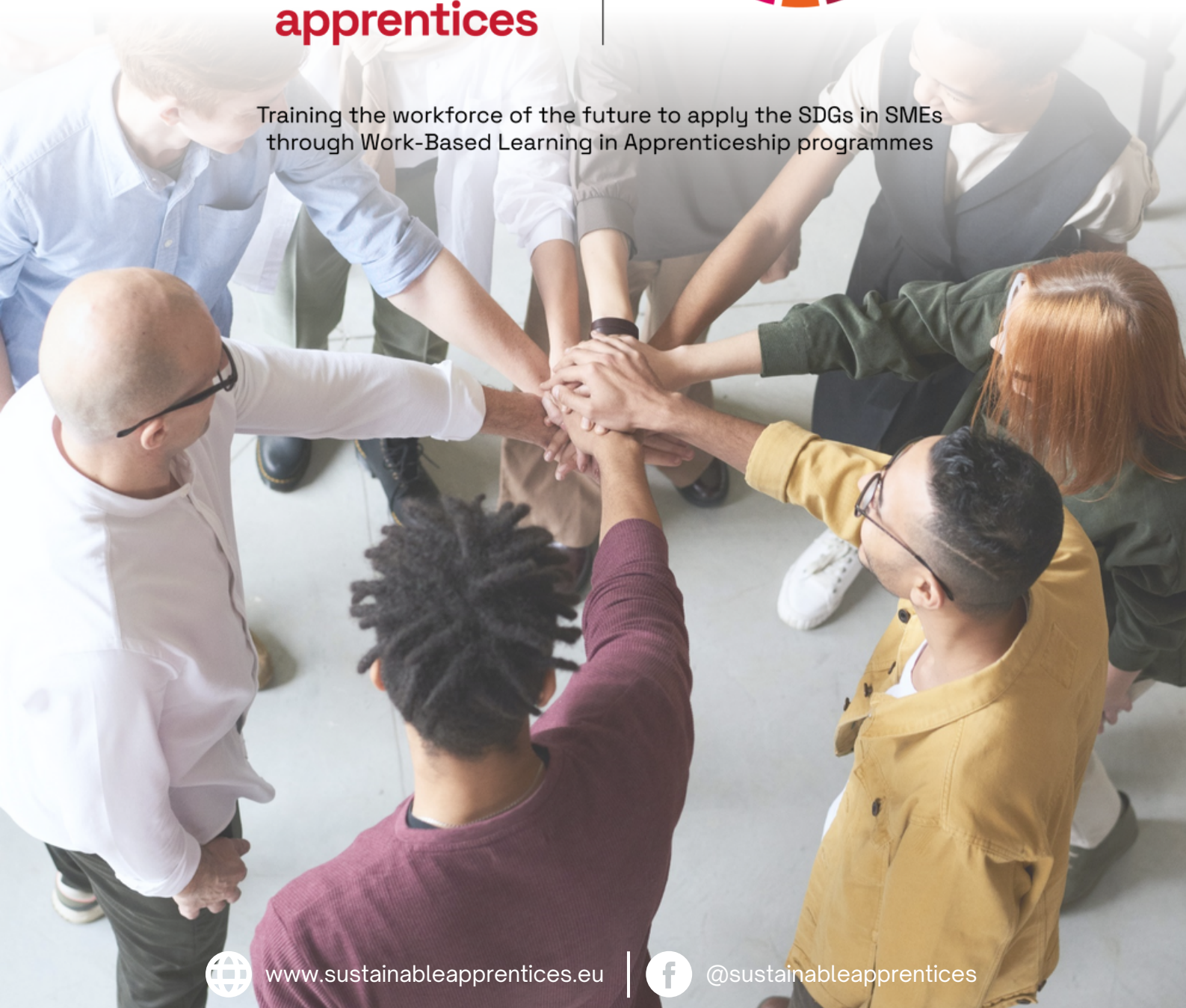
# NEWSLETTER No 1. December 2022



**sustainable  
apprentices**



Training the workforce of the future to apply the SDGs in SMEs through Work-Based Learning in Apprenticeship programmes



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## What is Sustainable Apprentices?

Sustainable Apprentices is an Erasmus+ project. These EU co-founded projects are made to create educational tools for people working in some specific sectors.

Sustainable Apprentices responds, on the one hand, to the needs of an industry that requires qualified workforce in the field of sustainability, new workforce to support and guide Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) through current and future challenges. On the other hand, adapting and enriching the Vocational Education and Training (VET) curricula with the necessary Green and Sustainable Skills to make the leap to the 2030 Agenda. In the current social and economic context it is clear that whoever is not on that train, will be left by the wayside.

Through this Erasmus+ project VET students will raise awareness and acquire technical competences related to the SDGs that they can put into practice through their apprenticeships in SMEs, thus becoming Sustainability Ambassadors in those enterprises already involved or willing to engage in the implementation of the SDGs.

Sustainable Apprentices aims to be the transmission belt between the labour market and VET by creating work-based learning opportunities through apprenticeship programmes aligned to the new economic challenges, and new businesses demands for more sustainable working methods and competences.

The project started in February 2022 and has a duration of two years.

## Who is it for?

This project is addressed to VET educators and in-company trainers, as target users, and to VET students and SMEs, as target beneficiaries.



The project tackles the lack of motivation and interest of learners in standard pedagogical methodologies that do not manage to engage them, by introducing project-based learning methods. This facilitates the development of cross-cutting sustainability competencies in VET students, who will get familiar with the SDGs through gamification and will be able to choose their preferred sustainable domain to develop a project applied to their field of work.

This will produce specific cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural learning outcomes that will enable this working force of the future to deal with the challenges of each SDG in their working environments and personal lives, and, therefore, supporting their achievement by 2030.

## What we intend to do: Project Results

Throughout the two years of the project, the six partners of the consortium together with vocational education institutions and small and medium-sized enterprises will collaborate to carry out a series of activities that will result in five concrete deliverables:

A new **European ECVET Curriculum** with defining competencies, knowledge, and skills needed to support Apprenticeship programmes to implement the SDGs in SMEs and addressed to provide guidance and framework to VET educators and in-company trainers to lead the process.

The Sustainable Apprentices **Online Open Learning Platform**, free access through which users can be trained in the subject and have access to all the material and resources developed by the project.

An **e-Directory** of innovative tools and resources to be used by VET educators and in-company trainers to lead the implementation of SDGs in SMEs by their VET students.

An online ICT-based **educational resources** and a networking hub for VET educators and in-company trainers to share, promote, prevail, and improve the implementation of SDGs in SMEs. These resources will consist of curriculum-based theoretical content on the one hand, and hands-on activities that educators can put into practice with their students.

Finally, we will produce a **methodological framework** to guide the transferability and replication of apprenticeship programmes implementing the SDGs in SMEs in other VET education providers and SMEs around Europe.

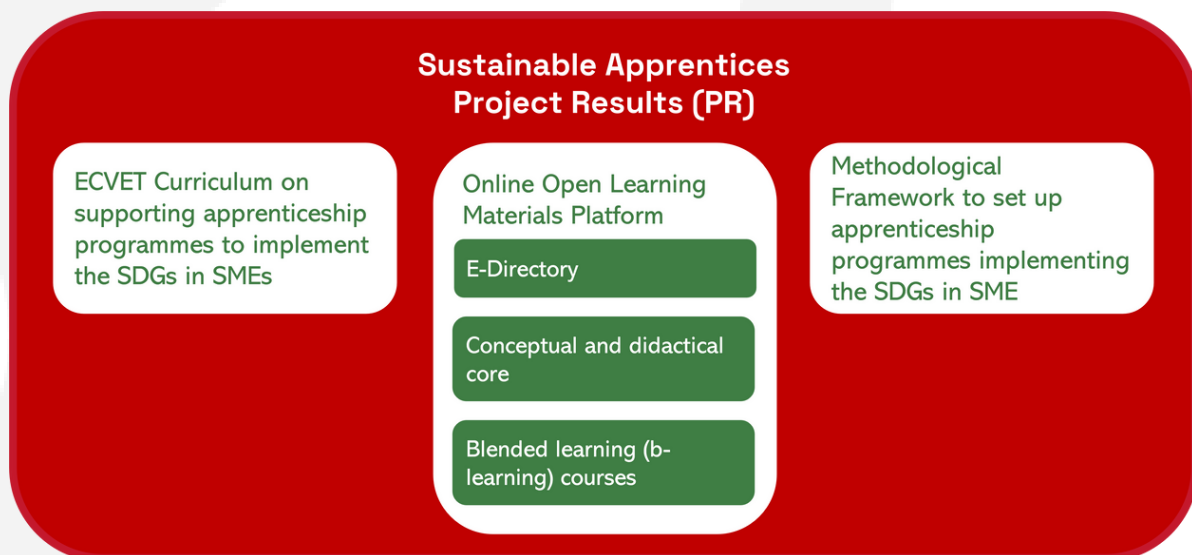


Figure 1. Project Results Diagram

## Who makes up the project consortium

The partnership of Sustainable Apprentices has a privileged position in terms of its connection and presence within the most powerful industrial sector and educational decision-making institutions, as well as with regional and national associations of SMEs and VET providers in Spain, Italy, Portugal, Turkey and Ireland.



The cooperation of partners from these five countries in the elaboration of the ECVET European Curriculum guarantees a transnational approach to needs close to the reality demanded by SMEs and VET providers and contributes to the unification of criteria on supporting apprenticeship programmes to implement the SDGs in SMEs. This transnational and holistic approach is crucial to row in the same direction at a supra-state level in the economic transformation and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, providing a holistic approach that includes the SDGs in a cross-cutting manner in the different areas of VET to educate future generations of work-forces in a sustainable mindset that contributes to a new way of doing business and a greener and more inclusive economy all around Europe.

All six partners have extensive and recognised expertise in creating new educational methodologies to address the gaps in VET, responding to the needs of the labour market as well as being directly linked to the main actors in education, in-company training, and SMEs.

### SPAIN

**Instituto para el Fomento del desarrollo y la Formación**, which is the coordinating entity of the project. INFODEF, which has been accredited as “Innovative SME” by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, is a private and independent centre for Research, Development and Innovation whose mission is to design and carry out projects that contribute to achieve a sustainable and inclusive development through education, culture and innovation.

**Asociación de la Industria Navarra**, is a private non-profit organisation and a technology and innovation centre located. With more than five decades of history er are the benchmark in the development and improvement of the competitiveness of industrial companies in their region. AIN is also a training centre of reference, where professionals from organisations, companies, and VET students and teachers are trained.

### PORTUGAL

**Mindshift Talent Advisory** is a consulting company specialised in Human Resources that invests in the performance and up-skilling of people’s competences, seeking to boost the digital and interpersonal maturity in organisations and society.

## TURKEY

The **Istanbul Valiligi** is the Governorship of Istanbul. Their European Union and Foreign Relations Office gives priority to supporting disadvantaged groups such as individuals with disabilities, migrants, NEETs, and adults in risk of exclusion. In this context, they work with many public institutions, universities, youth and adult education centres, vocational training centres and non-governmental organisations.

## ITALY

**Centro Servizi Formazione** is a foundation for Research and Innovation promoted by the University of Florence, Metropolitan City of Florence, and Foundation CR Firenze. CSF promotes and manages R&D and knowledge-technological transfer projects, involving University of Florence, public institutions, and research bodies and firms, facilitating the exchange of best practices on technology transfer and job placement with industries, SMEs, and public administrations, as well as national and international organisations.

## IRELAND

**InnoQuality Systems** provides programme and policy services designed to enable positive and progressive student and teacher outcomes in early childhood, primary, post secondary, VET and community education. They are experts in improving quality, drive outcomes, and increase accountability in a collaborative educational context, making real improvements and quantifiable results through their educational services.

All project partners collaborate in the planned activities with the aim of achieving the expected results. While INFODEF is the overall project coordinator, InnoQuality Systems, INFODEF and AIN lead the work on project results 1, 2 and 3 respectively. InnoQuality Systems is also responsible for the evaluation and quality assurance of the project execution as well as the final result of each of the RPs. In addition, a committee of subject matter experts from each project country provides external advice to the partners, ensuring that the educational content and outcomes of the project are tailored to the needs of the target audience.

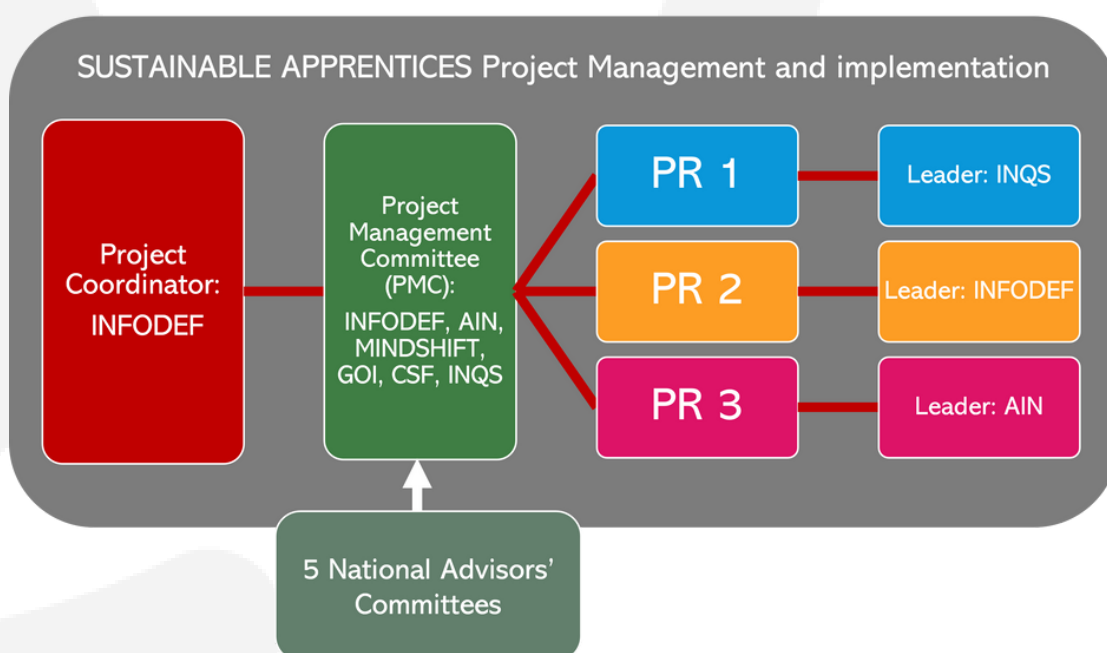


Figure 2. Summary of responsibilities for project implementation and management

## Joint Needs'Analysis: Goals and Objectives

With less than a decade to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), set by the UN Agenda 2030, it is imperative to train the workforce of the future in the principles of sustainable economy, environmental protection, and inclusion to shape the working and business culture of the next generation. The private sector is an essential part of sustainable development and SMEs, which represent 99.8% of business in Europe and employ 97,74% of the workforce (Statista, 2018), are a key part of the sustainable challenge.



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Agenda 2030 set by the UN is a mainstream inspiration and aspiration for policy makers, the industry sector, and education institutions worldwide. Sustainable development is also a priority for the EU and its commitment to the SDGs is strong as shown by the Commission's 'Whole-of-Government approach', both in economic and environmental sustainability (European Green Deal, 2019), and in the ambition of creating a Europe that is fairer, more inclusive, better educated and leaves no one behind (European Pillar of Social Rights, 2020).

The 17 SDGs mark a historic milestone as for the first time an international consensus has been reached on a collective road map for humanity. Governments, businesses, social organisations, and civil society are committed to these goals, which are also universal. After decades of accelerated economic growth, progress has been seen in various aspects of people's daily lives in all European countries. At the same time, this economic model has evidenced flaws with regard to environmental and social aspects that are challenging us to change the way we live and are challenging enterprises to change the way they do business. The commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda is therefore not a challenge that we can achieve individually but must be a common, transnational, and shared effort. However, despite public administration's efforts to promote the SDGs, in Europe, the vast majority of the population is unaware of their concept, let alone their application.



To meet the SDGs, the UN emphasises the key role of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) through cross-cutting competencies and a holistic approach. SDG targets 4.7 and 5.5 call for all learners to have acquired the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to promote sustainable development in both their personal and professional lives by 2030.

## NEEDS' ANALYSIS

Despite public administration's efforts to promote the SDGs, in Europe, the vast majority of the population is unaware of their concept, let alone their application. While in Turkey a large 92% of the population has heard of the SDGs, only 13% are familiar with their concept and concrete targets. However, in the rest of Europe, including Spain, Italy, Ireland, and Portugal, around 80% of the population know nothing about the SDGs (SDG Impact Summit, 2019). This lack of knowledge has been confirmed by the stakeholders of this consortium, industry and VET providers in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Ireland, even in Turkey, who confirm the lack of holistic approaches that include the SDGs in a cross-cutting manner in the different areas of VET to educate future generations of workforce in a sustainable mindset that contributes to a new way of doing business and a greener and more inclusive economy.

About 50% of young Europeans aged 15-19 participate in I-VET at upper secondary level, and although there are large differences in VET education policies and the approach to apprenticeships in different European countries, there is a clear commitment of governments to align with the European alliance for apprenticeships (EAfA) and its value-added approach to work-based learning. The creation of a new Sustainable Apprentices ECVET European Curriculum will contribute to the unification of criteria on supporting Apprenticeship programmes to implement the SDGs in SMEs, and will be crucial to row in the same direction at a supra-state level in the economic transformation and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

The direct relationship and joint collaborations in previous projects of the Sustainable Apprentices consortium with the industrial sector and key national and European educational decision-making institutions, has facilitated a comprehensive needs analysis of businesses and VET education related to the implementation of sustainable practices, to be addressed by this project:

- The SMEs' demand for young workers trained in the SDGs to respond to the challenges of the future faced by the private sector.
- The lack of a holistic approach in VET institutions that addresses not only environmental responsibility in all professions and business models, but also the key aspects of the Agenda 2030 such as inclusion, gender equality, cooperation, and innovation for development.
- Lack of coordination between VET educators and in-company trainers to guide and assist apprentices with a common understanding.



The partners have chosen to carry out this project not only have a wide and recognised experience in the creation of new educational methodologies to address VET gaps and to respond to the needs of the labour market but they are also directly linked to the main policy-making stakeholders in education, in-company training, and SMEs. This will guarantee a transnational approach to needs close to the reality demanded by SMEs and VET providers.

### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

There is therefore a clear and urgent need for SMEs to jump on the sustainability innovation bandwagon, for which they need both their current and future workforce to be aligned with a new, more sustainable working methods and practices to achieve the transformation of all these sectors required by the 2030 Agenda. To respond to these needs, Sustainable Apprentices aims at supporting VET teachers and in-company trainers to create new Work-based Learning opportunities to foster the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs through

digital tools and Project-based Learning methods.

The concrete objectives of the project are:

- Develop a new European ECVET Curriculum to support the implementation of SDGs in SMEs through Apprenticeship programmes.
- Train the workforce of the future with Green Skills and the SDGs to support the adaptation of SMEs to the current sustainable challenges and new economic demands.
- Raise awareness on the opportunities derived from the implementation of the SDGs in SMEs' business strategies.
- Generate and develop SDGs project-based learning approaches adapted to different working sectors through Work-based Learning.
- Understand in practice the individual capacity of workers to promote sustainable improvements in society through their working environments.



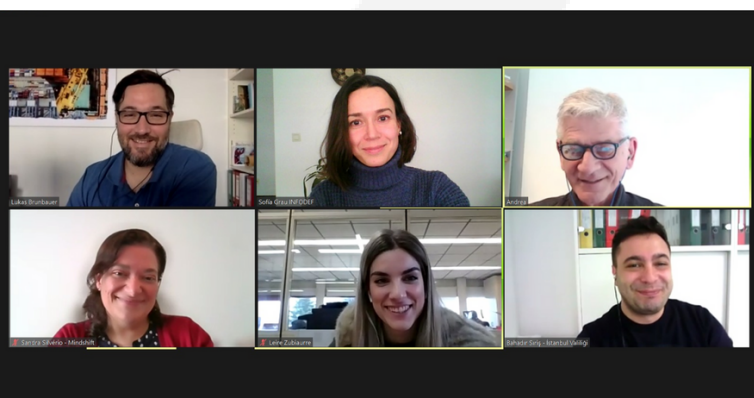


## From the Kick-off to the first results of the project

### KICK-OFF MEETING

In March 2022, the **kick-off meeting** took place, initially planned in Valladolid, the city of the coordinating partner INFODEF, but finally held online. This first meeting served to set up the initial agreements and contracts between the partners as well as to introduce ourselves to each other, reinforcing team building, shared understanding of the project objectives and the sharing of tasks and commitment to a common goal. The coordinator gave a detailed presentation of the project management tools and plans, the Risk Management protocol and the internal Communication Agreement. INQS presented the work plan for the ECVET curriculum (PR 1) and INFODEF presented the work plan for the open online learning materials platform (PR 2).

Partners also discussed on the evaluation techniques together with the design of the B-Learning course.



### SETTLEMENT MEETING

In September 2022 the partners met face-to-face for the first time in Lisbon, Portugal, to celebrate the **Settlement meeting**, hosted by Mindshift. During the meeting we made progress in the presentation of the beta version of the ECVET Curriculum (PR 1) and were able to evaluate the degree of development of the Online Open Learning Materials Platform (PR 2). In relation to this project outcome we were able to lay the foundations of the e-Directory, the Conceptual and Didactical core and the training contents and pragmatic resources.



## ECVET CURRICULUM FINALISED (PR 1)

The first project result, **ECVET Curriculum on supporting Apprenticeship programmes to implement the SDGs in SMEs** was completed in October and has been developed as an Open Educational Resource in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish and Italian. The curriculum contains six units that articulate the knowledge base for VET educators and in-company trainers to help develop internship programmes in line with the SDGs.



The curriculum is structured in the following learning units:



Learning Unit 1. Sustainability and green practices in SMEs (including considerations in young workforce training)



Learning Unit 2. Fostering the implementation of SDGs in SMEs through strategic planning



Learning Unit 3. Gamification to introduce the SDGs to the young workforce



Learning Unit 4. Good practices of work-based learning in SMEs



Learning Unit 5. Successfully managing apprenticeship programmes



Learning Unit 6. Effective training for implementing sustainable practices

## THE CONTENTS OF THE ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM COMPLETED (PR 2)

On the other hand, progress has been made in the development of the second project result. The resources for the **eDirectory** are now completed, the **Conceptual and Didactical Core** has been finalised and the educational content and practical activities for each of the learning units marked in the curriculum have been developed. All these resources will soon be available on the **Sustainable Apprentices Online Open Learning Materials Platform**.



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