Addressing social exclusion

Addressing social exclusion can be addressed at a number of levels – international, national and local.

NANSSI has suggested that much can be done starting at a local level, especially when policy makers are probably engaged in more fundamental issues around finance. However, by working at a local level, and engaging those who are excluded through simple, cost-effective local schemes, issues associated with maintaining expensive social welfare programmes may be diminished.

Within NANSSI we were asked to consider how programmes to promote social inclusion could be used to engage people in the new skills for new jobs agenda of Europe and to develop an action plan to support this.

PROPOSED ACTION PLAN FOR LOW SKILLED PEOPLE TO LINK THEIR SKILLS TO VET PROGRAMMES

The action plan has TWO parts intended for:
- Representative bodies – (such as AOC and MBO Raad), advocate to ministers and other policy makers at national and EU level to consider flexibility in approach to employability systems for young people and adults when considering engagement and job creation
- Individual organisations (colleges)

Action plan for representative bodies
The action plan is designed to engage policy makers in discussions at national/EU level to achieve demonstrable results. This also has to be linked to demonstration projects in colleges (see below)

What	Who to
1. Deliver messages based on NANSSI about the nature (ie small is beautiful) and cost (largely core funding) of engagement	Government departments with an interest in social inclusion and job creation At own, national and EU (eg EUproVET) events
2. Through the presentation use case studies derived from NANSSI	As above, with real people who have benefitted contributing where poossible
3. Present ideas for future projects linked to new skills for new jobs and reducing youth employment agendas	As above
4. Identify how existing funding streams can be utilised to support proposed new priority projects, at same time seeking additional funding	eg Lottery, social benefactors, charitable organisations, corporate social responsibility (especially in energy sector)

Education and Culture DG
Lifelong Learning Programme

EACEA
Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency

MBO Raad

Association of Colleges

Action plan at a local level/for colleges

The action plan has been designed as a checklist to enable providers to follow a process to enable recognition of their skills and experience, combined with an emphasis on developing employability skills contextualised to their specific interests.

Checklist item	√
1. Identify local needs in conjunction with key local community partners and other relevant stakeholders	
2. Identify those activities which will engage those who are socially excluded, following QCF/local NQF principles and guidelines	
3. Devise and accredit short programmes to engage, incorporating employability skills where possible, based on interests of those who are excluded	
4. Apply local/national RPL policies to accredit prior learning and experience based on specific QCF/NQF units	
5. Use flexibilities for the QCF/national NQF/aligned to EQF to fund bite-sized learning for engagement	
6. Certify learners who complete the engagement programmes and celebrate their success	
7. Apply diagnostic assessment at a time (probably once first programme is completed successfully) to evaluate future skills needs	
8. Develop further programmes which lead into established national qualifications and awards	

Supporting learning through social media and digital technologies

## Principles and guidelines for the use of social media for learning

1. Social media and new technologies will only work is supported by excellent teaching and learning strategies which are led from the top in an institution.
2. Social media must, therefore, be complementary to other forms of earning and assessment.
3. Social media has considerable value as a learning tool provided that teachers and instructors are sufficiently trained and confident to maximise their use.
4. Use of social media alone will not encourage learning without instruction/guidance.
5. Digital technologies/smart learning can do much to engage and encourage learning, providing that time for reflection is built in.
6. Social media and digital/smart technologies can encourage learning in the global context through the development of online and cloud partnerships
7. Social media can encourage progression through peer interaction and through supporting and reinforcing learning activity regardless of where the recipient of that learning is
8. Social media cannot be the panacea for all forms of engagement; however, the widespread available of smart technologies makes it increasingly accessible to most individuals and communities.
9. Social media and smart technologies can enable access to learning and development in remote, isolated and closed communities, provided that cultural and ethical sensitivities are recognised.
10. Inability to access social media, for whatever reason, must not result in learning or social exclusion.
11. Young people and adults must, as part of their learning, understand how to stay safe when using social media and other smart technologies

PRINCIPLES FOR VET COOPERATION

Principles of a VET cooperation framework

1. Learners, and their mobility, at its heart, especially those from vulnerable or disadvantaged groups
2. Cross-Europe recognition of skills and portability of qualifications central to the framework, including in the workplace with an emphasis on the new skills and competences needed across Europe, based on international occupational standards
3. Progression of learners in formal, informal and non-formal learning encouraged and recognised
4. Founded on equivalency, so avoiding unnecessary repeat of learning
5. Framework based on designing, aligning and articulating qualifications to the EQF, including employability and skills development programmes
6. Robust and transparent assessment and quality assurance driven forward by cooperation
7. Teacher and trainers are trained to European standards (ESCO)
8. Cooperation founded on making best use of social media and digital technologies for collaboration and to support learning in VET systems
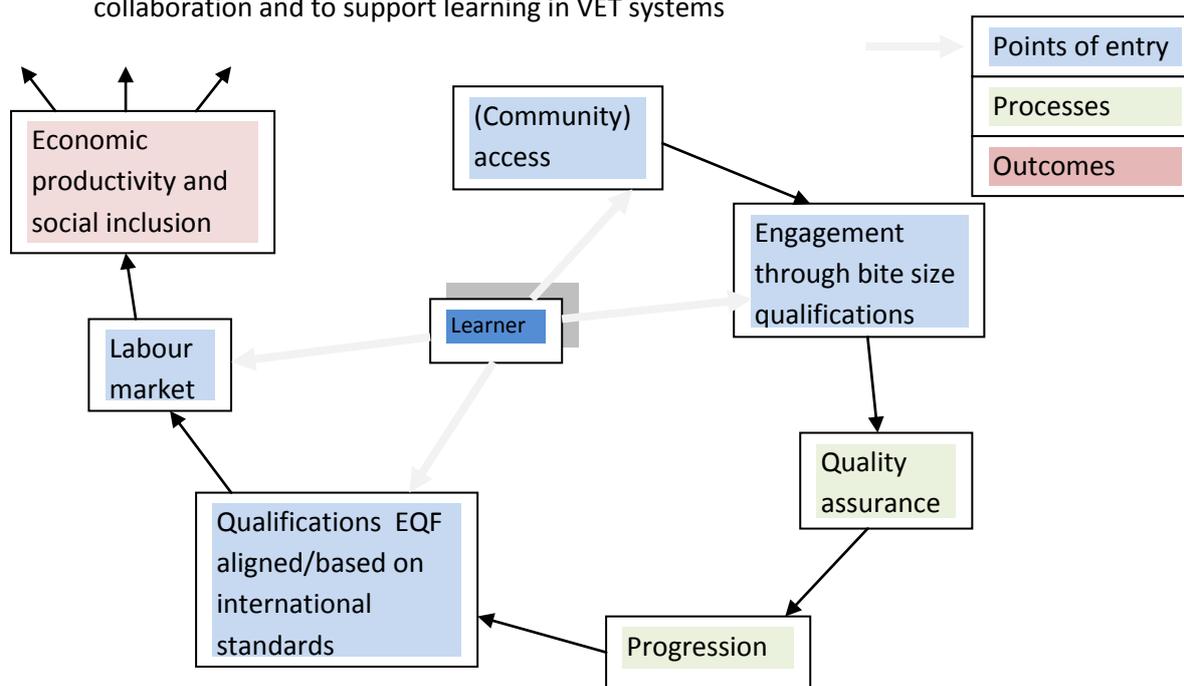
PRINCIPLES FOR A VET ALUMNI SCHEME

Alumni schemes, in universities and colleges and, increasingly in the corporate world, are a very useful way of keeping in touch with successful students or employees, encouraging them back for a variety of purposes (courses, jobs and possibly fund raising) and a useful way of extending a brand.

For the alumni, they offer a number of benefits:

- Networking is one of the main advantages to joining an alumni scheme
- Special interest groups can be set up to put alumni in touch with those who have interests in the same field
- Both these provide a ready-made opportunity to make contacts and maybe get a boost up the career ladder
- Most schemes also offer a range of commercial benefits as well which may link them with their previous college, university or employer

Some colleges and university schemes use alumni as ambassadors to promote their experiences to other potential students or even corporate clients. As a result in alumni can enable businesses and educational establishments work more closely together.

Relationship between an alumni scheme and Europass

In Europe we already have 'Europass', which consist to a series of documents that have been designed to present an individual's skills in the best possible way, and consistently across Europe, to employers. One of these is a transcript - the Europass certificate Supplement which is provided by awarding organisations to define an individual's skills and supplement their CV.

We see an alumni scheme being set up primarily for those who already have Europass, although there may be VET learners who have gained skills in the workplace, or outside Europe, and want to have them recognised. This would be phase 2 of the scheme.

Principles of a VET alumni scheme

The principles would be as follows:

- Open to everybody who has gained at least a one VET qualification/certification at any level
- Full alumni benefits for those who have achieved a level 2 or above
- Available to anybody who has at least one Europass certificate
- Alumni keep in touch through social networking, such as a special group within LinkedIn
- Linked to other EU schemes such as Leonardo?

What else we need to consider

- Who could manage or oversee the scheme – Europass, Eurodesk UK, individual organisations, another?
- Would there be a fee for becoming a VET alumnus and if so what would it 'buy'?
- What should the level of membership be for those at level 1 or below to encourage them and raise their aspirations?
- What specific benefits would VET alumni attract – or should be able to attract (eg should the scheme manager negotiate discounts on car hire, hotel accommodation etc?)
- Would someone have to participate in a European-related piece of learning to qualify as a VET alumni?

BEYOND NANSSI: A DISCUSSION PAPER

A key outcome of NANSSI is to explore ideas for new transnational projects that build on the directly on the development and cooperation activity, focusing on the themes of:

- New Skills for New Jobs
- Youth on the Move

and at the same time address issues of educational, economic and social exclusion.   Our new project addresses these central themes, which lie at the heart of European policy for lifelong learning, and extend and develop the work of NANSSI.

The current NANSSI project is also developing:

- principles for a VET alumni system, based on Europass
- a clear understanding of how the European Qualifications framework can be used to encourage national and regional mobility so that skills developed in one country can be recognised in another

We wish to take forward implementation work associated with the former in new projects.   These include strategies and activities that directly relate to the use of the EQF as an enabling mechanism for skills development across Europe and linking this theme with that of the VET alumni by reviewing and modelling European approaches to recognition of prior learning. We believe that we need between two to four European partners to ensure the success of future projects.

The longer term beneficiaries for the work we propose will be those learners who will be targeted in VET colleges and in communities who have low skills and/or aspirations and as a result are facing poor social inclusion and mobility in the new economy of Europe. They include young people who are at risk of unemployment or underemployment who have insufficient skill levels to contribute to the future European economy and older people in the workplace who may need to re-skill to contribute to the New Skills For New Jobs agenda.

Much future work will be delivered by the inclusion of partner organisations being able to experiment with new ideas in a relatively risk-free environment. They will bring their own rich experiences to the project, complementary ideas and projects which will enhance the deliverables for the benefit of all partners and more widely across Europe.

Our proposals all focus on the learning needs of young people and adults ain an increasingly competitive Europe. They uses well respected enabling mechanisms such as the EQF (and the 'to be developed' ESCO) participants to ensure that outcomes will have international (European wide) currency. Ongoing dissemination will be through websites, national and international conferences.

Following on from the outcomes of NANSSI existing networks will need to be be kept informed of progress at all stages through individual contacts throughout the project – so enabling dissemination even when fudning may not be available. Dedicated web pages will be built and social media such as Twitter will enable progress to be followed by organisations and individuals, and for them to respond and contribute immediately. In this way participants will be able to exploit readily available and

inexpensive media and evaluate on an ongoing basis how it can bring a new approach to trans-European cooperation.

The development of an EU-wide VET alumni system and a Europe wide approach to recognition of prior learning are identified as specific deliverables which will enable far-reaching effects on the key target groups to be realised in the longer term.

AN INTEGRATED PROGRAMME CONCEPT

Building on the experiences of NANSSI we wish to see project sbeing developed which are directly related to the New Skills for New Jobs agenda, and underpinned by the European Framework for Key Competencies, but as shown below, is informed by the key objectives, policies and initiatives of:

- transversal policy and operational objectives: development and delivery of innovative approaches to ICT
- transversal policy: disseminating and exchanging best practice
- specific objective: promoting quality and transparency of Member States' education and training systems, linking to sectoral systems
- horizontal policy: equity and inclusion
- the specific driver: Youth on the Move

This approach will ensure, that should any funding become available, the projects are already aligned to the key policies and strategies for learning in Europe. In particular, we propose that there is a direct relationship with the EQF as a mechanism for accelerating progress in the acquisition of vocational skills.

The diagram below proposes haw different project themes arising from the outcomes of NANSSI form an integrated structure in developing learning for the new skills agenda of Europe.

NEW SKILLS FOR NEW JOBS

EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK+ ESCO	Youth on the Move		Support cooperation at European level in lifelong learning	Innovative ICT (digital learning and social media)
		Specific objectives Promote European cooperation in fields covering sectoral programmes (Leonardo) Promote quality and transparency of Member states' education and training systems	*Operational objectives:*	*Transversal policies:*
		SPIRITS (**S**hared **P**ractices of **I**nnovative, **R**esponsive, **I**nclusive & **T**ransferable **S**trategies)		
		New Approaches, New Skills for Social Inclusion (NANSSI)		
		Horizontal policies Equality and inclusion and cultural awareness		

EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR KEY COMPETENCES

Education and Culture DG
Lifelong Learning Programme

EAC**EA**
Education, Audiovisual & Culture
Executive Agency

MBO
Raad

A○C
Association of Colleges

THEME SUMMARY

Each theme is summarised below. There may be many other potential themes to emerge especially, for example, related to accelerating apprenticeships in the UK or in the development of mobility schemes across all potential partners. As a result these project themes are designed to be indicative rather than definitive and are presented for discussion only.

Theme A: Innovative learning to deliver new skills for Europe

This theme builds on the previous work being undertaken through NANSSI to identify ways in which using digital learning can accelerate the development of skills for young people and adults in learning which focus on the New Skills for New Jobs agenda across different European countries.

Theme B: Addressing youth disengagement through new approaches to participation

This theme draws directly on the experiences from NANSSI and other projects which have involved the partners, such as School–Ex, and uses the examples of best practice from each nation for each to experiment with new approaches to engaging young people with low skills in VET, particularly vital at a time of rapidly rising youth unemployment.

Theme C: Skills for employability and learning

This theme looks at ways in which partners across Europe have delivered key employability and learning skills for young people and adults using innovative methods, including emerging technologies.   It will draw on best practice, including EDAM, to produce a compendium of schemes and resources that can be used by participating nations across Europe.

Theme D: Innovation in energy capabilities: towards a pan-European 'low carbon apprenticeship'

This theme specifically addresses the development of intermediate skills to tackle the low carbon/greening agenda, central to the New Skills for New Jobs agenda. It reviews the programmes currently available looks at how the EQF can be used to articulate between them, shared best practice in delivery and assessment and consider the option of a pan-European 'low carbon' apprenticeship in low carbon technologies.

Theme E: Transferability – a VET alumni scheme for Europe

This theme draws on the experiences of NANSSI and takes up the principles of a VET alumni system to develop and pilot a framework for recognition and transfer of skills across nations. This is very closely related to Youth on the Move and is aligned to the principles of Europass.

Theme F: Recognising prior VET learning across Europe

In many nations, there is only lip service to recognition of prior learning. This theme, researches the approaches of the partner nations, agrees a workable trans-national definition and looks at the models and experiences of RPL aligned to the EQF. It underpins all the other themes and as such provides a coordination mechanism for many of the other outcomes.

QUESTION: What other themes could be built on based on NANSSI or otherwise aligned to improving social inclusion and mobility?

WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

In order to build on NANSSI, we need, first and foremost, the commitment and input of organisations that we have worked with across Europe. These will be the membership organisations and also colleges who have contributed to NANSSI.

Some of the activity can be achieved without additional funding. For example, making use of the flexibilities of the individual qualifications frameworks aligned to the EQF is a nation-specific activity which should be readily accommodated. Building on the evidence and experience of NANSSI, bringing colleges together to experiment with trans-national as well as national schemes is, for example, possible.

FACILITATING FUTURE WORK

Facilitating future work on a trans-European scale requires an organisation prepared to take the lead. In the absence at present of European funding one organisation may need to take the lead in a coordinating role, but this would need to be without any transfer of funds to enable this to occur.

On the other hand, it may be necessary for each individual membership organisation to take the lead in its own country, and through international/European networks, to 'keep in touch' about progress until such a time as new European funding can be attracted. However, the reality is that after this year this may be minimal given the funding position across Europe.

Question: How can we sustain development work in the absence of funding streams? Are there other sources of funding we can access, from, for example, benevolent Foundations, the business sector?

PROFORMA 1:

HOW DO WE ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION? (Item 2a)

Question	Idea/comment
How feasible is it to develop social inclusion partnerships at a local level?	
What is needed to develop such partnership?	
Is the training we currently offer for the socially excluded sufficiently aspirational?	
How can we ensure that our training for the socially excluded takes into account employability needs and the new skills needed in Europe?	
Is the action plan for VET providers the right one? What else might we need to do?	

PROFORMA 2:

HOW CAN WE USE SOCIAL MEDIA EFFECTIVELY? (item 2b)

Question	Idea/comment
What is the place of social media in engaging the socially excluded?	
Are the principles outlined correct? Do we need to add others?	
What can we do to use social media and digital learning to encourage and support learners?	Social media Digital learning
What are the challenges we face in using social media for learning?	
How can we overcome any challenges?	

PROFORMA 3:

HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE AND DEVELOP VET COOPERATION AND MOBILITY? (Item 3a and 3b)

Question	Idea/comment
What are the benefits of encouraging VET cooperation and mobility?	
Are existing European mobility schemes enough?	
What would we be able to do if there was no funding of VET mobility schemes?	
Are the principles for VET cooperation the right ones? Is there anything you would add or subtract?	
Is the idea of a VET alumni scheme feasible at the present time?	
If 'yes' do you agree with the principles outlined for a VET alumni scheme?	

PROFORMA 4:

WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE?

WHAT IDEAS DO WE HAVE TO TAKE NANSSI FORWARD?

WHAT DO WE TELL THE POLICY MAKERS?

Question	Idea/comment
Future priorities to engage the socially excluded and to promote skills for the new jobs of Europe at a time of reduced funding	1 2. 3.
Based on NANSSI, what ideas should be taken forward?	1. 2. =
What shall we do first in our own organisation?	
What should we and our representative bodies be telling policy-makers?	
Any other comments/ideas to take the work forward?	