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# Interreg Alpine Space



## DuALPlus

European Regional Development Fund



# ORIENTATION NEEDS OF YOUNGSTERS: CHALLENGES FOR DUAL EDUCATION

## ● WORK PACKAGE

T1 - Career guidance and recognition

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## ABSTRACT

As to the growing demand of trainees in sectors in the industry it is of strong importance to establish an overall understanding of needed orientation and issues that arise in youngsters when making their choice about their further educational path. As this issue also strongly applies to the field of craftsmanship the conducted survey aimed at creating an orientation toolbox that can help choosing. This paper presents the results of the survey conducted in the work package “Career guidance and recognition of dual education” of the DuALPlus project, which is co-financed by the European Union via Interreg Alpine Space. The survey investigates the opinion of the public (in particular parents and youngster) on different topics regarding various education systems, especially the dual education program, in the different project partner regions located in Italy, Austria, Germany, Slovenia, France, and Switzerland. The main aim of the survey was to elaborate the orientation need of young people in regards of education and vocational training. The results show that although many of the participants know about the different educational paths, including the dual educational program, there are still many insecurities and a lack of information. The greatest issue in this field definitely lies in the low prestige and social recognition that the dual system currently has in today’s society. The different findings are to be implemented in the building process for the orientation toolbox that is to be used in all the different PP’s regional areas.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The process of career orientation of young people can be influenced by a variety of different factors. On the one hand, these can be structural factors such as school level or educational structures, but also the expectations and values of young people, e.g. in the form of goals, plans and educational attitudes play a role. In addition, the social environment such as family, school and friends can inhibit or positively support the career orientation process. Access to support services and existing contacts (networks) is an important influencing factor in this context. Another possible impact factor can be the personality of the young person, more precisely his/her information and coping strategies, as well as his/her interests.

To get a better understanding to which influences youngsters in the project partner countries are exposed on their future education decisions a survey was conducted, as part of the EU-project DuALPlus. Young people, parents and experts were questioned on their research methods for trainings, their knowledge about the dual training system, as well as the skills and job expectations of the young people, the influences on their decisions and their use of media. The aim of the survey was to uncover information gaps and to understand the youngsters' orientation process better. In the following the surveys of the parents and young people get analyzed and compared to each other.

Before being able to understand the improvements or changes that become necessary in the partner regions it is fundamental to establish a basic understanding of the point of view of young people and their parents and how they make the decision about their future education path. The work package "Career guidance and recognition of dual education" is therefore aiming at establishing a general understanding of the situation, regarding the current or future education choice of participants in the project partner areas.

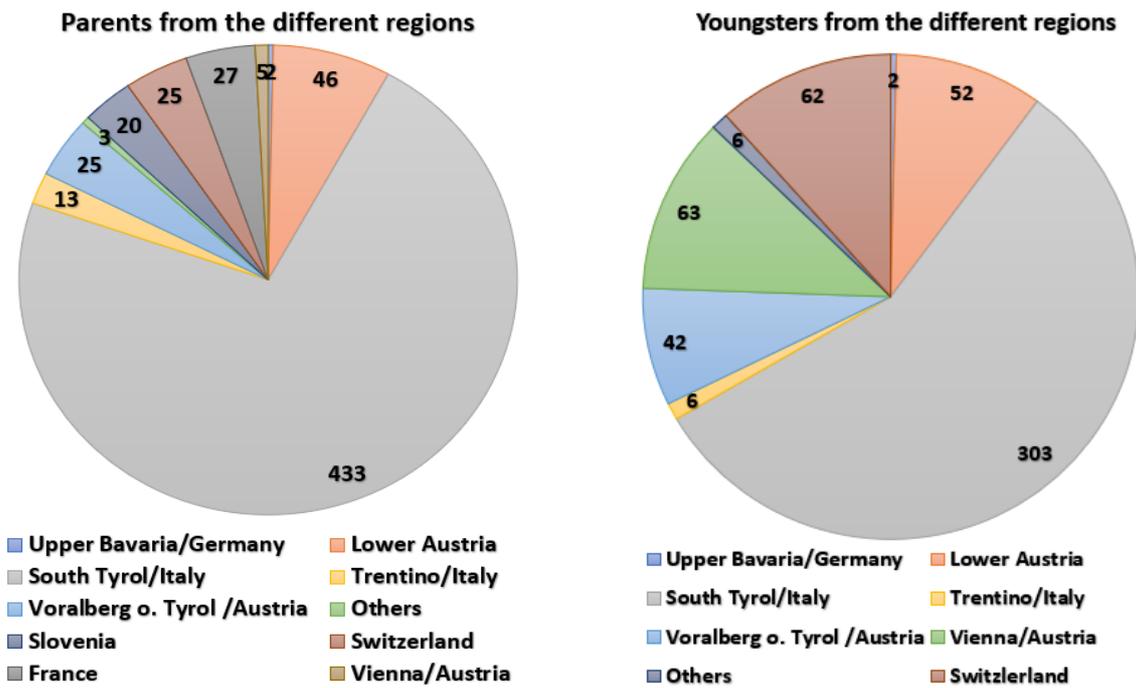
## 2 METHOD

Before conducting interviews, it was decided by the project partners to adopt a joint methodology to analyze the orientation needs and perspectives of youngsters. The methodology involved a mix of quantitative, like Online- and Offline surveys, and qualitative methods, like short interviews. It was decided to present the outcomes of the survey in a common need's analysis report. So, the overall goal of this document is to give insights into the perspectives and orientation needs of youngsters in the Alpine countries and is to be used as an input for enhancing or developing needed orientation tools in the project partner areas.

For the collection of the project partner area information a short online survey was used and one answer per project partner was needed. In addition, every project partner was responsible for sending the questionnaire to the target groups within the areas. The survey aimed at helping to question the applied decision-making process and to uncover possible information gaps.

One part of Online and Offline surveys was targeted at young people currently undergoing the decision-making process for their educational path or who are currently undergoing training as well as at their parents. Furthermore, to underline the data and/or to explain the single area situation better, it was decided to carry out further and additional requests/interviews with external partners/institutions like public or private orientation organizations, schools, parent and/or student organizations, etc.

For the inquiry three different target groups with 5 diverse surveys were consulted – 536 young people, 599 parents and 165 experts. Altogether 1300 respondents participated. Of these, one survey interviewed 559 parents and 474 young people, each in German, English, Italian and French. In this survey most of the parents answering were from the Italian regions South Tyrol and Trentino with 446 (77,9%) followed by Austria with 76 (13,28%) in the regions of Lower Austria, Vienna and Vorarlberg/Tyrol. From the youngsters 309 (57,65%) were from Italy (South Tyrol and Trentino) followed by 157 from Austria (29,29%) including Vienna, Lower Austria and Vorarlberg/Tyrol. A third poll for 87 people - which consist of 25 parents and 62 children - for Switzerland was carried out. In France and in Slovene the survey was only available to parents for data protection reasons. Thus, 20 parents from Slovene and 27 parents from France (in total there were 32 answers, but only 27 could be evaluated) participated. Moreover, 165 experts from South Tyrol were invited to discuss the topic "Success factors of dual training". These experts consisted of entrepreneurs, instructors, masters and commercial specialists. In the following part only the surveys of the parents and youngsters of the project partner countries are analyzed.



The list of questions that was to be answered by the different target groups, was created with the overall aim of understanding the orientation needs of young people, to understand how orientation offers are placed on the market and to verify whether there is a need to enhance or develop it further. The overall aim of this work package is ultimately to exchange good practices at international level within the consortium and to create a sort of guidance toolbox that may be of support to all institutions that want to offer or further develop their orientation activities. Secondly, the questions also aimed at understanding who the target groups were, how important orientation activities are for them in the process of decision making and to discover who within the family/society is in charge for guiding the youngsters to and through the orientation process. Taking into consideration that the whole school system that they are surrounded by, both public and private, teachers and tutors, as well as politics and other institutions have some influence on their decision making. Interesting was also to discover the differences, if applicable, between the opinions of youngster and their relatives/family members.

A question, of fundamental importance, while establishing the methodology was, “Do youngsters even know about the dual education-system and the opportunities it offers?”.

## 3 RESULTS

In the surveys conducted with parents and young people the different questions and comparisons brought very interesting results.

**In the first part**, questions like “What orientation service do you know?”, “Have you visited them?”, “Have you gotten in touch with them?”, “What is your satisfaction level?” were posed.

When analyzing the results, it becomes quite clear that both parties, parents and children, have gotten in touch with the Open day/school fairs orientation tool. The **Open Day initiatives** offer an opportunity for parents and children to visit schools and get information on their training offers.

Second in place are “school visits or information events by professional organizations/associations”, where **56,41%** of children answered that they knew about this form of orientation. In this type of orientation tool an organization comes to the school, thus getting the orientation offer closer to the school and not the other way around.

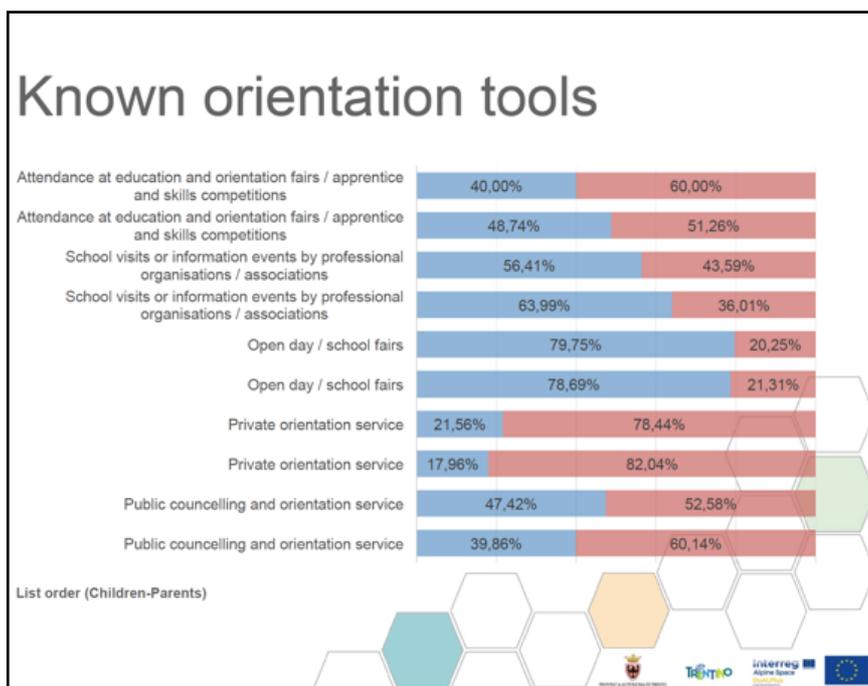


Figure 1- "What orientation service do you know?"

Interesting is also to see that both the **public counseling and private orientation services** (in Italy only 40% of school fairs offer an orientation) are given only **little attention**. In summary, the satisfaction is highest on open days and school visits, whereas there is room for improvement for all the other types of offer, especially as regards public and private services.

**A second aspect** the surveys focused on, was the strengths, talents and interests of the youth in the respective project partner regional areas.

Both young people and their parents were questioned to find out whether they shared the same views on the children’s first strengths, on their ability in using digital devices and tools. The answers were very different: parents think that their children’s first strengths are the ability to **understand logical relationships** while the children themselves see their strengths in **having fantasy and plenty of ideas** that can be exploited into the training world and perhaps in the working world.

At the question “Be good with computers/tablets and other digital devices” parents think that, since their children can use tablets/computers/smartphones, they are “wonderful at working with computers”, whereas children don’t actually feel that good. Using a tablet for fun is way different from using a computer for work. Another aspect is that, while parents believe that their children are good in handling tools, **young people rank this ability as the last option** in the list: so, there are in fact differences in perception among parents and young people. In regards to young’s interests, the same as above applies: some points are shared between parents and their children, whereas others diverge. **Shared points include the interests of children in visiting markets and shopping, playing sport etc.** The

observation shows that young people don't feel very confident at handling tools, whereas parents believe that they can and they're interested in that. Furthermore, while there is an interest to work outside and help at home, parents don't share the same perception; while parents guess their children are interested in learning languages, youth claim not to like it.

In one point the opinions of children and parents collide very visibly and this is so when looking at the results for **job expectations** that they wish for after their educational path. Both parents and children think that a job should allow improvement of skills, specialization, give access to lifelong learning. These factors are followed by the wish for steady employment after completing the training process, a good salary, a **profession with career opportunities** and with a good work-family life balance, free weekends and holidays.

Next to job expectations a strong influence on children's opinions are the **views and concerns of their parents**. Ultimately parents act as a role model and the findings show that they have a great responsibility in the orientation process.

Not to underestimate is also the impact that **influencers** on Social Media tools like Instagram, Snapchat etc. have on the opinion and decision making of children in the orientation process.

A point where the opinions of parents and children differ strongly again are the **aspects technical training and school grades**. As for the first aspect, parents are aware that today technical training is highly sought for in the labor market, since difficulties in finding skilled workers govern the labor market. As for the second aspect, while children don't attach much importance to school grades, for parents having good grades is an important criterion for choosing one training path over another.

A very interesting point that was realized while analyzing the results of the surveys is the view of parents and children on the question "**Are there different views/opinions in the education to choose?**". Here the results differ again: showing that situations can be interpreted very differently by the two target audiences. The children and parents were asked whether there are differences between each other's views when talking about orientation. 75% of parents say no, but for children that's only 60%. If the two parties are asked "If do you have different ideas, how do you decide or how did you decide?" as a follow up, the majority of children answer "In any case I will do what I feel like doing", whereas parents noted that they would try to discussion it first and, in case of continued divergence, they would **accept the decisions taken by their children**.

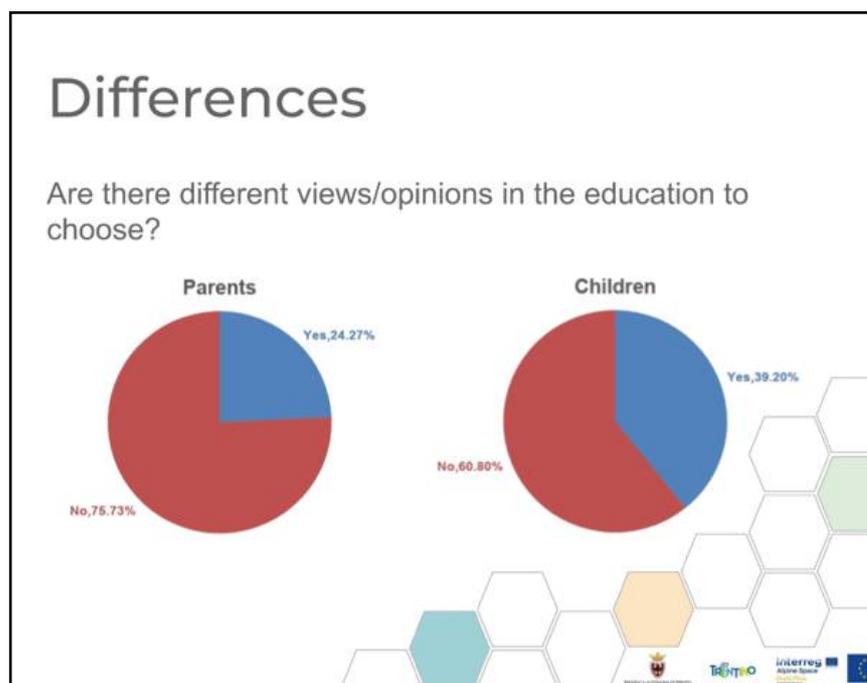


Figure 2 - "Are there different views/opinions in the education to choose?"

After having assessed strengths, talents and interests, parents and their children were asked whether they know the different training systems in their areas, referring to the five territories of the project. As for the parents, **82% declare to know about the education system** of their region, the global education and training system, the vocational training, the full-time training, high schools, vocational and technical schools. When asked whether they know the **dual system** education, a positive answer is given by 75% of parents and **only by 50% of youth**.

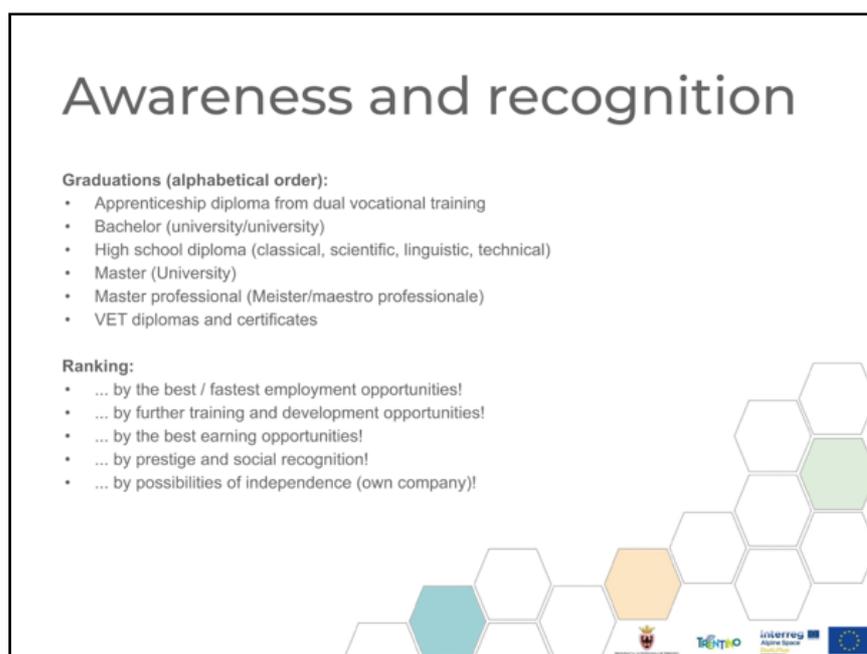
When asked whether they know how the dual education is handled at schools, there are similar results: a **positive answer is given by the 69% of parents**. While in comparison only 51% of children declare to know about how the dual education system is working. Furthermore, when asked whether they know how the dual education is provided in a company, a positive answer is given by the 68% of parents and only by the 35% of children. When asked about the economic aspect of the dual system, “Do you know how your salary is calculated? Or whatever you will be paid when you will be training?”, it is observed that, in both targets, **less than half know how the salary is calculated**. This is especially interesting when comparing it to the 69% of parents initially stated that they knew how the dual educational program works. The results of this section are very important as it gives an idea of where to start educating about the dual program.

In the next part of the survey, parents and their children were asked to **rank several diplomas** by the following criteria:

- best/fastest employment opportunities,
- further training and development opportunities,
- best earning opportunities,
- prestige and social recognition,
- possibilities of independence (creation of own company).

The presence of the different territories (Slovenia, Italy, France, Switzerland, etc.) and education systems, graphs were not seen as the best way of visualizing the results. Therefore, when analyzing the aim was to recognize positive tendencies for the dual program training over academic training.

In the ranking by the **fastest employment opportunities**, the vocational and technical diplomas are positioned high on the list; academic graduations are also ranked well, while scientific and humanistic graduations are rated lowest since these degrees often prospect a difficult entry into the labor market within the public opinion. The opposite applies when considering the ranking by **further training and development opportunities**. All academic careers were rated very high, whereas vocational training was rated very low. If the **earning opportunities** are considered, master at universities and professional masters were ranked first whereas vocational education and training, without reaching a master qualification, were rated very low. Furthermore, according to parents and children, **prestige and social recognition** is given mainly by bachelor, master degrees and academic careers. The low ranking of the dual educational programs in this question could be linked to the prejudice against the system, which is often considered a secondary degree that only works for those who cannot fit into the usual one. When looking at the results of ranking by **independence opportunities** master professionals are again ranked at the top, then followed by university master degrees and by technical degrees and once again scientific, literary and classic degrees are rated very low.



**Figure 3- "Please rank the diplomas by the following criteria."**

The analysis of the five rankings suggest that social recognition does not really depend on a good salary, or the opportunities of creating an own company. Giving the indication that other influences need to be considered when wanting to change the recognition of the dual education program.

The **last part of the survey** covered the topic of **media used** by both young people and parents, not only for orientation needs but in general. This part of the survey is important as it gives indication to where the to-be created orientation tool should build on.

Both targets ranked the **Internet as the most used media**. On the second position the opinions already differ, as parents still use traditional media like radio and TV a lot, while children straight away rank **“contact with friends” second**. In comparison, this point comes up 6<sup>th</sup> for parents.

For children, the “contact with friends” is followed by TV, radio, printed newspapers, events, magazines and others. For parents, after internet other traditional media follows.

When analyzing the channels that children use most, **WhatsApp and YouTube rank first**. As for the social media, young people prefer Instagram over Facebook, most likely because Facebook is strongly used by older generations.

Overall, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook, YouTube are the most used social media channels. While Twitter is strongly used in the US, the platform has not established itself very much within the European market and the project partner areas. LinkedIn and Xing are not considered by children, while LinkedIn and Pinterest are strongly used by parents.

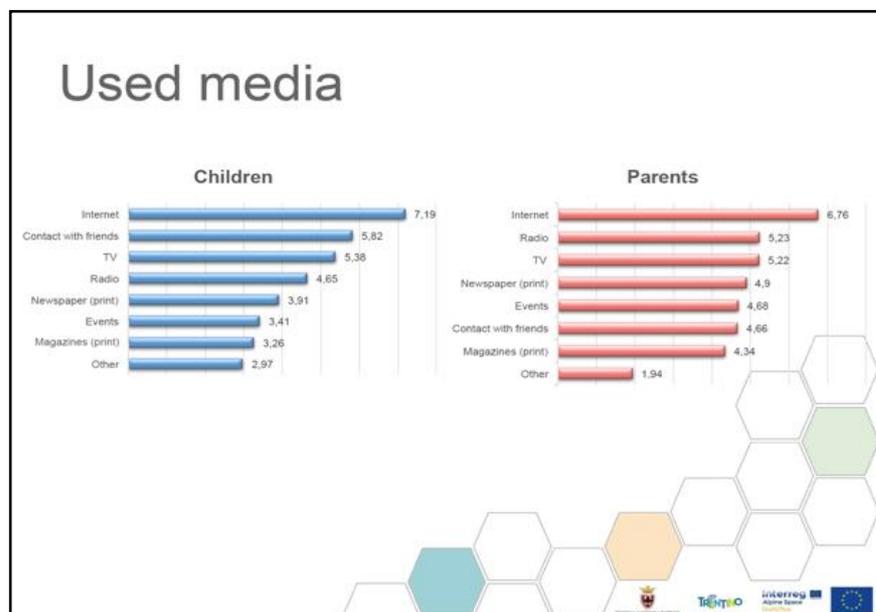


Figure 4 – “Please rank the following media depending on how much you use them.”

## 4 SUMMARY

To summarize the findings of the survey there are different points worth mentioning. Overall, the contribution of many different participants, from different educational, social and cultural backgrounds as to their location in the different regional areas led to a very diverse and interesting range of answers. But there was one argument that was the same across borders and culture and that was the fact that the dual educational program is well known and established but has certain things where improvement and further information is needed.

### **Some findings worth mentioning are the following:**

- Open days are a well-established place where children can gain information about educational paths
  - Private and public orientation services need improvement
- the youth does not recognize technical tool skills as a big strength, even though they spend a lot of time on devices
- many children see their strength in fantasy and having plenty of ideas, factors that are great for dual educational programs
- many parents state that the final decision on the educational path lies with their children
- only 50% of children seem to know about the dual education system
  - and of those 50% only the half knows how the program is finally implemented into schooling
- children recognize the strong influence of their parent's views and concerns on their decision making
- educational institutions, teachers and tutors, as well as politics influence the decision making of children
- social influencers are gaining power in the decision-making process
- prestige and social recognition are quite low for the dual educational program compared to Master degrees
- participants acknowledge that the dual educational program gives great opportunities for employment but do not recognize high career development opportunities
- the salary system of the dual educational program is not yet well-known
- traditional media do not reach the youth like they used to do with generations before
- WhatsApp and YouTube are social platforms that the youth uses the most, Facebook is losing importance within this generation

When coining the creation of the orientation toolbox it is vital to take the different takeaways into consideration. Especially the change in media usage and influence on the decision making of children is very important.

## 5 OUTLOOK

The results of the above analyzed survey show quite clearly that there is a need for further clarification and education about the dual education program and that this orientation is mainly needed by enhancing orientational activities. The toolbox that is to be created in the DuALPlus project based on the results will include the issues analyzed and try to solve some of the issues above. As the tools are developed in a bottom up process they correspond to the needs on the ground in each region and by each partner organization involved with the project. External experts such as members of EUSALP AG3 and the Communities of Practice will be invited to join the process, which lays the ground to a dissemination of outputs through these target groups. The overall goal is that the developed/improved tool will be immediately used by the project partners in their ongoing orientation offers.

Even if the tool will be fully adaptable to the goals and methods of the project partner, there are some key takeaways that will be influencing the tool. First of all, already when looking at the methodology section it becomes visible that there are different stakeholders that influence the decision-making process of the children. Therefore, the orientation tool should focus and be targeted on the four key influencers, with different needs and questions:

|  | Entrepreneur (in the self-presentation)   | Trainers/instructors (in the company, master craftsmen/foremen, in the vocational school of the specialist teachers) | Advisors (public/private counseling centers, associations and federations, etc.)   | Teacher (in secondary schools)  |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Problems regarding dual education program: | How can I find a suitable trainee for my company?   | How can I find a trainee?<br>How can I convince my boss that we should hire an apprentice?                           | How can I give more specific advice to young people looking for an apprenticeship? | Where and how can I show my students what the trainee program is?             |
| Problems regarding general orientation:    | How can I show children that my company offers attractive training opportunities and that my sector has a promising future? | -  | How can I point out the widest possible range of career opportunities?             | How can I show my students the widest possible range of career opportunities? |

These target groups play a key role in the success of effective orientation activities for children (and their parents) towards teaching. Parents and children are deliberately excluded from this target group definition, since they are beneficiaries of orientation activities and do not offer orientation activities themselves. The toolbox is therefore a "manual" on how to organize a given orientation activity.

When looking more closely at the structure of the toolbox it is best to base it on the principle of personas (target groups) encountering different measures and initiatives when handling orientation questions. The personas, questions and initiatives can have an international or regional character. In order to better classify the measures, a total of 6 categories were defined:

- School fairs (internal fairs of schools)
- Vocational guidance services (vocational guidance, public/private, associations, federations, etc.)
- Job Fairs (fairs like Futurum, including Skills Competitions)
- Group initiatives incl. events like “Career with apprenticeship”
- Information events (such as parents' evenings, information events for the target groups, etc.)
- Talent Checks (Talent Center)

In order to reach the biggest target audience, the tool is to be implemented online. As this allows better access but also sets the direction towards a more digitalized and agile future, just like the dual-education program.

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