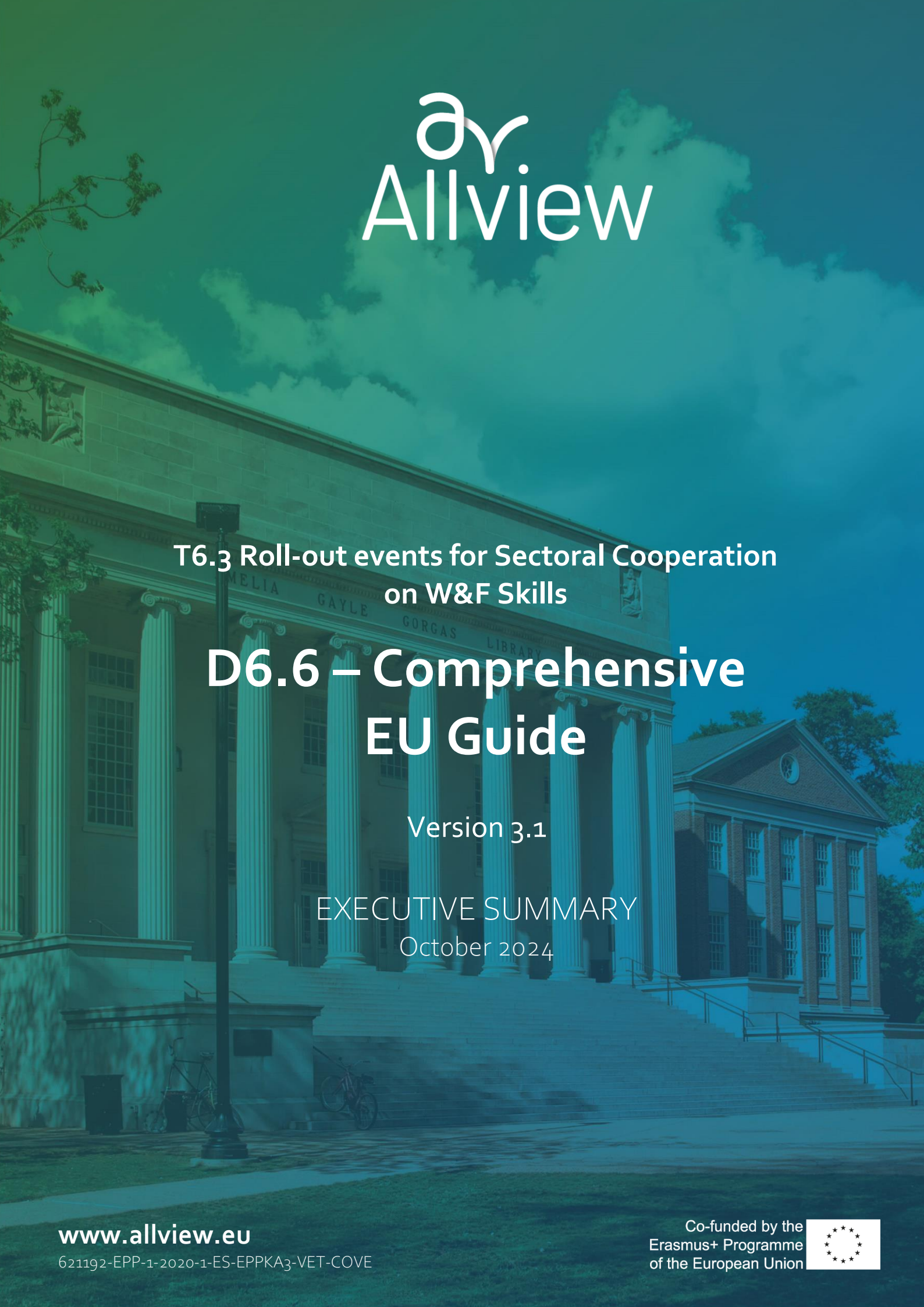

Allview

T6.3 Roll-out events for Sectoral Cooperation on W&F Skills

D6.6 – Comprehensive EU Guide

Version 3.1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

October 2024

www.allview.eu

621192-EPP-1-2020-1-ES-EPPKA3-VET-COVE

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union

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Summary

Abbreviations

AAL: Ambient Assisted Living

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

C-VET: Continuous Vocational Education and Training

ECTS: European Credit Transfer and accumulation System

ECVET: European Credits for Vocational Education and Training

EDC: European Digital credentials

EQAVET: European Quality Assurance for VET

EQF - The European Qualifications Framework

ERDF: European Regional Development Fund

GP: Good Practice

HE: Higher Education

HEI: Higher Education Institute

I4.0: Industry 4.0

I-VET: Initial Vocational Education and Training

LCA: Life Cycle Assessment

LLL: Life Long Learning

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

NQF: National Qualification Framework

PPP: Public-Private Partnerships

S3: Smart Specialisation Strategy

TVET: Technical Vocational Education and Training

VET: Vocational Education and Training

W&F: Wood and Furniture

WP: Workpackage

1. Introduction

The Comprehensive EU Guide for the Wood and Furniture (W&F) sector aims to provide an overview of the latest trends and policies in Europe towards a more competitive and sustainable industry. The document showcases the ALLVIEW Blueprint process worked out as a result of the consortium tasks within the so-called Workpackage (WP) 'Blueprint in the W&F Sector'.

Desk research, best practices, tools developed, training platforms, mobility and exchange and roll-out events have been merged in an integrated approach implemented by partners, supported and reinforced by the Regional Stakeholder Groups (RSG) upon the need to demonstrate real effectiveness of the project actions. RSGs were entitled to examine and validate ALLVIEW practices in their own regional context so as to proof how the consortium has worked out the best models and tools able to increase quality level of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes in Europe and consequently to foster the competitiveness of industries in the W&F sector.

The guide aims to demonstrate how stakeholders and decision makers can support the goal of ALLVIEW, which is to become the Excellence Centre for Vocational Training in Europe by providing findings, outputs, and tools developed. Furthermore, the document highlights the importance of updating education programs for vocational pathways to include Industry 4.0 (I4.0), Ambient Assisted Living (AAL), and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as the way to improve W&F product quality.

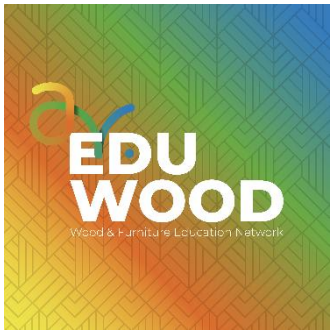
The state-of-art of qualifications in the W&F sector (EQF4, EQF5) in each country/region is the departure point for new proposals to complement existing qualifications with Circular economy, I4.0 and AAL skills and knowledge at EQF 4 and EQF 5 level in the concerned sector. An overview on skills and knowledge suggested in Pathways to HE is also included.

Following recommendations in this guide, decision-makers, policymakers, and other stakeholders are expected to reach common understanding regarding skills gaps in the W&F sector in each region, as well as the existing skills at the regional and national level. The ALLVIEW platforms are also introduced as useful tools for e-learning, knowledge sharing, co-creation, and skills development.

Finally, this document includes useful links to organizations that promote the interests of the European W&F sector and contribute to the EU policy-making process. Better cohesion and joint actions will be strategic.

The current document is a reduced version of the full ***Comprehensive EU Guide*** *drawn up by EURADA as a result of the W&F Blueprint and it includes the most outstanding tasks and contents to which All partners have contributed.*

2. The ALLVIEW Blueprint process



A blueprint is a detailed technical drawing or plan that serves as a guide for constructing or building something. Traditionally, blueprints were used in architecture, engineering, and manufacturing to show the design, dimensions, and specifications of structures, machines, or products. The term "blueprint" comes from an old photographic printing process that produced white lines on a blue background. This method, called cyanotype, was used from the 19th century until the early 20th century.

Today, blueprints have largely been replaced by computer-aided design (CAD) drawings, which are digital and can be printed on paper or viewed on devices. However, the term "blueprint" is still used metaphorically to describe detailed plans, such as "a blueprint for success."

Blueprints provide additional instructions or details about the design and are crucial for ensuring consistency and accuracy in the construction or manufacturing process.

That is why this Comprehensive EU guide has been prepared as a blueprint in the metaphorical sense because it provides a detailed and structured plan or framework for "building" better and more labour market-oriented VET systems in the W&F sector. Just like a blueprint outlines the structure of a building, the Comprehensive EU guide provides a structured and systematic approach to the particular subject and related policies, tools and processes. It is intended to offer step-by-step guidance, which can be followed to ensure that all necessary steps are included and correctly implemented.

The EU guide lays out clear objectives and policy goals, such as regulatory compliance, environmental standards, or social policies that may bring crucial benefits not only for well skilled people but also, in the long term, for SMEs and Industries in general.

Just as a blueprint ensures that every aspect of a structure is built to the same standard and uniformity in implementation, the guide aims to harmonize actions and policies across the European Union. But again as a modern blueprint it can be adjusted as needed during construction, and the guide also allows for flexibility in how member states implement certain policies in VET in the W&F sector, while still maintaining the overall vision and goals of the guide.

But how the ALLVIEW Blueprint has been built by the Consortium?

Keeping on the metaphor, here below the Guide unveils fundamentals, bricks, utility systems and circuits as main pillars of the work implemented.

2.1 Desk research

Desk research was carried out regarding the state of the W&F sector in each region so that a common understanding of educational gaps and skills demand could be established following data collected from literature and RSGs as well. Ultimately, the knowledge on the state of the W&F sector is being used to develop updated curricula in Europe with reference to the thematic areas defined as priorities during the ALLVIEW itinerary, i.e. Industry 4.0, AAL, and CSR.

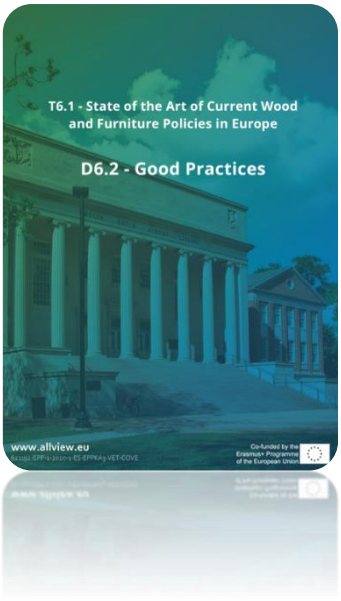
The consortium has published a document summarizing the activities carried out for the purpose of highlighting the State of the Art (SoA) of current W&F policies in Europe in the concerned sector. To put together such information, members of the ALLVIEW consortium from each region/country of the project drew on their extensive experience with stakeholders in the W&F industry, alongside consultation with said stakeholders and desk research.

A SWOT analysis provided insight into what the prevailing situation in each region is: in which ways the local W&F sector is doing well (Strengths), in what ways it is performing poorly (Weaknesses), which external conditions promise to help the industry (Opportunities), and which external conditions may cause setbacks to it (Threats). This is rounded off with a comparison of the internal aspects (Strengths and Weaknesses) and external aspects (Opportunities and Threats) to show up similarities and differences between the situations in each partner region/country. The SWOT analyses were done on the basis of either the entire national context (i.e. Poland) or the context of the region the contributing partner is based and works in (i.e. Flanders, Belgium) according to the scope of work of the contributing partners and what they felt they could best provide accurate knowledge about. Short versions of all local surveys are available for download in the official *ALLVIEW website*.

Regional on-site research was continued with a series of desk research carried out into 7 other non-participant countries, to gain a broader look at the W&F industry across the EU. This desk research focused on the 3 thematic areas of the project – Industry 4.0/Digitalisation, AAL, and Circular Economy/CSR – and gave a look into existing education pathways into the W&F industry in each of the countries included. ALLVIEW can bring improvement, especially by working to close the skills gap and updating curricula by bringing in extra focus on the project's thematic areas and are well assessed in the context of all 15 countries looked at.

2.2 Good practices and CSR

As a second step, a selection of Good practices (GPs) has been observed which brings together a set of initiatives considered particularly interesting due to them coinciding with the broader aims of the project. The full document is available for download - *https://allview.eu/downloads/*



GPs are initiatives that have proven to be successful in a region and which are therefore of potential interest to other regions. Proven successful means that the initiative has already provided tangible and measurable results in achieving a specific objective – here the fostering of ALLVIEW's goals. Two different compendia of Good Practices have been issued:

a. One is a compilation of GPs regarding policies or coming out from companies.
b. ALLVIEW partners identified, observed and analyzed in their region some Good practices related also with the 3 CSR pillars: a) Circular Economy; b) Inclusion of migrants and refugees; c) Accessibility of people with special needs.

These main 3 pillars have been declined in the following sectors: Education (VET) system, Labour market, Work environment, Work tasks. Through this research the consortium analysed the European, National and Regional policies related to the promotion of the pillars mentioned above to identify the best practices and developing guidelines regarding CSR to spread within the W&F sector.

2.3 Software Tools for Skill Assessment

A preliminary task planned by partners was to perform the analysis of the state of art in open-source software tools for skill assessment. The goal was to provide in ALLVIEW a software tool able to connect the three main actors of the W&F sector: companies, training providers and people seeking new job opportunities or training. The goal was also to provide a tool with AI/ML engine, offering added value to the three potential users: training courses and job offers recommendations based on ESCO skills, knowledge and competences, and learning pathways according to the job/skills/competences goals of users. One important point of the ALLVIEW platform is also to follow a reference in Europe about skills, occupations and professional profiles, ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) classification. Next, the state of art about software tools for skill assessment was detailed.

A report of the AI-based skills assessment framework, more specific "Analysis and evaluation of current open-source tools for skill assessment match under ESCO system" is available in the download section of the website *https://allview.eu.* Further on, Pathways to Higher Education (HE) were studied, which corresponds to the task "Blended learning library for the W&F sector" of the ALLVIEW project.

The work is a first step of a more complex task where the main result was an open source software platform (ALLVIEW platform) for broad skills assessment, identifying specific areas in need of development, and offering targeted training to address gaps. Finally, a database of the existing learning units and resources in the field of I4.0 of W&F sector was created. The database of the project relies on further use and classification of already existing learning ALLVIEW - Alliance of Centres of Vocational Excellence in the W&F Sector EU-funded projects content that contributed through the ALLVIEW team to the concept and compilation of learning contents.

2.4 Data Collection Methods

Existing and emerging partner's projects with developed materials, university resources, online courses, reports and articles were considered for data collection. All assumed resources were gathered into a database, dealing with the subject, and showing contemporary state of the art nature. An internal report was also issued with the aim of performing an in-depth research on Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Mixed Reality technologies, to identify which of them are more suitable and beneficial for use in education and teaching, more specifically in the W&F sector. Some examples of the use of these immersive technologies in education in the W&F sector are shown.

2.5 The Platforms

The consortium has developed an open-source web platform engined with Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to identify areas in need of development with the aim of offering targeted training courses and job offers to address gaps for workers and enterprises. The resulting tool delivers training path recommendations for workers and enterprises, VET centre suggestions, enterprise skill needs and learning outcomes. The platform is now improving the state of art of current tools with similar goals, considering its value-added features as follows:

a. three dimensions or user profiles in a single system: job and/or learning resource seeker, job provider (recruiter, company), learning resource provider;
b. Is focused on long-live-learning axis and job seeker;
c. it has a more global vision, opens the door to more complete use cases.

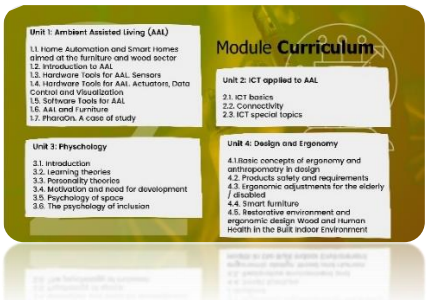
Moreover, ALLVIEW will use, not only AI/ML, but also will explore the use of REINFORCEMENT LEARNING (RL) technique: there are other AI techniques, but ALLVIEW will go to this because it has demonstrated very good benefits to learn our preferences over time, that is, learning is getting richer.

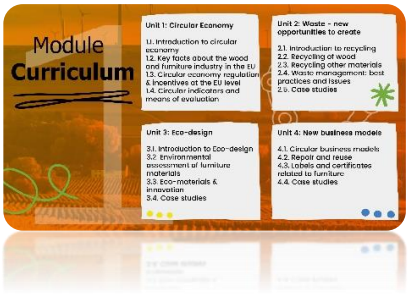
The ALLVIEW platform accepts three target users:

a. **People:** workers, job demanders or students. In general, people who want to look for new skills or job and want to know the current situation in the labour market.
b. **Training providers:** providers that offer novel training courses based on the current labour market requirements.
c. **Companies:** companies that offer new job offers and look for new candidates.

In addition to MOOCs and learning content from other specialised projects, the ALLVIEW project has brought together all 'Centres of Vocational Excellence' for the European wood and furniture industry becoming a major contributor to the learning contents of CE, I4.0 and AAL, which is also translated into several languages (Slovenian, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, German, Polish and French) and are available through a second online training platform.

In most European countries we are facing the same problems in our wood and furniture industry and there are many new, emerging challenges for our sector: digitalisation, industry 4.0, circular economy, corporate social responsibility... Most training centres in the EU have a good, but traditional infrastructure. Thus, pupils and students are still too often trained in the traditional way of woodworking and furniture production. In addition, innovation and technological evolution to meet social and environmental challenges are not frequently a prior goal. There is also a shortage of workers with these new skills. On the other hand, companies are doing excellent work in the field of digitalisation, green business models and social inclusion. The current state of knowledge from Circular Economy, Industry 4.0, Ambient Assisted Living or Corporate Social Responsibility shows that the existing curricula at each educational level (EQF 4, 5 and 6) have different knowledge gaps. The identified current knowledge level is the average of the participating EU countries, which means that some countries are above and some are below the average. But today individuals willing to reskill or upskill themselves about CE, I 4.0, AAL or CSR have a new opportunity within the enlarged and innovative vision of ALLVIEW e-learning modules. An it makes the difference.





2.6 Mobility and Exchange

International exchanges and Dual system are crucial to reinforce the quality of learning methods. A complete handbook has been issued to support VET / HE organisations looking for suggestions and guidelines about the Dual System method, from a practical point of view. A dual education system combines apprenticeships in a company and vocational education at a vocational school in one course.

Part of the ALLVIEW project was to organize mobility for in total amongst 70/80 students and 70/80 teachers. For around a week throughout years from 2022 to 2024 students and teachers have been exchanged among participating organisations. Each hosting country prepared an attractive program, consistent both with the general aims of ALLVIEW project and the specific needs of their counterparts, in terms of fields of interest, necessities, expectations. The program includes company visits, workshops, cultural activities.

As a result, the ALLVIEW consortium has started a community to share personal and professional experiences among teachers, students, professionals, and stakeholders involved during the mobility actions. A second aim of the community is to work for the understanding and sharing of National documents, drawn up in several languages and recognized as equivalent within the different National regulatory systems. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) partners are currently promoting the establishment of a community as an official European Association, with a digital community, based on one of the main social networks, to facilitate the mutual collaboration among its members, including area for sharing good practices and experiences. The digital community is expected to include both ALLVIEW members and third parties (EU and extra EU).

2.7 Regional Stakeholder Groups

While there is clear cross-over between certain aspects of the W&F sector in the partners' respective regions, the above findings and developing tools also reveal many differences regarding basic aspects. Regional Stakeholder groups have been created along the project life to upraise the voice on a handful list of conclusions related to industry and vocational training plans in Europe.

Conclusions are basically being drawn on the basis of the information collected during periodical RSG meetings, including that a "war for talent" generally troubles the sector, which often struggles to attract new/young workers and suffers a loss of workers through retirement among an ageing workforce. In order to try and improve the education provided to individuals entering the W&F industry, supported by RSG members, ALLVIEW will

ultimately seek to revise and update the existing curricula in all regions being integrated with courses on ALLVIEW's thematic areas. In that way, after updating the curricula, individuals entering the sector since engaged in vocational education pathways will be properly trained as far as how I4.0, AAL, and CSR are relevant subjects for guaranteeing better and higher-quality W&F products.

2.8 Roll-out events

The ALLVIEW partners have been engaged with the organisation of two national/regional roll-out events per partner country involved in the project. The aim of these events was to further discuss with an open audience about future regional blueprints regarding policies in the sector for the improvement of training programmes and for a major increase in industries' competitiveness. Conclusions after events will help react with new regional action plans in the future, now under consideration.

Contents are included in this ALLVIEW Blueprint Strategy for raising the Erasmus+ objectives growth in Sectoral Cooperation on W&F, which involves a detailed assessment of current and anticipated shortages and mismatches, monitoring approach and will be in line with the European Skills Panorama. It is built on EU policies and tools and some best practices, leading to a match in demand and supply of skills.

Within this overall task the large impact on digital, key enabling technologies, circular economy and social responsibility is proven.

3. ALLVIEW assessment

The above observed and assumed, as a major priority the ALLVIEW consortium set up for the development of a Centre of Vocational Excellence for the European W&F (W&F) industry, is to promote the integration of EU wide institutional governance structures for expanding the Blueprint Strategy for Sectoral Skills Cooperation. In the framework of ALLVIEW activities a continuous dialogue with regional stakeholder groups (RSGs) was established. The aim of these groups is to reach convergency on common lines to meet skills gaps in the furniture, wood or habitat sector in the region/country. The RSGs focus their interest on furniture design, habitat, wood processing among others with a view on the RIS3 of the specific regions. Transversal skills such as digitalization, green economy or social responsibility are mainly addressed.

Adapting policies to the regional context is essential because Europe's W&F industry is diverse, with different regions specializing in various aspects of the sector. Tailoring policies to the unique strengths and challenges of each region can lead to more effective solutions. Collaboration between government authorities, industry stakeholders, and educational institutions is crucial to ensure the successful implementation of these strategies and to meet the demand of the W&F industry in Europe.

One of the key initiatives to strengthen the relationship between education and industry is fostering dialogue and networks among industry professionals and trainers. By implementing "train the trainers" programs and making training materials readily available, we ensure that educators are well-equipped to provide relevant, up-to-date knowledge. Additionally, collaboration agreements between companies in the W&F industry and VET institutions are essential to align training programs with the actual needs of the job market. This synergy not only enhances the curriculum but also encourages internships in companies, providing students with practical, hands-on experience. Furthermore, promoting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles by teaching students about social and environmental responsibilities in business is critical. By instilling these values early on, we help cultivate a future workforce that is both ethically aware and prepared to contribute positively to society.

3.1 Training pathways and training of trainers

To ensure that schools, upskilling, and re-skilling programs effectively meet market needs, it is crucial to foster an environment of adaptability and responsiveness. In all these educational contexts, the key is to maintain a close and ongoing connection with the job market and the industries that drive it. This ensures that schools, upskilling, and re-skilling programs can evolve to effectively address changing market demands and the needs of their attendees.

Transferring hours from a teacher's working day to be devoted to innovation projects can be a valuable approach to fostering creativity, improving educational outcomes, and keeping educational institutions at the forefront of advancements. By transferring hours from a teacher's working day to innovation projects and following these steps, educational institutions can empower teachers to engage in creative endeavours that can lead to improvements in teaching, learning, and overall educational quality.

Barriers have been identified concerning the lack of the possibility for VET (Vocational Education and Training) centers to invoice and self-manage human resources and it can indeed impede internationalization and innovation efforts. Therefore, it is suggested to explore the possibility of breaking down these bureaucratic barriers that hinder the achievement of excellence in our schools and VET centres. Give them the possibility of reinvesting the financial resources generated in projects of this type or private services to improve their facilities, equipment, etc.

3.2 Schools and industrial placement

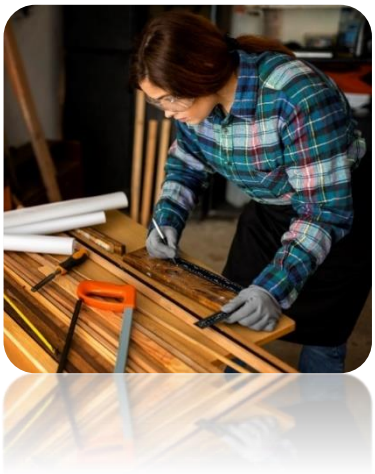
Representatives of the W&F sector therefore suggested that more emphasis be placed on encouraging the development of soft skills, psychology, emotional intelligence and project work. It is characteristic of most job seekers that they do not have ambitions for lifelong learning, following the development of the profession and their own development. They strongly lack self-initiative, they are afraid of being exposed, of presenting their views and of defending them. To do this, self-initiative and proactivity should be emphasized and encouraged during the study.

It is suggested to introduce supplements for students in the form of even one-day visits to various companies, which may broaden the horizons of the future staff and fill the gaps or to increase the promotion of disseminating knowledge about major studies, especially among VET graduates who have more experience due to a greater number of internships and workshops. Relationship with other educational institutions (Higher Education) might inspire them for education for the W&F industry as well as activities in the field of introducing students to professional development opportunities by organizing meetings with potential employers.

3.3 Social inclusion

Issues raised concerning disability, gender diversity, and the inclusion of underrepresented groups in the workforce are important and require proactive efforts to address.

Inclusion regarding people with disabilities starts from accessible machinery and equipment used in vocational training and workplaces are designed with accessibility in mind. This may involve investing in adaptive technology or modifying existing equipment to accommodate individuals with disabilities. Also to promote the use of reasonable accommodations, such as assistive devices or flexible work arrangements, to make it easier for individuals with disabilities to perform their job tasks effectively. But more relevant is to provide training and awareness programs for both employers and co-workers to foster a more inclusive and understanding workplace culture regarding disability. Finally, to collaborate with disability advocacy organizations and vocational rehabilitation centers to connect individuals with disabilities to suitable job opportunities and support services will surely help.



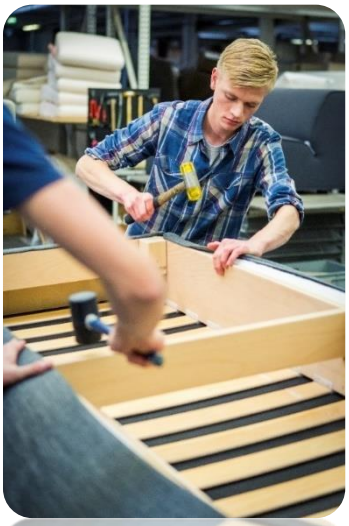
Gender Diversity deserves some approach different for promoting inclusion mainly. Encouraging and actively promoting gender diversity in traditionally male-dominated fields like carpentry is a priority. Showcasing the success stories of female professionals in these industries to inspire and motivate girls to pursue such careers are best practices to enhance. Regional ecosystems must offer education and career guidance programs that expose girls to a wide range of career options, including those in male-dominated fields. This can help break down stereotypes and biases.

Foreigners and Inclusion are included through the recognition of skills though. Companies must be encouraged to recognize and value the skills and qualifications of foreign workers. Foreign workers can bring unique talents and perspectives that can be beneficial for European businesses.

Stakeholders advocate for policies and regulations that promote diversity and inclusion in the labour market by engaging in a dialogue with relevant institutions to ensure that inclusive practices are encouraged and supported. By addressing the above challenges and fostering a more inclusive and diverse workforce, it's possible to create a more equitable and productive job market that benefits both individuals with disabilities and underrepresented groups and the companies that employ them.

3.4 Circular Economy and Sustainability

Transitioning to a circular economy is a crucial step toward sustainability, but it often requires employees to be well-informed and aware of the materials they work with. If employees lack knowledge about sustainability and the materials they use, it can hinder the adoption of circular economy practices.



It's crucial to invest in research and development to improve circular processes. While some initiatives may initially seem too complex or costly, ongoing innovation can lead to more efficient and cost-effective methods. On the other hand, governments and organizations can work on raising public awareness about the benefits of sustainability and the environmental costs associated with resource-intensive practices and can provide incentives, tax breaks, or grants for companies that invest in circular economy practices, making them more financially appealing.

There are recommendations for governments to drive the transition to a more sustainable and circular economy. By implementing these recommendations, governments can play a pivotal role in driving the W&F industry toward greater sustainability and circularity. Their actions can set the tone for responsible practices and inspire businesses and consumers to prioritize environmentally conscious choices. For example, solving waste flows is a commendable goal for companies, as it not only contributes to environmental sustainability but can also lead to cost savings and improved brand reputation. Solving waste flows is an ongoing effort that requires commitment, innovation, and a holistic approach. Companies that successfully address waste management not only contribute to environmental sustainability but also often see improved cost-efficiency and increased customer loyalty as a result of their responsible and sustainable practices.

While legislation plays a crucial role in driving sustainability, it should be also complemented by voluntary industry initiatives, consumer awareness, and technological advancements. The goal is to create a comprehensive framework that fosters responsible resource management and incentivizes the adoption of circular and sustainable practices.

An interesting practice could be to identify and empower company employees as sustainability champions. These individuals can drive sustainability initiatives within the organization and educate their colleagues. This can make sustainability part of their daily work. Measurable sustainability goals and regularly report progress to employees can help track the impact of their efforts and keep them motivated while maintaining a culture of continuous improvement in sustainability practices regularly review and updated.

Training and workshops for employees are thus key tools to increase their awareness and knowledge of sustainability, circular economy principles, and the environmental impact of their work. But also, to promote transparency regarding the materials and supply chain of the products or services a company offers. This helps employees understand the origin and environmental impact of materials.

Thus, companies find it important for students to undergo a sustainability awareness process at school because it equips them with the knowledge and mindset required to address the growing importance of sustainability in the modern world. Such education not only benefits the environment but also prepares future professionals to make meaningful contributions to their workplaces and society as a whole. Ideally all training courses should integrate environment and circular economy training. Many students go on to training environment or circular economy topics, but theses profiles do not meet the short-term needs of companies from the furniture industry

sector. This also reveals a lack of understanding of how it is important to tackle environmental issues at the company level.

Indeed, teaching students about sustainability at school helps raise awareness about environmental and social issues. It fosters a sense of responsibility and encourages them to incorporate sustainable practices into their lives. Learning to live a sustainable lifestyle is crucial because individuals can make a significant impact through their daily choices. Companies value employees who are environmentally conscious both at work and in their personal lives. Knowledge of Important Concepts (Pfec, Fsc, LCA, Biobased, etc.), which are key in the field of sustainability. Understanding them is vital for students to grasp the intricacies of sustainable practices, products, and processes. Such knowledge can be applied in various industries and roles.

For this reason, ALLVIEW partners have made of this one of the main objectives of the project.

3.5 Ambient Assisted Living (AAL)

This theme appears to have little relevance in the business world. The companies are engaged in executing orders, not inventing them. AAL came up with the knowledge that the older experienced employees possess (elderly in the role of teacher) but the use of AAL technology can be beneficial for a wide range of individuals, including small children who may not be able to perform certain tasks independently. AAL systems can provide safety, security, and assistance to people of all ages and abilities. These technologies can be particularly useful for elderly individuals, people with disabilities, or those who require additional support in their daily lives.

The transformation of the Bijlmer prison into a hotel is mentioned as outstanding example of adaptive reuse of a space. Making a portion of the hotel rooms suitable for people with disabilities, particularly those who use wheelchairs, is a positive step toward inclusivity in the hospitality industry. This demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that the facilities are accessible and welcoming to a diverse range of guests, including those with specific needs.

These topics highlight the importance of considering inclusivity, safety, and accessibility in various aspects of society, from technology and the workplace to the design and use of public spaces. Companies can indeed face various challenges, and there are potential solutions for each:

a. promote awareness and education about the benefits of AAL technology. Collaborate with experts and organizations in the field to better understand its applications and how it can improve the quality of life for users;
b. advocate for the inclusion of AAL-related criteria in certification standards and encourage companies to voluntarily integrate AAL technologies into their wellness initiatives;
c. employ universal design principles to create flexible workspaces that cater to different requirements;
d. provide digital literacy training and ongoing support for older employees. Encourage mentoring and peer learning to help them adapt to new technologies;
e. create a work environment that is ergonomically friendly and consider flexible work arrangements (develop wellness programs that focus on age-appropriate fitness and health support);
f. establish a buddy system where experienced employees mentor newcomers. This mutual learning benefits both parties, improves onboarding, and fosters a supportive work culture.

By addressing these challenges and implementing these solutions, companies can adapt to changing trends, foster inclusion and innovation, and better serve both their employees and customers in an ever-evolving business landscape. Including basic knowledge about the techniques used in AAL, such as sensors that control moving parts, in a curriculum can be highly beneficial.

This type of education can help students or professionals in fields relevant to AAL gain a foundational understanding of the technology and its applications.

3.6 Industry 4.0

About debates among regional stakeholder groups (RGS) many of them coincide on the fact that the W&F sector emphasizes that graduates lack better knowledge of modern technologies and their integration. Many training regulations in the wood industry and related sectors are outdated and need to be amended in order to become more attractive to young people again and, at the same time, to reflect the current state of the art in a practical way. Urgently require revision in order to provide the industry with qualified trained specialists and to become more attractive to young people again

Namely, modern technologies are developing extremely fast, so they must be constantly followed and constantly educated in this field. The digitalization of workplaces and the operation of modern plant machinery are currently not sufficiently addressed during training and require updating. It is also interesting to discover the relationship between craftsmanship and technology. It's nice to explore the mix between manual work and computer work; the creative space in between. In our lab we wanted to explore woodworking tools or how can we reproduce certain craftsmanship. There is a shortage in experts in this field.

Some cases observed bring up how unsuccessful they are in retaining students for the industry. Not enough students end up working for companies in the industry. The question is to what extent students are prepared for employment in an interior construction company. By leveraging the issues of digitization 4.0, the sector is to be made a little more attractive for young people and meet the new needs of companies, including virtual courses using virtual reality in the education system.

Increase the practical, hands-on experience for students can be achieved by promoting internships, co-op programs, or apprenticeships with local companies that use CNC technology or implementing the use of MR glasses to provide students with immersive, real-time instructions for CNC programming and operation. This technology can enhance the learning experience and help students gain practical skills.

Further suggestions are to include a basic computer literacy course as part of the curriculum to ensure that students are proficient in using computers and common software applications or to offer introductory courses or workshops on robotics to familiarize students with the fundamentals of robotics, automation, and their applications in various industries.

In general, the newborn ALLVIEW platform for partnering with companies that are willing to mentor or offer internships to students will successfully expose students to real-world applications and inspire their interest in computer-aided design (CAD), relevant software tools used in their field, such as Proteus for electronics design, virtual reality (VR) training and experiences or new techniques for the incorporation of electronics in furniture design and manufacturing.

By addressing these topics in the curriculum and fostering connections between students and industry, educational institutions can better prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce and promote interest and expertise in these essential areas.

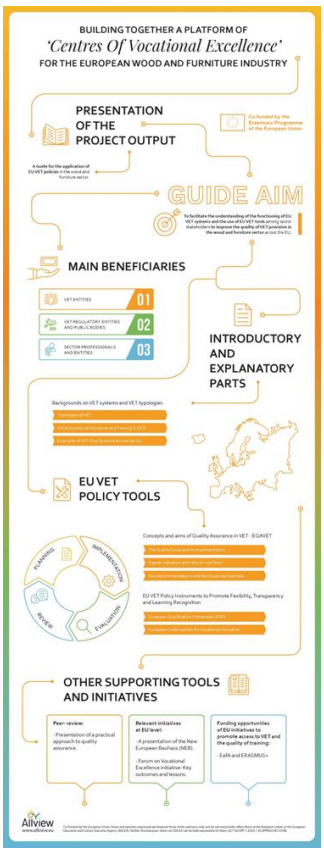
4. ALLVIEW overview and beyond

The European Commission (EC) has launched various industrial trends and policies in recent years with the aim of promoting sustainable growth, innovation and competitiveness in the W&F sector. These policies are aimed at addressing various challenges faced by the industry, such as increasing global competition, changing consumer preferences, resource scarcity and environmental concerns. The Commission has also focused on promoting the use of digital technologies, circular economy principles and eco-design in the sector.

This Comprehensive EU guide intends to provides an overview of how these policies and trends can be driven following the ALLVIEW Blueprint construction process.

4.1 The way to go

The ultimate goal of the ALLVIEW consortium is to apply a proactive approach to knowledge sharing, collaboration and fostering sustainability with an enlarged community of stakeholders in Europe.



How can the goal be achieved?
Stakeholder meetings shall continue to facilitate discussions, collaboration and the exchange of ideas among industry players, educational institutions, and other relevant parties with the main goal of continuously update and improve the ALLVIEW project to ensure it remains relevant and aligned with the evolving needs of the industry and learners.

As a practical issue, stakeholders are encouraged to populate the ALLVIEW knowledge platform with the latest information on circularity and sustainability, AAL, and new techniques. This ensures that the platform serves as a valuable resource for learners and professionals. Frequent tests of the ALLVIEW platform are necessary to ensure its functionality, user-friendliness, and effectiveness as a knowledge-sharing tool contributing to the goal of generating opportunities and making professionals, educators, and learners to network, exchange ideas, and form collaborations within the industry.

Best practices in circularity, sustainability, AAL, and new technologies applied to learning in European countries will be a valuable practice to enhance cross-border knowledge exchange as a way to achieve better innovation and sustainability levels. Sharing inspiring best practices from across Europe might also increase the number of successful initiatives and approaches as well as promote the sharing of solutions and innovations from different countries to foster cross-border learning and improvement.

Data from W&F industry companies are being continuously collected to acquire visibility through the European sectorial map. This map can is a valuable source for insights into industry trends and practices across different countries. Disseminating factual knowledge about the W&F industry at the European level will surely contribute to a more informed and competitive industry while arranging European-level exchanges for teachers, students, and company employees to test new learning materials and gain hands-on experience in different environments might become the most significant asset.

The European Center for Vocational excellence ALLVIEW will be undertaking these tasks pursuing the goal to advance knowledge, best practices, and collaboration in areas crucial for sustainability, innovation, and the development of strong European industries in the sector. This collaborative approach can lead to positive outcomes and valuable progress.

4.2 European Policies supporting the process

As a general approach, the ALLVIEW Blueprint addresses the S3 Strategy of the European Commission, or "Smart Specialisation Strategy" (S3), that is the key policy framework aimed at fostering regional innovation and growth within the EU. It is designed to promote sustainable economic development by helping EU Member States and regions identify their unique strengths and competitive advantages, focusing on specific sectors or areas with high growth potential.

The S3 strategy is grounded in research and innovation, emphasizing collaboration between regional governments, businesses, research institutions, and civil society. This approach helps regions to avoid duplicating efforts in innovation, instead focusing on targeted investments in sectors where they have a competitive edge. It encourages regions to align resources and investments to support new technologies and industries that can drive economic growth.

Several policies are the consequence of the application of such a global strategy as a set of guidelines, principles, or rules designed to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes at different levels. Policies are created to direct actions in a consistent and structured way and provide a framework for making decisions and determining how issues will be addressed. From our observation, the most relevant issues are:

a. Industrial development and digitalization

The W&F sector is a critical part of the EU's industrial ecosystem, and it is poised to benefit greatly from the EU's focus on industrial development and digitalization. With the EU's increased emphasis on sustainability, the W&F sector is well-positioned to lead the way in developing more environmentally friendly products and production processes. Digitalization offers significant opportunities for the sector to improve its productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness, with technologies such as 3D printing and digital design software transforming the way that products are designed and manufactured. I4.0and digital technologies are often mentioned as being increasingly taken into use in the sector, including for making products more customer specific. Increasing the prominence of such techniques in W&F education may bring major benefits in terms of preparing students to apply the latest techniques in their future work. Moreover, the EU Industrial Strategy includes several measures aimed at supporting the W&F sector, such as promoting the use of wood in construction and supporting the development of sustainable supply chains. The EU's policies on industrial development and digitalization are helping to ensure that the W&F sector remains at the forefront of innovation and growth.

a. Sustainable and green industries

Wood is renewable, sustainable and can be used, re-used and re-cycled. It is a model product for Europe's transition towards a Circular Economy intended to boost global competitiveness, foster sustainable economic growth, and generate new jobs. In the W&F sector, the EU has taken several steps to promote sustainability and

green practices. For example, the *EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) (1)* is a legal framework aimed at preventing the import and sale of illegally harvested timber in the EU. The EUTR also encourages sustainable forest management practices and helps to promote the use of wood products from legal and sustainable sources. Additionally, the *EU Ecolabel program2* provides a certification scheme for furniture products that meet specific environmental criteria. The EU has also launched several initiatives to promote the sustainable management of forest and increase the sectors contribution to the EU's climate and biodiversity objectives such us the *EU Forest Strategy3*. The strategy includes measures to support the W&F sector, such as promoting the use of wood in construction and encouraging sustainable forest management practices. These policies and initiatives demonstrate the EU's commitment to promoting sustainability and green practices in the W&F sector.

b. Social inclusion

Within the W&F sector, there is a growing recognition of the importance of social inclusion. The industry is working to promote greater diversity and inclusion within its workforce, with a focus on recruiting and retaining employees from a range of backgrounds. In addition, there is a growing trend towards the use of sustainable materials and practices, which not only benefit the environment but also support local communities. By prioritizing social inclusion in the W&F sector, the industry is helping to create a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

c. Competence recognition

The W&F sector plays a vital role in the EU economy, providing jobs and contributing to sustainable economic growth. To support the development of a skilled workforce in this sector, the EU has implemented policies to recognize competencies and qualifications relevant to W&F manufacturing. These policies aim to support the mobility of workers within the sector and across borders, and to ensure that individuals with the necessary skills and competencies can access training and employment opportunities. The EU also works to promote the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in this sector, to ensure that individuals with relevant skills and experience can have their competencies recognized and valued. The *European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) (4)* is an EU agency that supports member states in developing vocational education and training policies and practices. In the W&F sector, CEDEFOP facilitates the recognition of qualifications and certifications, and supports the development of skills and competencies. The European Sustainability Competence Framework GreenComp (5) plays a vital role in promoting environmentally friendly practices, resource efficiency, and circular economy principles whereas the Intellectual Property Action Plan contributes significantly to growth and innovation in W&F.

d. Promoting Industry-Driven Training

EU policies emphasize the importance of industry-driven training programs that align with the specific needs of the W&F sector. By collaborating closely with industry stakeholders, local and national governments can design VET pathways that address current and emerging skills requirements. These policies encourage the involvement of employers, trade associations, and professional bodies in shaping the curriculum and providing hands-on training opportunities, ensuring that VET graduates possess the competences valued by the industry.

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1 EU Timber Regulation: *https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/forests/deforestation/illegal-logging/timber-regulation_en*

2 EU Ecolabel program: *https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/circular-economy/eu-ecolabel-home_en*

3 EU forest strategy for 2030: *https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/forest-strategy_en*

4 CEDEFOP: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/es

5 GreenComp: the European sustainability competence framework: https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/greencomp-european-sustainability-competence-framework_en

e. Fostering Sustainability and Green Practices

Sustainability is a key focus area for the EU, and this principle extends to the W&F industry. EU policies encourage local governments to incorporate sustainability and green practices into VET programs. By integrating concepts such as sustainable sourcing, eco-friendly production techniques, and circular economy principles, VET graduates can contribute to a greener and more environmentally conscious W&F industry.

f. Enhancing Digital Competences

In line with the digital transformation sweeping across industries, the EU emphasizes the acquisition of digital competences in VET programs. Local and national governments are encouraged to invest in state-of-the-art digital infrastructure, enabling students to gain expertise in areas like computer-aided design (CAD), 3D printing, and digital manufacturing. By nurturing digital skills, VET can equip the workforce with the tools needed to thrive in the modern W&F industrial landscape.

g. Recognizing Non-Formal and Informal Learning

EU policies recognize the value of non-formal and informal learning experiences in building competences. Local governments are urged to create mechanisms that validate and recognize skills acquired through work experience, apprenticeships, and other non-traditional routes. By offering pathways for recognition of prior learning, VET programs can attract a more diverse pool of learners and meet the diverse needs of the W&F industry.

h. European Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition

Focused on addressing the digital skills gap, this coalition promotes the development of digital competences across industries. In the context of the W&F industry, it can encourage VET programs to integrate digital technologies and processes.

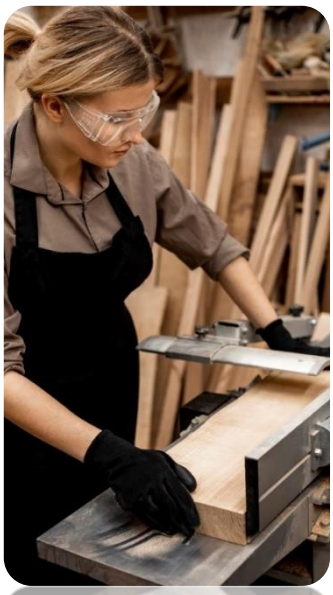
i. European Alliance for Apprenticeships

While not specific to the W&F industry, this initiative aims to strengthen and expand apprenticeship opportunities. This can encourage the industry to offer apprenticeship programs, which can be an essential component of VET.

j. Erasmus+ Program

The Erasmus+ program provides funding for educational exchanges, training, and mobility projects. Within the framework of Erasmus+, initiatives related to the W&F industry can receive support for skills development and knowledge exchange.

Incorporating EU policies into local eco-systems is essential for VET to effectively meet the demands of the W&F industry. By adopting industry-driven training, embracing sustainability and digital competences, and recognizing diverse learning experiences, local and national governments can ensure that VET graduates possess the necessary competences to contribute significantly to the growth and success of the W&F sector. Harmonizing policies with EU guidelines not only benefit the industry but also strengthens the overall competitiveness of Europe's workforce on the global stage.



k. The COVE strategy

The formula of a European Forum on Vocational Excellence has brought together education and training providers, governments and businesses to share knowledge, inspire and learn from each other reinforced in 2023 since it was declared European Year of Skills. VET providers, employers and governments have a shared responsibility to make sure the skills our workforce acquires are up to date with the latest needs and demands of society. New editions will come to keep alive the CoVE's spirit for networking and capacity building. Being also a threshold for the ALLVIEW consortium to disseminate theretheir effective results in 2024.

l. European networks to reinforce critical mass

EU networks and the need for a Pan-European network have become increasingly important in today's interconnected world. The European Union has established various networks aimed at promoting collaboration and cooperation among member states and fostering economic growth and development. These networks facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices across a wide range of industries, including the W&F sector.

European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) (6), which aims to support the development of rural areas across the EU through the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and good practices and *The Customs Action Plan (7)* has significant repercussions in the W&F sector.

Many others, such as the *European Furniture Industry Confederation (EFIC*) are interconnected with ALLVIEW partners and have been proactive in the project pathway.

4.3 ALLVIEW Blueprint and new regional plans

The European Union (EU) has developed various policy instruments and initiatives to promote flexibility, transparency, and the recognition of learning outcomes in Vocational Education and Training (VET) across EU countries. These policies aim to create a more harmonized and interconnected European education and labour market.

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6 European Network for Rural Development: *https://ec.europa.eu/enrd/home-page_en.html*

7 https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/customs-action-plan-supporting-eu-customs-protect-revenues-prosperity-and-security_en#:~:text=The%20Action%20Plan%20proposes%20steps,better%20preparation%20for%20future%20crises.

The European Skills Agenda starts from the Skills Agenda adopted in 2016; it sets objectives to be achieved by 2025 and includes 12 actions based on well-established quantitative indicators.

A precondition for the recognition of a new curriculum is that it clearly and logically refers to a specific EQF level and takes into consideration all the principles of this framework and ensure that all the contents can be assessed in terms of learning outcomes. Moreover, the curriculum produced need to comply with all the requirements in terms of content requested by the country VET system and properly provide all the related information and details. Finally, it is important to remember that the Curriculum Recognition should be submitted in each European country respecting the formal requirements foreseen at the national level, so a specific level will be assigned according to the NQF in place. On the other hand, VET systems can vary significantly from one region to another and from one member state to another, depending on a country's historical, cultural, and economic context. In the EU, VET systems are diverse and may include dual VET systems (combining school-based and workplace-based training), school-based VET, apprenticeship programs, and adult education. The European Commission supports the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) to facilitate the recognition and mobility of qualifications across member states.
For this reason, the ALLVIEW workplan makes continuous reference to all available sources combining the most applicable guidelines throughout a holistic approach to European frameworks, namely:

a. European Qualifications Framework (EQF);
b. European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET);
c. European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET);
d. European Skills, Competences, Qualifications, and Occupations (ESCO);
e. VET Mobility Charter;
f. NQFs to link their national qualifications to the EQF and facilitates the recognition of qualifications across borders;
g. Europass as a set of documents that makes skills and qualifications more understandable across Europe;
h. European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) as a multi-stakeholder initiative that promotes apprenticeships;
i. the process of Tuning Educational Structures in Europe;
j. e-Portfolios and Digital Credentials

4.4 W&F demand-driven VET plans for local economies

All along the project life, one full common thought has been established though: customizing Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs to meet industrial demand, especially in sectors like the W&F industry, shall be progressively achieved as an ultimate goal.

Working closely with business associations and industry stakeholders to understand current and future workforce needs is a major priority.

These associations often have valuable insights into the specific skills and qualifications required in the sector. Implementing a dual vocational training system where students split their time between classroom-based learning and practical, on-the-job training in companies is the ideal approach to ensure that students acquire hands-on skills directly relevant to industry needs, involving VET tutors or mentors within their companies. These mentors can guide and supervise VET students during their practical training, ensuring that they gain industry-specific skills and knowledge.

Consider establishing industry-specific training centers equipped with state-of-the-art machinery and equipment. These centers can serve as hubs for practical training, and their operation can be funded through a combination of public and private resources.

Improving procedures for the mutual recognition of qualifications in EU Member States is a cornerstone of establishing a European Education Area by 2025. A key element for facilitating these mobilities is the official recognition of the qualification of workers and students among the different countries, but the key precondition is the recognition of these qualification at national level (in some countries at regional level).

4.5 The ALLVIEW pathway for curriculum recognition

Ensuring a precise and common understanding among all sector stakeholders of all the concepts and purposes of EU VET policies is essential to really achieve the key project aim to establish a network supporting a better and modern VET system for the furniture sector, able to respond to labour market knowledge, skill and competences needs on the medium and long term. The consortium has produced a focus guide which strives to facilitate this precise and common understanding and to properly respond to the challenges posed by the need of creating an upgraded and continuously innovated VET offer for the furniture sector across the EU.

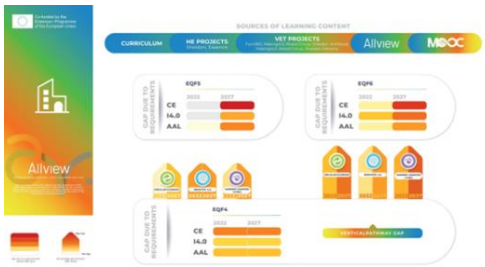
In summary, the guide aims to facilitate sector stakeholders (mainly VET providers and actors of EU countries VET regulatory systems) in the process of securing that the sector VET provision satisfies the requirements of the EU VET frameworks and principles. But also, to increase awareness among sector actors of the relevance of the deployment of EQF and EQAVET principles and criteria in the sector training provision: how they facilitate to increase the quality of the VET offer, facilitate mobility, transparency and recognition across EU countries.

The content has a practical approach towards the EU VET policies instruments and special attention has been put on those practical aspects that can make the grade of the VET provision within the W&F Sector across the EU. In the guide there are several references to different existing documents that can provide more details about the different topics treated and information about the national situations.

The full version is available here:
https://allview.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ALLVIEW_D8.4_Guide_EU_policies_V2.0_FV.pdf

Finally, the above Guide is being reinforced with an overview of the state-of-the-art of recognition and validation processes in Europe. Such overview is available in the Download section of the project website (*www.allview.eu*) and introduces three new training pathways that the consortium members have designed and agreed to be formally submitted to regional authorities before the end of the project in October 2024.

This recalls a very pragmatic approach as a proposal for the recognition of new pathways addressing the key issues observed during the entire project life: AAL, Industry 4.0 and Circular Economy.



Furthermore, on June 16, 2022, the European Union Council adopted a Recommendation regarding a European strategy for micro-credentials aimed at lifelong learning and employability. These micro-credentials could provide a flexible and tailored approach in acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies in the three appointed fields too. The programs could then be prepared in such a way as to equip the individual with specific knowledge, skills and competences that address social, personal, cultural needs or the needs of the labour market. A final step that might bring up new outcomes.

5. Impact of the Blueprint

The establishment of a Center of Vocational Training Excellence (CoVE) in the W&F sector has a significant positive impact on various stakeholders, the industry and the broader community.

CoVEs focus on providing high-quality training and education. This results in a workforce that possesses up-to-date skills and competencies relevant to the W&F sector, enhancing the quality of the labor pool. A CoVE's emphasis on industry-aligned training ensures that the sector remains competitive. Skilled workers contribute to increased productivity, better product quality, and innovation. They often incorporate the latest technologies and industry practices into their training programs. This fosters a culture of innovation and helps companies stay competitive in the global market. CoVEs typically have strong connections with industry players. This collaboration ensures that the training offered is aligned with industry needs, providing graduates with practical, real-world skills.

In ALLVIEW the implementation of innovative learning methods is making the W&F sector more attractive to prospective students. It offers a clear path to gaining in-demand skills and entering a fulfilling career. The consortium is ensured to play now a crucial role in mitigating skills shortages in the W&F sector. By producing skilled graduates, they contribute to filling industry gaps. The partners' programs often lead to recognized and accredited qualifications. This helps individuals entering the workforce by providing them with credible certifications that are valued by employers. They can offer continuing education and upskilling opportunities for professionals in the W&F sector. This supports lifelong learning and adaptation to industry changes.

The influence of our CoVE stimulates regional economic growth. It attracts investment, supports local businesses, and generates employment opportunities, both in training and the W&F industry. Through research and development activities, we can lead to the creation of innovative products and processes, benefiting the industry as a whole since ALLVIEW incorporates sustainability and environmental best practices into training programs. Graduates are now better equipped to contribute to sustainable practices within the sector. Our CoVE may engage in further international collaboration, allowing for knowledge exchange, best practices sharing, and the integration of global perspectives into training and industry practices.

In summary, our Center of Vocational Training Excellence in the W&F sector can have a multifaceted impact, benefiting individuals, industry, and the broader community. It serves as a hub for education, innovation, and collaboration, supporting the sector's growth and sustainability.

Therefore, the ALLVIEW Impact Committee was established to help monitoring the current impact of activities that have been carried out by partners jointly and individually, looking at the current values of the initial KPIs of the proposal by the end of the project life is among their main goals. Involving all partners in identifying additional relevant KPIs, collect, analyse and present results were their main tasks. Medium- and long-term exploitation and how these exploitation actions can boost even more the project impact on all different target groups were highlighted. The six evaluation criteria proposed by the OECD for the evaluation of interventions were applied (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability).

But how the COVE experience is demonstrated as a true effective PanEuropean impact action? A threefold sustainability impact assessment method of a COVE (Centres of Vocational Excellence) project is applied and it is designed to evaluate the comprehensive effects of the project across three core dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. This method provides a holistic framework to assess how ALLVIEW contributes to sustainable development by aligning vocational education and training (VET) initiatives with broader sustainability goals in the W&F industry.

Below is a detailed description of each dimension and how they interconnect.

a. Social Impact

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is an approach to evaluating (investment) projects with a view to their societal - social and/or environmental - added value. It can help organizations make data-driven decisions, enhance accountability, and communicate their social impact to donors, investors, and the public. It is a valuable tool for assessing whether the benefits of an initiative outweigh the costs. The ALLVIEW partners carried out a SROI analysis to fulfil a range of purposes, as it can be used to guide management choices, as a tool for strategic planning and improving, for communicating impact and attracting investment, or for making investment decisions and it will show how to transparently calculate SROI and help W&F companies to better communicate their impact to customers, stakeholders, government and the public. Our Blueprint is then intended to help companies take also social aspects into account in the overall consideration of the quality of work.

This approach can not only be beneficial for the company itself but can also present the entire sector of the W&F industry as sustainable in an overall social context, whereas Students and Workers will improve their chances on the labour market and their possibilities of employment (at regional, national and international level). In addition, AAL refers to the use of technology and smart environments to support aging and improve the quality of life for seniors and individuals with specific needs, such as disabilities or chronic illnesses. In the context of the W&F industry, AAL can be integrated by designing furniture with integrated technology that helps and monitoring for the elderly or individuals

with disabilities, such as adjustable beds or chairs with built-in sensors. Using materials that enhance safety and comfort, such as anti-slip and anti-bacterial surfaces in furniture for assisted living environments. The W&F industry can contribute to global goals by producing adaptive and smart furniture solutions.

A full set of guidelines regarding SROI in the sector is available here: *https://website.infoproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/D4.3-Guideline-to-Social-Return-on-Investment-SROI_MSM_MR.pdf*

b. Economic Impact

The economic dimension focuses on evaluating the financial and economic benefits brought about by the COVE project. The W&F industry can have a significant economic impact, both locally and globally. The W&F sector attracts investments, promotes entrepreneurship, and encourages the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It plays a role in local and national economic growth by contributing to GDP and fostering innovation and technology adoption. Further enhancement can be provided by investing in community development projects, such as local wood processing centers, to provide communities with employment and income-generating opportunities or facilitating access to domestic and international markets for W&F products, helping artisans and small businesses reach a broader customer base.

To enhance the competitiveness and economic performance of the W&F industry, various tools and strategies can be employed such as implementing and adhering to quality standards and certifications to ensure the production of high-quality products that can compete in domestic and international markets. These tools and strategies can help the W&F industry remain competitive, contribute to economic growth, and empower individuals and communities within the sector. In the long term, metrics will be used to highlight the real impact on final users upon criteria such as Job Creation and Employment; Economic Growth (Increase in regional GDP); Cost-Benefit Analysis and Infrastructure Development (Return on Investment).

c. Environmental Impact

Last but not least, the environmental dimension focuses on understanding how the COVE project interacts with and impacts the natural environment. This involves assessing efforts to minimize negative environmental effects and promote sustainable practices within VET. Sustainable forestry practices ensure that wood is sourced responsibly, minimizing deforestation and protecting natural ecosystems. Efficient wood utilization reduces waste and conserves resources. The industry can minimize the environmental footprint by using wood efficiently. Wood products can sequester carbon, contributing to carbon neutrality or negative emissions when managed sustainably.

Upcoming regional VET programmes will transform W&F with a new vision: implementing energy-efficient manufacturing processes and reducing energy consumption in the production of W&F items; minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants during manufacturing, finishing, and transportation processes; promoting the recycling and upcycling of W&F products to extend their life and reduce waste; using eco-friendly materials, such as low-VOC (volatile organic compound) finishes and adhesives, to reduce environmental impact; transitioning to a circular economy model that emphasizes product durability, repairability, and recycling to reduce waste.

In the context of the W&F industry, circular economy principles can be applied by designing W&F products with longevity in mind, using durable materials and modular components that can be repaired or repurposed.

The threefold sustainability impact assessment method provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating the sustainability performance of the COVE project. By focusing on economic, social, and environmental impacts, the method ensures that vocational education and training are aligned with broader sustainability goals, ultimately contributing to a more equitable, prosperous, and environmentally friendly society. Implementing this method allows project stakeholders to make informed decisions that enhance the positive impacts of COVE projects and address any negative consequences, leading to a holistic approach to sustainable development.

6. Conclusions

The term heterogeneity can sum up the main findings through the observation of our sample European regions but the debate among partners and stakeholders brought up valuable key ideas to improve common recognition processes in the future.

For our companies it is fundamental to attract skilled personnel throughout the entire processing chain. A highly skilled workforce, able to creatively incorporate new skills and competencies, to work with a variety of materials and to make an intelligent use of the potential for new combinations is essential for a competitive furniture sector competing on an increasingly global market. SMEs already apply a broad set of measures to find and retain workers. This includes efforts to make better use of talent within the company (e.g. staff mobility or job rotation), more investment in training, or increasing the attractiveness of jobs.

Labour shortages and lack of skilled workforce are the challenge in W&F industry, as well as a relatively low attractiveness for youngsters and women. Many institutions are engaged with the sectoral Social Dialogue for the Woodworking and Furniture industries and Social Partners are committed to taking an active role in finding solutions for common labour challenges, many of them also participate in EU funded projects addressing skills needs in relation to the transition to the circular economy and digitalization.

We have concluded that some Circular economy, I4.0and AAL skills and knowledge are missing and should be updated in existing qualifications. Lists and samples provided are not exhaustive, but they highlight the urgent need to integrate sustainable and digital skills and knowledge into VET educational and training programmes. These identified gaps are crucial for adapting European qualifications to the evolving needs of the modern workforce and expectations. By integrating these skills and knowledge, we aim to improve the relevance and applicability of VET programmes, equipping learners with the essential skills they need to thrive in a rapidly changing global environment, particularly in the specialised W&F sector.

We believe that it is necessary to update the training received by students in terms of concepts related to the circular economy and the use of new technologies, to be able to cope with the rapid changes that arise in the W&F sector. Updated training allows for improved skills and greater job insertion of workers within the sector. At the same time, companies can face the challenges presented to them to be more competitive in a demanding global market

To stay to the aim the school shall be set up in such a way that innovation is given a permanent place. There is a constant focus to search for information about sustainable and innovative materials to be integrated into the curriculum. Because developments in the field of new techniques are moving so fast, we find it important to teach students and encourage teachers and instructors to remain inquisitive. The LCA is an important tool to measure in an objective manner the level of sustainability of materials. AI is going to play a big role in the industry in the future. Concerning AAL, students need to be able to design furniture with sensors incorporated into it, so that people can live independently at home for longer. Since this subject is not described in the compulsory learning objectives of the study programmes, it is encouraged to be included in home automation modules. The

processing of light in furniture using sensor technology is a skill that is important for students to learn too. Finally, safety appears to be a relevant topic when it comes to furniture design. Students should have knowledge about the flammability and toxicity of materials they work with. The curriculum will be looked at profoundly to see if enough attention has already been paid to this subject.

As a result, collaboration between all actors involved, from industry, to social partners, to training institutes and universities, national governments and EU institutions has been encouraged during the ALLVIEW project life but still increased collaboration between industry and public employment services, technical teaching institutes, design institutes, universities and schools operating in the sector needs to be promoted.

Identifying new skills needs continuously, monitoring supply and demand for skills, identifying positions for which there is shortage of labour and collecting data on sectoral needs (skills gaps, skills mapping and development, skills forecast) and better tools for assessing the skills of applicants and company's skills needs can be put ahead through the ALLVIEW community platform and communication tools developed.

Promoting the attractiveness of and supporting Vocational Education Training considering differences in the Member States, further and increased mobility for apprenticeships via e.g. Erasmus+ and cross-border cooperation, including school-based VET and workplace training is a priority shared by members beyond the project.

Finally, it is important to remember that a curriculum recognition should be submitted in each European country, respecting the formal requirements foreseen at national or regional level. For each curriculum a specific level will be assigned according to the NQF. Thus, policy actions supporting the recognition of qualifications, investment in professional education, upskilling, continuous learning opportunities and upgrading workers' competences, via special courses on innovative aspects (circular economy, sustainability, application of climate friendly materials) available in the e-learning platform and attended by students at the COVE training centres are highly recommended.

We hope that the results of the ALLVIEW project can be capitalised on through the many other projects that will emerge from the experience gained during these four years.

The joint work of the consortium with the stakeholder groups representing regional excellence, the advanced level contents of the online training courses, the powerful networking platforms and the useful working tools are our legacy at the disposal of future users. Those who believe in advanced training techniques, in young generations, in the dignity of labour and in the most modern and competitive, responsible, sustainable and inclusive future of the European F&W industry...

Allview

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union