

EuroDuaLE

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 3

**EuroDuaLE
Methodological Framework
for International Dual Learning**

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1. Introduction

This document has been produced within the ERASMUS+ Project named EuroDuaLE and **aims to summarise the methodological elements developed by the project and integrated into a framework.**

It is mainly directed to those people in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and companies who wish to design a Dual Learning programme in coherence with EuroDuaLE model and/or goals.

The goal of EuroDuaLE – European Cooperative Framework for Dual Learning – is to develop an integrated transnational Dual Learning design framework, in which Higher Education Institutions and relevant stakeholders in the labour market establish a synergy and provide students with new or expanded *curricula*, combining formal and on-the-job training, physical and virtual mobility. In other words, students are provided with both a dual learning education and an international experience. The project focuses on the tertiary education level which, according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), includes short-cycle tertiary education, bachelor, master, doctoral or equivalent level.

The first phases of the project consisted of analysing the context of international mobility and dual learning in order to understand the main issues to take into consideration for the design of an original EuroDuaLE model of transnational dual learning.

With this document, Partners intend to develop an orientation basis for dual learning in higher education, composed of common principles and practices, which can be applied and adapted in different sectors, countries and contexts. For this reason, the core of the EuroDuaLE framework gives a “principled overview” of the fundamental steps for planning and the building blocks for implementation of a dual learning programme.

The **framework is conceived to allow the design of quality international Dual Learning programmes** – from relatively short experiences to full study programmes – while keeping in mind the aims of Dual Learning and the expectations of its main stakeholders, namely the learner, the employer and the Higher Education Institution(s) involved.

On the basis of this Framework, for those who want to design and implement a transnational dual learning programme, the EuroDuaLE project will provide a **Practical Handbook** that will contain more **operational guidelines** and a toolkit for operational design, implementation and evaluation. This Framework and the Practical Handbook will also be tested through a piloting phase within the project.

2. Definitions and aims of Dual Learning in Higher Education

The term “Dual Learning” corresponds to a variety of concrete combinations and the **integration** between formal learning at an education or training institution and learning “at the workplace” at the different levels of education and training.

Dual Learning is frequently described by the quasi-synonym *alternance training*, which is defined as: **“education or training combining periods in an educational institution or training centre and in the workplace. The alternance scheme can take place on a weekly, monthly or yearly basis. Depending on the country and applicable status, participants may be contractually linked to the employer and/or receive a remuneration”¹.**

The Dual Learning is, therefore, a pedagogical methodology that can be implemented through diverse kinds of legal schemes: apprenticeships, traineeships/internships or other forms of work-based experiences or work placements. It must, however, be guaranteed that the level of integration between classroom-based and work-based learning is high enough to constitute a real educational project and not just the sequence of unrelated learning episodes.

While the **apprenticeship** is considered the main form of work-based experience and the best tool for dual learning – even if it in itself is not homogeneous among and within EU countries – other forms of work-based experiences have been introduced in national legal systems to make learners experience workplace environments (in some cases, even without a real professionalization objective) or to “professionalise” secondary and higher education study programmes with the purpose of providing students with the knowledge and skills to better answer labour market requirements.

Not only in vocational education and training, but also **in higher education**, dual learning programmes are becoming more common in EU countries. They offer advantages to employers in terms of human resource management, such as reduced costs for recruitments and increased corporate loyalty. As for the students, they may become more motivated to learn, they better understand how to link practice and theory, and they have opportunities to develop career networks.

While advantages for companies and students are quite clear (see also par. 3), EuroDuaLE intends to develop **a model in which Higher Education Institutions are also a motivated actor in the system**. For this reason, it is important to state that, from the EuroDuaLE perspective, **Dual Learning is a methodology aimed primarily at a better, more competence-rich education of students**, and only secondly as a tool to improve employability and benefit the economic system.

¹ Cedefop, *Terminology of European education and training policy, A selection of 130 key terms*, Second edition, 2014, p. 24-25.

The *curricula* of EuroDuaLE programmes needs to be planned in such a way, that the periods of Higher Education institutions (semester, trimester) are integrated in the best suitable way. So, **the leading idea is not to add a bit of practical learning to the “normal” curriculum, but to well coordinate theoretical and practical learning** and to combine the learning places, learning concepts and learning methods, so that the needed competences and skills can be developed optimally.

Nevertheless, dual programmes also mean a change in the understanding of higher education learning. If the knowledge and needed skills become more complex, the traditional understanding of higher education learning is changed into a more explicit orientation of higher education studies towards the world of work.

EuroDuaLE is focused on the Higher Education level, and should concentrate on the purposes of Dual Learning in this field. Nevertheless, even in this area the possibilities to design dual learning vary significantly according to the aims that are attributed to it. Examples include: from an initiation to the world of work for students in the middle of their initial higher education, to the parallel development of professional competences for a specific profession/qualified job, to the establishment of a specific high-level apprenticeship contract in view of its transformation into a long-term labour contract, to the re-qualification of graduate company staff in collaboration between HEIs and employers. This last area represents a different, promising and largely unexplored field for dual learning development, that is not, however, in the focus of this document, nor of the EuroDuaLE project.

Modern (inter-)national regulations and standardizations are needed to support the development of these programmes. The education framework must be well developed, e.g. quality standards, national regulations and job profiles as well as an international recognition system.

The EuroDuaLE Framework is conceived to accommodate these different purposes; therefore, it is not prescriptive. It shows a set of principles and a sequence of steps that might (should) be undertaken before the operational design of a Dual Learning experience/programme can start. The core of the EuroDuaLE framework, however, is not the “initiation to the workplace” nor the development of very operational skills linked to a specific job in a specific workplace, **but the development of technical and transversal skills and competences** (such as teamwork, problem diagnosis, problem solving, professional communication, inter-generational communication and collaboration, responsibility taking towards a working process and other people, working under time pressure, quality improvement, taking initiative, understanding and respecting diversity of roles and functions in an organisation, etc.) **that are better developed in cooperation** between an educational environment and a company/workplace rather than solely within an educational environment.

3. Expectations, concerns and potential benefits for stakeholders

The main **potential benefits of well-designed dual learning programmes** in higher education consist of the increased quality of higher education and study programmes, the improvement of youth employability and the reduction of the mismatch between competences provided by higher education institutions and competences required by the labour market.

First of all, dual learning programmes enhance the capabilities of all actors to provide quality and successful education to students. The quality of the education and the employability of graduates is increased mainly thanks to the possibility of combining formal and on-the-job training, that is, theoretical learning at universities or HEIs with practical training in companies provided by working or participating in work-based experiences during their educational course.

Secondly, the mismatch of competences is reduced because HE courses are designed together by HEIs and companies and are consistent with the educational and vocational needs expressed by businesses. Obviously, the possibility of graduates to enter the labour market is greater if they have professional profiles that meet the expectations of companies.

The advantages for all parties involved are clear and they will be further explained in next paragraphs. Moreover, the spread and practice of apprenticeships do not benefit only apprentices and companies, but also the economy and society as a whole.

Nevertheless, mention should be made of the fact that dual learning programmes may encounter obstacles during their implementation. These obstacles may depend on administrative issues and the coordination between educational and working contexts, but it seems that difficulties in the implementation and development of dual learning programmes may be related to the lack of "cultural" preparation/availability on the sides of all parties involved that may not fully understand the potentiality and advantages of dual learning programmes for all stakeholders. Moreover, conflict of interest and conflicts of commitments between business and academic may arise. This could happen especially when members of the HEI become involved in an outside activity, so that they cannot fulfil their academic responsibilities in terms of scientific, free and impartial contribution to academic work².

Therefore, the awareness of potential benefits for all actors must be considered as the first feasibility condition. The potential risks of non-designed or badly-designed dual learning programmes, however, should also be considered. A disappointing experience may compromise the credibility of the whole concept for learners, enterprises and HEIs; that is why understanding the potential benefits and working to achieve them is a good starting point for a design framework.

² <https://tomprof.stanford.edu/posting/452>.

It is important to consider the picture of risks and benefits as a whole. The goal is to create a win-win-win situation in which benefits and risks of all stakeholders are balanced and interdependent, meaning that benefits to one of the actors involved will not occur if the system does not benefit all actors involved.

3.1. Students

The main purpose of dual learning is to improve students' education and their employability, helping them to work towards a qualification.

Dual learning can better equip young people with the skills – both soft and hard, transversal and technical – essential to enter the labour market and needed in a workplace since they can enhance their theoretical knowledge by acquiring skills and competences directly from a working environment. Students undertaking dual learning *curricula*, often have the chance to access the labour market earlier by continuing their study path and acquiring a tertiary qualification, and in the meanwhile getting in touch with companies and starting their path for future placement in the labour market.

Not only can students be better prepared to enter the labour market, but the direct experience of a working environment and, above all, putting in practice their own attitudes, knowledge and competences act as an actual guidance for their future careers. The value of dual learning programmes lies not only in the early placement into the labour market – even if it is one of the main outcomes of the system – but mainly in the impact on the future careers of young people. A dual learning programme can provide the students with a better understanding and awareness about themselves, their attitudes, skills and competences. It might serve as an orientation towards what they need to develop and learn and towards their future choices of career.

Dual learning may also enhance the sustainability of the tertiary level education for students and their families. Indeed, if dual learning programmes are based on apprenticeships, students receive a salary from the company on the basis of the apprenticeship agreement. This would ensure that even economically disadvantaged young people have access to tertiary education without having to search for an occasional job not related with their field of study.

The main risk from the students' point of view is that the dual learning programme could have a low quality and a low educational value. First of all, companies could use students to cover non-formative and non-qualitative jobs. Secondly, the theoretical part of the programme offered by HEIs could turn out to be of poor quality. It could be either unbalanced on the needs of a specific company – and so, not effective for students' overall education, competences and employability – or it could be unbalanced on the side of higher education professors or teachers, due to a theoretical education not connected with practical experience. Dual learning education also needs to be planned and implemented with high quality standards.

These risks are real and are the main reasons for dual learning not working in some contexts. On the other side, these concerns can be overcome through a

good planning of the dual learning programme and through a wider spread of the dual culture.

In short, dual learning has the potential effect of better preparing students for the labour market, allowing them to shorten the school-to-work transition period and giving good job prospects after graduation. This would in turn lead to better life standards for young people, anticipate their economic independence, and be an opportunity for the social inclusion and civic participation of youth in the public sphere.

3.2. Companies/Employers

Dual learning is an opportunity also for companies and other employers such as non-profit organisations, public administrations and so on. We refer to companies because this is the context in which dual learning is more developed, but, obviously, the following considerations can also be applied to other working environments.

The most evident advantage for companies participating in dual learning is that it is the best opportunity to train people with the skills and competences required by companies themselves. This happens primarily with the participation of the “dual students” in the activities of the companies at different levels. But this is not the only way a company can influence the learning process and the training of the students. Within dual learning programmes, companies participate in the design of the entire course/*curricula* together with the HEI.

The degree of influence by the companies on the design of the whole study programme, of course, depends on the field of study and on its level of specialisation.

Actually, dual programmes can provide employers with the opportunity to test students coming from backgrounds (e.g. humanities) different from the ones they are used to and discover they possess unexpected competences that might be strategical for their business.

Moreover, dual learning represents a chance for companies to get in touch with high-skilled, talented and creative young people that may effectively enter the company afterwards. This would reduce the cost of recruiting and it would give new lifeblood to the company, allowing the company to maintain its position on the market and even increase its productivity. Furthermore, since they have been trained on the job, at the end of the programme, students are in the position to be immediately “productive” for the company.

Again, by participating in dual learning schemes, companies would benefit from the knowledge and know-how transfer from HEIs. A smooth communication between the “two worlds” would guarantee an improvement on production, by using results of higher education’s research in contact with R&D departments of companies.

In the case of SMEs this positive effect of dual learning is even deeper, since they usually do not have their own R&D division. Through a constant relationship with HEIs, they could communicate their professional needs to

education and training actors and have an influence on future HE study programmes.

Employers' associations and Chambers of Commerce can play an important role in supporting the development and spread of dual learning programmes by explaining to companies their potential benefits, including the opportunity for local development from which all companies can take advantage.

There could also be some risks or downsides for companies. Companies participating in dual learning programmes need to provide students/apprentices with tutors and, depending on the kind of study programme and company, let them stay aside company staff. Workers involved in work-based experiences of students/apprentices have to spend time with learners and might be less productive. This may appear too expensive for a short-term profit-oriented company. But, in EuroDuaLE philosophy, this is an initial cost that should be sustained necessarily by the company. Considering that this is a premise for a good quality dual learning programme and that, as we already mentioned, it is indeed an investment for the future from various points of view. Companies should not only provide tutors and staff, but should train these people with the right competences to be trainers (for example, with pedagogical competences), in both situations in which students are followed by a single main tutor (in this case he/she needs to be specifically trained for this) or they alternate with different workers (in this case, all workers need to have basic pedagogical training). So, these aspects cannot be avoided, because they are conditions for the dual learning experience to be of high quality.

However, companies can be stimulated to invest in dual learning programmes by the recognition of the important role they play for the economic system and society through their active participation, offering the opportunity for young people to participate in work-based experiences, also giving them more visibility. The idea is to recognize a company that participates in good quality dual learning programmes with special attention from the point of view of the corporate social responsibility (CSR), with resulting advantages in terms of image and incentives (where existing).

3.3. Higher Education Institutions

Universities and HEIs are sometimes reluctant in designing dual learning programmes and may prefer to offer "traditional" courses. To decide to develop dual learning programmes, HEIs need to understand relevant benefits and advantages and how these programmes can be beneficial for them.

Thanks to these kinds of programmes, **HEIs can better fulfil some of their main missions: better prepare students for their future careers and design *curricula* providing the right knowledge, skills and competences required by employers.** If they are successful in doing this, they can increase the employability of their students and graduates and enhance their opportunities to enter the labour market earlier. In this way, HEIs can also increase their performances indicators in their graduates' placement during and after the courses.

Since the limited contact between HEIs and employers is perceived to be a common problem across the EU, **dual learning programmes have the merit to improve this relationship** and bring benefits to the economic system as a whole. By working together with companies in designing dual learning programmes and being continuously in touch, HEIs can better understand knowledges, skills, and competences required in general by companies, detect companies' training and vocational needs and anticipate skills demand. This information is useful for HEIs, not only to design dual learning programmes, but also to become, in general, more responsive to the needs of companies; for example, by revising existing courses, in order to improve the education and vocational knowledge of graduates, fitting to companies' vocational requirements, and thus facilitating their employability in the school-to-work transition. This consideration is particularly relevant in academic disciplines that do not have an immediate relationship with the world of enterprises, such as humanities, social sciences and arts. In private companies there are also some functions that are suitable to dual learning for students of these disciplines and a lot of soft skills can be learnt by a well thought out experience in a firm. Moreover, not only commercial and industrial companies can offer work-based learning opportunities: NGOs, associations, the Public Administration at central and local levels may also offer opportunities to learn.

Regarding the implementation of dual learning programmes among HEIs, universities, in particular, may have concerns about the quality control and maintenance of academic standards of the whole course, considering that a part of the training is provided outside the universities by companies. But the universities themselves, and HEIs in general, have the overall responsibility of quality assurance. They should evaluate and certify not only off-the-job training, but also on-the-job training, and monitor the acquisition of expected skills and competences.

Even if it is not possible to expect that all HEIs' students can access the labour market through dual learning programmes, universities and HEIs should consider these programmes as a key tool for the job placement of their students and graduates. Moreover, it seems crucial that the economic system as a whole shows a strong commitment to design and implement dual learning courses.

3.4. Economy and Society

The economy and society as a whole may benefit directly and indirectly from the set-up and implementation of dual learning programmes.

Their development and spread allow highly educated young people to enter the labour market with the knowledge and competences that companies need, reducing the skills mismatch and allowing companies to hire people with a strong basis of skill development. This would lead to a virtuous circle in which the labour market absorbs highly educated young people with appropriate competences who can give a personal contribution to the production process, promoting technical and organisational innovation. This would support and

increase economic competitiveness and result in a more dynamic and healthy economic system, which will benefit all companies and the system.

Furthermore, while designing and implementing dual learning programmes, **HEIs and employers develop a constructive framework of collaboration** and cooperation which goes beyond the setting-up of these programmes and may help the creation of a more productive local economy.

Since dual learning programmes support the quality of the education of young people and their employability, their implementation may increase the confidence of the community in the HE system.

4. The trans-national dimension of Dual Learning

The EuroDuaLE Project considers trans-national Dual Learning as an interesting area to explore and suggests that **Dual Learning programmes should include, as far as possible, a trans-national dimension**. This is not only important because the labour markets of different European countries offer different employment possibilities, but also because adding an international work experience to a HEI study programme entails additional benefits for the stakeholders involved.

When the term 'international' is used in this Dual Learning context, it should be interpreted as exchanging students across national borders. For example, a HEI sends a student to follow a dual learning programme at a HEI in another country. The latter designs a dual learning study programme together with a local or international organisation/company.

As for the **students**, Dual Learning across borders offers them the possibility to combine work and study in another country. This way, students are exposed to a different market (abroad), which may offer new career possibilities and, as such, is a way to become more employable. They develop a professional identity with international exposure which offers them new career possibilities. Students learn about the reality and complexity of a foreign workplace, such as differences in interest at play, learning how to cope with team pressure and different work procedures. By working in another country, they learn to work and cooperate with professionals from different cultures. Furthermore, on the one hand, as an employee with special skills, Dual Learning students can be employed abroad to support a sector in which there may be a shortage of certain skills and offer their home-taught skills to a company/organisation abroad. On the other hand, through Dual Learning, students are also offered the opportunity to work in another country where they can learn new professional skills and languages.

As for **HEIs**, Dual Learning across borders offers them the opportunity to get familiar with foreign labour markets and, as such, they become aware of possible market changes. Working across borders can help HEIs to build international networks and partnerships with foreign professional sectors. By building such networks, HEIs are able to benchmark their own study programmes with the needs of foreign workplace environments. In a Dual Learning situation across borders, HEIs can also attract different student groups and international organisations for their study programmes. In terms of educational methodology, setting up Dual Learning programmes abroad stimulates this development and innovation.

As another stakeholder in the Dual Learning system, **companies/organisations** are offered the opportunity to work together with HEI's across borders and build networks and partnerships with them. Companies/organisations get access to a potential pool of employees from other countries and offer them the possibility to fill jobs for which there is a local shortage. This cross-border exchange between student, HEI and

company/organisation stimulates productivity, professional development and innovation. It also supports the transfer of knowledge and expertise which foreign students bring to the company/organisation.

As mentioned, increasing employability by working across borders is another potential benefit of Dual Learning. This is to the advantage of students as well as potential employees and **society** as a whole. Other benefits for society can be creating realistic employability chances in professions for which there may be a shortage in other countries, and also attracting employees with highly developed skills or competences.

Of course, adding a trans-national dimension to a Dual Learning programme may also generate additional work and complications including: checking/developing language skills, establishing a partnership with foreign companies (or HEI which have an established relation with local companies), providing local support to students who accept to spend a part of their programme abroad, monitoring progress at a distance, recognizing credits and competences developed abroad. In this regard, it must be said, however, that HEIs have a less complicated job to do than VET providers since they normally have partner HEIs abroad and the ERASMUS infrastructure (ERASMUS Offices, Erasmus Student Networks, etc.) can support student mobility.

There are additional benefits of working virtually across borders. There are two ways in which students can be employed virtually across borders. In the first one, a student is enrolled and studies in his home country but works virtually for a company abroad. In the second one, a student is physically present in a company abroad but is enrolled in a programme at home and follows this programme in a virtual way. In order to make these two situations a valuable trans-national experience, ICT and/or virtual tools should be incorporated in the programme. For example, ICT and/or virtual meetings/lectures may help to keep links strong between the home country, the HEI, the company/organisation and the student being trained in a different country. Additionally, using ICT and/or virtual tools definitely reduces costs that may be incurred by working, studying and frequently travelling across borders.

5. The core components of Dual Learning and the various implementation approaches

While Dual Learning, at certain qualitative conditions, has benefits to offer to students, companies and HEIs, its implementation is not standardised across Europe. The diffusion of a standardised model of Dual Learning – capitalising the best experiences in Europe – might appear at a first sight the best solution in order to introduce Dual Learning where it doesn't exist or improve it where it doesn't work properly. This might be a long-term goal for European policy makers, also in view of the transnational mobility opportunity mentioned above; but in the short run, and for the purpose of this project, this is not necessarily the best way. **Dual learning systems are built on the innovative effort of many actors and on particular conditions, so – like any other “social innovation” – they are “context dependent” (they depend on the economic, social, cultural and legal background).** For this reason, **EuroDuaLE does not propose a “one-size-fits-all” approach, a “one best way”, but a way to undertake the complex operation of designing quality dual learning programmes with full awareness of the contextual conditions.**

The intention of this “framework for design” document is to identify a limited set of core principles and steps – that might be taken as a starting reference for all countries and situations and make the core of the EuroDuaLE approach/modelling engine – and to encourage “Designers of Dual Learning at HE level” to customise these core elements according to the country(ies) in which the Dual Learning has to be conducted (keeping in mind the national contexts in terms of culture, legislation, economic structure, etc.) and the further elements of specificity deriving from the (learning and employment) aims of “that” Dual Learning programme, the characteristics of the study programme, the workplaces involved, the specific sector and profiles.

In the following graph, the centre represents the core principles and the six building blocks that are illustrated in section 6, while the second circle represents the “country” contextual elements and the external circles represent the more specific contextual elements linked to the study programme, the workplaces and the specific Dual Learning programme to be put in place.

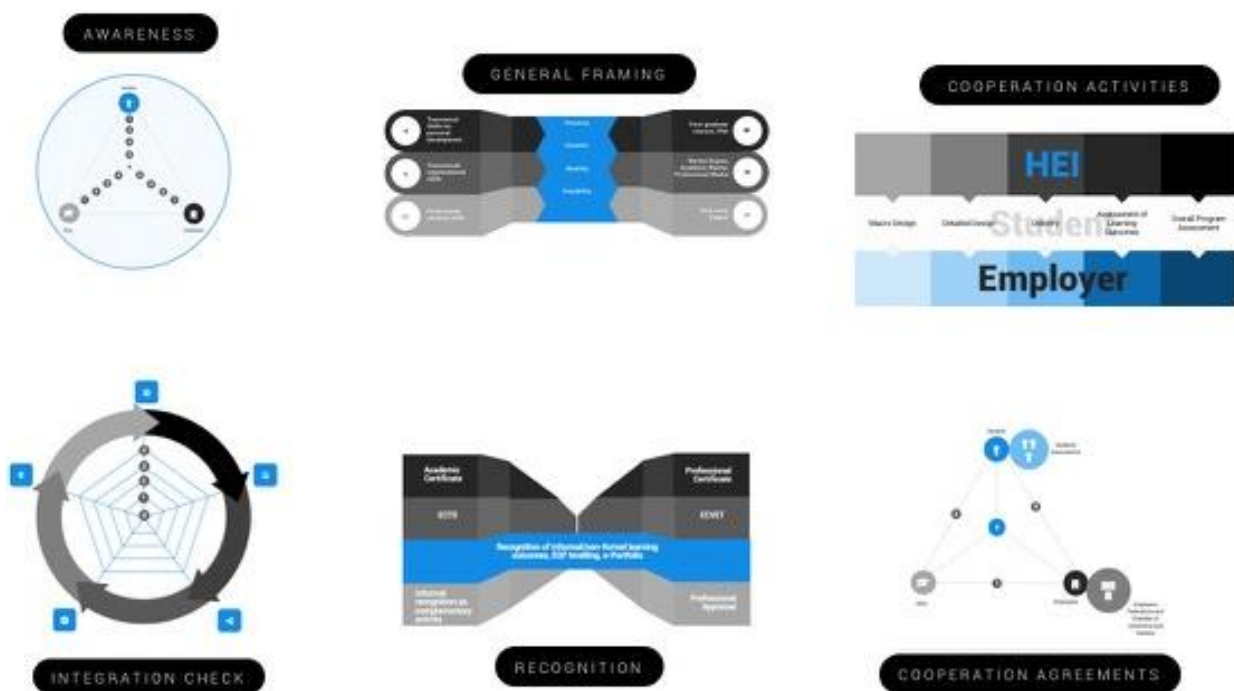
This approach is proposed to guarantee a basic level of commonality and coherence across countries and contexts – to allow comparisons and exchange of good practices – but above all, to respect the many contextual elements that will make every project different in some elements of its construction.



6. The EuroDuaLE Design Framework

The following section illustrates the six Building Blocks proposed by EuroDuaLE to design Dual Learning Experiences and Study Programmes.

They represent the first phase of design in which context conditions, learning aims, structural features, feasibility conditions and desired levels of collaboration, formalisation and recognition are considered and agreed among the key parties involved. The successful completion of these steps will allow then the start of the operational design phase, supported by the EuroDuaLE Practical Handbook, that will address more practical issues.



6.1. Awareness

The level of awareness and willingness to engage in dual learning must be considered as the first feasibility condition, essential to start the whole process. The students, the HEI and the employer must – at least – agree to participate and possibly take a pro-active role in the dual learning programme implementation. No programme should be started without the firm agreement of each of the three main parties, although other stakeholders (associations, public authorities, etc.) may play a positive and persuasive role.

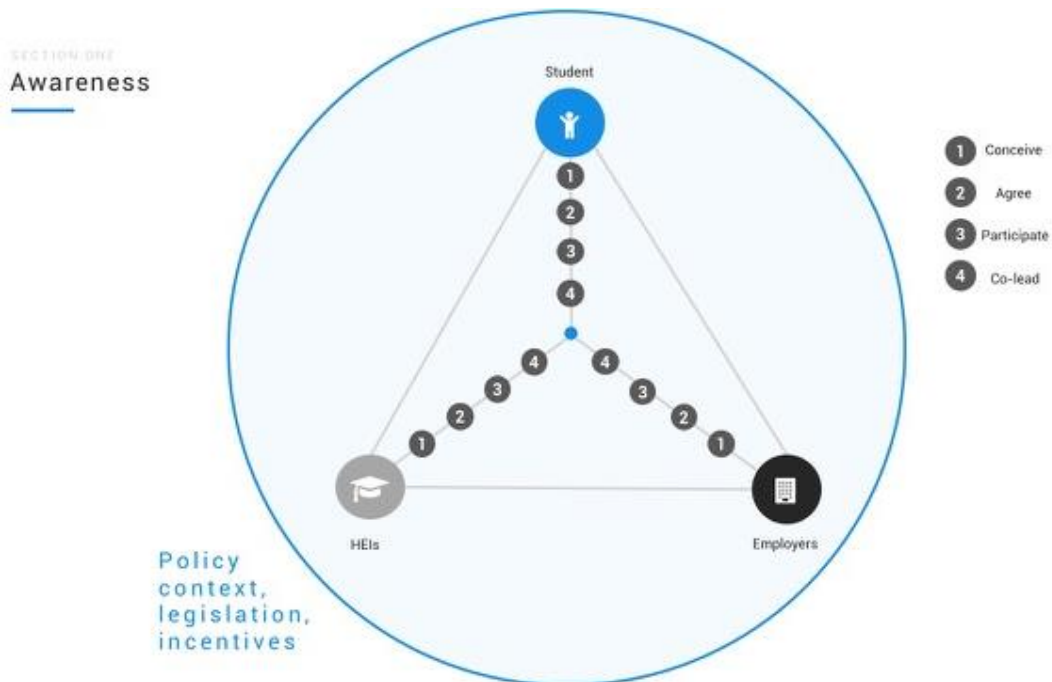
The existing legislative and Higher Education Quality Assurance/Accreditation framework may encourage or discourage dual learning, thus either stimulating or discouraging the interest of both HEIs and enterprises. Similarly, policy emphasis and financial incentives may be an important help to convince smaller enterprises to undertake apprenticeship programmes and to make apprenticeship a common practice in countries that do not have a significant tradition.

Employers and employee representatives can also significantly contribute to the development of dual learning awareness level in the labour market and society as a whole. Chambers of Commerce, Trade Unions and Workers Associations can support the definition of dual learning activities and the development of specific abilities and competences in students, thanks to their broader and wider view of market evolution and practices as for companies' specific and technical knowledge. The situation of the labour market and the environment has a big impact on dual learning programmes: designing dual learning pathways without this awareness could be risky and ineffective.

As graphically reported in the image below, we can have different levels of awareness of each stakeholder, from passive information to active participation and mainstream experience. It means that the level of awareness towards dual learning grows as stakeholders have the chance to experience it and the system reaches the maximum level of awareness when it is a mainstream activity. In other words, when it becomes "normal" for students to take part in a dual learning programme during their education path, when HEIs normally offer high-level dual learning programmes as a core part of their educational provision, and when companies are fully equipped to offer training opportunities to students. Regarding students' highest level of awareness, student associations can work together with companies and HEIs in the *curricula* definition and in the implementation of dual learning experiences. The idea that student associations contribute in the design of dual learning pathways, not just as recipients of training, denotes also a high-level of interaction between parties involved and development of students' responsibility. It is necessary to underline both the impacts of the labour market and 21th century challenges in dual learning programmes in order to stress the importance of students' self-improvement responsibility.

If "awareness" is to be understood as a progressively deeper knowledge of dual learning and commitment towards its implementation by all actors involved, then the issue of quality assurance also becomes important. Quality assurance may include: specific requirements on the level of *curriculum* integration of the dual learning component and its recognition in terms of credits and learning outcomes; requirements for hosting employer organisations and a possible "label" of "investors in people"; training and competences requirements (e.g. a specific certification like the German AEVO) for company trainers/mentors and HE tutors engaged to support students in the workplace and in the HEI; level of specification of the dual learning agreement signed by the three parties involved; and briefing courses for students before starting dual learning. All these points will be mentioned below and better specified in the Handbook that will follow this Framework.

Higher levels of awareness often lead to long-term partnerships between HEI and employers, with smoother relationships among the people who support learners on the two sides and a habit to share information and evaluation results. The “connecting competence” for HE tutors and employers’ trainers/mentors is a key element to overcome traditional cultural gaps and to guarantee good design and collaborative implementation of Dual Learning.



6.2. General Framing

This is the **core of the EuroDuaLE framework** in which the HEI defines, in general terms, **what is desirable and possible** given the goals, the resources and the constraints associated to the Study Programme (e.g. a work experience of a few weeks, a dual year in a master programme, a fully dual *curriculum*, etc.).

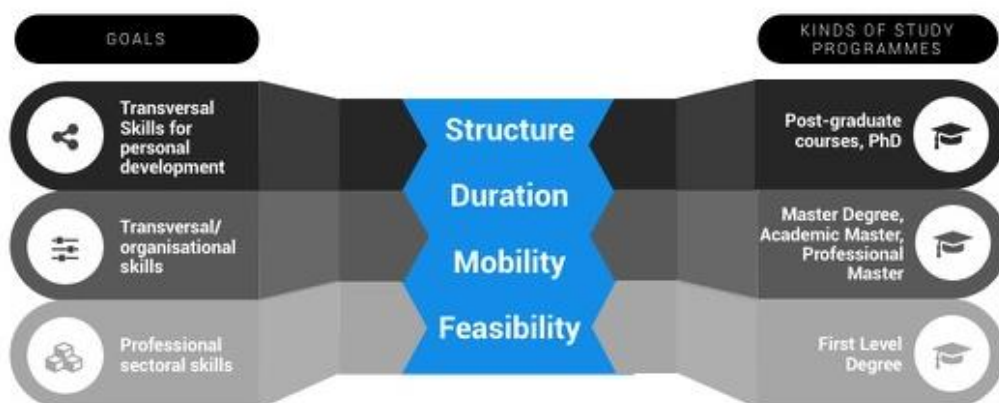
The following graph can be explained as follows:

1. On the left side, **the balance of goals – such as employability, personal development, approaching the world of work, developing social-organisational competences** – (overarching the desired Learning Outcomes) is represented, which are the main learning outcomes of the desired dual learning programme. As specified in Section 2, dual learning can be proposed to develop transversal skills for personal development (e.g. critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, initiative taking, entrepreneurship, communication, etc.), or more organisation-oriented skills (working under strict time constraints, respecting roles and

functions, positioning oneself in a work-cycle, etc.), or more sector- or job-specific skills and competences, or any combination of the three. What is important, is to clarify the balance between educational and employment aims and the nature of the desired learning outcomes before starting the operational design. EuroDuaLE assumes that quality Dual Learning cannot be focused only on job-specific competences, but must include – as learning outcomes – transversal skills to be developed in cooperation between HE and employer; and must keep student at the centre of the learning/teaching approach.

2. On the right side, **the kind and level of Higher Education Study Programme** is represented. While it can easily be argued that dual learning may contribute to the quality of HE at any level and in any discipline, certain forms of dual learning are adequate at the beginning of a HE cycle, but would not make sense at a higher “academic professionalization” level and vice-versa. Also in this case, before starting to design dual learning, it would be good to have clear ideas on what form of dual learning is desirable for a given study programme and years of courses.
3. At the centre of the drawing is **what must be defined at this preliminary stage, on the basis of the two previous steps: the basic structure of dual learning (the form of work-based experience implementing the dual learning, how long, in which period of the study programme, with which “alternance rhythm” between classroom and workplace, in which kind of organisation and function, and in individual or group format); the mobility element (including the language competence/training requirements); and the basic legal, economic and organisational feasibility conditions of the experience that obviously include a first esteem of expected costs and benefits and the identification of a preliminary financing strategy.**

SECTION TWO General Framing



6.3. Cooperation Activities

The different roles of the HEI (mostly coordinated through a well identified representative, a tutor or a placement officer) and the employer (who should appoint a mentor/trainer as a reference figure) throughout the different phases and main activities of the Dual Learning Experience/Programme are to be envisaged in this step. Specifically, **what is done by the HEI, what is done by the Employer/Enterprise, what is expected by the student and what is done together must be defined.** In principle, one could say: “The higher the degree of collaboration, the higher the possibility to consolidate the partnership and to make it sustainable in the long term”, but less integrated collaboration models can also work well.

The role of the student must not be underscored. He/she is the person most continuously involved in dual learning and the main beneficiary. He/she should be constantly encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions on how the programme and the methods might be improved and become, therefore, the first cooperating partner in the exercise.

The figure below represents the main phases of design and implementation of any training experience applied to the possible respective roles of the two organisational partners: the HEI and the enterprise. Although it is perfectly conceivable that a HEI designs and evaluates a dual learning programme almost “alone”, and the employer may intervene only in the implementation/delivery of the programme, **EuroDuaLE suggests that collaboration is applied to all the phases of development, from joint macro-design of the dual learning programme to joint evaluation of learning outcomes and programme results.**

SECTION THREE Cooperation Activities



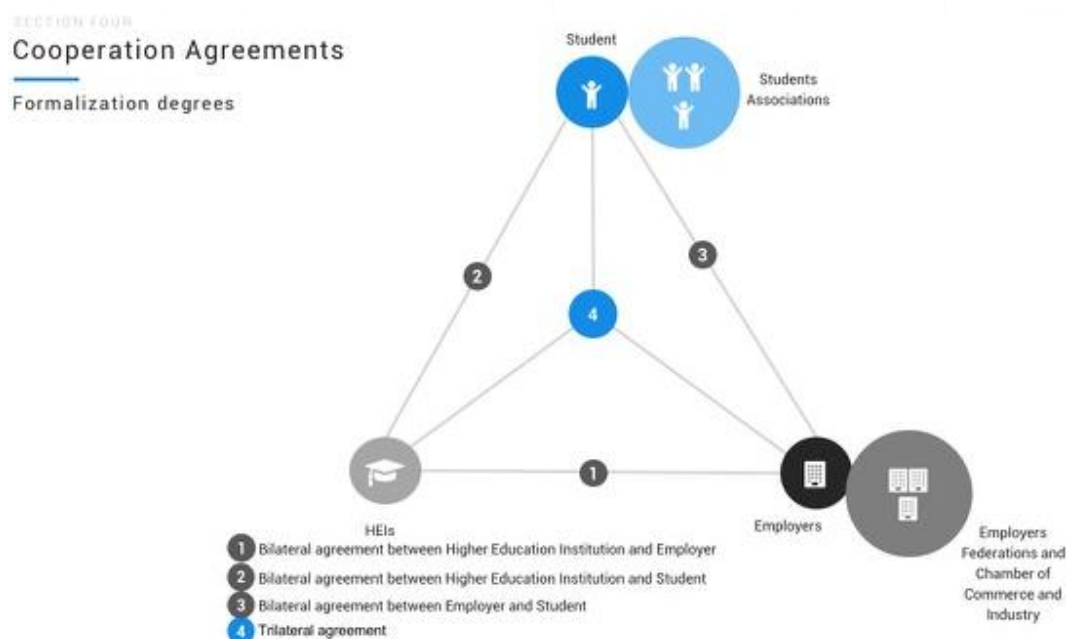
6.4. Cooperation Agreements

Defining the form of the cooperation agreement is conceptually simple, but it implies a serious consideration of the contextual factors (cultural, legal, industrial relations, etc.) in which the dual learning will take place.

In order to set up and regulate dual learning programmes, various agreements are needed to define the involvement of each part (student/apprentice, employer, HEI) and their relationships. Moreover, these agreements differ according to the kind of work-based experience to be implemented within the dual learning programme.

The regulation and implementation of the dual learning programme can be based on a combination of bilateral agreements or **bilateral and trilateral agreements**. It depends on how national legal systems regulate each kind of work-based experience implemented within the dual learning programme.

Examples of how to address this kind of issues will be developed and exemplified in the Practical Handbook.



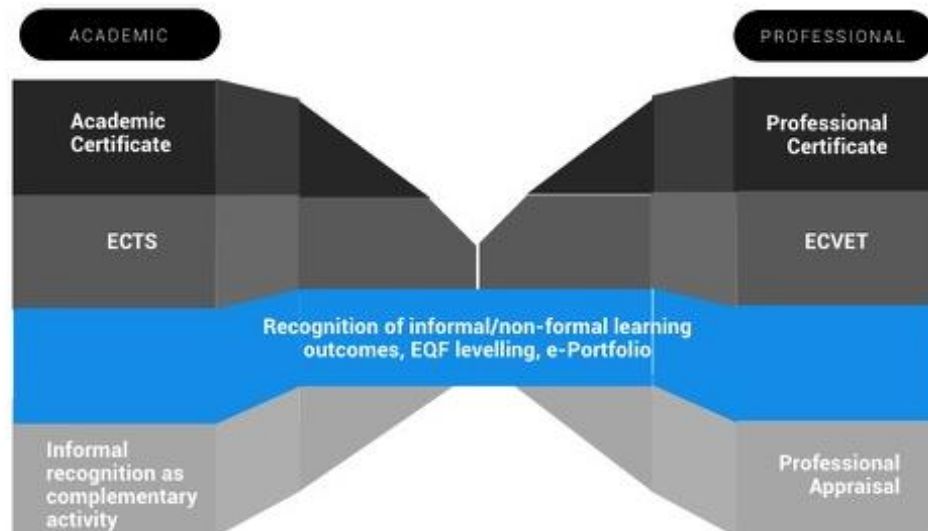
6.5. Recognition

This step is extremely important to give dignity, portability and ultimately **student interest** in the dual learning programme/experience. It includes an **academic element** and a **professional element**, both of which should be carefully considered: what level of formalisation is reasonably achievable?

Some central elements in the recognition of learning outcomes achieved at the workplace and in classic academic activities could be recognised in terms of National and European Qualifications Framework, covering both academic and professional qualifications while others are easier to be recognised in one or the

other system. In any case, **recognition has to be part of the design of a Dual Learning programme, not a problem to be solved at the end.**

SECTION FIVE Recognition



There are two routes for recognition that should have been considered since the early design phase:

1. Recognition as part of the design of the dual learning programme in HE, with its credit system and specific formal certificates corresponding to academic degrees (left side)

One of the ways to differentiate between more structured forms of dual learning (focusing on learning outcomes) and other forms of work-based learning (just focusing on practical experience) is the predesign of the learning programme, the wished learning outcomes and the ways they are made visible. In this ideal case, the steps should be:

- a.** *The starting point is the HE programme, described in terms of learning outcomes or competences;*
- b.** *Identifying what results theoretically can be achieved (what learning outcomes can be reached or what competences developed) in a dual learning programme given the HE programme;*
- c.** *Identifying the employer and workplace (including country specific job description and differences in qualification systems), describing what concrete parts of the results of step 2 can and should be achieved during a dual learning programme at this employer, resulting in a list of outcomes from the dual learning period;*
- d.** *Agreement between employer, student and HE institute if and how each of the points from step 3 are measured, made visible, tested or valued;*

- e. *Dual learning starts with intermediate testing or evaluation of the agreed learning outcomes so the programme, if necessary, can be altered;*
- f. *Final validation and valuation of the results of the dual learning period, in terms of the HE programme the student is enlisted in.*

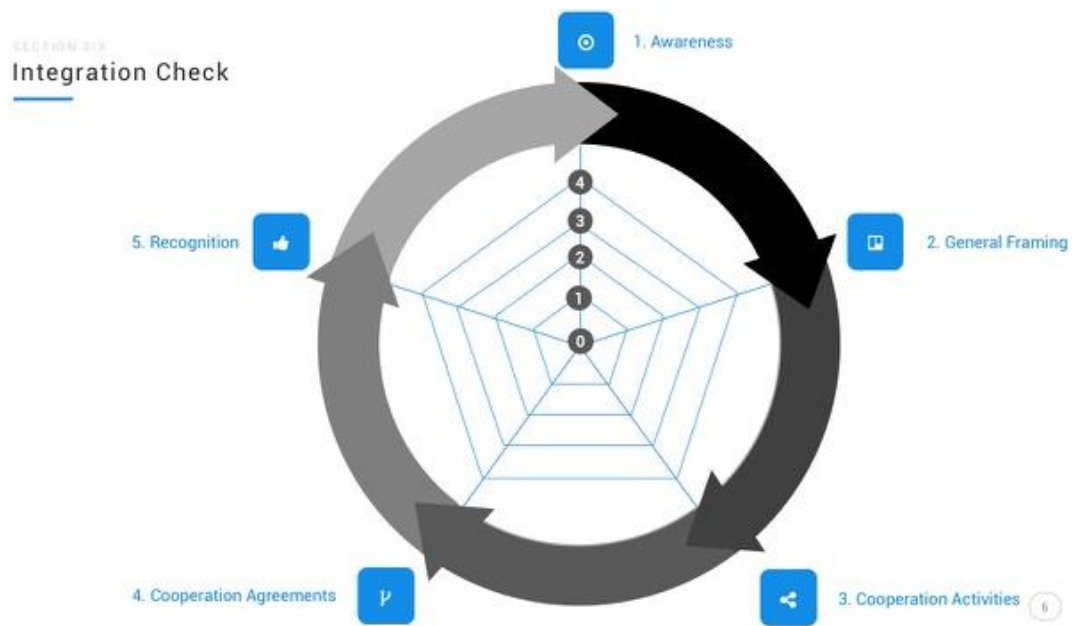
2. Recognition as the process of validating and valuing the learning outcomes of the working and learning experience at the workplace achieved by the student (the right side).

During a dual learning activity, more than just the expected and pre-designed learning outcomes can be achieved. This, however, equals validating and valuing non-formal and informal learning (referred to as RNFIL or VPL). For the recognition, validation and / or valuation, the HE institute with the employer should have a recognition system in place. Such a system can reach several levels and must take mutual points into consideration.

Obviously, the ideal situation would be one in which the academic and the professional recognition processes would converge as much as possible and identify common apprenticeship standards. However, this is probably achievable only in the case of long-term and complete dual learning programmes designed in an integrated way to provide a “double qualification”.

6.6. Integration Check

This final step has the function of “**Quality Assurance check**”. It should allow for identification and correction of possible inconsistencies in the levels of integration proposed in the previous steps. If incoherence is found, for example between the level of awareness/commitment and the envisaged collaboration activities and agreement, some corrections should be proposed.



After this check, the operational design process can start.