



for work-based learning Guidelines

*Set of recommendations for VET institutions for an
effective implementation of SELFIE WBL*

Authors: C. Herrero, L. Weikert García,
M. Horgan, M. Tasiovasilis

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Introduction

Vocational Educational and Training (hereafter, VET) holds a prominent position on the European agenda, aiming to **equip individuals with the appropriate skills** for current and future job demands. By connecting educational institutions and professional environments, VET prepares the future workforce with the essential digital competences needed in today's evolving landscape. VET also plays a crucial role in facilitating the digital transformation process for both learners and future workers.

Given the current digital transformation, it is important to support VET institutions and companies to make the most of digital technologies for teaching, learning and training. The 2020 Council Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training for sustainable competitiveness, social justice and resilience define the key principles to ensure that VET is able to adapt to labour market needs and to provide quality-learning opportunities. In relation to supporting the digital transformation of VET provision both in school-based and work-based environments, SELFIE was recommended as a relevant tool for such a role (as the basis for SELFIE WBL development).

In addition to that, there are several European Commission policies that support the digital transformation of the VET sector: the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027, the 2020 European Skills Agenda and the Osnabruck Declaration on VET as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies.

In order to support the digital transformation of education and training, a number of digital competence frameworks (Digital Competence Framework for citizens - DigComp 2.2, educators - DigCompEdu, and educational organisations - DigCompOrg) were developed. A competence framework defines and describes the most important competences in a given area, usually accompanied by detailed descriptors, proficiency levels and/or learning outcomes. Competences are defined as the combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, following the 2018 European Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning.

The European Framework for Digitally Competent Educational Organisations (DigCompOrg) provides a comprehensive and generic conceptual framework that reflects all aspects of the process of systematically integrating digital learning in educational organisations from all education sectors.

Based on the framework, a self-reflection tool (SELFIE) for primary, secondary and vocational schools was developed and launched in October 2018 to give greater visibility to the framework and to put it into practical use. SELFIE can be used by primary, lower and upper-secondary general, upper-secondary vocational and post-secondary non-tertiary

education schools. VET institutions can already use the SELFIE tool within their institutions. The first iteration of SELFIE did not address VET schools that offer work-based learning schemes that combine school- and workplace-based experiences for students. In order to cover this need, a new module was developed for SELFIE, focused on work-based learning (WBL): SELFIE WBL.

SELFIE WBL (work-based learning) Module

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie/selfie-for-work-based-learning>

SELFIE for work-based learning (WBL) is a module developed as part of the SELFIE tool. SELFIE is a free online tool and VET institutions and companies can use the WBL module also for free in any of the languages available. It supports them in making the most of digital technologies for teaching, learning and training.

SELFIE WBL helps VET institutions and related training companies become fit for the digital age by supporting them in embedding digital technologies in the training process to provide relevant and engaging learning experiences and blending traditional and digitally innovative instruction methods.

This adaptation of SELFIE for the work-based learning context has been a much-needed step for the digital transformation of VET and the dual VET model offering a common reference and a link between VET institutions and companies.

SELFIE WBL consists of an online questionnaire, composed of scientifically validated questions regarding the digital capacity of VET institutions including work-based learning environments. In order to do so, there are specific questionnaires for each one of the four profiles involved in the collective reflection process promoted by SELFIE WBL:

1. School leaders
2. Teachers
3. Learners
4. In-company trainers

In sum, the rationale behind this work is for VET institutions and companies to work together to support the digital transformation of the VET sector, using SELFIE WBL as an enabler.

Both 'school' and 'company' environments are important to foster this transformation, and both need to be involved.

In addition to that, the tool reinforces the link between education and employment. SELFIE WBL can play an increasingly important role to facilitate the link between training (VET institutions) and the labour market world (companies) in relation to the digital transformation of the VET sector.

The main goal of this work is to support the digital transformation of the VET sector by exploring a more coordinated approach among companies and VET institutions via SELFIE WBL as a common tool for both contexts.

SELFIE WBL Guidelines

In order to support this more coordinated approach among VET institutions and companies, the elaboration of a set of recommendations and guidelines for a more effective use and implementation for SELFIE WBL was considered as a useful resource, after feedback received from real use and evidence from research.

One of the main and most recurrent findings in every single piece of research and in any event (such as SELFIE Forum) or experience (national and regional projects) related to the use of SELFIE and SELFIE WBL is the need for support to schools and companies in the implementation of the SELFIE WBL exercise, analysing the results and planning actions accordingly.

The content included in the current document is based on three main pillars:

1. Monitoring the use and implementation of SELFIE WBL (and SELFIE) in different regions and countries since its official launch in October 2021.
2. Collection of feedback and experience from practitioners but also educational authorities or involved institutions on the use of SELFIE WBL.
3. Small pilots of SELFIE WBL in four countries in the academic year 2023-2024: Albania, Austria, Spain (Basque Country) and The Netherlands. The selection of these countries was based on their strong VET system with also strong relationship between VET institutions and companies. To cover different situations and get a more global view, the pilots include different scopes: national case, regional case, centralised system and decentralised system. Organisations taking the lead for the fieldwork (use of SELFIE WBL) are:
 - d. Albania: national expert
 - e. Austria: IBW - Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft
 - f. Spain (Basque Country): University of Mondragon Mondragon Unibertsitatea
 - g. The Netherlands: ECBO | Expertisecentrum Beroepsonderwijs

After the collection of all this information from all these different sources, a further internal analysis took place to synthesise the corpus of data and identify a set of recommendations, which could be relevant, and of interest when thinking of implementing a SELFIE WBL exercise in a VET institution.

SELFIE WBL Guidelines

Goal

These SELFIE WBL Guidelines include a set of recommendations for VET institutions, based on previous experience and research, for a more relevant and effective use of SELFIE WBL to support them and training companies to reflect and act upon their use and integration of digital technologies in the training process.

SELFIE WBL is a relevant tool to support both VET institutions and related companies to foster the digital transformation process of the VET sector. VET is a natural bridge between education and the world of work, so by supporting this transformation process, we are supporting having a better-prepared future workforce, which can better grasp the job opportunities that the digital transformation brings. VET can be a vector for the digital transformation of the labour market (especially SMEs).

Stages

It is fundamental to provide a global overview of the whole process of SELFIE WBL use to all participants in order to:

- i. Facilitate the understanding of the process,
- ii. Foster the involvement and participation of all the actors (school leaders, teachers, learners, in-company trainers, school and company coordinators).
- iii. Make the most of SELFIE WBL as a lever for the digital transformation of the VET sector.

The SELFIE WBL process consists of four stages:

1. Preparation of the SELFIE WBL exercise*
2. Implementation of the SELFIE WBL exercise*
3. Analysis of SELFIE WBL report
4. Digital Action plan

**SELFIE WBL exercise refers to the proper use of the tool.*

Figure 1. Summary of the main actions in chronological order with the different profiles involved (school leaders, teachers, learners, in-company trainers and school and company coordinators).

Order	Action/Profile	School leader team	Teacher	Learner	In-company trainer	SELFIE WBL school coordinator	Company coordinator
PREPARATION STAGE							
1	Selection of SELFIE WBL coordinator	x					
2	Selection of Company coordinator				x		x
3	Initial reflection of the goal and context of the exercise	x	x (optional)	x (optional)	x (optional)	x	x (optional)
4	Registration of the VET institution in SELFIE WBL					x	
5	Invitation to registration for companies (first time)					x	
6	Registration of the company in SELFIE WBL						x
7	Preparation of the SELFIE WBL exercise: questions, deadlines, links...	x (for feedback)				x	x
8	Preparation and sharing of contextual information to participants in the study	x	x (optional)	x (optional)	x (optional)	x	x (optional)
IMPLEMENTATION STAGE							
9	Sharing links to SELFIE WBL exercise to the different profiles					x	x
10	Completion of SELFIE WBL questionnaire	x	x	x	x		
11	Monitoring of the participation					x	x
ANALYSIS STAGE							
12	Generation of the SELFIE WBL report					x	x (for the company)
13	Preparation for the analysis of the results: actors, timing, goals, etc.	x			x	x	x
14	Analysis and discussion of the results from SELFIE WBL report	x	x	x	x	x	x

DIGITAL ACTION PLAN STAGE							
15	Identification of priorities and actions for the digital plan	x	x	x	x	x	x
16	Design of the digital action plan	x	x (optional)	x (optional)	x (optional)	x	x
17	Implementation, monitoring and assessing the digital plan using SELFIE WBL after a pre-defined period of time	x	x	x	x	x	x

Next, it is presented a more detailed description of the different actions needed in each of the four stages defined for a proper SELFIE WBL process.

Stage 1. Preparation of the SELFIE WBL exercise

In this stage, the process is launched and the focus should be on the contextualisation and activation of the SELFIE WBL exercise.

1. Selection of SELFIE WBL coordinator

The School leaders' team will select the appropriate person to be responsible for leading and managing the process. Up to two SELFIE WBL school coordinators can associate their EU-login account to the school account.

The following are some criteria that VET institutions should take into account. The coordinator should:

- Have an advanced level of digital competence (referring to DigCompEdu).
- Know the SELFIE WBL tool and the rationale behind it.
- Have leadership and communication skills.

For more information on the tool and related resources:

- Official SELFIE WBL website: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie/selfie-for-work-based-learning>
 - Resources section: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie/selfie-for-work-based-learning/resources>
- Official SELFIE website: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie>
 - Resources section: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/selfie/resources>

2. Selection of Company coordinator

This is an internal process and a decision for the training company. In order to be more effective, a recommendation is to assign to an in-company trainer the role of company coordinator as well. This may also depend on the size of the company.

Several company coordinators can associate their EU-login account to the SELFIE WBL company account.

3. Initial reflection of the goal and context of the SELFIE WBL exercise

The goal is to provide context to the SELFIE WBL school coordinator and plan the process.

In this step, the coordinator and School leaders will gather information about the process. That is, they must understand the purpose of SELFIE WBL and know how it can benefit the VET institution. In other words, they must be able to answer the following questions:

- What is the purpose of SELFIE WBL?
- How can it benefit the VET institution?
- Why the participation in this reflection process is important for the community?

4. Registration of the VET institution in SELFIE WBL

Once the benefits of the SELFIE WBL process are clear, the next step should be registering the VET institution on the platform.

The school coordinators need to start the registration process here: <https://schools-go-digital.jrc.ec.europa.eu/> by clicking on the Sign-up button. SELFIE WBL is using EU Login so, the school coordinators EU Login account will be associated to the school account. Since multifactor authentication is required, this EU Login account has to have an associated phone number.

The process must be adapted to the circumstances of the VET institution and the coordinator and School leader team must plan how they want to design the process and how to involve the collaborating companies and the necessary people. For this purpose, the following questions must be answered:

- Will the process be applied to the whole VET institution or only to a specific department or area?
- At what point will context be provided to the School leaders' team, teaching staff, learners and in-company trainers?
- How will the participants (School leaders' team, teaching staff, learners, in-company trainers) be involved in each step and phase?
- How is the questionnaire to be customised? (Add optional predefined questions. For example, in the area 'Collaboration and Networking', the question Synergies for Blended Learning related to the collaboration with other VET institutions, – and up to 10 questions created by the VET institution – SELFIE WBL coordinator can create these questions in collaboration with other actors). Are other stakeholders (collaborating companies) involved in this customisation?
- When will the questionnaires be distributed?
- When will the report be created?

Therefore, after contextualising and planning the process, the coordinator will register the VET institution in SELFIE WBL, via the SELFIE platform.

5. Invitation to registration for companies

One of the main characteristics of the SELFIE WBL module is the capacity to involve companies in the exercise. To associate companies to a VET institution, the SELFIE WBL school coordinator can send an invitation to the collaborating companies through the tool.

6. Registration of the company in SELFIE WBL

Companies can register on their own by going to the SELFIE WBL home page for companies and signing up on the platform.

An EU login account is needed; it should be the personal one of the SELFIE WBL company coordinator. Several company coordinators can associate their EU login accounts to the SELFIE WBL company account.

Once companies are registered, the VET institutions will be able to associate them in the company's management section of the school profile inside SELFIE WBL.

7. Preparation of the SELFIE WBL exercise: questions, deadlines, links...

This action is about setting up the SELFIE WBL exercise by the SELFIE WBL coordinator and the School leaders' team.

This involves entering participation numbers (potential participants), personalising the questions (adapt to the context and needs); taking into account received feedback and selecting the exercise period (timing and deadline).

In SELFIE WBL, there are three types of questions:

1. Core questions, related to the 8 areas of the digital capacity of educational organisations and included for all VET institutions.
2. Optional predefined questions by the tool, that the SELFIE WBL school coordinator can decide to include in the questionnaires.
3. Specific questions that the school coordinator can create and include in the questionnaire to tailor the questionnaires to the VET institution context. It is possible to create up to 10 questions for the different respondent types.

After registering, the coordinator will reflect on which questions are appropriate for inclusion in the questionnaire since the SELFIE WBL tool provides the option to add additional questions in order to obtain a more holistic view of the digital activities and processes of the VET institution.

The school coordinator should check the questions chosen with the School leaders' team and review the questions created to contextualise the questionnaire to the VET institution needs.

The coordinator will then choose the dates on which questionnaires will be available to those participating in the process. It is very important to choose the dates carefully, taking into account the academic calendar and the time necessary to involve the participants, especially companies, as these are external to the VET institution. The SELFIE WBL exercise period can be changed until the questionnaire links are activated.

Important note: once the links to the questionnaires have been generated, it is not possible to make any changes to the SELFIE WBL exercise set-up: participation numbers, questionnaire customisation and exercise period cannot be modified.

8. Preparation and sharing of contextual information to participants in the study

This step is aimed at engaging the VET community in the reflection process, so, it is crucial to contextualise the process by SELFIE WBL coordinator, school leaders' team, teachers,

learners and in-company trainers. This step is a follow-up and extension of Step 3, with more concrete decisions and actions.

The coordinator will think about how to provide context for the process that is being carried out. For this purpose, the coordinator must be able to answer the following questions:

- How and when will context be provided to the participants? Will all participants receive this information at the same time?
- Will any resources be used to contextualise and explain the process?
- How do we want to involve companies in the process (meetings, tutorials, calls...)?

Stage 2. Implementation of the SELFIE WBL exercise

9. Sharing links to SELFIE WBL exercise to the different profiles

Once the exercise is set up and all the confirmations and checks are done, the school coordinator can generate the links to the SELFIE WBL questionnaire, which should be shared with all the participants in the exercise.

SELFIE WBL generates a specific link to the questionnaire for each of the profiles, so, there will be a link for school leaders, a link for teachers, a link for learners and a link for in-company trainers.

In this step, the coordinator will send the links created on the SELFIE WBL platform to each participant. Here are some recommendations tailored to the cases of:

- School leaders' team and teaching staff: use the institutional email and an existing email-list.
- Learners: it is better if the teacher sends the link to them; it can be done in class or outside the lessons time.
- In-company trainers: it is recommended that the company coordinator sends a personalised email to each in-company trainer with the invitation that the tool generates to participate in the SELFIE WBL exercise.

10. Completion of the SELFIE WBL questionnaire

At this step, the focus is on replying to the questionnaires shared via links during the defined period in the exercise setup.

During the exercise setup, the school coordinator decides the period for this phase (between one and three weeks). This is the timeframe for all participants.

It takes up to 40 minutes for school leaders, teachers and in-company trainers and up to 25 minutes for learners to complete the self-reflection questionnaire.

Because of anonymity, the questionnaire cannot be stored and completed at a later stage. The questionnaire must be completed within two hours' time.

Before starting to respond to the questionnaire, the participant can select the language in which they feel more confident to reply to the questions. The language selection must be done before starting, as if it is done later, the questionnaire will reset and the participant will need to start the process again. The questionnaire is available in more than 40 languages.

11. Monitoring of the participation

It is important to monitor participation and design actions to engage the VET institution community to participate in the exercise.

As has been mentioned before, the SELFIE WBL school coordinator decides the exercise period when setting up the exercise. This period must be minimum 1 week and maximum 3 weeks. School coordinator and company coordinators can monitor the participation in real time from the SELFIE WBL dashboards. If the participation is still low, they can design strategies to engage the community. Again, due to anonymity, it is not possible to identify participants, so, the tool shows participation rates and total figures.

Stage 3. Analysis of SELFIE WBL report

12. Generation of the SELFIE WBL report

At this step, the main goal is to obtain the results and analysis of the report by SELFIE WBL coordinator and school leaders.

Once the time for completing the SELFIE WBL questionnaires is over, the report will be automatically created on the platform.

The next steps are to be decided by each VET institution, but a proposal could be to have a first quick analysis of the results by the school coordinator and school leaders' team, to identify main trends, issues or findings. Then, it is necessary to prepare the bigger analysis and discussion with the rest of people involved in this discussion (to be decided by each institution). In this phase, creating a SWOT analysis can be very useful. It is important to identify strengths and points for improvement to prepare key issues to discuss with the other VET institution representatives.

13. Preparation for the analysis of the results: actors, timing, goals...

At this step, the focus is on organising the discussion and action to be taken by the SELFIE WBL coordinator, School leaders' team, teachers, learners and in-company trainers.

Based on the SWOT analysis, the SELFIE WBL coordinator and School leaders' team will organise some sessions with the representatives of the participants (all the profiles). The aim of these sessions will be to compare the ideas of the SWOT and to explore them in depth.

The SELFIE WBL school coordinators can request the report as a PDF file in the different available languages to share it with representatives of the different profiles. They can also create their own presentation of results downloading the graphs from the online report. An excel file with aggregated data can be downloaded from the results section, so that school coordinators can design their own graphs as well. These reports can be from a single session or include data from two different sessions with their comparison.

14. Analysis and discussion of the results from the SELFIE WBL report

In addition to organising the discussions, the school leaders' team will answer the following questions:

- What issues do we wish to discuss with the teaching staff, learners, and in-company trainers?
- When will these discussions take place? Will we meet with all representatives at the same time? How are we going to design these sessions?

Stage 4. Digital Action Plan

15. Identification of priorities and actions for the digital plan

To continue making progress by SELFIE WBL coordinator and school leaders' team.

After carrying out the discussions, identifying, and understanding the needs of the people involved in the VET institution, the School leaders' team will begin to design the VET institution's Digital Action Plan.

16. Design of the digital action plan

In this plan, the idea would be to set short-, medium-, and long-term objectives that must be realistic and appropriate for the circumstances of the VET institution.

It is also essential to propose actions to take, in order to achieve these objectives. Follow the SMART approach (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound).

17. Implementation of the plan, monitoring, and evaluating using SELFIE WBL after a predefined period

Ideally, after the VET institution's Digital Plan has been designed and depending on the proposed objectives, an analysis would be conducted to determine whether the actions proposed to achieve the objectives are being carried out, and the impact of these actions.

For this purpose, it is important to begin the SELFIE WBL exercise again, in order to update the objectives and actions in the VET institution's Digital Plan. Working collaboratively within a network of VET institutions and collaborating companies can enrich this process.

SELFIE WBL can be used again to analyse the impact of the digital plan in the VET institution's processes.

Final remark

These guidelines are based on previous research, work and experience in the use of SELFIE WBL to support VET institutions and training companies in their digital transformation process.

These guidelines should be considered as a proposal, as a basis for further development, and some degree of modification and adaptation to local/regional/national context is expected.

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