**General description**

Ikaros is a certified VET Provider operating in the fields of Initial Vocational Training, Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Job Services in the provinces of Bergamo and Milan; its nucleus dates back to 1972. IKAROS has actually 1600 initial vocational training students (secondary education), 200 higher education students, it trains over 2000 adults every year, accompanied more than 1000 people in the labour market and supported over 300 children and adults with disadvantage. Since 2011 all our students and teachers have been using iPad during the lessons and during the Lab activities. Ikaros received an Excellence Label from Lombardy Region being active in the provision of a wide range of training initiatives, some of these targeted at specific groups i.e. early school leavers, NEET or disadvantaged groups. Ikaros developed an important expertise in the field of teaching and learning with ICT, as well as in formal/informal skills development and competences certifications through ECVET system, being involved in several European projects concerning these issues.

IKAROS is accredited within the regional system of Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) which represents an educational offer that allows the completion of compulsory schooling. The training courses have a variable duration of three, four or five years. Apart from compulsory education, the paths provide vocational skills marketable in the labour market thanks to the high percent of hours of work experience and Laboratory activities integrated into every curriculum. After the three-year qualification students can continue with the fourth year, especially in the regions where it is required to obtain the vocational skill or to be reintegrated in school to graduate. Lombardy is the only region that currently provides for the fifth graduation year, allowing the learners to continue the path within the University or other Higher Education Institute, such as the Superior Technical Institute (it. Istituto Tecnico Superiore).

IKAROS offers courses recognized in Italy that include traineeships for Hairdressers, IT Technicians, Carpenters, Cooks, Electricians, Beauticians, Secretaries, Mechanics, Electronic technicians, Designers, Marketing operators, Surveyors and Accountants. It also organizes courses for adults in sectors as Marketing, Sales and communication, Organization and processes, Administration, Finance, Human Resources, Logistics, Quality and safety, Information and Communication Technology, Languages, Health and social services, Continuing medical education.

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In its work, Ikaros has established a network of professionals with business experience and a network of partnerships with Enterprises, Institutions, Professional Associations, Universities and Research institutions. It has a high-profile staff with experience in the direction, coordination, organization, and implementation of projects and in the administrative area. It has obtained a relevant experience in education and training, in tutoring, in teaching, in the management of group and personal dynamics with adolescents and in the supporting of disabled. It has also has developed an important expertise in the field of formal and informal skills and competences certifications through ECVET system and other types of certification.

**Some relevant Experiences**

**VET FIELD**

IKAROS is one of the biggest VET provider in Lombardy Region, having around 1500 students and being one of the more active and proactive Institutions in the field. According with the European polices about VET, Ikaros is working for improve the quality of training (initial education, continuing development); improve the quality of teachers, trainers and other professionals in
the sector; make courses more relevant to the labour market.
For instance, Ikaros has organized over 90 Learning Week paths involving over 2300 students abroad and in Italy in the last three years. The learning weeks are informal paths developed out of the normal school activities, involving the students in a different way of learning, often strongly connected with the labour market, entrepreneurs, and a on-the-job training experiences.

DEVELOPING AND TESTING E-LEARNING PLATFORM
Thanks to the European projects ECTIY and OPEN and thanks to other local initiatives like “Innovative training” Ikaros has been developing significant experiences linked with developing and testing learning platform with students and adults. The objective of the eCity project is to design, develop and validate a Problem Based Learning (PBL) oriented, online, collaborative VLE platform, based on a city-development simulation engine that stimulates the integration and continuous exploitation of PBL. The aim of OPEN is to design, implement and test a language learning platform for deaf people. The OPEN Multi-language platform is an educational tool for learning the English language in combination with 6 different sign languages/systems.
E-City project website : www.ecity-project.eu
OPEN project website: www.opensignlanguage.eu
OPEN platform: www.openleonardo.com

INNOVATIVE DIDACTICS WITH ICT
Ikaros has matured a large experience in teaching with ICT, participating in the projects ICT WAYS, TIC, Innovative Competences for teaching, Innovative Training, Web Generation. In addition to having implemented full ICT didactic approach in the classrooms Ikaros gave life to the ICTWays Community of Practice (COP), a free online network for teaching and support in Primary and Secondary Schools, helping to build a community for creating, sharing and reusing teaching and learning materials and methodologies. This COP was created as a development of the ICTWays project, and provides an inventory of existing ICT in Primary and Secondary and Vocational schools in Europe and the existing gaps in software and hardware, specifically for teaching and learning Sciences.
Website: http://ictways.eu/
GW – Generazione Web project (Web generation) - ICT Innovative Competences for Teaching – a regional project aimed at disseminating and enhancing the skills of primary and high school teacher for the optimal use of new forms of teaching in digital mode.

STUDENT MOBILITIES (LLP, Erasmus+)
Thanks to the participation in the European mobility projects and other local proposals related to professional mobility of students and workers, Ikaros has developed an important expertise in the field of student mobility. As follows a list of the major initiatives in the last years:

- ABROAD – Train Global, Employ Local (Erasmus + KA1) VET learner mobility project in UK and Ireland for young learners in hairdressing and IT: 80 students to a 7-week long work-based training experience in modern Hair and Beauty salons and IT companies.

- KCKH – Keep Calm and Keep on Hairdressing (Erasmus + KA1) VET learner mobility project hosted in Italy for young learners in hairdressing: 60 students to a 2-week long work-based training experience in modern Hair and Beauty salons.

- HAIR - Work based training in UK for young learners in hairdressing (LLP Mobility Leonardo da Vinci IVET): 100 students to a 4-week long work-based training experience in Doncaster UK through Oracle Training Consultant Ltd.

- Regional Project “Fourth year abroad. More than one year of study”: IKAROS has sent 22 learners enrolled in the 4th year of the training programme for certified IT Technicians to a work-based training experience of a 4 months duration in Dublin, Ireland, hosted by Emerald Cultural Institute. The learners are carrying on their mobility activities at this very moment and they are meeting the best IT
company situated in Dublin in order to develop their vocational skills.

- Regional projects “Learning Weeks”: IKAROS has organized over 90 learning week paths involving over 2300 students abroad and in Italy in the last three years. The learning weeks are informal paths developed out of the normal school activities, involving the students in a different way of learning, often strongly connected with the labour market and a on-the-job training experiences.

CERTIFICATION AND RECOGNITION OF SKILLS
IKAROS has developed important projects that facilitated international mobility. Thanks to the participation in these projects, IKAROS has obtained an important expertise in the field of formal and informal skills and competences certifications through ECVET system and other types of certification.

- Ikaros is a partner in the project “care4mobility: Promoting the Efficiency of VET Learner Mobilities in health and social care professions by implementing ECVET”, that aims at promoting student and staff mobilities to increase their intercultural and linguistic competences as well as their access to the European labour market. The project will facilitate the multilateral recognition of learning outcomes (acquired during a mobility period) between the participating institutions by implementing ECVET instruments.

- I-CARE project: it has been one of the ECVET Pilot Projects (2nd generation) funded by the European Commission and represented an experimental application of the ECVET system. It was dedicated to “Improving Mobility and Career Paths for Personal Care and Social Workers” and its objective was to support the full labour market integration and human capital development in Personal Care and Social Work by increasing interoperability among different countries and learning contexts. Partners analyzed existing qualification systems in the field of personal care and social work in their respective countries with the objective to develop a recognition model, thus encouraging mutual recognition of training and qualifications. The project targeted those interested in the development of flexible training solutions, in facilitating mobility and access to work and in addressing the need for qualified professionals in the care sector (VET providers, labour market services and organizations in the field, social partners and authorities).

- “Recognition of skills” Pilot project: it has been developed with the Polytechnic of Milan which is one of the main authorities in the field of innovative project for supporting public body in order to develop political and technical approach of certification and recognition. The project has been about recognition of informal and non-formal skills in respect of QRSP (frameworks of regional training standard); Ikaros has researched about the administrative, secretarial and health sector skills. The project results have been presented to Lombardy Region in order to improve the regional system of recognition of competences.

YOUTH GUIDANCE
IKAROS has gained a more than 5 years experience in organizing Learning Weeks - courses based on non-formal learning and acquisition of experiences in a full immersion manner, aimed at students attending high schools / Institutes of Higher Secondary Education and students attending the 3rd and the 4th year of Vocational education and training. Learning Week courses are based on experiential learning in a non-formal context and follow the learning model based on “learning by doing”, as opposed to the traditional “learn the theory first and apply it later”. The youngsters take part in practical assignments, simulations, coaching and short internships. So far 92 Learning Week projects have been submitted and approved, attended by more than 2,300 students, and involved 25 different educational institutes and many other different subjects in the area (companies, universities, ..).

INCLUSION AND REMEDIAL EDUCATION
IKAROS has activated a counseling service for teenagers at risk of social exclusion at its headquarters in Bergamo in 2006, that is active still today. The counseling is open to both students, their families and the teaching staff, since unfavourable situation of adolescents affects also their academic path, and especially with the aim to identify educational strategies that may foster academic success. Interventions are structured during school hours by psychologists experts in management of relational dynamics.

In 2010 IKAROS Foundation had initiated a project for the implementation of Training Services for Autonomy of Minors aimed at adolescents in situations of social disadvantage. The project aims to provide systematic re-motivation of adolescents for the reconstruction of the experience factors, such as the context in which the youngsters live that prevented, slowed down or distorted their successful
Throughout the educational program the minor is supported by a tutor, the educational reference figure of the project. The interviews are conducted by professionals with experience of at least three years in educational services for adolescents. After a careful analysis of the needs of the adolescent and of the objectives of the intervention done by the tutor and the coordinator of the service, the activities responsive to the needs of the individual and a personalized educational plan is drawn up. The project was born as a pilot project that found its realization and self-sustainability in the Municipalities of Bergamo that still use this service on a fee basis.

"NEET Work" project is aimed at NEET, that is young people aged from 16 to 19, who neither study nor work as they have abandoned school or are at risk of dropping out of their studies. The project aims at offering them a short and professionalizing training finalized at providing employment (to 18-19 year-olds) or to bring them closer to the training already undertaken by increasing their chances of academic success. The following activities have been implemented: career guidance interviews and analysis of their attitudes and propensities, professional courses lasting an average of 80 hours, traineeships, guidance and active job search workshops, study groups led by tutors that supported the young in recovery of school subjects.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT
Ikaros, ad an entity accredited for the employment services in the Lombardy Region, has for years been dedicated to supporting youth employment, providing services for the unemployed and youth at risk of social exclusion, in order to foster an individualized approach through the placement into employment, offering services of:
Information, career guidance, counseling services and skills assessment
Support the implementation of training programs for requalification and upgrading of qualifications
Meeting the supply and demand in the labor market with selection services and active job search.

ADULT EDUCATION
Ikaros organizes adult education courses in areas ranging from ICT to Marketing and Public Relations, to Foreign languages, Healthcare, Administration and Human resources.
In the training year 2014/2015 it has trained a total of 1.754 persons, organized 165 courses and provided 4.503 hours of training.