

What is VOCAL? The **VOCAL** project (www.vocalproject.eu) follows the method and structure of the earlier successful EU project entitled **Problem SOLVE** (www.problemsolve.org). The main topics included are Travel, Accommodation, Socialising, Emergencies, at Work. The new feature in the **VOCAL** materials is an additional LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) component relating to Business, Tourism, Banking & Services, Engineering. The easily accessible and user-friendly materials are web-based and users are provided with both general and technical language relating to the virtual situations they may encounter. Useful logistical and cultural information for each host country is also provided.

Who is VOCAL designed for? Learners preparing for mobility placement in vocational settings are the main target group addressed. The **VOCAL** project is based on preparation for student mobility placement abroad. The preparation offered is on the level of both practical language skills and cultural awareness related to vocational training settings. This linguistic and cultural preparation is achieved by means of a virtual journey which can be undertaken by prospective mobility students accessing the materials on the user-friendly website.

The web-based packages take cognisance of the various learning styles and the interactive materials provide an autonomous learning environment incorporating authentic contemporary situations in an outside classroom environment.

VOCAL Quality and Research: In advance of designing the on-line materials, the **VOCAL** partners issue various student work placement cohorts with questionnaires in order to gain feedback from mobility students. The purpose is to ensure that the materials generated are relevant and based on student needs. The content, virtual tours, questions and quizzes are thoroughly researched and prepared by native speakers and tested by mobility cohorts.

The VOCAL materials: The on-line materials generated by the project are bilingual (i.e. designed in the target language of each partner country and also available in English). These materials consist of language and cultural exercises which require students to actively engage in practical problem solving via a virtual journey of a placement abroad. This preparation tool encourages students to interactively troubleshoot any potential challenges they may encounter while training in a different country. A principle aim of these pre-departure modules is to facilitate improvement of student language skills as well as enable acquiring cultural and practical knowledge of their host country, with specific reference to the topics of Travel, Accommodation, Socialising, Emergencies, Working abroad and the LSP components relating to Business, Tourism, Banking & Services, Engineering.

Rationale & Impact: This project is a practical and innovative pedagogic response to the need for language and cultural preparation in advance of placement abroad. It aims to provide mobility beneficiaries with a practical and useful preparation tool for their placements and contribute to a successful integration process whereby learners can maximise linguistically and culturally. Knowledge of modern languages means greater mobility, multilingualism being a core value in Europe and one of the unique qualities contributing to its richness and diversity.

The VOCAL partnership: The **VOCAL** project partnership consists of 10 European countries, 12 partners, 11 languages including Irish.

Ireland (3 partners), Bulgaria, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovakia, Switzerland.

Details of the partners may be located on the VOCAL website www.vocalproject.eu