TEMPLATE FOR THE GOOD PRACTICE

What is a good practice?

A good practice is not only a practice that is good, but a practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results, and is therefore recommended as a model. It is a successful experience, which has been tested and validated, in the broad sense, which has been repeated and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of people can adopt it.

Please follow the instructions included to fill in the template. You can replace the guiding questions for each element with your description.
Mandatory fields are defined by *

Element	Description
Title*	*Fondazione M.A.SK. ITS Academy – Good Practice Model*
Name of the VET Provider	*Fondazione M.A.SK. ITS Academy*
Thematic domain	What is the thematic domain covered by this good practice? More than one domain can be indicated • **Innovation** • **Digital** • **Green** • **Inclusion** • **Entrepreneurial** • **Career guidance** • **Lifelong learning** • **Creating partnerships/skills ecosystems**
Introduction*	*The practice was developed in response to a persistent gap between the skills required by companies in the fields of digital services, cybersecurity, logistics and data management, and the skills typically acquired by learners in traditional educational pathways. In the Calabria region, this mismatch was particularly evident: many young people lacked opportunities for advanced technical training, while local small and medium-sized enterprises struggled to find qualified professionals able to support digital transformation and innovation processes.*

Moreover, the rapid evolution of digital technologies created an urgent need for flexible, practice-oriented training models capable of updating competencies quickly and effectively. Traditional systems were not sufficiently responsive to emerging labour-market demands, resulting in unemployment among graduates and skills shortages among businesses.

To address this challenge, Fondazione ITS MASK Academy introduced an innovative, labour-market-driven training approach that integrates technical specialization, hands-on experience, and collaboration with companies and institutions. The practice aims to equip young people with advanced, industry-relevant competencies while supporting the digital growth and competitiveness of the region.

Stakeholders and Partners	***Young people (students, recent high-school graduates, graduates)*** *— ITS MASK offers its courses to high-school graduates (and also to university-level graduates or those with higher education) who wish to acquire specialized, practice-oriented competencies in digital services, cybersecurity, compliance, data, logistics, etc.* ***Local labour-market and companies / SMEs*** *— By training technicians with up-to-date, relevant digital and technical skills, ITS MASK aims to supply the local and regional economy with professionals ready to work in fields of high demand (digital innovation, compliance/security, data analysis, logistics, etc.).* ***Youth of the region (especially Calabria)*** *— In a context where many young people often leave the region due to lack of opportunities, this initiative offers a concrete chance to stay, get quality training and find employment nearb*
Impact*	*M.A.SK., and more broadly the network of ITS Academy in Calabria, shows strong outcomes in terms of job placement. As reported recently, more than* ***80% of ITS Academy graduates in Calabria*** *find a job within a year after completing their course.* *Thanks to internships, company-linked training and relevant technical curricula, students receive "work-ready" skills — not only theory, but practice oriented to real labour-market needs. This significantly enhances their chances of entering employment quickly after graduation.*
Innovation and Success Factors *	*The good practice at Fondazione ITS MASK is innovative because it combines advanced technical training, hands-on laboratory experience, and structured work-based learning, all closely aligned with real labour-market needs in areas such as digital services, cybersecurity, data analysis, and compliance. By co-designing curricula with companies and institutional partners, the Academy ensures that training remains up-to-date and responsive to emerging technological trends. At the same time, it strengthens the local innovation*

ecosystem by connecting education, industry, and public institutions, while addressing social challenges like youth unemployment and brain drain.

For successful replication in similar contexts, it is essential to have institutional support and governance structures that integrate education providers and industry, sufficient economic resources for infrastructure and qualified trainers, engagement from the local community, and access to physical and digital infrastructure that supports hands-on, applied learning.

Constraints*	*Implementing the good practice at Fondazione ITS MASK faced several challenges. One major challenge was aligning training programmes with rapidly evolving labour-market needs in high-tech sectors like cybersecurity, OSINT, and digital services. This was addressed by closely involving companies and institutional partners in the co-design of curricula, ensuring that students acquire up-to-date and relevant skills.*
	Another challenge was engaging local youth and preventing brain drain, given the historical trend of young people leaving Calabria for education or employment elsewhere. The Academy tackled this by offering high-quality, practice-oriented training locally, coupled with internship opportunities in nearby companies, demonstrating clear career pathways.
	Resource and infrastructure constraints also presented difficulties, as high-quality laboratories, equipment, and qualified trainers were required to deliver hands-on technical education. These were addressed through regional and national funding, partnerships with companies, and collaboration with universities and research centres to share expertise and facilities.
	Finally, building effective cooperation among diverse stakeholders — public institutions, private companies, educational partners, and students — required sustained coordination and communication. ITS MASK created formal governance structures, regular meetings, and joint initiatives to maintain alignment and collaboration.
	Through these strategies, M.A.SK. ITS ACADEMY has been able to implement its innovative training model successfully, while continuously adapting to challenges in a dynamic regional and technological context.
Lessons learned *	*The experience of Fondazione ITS MASK demonstrates that high-quality, practice-oriented technical education can effectively bridge the gap between education and the labour market, especially in regions facing youth unemployment and skills shortages. A key message is that collaboration among multiple stakeholders — including companies, public institutions, universities, and students — is essential for designing curricula that are both relevant and adaptable to evolving technological needs.*

Another important lesson is the value of integrating hands-on learning and work-based experiences into formal education. Internships and company partnerships not only enhance employability but also strengthen the connection between local businesses and talent development.

The experience also shows that offering advanced training locally helps combat brain drain and fosters regional development, creating social and economic benefits beyond the immediate student cohort. Finally, continuous feedback, flexible governance, and a commitment to innovation are crucial to sustain the impact and scalability of such practices, ensuring they remain responsive to both industry trends and community needs.

Replicability and/or up-scaling	*M.A.SK. good practice has strong potential for wider replication nationally and internationally, especially in regions with skills gaps, youth unemployment, and growing demand for digital and technical expertise. Its success relies on combining advanced technical education, hands-on training, and strong industry partnerships.* *For effective replication, several conditions must be met: robust governance structures integrating education providers, companies, and public authorities; sufficient funding for infrastructure, laboratories, and qualified trainers; and active collaboration with companies to co-design curricula and host internships. Social acceptance of technical education, career guidance, and community engagement are also essential.* *While the core principles — industry collaboration, work-based learning, and labour-market alignment — should be preserved, curricula and delivery methods must be adapted to the local socio-economic and cultural context. With these conditions, the practice can be scaled successfully, supporting employability, regional development, and innovation in new settings.*
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URL of the practice	*https://www.itsmask.it/?go=1*
Related resources that have been developed	*https://www.itsmask.it/?go=1*