SUSTE!N EU

FINAL REPORT AND
EVALUATION

Index

1 Introduction

Prior to this SUSTEIN project (Supporting Students in Education and Information Network), also with funding from the Erasmus programme, the Cozima portfolio was developed. Cozima stands for making competences visible, specifically for young people in a vulnerable position who usually do not obtain a diploma. This SUSTEIN project is the follow-up to this, focusing on a broader roll-out of the portfolio in Europe and its use with employers during internships and the transition to work.

Lithuanian, German, French, Italian and Dutch partners participated in the project. A two-track approach was chosen. The new partners from Lithuania, France and Italy started applying the Cozima portfolio in their educational situation and with employers. They could use the knowledge and experience already gained within Cozima.

The German and Dutch partners wanted to expand the portfolio with new functionalities and develop a training and education concept. This allowed them to improve the user-friendliness and implementation of the Cozima portfolio -also with employers. They wanted to learn from the broad expertise and networks at larger employers that the new partners brought in.

From the Netherlands, the Aloysius Stichting acted as applicant. They also provided the project management. The Sectorraad GO (Education Sector Council - formerly Lecso) was found willing to do the evaluation and reporting.

2 Structure of this final report and evaluation

This report falls roughly into two parts, a project description and evaluation.

2.1 Project description

The first section contains information on the project itself, such as its goals, activities, partners involved, planning and chosen methodology. Because of the major influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the course of the project, a separate section is devoted to it.

2.2 Evaluation

The second part contains the evaluation of the project. What succeeded, what went less well, what impact did the project have on the partners and the use of the portfolio? We also discuss how satisfied the partners look back on the project, cooperation, communication and commitment, and the role of project management. We conclude with an overview of lessons learned and key insights gained.

3 The SUSTEIN user guide

In addition to this report, a SUSTEIN user guide has been compiled. This contains tools and products that were developed during the project as so-called 'intellectual outputs'. The guide is intended for teachers, career counsellors and other professionals who work with pupils with special needs and who are looking for more in-depth concrete tools if they themselves want to work with this or similar portfolios for this target group. It includes a training concept for users, a framework for work placements and a comparison of vocational education systems and the position of pupils with special needs. In addition, all instructional videos for users can be found on the website www.sustein.eu.

Where can these documents be found?
The final report and evaluation and the SUSTEIN Guide will be available at www.sustein.eu from the beginning of March 2023 and will remain available there for at least another 3 years, until March 2026.

4 Project goals

Below we outline the main goals of the project.

Expanding the deployment of the Cozima portfolio
Deployment of the portfolio to new partner countries Lithuania, France and Italy with support from developer Paragin and partner countries Germany and the Netherlands.

Engaging employers, intermediaries and municipalities
Explore how the Cozima portfolio can be used during internships and the transition to work.

Improving accessibility and ease of use
To lower the threshold for use and better equip users, we developed 'Intellectual outputs' in the project. Such as QR codes to quickly place documents in the portfolio, a traffic light model to visualise progress per student, teaching students to upload videos and photos as evidence and developing training materials for users and by delivering a SUSTEIN guide for users.

Increase sustainability of use
By collecting and sharing user cases and knowledge about VET systems in partner countries for the target group special needs learners. By collecting management information and and measuring user satisfaction.

5 Planned activities

The main activities were developing, testing, training, sharing knowledge and experience, disseminating the project and its results and, finally, implementing the portfolio within education and with employers.

Develop

- Translating the portfolio into the new countries own languages (LT, FR, IT);
- Creation of basic and follow-up training for users;
- Developing new functionalities, such as the QR code, traffic light model and instructional videos;
- Creating a framework for placement practice for vulnerable learners.

Testing

- Of home language portfolio through new countries;
- Of the instruments developed by the Netherlands and Germany.

Training

- 'First user' training in the new countries;
- Multiplier training.

Knowledge sharing

- Via intranet environment within project;
- Project newsletters via the SUSTEIN website;
- Good practices described in 'user cases';
- SUSTEIN guide for existing and new users.

Dissemination

- Country dissemination (meetings, news releases, publications, information);
- Multiplier meetings (Germany, France and the Netherlands).

Dissemination of the project is done both locally and regionally by the partners themselves, while greater dissemination of the entire project was planned in Germany, France and the Netherlands (during the annual meeting Hèt Congres).

6 Partners involved in the project

The main project partners were educational institutions for secondary (special) education and vocational education that train young people with the primary outflow perspective of work. In addition, intermediary partners were involved who support this target group in the transition from school to work. Below, we briefly introduce the partners.

Education partners

- Lycée Professionel Turgot, a school near Paris that trains young people from (mainly) migrant backgrounds with poor school careers for work in commercial, administrative and sales positions.
- Mulvany Berufskolleg Herne, a school for (lower) vocational education that educates a significant group of mainly low-skilled young people who are threatened with school dropout and lack of motivation. In cooperation with the Bildungsburo Herne and the municipality, the school offers projects to prevent school dropout.
- Alytaus Profesino Rengimo Centras, a VO school from Lithuania near the capital Vilnius with education in the technical and care sectors. The school is also accessible to and serves young people with disabilities. In addition to 1,300 VO pupils, 1,000 adults attend vocational courses or training here.
- Istituto Istruzione Superiore P. SRAFFA from Crema Italy. A school for secondary vocational education with over 1,100 pupils. A special feature is that 150 pupils with mild intellectual disabilities are also served within regular education (inclusive education).
- The Aloysius Stichting acts as partner and beneficiary and provides project management. From the foundation, the project involved the schools for closed education (Harreveld, Korenaer Deurne and Kompas College at Spijkenisse) and the Limburg schools Widdonck Weert, De Ortolaan Heibloem and Ortolaan Roermond. In all cases, these are pupils from the so-called cluster 4, pupils with solid behavioural problems (such as autism, weak social environment, learning difficulties, parenting problems.
- Sectorraad GO (specialised education), formerly known as National Expertise Centre for Special Education (Lecso). Was involved in the project for dissemination and evaluation. During the project, was the booster of the introduction of the VSO diploma with a legally required portfolio.

Partners in the transition to work

- Kommunales Bildungsburo Stadt Herne, the municipal organisation that guides young people and people at a distance from the labour market into work. Is an important partner of the Mulvany Berufskolleg.
- PSW Werk, a similar organisation that assists people with a distance and employers in fitting into work, including through job coaching. Work together with several VSO and Practical Education schools and with municipalities in the region acting as clients.

Other partners

During the project, a number of partners joined. These were not funded by the Erasmus+ grant, but joined or were able to contribute content. These include a Berukskolleg from Bochum, the Alice Salomon, with which the Herne school cooperates a lot in the field of knowledge sharing and Career Orientation and Occupational Guidance (LOB). This school has also started using the Cozima portfolio.

In the Netherlands, cooperation was sought with the Euroguidance team and the Expertisepunt LOB. This resulted in the availability within Cozima of a set of assignments on the five career competences, for special education students.

In Limburg (Netherlands), the network of Limburg schools has expanded to include the reintegration company Werk.Kom. They support the transition to work for municipalities and also mediate for sheltered employment. Use an e-Portfolio similar to the Cozima portfolio. They will shape the transition of pupils and reconciliation of clients with municipalities through the same portfolio (one file) in order to reduce administrative burden and ensure communication without noise.

7 Planning and procedure

Timetable as a basis

In this three-year project, which run from September 2019 to December 2022 (extended by three months due to the Covid-19 pandemic), work has followed a planned approach based on a 'time-table' appropriate to an Erasmus+ strategic partnership.

After a kick-off meeting in September took shape within Erasmus+ frameworks, the following project approach was adopted. After an initial basic training for the new partner countries in Italy, these partners received a Cozima portfolio in their own language and with their own look-and-feel. With this, the partners could each start working individually.

During the course of the project, 6 partner meetings were planned, in which the progress of the project and the implementation of the portfolio by the partners in their organisation and the new functionalities to be developed and training courses would be discussed / carried out. In addition, practical experiences and insights would be shared through 'user cases'. The partner meetings were prepared by means of homework assignments and a fixed agenda, and reports were made of each meeting. All information was shared via an intranet environment on the website SUSTEIN.eu.

Two-track approach

The project provided for a so-called two-track approach. This allowed the new partner countries to start working with the Cozima environment made available for their own target group in their own language. A basic training was organised and support of the developer Paragin and the Dutch and German partners could be used. In addition the project focused on further implementing the portfolio and developing and testing new functionalities. These would be shared during the project meetings and provided with feedback from all partners, in order to later create the widest possible application.

Monitoring and steering

Progress monitoring and steering took place during project meetings, an interim evaluation and via interviews and one-to-one consultations between project management and partners. A project team was put together that took care of the development tasks in close cooperation with Paragin. In addition, two evaluations were planned, an interim one in 2020 and a concluding one in 2022.

8 Impact COVID-19 pandemic on project

The pandemic had a major impact on the course of the project, despite the fact that we took measures to mitigate it. The first joint meeting in Germany, which took place after the basic training, took place immediately online. Only in March 2022 could we finally meet live again. Until then, all activities were mainly conducted via Teams meetings and one-to-one contacts per mail and by phone.

For the development work, this had hardly any impact, all intended Intellectual outputs and tools were delivered and provided with feedback. The biggest impact the pandemic had on school activities among the partners. Lessons dropped out, teachers fell ill, education was reduced to the core and mostly offered online. Our objective, to gain experience with the portfolio mainly during internships and with employers, was difficult to achieve, partly because many students were unable to do internships with companies during that period.

It also became visible that joint learning through online meetings hardly took off. This was true not only at the project level between the partner countries, but unfortunately also at the schools and at the organisations that would become active as intermediaries. Every effort had to be made to shape the primary education process. Teachers could not easily be persuaded in this situation to also take up new issues, such as introducing the portfolio and testing the new tools, especially since these activities would then have to be taken up online by teachers and supervisors, who had insufficient training for this purpose.

Motivating students to use the portfolio was not easy. Its added value could hardly be tested during internships. Meanwhile, as it also became clear (through the Italian partners' research and during occasional explorations among employers by other partners) that employers perceived little added value from the portfolio (they often use traditional CVs, own HR systems for recording competences or, on the contrary, use intermediaries to recruit staff), the momentum gradually disappeared.

Troublesome in this respect was that the pandemic had consequences in three school years. After the start-up of activities came to a halt in the first school year 2019-2020, it took well into the school year 2021-2022 before everything could 'open up' again. Reviving the project in March or April of the last school year was almost impossible for every partner. Those who wanted to continue and get serious about the project and implementation again chose not to do so until the 2022-2023 school year. However, the end date of the project was

already planned for September 2022. While the 3-month extension helped to get a good view of the follow-up situation, it was not enough to fully achieve the important goals related to implementation in practice at schools and employers.

Yet the pandemic -unintentionally- also had positive effects. With the loss of internship opportunities at companies, schools switched to alternatives to prepare young people for future work or professions. More attention was paid to offering assignments in the field of Career Orientation and Guidance, especially in Germany and the Netherlands, and to offering alternative programmes aimed at discovering one's motives, motivation and increasing self-confidence, among others through sports, art and storytelling (such as the Future me programme). The Cozima portfolio proved to be a great environment for offering the related assignments to pupils and for including their reflections and evidence of completed assignments.

9 Evaluation

What succeeded and what went less well?

9.1 Succesful

- The goals of achieving wider use of the portfolio in Europe, increasing accessibility and user-friendliness, and achieving sustainability of use were largely achieved;
- New partner countries have portfolio in their own language that meets their main needs in terms of design and layout;
- The Cozima portfolio will remain in use after the project in 4 of the 5 partner countries and in Belgium (previous partner). With the exception of France, all SUSTEIN partners will continue with it;
- The development and actual delivery of the intended tools and instructional materials, as well as a measurement of user experience and satisfaction integrated within the portfolio;
- Compile the SUSTEIN guide for users (existing partners but also new users) which includes training for users, instructional videos, a framework for placements and an overview of VET systems in partner countries for the target group;
- All originally planned meetings went ahead, albeit largely online. The continuation of activities and exchange of experiences and knowledge that could take place online has been achieved;
- Understanding employers' interest in the portfolio;
- Cooperation with external regional partners (in the Netherlands and Germany) in the (future) transition to work;
- Application of the Cozima portfolio in an LOB curriculum.

9.2 Less successful

- The objective of introducing the portfolio more widely to employers and using it as a tool in transitions has not taken off sufficiently, mainly due to COVID-19 and because employers prefer other ways of recruiting and capturing competences;
- They also did not sufficiently succeed in using the portfolio as a means of making assignments with employers during internships, recording results and jointly

communicating about the internship via the portfolio. The loss of internships was mainly to blame for this;
- Getting/keeping teams in schools enthusiastic about the portfolio and then really 'making metres' with the use of the portfolio; partly due to the pandemic, but some also indicate that working with it completely independently is still a bridge too far for many pupils/clients;
- Follow-up trainings and multiplier meetings conducted by partners;
- Learning with each other during the meetings regarding the actual use in practice (learning from frontrunners, being able to ask and answer questions in more depth based on own experiences). At this point, the new countries in particular expected to benefit more from the knowledge and experience already built up in Germany and the Netherlands. Here, the fact that most meetings had to take place online at this stage of the project played a major role. Physical meetings lend themselves much better to such processes and to those needed.

9.3 Number of portfolios in project

At the completion of the project, the dashboard developed for the project to measure the number of active portfolios allowed the following state to be noted. The number of open active portfolios (in which learners/clients can still update data) per partner.

Lithuania, Alytaus	70
France, Lycée Turgot	20 (will not continue with the portfolio, will be closed)
Italy, Sraffa	68
Germany, Mulvany Berufskolleg	330
Netherlands, Aloysius	863
Netherlands, PSW	38

9.4 What impact has been achieved?

The intended change -a widely supported implementation of the portfolio among all partners and also their employers- has not (yet) been fully achieved. While the implementation process has been delayed due to the pandemic, delay does not lead to postponement for most partners.

It is fair to say that the use of the portfolio within education and during internships is promising, but the expectation that employers themselves will become active users of the CoZiMa portfolio when hiring new staff from a vulnerable position or to record acquired competences is not yet fulfilled. This is due to the fact that recruitment often goes through external agencies and employers are increasingly using their own HR tools to track staff competence development.

The world outside the SUSTEIN project has not stood still in the recent period either. In the Netherlands, partly as a result of the efforts of the Sectorraad GO, the VSO diploma has now been introduced. That has a compulsory portfolio as part of it. With this, we are sure that the portfolio will take off for this target group. Apart from the Aloysius schools, which already work with the Cozima portfolio, 14 VSO and practice schools have now switched to the Compasser portfolio. This is a similar instrument to the Cozima portfolio, which also contains a learning environment with assignments. There are now 1,750 portfolios in use at these schools in the Netherlands (excluding Aloysius). That number is expected to rise to around 3,000 by mid-2023, when one of the larger organisations for Special Education (De Onderwijsspecialisten) becomes active.

In Belgium (partner in the earlier Cozima project), the portfolio has now been introduced more widely in dual education and is used in particular to provide an overview of progress and competences at individual and group level.

Provided the conditions and preconditions are right, using the portfolio as a transition hub also seems to work, for intermediary organisations that engage municipalities in the transition of pupils in a vulnerable position. In Germany, the Mulvany Berufskolleg, in cooperation with the municipality of Herne and the Bildungsburo, is setting up projects for young people who have become unemployed or are threatened with unemployment. In Limburg, the joint Servicepunt for internship, career and transition of three Aloysius schools, is partnering with the reintegration company Werk.kom and PSW. They too use the Cozima or MijnPortfolio (also supported by Paragin).

10 How do partners look back on the project?

10.1 Satisfaction with project and cooperation

During the final meeting in Paris and after the project, we reflected on the project. In the meeting by answering the questions of the 'final report' together, after the project by filling in a questionnaire by the partners.

Partners were asked to use smileys to score the project on a five-point scale for satisfaction with the realisation, cooperation, knowledge exchange and commitment of the partners, and were also asked how satisfied they were with the project management on the aspects of communication and accessibility and commitment. Responses were received from all partners, with a total of eight respondents.

Degree of satisfaction -> About	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Less satisfied
Realisation of the project	1	4	1	2
Cooperation partners	2	4	1	1
Knowledge exchange	3	5	1	0
Commitment of partners	2	5	1	0

The partners' overall score was mostly good. The least satisfaction was with the realisation of the project. This is to be expected given the many problems that had to be overcome and the difficulty some partners had in engaging with colleagues and pupils. This particularly played out with the German and French partners. Satisfaction with the cooperation between partners and especially the knowledge exchange and commitment of the partners is at a high level, though.

The French partner was less satisfied with the collaboration within the project and with the relatively large differences in the application of the portfolio and the type of learner served.

10.2 Satisfaction with project management

Satisfaction with Aloysius' project management, both with communication from the project management, approachability and commitment to the project, is very high. None of the partners gave a score lower than satisfied and the vast majority were even very satisfied.

Degree of satisfaction -> About	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Less satisfied
Communication	7	1	0	0
Approachability	6	2	0	0
Commitment	7	1	0	0

Satisfaction with yield and uses within the organisation
There were different responses to this question. The comments show that some partners are succeeding well in integrating the portfolio into their work processes or programme, but that others still find it difficult. Sometimes because the portfolio was insufficiently motivating for students, sometimes because the introduction was too complex. Partly for this reason, the training concept was developed and instructional videos were made. The fact that the intended training sessions for teachers and tutors and a number of physical meetings could not be carried out obviously did not help. Still, no single identifiable explanation for the differences can be found, such as the level of the target group, for example. What emerges from the user cases, among others, is that consciously choosing for the broad introduction of the portfolio, adapting the work processes to the possibilities of the portfolio and supervising and steering the use from the management are important success factors. This also applies to appointing the role of functional manager, who takes care of all matters surrounding the implementation.

Satisfaction with online and physical meetings
Not unexpectedly, the meetings in which we were able to meet live scored significantly higher in terms of satisfaction than the online meetings. Whereas in the latter, 3 partners were satisfied or very satisfied and 4 partners were neutral, this result was more positive for the physical meetings. No fewer than 6 were very satisfied, one satisfied and one neutral. From the comments, partners positively appreciated being able to track progress, discuss the tools developed and especially during the physical meetings, range of depth around

portfolio experiences and knowledge exchange. The least positive partner indicated that the different goals of the partners (due to the twin-track policy) were a difficult issue. It was difficult to 'keep up' with everything as a newcomer.

On using the portfolio after the project
Except for one partner, all other partners indicate they want to continue using the portfolio and see good opportunities for a follow-up. From PSW (intermediary organisation in the Netherlands), it is indicated that developments in the region are decisive in this respect. As it looks now, further cooperation with more municipalities and with the schools and Werk.Kom can contribute positively to the decision. From one of the German partners it is also indicated that the possibilities of the portfolio as an aid to keeping an overview could be better highlighted to motivate students to start working with it.

Desired further development of the portfolio
When asked what could be improved or developed about the portfolio and its use, the picture is not very clear. While some would like to see the decoupling of the portfolio from the (steering role of the) organisation, others are more interested in making the portfolio more user-friendly or in introducing more 'reward possibilities' to motivate students. Yet the most frequently mentioned is encouraging its use in the context at companies, such as internships.

Desired continuation of contact after the project
Almost all partners expressed a need or appreciation to stay in touch with the other partners and developer Paragin.

11 What are the key insights and lessons?

Reflecting on the course of the project, the approach taken and the results achieved, we come to the following insights and lessons.

Regular physical meetings are irreplaceable and are not at the heart of KA2 partnerships for nothing. Although switching to online meetings and contacts did not bring the project to a halt, partners particularly missed learning with and from each other on the ground.

If the primary (education) process takes precedence over additional project activities during a pandemic, this not only impacts the individual partners and quantitative results such as the number of portfolios deployed, but also the project as a whole. The focus then shifts more towards what is achievable in one's own school or organisation and becomes less focused on the common goals of the project. This may also have been influenced by the fact that the partners' project coordination lay with executive staff such as teachers and mentors/supervisors.

The chosen two-track approach, with some of the experienced partners taking on development tasks and the new partners joining 'along the sidelines', did not prove to be the most fortunate in practice. The French and Italian partners in particular would have liked to exchange more, especially in a practical sense during trainings and meetings. Perhaps next time it would be better to establish partnerships with organisations that have a more similar starting position.

The portfolio is now gaining a real place within education in the Netherlands, as evidenced by the introduction of the portfolio as a compulsory part of the VSO diploma and the large growth in the number of portfolios offered by Cozima and related portfolios such as Compasser and InCtrl.
A particular development is that in both the Netherlands and Germany, the portfolio contains assignments for the 5 career competences of Career Orientation and Guidance (LOB) or is embedded within the LOB curriculum.

But the participating partners also see prospects for further roll-out and growth in the European context. Cozima's portfolio is now available in more languages and the partners in Italy, Lithuania and Germany indicate that they want to (continue to) make full use of the portfolio in the coming period. In this respect, it is helpful that external parties, such as a

municipality, act as financier or that special projects are entered into with external parties (such as the Future me project in Harreveld). These external commitments increase the importance and commitment to actually deploy the portfolio.

A major benefit of the project is that all participants who have filled their own portfolio can continue to take it with them under their own control, even when they are out of school. The original aim of the Cozima project that the pupil is and remains the owner of his own development and portfolio is now guaranteed.

The use of the portfolio as a tool from schools offered to employers is significantly less promising. Especially in the transition from school to work. Employers often use intermediaries when recruiting these vulnerable young people, and for tracking and maintaining the competences of their staff, they usually deploy their own instruments and HR tools.

For successful implementation of the portfolio as a 'transition hub', it is important that schools, intermediary parties and municipalities work with the same or at least interchangeable portfolio. The experiences of Werk.kom in Limburg (the Netherlands) show that municipalities that already work with the portfolio are very happy with the uniformity of concepts, competences and the reduction of the administrative burden. Moreover, there is less communication noise between counsellors because they work with the same information base (joint file/portfolio). Now that the three Limburg schools of Aloysius are also using the same portfolio from their Service point for internships, careers and transitions, the transition hub can really be put into practice.

European Commission

Erasmus+