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MODULE 1

SMART VET
Erasmus+ K210-VET Small scale

Adaptability & Resilience

Equip learners with strategies to handle change, uncertainty and new environments effectively during international mobility.

Erasmus+ KA210-VET | SMART-VET Project

Funded by the European Union

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Enriching lives, opening minds.

Learning Outcomes

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

By the end of this module, learners will understand what adaptability is, why it matters for international mobility, and how resilience turns setbacks into opportunities for growth.

BY THE END, LEARNERS WILL BE ABLE TO

1. Explain what adaptability is and why it is essential for academic, professional and personal success abroad.
2. Describe how resilience helps learners face and overcome adversity.
3. Apply practical strategies for adapting to new environments and coping with culture shock, stress and uncertainty.
4. Recognise the value of social support, self-reflection and open-mindedness when integrating into a new culture.
5. Identify the stages of the adaptation process and relate real-life examples to their own experience.

The Mobility Emotional Journey

International mobility is “learning by leaving” — a transformative process with a predictable emotional arc.

1

Initial Enthusiasm

Motivated by curiosity, language goals, self-confidence and academic development.

2

Culture Shock

Insecurity, unfamiliar customs and difficulty initiating relationships can cause stress and demotivation.

3

Adaptation & Growth

Overcoming challenges builds open-mindedness, autonomy, problem-solving and resilience.

Psychological Challenges of Mobility

Six challenges reported most often by VET learners on placement abroad.

1 Anxiety & Uncertainty

An unfamiliar environment, language and customs require flexibility and willingness to change.

2 Language Difficulties

Struggles persist even with prior study, especially in everyday situations and early classes.

3 Bureaucratic Challenges

Paperwork and personal-information processes abroad are complex, time-consuming and stressful.

4 Financial Resources

Limited funds are a major barrier to taking part in, and coping during, mobility.

5 Economic Instability

Unfamiliarity with the host banking system can cause liquidity problems and financial stress.

6 Loss of Support Network

Without the usual network, learners can feel nostalgic and isolated unless they build local links.

Strategies to Cope with Setbacks

Resilience is not a fixed trait — it is a set of practical habits that can be learned.

1 Seek Social Support

Turn to colleagues, friends, family or professionals to share emotions and get practical help.

2 Problem-Focused Coping

Analyse the situation, identify causes and break the problem into manageable steps.

3 Positive Re-Evaluation

Reframe the setback as a chance to learn, identifying the lessons it offers.

4 Express & Reflect

Talking or writing about feelings helps process the experience and reduce discomfort.

5 Avoid Denial

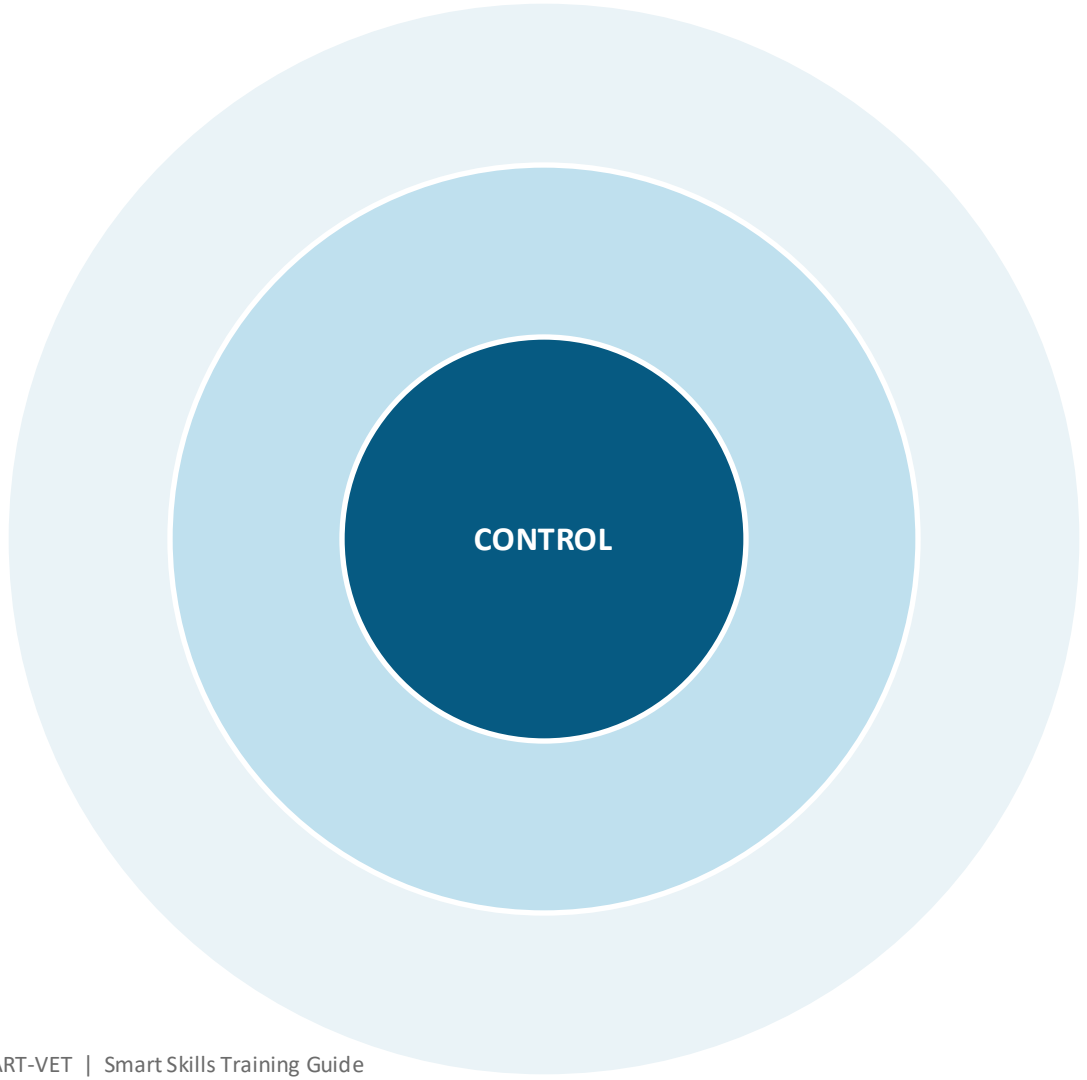
Address the situation directly rather than ignoring or delaying a solution.

6 Stay Active

Exercise or other activities are a healthy way to channel stress and improve mood.

Covey's Circle of Control

A practical tool to reduce stress: sort your concerns into what you can act on — and let the rest go.



Zone of Control

100% depends on you: your actions, your words, your attitude. Put 80% of your energy here.

Zone of Influence

You don't fully control these, but you can act on them — e.g. your relationship with your mentor.

Zone of Concern

External factors with no power over you — the weather, local laws, transport prices. Accept and let go.

The 5-Minute Technique

A quick reset after a language block, technical mistake or stressful moment abroad.



Breathe

Physiological control: square-breathe — inhale 4s, hold 4s, exhale 4s. Signals safety to your nervous system.

Label

Cognitive control: name the feeling in one sentence (“I feel frustrated because...”) to lower its intensity.

Reframe

Learning: ask “What information was I missing, and what will I learn for next time?”

What Does Adaptability Look Like?

Real mobility situations across four professional sectors.

Professional Sector	Situation Abroad	Adaptive Behaviour
Industrial (welding, mechanics, electricity)	Your host company in Poland uses different numerical control machinery than your school.	Observe carefully, ask about safety protocols, and adjust your pace without frustration.
Healthcare & Care	At a French nursing home, hygiene protocols and patient care follow different cultural norms.	Manage frustration, find alternative non-verbal communication, and learn the local codes of empathy.
Administration & Marketing	An Irish office uses English software and a flatter hierarchy than expected.	Propose ideas in meetings, overcome the language barrier, and adopt unfamiliar digital tools.
Hospitality & Culinary Arts	An Italian hotel's service pace and meal schedules differ sharply from home.	Stay calm under pressure, accept feedback constructively, and work with unfamiliar local ingredients.

Practical Exercises for This Module

1 Simulation: New Work Environment

Groups of 6–8 role-play a multinational team (team leader, new employee, mentor, HR, etc.) navigating unexpected challenges and change.

2 Journaling Challenge

10 minutes a day for a week, reflecting on a past major change: context, initial emotions, difficulties, strategies used, and lessons learned.

3 Emotional Management Exercise

Learners draw their own Circle of Control and sort five current concerns using sticky notes.

4 Peer Activities on Coping

Small groups are assigned a real mobility scenario and must propose at least three coping strategies, then present their “star solution.”

Key Takeaways

- Adaptability is the skill most valued by today's employers — it's about maintaining performance and well-being in uncertain situations, not just “fitting in.”
- Culture shock and initial frustration are normal, expected stages of mobility — discomfort is temporary.
- Focus your energy on what depends on you (attitude, effort, rest); let go of what you cannot change (climate, schedules, accents).
- Resilience means “bouncing back” after a mistake or harsh feedback — emotional-regulation techniques like the 5-minute pause help you learn from every challenge.
- Asking for help is a strategy of social intelligence, not a weakness — mentors and peers multiply your resources.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Change Is the Only Constant — Adapt With Confidence.

Next: Module 2 — Effective Communication, building the verbal and non-verbal skills to connect across language and cultural barriers.