

## Second annual report – Network meetings URKRAFT – Sweden

**Reporting period:** January 2024 - December 2024

### Overview

The network's purpose continues to be to bring together business representatives, organizations and education providers in Skellefteå to discuss and develop how school and working life can be more closely linked. The goal is to create concrete activities that strengthen young people's motivation, give them practical experience of working life and open up for early study and career guidance.

After a first year of establishing the network, focusing on dialogue and common understanding, year 2 has been about putting ideas into practice. The network has worked on developing, testing and evaluating three different activities for compulsory school. The activities combine practical elements from working life with career interest tests and study and career guidance, to create a whole where students can both try out and reflect on future opportunities.

More in detail and schematically, the network organised its 2024 activities as reported below:

1. February, fourth meeting of the network to recap on RealityChecks responsibilities, and draft ideas for the RealityChecks.
2. March, fifth network meeting to provide last details on the Reality Checks in order to test them in May and June.
3. November, the “Regional Conference Reality Check” was held.

The regional conference or “symposium” represented a conclusive event of the activities of the network in 2024, as well as the occasion to discuss possibilities and ideas on how to continue the work of the network in the future.

At the end of the second year of activity of the network, it is possible to affirm that the year 2024 was considerably positive and successful in terms of cooperation in and realisation of Reality Check initiatives. The network respected timelines and commitments for the implementation of activities and also actively participated in the subsequent feedback and follow-up phases. The RealityChecks realised were highly appreciated by the participants involved.

## Fourth network meeting

**Date & Time:** March 5<sup>th</sup> 2024 – 14:30-16:30

**N. of participants:** 8

### Description/Minutes

The first network meeting of the year focused on jointly defining three pilot activities that can be carried out with primary school students. The discussions were based on the need to offer more and more varied contacts with working life at earlier ages.

Three activities were selected:

Industrial work elements – students get to try welding and CNC in a safe learning environment, supplemented with a career interest test and discussions with study and career counselors.

Construction, mechanics, kitchen and care/care – a practically oriented activity where students get to try different work elements in several professional areas. Again combined with a career interest test and guidance.

Film competition – students choose a profession, do research, write a script and record a short film with a mobile phone. The competition ends with the best entry being selected and rewarded.

The network worked together to develop the purpose, target group and practical arrangements for each activity. Employers, school staff and organisations contributed perspectives on content, safety, resources and expected benefits for the students. At the second network meeting, the work of planning the activities in detail was deepened. Time frames, resources, coordination and division of responsibilities were discussed here. Employers contributed with offers of workplaces and supervisors for the practical elements, while school representatives ensured that the activities could be integrated into the students' schedules and the school's planning.

The network also developed common routines for how the vocational interest tests and study and career guidance would be integrated into the activities. The aim was to create a common thread where students not only get to test practical elements but also reflect on what the experiences mean for their future choices.

The film competition was planned in collaboration with both school staff and cultural actors. The focus was on strengthening the students' creativity, ability to collaborate and digital competence at the same time as they get to delve into different professions.

### Key decisions & future milestones

- Operational plan for each RealityCheck is defined
- Timeframe for RealityChecks implementation is set (April-July 2024)

## Fifth network meeting

**Date & Time:** Sept 9<sup>th</sup> 2024 – 14:30-16:30

**N. of participants:** 7

### Description/Minutes

The first meeting of the autumn was dedicated to evaluating the three activities. The students' experiences, the teachers' observations and the employers' experiences were collected and analysed. In general, the feedback was very positive:

The students particularly appreciated the opportunity to "get to do it for real" and many expressed increased curiosity about different professions.

The schools saw the activities as a valuable complement to regular teaching and a concrete way of working with study and career guidance in compulsory school.

The employers saw the value of meeting the workforce of the future early on, even if time resources remain a challenge.

The discussions were about what could be improved for future rounds, for example the need for more tutors, more preparation material for the schools and clearer instructions for the students for the film competition.

### Key decisions & future milestones

- Agreement on participation in final regional conference in autumn.

## Regional symposium

**Date & Time:** November 28<sup>th</sup> 2024 – 15:00- 16:30

**N. of participants:** 19

### Description/Minutes

The Regional Conference of the Swedish RealityCheck network represented the conclusive event of the work done by members between 2023 and 2024. The symposium took place on November 28<sup>th</sup>, at Urkraft. The event was managed by Urkraft, and the participants were both members of the network and individuals coming from the school, training, and company contexts as well as staff from Urkraft.

The last network meeting of the year had two focus areas: to summarize the experiences from the activities and to provide feedback on the handbook and toolbox that the project is developing.

The handbook and toolbox aim to collect the experiences, methods and materials developed in the project so that they can be used by schools, employers and organisations even after the end of the project. The network provided valuable feedback on content, language and

structure. It was emphasised that the material should be practical, easily accessible and clearly describe both the purpose and implementation of the activities.

During the discussion and reflection time, the symposium's participants came up with some enriching feedback and comments for Reality Check reported below:

External facilitator is in demand – many want an outsider to lead the activities to relieve the school/employers.

### **The manual**

- Should be concise, clear and easily accessible.
- Should serve as inspiration and “sales pitch” to dare to test activities.

### **The toolbox**

- Should contain more details, instructions and practical support.
- Seen as the part used for in-depth study and concrete implementation.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Year 2 has been a year of development and concrete action. The network has gone from discussing needs and opportunities to actually testing three new activities in practice. By involving both students, school staff and employers, we have created a holistic model where theory, practice and reflection are interconnected.

The most important results from the year are:

Three new activities for primary school that connect school and working life more closely: industrial elements, construction/mechanics/kitchen/care and a film competition.

Clearer collaboration between school and working life where the network has jointly planned, implemented and evaluated the activities.

A handbook and toolbox are being developed, where experiences are systematized and made available for continued use.

Strengthened consensus among the actors on the importance of early working life orientation in primary school, as well as an increased willingness to continue developing the initiatives despite challenges with resources and time.

The work during year 2 has shown that it is possible to create meaningful meetings between school and working life already in primary school. Students gain increased motivation and a more realistic picture of working life opportunities, while employers have the opportunity to contribute to the region's future skills supply. The project and network have thus taken important steps towards the goal of creating a sustainable structure for collaboration between school and working life in Skellefteå.