

VETech TOOLKIT

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INTRODUCTION SHEET

Name of the tool: Online collaboration

Specific tool: Google account and services (Google Workspace)

Level: Beginner

Target group: VET Trainers

General description of the tool: online collaboration refers to a form of digital cooperation in which participants—regardless of their geographical location or time zone—work together on documents, projects, or tasks, either in real time or asynchronously. This is most commonly enabled by cloud-based solutions such as Google Workspace, Microsoft 365, or other similar platforms.

Online collaboration can take several forms:

1. The simplest tools include email and **chat applications**, which are suitable for quick information exchange.
2. More advanced are **video conferencing** solutions, which allow participants to communicate face-to-face, share presentations, and collaboratively discuss topics and issues.
3. **Cloud-based document management** systems enable multiple users to work simultaneously on text files, spreadsheets, or presentations. These provide real-time co-editing capabilities, significantly speeding up collaborative work.
4. **Project management and task-tracking tools** are increasingly common, helping teams collaborate in a structured way, with deadlines and assigned responsibilities.
5. **Shared calendars**, note-taking applications, and survey editors serve as simple but important complements to everyday collaboration.



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Advantages:

- **Flexibility:** Participants can access the necessary information from anywhere and on any device, without the need for physical presence. This saves time and costs and enables efficient work, even for international teams.
- **Real-time editing and communication:** All changes are immediately visible, allowing faster decision-making and more effective problem-solving.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Some platforms are available for free, while subscription-based systems offer more extensive features. Subscriptions make expenses predictable and easier to plan.
- **Reliability:** Major providers adhere to high standards of security and data protection.
- **Storage savings:** Content is stored in the cloud rather than occupying users' local device storage. This reduces the burden on computers while ensuring that materials are accessible from anywhere on any device.
- **Scalability:** Whether it's a small group or a large organization, the tools can be easily adjusted to fit the team's size and needs.

Challenges:

- **Reliable, fast internet connection:** Poor network quality can disrupt collaborative work.
- **Tool updates and changes:** Online collaboration tools are continuously developed by providers. Using them requires ongoing learning and adaptation, and some participants may resist changes.
- **Data security:** While providers offer strong protection, user errors—such as weak passwords or improperly configured permissions—can pose significant risks.
- **Lack of personal interaction:** Maintaining direct human connections is more challenging in an online environment.

Summary

Online collaboration has become an integral part of everyday work and learning. It helps bridge distances, accelerates processes, and creates new opportunities for joint work. Although it comes with certain challenges, digital collaboration is an essential long-term tool for anyone who wants to remain competitive, flexible, and efficient.

Relevance of the tool for the target group:

Online collaboration tools are highly relevant for VET trainers, as vocational education and training increasingly relies on **blended, digital, and work-based learning formats**. For example, the Covid pandemic context had increased the necessity of working remotely and pushed the creation of tools for online teaching and training and teachers' work coordination. VET trainers often work with diverse learner groups, external companies, institutions, and colleagues, frequently across different locations and schedules, especially in a context of Erasmus+ cooperation projects implementation where multicultural VET trainers teams has to collaborate remotely. Online collaboration enables trainers to manage these complex interactions efficiently and transparently.



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For VET trainers, **email, chat, and video conferencing tools** support continuous communication with learners, apprentices, and among trainers, facilitating timely feedback, guidance, assessment, and mentoring. **Cloud-based document management systems** allow trainers to prepare, share, and update learning materials, assignments, and assessment documents collaboratively, ensuring that all participants work with the most up-to-date versions. This is particularly important in VET contexts where curricula, standards, and workplace requirements may change rapidly.

Project management and task-tracking tools help VET trainers organise training activities, group projects, and work-based learning tasks, clarifying responsibilities and deadlines for learners. **Shared calendars and scheduling tools** support the coordination of training sessions, online classes, company placements, examinations, and meetings with external stakeholders.

By using online collaboration tools, VET trainers can **enhance learner engagement, promote teamwork and digital competences, and model professional digital collaboration practices** that learners are likely to encounter in the labour market. At the same time, these tools **reduce administrative burden, support flexible training delivery, and improve cooperation** within training organisations and between VET providers and employers.

The most common forms/applications/solutions of the tool:

Online collaboration can be supported by a wide range of digital tools and platforms, many of which are already commonly used in education and training contexts.

For VET trainers, the most relevant solutions include:

- **Email and chat applications** such as Gmail, Outlook, Google Chat, Microsoft Teams Chat, and Slack, which enable fast communication, announcements, and informal coordination with learners and colleagues.
- **Video conferencing solutions** including Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Webex, which support online lessons, hybrid training sessions, meetings with companies, and remote consultations with learners.
- **Cloud-based document management systems** such as Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, and Dropbox, which allow trainers and learners to store, share, and co-edit documents, presentations, and spreadsheets in real time.
- **Online office applications** like Google Docs, Sheets, Slides, or Microsoft Word Online and Excel Online, which enable collaborative content creation, commenting, and peer feedback.
- **Project management and task-tracking tools** such as Trello, Asana, Microsoft Planner, or ClickUp, which help structure group work, learning projects, and training tasks with clear deadlines and responsibilities.

- **Shared calendars and scheduling tools** including Google Calendar and Outlook Calendar, which support the organisation of training sessions, assessments, meetings, and work-based learning activities.
- **Survey and feedback tools** such as Google Forms or Microsoft Forms, which allow trainers to collect feedback, evaluate learning outcomes, and conduct quick assessments.

Together, these tools form an integrated digital environment that supports collaboration, communication, and organisation in modern VET training.

**General presentation of Google account and Workspace as online collaboration tool:
What is it? For what to use it? Advantages and disadvantages.**

In Google Workspace and in Google account the same applications are available (e.g., Drive, Meet, Chat, Calendar, etc.). The difference is not in the applications themselves, but in the fact that the Google Workspace version offers extra features, administrative options, and storage for businesses.

This material focuses on the google services (applications) provided with Google account:

Google account is a cloud-based online collaboration and productivity platform developed by Google. Its purpose is to provide all the tools a team or organization needs for effective collaboration, communication, and work within a single integrated ecosystem.

Key components of the suite include **Gmail** for email communication, **Google Calendar** for shared scheduling and meeting management, and **Google Drive**, which offers cloud storage and version control. Within Drive, users can access **Google Docs**, **Sheets**, and **Slides**—online office applications that enable real-time collaborative editing, commenting, suggestions, and secure document sharing.

Google Meet provides a video conferencing solution capable of supporting hundreds of participants, with features such as screen sharing, chat, and recording. **Google Chat** allows group conversations, topic-based rooms, and task management, making teamwork more transparent and efficient.

One of the main advantages of the **Google account** is that it is fully browser-based, requiring no installation, and accessible from any device-computer, tablet, or smartphone. All changes are automatically saved to the cloud, minimizing the risk of data loss. The admin console allows centralized management of users, permissions, and security settings.

Relevance of Google account for the target group:

Google Account and its services are particularly relevant for VET trainers because they provide a comprehensive, easy-to-use, and widely accessible ecosystem for online collaboration. Many VET trainers work under time constraints and with varying levels of digital confidence among learners. Google's tools are intuitive and require minimal technical setup, making them suitable for both trainers and trainees.

For VET trainers, Google Drive and the integrated office applications (Docs, Sheets, Slides) support the collaborative development of learning materials, training plans, assignments, and assessment documents. Trainers can give real-time feedback, track revisions, and ensure transparency in group work and learner contributions. This is especially useful in project-based and competence-oriented VET approaches.

Google Meet enables trainers to deliver online and hybrid lessons, organise virtual meetings with companies, and provide remote mentoring to learners during apprenticeships or work placements. Google Calendar supports the coordination of complex training schedules involving classes, examinations, and workplace learning periods. Google Chat facilitates ongoing communication and teamwork within training groups.

The browser-based nature of Google Workspace allows VET trainers and learners to access materials from different devices and locations, supporting flexible learning paths. For training organisations, the administrative features of Google Workspace enable secure management of users, permissions, and data, which is essential when working with minors, external partners, and sensitive training information.

Overall, Google Account and the Google services help VET trainers deliver more flexible, collaborative, and learner-centred training while simultaneously strengthening learners' digital and collaborative competences relevant to the labour market.