

Report: mobilities in vocational education and training

## Of fears conquered and self-confidence gained

Text: Rea Wittwer, Photos: Mélanie Baierlé

Movetia visited three trainees and the VET trainer at *libs Industrielle Berufslehren Schweiz* in Baden and asked them about their mobility project. In the course of this, it became clear that the mindset of Swiss nationals and Swedes may not be completely different but there are some distinctions.

Switzerland, Sweden – elsewhere, people tend to mix up these two European countries or even lump them together. Yet the differences are evident in the small things. “What amazed me most during my three weeks at my workplace with ABB Machines in Västerås were the long coffee breaks, which they have three times a day. They call it *fika*. The first *fika* is as early as 9 o'clock in the morning even though they don't start work until after 8 o'clock,” laughs Nuria Regensburger, 18, commercial trainee at *libs* in Baden. The cheerful commercial trainee in VET qualified as one of 15 *libs* trainees for the exchange in Sweden and, so, was able to get a taste of the world of work there in Västerås. The experiences that Nuria was able to have in October 2017 really do sound rather different from the ones she is gaining here in Switzerland. “Punctuality, order and a neat and tidy way of organising your work is very important in Switzerland. In these areas, I was able to help my colleagues in Sweden a lot.”



Nuria Regensburger, Commercial Trainee Federal VET Certificate



Andreas Guntern, VET Trainer *libs*

The young woman with a love for travelling can look back on an exchange in the USA and France and has already seen much of the world with her parents. So she didn't have any fears or real trepidation about her stay in Sweden. “Obviously, the fact that I speak English well certainly helped. My host family was very kind and friendly anyway and I was made to feel very welcome, including at work. Of course, the more informal

culture in Sweden makes some things easier.“ If she could, Nuria would join in a mobility project again straight away, but first she has to complete her commercial training at libs successfully.

## Building self-confidence

Andreas Guntern, 56, VET Trainer in charge of the mobility project at libs, has been handling the exchanges between Switzerland and Sweden for more than 10 years. “I’m an old hand at this,” says the father of three, “and although the administrative tasks take up a lot of time, the light in the eyes of the trainees when they come back stronger, full of energy and with new self-confidence, gives me fresh motivation time after time.”

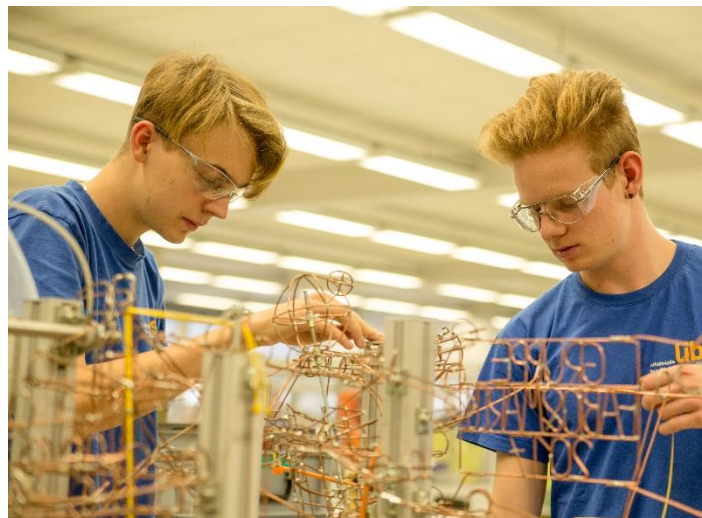
**“The light in the eyes of the trainees when they come back stronger, full of energy and with new self-confidence, gives me fresh motivation time after time.”**

Andreas Guntern can fall back on the support of Movetia with organising everything, if necessary. The Swiss agency for exchange and mobility also supports the project financially with flat-rate allowances for travel, organisational and subsistence costs. Without that support, it wouldn’t be possible to carry it out. Out of 25 applications to take part in the mobility project, 15 trainees can be selected each time to go to Sweden for three weeks. “They work in

a business enterprise with a technical or electronic focus. And, like Nuria, the trainees stay with a host family, embedded in everyday Nordic life.” “This family connection is very important,” continues Andreas Guntern, “and there have been hardly any problems. In this way, not just at work but also in their time off, the young people can get an insight into the other culture.” Standing on their own two feet for three weeks, getting to know new people, coping in an unfamiliar working environment and, at the same time, finding out a bit more and new things about themselves – it goes without saying that all those experiences have a positive effect on their self-confidence.



Fabian Isenschmid, Trainee Automation Engineer  
Federal VET Certificate



Trainee Automation Engineers

## Dispelling fears

Fabian Isenschmid, 17, trainee automation engineer at libs, also enthuses about his stay in Sweden. “I jumped at the chance when the opportunity to take part came up. A new culture, getting to know other people and gain international working experience, that really appealed to me,” says Fabian. Of course, he also had to push himself a bit. “Travelling alone, for the first time without my parents, to another country, a foreign language... “But it went incredibly well. From the journey there and the stay itself through to the return flight, everything was well organised.”

Each time before they depart for their destination, Andreas Guntern holds a preparatory workshop with the participants. That covers general information on subjects such as language, culture, what happens when, and travel. For Fabian, this was just what he needed to dispel any anxieties. And the only thing he feared

**“My parents thought it was good that I took up this challenge and they supported me with it.”**

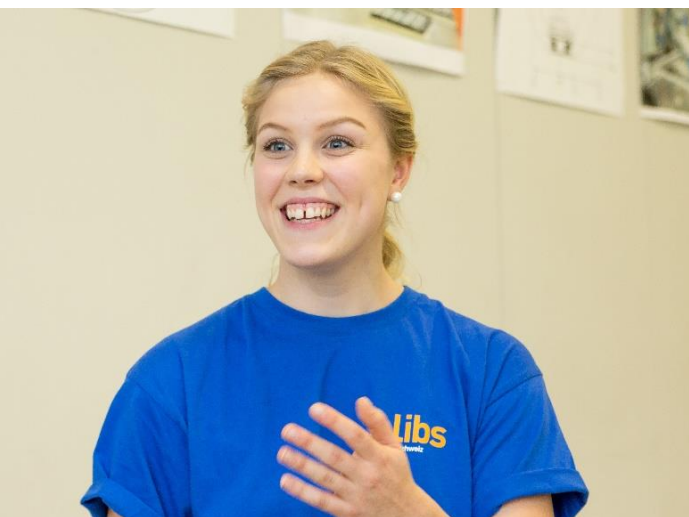
didn't happen at all. “Before, I thought that it might be a bit strange staying with people I don't know in their home. And, at work too – nothing but new people and new working steps. But then none of that was a problem in the end.” Fabian's work in Sweden's biggest printing firm comprised, above all, mechanical and electronic tasks. “Over a three-week period, we were able to get a machine in good working order again.

We were given instructions on a regular basis but, after that, were allowed to work very independently in each case.” His biggest sense of achievement: on the very last day of his stay there, the jobs were completed and the machine was working perfectly again.

“My parents thought it was good that I took up this challenge and they supported me with it. And you can also manage without your friends for three weeks once in a while,” says Fabian, grinning. One thing he noticed was that Swedes are more open and warmer than many Swiss people and, so, he felt well-integrated both in the family and at work.

## Assembling keepsakes

Discovering another country is exciting – and giving someone a better understanding of his/her own culture can provide just as much pleasure. Lina Norling, 18, student at the ABB Industrigymnasium in Västerås, is currently on an exchange at libs and is staying with a host family outside Baden. “I'd never been to another country before. We don't travel around very often,” explains the young woman. “So, I was quite in awe of the mobility project. But I looked forward to it a lot, feel very much at home with my host family and I enjoy the work at libs.” And she thinks it's great that the bus always runs so punctually and stops right in front of libs. Lina, who, at the Industrigymnasium, swots up mainly on theory, can benefit from the practical work in the training workshops of libs and learn a lot more. In the three weeks, the Swedish exchange students are making a table lamp and, in the process, learning about soldering, machining, assembling and other skills. In the course of this, two libs trainees look after the Swedish exchange students all the time. Their shared objective is, after the three-week stay in Switzerland, to take the table lamps they've made themselves, along with lots of new experiences and impressions, home with them to Sweden.



Lina Norling, ABB Industrigymnasium (SE) student



Discovering together at work

*The project was provided with financial support from Movetia within the framework of the Swiss Programme for Erasmus+. Movetia, the Swiss Agency for Exchange and Mobility, funds mobility projects in the field of vocational education and training for VET trainees and recent VET graduates as well as for VET professionals.*

Programme	Mobilities in vocational education and training
Project promoter	libs Baden
Project duration	3 weeks
Funding amount	CHF 68,520.00
Countries	Switzerland/Sweden
Activities	Work placement trainees
Number of participants	30 (outgoing 15, incoming 15)

*Further information: [www.movetia.ch](http://www.movetia.ch).*