

Modularisation and Recognition of basic VET via ECVET and EQF

The EU funded project “EQF meets ECVET” which started in November 2013 and will finish in October 2015, aims to further implement the former “NQF inclusive” project results. “EQF meets ECVET” will adapt the training material of “NQF Inclusive” -implemented in Austria and Denmark- to basic VET organisations in Slovenia, Italy and Germany.

This innovative project wants to offer a new model for recognition of all learning with the goal to ease access to and progress in VET. It will design a model to define learning outcome units by applying the ECVET system and by assigning these units to the NQFs and accrediting them at NQF levels 1 and/or 2. This new model allows step by step learning, shows the learning outcomes of the particular validated units, values them and offers a more individual learning path which might also lead to a whole VET programme’s certificate.

This first e-letter introduces each of the partners, underlying their specific role in the project, as well as announces the next steps to take within the coming months. Current information can be found at

<http://www.eqfmeetsecvet.eu>

High quality training and education remains the most powerful instrument to promote social inclusion and fight poverty. Today only 3 (29%) out of 10 persons with a disability in the EU have a real job including a real salary; the EU average for the population at working age is around 70%. The main reasons are related to an old ‘medical–defect’ view of disability, discrimination and a mismatch between abilities and jobs available. Indeed, the overall quality of the training provided to persons with disabilities needs to be challenged.

In this project the partnership tries to further develop the quality of the education and training provided to persons with intellectual disabilities. In other words, the project tackles the mismatch between training and job demand by assuring that the training is of high quality and is in line with the national qualification structures. Another key part of this project is its modular approach. As vocational and educational training (VET) is sometimes very demanding for a person with disabilities, an approach based on modules is extremely important. It allows learners to further develop skills and knowledge at their own pace.

Why is it crucial to link VET programmes to national qualification frameworks? A formal recognition of modules and topics studied both reassure the learner and provide a guarantee to the potential employer. Certification of their learning gives a boost to the self-esteem of people and has an empowering effect. It will also help employers to step over negative stereotypes.

By confronting the quality of VET and redesigning training and education vis-à-vis the qualification frameworks, the project is tackling in a structural way one of the most challenging issues in the disability field; that being the too high level of unemployment and poverty risk deriving from a weak position on the labour market.

We wish the project partners all possible success in their work on this key project.

Luk Zelderloo
Secretary General of EASPD

The Project Coordinator Chance B, a service provider from Austria

Chance B was founded in 1986 as a “self-help association” by parents with children and young people with disabilities as well as by teachers of the Gleisdorf special school for children with intellectual and physical disabilities.

The aim of this association is “to assist and support old, ill and disabled people so that they can live life to the full” in their villages. For this purpose Chance B has worked out and set up service offers for people of any age to compensate for possible disadvantages due to disabilities in their efforts to pursue an independent way of life. Among these services are different, social and medical care and support offers as well as trainings and job finding support services. Every year more than 2.200 people use these services which are offered by about 300 employees. Training programmes oriented to different specific vocations (e.g. gardening, bakery, farming, gastronomy) are offered for people with learning difficulties and other disabilities from the age of 16 and for long-term unemployed.

To make all their learning outcomes visible and valuable “EQF meets ECVET” will be helpful: in this project we want to design a model to define learning outcome units by applying the ECVET system and to assign these units to the NQFs and accredit them. Learners will receive an officially recognized certificate showing also their special strengths.

By coordinating this project we hope to open national vocational education systems for more individual learning paths, especially for people with learning disabilities, and to make a further step towards equalisation of opportunities.

More info at www.chanceb.at



FormAzione Co&So Network: a consortium of social services in Italy

FormAzione Co&So Network (FCN) is a consortium of 11 cooperatives working at regional level to provide social, vocational, education and training services. The Organisation provides and promotes training for all the associated cooperatives in different fields to meet various targets.

The consortium is one of the most important private institutions in Tuscany working in the sector of vocational education and training, supporting public vocational schools in preventing the school drop-out. The organisation has been quality certified since 2004 and accredited by Regione Toscana to manage training funding. The Consortium promotes and manages in particular training activities for disadvantaged groups and young people at risk of marginalisation. FCN has also a longstanding experience in managing EU projects in the frame of LLP, ESF, Daphne and FEI.

Thanks to its wide experience it contributes to several aspects of the project, in particular implementing ECVET technical specification, stimulating the establishment of a stable network and encouraging the involvement of local authorities and competent bodies for the recognition and certification of competences.

More info at www.formazione.net.eu

EASPD in Brussels, the European Project Partner

The European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) was founded in 1996 and is now Europe's largest network of service providers for persons with disabilities with over 10.000 members in 31 European countries. A considerable part of the EASPD membership is providing training and employment related services to people with disabilities. The correct implementation of the UN Convention is at the core of EASPD's work.

In the EU, only 20% of disabled citizens are employed, and this figure has not risen in the last 10 years. One of the main topics of our policy and advocacy work is the promotion of inclusive education, training and employment on the open labour market. Vocational and educational training, employment and job opportunities are therefore, of course, high on the agenda of service providers in Europe.

The EQF meets ECVET-project gives EASPD the opportunity to be further engaged in the development of tailor-made training models for disabled learners. Besides the development and implementation of the VET modules, the trainees will receive an officially recognised certificate showing their competences and skills. By participating in this project we hope to open vocational education systems for more tailor-made training models, specifically developed for people with learning impairments, and to further advocate for the formal recognition and certification of competences.

More info at www.easpd.eu

Chiemgau-Lebenshilfe-Werkstätten, a sheltered workshop in Germany

The Chiemgau-Lebenshilfe-Werkstätten arose after parents of children with learning impairment founded the Lebenshilfe Verein Traunstein. What began in 1972 as a shelter workshop developed in the run of the years into a stronghold within the working world for individuals with a mental or psychological deficiency. These persons were thus offered various opportunities to participate in a working environment within the workshop or in enterprises in the general workforce.

Not only did the number of persons engaged in the workshops increased with time, but so did the educational requirements that invariably arise in workshops for individuals with impairments. From their initially purely protective character in the early seventies the Chiemgau-Lebenshilfe-Werkstätten evolved more and more into an institution for personal advancement and education. In the interests of its clients the Chiemgau-Lebenshilfe-Werkstätten has always incorporated current developments to a high standard. This reaches from the adoption of educational concepts, the founding of an independent department for vocational training, certification of the workshops as an educational institution, the establishment of an integration service, the integration of workshop charges accompanied by job coaches into the general workforce, right up to the realization of their own personal budgets.

Now it is time for the Chiemgau-Lebenshilfe-Werkstätten to take yet another step, to provide an active contribution toward national and European recognition of vocational certifications for persons with learning impairment. To this end the Chiemgau-Lebenshilfe-Werkstätten will bring its experience in training persons into the project « EQF meets ECVET » and support its partners as optimally as possible in attaining this aim.

More info at www.clw-traunreut.de

VDC POLŽ Maribor, an occupational activity centre in Slovenia

Varstveno delovni centre POLŽ Maribor (abbreviation: VDC POLŽ Maribor) is a public regional social welfare institution for adults with mental and physical impairment. VDC POLŽ Maribor is the second largest occupational activity Centre in Slovenia and the largest in the region of Styria. As the name suggests our institution is located in Maribor, which is the second largest city by population in our country. We are a work-oriented institution operating in a controlled environment for the purpose of providing guidance, care and employment under special circumstances as well as creative leisure activities for 228 adults with mental and physical impairment and residence for 29 users of the services we provide. VDC POLŽ Maribor was founded in 1993; and in the 20 years of its existence our institution has grown and developed extensively. We are now comprised of six units providing guidance, care, and employment under special circumstances in the following cities: Maribor, Lenart, Slovenska Bistrica, Ruše and Šentilj. We also have two housing units in Maribor providing services of institutionalised care. Currently there are 228 adults with mental and physical impairment integrated in our units



providing guidance, care, and employment under special circumstances. Two housing units offer homes to 29 residents. The Slovenian acronym VDC POLŽ Maribor stands for: We help give purpose in life.

VDC POLŽ Maribor was coordinator of the LdV project "Happy Farm" and core-partner in the LdV project "NQF Inclusive", both dealing with the recognition of non-formal learning. Having experience in dealing with the learning outcomes approach our role in the project "NQF Inclusive" was to give advice and guidance to the partnership regarding this topic, but not to define learning outcomes for a Slovenian training programme. In this project, VDC POLŽ Maribor will transfer and adapt the learning outcomes, defined in "NQF Inclusive", to the VET programme, modularize them by using the ECVET system and design a model for assignment and recognition of qualification modules together with the associated partner CPI, the public VET institute of Slovenia. VDC POLŽ Maribor was also the organiser of the Kick-Off meeting which took place at the beginning of December 2013.

More info at www.vdcpolz.si

Vytautas Magnus University, a Research Centre for Vocational Education in Lithuania

The Centre for Vocational Education and Research at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas (Lithuania) is involved in research and study projects of the vocational education systems and their changes. It executes the research related to VET policies, qualifications, competences, qualifications frameworks and systems on the national and European levels.

The main goal of the Centre for Vocational Education and Research in participating in the project "EQF meets ECVET" is to contribute to the development of methodical approaches and know-how in design and implementation of qualifications referenced to the EQF levels 1 and 2, as well as to gain new know-how and experience in this field from the cooperation with the project partners.

More info at www.vdu.lt



Next Steps

Partners from Slovenia, Italy and Germany are currently writing the learning outcomes for the following basic VET: Slovenian Tearoom Waitressing (NQF level 1), Italian Catering (NQF level 1) and German Seamsters (NQF level 1 & 2). These learning outcomes will be evaluated by the organisations' users and learners to see whether they are really easy to understand by the end of May.

The consortium of the project will meet in Germany in May 2014, at the partner's Chiemgau-Lebenshilfe-Werkstätten institution in Traunreut. During the meeting the partner from Italy will give us some advice on how to use ECVET and we will discuss how to apply this to modularize the 4 basic VET.



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