

European vocational training for Offshore Wind

Legal Framework



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Introduction

Collaboration on education in Europe has become more dynamic in the area of the vocational training policy in response to the European councils of Lisbon, Stockholm and Barcelona, but in particular due to the common report of the EU Education Ministers on the future aims of European education systems, as well as the working program to this conversion up to 2010. To enhance this, new initiatives of the EU committee for mobility, lifelong learning, as well as reinforcement of cooperation in the area of teaching and training will contribute to improved professional education. A central target is the European dimension of education and the creation of a European educational space, which permits borderless mobility in education and continuing education, as well as the protection of innovation and quality of the European education systems, applicable to all citizens of Europe. In February 2002, the EU Education Ministers decided a common working program up to 2010 with a total of 13 educational objectives, and agreed on a systematic and structured educational collaboration in the European Union. The task of the working program of the EU Education Ministers is to support the effective creation of national reformist policy by mutual exchange of experience and to make clear the contribution of the educational policy for the achievement of the Lisbon goals.

In the working program, progress and developments on indicators should be made clear. In May 2003 the EU Education Ministers decided to use five reference values, which the EU wants to reach as an overall average by 2010:

- The average of dropouts in schools should be a maximum of 10%.
- The number of university graduates in mathematics and natural sciences should rise by at least 15% and be balanced better between the genders.
- At least 85% of 22-year-olds should complete secondary school.
- The number of 15-year-olds with weak reading competence should reduce by at least 20%.



- The participation of employed people in lifelong learning should be at least 12.5%.

In the conclusions of the council, the European benchmarks are defined as average reference values for the EU member countries, and the countries which would like to become members of the EU.

Brugge Copenhagen initiative

On the 30th November 2002 in Copenhagen the European ministers responsible for vocational training and the European committee adopted an explanation about reinforced collaboration in vocational training. They formulated concrete purposes and instruments for professional education up to 2010. The process initiated by the Copenhagen explanation has given a new value to vocational education and training within European educational co-operation. The most important spheres of activity of the EU are to support the transparency of qualifications; the recognition of qualifications and competence; as well as quality assurance of vocational training. A conversion study group and a coordination group were furnished in each case with participation of the member states, entry states and social partners. The purpose of the "study group transparency" is the modernization and desegregation of existing single instruments in a uniform European frame for qualifications and competence. European vocational training cooperation has developed during the last years a huge number of instruments to describe qualifications and certificates in a European format. The polyglot training profiles, the European curriculum vitae and the EUROPASS are segments of graduation during vocational training. EUROPASS, is built up in modules, electronically and in paper form.

The "study group Quality" is responsible for the realization of what is described in the Copenhagen explanation as, "the collaboration of quality assurance in vocational training". This means the exchange of models and drafts, as well as the development of common criteria and principles of quality assurance. Until now existing national and international standards and norms of quality assurance were grasped and valued, and some common core criteria were identified for higher-class development at European level. Eight indicators were suggested - mostly oriented to output - which relate to the System – i.e. at the educational supplier level. The other main operating focuses are a mapping of quality assurance institutions in Europe, and a European manual for self-evaluation of quality assurance.



ECTS (European Credit transfer system) has worked in the university area to raise the mobility of students by accrediting study achievements abroad. The study group for the ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) has the task of adapting elements of ECTS to the requirements of vocational training, and to start a similarly positive long-term development.

Presently two models are discussed for ECVET. The first is a wide and comprehensive model including all aspects of the capture of qualifications and competence in all educational areas. A second aims at the development of a "light" pilot model of ECVET for trans-national education segments during professional education. The primary purpose is to work out a concrete suggestion for the pilot models and to present it to the next minister's meeting to the Copenhagen process.

The validation of formal and informal competence is an object of the Copenhagen explanation, which plans to compile a set of common principles to be applied in the member states. In the consultations, three areas of the formal education system were discussed: learning in the workplace; learning in the social sphere; honorary activities. Moreover, the expert's group has analyzed several models carried out in the member states, including the view of the achievement of individual access possibilities for education and employment, the quality and transparency of the validation principles and the reliability and acceptance of the validation for the target groups. On this basis, principles for the validation process were suggested.

In the course of the fusion of Europe, increasing numbers of clearly European qualification profiles and occupational profiles are developed in internationally oriented organizations. Examples for this are the automobile and aviation industries, as well as the IT area. For the harmonization of this, up to now independent of other developed processes of economy and policy, a European cooperation platform and platform of information is necessary. This also gives a stronger weight to the development of the respective national vocational training systems. Moreover the advisory committee for vocational training of the EU takes on a new role. The first task is to stock-take and gain an overview of all European branch arrangements.



Helsinki Communique

An assessment of the process and an examination of its strategies and priorities took place at the second follow-up meeting in Helsinki on 5th December 2006.

The process is judged successful and necessary. Now - four years after Copenhagen - it is a matter of concentrating upon continuing the works, plus completing and practical conversion of the initiatives that have already been started. Different initiatives and instruments should be tied together with each other and mutually support themselves, and one should develop the vocational training on all steps - as an essential component of lifelong learning and in narrow connection with the general education.

The measures initiated by this process are voluntary and are developed within the scope of a bottom-up cooperation. A special main focus is the integration of the social partners and sector organizations in all working phases, and the feedback about national experiences, as a contribution to the work at European level.

Reforms need time - coherent action necessary

The priorities of Copenhagen and Maastricht are still valid. However, the process should be strengthened and the work should be aimed on the following main areas:

1. Image, value and attraction of the vocational training: In this connection a stronger weight should be laid on "Good Governance" of vocational training systems and suppliers.
2. Other developments, test and more integrated use of European instruments: Purpose should be to have the agreed instruments ready by 2010 .
3. A more systematic approach to the strengthening of mutual learning: for this purpose special attention to the improvement of the target area, the comparability and dependability of the vocational training statistics should be laid up to 2008.
4. Active integration of all actors in the work, converting to the Copenhagen process.



The next Follow up-minister's meeting takes place in 2008. The meeting serves to evaluate progress, to strengthen vocational training priorities and strategies within the scope of the working program "universal and professional education in 2010" and for the adjustment of the process after 2010.

European qualification frame

The core of the European qualification frame (EQF) forms a sentence of 8 authoritative levels with which "learning results" are described - i.e. what Learning / a learner knows, understands and is in the position to do - no matter, in which system a certain qualification was acquired. The authoritative levels for EQF are a deviation away from the traditional beginning, in which the learning input stands in the foreground (duration of a learning experience, kind of the equipment). The movement of the main focus on the learning results makes it lighter,

- to tune the requirements for the job market (knowledge, abilities and competence) and the training purposes together,
- to validate informal learning,
- and to transfer qualifications in different countries.

Because the EQF is an instrument for the support of the lifelong learning, it encloses general education and adult's education just like professional education and continuing education, as well as higher education. Eight levels cover all qualifications, from the general and professional duty graduation up to qualifications that are learnt on the highest step of academic or professional education and continuing education.

The draft of the recommendation intends that the member states couple their national qualification systems (by 2009) into the EQF. Individuals and employers will be able to use the EQF as an authoritative instrument to compare the qualification levels of different countries with each other. The EQF will be a kind of translation help, with which the relations between qualifications and different systems can be shown more clearly.



Criticism of the employers' association in Germany

The authoritative levels and descriptors

Does the structure described by eight authoritative levels of the EQF reflect the complexity of the lifelong learning in Europe?

The EQF defines competence for defined authoritative levels. For this, it may not be thought exclusively in terms of national education systems. There must be a differentiated and systematic order of the authoritative levels. It must orientate itself by the development of competence, not by formal ends. The authoritative levels must be separated clearly from each other and permit an unequivocal allocation of learning results.

The EQF should be a qualification frame, which is based on lifelong learning. This must be reflected on the one hand in the number of the authoritative levels as well as - analogously of an educational biography - in an adequate distribution of the authoritative levels. An eight-step system is useful, but the design of the single steps is questionable.

In the present suggestion of the EU committee, four steps are for a base qualification, and four steps for the whole employment or continuing education. Under this claim must be taken into account lifelong learning and occupational experience by the fact, that the 8. (or highest) authoritative level can be reached not only by formal qualifications in academic and professional education, but also with complementary occupational experience. In principle every level about different educations must be accessible, i.e. there may be no "automatic reservation" from level steps for the university education.

Do the descriptors describe the learning results and the differences between different levels in adequate way for the single levels?

To describe learning results in an adequate way, a differentiated grid is required. The descriptors of the EQF must procure so that they are useable clearly (and are separable at the same time expressively), of each other and measurable. At the same time they must be open enough to admit national specifications.

On the above point he EU committee is moving in the right direction. With the intended descriptors the learning results typical for an authoritative



level should be described. Nevertheless, the present suggestion of the EU committee shows a weakness with the regulation of the authoritative levels: These are not separated clearly from each other, and the single authoritative levels enclose a different range of competence.

Hence, the employers' association in Germany suggests, in addition to the descriptors of the EU committee which serve for the description of the learning results, to complement four qualitative descriptors which construct the authoritative levels systematically and differently. If the authoritative levels of a respective qualification frame are created once, these four descriptors have fulfilled the function. Four descriptors mark action situations for which a certain competence is necessary.

The concerns are:

- o Degree of complexity: With it the number of possible variables of an action situation.
- o Degree of insecurity: With it the number of variables of an action situation which are not evident for the learner from the start
- o Degree of networking: With it the linking of the variables of an action situation.
- o Degree of dynamism: With it the quickness with which the action situation changes.

The more complicated, and non transparent, the more linked up and the more dynamic the action situations are, the higher is the requirement degree of an action situation and consequently the accompanying authoritative level.

The descriptors intended by the EU committee to describe the learning results already offers a good basis for discussion. Nevertheless, they must be developed to remove the following disadvantages of the draft:

The division carried out nowadays in the EU Commission's suggestion of competence in knowledge, skills and personal and technical competence is an artificial-theoretical separation (and none clearly separable). It puts to itself the question as for example the skill "a row of specialist skills for the execution of tasks use and personal interpretation and by choice and adaptation of methods, to tools and materials demonstrate" from the learning competence "independently learn" can be separated (step 3).



The descriptors are difficult to measure in terms of objective, generally understandable criteria or uniform procedures (e.g., independence, social, ethical or communication competence). Moreover, the appraisal is based on a subjective and selective perception without unambiguously separable steps.

To remove these disadvantages of the draft, the following steps are necessary:

1. Advance or supplement the descriptors for "knowledge" and "skills" around the competence concept.
2. Introduction of quantitative descriptors, i.e. achievement points system

ad 1: It is not logical to apply the competence concept only with the descriptor "of personal and technical competence" and to measure competence. Hence, it should be discussed and be tested as knowledge that can be developed in the direction of cognitive competence and skills in the direction of functional competence.

ad 2: To the description of the learning results the fifth, quantitative descriptor should be introduced which expresses the average learning expenditure which is necessary to the formation of the competence (this corresponds to the "Workload thought" from the university area). With it an achievement points system is integrated into the EQF model as a steady component. Under the objective of the movement between all educational areas the calculation of the achievement points ECVET should occur after the same modalities as in the university area (ECTS system). The following principles should be included:

All learning times are to be included: Presence phases, E-Learning, study work, self-directed learning, exam times, etc.

Criticism of vocational training researchers from Bremen

The Bremen vocational training researchers view the Copenhagen process very skeptically. Copenhagen is not Bologna: While the European harmonization of colleges and universities progresses in the so-called Bologna process dynamically and already accepts steady contours, the harmonization of the professional education - the so-called Copenhagen process - presents itself totally differently. The European Union, with its



attempt to create a European vocational training space with the help of a European qualification frame, is increasingly becoming a dead end. And this is the finding of the vocational training researchers of the Institute of Technology and Education (ITB) of the University of Bremen.

All attempts up to now have failed to come to an agreement about a classification and systematization of qualifications. If one introduces such grids, nevertheless, they conclude that the consequences are rather counterproductive.

The Bremen educational researchers suggest putting the European vocational training on the base of European core occupations. The vocational training expert professor Felix Rauner states that: "For the development of a European vocational training architecture - based on the examples of good and best vocational training practice in Europe - there is no alternative. A European economic area and a European job market depend on a strengthening of the European dimension of professional education." In addition, the ITB scientists plead to include the results of a long-standing tradition of European vocational training research in a stronger way in the present vocational training policy.

Criticism of the suggestions of the EU committee for a European vocational training space

The times in which the professional education aimed at regional job markets are over. The European economic interweaving requires national organization and qualification forms, the international standards are enough. The European committee has developed as a contribution to the creation of a European vocational training space a qualification frame and has asked to discuss this broadly. The ITB of the university of Bremen sees no suitable basis for a European vocational training in the suggested qualification frame with eight levels. "The linear qualification with its eight steps of hierarchy corresponds neither to the reality of the level of qualifications and decisive hierarchy of modern enterprises, nor to the structures of the occupation system", criticizes professor Felix Rauner. The ITB holds against it a clear qualification frames with three steps.

The ITB scientists as a determining definition criterion observe the degree of occupational ability in the qualification levels. They distinguish the steps of people without formal training, trainees with medium certificates



and highly qualified (with master certificate) professionals. Thus the different educational backgrounds can be put in the eyes of the Bremen vocational training experts in Europe on a common platform: Since in many European countries vocational training is only an add-on to high school or university learning, and the work practical competence (action competence) occurs only through a practical phase. This is different with the dual form of vocational training, in which theoretical and practical learning are integrated. In this manner dual vocational training ways lead immediately to the occupational ability. A step to the quick creation of a European vocational training space permits the three-stage ITB model to all EU countries.

The Rauner Model

