

Workshop Harmonisation of qualification requirements

A key problem in the new offshore wind energy sector, according to [1a] is the lack of comparability and acceptance of national standards and qualifications in education and training. The size of the volume of business alone inevitably means that the offshore industry must be based on cooperation between companies in Europe. However, doubts regarding compatibility arise with the certification of human resource qualities and this is in particular the case for vocational qualifications. At higher education levels, the so-called Bologna Process in the EU has been initiated. The European Credit Transfer System makes Bachelor and Master degrees from every college and university in the EU comparable and of the same value. The process involves modularising a study. Each module is allocated so-called credit points. A course of study is completed when a certain number of such points is accumulated.

Vocational training however is defined nationally in individual countries, but the application of vocational qualifications is international in the European single market: could a German electrician work on an English offshore platform? For instance, a Danish company in the field of assembly and logistics reported that the requirements for a crane driver are very different in the various European countries. In one country a one day course is sufficient, while in other countries a four-week training course is required. It is clear that to enhance cross-border cooperation of European countries, work must be compatible in terms of its qualifications. An attempt to tackle the problem with the so-called Euro Pass has already been made in various European countries. The objective is to make vocational qualifications obtained in different countries comparable so that crane driver from one country can be employed across the entire European labour market without any practical or administrative problems.

It will be a major challenge for both the competence centres and networks of the wind energy industry to raise awareness of the pressing need for standardisation in terms of qualifications and certification to make growth on the European market as smooth as possible.

POWER WP.3 took the initiative to organise the workshop Harmonisation of Training for the Offshore Wind Energy Industry on 26th of April 2007 at the Wind Training Centre in Bremen. The workshop attracted approx. 40 participants from Germany, the UK, The Netherlands and Denmark and both from educational institutes and from industry.

The workshop dealt initially with the Status Quo: existing international training, current regulations and certificates and requirements for the offshore wind energy industry.

The Counsellor of State Dr. Birgit Weihrauch welcomed the participants and this was followed by the following presentations:

Prof. Dr. Felix Rauner (ITB Bremen, GE): Towards a European VET Architecture: Dual Study Programmes for Technicians;

Ian Fisher (Northumberland College, UK): Harmonisation of Training for the Offshore Wind Energy Industry in Great Britain, a description of vocational training courses for the installation, service and maintenance of renewable energy technology (biomass and wind) given by the Northumberland Renewable Energy Group;

Dr. Sören Peters (Westacademy, Esbjerg, DK): Harmonisation of Training for the Offshore Wind Energy Industry in Denmark, description of courses offered by the academy in Technical Manager Offshore and Technical Offshore Operation;

Prof. Gerard van Bussel (University Delft, NL): Harmonisation of Academic Training for the Offshore Wind Energy Industry in the Netherlands;

Prof. Henry Seifert (Hochschule Bremerhaven, GE): Improvement and Harmonisation of education in the Power Region, a brief historical overview of the usage of wind energy and a description of the Hochschule

Bremerhaven contributions to the wind energy education with several off- and onshore relevant courses
 Thomas Reincke (GAUSS, Bremen, GE): Basic Safety Training for Personnel in Offshore Windfarms,

The participants of the workshop broke up into working groups on academic education, vocational training and vocational marine safety training, followed by a final discussion and conclusion round.

Regarding vocational basic safety training:

"Learning by doing" as reality is the best teacher, for instance the GAUSS training course involves 10teaching, 10showing how what is done and 80practice.

Scotland does not accept training courses in which participants do not take a final examination to prove their trained abilities

One solution to mutual acceptance and recognition of basic safety training courses could be to be a member of the IASST (International Association for Safety Survival Training), a non-governmental, self-regulating body.

The workshop provided intensive exchange of information on national education and vocational training and resulted in the following conclusions:

harmonisation on the level of educational institutes can best be achieved by executing joint international projects and examples and thus laying ground for mutual acceptance;

also, it is recommended to organise a more intensive exchange of teaching staff between institutes of different EU countries, thus promoting mutual understanding and a convergence in education.

Please see documents section for further information: WP3_2a, WP3_2b and WP3_2c for respectively PR material, Final Report and Summary of presentations. An overview of the legal framework in connection to harmonisation of in particular vocational training is given in WP3_2d.

Following the workshop, an initiative has been taken between UK, Danish and German educational institutes to set-up such a joint vocational training.

The proposed training is a two-year programme, in which theoretical learning is combined with practical learning in the energy industry. The advantage of this dual training is that systematic work experience is integrated into theoretical learning. For industry this offers the advantage that technicians are already trained for the special requirements without long internal training periods.

The proposed model connects the dual basic training with a technical college training integrated into a bachelor degree. Since the training of the field mechatronics requires at least O- Levels, the transition to the technical college is not a problem.

Graduates with A - levels could use directly the advantages of a dual study programme. In the context of the European comparability a Foundation Degree would be the exit award.