

AQUA-TNET3

Promoting innovation and a European dimension through Lifelong learning in the field of Aquaculture, Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management – Thematic Network

Grant agreement number: 518700-LLP-1-2011-1-UK-ERASMUS-ENV

Deliverable Number: D5A.2.2

Help guide to articulation between ECVET, EQF and NQF

Workpackage(s) concerned: WP5

Nature of deliverable (Product,)

Due date	Initial Submission date by M.Eleftheriou	2 nd reviewer XXX date	Date accepted by Management
M18	M 36	XXX	XXX

Dissemination level: XXX

PU Public	x
RE Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
CO Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

Indicate any document related to this deliverable (report – Annex 1)

SUMMARY

Objectives:

Creation of Help Package for the AQUATNET network on articulation between ECVET, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), based on results of AQUA-TNET survey on use of ECVET in tertiary education in the sector.

Rationale:

As the Lifelong Learning (Flexible Pathways) Workshop was postponed from M13 to a more suitable date in Year 3 of the project, development of a Help Package had to follow suit. In addition, the LLL survey was also slow to be completed and this had a knock-on effect on the completion of the Help Package. All these developments were extensively reported and commented on the correspondence with the Coordinating organisation.

Results:

The results of the inevitable delay in the completion of this deliverable are shown in the Help Package itself (Annex 1). The LLL Workshop[was held during the Year 3 Annual Event in Malta (Deliverable 5A1.3). A full account of how to prepare for the articulation between ECVET, the EQF and NQFs was given by one of the prime movers in this area, the Government of Malta and its establishment of the Malta Qualifications Authority to carry out just this task. The complexity and difficulties of the task as carried out by the Malta Qualifications Authority demonstrated the impossibility of any single educational establishment being able to do likewise.

A further reason for the unfeasibility of a Help Package was the publication of the)Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) dated 4th July 20. The Report highlighted many inadequacies in the implementation of ECVET which are shown in Annex 1. It is quite clear that the findings of successive AQUA-TNET surveys in this area were remarkably prescient in their findings, rendering the development of the proposed Help Package inappropriate and premature at this juncture.

Teams involved

AMC Ltd (Margaret Eleftheriou)

Geographical areas covered: Not applicable

Annex 1

Help Package WP 5A.2.2 Flexible Learning Pathways: Help Package for the AQUATNET network on articulation between ECVET, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), based on results of AQUA-TNET survey on use of ECVET in tertiary education in the sector.

Background

The timing of this HELP package has been dependent on the way certain events and activities progressed within the network.

1. Because the Lifelong Learning Workshop, Deliverable 5A.1.3, was postponed from Month 13 to Month 33 as a result of the many changes to and evolution of the development of ECVET itself, it was agreed that it would be pointless to hold a workshop, intended to pass on definitive information about the ECVET process, while these changes were occurring to the process itself.
2. The Help package was to be based on the results of the WP5A survey on the use of ECVET in tertiary education in the sector. A previously prepared questionnaire was finally agreed only at the coregroup meeting in Istanbul in March 2013. Its rather slender responses were analysed and the draft results published in June 2013. Further efforts were made to elicit more responses at the coregroup meeting in Frankfurt in September 2013, and the final results were presented at the Annual Event in Malta in June 2014.
3. Though AQUA-TNET partners were sent all the latest information concerning the development of ECVET, and in some cases (the Learning Agreement, the Memorandum of Understanding) being given prototypes of these documents before they were made available to the public on the ECVET website, the subgroup leader found it hard to convince partners of the importance of the initiative.

Relevant information concerning the provision of Flexible Learning Pathways: the articulation between ECVET, the EQF and NQFs

Accordingly, the subgroup invited an expert in the articulation between National Qualifications Frameworks and the European Qualification Framework, to give the keynote address at the 2014 Annual Event. The presentation of the case of Malta, which had referenced the Malta Qualification Framework (MQF) with the EQF was very relevant to the Help package, as Malta had indeed carried out this very task.

A summary of the many and various necessary stages in this process is given in Annex 1 of WP5A Deliverable 5A. 1.3. It is not proposed to reiterate all the information concerning the various stages in the process undertaken by Malta, but rather to provide links so that interested parties can use the much more detailed information contained therein.

1. Referencing of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Qualifications Framework of the European

Higher Education Area (QF/EHEA) <http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/content/home-documents-and-publications-mqc-publications-referencing-report/5963783/>

2. Manual for the Conversion of qualifications into the ECVET system
http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/uploads/filebrowser/ECVET%20Conversion%20manual_1.pdf
Malta has 5 of the 8 partners (Partners 1,5,6,7 & 8).

Conclusions

It is clear that the steps needed to carry out a valid and reliable articulation process between ECVET, the EQF and NQFs are beyond the capacity of educational organisations acting on their own initiative. Malta, however small as a country (population around 400.000) is nevertheless a Member State of the EU and as such has the authority and the resources to carry out such an undertaking. It is very clear that large resources of staffing and funding are required, along with the political will to engage in such an undertaking. None of these attributes are within the scope of the AQUA-TNET members.

A further argument against the provision of a valid and reliable articulation process between ECVET, the EQF and NQFs can be found in the very recently published (Sept. 14 2014) Evaluation Report on the Implementation of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) dated 4th July 2014 but published on the EACEA website on September 14 2014. Some excerpts are posted here for the benefit of AQUA-TNET members.

*“During the evaluation period of 2009-2013 the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) had **limited progress at the national level**. While it remained pertinent to the changing EU policy objectives in the field of vocational education and training (VET), **it was not considered by all EU Member States to be equally useful**, with commitment to it depending largely on the their VET and credit systems. **Countries with already functioning credit systems and those with VET systems dominated by workplace-based training saw less added value in ECVET than those without a credit system or units/modules and/or those predominantly school-based.**”*

This is entirely in accordance with the results of both AQUA-TNET surveys and is strikingly described in the different responses of both Northern, Central and Southern European organisations as shown in Deliverable 5A. 1.3 (Seixas' presentation)

*“**The most valuable elements of ECVET as perceived by stakeholders were the (units of) learning outcomes and the ECVET documents (Memoranda of Understanding and Learning Agreements)**, but there was no particular relevance or demand for credit points due to their unclear technical specifications. There is considerable potential and support for greater integration of these elements of ECVET with other EU tools in the context of the European Area of Skills and Qualifications.”*

These are the elements that were found and disseminated to AQUA-TNET members even before their official publication on the ECVET website.

“ECVET had a comparatively complex and unclear (to its stakeholders) governance, communication and support structure, although its separate bodies performed their respective functions well. The monitoring of national level progress and ECVET pilot projects was performed strongly, but the Leonardo da Vinci transfer of innovation and mobility projects with ECVET element were not sufficiently followed up.”

“The ECVET projects strongly increased the quality of mobility and developed awareness and understanding of learning outcomes approach, but were unable to increase the political commitment at the national level, or to bring stronger permeability of any kind between VET and higher education.”

This is the main reason why an AQUA-TNET Help document at this stage is and may remain, premature.

“ECVET and ESCO shared basic terminological principles by focusing on knowledge, skills and competences. The intention of ESCO was to describe relevant skills, competences and qualifications for a variety of occupations in a standardised language, which could contribute to a common language in organising mobility experiences with an ECVET element, but at the moment ESCO is at too early a stage of development to have had any significant impact.”

AQUA-TNET members have been informed of the existence and the potential significance of the ESCO initiative from the very beginning, as AQUATT serves on its Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Reference Group (Deliverable 5A.1.3, Eleftheriou presentation).

“ECVET and ECTS had weak compatibility in terms of their approach towards credit / credit points, but the learning outcomes approach could facilitate a two-way conversion between the systems. There were also indications that keeping separate tools was a viable option, as the workload element was much more important in higher education due to the stronger need to structure the curricula and schedules of lecturers and students, and meet student expectations in terms of workload offered by university courses.”

An aspect that has important implications for AQUA-TNET members.

“The discussions on ECVET in the framework of validation of non-formal and informal learning were scarce and there were very few examples where ECVET was already being used for this purpose. Learning outcomes were considered to be the major relevant element of ECVET for validation of prior learning, whereas the ECVET documents and credit points were theoretically tied to the formal context of learning. ECVET also led to better structuring of VET, making it more favourable for taking into account learning outcomes gained outside the formal environment.”

The above excerpts show very clearly why the time is not yet ripe for the creation of a Help Document concerned with the provision of a valid and reliable articulation process between ECVET, the EQF and NQFs.

M.Eleftheriou

S.Seixas