Exploiting the TIPTOE plAtforM by transferring ECVET and EQF semAntic tools in a Multi-sectoral perspective

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SUMMARISING REPORT

ADAPTATION MEETING
Brussels, 12th of July, 2012
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Europe is still undergoing an economic crisis which highlights the need to enhance young peoples’ qualification level by improving their competences as well as to continue the path functional to achieve a common space for education launched by the Lisbon Process and strengthened by the ET2020. The project seeks to address two types of needs. The project identifies specific objectives and a cross aim which are in line with the above needs. The specific objectives aim at enabling the young people to receive a training which comes through the local barriers, for example a virtual, geographical and sectoral mobility; but they will also allow to develop a real mutual trust among the workers/operators of the different contexts.

TAMTAM is not only an acronym, but it is also synonymous with a wider distribution of new qualifications and the effective use of an interesting platform. The project TAMTAM is aimed at disseminating the project results of the TIPTOE project. In TIPTOE the EQF and ECVET principles are tested in the context of the trade sector. In TAMTAM the results were distributed: from trade to ICT, fashion/textiles, mechanics/mechatronics and energy efficiency/green building, from the Netherlands to Italy, Austria, France, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom. Therefore, TAMTAM adapts, transfers and valorises the platform and the methodologies developed in TIPTOE by representing EQF level 5 qualifications in the chosen sectors, applying ECVET tools, gathering innovation needs and verifying the flexibility of qualifications and their predispositions to updatability.

The project was initiated by Politecnico di Torino in Italy and is funded by Leonardo da Vinci, part of the Lifelong Learning program.
PROGRAMME

10.00  Arrival and registration of the participants

10.30  Welcome  
KCH International

10.35  Introduction TAMTAM  
Politecnico di Torino

11.00  Speakers  
Mr. Georg Spöttl (Universität Bremen)  
Mr. Rolf Kristiansen (EUROMASC Ltd)

12.30  Lunch

13.30  Speakers  
Mrs. Pauline van den Bosch (EVTA)  
Mr. Antonio Mocci (external evaluator TIPTOE)

14.30  Current situation and achievements of TAMTAM  
- Transfer of the geographical point of view and the multi-sectoral perspective (Work Package 2 methodological adaptation)  
  KCH International  
- Demo of the functionalities of the semantic-based software (Work Package 3 technological adaptation)  
  Politecnico di Torino

16.00  Coffee break

16.15  Workshop “Transferring innovation”  
How to design a qualification?

17.00  Open discussion  
Moderator: Mr. Pasqualino Mare (ETF)

17.30  Recommendation and closing words  
KCH International
### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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MINUTES

Welcome

Rob van Wezel, KCH International, as the promoter of the adaptation meeting welcomes all participants and introduces the project coordinator of the project TAMTAM Fabrizio Lamberti from Politecnico di Torino.

Introduction of TAMTAM

Fabrizio Lamberti illustrates that the TAMTAM project is about implementing EQF and ECVET principles according to the previous project TIPTOE. TAMTAM started in October 2011 and will last for 2 years. The project is following up the results of TIPTOE. In TIPTOE also a European conference was organised in Brussels where the results were presented. The consortium of the TAMTAM project consists of core and associated partners of different representative organisations. The project website of TAMTAM www.tamtam.polito.it contains general information about the project and has a reserved area with also access to the adapted platform. TAMTAM mainly operates a sectoral and geographic transfer to different countries and more sectors. The methodology and platform of TIPTOE will be transferred as well. By mixing information sources and the profiles of the labour and education world with transnational profiles TAMTAM aims to transfer knowledge in the changing countries and new sectors.

In his presentation, Fabrizio Lamberti also stated some tools that could be practical obstacles: different CVs, etc. which could limit mobility/LLL space. The approach of TAMTAM is to overcome the information asymmetries and heterogeneity issues, which are

- due to different interpretations of EQF and ECVET concepts
- but also related to more practical aspects, i.e., to content or language.

Therefore, it is important to create a common vocabulary with keywords to establish the relation among them. Politecnico di Torino adapted the TIPTOE platform and created a new and softer platform to support the comparison of educational and occupational profiles and to test the flexibility of new standards with respect to innovation needs.
Qualifications Frameworks in VET – Status, Implications, Risks?
Georg Spöttl (ITB, University of Bremen)

A lot of different classification systems exist in different countries. In Europe we concentrate on the qualification framework (EQF), established in 2008. This is a driver for many institutions and programmes. In the institute ITB of the University of Bremen 10 persons are working on this area.

But why frameworks?
There are many risks in these frameworks and you should not be afraid of these differences, but use them in order to make a comparison of qualifications possible. The most important step that was made since the starting discussions about frameworks is the parameters of learning outcomes. Already in the 60/70’s this topic was discussed, the outcome-oriented curricula.

Informal and non-formal learning is still an issue in EQF and learning outcomes could facilitate this learning in countries who do not have a systematised VET. The key questions are about the output and the input-orientation. Both approaches are relevant and should be considered. It is impossible to build competences without having a curriculum and to influence the learning process.

Sectoral frameworks are topics in a lot of projects. How are they different to the national frameworks? Looking at the three pillars of the EQF (KSC) and the German Qualification Framework (GQF) you see that in Germany used Knowledge, Skills, Social Competences and Autonomy. This gives an overview of the approached in different countries which concludes that descriptors of the different pillars and the different levels are defined differently. So maybe we created a big mess on the national and sectoral levels? But also another discussion comes up, that because of the differences people start to think whether national frameworks are necessary and maybe having a European one is sufficient.

Advantages of sectoral frameworks and on what the approach relies is the absence of transfer problems. But this means sectors need have an authorised role and should be organised. Sectoral frameworks are less abstract than the European frameworks. EQF level 5 has a very important position, it is the short cycle, the level for the highly qualified worker or associated bachelor. This means VET should not end at level 5 and the academic should only start on level 6, because level 6 is not only academic anymore.
Permeability is the key word in the process of qualification frameworks. Learning outcomes being recognized across different strands of learning, training, life experiences and locations. Therefore prerequisites are necessary for permeability, such as mutual trust, transparency, etc. Also the definition of currencies is an important issue, what kind of currency are we using when exchanging between systems? Points are not content specific and you never know what kind of learning is under the ‘points’. For currency we should use the learning outcomes descriptions. This is useful for the eliminating barriers, assessing and establishing parity estimation is easily done, we can construct matrixes of qualification and the implementation in the work place is ensured.

Should learning outcomes be described in a holistic or partial description?
The three pillar approach in describing learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competences is too theoretical. An alternative description is the ‘work place oriented’ approach on describing learning outcomes. There, we have the competence on the top, that is the performance competence.

Describing a qualification, you break this qualification down in smaller units, the unit is the ability to perform. You can describe on a theoretical basis the elements of that, but that is kind of a ‘desk research’ activity and is not the operational handling for a skilled worker.

For examples have a look at the projects:

**SME Master and Learning Outcomes**

**The PERMEVET approach**

**A WEB based workflow with Skillsbank**
ECVET and EQF... that’s why!
Pauline van den Bosch (EVTA)

The European Vocational Training Association has the main activities on training, innovation, entrepreneurship and employment and participates in projects about the implementation of ECVET. EVTA is a network on comprising relevant actors in VET.

Differences in EQF-levels are differences in complexity. In daily practice for certain profession it is not a horizontal approach. In TIPTOE the ruler describes for specific functions the different skills/knowledge/competences. Companies are aware of the learning outcomes approach and that makes it obvious that they have consequences for assessments/training etc.

The three European tools EQF – EQAVET - ECVET are significantly related to each other and it is important to implement all of them to really ensure quality.

The consequences of an LO-based approach is the right balance between an “holistic approach” and a detailed description of learning outcomes. The point of ECVET is the transparency of qualifications.

CEDEFOP published recently a report on the ‘necessary conditions for ECVET implementation’ (Isabelle le Mouillour). Observations on the implementation of ECVET so far are that ECVET is used, but not implemented and that the main motivation is on mobility. Educational systems can not be changed in the pilot projects, but if ECVET wants to be fully operational, effective and a natural process, it has to be embedded in national qualification systems.
From TIPTOE to TAMTAM

Antonio Mocci (external evaluator of TIPTOE)

The project TIPTOE was evaluated by Antonio Mocci, who operated as an independent expert in the evaluation process of the project. TIPTOE finished in 2009. At the very heart of the TIPTOE project was the challenge of interpretation and application of EQF and ECVET principles within the trade sector.

Through the analysis of the massive results produced by partners it is possible to define TIPTOE’s “heritage” for the EU and partner countries’ VET systems:
1. partners experimented a complex methodology for involving key actors whose opinion must be cared for in implementing EQF.
2. partners elaborated an original mix of negotiating actions, research, scientific mapping and communication.

3. the tested common profile EQF referenced can be considered an industry driven qualification.
4. partners acquired an experience based know how on how to describe competence profiles in a way that referencing with EQF can be done in an easier and more reliable manner.
5. partners shared terminology on the referencing process and on mapping competences in a way that makes them a reference network in the EQF implementation.

The most important results of TIPTOE is the ‘ruler’, a communication or referencing tool for the labour market and the education field, in national and international contexts and the semantic platform.
Current situation and achievements of TAMTAM

Work package 2: Methodological adaptation
Elena Hage (KCH International)

KCH International is the work package leader of WP 2: methodological adaptation. This work package focusses on the transfer of the geographical point of view and the multi-sectoral perspective and lays the foundation for the actions that will follow in the project. The work package is mainly about dealing with the qualifications who are going to be inserted in the adapted platform.

The result of the work package is a guidebook with information about the educational systems of the 9 participating countries, the position of EQF-level 5 qualifications and the application of ECVET in terms of allocating ECVET-points and describing learning outcomes.

The most interesting outcome is that the position of the EQF-level 5 in the participating countries in the project is different. In some countries it is on VET and in some it is HE, or even positioned in both systems. This has to be considered for the project process.

The template to describe a qualification in TAMTAM is an adapted version of the TIPTOE template, describing a unit in competence, skills and knowledge and is dealing with the position of the EQF-level 5 and both approaches, input and output oriented.
**Work package 3: Technological adaptation**

*Fabrizio Lamberti (Politecnico di Torino)*

Politecnico di Torino as project coordinator is responsible for work package 3: technological adaptation. In this work package a semantic-based software is developed. Fabrizio Lamberti presented a demo of the functionalities of this software.

The adapted platform, based on the semantic-based software offers certain services:

- To support the collection of qualifications
- Enhanced algorithms for computing the gap between qualifications and their elements
- To support the comparison of educational and occupational profiles
- To test the flexibility of the new standards with respect to innovation needs
- Collaborative functionalities for letting users
- Find commonalities and differences among qualifications
- Work on the creation of European qualifications (per sector)
- Test various strategies for aggregating learning outcomes and for allocating ECVET/ECTS points

To be able to compare qualification there is a need for a common language. LO are going to be semantically annotated (word net). The standard language is English, but every LO can be translated into the national language.
Workshop “Transferring innovation”
How to design a qualification?

To put the theory in practice the participants are divided into 3 groups for the workshop. Together they have to experience how to describe and assign Competences, Skills and Knowledge to a qualification, experience the EQF level 5 description and experience how Competences, Skills and Knowledge should be formulated. The qualification was an European reference profile of the ‘fashion designer’ developed in a previous LdV project.

The participants experienced the workshop as challenging, but useful. Putting theory in practice is very difficult tasks, especially when different perspectives are brought together to discuss.

The participants got stuck in assigning the LO, deciding whether it is a competence or a skill and tried to find a solution in the definition, which was not useful. Every country has a different definition of competences though. Furthermore it is difficult to assign LO with that less information. Especially when you have competences and skills. Therefore, the groups had in-between LOs, both skill and competence.
Open discussion
Pasqualino Mare (ETF)

The European Training Foundation (ETF) is an agency of the European Union, acting outside Europe, with the aim to make vocational education and training in the partner countries a driver for lifelong learning and to help transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital. Pasqualino Mare is also involved in the ESCO. The ESCO (European Skills, Competences and Occupations taxonomy) is bringing actors in education and labour market closer together for the creation of a EU labour and education market with the impact of job seekers, employers and VET. Basis are the three pillars (occupations, skills/competences and qualification) to facilitate mobility and mobility partnership and to organize agreements with other countries.

Therefore, one of the key points is also having common profiles in order to have a common vocabulary regarding the different languages.

The TAMTAM project focuses a lot on the technical dimension. The question raises how it is going to be applied in the national contexts. Do you also have a strategy on how to connect these results to the concept of EQF? And of course how is the relation to the labour market, also considering migration.

Fabrizio Lambertti: The software/platform will be finalised by testing with the end-users in the countries to ensure the applicability and usability in the different contexts. The software is also used in another project, called MATCH, which is focusing on migrants. Matching the CV (Europass) with job offers. With respect to EQF we are planning on disseminating and exploiting the platform and the project during the project duration.

Anne Potters: Regarding the input on the project and the way of implementing ECVET, the question is ‘what are you doing different than the other European projects’. As a national agency every project coordinator assumes that the project is the best idea.

Wilfried Boomgaerts: The TIPTOE project is an interesting start to proceed with TAMTAM, because you have a common profile that comes back in every European country. So the national profiles can make use of the common profiles. This is an inspiration.

Terry Hook: I have experiences as a project leader from the ICT perspective. My observations of this very successful project and the reason of this success was the hunger of the participants wanted more understanding about European qualification structure. It is
important not to present concept ideas, but have pragmatic guidance so that the, in this case, the ICT industry can benefit from the competences of the different countries. In terms of significant benefit the important thing is to have something described pragmatic. You should have a starting point of understanding, to understand the sector in different countries.

Wilfried Boomgaerts: Coming back to ESCO, indeed the weakness or the strength of ESCO will be the representativeness of the referencing group. The referencing group will link the KSC to occupations. As long as these people are representing the sector, there will be some trust to deliver the exercise. If they are just experts making a desk research then there will be no trust. Another problem or challenge is that the European law is interfering with this exercise. There is a direct link from qualification to occupation and there is no attention on KSC laying behind this. So from the start, we have a little illusion that by using KSC we can find directly a bridge between these two world (occupation and education), but there are a lot of external factors interfering with that.

Pasqualino Mare: There are a lot of opportunities, but also limitations. But if you do not do the effort to see how it can be used, it will not be used at all. That is the message, also for all projects. It costs a lot of time to discover and develop common profiles, but it is a very good way to discuss qualifications and make it also understandable for each other. This is the lessons learnt. And of course it will take us a lot of effort.

Recommendation and closing words

Rob van Wezel

The adaptation meeting of the project TAMTAM was very fruitful, not only to the sense of the next project steps, but also in order to network and keep each other updated. As we have seen the theory and the technology should not limit the practice and end users should be taken into account. Thanks to all participants for their attendance and their contribution to this meeting.