



MyLK Project

D1.3 : Report on skills requirements with existing certification systems

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1. Introduction

The project team has discovered that there is in fact, at present, not much work directly concerned with correspondence between formal and informal certification. Some of the reasons for this are documented below. Therefore, this task takes on the aim of describing current approaches to the certification of skills, both formal and informal, and highlighting the few approaches that have some promise. The role of the MyLK “dashboard”, and other systems that may be needed, is indicated in general terms, towards providing an approach that gives the results not currently given by existing and past projects.

The MyLK project is destined to create a digital platform, initially, to trace digital training and personal development automatically, in the context of Life Long Learning. To make the tool worthwhile for the user, it should also be an IT tool that also can give information and/or answers what training, learning and development the user will need.

To be most effective in meeting this need, the system needs to gather as much information as practical, not being limited only to a fixed subset of possible learning contexts. To discuss the range of learning contexts, we need to agree a typology of learning, education or training. Various typologies exist, with the expected confusion between them. Some people distinguish “formal”, “non-formal” and “informal”, referring it either to “education” or to “learning”. For the MyLK project, the most important distinction is between “official” education or training, meaning learning episodes that are managed in some way by an official presence such as a learning institution or an employer, and “non official” learning, meaning learning that happens to an individual outside the scope of any planned provision for education or training.

Of course, within this typology there is a need to define what type of “learning episodes” the platform wants to trace and to be clear about the use of terms. However, subtle nuances of definitions can have Implications for how we decide to trace the content of that training, because every typology can be helpful and relevant, and maybe we have to choose a mix of both.

There is also the issue of development. We could envisage personal development in relation to the competences the user needs to have or needs to develop. Can this be done? What about the experience in and out of the world of work. How can we take these into account?

From both the formal and the informal perspectives, the conclusion is that practical solutions need an underpinning development of frameworks of learning outcomes – knowledge, skills, competence, and perhaps also attitudes – that are easily recognisable by learners and employers alike. Learning that has taken place informally needs to be assessed against these frameworks, and converted into corresponding formal certificates. But also, many more “micro credentials”, like the idea of open badges, need to be developed, both to stimulate the personal and vocational / professional development of learners, and also to provide easily recognised and reliable evidence to employers of the suitability of candidates in their recruitment processes.

There are many unanswered question remaining. How should informal learning be certified? How can such informal certification be presented, first, to employers, in the recruitment process, and second, to educational institutions, if they take the role of mapping informal learning into their more highly developed learning outcomes?



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Table of content

1. Introduction	1
Table of content.....	3
2. Current certification of official learning: knowledge, skills and competence	5
2.1 European Qualification Framework	5
2.2 European Higher Education Area (EHEA).....	6
2.3 European Vocational Education Area.....	7
2.4 Relevant documents within Europass (see annex).....	7
2.4.1 The Europass Certificate Supplement	7
2.4.2 The Europass Diploma Supplement	8
2.4.3 The Europass Mobility	8
2.5 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).....	8
2.6 The World of Work (EURES).....	9
2.7 Summary of relevance to MyLK	10
3. Approaches to certification of non-official learning and achievement.....	12
3.1 Recognizing experience at work	12
3.2 Professional status and grade.....	13
3.3 Open Badges.....	13
3.4 Reputation in the peer group.....	14
3.5 Official “Decorations”	15
3.6 Awards in Wikipedia.....	15
3.7 Achievements in games.....	16
3.8 Summary of relevance to MyLK	16
4. Past and present relevant projects and initiatives	17
4.1 “Learning is Earning 2026: Ledger”	17
4.2 European projects.....	18
TRAILER: Tagging, Recognition and Acknowledgement of Informal Learning ExpeRIences	18
KøDE-NQF ‘Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal competencies in the context of National Qualification Frameworks’	19
PROVIDE	19
LEO qualiTC.....	19
Europortfolio.....	20
4.3 National projects and initiatives.....	20
Netherlands.....	20
Poland.....	21
UK.....	22
France.....	22
5. Issues in finding correspondence	23

6. Discussion.....	24
6.1 Future vision	24
7. Conclusions.....	26
7.1 Why we need to be concerned about “skills correspondence”	26
7.2 How to improve correspondence.....	27
Annexes	28
Europass	28
European Qualifications Framework (EQF).....	28
What is the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?.....	28
What Does the EQF Offer?	29
Which Qualifications the EQF Covers?.....	29
ECVET.....	29
ECVET: AN INSTRUMENT FOR MOBILITY AND RECOGNITION	29
ECVET for valorising mobility	30
ECVET for lifelong learning	30
ECVET for attractiveness of VET	30
ECVET IN BRIEF	30
EQAVET	31
REFERENCES.....	32
Articles, books.....	32

2. Current certification of official learning: knowledge, skills and competence

2.1 European Qualification Framework

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe, promoting workers' and learners' mobility between countries and facilitating their lifelong learning. The EQF aims to relate different countries' national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework. Individuals and employers will be able to use the EQF to better understand and compare the qualifications levels of different countries and different education and training systems. Since 2012, all new qualifications issued in Europe carry a reference to an appropriate EQF level

The EQF applies to all types of education, training and qualifications, from school education to academic, professional and vocational. This approach shifts the focus from the traditional system which emphasises 'learning inputs', such as the length of a learning experience, or type of institution. It also encourages lifelong learning by facilitating the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

This reflects a wider shift within which the EQF is acting as a catalyst for reforms: most Member States are now developing their own National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) based on learning outcomes. The EQF system has now been implemented and accepted in all European member states. All national qualifications should map onto a from level one to eight on the EQF scale.

At present, an enterprise in France may hesitate to recruit a job applicant from, say, Sweden, because it does not understand the level of the qualifications presented by the Swedish candidate. But once the EQF is fully implemented, a Swedish person's certificates will bear a reference to an EQF reference level. The French authorities will have already decided where their own national certificates in the field concerned lie, so the French enterprise would use the EQF reference to get a better idea of how the Swedish qualification compares to French qualifications.

At European level there also has been developed a policy strategy towards 2020 to connect the world of education more with the world of work concerning the learning outcomes needed by the world of work and developed by the world of education. There is also more and more focus, due to the dynamics of change in industry and technology, on what learning outcomes are needed for which industry and how we can forecast these. At European level the EU commission is studying how to connect the EURES data bank based on occupational profiles with the qualification frameworks from the member states. The gaps between the demand of

the labour market and the supply of graduates on the education sides are still too large and result in unemployment.

2.2 European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

A qualifications framework encompasses all the qualifications in a higher education system – or in an entire education system if the framework is developed for this purpose. It should show what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on the basis of a given qualification – that is, it shows the expected learning outcomes for a given qualification. It also shows how the various qualifications in the education or higher education system interact, that is how learners can move between qualifications. Qualifications frameworks therefore focus on outcomes more than on procedures, and several learning paths – including those of lifelong learning – may lead to a given qualification.

Qualifications frameworks and the ECTS system (credit point system for higher education) play an important role in developing degree systems as well as in developing study programs at higher education institutions. They also facilitate the recognition of qualifications¹, and they are important for those who make use of qualifications, in particular learners and employers.

In the European Higher Education Area, qualifications frameworks are found at two levels. An overarching framework² has been adopted for the EHEA in 2005; and by 2010, all member countries will develop national qualifications frameworks³ that are compatible with this overarching framework. In this sense, the overarching framework sets the parameters within which each country will develop its own national framework, and it is the national framework that most directly affects study programmes.

The Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process established the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area when they met in Bergen in 2005:

We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. We commit ourselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010, and to having started work on this by 2007.

¹ Recognition of Qualifications, The official [Bologna Process webpage](#), 2007-2010, accessed 8.6.2016

² The overarching [framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area](#), Bergen 2005, The official Bologna Process website, July 2007 - June 2010, accessed 8.6.2016

³ *ibidem*

2.3 European Vocational Education Area

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, often referred to as ECVET, is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and (where appropriate) accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving qualifications. Guided by a European-level Recommendation⁴ ECVET tools and methodology comprise a description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes, a transfer and accumulation process and series of complementary documents such as learning agreements, personal transcripts and user guides. ECVET is intended to facilitate the recognition of learning outcomes in accordance with national legislation, in the context of mobility, for the purpose of achieving a qualification. ECVET aims to support the mobility of European citizens, facilitating lifelong learning (formal, informal and non-formal learning) and providing greater transparency in terms of individual learning experiences, making it more attractive to move between different countries and different learning environments.

At a systems level, ECVET aims towards better compatibility between the different vocational education and training (VET) systems in place across Europe, and their qualifications.

From a geographical mobility perspective, ECVET aims at facilitating validation, recognition and accumulation of skills and knowledge acquired during a stay in another country, with a view to ensuring that such experiences contribute to the achievement of vocational qualifications.

2.4 Relevant documents within Europass (see annex)

Europass⁵ consists of “five documents to make your skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe”. Of these, two are specifically concerned with certification of official learning: the Diploma Supplement and the Certificate Supplement.

2.4.1 The Europass Certificate Supplement

The Europass Certificate Supplement⁶ (CS) is intended to describe “the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of vocational training certificates”. The idea is that different providers of vocational education and training across Europe can use a Certificate Supplement that is the same, translated into each native language. Though there will be many vocational courses leading to certificates, if they all work towards the same learning outcomes, they can all use the same Supplement. In this way, it is possible to promote mobility for workers across Europe.

⁴ Recommendation of The European Parliament and of The Council on the [establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training](#) (ECVET), The European Parliament and The Council of The European Union, 18.6.2005, accessed 27.06.2016

⁵ [Europass](#) - Opening doors to learning and working in Europe, CEDEFOP accessed 8.6.2016

⁶ For more see: [The Europass Certificate Supplement](#), accessed 8.6.2016

This may indeed lead to correspondence between the knowledge and skills acquired in different countries, but the CS provides no mechanism for ensuring the correspondence between the description of knowledge and skills and other descriptions from elsewhere, whether from other vocational areas, or academic education. There is not even any automatic method (beyond unreliable comparison of the actual wording) of determining the overlap of knowledge and skills between two certificates, let alone between a vocational certificate and a degree.

2.4.2 The Europass Diploma Supplement

The Europass Diploma Supplement⁷ (DS) is a “document describing the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees.” Some DSs may have a list of knowledge areas, skills, and competences, but examination of the examples shows that the only reliable part of a DS is a list of the component parts of the course (often called “modules”), often with a score or grade given to the individual for the assessment on that part of the course.

While this may give a general idea of the kinds of knowledge and skills acquired, it falls far short of any clear or machine-processable correspondence with, for example the requirements of an employer. Employers who recruit graduates need to find out from experience, deeper enquiry, or just guess how module results relate to skills that are directly relevant to their job openings.

2.4.3 The Europass Mobility

The Europass Mobility⁸ is intended “to record knowledge and skills acquired in another European country.” However, the record is often simply an informal description under headings similar to the Europass CV. There is even less possibility of mapping correspondences than in the two Supplements.

2.5 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of prior learning (RPL), prior learning assessment (PLA), or prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), describe processes – used by regulatory bodies, adult learning centres, career development practitioners, military organizations, human resource professionals, employers, training institutions, colleges and universities around the world – to evaluate skills and knowledge acquired outside the classroom for the purpose of recognizing competence against a given set of standards, competencies, or learning outcomes. RPL is practiced in many countries for a variety of purposes, for example an individual's standing in a profession, trades qualifications, academic achievement, recruitment, performance management, career and succession planning.

⁷ For more see: [The Europass Diploma Supplement](#), accessed 8.6.2016

⁸ For more see: [The Europass Mobility](#) webpage, accessed 8.6.2016

Methods of assessing prior learning are varied and include: evaluation of prior experience gained through volunteer work, previous paid or unpaid employment, or observation of actual workplace behavior. The essential element of RPL is that it is an assessment of evidence provided by an individual to support their claim for competence against a given set of standards or learning outcomes.

RPL is sometimes confused with Credit Transfer, assessments conducted in order to recognize advanced standing or for assigning academic credit. The essential difference between the two is that RPL considers evidence of competence that may be drawn from any aspect of an applicant's professional or personal life. Credit Transfer and advanced standing deal primarily with an evaluation of academic performance as it relates to a particular field of study and whether or not advanced standing may be granted towards the gaining of additional qualifications. Some academic institutions include Credit Transfer within their overall RPL umbrella, as the process still involves assessment of prior learning, regardless of how achieved.

RPL is known by many names in different countries. It is APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning), CCC (Crediting Current Competence), or APEL (Accrediting Prior Experiential Learning) in the UK⁹, RPL in Australia¹⁰ and in New Zealand¹¹, and PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) in Canada¹². The term RCC (Recognition of Current Competence) is also used. France has a more sophisticated system¹³ in which assessment is known as 'Bilan de competences', 'Bilan des competences approfondi', or 'validation des acquis de l'expérience (VAE)'. Regardless of the title, all are very similar, and treated as RPL for the purposes of this project.

2.6 The World of Work (EURES)

"EURES (EUROpean Employment Services) is an information exchange network operated by the public employment services in the European Union and the EFTA countries. Its aim is to facilitate the mobility of workers within the countries of the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). EURES was founded in 1993. Through its accession to the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons, Switzerland has been part of the EURES network since 1 June 2002. In Switzerland, the Labour Directorate at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO is responsible, together with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA and the cantons, for coordinating the EURES network.

⁹ See: [The Accreditation of Learning obtained through Experience \(APEL\)](#), Learning from Experience Trust, Birkbeck College, University of London, accessed 8.6.2016

¹⁰ See: Get Qualified Australia, [Recognition of Prior Learning](#), Australia, accessed 8.6.2016

¹¹ See: Careers New Zealand, [Recognition of Prior Learning](#) Course, New Zealand, accessed 8.6.2016

¹² See: [What is Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition \(PLAR\)/ Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\)?](#), Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA), Canada, accessed 8.6.2016

¹³ From: [Le portail de la validation des acquis de l'expérience](#), Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi, de la Formation professionnelle et du Dialogue social, accessed 8.6.2016

- EURES seeks to promote the mobility and equal access to the labour markets of the partner countries in Europe of all those workers wishing to cross borders.
- EURES wishes to increase the interregional, cross-border and European exchange of job vacancies and job recruitment.
- EURES aims to increase transparency and the exchange of information on the European labour markets. For this purpose, it provides the partner countries with basic information on living and working conditions in the various countries as well as on issues related to social security.”¹⁴

EURES is a cooperation network designed to facilitate the free movement of workers within the EU 28 countries plus Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The network is composed of: the European Coordination Office (ECO), the National Coordination Offices (NCOs), EURES Partners and the Associated EURES Partners. Partners in the network may include Public Employment Services (PES), Private employment services (PRES), trade unions, employers' organisations and other relevant actors in the labour market. The partners provide information, placement and recruitment services to employers and jobseekers whereas the European and National Coordination Offices oversee the organisation of the activities at European and national level respectively.

EURES could have an important role to play in providing specific information and facilitate placements for the benefit of employers and frontier workers in European cross-border regions. In practice EURES provides its services through the portal and through a human network of around 1000 EURES advisers that are in daily contact with jobseekers and employers across Europe.

EURES has significant potential, but appears not to be used as much as it could be.

2.7 Summary of relevance to MyLK

The EQF provides a framework for assigning a level to attainment across education, training and practice. While every sector may have learning outcomes in all three areas – knowledge, skills and competences – broadly speaking, formal education is strongest in the area of knowledge, vocational training is strongest in the area of skills, and professional practice is strongest in the area of competences.

¹⁴ From [Eures](#) - European Employment Services, accessed 8.6.2016

Certification of competences, distinct from knowledge and skills, within the official system is rare. There are instances, for example, of PhD degrees awarded for professional practice,¹⁵ but this is the exception rather than the rule.

There may only be a small overlap between the knowledge, skills and competences in these different areas of life. Beyond the overall levelling given by the EQF, current approaches to certification of official learning give us little or no idea about skills correspondence between these different areas.

As detailed above, the Diploma Supplement, the Certificate Supplement, and similar systems, by themselves, offer little help to any automatic system in mapping correspondences between knowledge, skills or other learning outcomes learned in different contexts. What is missing is, first, the ability to map these learning outcomes onto the knowledge, skills and competence required in employment, and second, some way of agreeing definitions of those employment requirements.

RPL gives a good approach to validating informal learning in a way corresponding to formal learning. However, this is limited to establishing correspondence between informal learning and the skills that are recognised in formal learning. To satisfy employers through RPL, a much more comprehensive set of learning outcomes will have to be assessed using RPL, and these will need to be defined in a way that is generally recognised and accepted.

Given all these considerations, it is not too difficult to envisage a dashboard system that makes these correspondences clearer to learners. In cases where the requirement of employment are not agreed, the task of a dashboard is almost impossible, trying to track a vast number of different kinds of overlapping requirements. If no mapping or correspondence can be made between what is learned from digital resources and what is learned from live experience, a dashboard cannot be directly relevant to employment. Yet there is a ray of hope, to be investigated in this MyLK project, that the existence of the dashboard technology can stimulate agencies to create frameworks of skills and competence that cover more of the real requirements for employment.

¹⁵ E.g. see Database of Professional Doctorate Programmes Worldwide, [FindA Professional Doctorate](#), University of Bath, accessed 8.6.2016

3. Approaches to certification of non-official learning and achievement

3.1 Recognizing experience at work

In the world of work and learning, experiences are important, and especially so in connection with the name of a company. For example somebody working as a chef in in the hotel industry can easily apply for a job in a hotel in another European country. The main question is always where have you worked, and if you can mention a well known hotel, automatically your experience will be recognised. It also matters with whom you have worked. If you have worked in that specific hotel and you can mention also a famous Chef you worked with, your experience will be more highly valued and recognised. This applies as much in vocational areas as for academics.

Perhaps what people are thinking is, if that person was employed by, and worked in, that establishment, and with that supervisor, their standards are known to be good, and therefore the person will be able to perform that work well. This is at least part of how the reputation of an establishment works. But, traditionally, it relies on several things that cannot easily be built in to an ICT system.

1. It relies on the reputation being known. If someone has worked in an establishment that has a good reputation in Ireland but not in Greece, it will not be specially helpful to mention that in Greece.
2. Often, the exact qualities of the work in the highly-rated establishment are not made explicit. Maybe a particular restaurant has a great reputation, but is vegetarian. A person employed in the kitchen there cannot be expected to have perfected the art of frying steaks!

A dashboard, like a portfolio, can work in two ways. One way is simply to collect information and relay it. No high technology is needed for this, and it can work with the examples above. Another, more challenging way is that it could help with automatic processing, whether of learning pathways or of routes into employment. For this to work, recognising experience at work needs to go beyond name reputation, and include the details of what exactly has been learned or mastered while having the work experience. If the work experience includes working with ICT tools, at least there is some possibility in principle to track what is being done well.

Validation of vocational competence is almost always through expert judgement and practical performance, not through technical means.

3.2 Professional status and grade

Many professional bodies or careers have structured grades and status.

In academic life, a doctorate is a common entry qualification into teaching at a university, but the abilities and qualities needed to obtain a doctorate are not commonly documented. It is the doctoral thesis, and the quality of the defence, that are assessed. In many countries, there is a further step, known as “habilitation”¹⁶, with its own dissertation, needed before being awarded the title and status of “professor”, though notably this does not happen in the UK.

In medicine in the UK there are several “Royal Colleges” representing the different medical specialisms and pathways. There are many other professional bodies outside medicine that work in similar ways: for example, the BCS, the chartered institute for IT in the UK. There is an assessment process to become a full “Member”, and a further process to becoming a “Fellow”. These grades of professional membership and fellowship may have a more or less standard process for attaining them, but in general the knowledge, skill, competence and personal qualities needed are rarely well-documented, and tend to be less formalised than in the case of ordinary university degrees.

In some cases where the knowledge requirements are better documented, there are courses designed to help people pass the relevant examinations, and this could be seen as official rather than unofficial learning.

3.3 Open Badges

Work with Open Badges in the recent past has been started by Mozilla, as Mozilla Open Badges¹⁷, funded by the MacArthur Foundation¹⁸. Other players have joined in the Badge Alliance¹⁹, including IMS Global²⁰, a membership organisation, who a year ago (2015-04-21) announced an Initiative to Establish Digital Badges as Common Currency for K-20 and Corporate Education²¹. It is unclear where the leadership now lies with this work.

Simon Grant (co-author of this document) has written several blog posts related to badge²² particularly in 2013 and 2014, when ideas in the field were being developed quickly.

¹⁶ [Habilitation](#), Wikipedia, last modified on 27 June 2016, accessed 27.6.2016

¹⁷ Mozilla Open Badges [webpage](#), accessed 10.6.2016

¹⁸ See Digital Badges on MacArthur Foundation [webpage](#), accessed 22.06.2016

¹⁹ Read more about the Badge Alliance [Working Groups](#), accessed 10.6.2016

²⁰ See IMS Global [webpage](#), accessed 10.6.2016

²¹ See IMS Global, Press release: [Initiative to Establish Digital Badges as Common Currency for K-20 and Corporate Education](#), Lake Mary, Florida, USA 2015, accessed 10.6.2016

²² For more read Grant S., [E-portfolios and badges for the common good](#), Cetus, 2014 accessed 10.6.2016

Badge the World is the new social and technology movement to capture recognition for learning that happens anywhere. Together with Badge Alliance and Open Badge Network they form a community of practitioners and researchers that work on the badges implementation to support recognition and accreditation of competences, develop standards and policies towards open badges adoption in formal, non-formal and informal education²³

Open badges offer the possibility of specifying what exactly needs to be done to be awarded the badge (known as the “criteria”).

To summarise some of these reflections, it should be said that there are still doubts about the effectiveness of Open Badges in terms of recognition by employers. It is not enough simply to possess a “backpack” for badges, and to display the whole collection to employers. First, employers typically have little time, and wish to see only those credentials that are relevant to the job they are offering. Second, employers need to be able to trust the credentials they see. Certificates from established educational institutions are relatively easy to recognise, if not very specific. But it is very hard to judge the value of a badge issued by someone who is not widely known. A larger number of badges would make both of these issues worse.

What is needed are mechanisms by which employers can select their view to see only the kinds of badges that they value; and for them to have a reasonable degree of quality assurance about the abilities of the people who use the display of badges to assert their knowledge, skills, or competence.

3.4 Reputation in the peer group

Peer groups, by themselves, offer no certification as such. One field in which peer group reputation is very prominent is in academic research, where academic reputation is often based on peer recognition and publications in “good” journals. Citation indices offer a measure, which plays a part in some academic institutions’ recognition and promotion. The project could try to find any available key conclusions in articles about academic peer group reputation.

Web-based services often have a reputation function built into them, run by peers. There is eBay, Airbnb and similar services have peer reputation built into them as an essential part of the service. It is difficult to know whether this could be successfully formulated into a consolidated approach to certification, due to the necessarily informal nature of the reputation feedback, and what any such certification would mean in comparison to formal certification.

²³ See [Open Badges Network](#), [Badge The World](#) and [Badge Alliance](#), accessed 10.6.2016

3.5 Official “Decorations”

In many countries there are government-sponsored systems of honours²⁴ such as “peerage”, knighthood and many lesser awards in the UK, “chevalier” of various orders in France, and many others. Industry has recognition systems like prizes and awards, sometimes with prize money. There are internationally recognised prizes such as the Nobel prize.

However, the project partners know of no attempts to define equivalences of any of these decorations to any other award system.

The value of decorations and prizes again depends on their acceptance and recognition by the relevant people. Existing ones are currently generally accepted by everyone, even though they may not be formal, but an attempt to extend the number of these, or changing them radically, risks lowering recognition and acceptance.

3.6 Awards in Wikipedia

For many years, Wikipedia has had a peer-managed system of awards²⁵, aiming to “reward vigorous Wikipedia contributors for their *hard work and due diligence*”. These include Wikipedia’s own “barnstars”²⁶. More recently, from 2012, there has been the idea of including awards at a lower-level than barnstars are usually awarded, as Wikipedia Badges²⁷. However, this does not appear to have any significant uptake.

Wikipedia awards may be a useful indication of someone’s ability to operate effectively in a voluntary unstructured environment. However, if too much weight were put on this kind of award, that is, if these awards became very significant in life, people might start to find ways to “game” the system, for instance by having groups of conspirators awarding each other barnstars or other badges. The value of any award is dependent on the person or body awarding it, and there is no control in the Wikipedia universe on this. Thus these awards cannot be completely trusted.

Another issue from the perspective of the MyLK project is that Wikipedia awards, like Open Badges, are not automatic. They are awarded only by direct intervention by other people. In Wikipedia, or any other peer-managed project, the other people will be essentially peers. In Open Badges more widely, badges may be awarded by anyone, including individuals or organisations.

²⁴ See e.g. [Orders, decorations, and medals of the United Kingdom](#), [Orders, decorations, and medals of France](#), [Decorations and medals of the Netherlands](#), accessed 10.6.2016

²⁵ From Wikipedia: [Awards](#), accessed 10.6.2016

²⁶ From Wikipedia: [Barnstars](#), accessed 10.6.2016

²⁷ From Wikipedia: [Badges](#), accessed 10.6.2016

3.7 Achievements in games

It is when we move to looking at games that automatic recognition becomes possible, because games tend to be closed worlds with their own systems governing achievement, progress and scores. It may or may not be obvious what knowledge or skill is displayed through mastery of a game, but often much of that is relevant only to the game. If a game is deliberately constructed to help people learn real life skills, then those skills need to be carefully documented. This is often referred to as “gamification”²⁸.

3.8 Summary of relevance to MyLK

Non-official learning can either be very easy or very difficult to relate to official learning and employment in terms of the skills and competences involved. Non-official learning may be deliberately aimed at a particular skill or competence, which may relate immediately either to official learning or to employment. On the other hand, where unofficial learning has no explicit intended learning outcome, or where the outcomes are not described in terms that relate directly to other areas, it is more difficult to relate it to official skills.

The reason for this is plain to see. Official learning is designed and managed within an established body, whether that be an institution of learning or a business organisation. The opportunity is there within the body that manages the learning to consider what the intended learning outcomes might be, even if this is not consistently done. In contrast, for unofficial learning, the only ways to achieve clarity in the learning outcomes are (a) for the learners themselves to decide on the learning outcomes, or (b) to take outcomes from the learning materials themselves, based on the ideas of authors or reviewers.

Perhaps what the MyLK project is looking for is a way for people to define and agree learning outcomes that can, in principle, be certified both formally and informally. For, at present, there appears to be no such system, and no such learning outcome definitions, at least none that are well known or well used.

If there were some well used and agreed frameworks of skills and competences that covered what is needed by employers, and if there were some means of assuring the reliability of awards mapping to these frameworks, then a well-designed set of something like open badges might offer real progress.

The MyLK project could help greatly with this, by showing the frameworks within the dashboard, and thereby enabling individuals to work towards being accredited either through recognised institutions of learning, or other authorities, including workplaces, that had proved themselves reliable in awarding those badges.

²⁸ See Wikipedia: [Gamification](#), accessed 10.6.2016

4. Past and present relevant projects and initiatives

4.1 “Learning is Earning 2026: Ledger”

In the USA, the ACT Foundation²⁹ has recently started an initiative called “Learning is Earning 2026”³⁰. The site presents a scenario that is set 10 years in the future, 2026.

“where learning has become a kind of currency that ties together every aspect of our lives. In this future, the currency of learning is tracked and traded on a digital platform called the Ledger. It’s a complete record of everything you’ve ever learned, everyone you’ve learned from, and everyone who’s learned from you. The Ledger not only tracks what you know - it also tracks all of the projects, jobs, gigs, and challenges you’ve used that knowledge to complete.”³¹

This clearly is intended to cover non-official learning, because, as the narrator of the short video presentation says, (0:28) “anyone can grant edublocks to anyone else”³². (0:45) “The Ledger makes it possible for you to get credit for learning that happens anywhere, even when you’re just doing the things you love. Your profile displays all the edublocks you’ve earned. Employers can use this information to offer you a job, or a gig, that matches your skills.” The video then goes directly on to something that we might recognise as analytics³³. (1:00) “We’ll keep track of all the income your skills generate, and use that data to provide feedback on your courses. When choosing a subject to study in the future, you may wish to choose the subject whose students are earning the most income.” The Ledger is imagined as being built on Blockchain technology. This will help the Ledger system to facilitate people investing in your education for a return based on your future income.

Another idea promoted by the Ledger concept is of learners being teachers. After the caption (2:30) “Anyone can grant an edublock. Anyone can be a teacher.” we hear “If you have federal student loans from college, you can pay them down by teaching someone else what you learned. Whatever blocks you learned in school, you can teach them to others.”

This vision raises interesting ethical and political, as well as practical questions. For instance, in which situations is it morally responsible for one individual to have a call on someone else’s future earnings? Is it good for the teaching profession to suggest that anyone can be a

²⁹ For more informations check [ACT Foundation website](#), accessed 17.6.2016

³⁰ See [LearningsEarning2026](#), accessed 17.6.2016

³¹ Ibid.

³² See Learning is Earning 2026 [video](#), accessed 17.6.2016

³³ Ibid.

teacher? But different people can be more or less effective as teachers. One aspect of this is a sharing of language and culture. How can these and similar issues be taken into account?

Nevertheless, this initiative presents a useful reference point for MyLK, with which the project can compare and contrast ideas and objectives.

4.2 European projects

There have been many European funded projects which are more or less relevant to MyLK. Here are a few of the more relevant ones.

TRAILER: Tagging, Recognition and Acknowledgement of Informal Learning Experiences³⁴

This was a European consortium project funded under the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme, running during 2012 and 2013.

“The evolution of new technology and its increasing use, has for some years been making the existence of informal learning more and more transparent, especially among young and older adults in both Higher Education and workplace contexts. However, the nature of formal and non-formal, course-based, approaches to learning has made it hard to accommodate these informal processes satisfactorily, and although technology bring us near to the solution, it has not yet achieved.

The project aims to facilitate first the identification by the learner (as the last responsible of the learning process), and then the recognition by the institution, in dialogue with the learner, of this learning. The learner identifies episodes and evidences of informal learning in any of the different spaces in which she learns (formally or informally). She then links to these to the tool, located within her portfolio, and then tags them in relation to a predefined but evolving catalogue of competences. The tool is linked to the institutional interface in such a way that relevant experiences (related to the institutional target competences) are accessible to the institution. Other experiences that may be personally relevant to the learner are accessible to her.

In this way informal learning experiences become transparent and useful both for the individual and for the institution. Also the data generated could be used to improve learning systems and identify emerging competences.

The impact of this project will be especially representative to institutions, learners and the educational systems. To institutions because they could obtain and use hidden information about skills that their workers acquire in informal context. To learners,

³⁴ See Trailer Project [website](#), accessed 17.6.2016

because informal activity recognition will allow them progress in work-place context. To education systems, because they could consider the obtain information to adapt their learning pathways in a proper way to match labour market demand.” (*Web site front page.*)

At the end of a paper reporting on TRAILER,³⁵ the authors say that the results “open other challenges such as if the informal learning is really being considered in the companies, if what is needed is a technological solution, if it is necessary to measure and recognize all person merits, etc. From a technological point of view the system can be improved introducing ways to deal with competences ambiguity, semantic layers enhance the decision support system and to propose competences to the learners, etc. [...] there is a need to see how informal learning can be really exploited.” So we can be confident that TRAILER did not solve all the issues being addressed in the MyLK project.

KøDE-NQF ‘Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal competencies in the context of National Qualification Frameworks’

The project aims at modifying and adapting the contents of KODE® system to EQF and NQF of partner countries. The project's goal is to provide VET counsellors, advisers and consultants with a set of training guidelines that are easily adaptable not only to the individual users' needs but also to the specific learning cultures of the partner' countries. See the project web site.³⁶

The main output of the project was a final Project Handbook.³⁷

PROVIDE

The title of the project was “PROmoting the Validation of Informal and non-formal learning and the Development of key competences for professionals in vocational Education”³⁸

A sustainable system for continuing professional development (CPD) for educational professionals regarding Competence Based Learning (CBL) Handbook³⁹ for procedures.

LEO qualiTC

The project⁴⁰ aims to provide concrete methodological tools to analyse and describe a range of vocational qualifications (EQF 2-3 levels – Tourism and Catering sector) in terms of units of learning outcomes and a Model that permits the validation, recognition, accumulation and

³⁵ [Enhancing informal learning recognition through TRAILER project](#). Proceedings of the International Workshop on solutions that Enhance Informal Learning Recognition – WEILER 2013, accessed 25.06.2016

³⁶ [Kode Project website](#), accessed 15.6.2016

³⁷ *ibidem* <http://www.kode-project.eu/images/doc/FINAL-Files%20KODE-NQF/EN%20K%C3%B8DE-NQF-Handbook-Excerpt.pdf>

³⁸ [Provide Project website](#), accessed 15.6.2016

³⁹ Competence Based Learning (CBL) [Handbook](#) 2014, accessed 15.6.2016

⁴⁰ LEO qualiTC [webpage](#), accessed 15.6.2016

transfer of units of learning outcomes with reference to the existing European tools (EQF, Europass, ECTS) and principles (validation of non formal and informal learning, quality assurance) in order to reduce the barriers to mobility across Europe.

Europortfolio

Europortfolio⁴¹ is a European Network of ePortfolio Experts & Practitioners. The discussion forums on the site have 12 posts covering 2014 to 2015. Europortfolio also supports a Badge Europe⁴² web site.

4.3 National projects and initiatives

Netherlands

At present we also have a number of other examples in the same line of MyLK project, but they are more or less stand alone projects.

Xebic⁴³ is a software provider, offering solutions called OnStage, OnTrack and OnQuest. This commercial platform delivers information and a working platform for schools concerning students that go for work experience and/or work placement. It also monitors the process and the different activities during the placement period.

NCP/NLQF⁴⁴ is a national body that aims to facilitate students and labour market mobility by providing an insight into the levels of qualifications recorded by the National Coordination Point NLQF in the NCP register. The NLQF provides transparency in that it facilitates a comparison of qualification levels nationally and internationally, thus, labour market mobility.

An example of a different concept of a “dashboard” is the **City Dashboard Amsterdam**, which was operating in 2014 but has since ceased operation. This dashboard

“... showed *real time data* from the city. Amsterdam has released quite a lot of data. Census information, traffic densities, public transport schedules and sustainability readings. These data are published on several websites, in various formats. As part of the City Service Development Kit (CitySDK)⁴⁵ and the Open Data Exchange projects, a lot of effort has been made to make data sets available in real time.”⁴⁶

This dashboard contained

⁴¹ Check the Europortfolio [website](#), accessed 15.6.2016

⁴² See: OpenBadges [website](#), accessed 15.6.2016

⁴³ Visit the Xebic [webpage](#), accessed 15.6.2016

⁴⁴ See NLQF [webpage](#), accessed 15.6.2016

⁴⁵ See City Service Development [website](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁴⁶ From: [Waaq Society](#), 16.05.2014, accessed 15.6.2016

“an enormous insight in what make the city tick. Unfortunately, these raw data are hard to ‘read’. Considerable skills are needed to understand the data files, and infer their hidden meanings. Therefore, we have taken the metaphor of the Key Performance Indicators - and devised City Performance Indicators. These condense the data and we visualized them in easy to read dashboard.”⁴⁷

Hospitality sector in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands there has been an ongoing discussion about formal/non formal and informal learning/education. Especially when the education system is changing, graduated people, workers and entrepreneurs have difficulty in identifying the new system with the ones they have followed themselves.

In the hospitality industry we tried to initiate in the early days of the Life Long Learning concept the e-portfolio. The general concept was that a national body within the sector of hospitality would provide the e-portfolio by the internet, the user would register and therefore pay a subscription fee and he/she could register all their certificates, diplomas and other valid papers in this e-portfolio. As it was managed by a national sector body, it would at the same time be validated. This concept was started in the late 1980’s and due to lack of interest it was stopped a few years later.

From the Dutch side we propose to take the hospitality sector as a pilot sector to develop the tools of the MyLK project further.

Poland

The integrated project “Polish qualifications” (“Kwalifikacje po polsku”) was co-financed with the European Structure Fund <http://www.kwalifikacje.edu.pl/pl/>⁴⁸. Its aim was to develop a baseline qualification framework concerning all levels of education, including research and analysis of the instruments available as well as prepare the ground for competence recognition in informal and non-formal learning. The project involved debates, experts meetings and desk researches that concluded in development of several documents: ECVET screening⁴⁹ and ECTS screening⁵⁰, “Validation of learning outcomes achieved outside formal education system”⁵¹, “Bilans of Competences”⁵².

⁴⁷ ibid.

⁴⁸ For more: “Kwalifikacje po polsku” [website](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁴⁹ Gruza M., [Badanie formalnych i nieformalnych uwarunkowań wdrożenia systemu przenoszenia i akumulacji zaliczonych osiągnięć w Polsce w oparciu o założenia systemu ECVET](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁵⁰ Rasiński R., [Ekspertyza dotycząca gromadzenia i przenoszenia osiągnięć w szkolnictwie wyższym w Polsce – zastosowanie ECTS](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁵¹ Bacia E., [Walidacja efektów uczenia się uzyskanych poza systemem edukacji formalnej jako nowe wyzwanie dla polityki na rzecz uczenia się przez całe życie](#), Warszawa 2014, accessed 17.06.2016

⁵² [Metoda bilansu kompetencji](#), Warszawa 2015, accessed 17.06.2016

UK

There have been several projects funded by Jisc, the UK agency whose role is to support technology development for higher education. A good example from this source is the Co-genT project⁵³. They posted a brief explanatory video⁵⁴. Originally designed “to support dialogue between curriculum teams and employers”, the project included attempts to translate, and therefore indicate correspondence, between employers’ needs and academic learning outcomes.

Like many other similar projects, while it offered a useful proof-of-concept, the ideas were not taken up in the mainstream.

France

In France, there are two main initiatives giving value and validation to informal learning : Validation des Acquis de l’Expérience - VAE, and Validation des Acquis Professionnels 85 - VAP 85. Both initiatives want to give more value and recognition to experiential learning.

VAP 85 is a initiative set up in 1985. It gives the possibility to join directly an academic programme without having the required diploma by offering a recognition and a validation to professional experience (as employee or as volunteer work), non-academic training the applicant has taken, or personal benefits he/she has developed in his/her own life.

VAE⁵⁵ was set up in 2002. It is a procedure that allows any French educational institution to grant degrees partly or completely based on work experience. It gives to the applicant the possibility to obtain a partial or total validation of a diploma, provided that he or she can give evidence of at least 3 years of experience related to the desired diploma.

Theoretically, VAE is a good and useful initiative, but actually it doesn’t work as well as expected. The educational system seems no t to be motivated to communicate about it, or to encourage people to obtain a VAE (cf. Interview with Pierre Rieben).

⁵³ Co-genT Project [website](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁵⁴ Co-genT Project [video](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁵⁵ Cf. Interview with Pierre Rieben

5. Issues in finding correspondence

In effect, there is at present little or no correspondence between official and non-official certification and validation.

One challenge that could be addressed is the challenge of creating learning outcome frameworks, covering knowledge, skills and competence, that better allow correspondence to be mapped. It is difficult to see how it would help to simply bringing together two non-corresponding frameworks on the same dashboard. Rather, the challenge is to create frameworks where the concepts and the language work across different sectors.

Traditionally, formal education and training has been concerned with outcomes that are more easily assessed or measured. Knowledge of all kinds is relatively straightforward to assess. Many technical skills can be assessed in controlled environments. For examples, think of playing musical instruments; martial arts; medical procedures; computer programming and related ICT skills. All of these have various established schemes for assessment or grading. The issue here is how to recognize non-official learning in these areas, and in principle this can often be done through bypassing established courses and going more or less straight to some kind of formal summative assessment, which might be similar to the kinds of assessment currently used in formal learning situations.

Competence, as opposed to knowledge and skills, presents different challenges. Professional and/or vocational certification is usually done in the context of a workplace, whether during regular employment or at an early stage such as an apprenticeship. Formal education and training covers the knowledge and skills that “underpin” competence, but cannot fully assess competence in the classroom or through formal examinations.

6. Discussion

It will help the discussion refers to the kind of future vision that is current amongst project partners.

6.1 Future vision

Imagine that, ten years into the future, the MyLK Dashboard has ten million or more followers all around the world, and is creating a new trend in Life Long Learning. Facebook and LinkedIn are interested in the new dashboard because the Dashboard gives the users the possibility to identify their learning outcome profile in addition to the possibility to give them options for future career paths, professional or vocational development, and a better position in the dynamic labour market. It is not only a dashboard of what you already know but it can inform, show and plan the next phases of your career path. It is also a platform where you can market your expertise and get connected with possible client/customer – organisations and or persons that will pay for your services.

The MyLK project, and the objective to create a LLL tool in the form of a dashboard is aimed at future developments and also the change of learning in the near future. The question that arises is how to manage your LLL, and which statistics do you need so you can manage this.

What are the real needs of users?

It is also about what aims you are looking for. Is it a future job position a certain profile e.g. Manager of a international company or a future politician or is it a tool to reach a certain level of expertise in a certain field. And both objectives have a financial aspect, because in the long run education, learning and development needs to establish a firm economic base in order to survive in a international world.

Here is a short list of some issues concerning official and not official education and/or learning, mostly that have some sort of implications for correspondence, that the project may identify:

1. NL has a “binary” system, academic and vocational pathways.
2. In certain sectors there are sector specific education - e.g. banking, accountancy, specialisation, there are exams. In NL there is a national body to assign EQF level to these.
3. Jargon - glossary is often necessary because practice varies widely between different sectors.
4. I’m a doctor, swap in the medical jargon.
5. Retraining - big motivation for governments - how can MyLK help to avoid wasted resource?

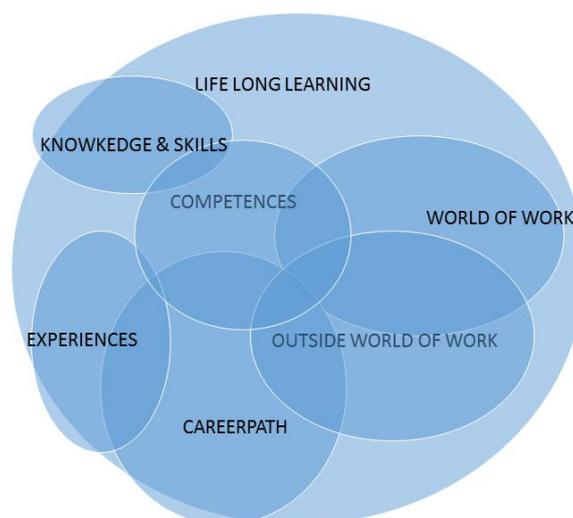
6. So we do have the EQF to show correspondence...
7. MyLK dashboard needs to translate the different languages.
8. NL: commercial issue: the training institutions want to make money out of RPL - sell you a larger course even if you don't need it.
9. If a person is a chef and has been working for several years, why can't they be recognised? Easy in the hotel trade to find a chef job in other countries. Prospective employers ask where you have worked, not for your qualifications.
10. Dashboard include who says you are good at something?
11. Common "employability" skills "transferable" skills.
12. Consider: looking at LinkedIn. We often look at where people worked, rather than qualifications or endorsements.

If you put these in a diagram you can identify issues and combine them concerning

- a. education and learning outcomes (nr. 1)
- b. the world of work (nr. 2 – 6).
- c. Life Long Learning (7 – 10).
- d. careerpath (11 – 12)

Based on desk research, discussions and this brainstorm until now we can identify a number (not exhaustively) of individual aims that the user of a dashboard or the MyLK dashboard will need or have to choose from. These aims are not used only for the present moment but are also needed for the future. So far we distinguish the following three strands.

- Career path and future positions (guidance)
- Expertise and know how
- Financial and commercial aims



7. Conclusions

7.1 Why we need to be concerned about “skills correspondence”

In the latter half of the 20th century formal education was mainly aimed at knowledge and based on the knowledge one can develop skills etc.. There was relatively little change in occupations or professions, and jobs tended to last for a lifetime. Therefore there was little need to account for personal skills and competence. These were learned “on the job”, and rarely needed to be transferred, and within most jobs it would be obvious whether someone was competent or not. The issue of skills correspondence was not so important, because the knowledge and skills people learned formally were clearly separate from the skills and competence learned “on the job”.

In the 21st century, however, the rate of changing jobs is likely to continue to increase. There will also be more older people. The retirement age is increasing across Europe, and more and more people are remaining active at work beyond the retirement age.⁵⁶ Life Long Learning and working will be the reality. While formal learning, education and training will most likely continue to play a vital role, it is wildly impractical to imagine that all of a person’s lifelong knowledge and skills needs will be supplied through this formal path. Hence comes the need to account for both formal and informal learning in the same or similar terms. A much better basis for establishing correspondence is needed. This implies being much more explicit in developing, recording, managing and accounting for skills and competences.

People will want to know if they are ready for a different job, and will want to convince others that they are able to perform. There is no way that someone can acquire even most the skills and competences they will need before starting their careers. But people need to know what their abilities are, so that they can develop them as needed. In the sense of validating experience-oriented learning outcomes, the companies or contexts in which the person has worked will be more and more recognised as significant. The best validation there is for effectiveness at work comes from the companies, organisations, or colleagues one has worked with.

This is not only true of technical knowledge, skills and competence, but it is increasingly recognised that other attributes – known variously as “soft skills”, qualities, or attitudes – are essential for a person to perform well in a job. These attributes may also turn up under the heading of “talent”. Talent development, and therefore experiences in the area of education, work and social context are important.

The individual in the 21st century is likely also to have more of an inherent natural desire to be in command of his/her own learning and career path. Based on their knowledge, skills,

⁵⁶ see e.g. [Employment and retirement – explaining recent trends](#), 20.10.2014, accessed 20.06.2016

competences and attitudes they will be more proactive in finding suitable jobs, rather than waiting for a vacancy in a company they like to work for, and that will connect with their expertise and experience. They may start looking for companies, work and approach them even when they do not have a vacancy. They also will learn and develop themselves with the knowledge, skills, competences and attitude that is necessary for this new job. They will be more aware of their own performance as such. Therefore they will also need an informative, supportive and guidance tool, which MyLK should provide. The individual therefore needs a tool that registers all this and at the same time it needs to be valorised.

7.2 How to improve correspondence

What we have seen, however, is a great lack of systems and initiatives to provide that needed correspondence. Formal learning has its own way of describing learning outcomes, mainly to do with knowledge, and some skills, while for informal learning there is what often looks like a chaotic profusion of ways in which someone might acquire knowledge, skills, and competence, of which few, if any, are seen by employers to be relevant to them.

On the formal side, some kind of RPL gives perhaps the best promise of some kind of correspondence. The idea is to investigate what an individual has learned informally, and map it onto the same learning outcomes as are in use in the formal learning sectors. However, this approach falls short of providing what employers want in exactly the same way that most formal learning also falls short. Many of the skills, particularly “soft skills”, that are needed by employers are simply not formally documented in any formal course.

On the informal side, perhaps the Open Badges approach is the most promising. Once a well-accepted framework of skills and competences is in place, the MyLK system and other badge technology, working together, could help by encouraging and facilitating individual learners to convert their knowledge, skill and experience into badges that correspond to what is wanted by employers.

If European policy aims to develop work-related skills and competence of EU citizens, then it should also be policy to provide ways in which skills and competence can be accredited by formal education, by employers, and by other informal learning. MyLK should be the tool that supports this policy. The tools should facilitate the development of skills and competencies and also show experiences and talents.

From a marketing perspective it should do this in phases over the project time and after. We should decide on product market combinations such as e.g. university students, companies and education.

Annexes

Here are summaries explaining in outline the various initiatives referred to above.

Europass

Five documents to make your skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe:

Two documents freely accessible, completed by European citizens:

- the Curriculum Vitae⁵⁷ helps you present your skills and qualifications effectively and clearly. You can create your CV online using tutorials or download the template, examples and instructions.
- the Language Passport⁵⁸ is a self-assessment tool for language skills and qualifications. You can create your Language Passport online using tutorials or download the template, examples and instructions.

Three documents issued by education and training authorities:

- the Europass Mobility⁵⁹ records the knowledge and skills acquired in another European country;
- the Certificate Supplement⁶⁰ describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of vocational education and training certificates;
- the Diploma Supplement⁶¹ describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees

European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

What is the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)?

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a European-wide qualifications framework which joins the qualifications of different EU members together. In a way, it is a translation of different national qualifications which makes qualifications in different EU countries easier to understand. The EQF aims to facilitate mobility of students and workers within the EU in order to encourage development mobile and flexible workforce throughout Europe and to help develop lifelong learning.

⁵⁷ See: The [Europass Curriculum Vitae](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁵⁸ See: The [Europass Language Passport](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁵⁹ See: The [Europass Mobility](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁶⁰ See: The [Europass Certificate Supplement](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁶¹ See: The [Europass Diploma Supplement](#), accessed 17.06.2016.

The EQF was formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in April 2008. The UK has completed the cross reference of its frameworks – the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) but so far, only a minority of the EU member countries decided to do the same. The EQF is voluntary and the member countries are not obliged to cross reference their frameworks but the number of completed cross references is expected to increase in the near future.

What Does the EQF Offer?

The EQF enables the learners, learning providers and employers to compare qualifications between different national systems. This is thought to help increase mobility in the labour market within and between the countries because it makes it easy to determine a person's level of qualification which in turn will improve the balance between demand and supply of knowledge and skills.

Which Qualifications the EQF Covers?

The EQF is a lifelong learning framework and covers all types of qualifications ranging from those acquired at the end of compulsory education (Level 1) to the highest qualifications such as Doctorate (Level 8 in the QCF and Level 12 in the SCQF). It also includes vocational qualifications. Just like the QCF, the EQF consists of 8 levels which indicate the difficulty level. And just like the QCF as well as the SCQF, the EQF is focused on the outcome of learning and the person's actual knowledge and skills rather than the amount of study needed to complete the qualification programme.

ECVET

Developed by Member States in cooperation with the European Commission, ECVET has been adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2009. The adoption and implementation of ECVET in the participating countries is voluntary. Currently, the participating countries and the Commission support a Europe-wide testing of this instrument to which all stakeholders have been invited to participate.

ECVET: AN INSTRUMENT FOR MOBILITY AND RECOGNITION

ECVET's purpose is to enable recognition of learners' achievements during periods of mobility by creating a structure, bringing a common language, and stimulating exchanges and mutual trust among VET providers and competent institutions across Europe. In the context of international mobility but also mobility within countries, ECVET aims to support recognition of learning outcomes without extending learners' education and training pathways.

ECVET for valorising mobility

ECVET contributes to making recognised mobility an integrated part of individuals' learning pathways. It makes it easier for employers to understand qualifications achieved abroad. It also improves the credibility of international education and training experience by identifying and documenting what the learner has achieved.

ECVET for lifelong learning

ECVET supports flexibility of programmes and pathways to achieve qualifications, enhancing the opportunities for lifelong learning. It makes it easier to recognise the learning achievements that young people or adults have gained in other contexts - be it countries, institutions or systems (for example initial or continuous training) but also formal, non-formal, or informal ways of learning.

ECVET for attractiveness of VET

By giving learners the possibility to undertake parts of their training abroad, VET providers can enrich the training provision, raise the attractiveness of training programmes and enhance their pan-European reputation. The improved possibilities for lifelong learning created by ECVET facilitate cooperation between VET providers and companies. This means that ECVET can strengthen the link between education and training and the labour market.

ECVET IN BRIEF

ECVET is based on concepts and processes which are used in a systematic way to establish a common and user-friendly language for transparency, transfer and recognition of learning outcomes. Some of these concepts and processes are already embedded in many qualifications systems across Europe.

ECVET is based on:

- Learning outcomes, which are statements of knowledge, skills and competence that can be achieved in a variety of learning contexts.
- Units of learning outcomes that are components of qualifications. Units can be assessed, validated and recognised.
- ECVET points, which provide additional information about units and qualifications in a numerical form.
- Credit that is given for assessed and documented learning outcomes of a learner. Credit can be transferred to other contexts and accumulated to achieve a qualification on the basis of the qualifications standards and regulations existing in the participating countries.

- Mutual trust and partnership among participating organisations. These are expressed in Memoranda of Understanding and Learning Agreements.

EQAVET

EQAVET⁶², the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework, is a Europe-wide framework to support quality assurance in VET, and has an official introductory video⁶³. As this video from March 2016⁶⁴ shows, this is not a system imposing a European approach, but a voluntary framework within which to develop a national or regional quality assurance system. It includes a Quality Cycle:

1. Planning
2. Implementation
3. Evaluation
4. Review

The EQAVET materials cover many concepts and guidelines for how to build an effective VET system. As EQAVET is a guide to setting up formal VET systems, it does not attempt to clarify any kind of correspondence between formal and informal, or official and non-official learning. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how informal learning could be subject to a quality assurance system.

⁶² For more: European Quality Assurance Reference Framework [website](#), accessed 17.06.2016

⁶³ See: EQAVET [video](#) 19.06.2015, accessed 17.06.2016

⁶⁴ See: EQAVET 2 [video](#) 21.03.2016, accessed 17.06.2016

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