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The involvement of employers and trade unions is crucial to achieve an open labour market that values all forms of learning

The common [European tools for education and training](#)¹ - such as Europass, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) - will make it easier for citizens to pursue learning throughout their lives, and to document their skills and knowledge in a form which is recognised by employers and the labour market across Europe.

Employers and trade unions are important partners in the implementation of these tools. Cedefop's conference '*Common EU tools for education and training – Working together for shared vocational education and training policies*' - taking place on 24-25 November in the European Parliament - was organised together with and for the social partners.

Common to all the tools is their focus on the **outcomes of learning**, on what a person knows, understands and is actually able to do, rather than a concentration on how, how long and where somebody has been learning. The focus on learning outcomes is helpful to employers and employees alike - clarifying for learners the objective of their learning process and clarifying for employers what they can expect from a particular qualification.

There is agreement between employers and trade unions that the shift to learning outcomes provides an opportunity to increase the **transparency** of education and training, to improve the **relevance** of qualifications and to make education and training institutions **accountable** for what is delivered. The European qualifications framework and the national qualifications framework now being established in all EU countries has helped to promote the learning outcomes perspective.

Both employers and employees pointed to the growing importance of identification and assessment of skills and competences acquired outside the formal education system, at work and in life. To succeed at the labour market, **individuals must be able to have their skills and competences systematically identified and documented**. Social partners underlined the need of a coherent approach for validating learning in the workplace and the key role they have in this process together with sector representatives. Europass, ECVET and the arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning can - separately and in combination – support citizens to better present and represent their full experiences.

Social partner representatives, employers and employees, confirmed their commitment and underlined that increased action is needed at European, national and local level. Social partners

¹ Europass <http://bit.ly/sUPR9b>;

European Qualifications Framework <http://bit.ly/kRB8NM> and related National Qualifications Frameworks;

European Credit System in Vocational Education and Training <http://bit.ly/suiMBB>;

European Quality Assurance Reference Framework <http://bit.ly/vq9y5U>;

Validation of non-formal and informal learning <http://bit.ly/tORI0t>;

Lifelong Guidance <http://bit.ly/rBXXfe>

need to be directly involved in the definition of learning outcomes and how they are used in standards, curricula and teaching methods.

More information:

Cedefop Briefing note: Shaping lifelong learning: making the most of European tools and principles

<https://events.cedefop.europa.eu/EUtools2011/images/stories/EUtools/shaping%20lifelong%20learning.pdf>

Cedefop Briefing note: Qualifications frameworks in Europe: modernising education and training

https://events.cedefop.europa.eu/EUtools2011/images/stories/EUtools/qualifications_frameworks.pdf

Conference website:

<https://events.cedefop.europa.eu/EUtools2011/>

EU common tools on the Cedefop website:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/understanding-qualifications/index.aspx>

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Contact

Head of Communication, Information and Dissemination

Gerd Oskar Bausewein, tel. +30 2310 490288, E-Mail: gerd-oskar.bausewein@cedefop.europa.eu

About Cedefop

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), an agency of the European Union based in Thessaloniki, Greece, supports European policy-making in the field of vocational education and training. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu>