

Certification Per Unit (CPU)

Description

In the French-speaking community of Belgium, Certification Per Unit (CPU) allows students to validate their skills gradually. This gives value to the young person's learning outcomes and can help to avoid year repetition.

Beneficiaries

-  **VET students (school-based learning)**
-  **VET students (work-based learning)**

All VET students and adult learners in the aforementioned VET tracks.

Countries

-  **Belgium**
-  **Belgium-FR**

Education level and sector

-  **Upper secondary education**
-  **Upper secondary vocational education and training (school-based)**
-  **Adult education**

Upper secondary Vocational Education and Training - VET (school based) Adult education (Promotion sociale)

Type of policy/initiative

-  **Prevention**
-  **Intervention**
-  **Compensation**

Prevention, Intervention and Compensation

Level of implementation / Scope

-  **Regional level**

Regional

Stage of implementation

On-going

In 2011, 50% of concerned VET schools agreed, on a voluntary basis, to implement the CPU reform in three VET sectors (i.e. auto mechanic, auto technician and beauty practitioner). In September 2014, all concerned VET schools implemented the CPU in the three aforementioned sectors, plus hairdressing. The plan is to roll-out the scheme to other VET tracks in the coming years.

Aims of policy/initiative

The CPU aims at the facilitation, transfer, and recognition of learning outcomes (allowing students to validate their skills gradually). It also aims to prevent students from repeating a year; to increase the meaningfulness of learning outcomes for the citizen within a system, between stakeholders and between European countries; to promote lifelong learning without borders and to increase the quality and attractiveness of VET schools.

Features and types of activities implemented

The CPU is a reform of the French - speaking, Walloon Community of Belgium which divides VET upper-secondary tracks into different learning outcome units (Unités d'Acquis d'Apprentissage-UAA). Every student will receive the Qualification Certificate when all the learning outcome units are validated. Those who fail the test get a second chance after personalised support from teachers. The support can also come before the test if the teacher feels there is a need. The unit can also be validated further on several occasions, for example during the validation of the next unit, since the learning path is of a spiral nature.

Resources

The CPU is led by public funding (from the Ministry of Education of the French-speaking community of Belgium, including support of EU funds).

There was a provision agreed by the Parliament, in addition to traditional funding for secondary education, of €3 million for the funding of projects involving the restructuring of VET between 2010 and 2014 which the CPU was a part of.

Schools receive additional teaching hours which are calculated based on the number of students enrolled in the VET programmes, in order to be able to provide remedial support to students who failed their unit.

Evaluation of the measure

The pilot measure was evaluated by school inspectors in March 2012 as planned. The evaluation was based on an observation of practices and on qualitative interviews of school-level stakeholders. It focused on the difficulties of implementing the CPU, its effects on the school's and teachers' practices as well as the school's organisation and the advantages perceived by VET schools.

Evidence of effectiveness of the measure

The school inspection evaluation of March 2012 pointed out the fact that the CPU has

increased the motivation of learners to continue their training.

In the Cedefop study, the majority of interviewees at regional-level recognised the positive impacts on the learners of evaluating learning outcomes rather than sanctioning failures and the strong remedial support offered to those who failed to validate a unit.

Success factors

The following success factors are based on the testimonies of participants in the measure interviewed under Cedefop study:

1. Political will to reform VET and the overall education system: the CPU was introduced as part of a wider plan to reform VET that aims at tackling early leaving; promoting a positive orientation towards VET; and updating qualification profiles and VET learning outcomes. The government of the French-speaking Community of Belgium has also recently launched an initiative for a pact on excellence in teaching covering the education system overall.
2. The existence of a specific body for defining the qualification and training profiles (i.e. the French speaking Professions and Qualifications Service): the French speaking Professions and Qualifications Service is a key actor as it enables the gathering of all relevant stakeholders and experts around the table to define the new qualifications and training profiles in BEfr. This service also ensures that a specific methodology is applied in the definition of new qualification and training profiles common to all types of training providers. This is crucial for the reform of VET qualification and training profiles.
3. Top down communication: communication with school staff is key to ensuring the smooth implementation of the measure. If VET schools do not understand what they need to implement, it is impossible to implement the CPU.
4. A CPU coordinator at school-level: the role of the CPU coordinator is crucial for a smooth implementation of the CPU at school-level. The CPU coordinator is the reference point that teachers have at school level. This person is also the contact point between the school and the Ministry.
5. Cooperation at school-level: as the CPU implies additional assessment periods and a different organisation of VET courses, good cooperation is needed between teaching staff at school-level. This aspect is crucial, especially during the transition period-when the CPU is not yet implemented in all VET tracks – and therefore the two systems co-exist.
Also, a smooth implementation of CPU requires the allocation of sufficient human resources to deal with an increase in administrative tasks at school level.
6. Remediation support as an integral part of the CPU implementation: remediation support (i.e. additional classes) is offered to learners when they fail to pass a unit. This support increases their chances of acquiring their certificate.
7. Mobility in the educational pathway: the fact that the CPU enables learners to certify their skills gradually, acquiring learning outcome units might contribute to an increase in the learners' self-esteem and achievement perspectives, although strong evidence was not yet gathered on this impact of the CPU.

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