

**2nd POLICY LEARNING FORUM:****Defining and writing learning outcomes for VET qualifications***Cedefop, Thessaloniki 13-14 October 2016***First working group session****Working Group 1****A common language? Dilemmas and opportunities in writing learning outcomes****Work flow**

The working group discussed issues related to the process of writing learning outcomes for VET qualifications, pointing to challenges and opportunities. Rena Psifidou moderated the session, introducing the thematic and explaining the session flow. She invited participants to present themselves and explain their role in relation to the writing of learning outcomes. The group consisted of 23 participants from a wide range of countries (AT, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, IE, IT, LT, MT, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK), Cedefop, and the European Commission. To ensure continuity and complementarity of discussions held in the 1st PLF on terminological issues when writing learning outcomes held in 2015, Rena Psifidou presented the key points identified by participants in the [2015 PLF on learning outcomes](#).

Küllli All, from the Ministry of Education, Estonia, presented the Estonian Qualifications Framework and the work carried out at national level to introduce learning outcomes in VET curricula on the basis of occupational standards with the participation of teachers and companies. *Malcolm Micallef*, working with MATSEC Support Unit, of the University of Malta, presented the approach followed for the integration of learning outcomes in new VET syllabi developed for programmes offered by national VET providers (MCAST, ITS). A particular asset of this process was the inclusion of learners in the design process. He advocated that the key to success was the communication among all stakeholders involved and the strong political commitment. In Malta, broader descriptions of learning outcomes are complemented by more specific grading criteria. Brief discussion on these presentations followed. Then, participants were familiarised with the questions proposed to be discussed in small teams. Suggestions were made for slight adaptations. Three groups were formed for further discussion. A representative of each sub-group shared the key messages discussed to all participants of WG1.

The discussion focused on the following questions:

1. How can learning outcomes become a common language for
 - the world of education and employment;
 - different countries?
2. To what extent can formats and terminologies be standardised at European level?
3. When writing learning outcomes statements, what needs to be left open to local adaptation?
 - Which main challenges do you identify?
 - Which main opportunities do you identify?

The key messages can be summarized as follows:

QU1 –

1. It is crucial to identify and raise awareness on the added value of LOs to national stakeholders so that they are committed and willing to collaborate and work towards this direction.
2. Occupational profiles and standards are useful to represent what the industry needs. What does the occupation or job entail? Starting from the occupational standards and profiles can help to establish a common language provided that all actors concerned are involved, e.g. companies and teachers, but also learners, graduates. Collaboration with stakeholders from the employers' and employees' side is crucial.
3. Employers need to take a step back and think the learner both as an employee and as a learner. For example, employers ask for certain attitudes. It is a challenge for the education side to come up with ways to describe ("write down") these attitudes

QU2 –

1. To standardise you have to be more abstract and that poses a risk. The risk is to lose or undermine the importance of local particularities / realities. Hence, standardisation is possible at higher level that allows some level of abstraction.
2. At national level, perhaps what is more needed are common principles rather than common formats (or terms). We could aim for example for an improved version of certificate supplement (Europass).
3. Then a sectoral approach could help to establish a common language, some sectors already use common terms across countries (e.g. financial sectors, accounting). By looking at sectoral groupings, one could see ways to establish common formats for writing learning outcomes to VET qualifications across countries. Approaches employed at sectors that already use common language can be studied and provide the basis for further implementation of such approaches in more sectors.

QU3 –

1. Standardising too much on European level may be too limiting. There is a risk of losing the national and local aspect which might increase lack of trust.
2. Flexibility and respect for national tradition is crucial; autonomy should be given at local, regional, sectoral level to define and write LOs. For example, those countries offering the possibility that an x% of curriculum can be left open to VET providers at local level, and by involving local stakeholders in its design, increase trust.

Overall opportunities and challenges:

1. The definition and writing of LOs in VET qualification are based on mutual trust; this is viewed both as an opportunity and a challenge for ensuring accessibility, mobility, and transferability.
2. Defining and writing learning outcome in VET qualifications should be closely related and interconnected with the assessment approaches and tools. LOs allow for a structured European dialogue, peer learning, communities of practice, PLAs, etc. bringing European, national and local stakeholders in synergy and systematic dialogue.