

**DRAFT DOCUMENT: OUTLINE**

Thessaloniki, 03 December 2009
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**CEDEFOP EXPERT WORKSHOP ON
LINKING THEM FOR THE BEST?
THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CREDIT SYSTEMS AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS**
(Cedefop, Thessaloniki, 21/22 January 2010)

BACKGROUND NOTE OF THE EVENT

The Cedefop expert workshop on the relationships between credit systems and qualifications frameworks will take place in Thessaloniki, Greece on 21-22 January 2010. The event will be largely based on the results of the forthcoming Cedefop study on *Exploring the relationships between credit systems and qualifications frameworks* (working title). This study aimed at analysing the relationships between qualifications frameworks and credit systems and their implications on qualifications (design and award), the progression routes for learners and the flexibility in terms of constructing individualised learning paths; and the administrative and regulatory arrangements that enable accumulation of credit. The patterns of interaction and integration are considered in national education and training contexts and at European level between ECTS, ECVET, EQF and the EHEA-QF¹. The study covers the state-of-play of credit systems and qualifications frameworks in 8 countries (Australia, Finland, France, Germany, Slovenia, Spain, South Africa, UK-EWNI and UK-Scotland) as well as at European level in the field of VET and HE. The study includes the identification of alternative development paths for the integration of credit systems and qualifications frameworks at European level. The draft version of the report will be made available for the participants before the workshop.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

- To disseminate and debate the key findings of the forthcoming Cedefop study on *Exploring the relationships between credit systems and qualifications frameworks*;
- To take further the discussion started one year ago on transition and permeability in Education and Training;
- To present and discuss national and project initiatives considering both credit systems and qualifications framework in view of their linkages for progression;
- To link with national and European initiatives and expert groups on credit systems, qualifications framework, recognition of learning outcomes.

¹ ECTS: European Credit Transfer and accumulation System; ECVET: European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training; EQF: European Qualifications Framework; EHEA-QF: European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework.



The expert workshop is targeted at ca. 40 European and national VET policy- and decision makers, experts and practitioners engaged in projects, policy-making and/or research in the field of qualifications frameworks, credit systems, learning outcomes and qualifications whom Cedefop will invite to contribute to and participate in the event.

THE BACKGROUND

The aim of this background note is to briefly raise some aspects linked to the European policy and strategy context. It will be completed by a working paper presenting the preliminary study results.

Qualifications framework, the learning outcomes approach, credits systems and validation mechanisms are all contributing to progression and permeability in education and training. Yet it is obvious that institutional devices and even formal regulations are not sufficient to establish progression or permeability as a 'normal' feature of qualifications systems. The participants to the Mai 2009 Cedefop workshop on permeability and transition in Education and Training formulated some requests in terms of needs:

- There is a need for further nurturing trust among education and training stakeholders; zones of mutual trust in terms of agreements around the issue of progression are emerging and that diverse stakeholders are working together to articulate their qualifications;
- There is a need for intensive reflection and analysis of the use of the European tools (ECVET, ECTS, EQF, QF-EHEA); thus reinforcing the messages formulated in the recommendations on EQF, ECVET and EQARF;
- There is a need for carefully dealing with differences which might exist between the different education segments. The European tools, the mechanisms and devices developed at national or sectoral level might be considered as sign of changes which concern qualifications, roles and positioning of stakeholders, increased competitions in the field of qualifications provisions and the blurring of boundaries between VET and HE;
- There is a need for acknowledging the conceptual differences between the different segments of education and training (IVET, CVET and HE) as far as learning outcomes and educational objectives and philosophies are concerned;
- There is a need to expand our views on the European tools with the dimensions of cooperation, reciprocity and mutual recognition.

Credit systems and qualifications frameworks are interwoven elements of qualifications systems although they may be assigned different roles in relation to flexibility and responsiveness of qualifications systems, learners' motivation, linking labour market and education, opening access to qualifications, assessment procedures, transparency of qualifications, funding and efficiency of qualifications systems, or management of qualifications systems. Their major difference might be in their operative fields – as the study shows – the way qualifications frameworks and credit systems are designed and implemented in terms of regulatory or informative functions, determine much their mutual influencing and their impacts on qualifications as well as education and training systems. Taking by the words the objectives of EQF, ECVET, ECTS or QF-EHEA linked to transparency, comparability and mobility (in the sense of flexible pathways) the study urges to carefulness and reflexion on the characteristics of the tools, their links and the objectives inherent to the qualifications systems and their links to the labour market.



THE TWO SESSIONS

This expert workshop will divide at some stage in two working sessions. Those sessions will allow the participants to discuss more in-depth on the basis of the presented results of the Cedefop study and two contributions.

SESSION 1 will be focusing on the linkages between credit systems and qualifications frameworks. The participants are invited to reflect on the mechanisms existing/envisaged for linking credit systems and qualifications frameworks: Which are the objectives or reasons related to those linkages? How are the linkages reflected in the daily work of the stakeholders?

SESSION 2 will address the issues of path-dependency and ownerships when it comes to introducing credit systems and qualifications frameworks in qualifications systems. As qualifications frameworks and credit systems are strongly embedded in their respective qualifications systems and linked to education and training policy objectives. What can be learnt from past experiences in terms of ensuring ownerships and empowering stakeholders to implement and use credit systems and qualifications frameworks?

Path-dependency and evolution also concern the European tools; the session 2 will discuss how the European tools might evolve on the basis of the possible implementation futures identified in the study.

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