

COMETA EVOLUTION PROJECT

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

WP6 – Quality Management and Evaluation

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Introduction

*“The [Cometa Evolution] final evaluation report will describe the experiences and achievements of the project, both for internal and for external audiences, to crystallize the key lessons to be drawn from the experience, to create the background for further development work, and for future partnership, to support or extend dissemination of the innovative approach of the project, method and tools”
(WP6 Description)*

The present document is the Final Evaluation Report of the Cometa Evolution Project.

It is composed of three main parts: Evaluation Summary (I); Peer Review Procedures (II); Assessment and Feedback (III). A final chapter, devoted to the Conclusions and Lesson Learned with, as Annexes, the Agenda and Goals of Peer Review Partners Meeting and the Activity Plan of the Project Final Evaluation, completes the report.

The choice of adopting a Peer Review method and approach was made by the Consortium from the start, since the project designing phase.

The Peer Tandem – inspired by the content of the European Peer Review Manual for VET - in carrying out their activity, while focusing on processes rather than on the individual stakeholder, always tried:

- to give reflective and constructive feedback, avoiding judgmental language
- to be specific rather than general
- to promote reflection about strategies, having in mind the project goals and aims
- to make sure that the partners could share information, rather than giving advice.

The sole responsibility for the content of this document lies with the Peer Tandem Team and the Cometa Evolution Project Consortium Members. It does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission. The European Commission is not responsible or liable for any use that might be made of information contained therein.

We hope you will enjoy reading it.

The Peer Tandem Team
Dorotea Daniele – Marisa Marini

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Part I - EVALUATION

1.1 The Project

The Cometa Evolution is a multilateral project of transfer of innovation (MP ToI) carried out within the sub-programme Leonardo da Vinci of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013), priority 5 “ECVET for transparency and recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications”.

„Cometa” stands for **Care Operators Mobility through ECVET – C.O.M.E.TA. Evolution**. In fact, the project targets are the health and social care sectors.

Aim of the project is to promote transparency, transferability, validation and recognition of learning outcomes (LOs) achieved by individuals in different learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal) in the different countries

Cometa Evolution is based on the experiences and results of a previous LDV project („Highlight the Competences”), which focused on the implementation of an ECVET process in the logistic field. Thus aiming, with this operation, at transferring and applying the lessons and methods learned to the health and social care sectors.

Furthermore, the Cometa Evolution project builds upon the experiences of another LDV project „European Care Certificate”, which identified a list of so-called *Basic European Social Care Learning Outcomes – BESCLO*, that might be considered as the basic knowledge to exercise any profession in the social care sector.

Finally, the project has also used the results of the LDV Project "Care Talents", which developed a tool for the validation of competences (including soft skills) informally acquired by home helpers.

The final aim of the project was to allow an easier mobility – both geographical and inter-sectorial - of workers and VET learners, among partner countries.

The project duration according to the Application Form was of 24 months (2012-2014).

The **project work plan** is composed of six Work Packages, **three transversal** to the project activities and lasting for its overall duration (WP1 – Project Management; WP4 – Dissemination and WP6 – Quality Management and Evaluation); and **three specifically dedicated to the implementation and multiplication of the project goals** (WP2 – Adaptation; WP3 – Testing and Training; WP5 – Exploitation Activities).

Cometa Evo - Work Plan

WP1	WP2	WP3	WP4	WP5	WP6
Project Management	Adaptation	Testing and Training	Dissemination	Exploitation Activities	Quality Management and Evaluation

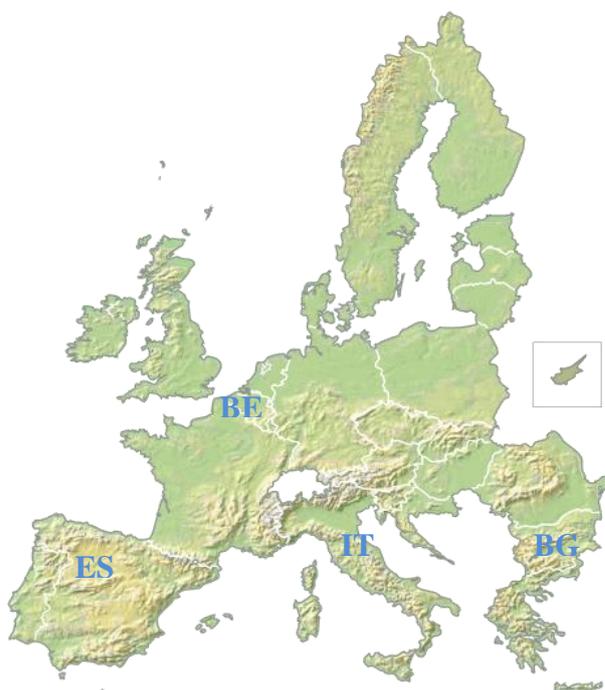
The present document, Final Project Evaluation Report, is a result of the WP6 activity.

1.2 The Consortium

The Cometa Evolution partners' Consortium is multiplayer as it involves several, different actors. All of them being key players in the field of the vocational training system and VET policies implementation, in their relevant Country of operation.

The list of the involved countries and project partners is as follows:

- **ITALY**, a national Consortium of Social Cooperatives (DROM), a not-for-profit organisation with an extensive experience in migrant care workers training (ANS), a training agency (ARIS), as core partners. And four Regional Governments, key-actors in the field of recognition of credits and competences for the selected target groups, as associated partners;
- **SPAIN**, a federation which represents more than 1000 cooperatives working in the field of social-health care sector (COCETA);
- **BULGARIA**, a SME specialised in consultancy on training issues (BALKANPLAN).
- **BELGIUM**, a social communication and promotion agency working at the European level (DIESIS Coop).



1.4 The Aims of the Evaluation Activity

Aims/Goals

The aims and goals of the present Evaluation activity is to review the COMETA Evolution project's process and main outcomes in order to:

- **ascertain the standards of quality of the co-operation**, such as stated in the Application Form and resulted from the Project Steering Committee Meeting decisions;
- **improve the performance of the project Partners and provide credibility** within the present Consortium and towards all the involved associated partners and stakeholders, at the local, national and international level.
- **support European co-operation** in evaluation at VET provider level

It has a **formative function**, putting a particular emphasis on the identification of the strenghts and weaknesses of the devised tools and methods for the transferring and validation of the skills, with reference to the main EU quality standards.

It has a **development-oriented function**, putting a particular emphasis on the promotion of continuing quality improvement within the VET providers/institutions and in order to make the project results fully applicable, recognized and lasting.

It has a **benchmark and sustainability function**, putting particular emphasis on assessing the quality and the potentials of the co-operation between organisations and institutions providing learning opportunities in the social and care sectors, enterprises, social partners and other relevant bodies, thus allowing further innovation and cooperation, at the national and EU level.

To/With Whom

The Evaluation activity focused on the core partners of the Project Consortium (i.e. a non-profit making organization, a training agency, a social communication agency, a consortium of social enterprises, a federation of social cooperatives and a SME, who have been involved in both content-related activities and in the transversal activities.

Outcome

- Final Project Evaluation Report

Part II – THE PEER REVIEW PROCEDURE

2.1 The Peer Review: in a Nutshell

The Final Evaluation activity of the Cometa Evolution project has been carried out with a Peer Review methodology and approach, as foreseen in the Project Application form (WP6). It took place in the last months of the project implementation phase (mostly Summer 2014).

Who is a Peer?

- **Peers are sometimes also called ‘critical friends’**

A Peer is a person

- who is an equal of or is on equal standing with the person(s) whose performance is being reviewed
- who works in a similar environment (and/or in a similar institution)
- who is external (i.e. from a different institution) and independent (has no personal/institutional "stakes" in the evaluation process) and
- who has specific professional expertise and knowledge in the field (shares values, professional competence and attitudes, language, etc.)
- who can thus bring a degree of “inside” knowledge of the object of review into the process and combine it with the external view of somebody coming from a different organisation (“external insider”).

“The core task of the Peers is to come to an understanding of the particular situation of the reviewed VET provider/institution and to give critical feedback. Recommendations and solutions to problems should only be given if expressly asked for by the VET provider.”

Why Peer Review?

Advantages and benefits of Peer Review as an instrument of quality assurance and development

European providers of VET can expect to benefit from a Peer Review by

- obtaining critical yet sympathetic feedback on the quality of their VET provision from colleagues in the field,
- becoming acquainted with an external perspective,
- ascertaining the quality of their provision,
- presenting their strengths and showcasing good practice,
- enhancing accountability towards stakeholders,
- detecting blind spots and weaknesses,
- receiving advice and discovering the good practice of Peers,
- engaging in mutual learning with Peers,
- establishing networks and cooperation with other VET providers, and
- obtaining an external evaluation report on the quality of their training and education at a comparably economic cost.

“The experience of the Peers (...) indicates that a balance must be found between the requirement to glean comprehensive data from different stakeholders (...) and the need for a thorough analysis and discussion of the findings.”

Source: *European Peer Review Manual for Initial VET*, Vienna June 2007

2.2 The Peer Review Activity

Composition of the Peer Team

The Peer Team is composed of a Peer Tandem, two professionals (one internal and one external Peer, Ms. Dorotea Daniele and Ms. Marisa Marini, respectively) with extensive experience in the social and educational field, as project managers and evaluators. Area of expertise: EU transnational projects and pilot programmes, field surveys, benchmarking and transferring of practices.

Methods and Tools

The tools and methods applied to the Cometa Evolution Project Peer Review Evaluation Activity have been inspired by the European Peer Review Manual for VET providers/institutions.

Out of the four „Core” Quality Areas that the Manual recommends to tackle, the present evaluation focuses on that of „Assessment”, since it lies within the decision-making power at the Partners’ level to take part in a continuous monitor and assessment procedure during the project life.

What

The Peer Review Evaluation Activity paid particular attention to the assessment of the following project components and features:

- Validation Tools
- Recognition and Acknowledgement
- Transparency and Transferability
- Cooperation and Mobility

These have been evaluated against the following project elements:

- 1._the Process
- 2._the Outcomes
- 3._the Cooperation

How

The Peer Review Evaluation activities have been carried out by means of the following actions and tools:

- Briefing on the Peer Review Activity at the Partners’ Meeting (Sofia, 21 March 2014)
- Sharing of the Peer Review Activity Plan with Goals and Tasks (June 2014)
- Peer Review Partners Meeting (Milan, 8 July 2014)

As for the Peer Review Partners Meeting, it was considered by the Consortium to serve as the main tool and the central step of the Final Evaluation Activity..

2.3 The Preliminary Analysis

A preliminary analysis and assessment on the projects' outcomes and achievements was carried out by the Peer Tandem before the Peer Review Partners' Meeting, held in Milan, IT on the 8th of July 2014.

The following documents were analysed and considered (stand July 2014):

- Project Application Form and up-to-date Work Plan
- Pre-test (focus-group) and Testing reports
- Memorandum of Understanding with relevant Annexes
- Benchmarking and Analysis documents (i.e. Comparison of Skills; Report on Profiles)
- Partners' meetings minutes
- Project monitoring reports
- Project brochure/leaflets
- Project website www.cometa-evolution.eu

The participants at the Peer Review Partners Meeting in Milan were the following:

- Ms. Licia Boccaletti, **Anziani e non Solo società cooperativa** (IT)
Project Content Manager (in charge of the questionnaires, pre-testing and pilot activities in Sicily and Sardinia Regions.)
- Ms. Anna Pasquino **ARIS cooperativa** (IT)
Project Content Manager (in charge of the MoU tool, coordinator for the testing and pilot activities and for the activities to be carried out in the Umbria Region).
- Ms. Denitza Toptchiyska, **Balkan Plan** (BG)
Project Manager (in charge of the activities to be carried out in Bulgaria and of the Project Monitoring Activities).
- Mr. Federico Camporesi, **Diesis Coop** (BE)
Communication Manager (Responsible for the project communication activities and together with Ms. Dorotea Daniele for the Evaluation activities - Peer Review)
- Mr. Pedro Blazquez, **Coceta** (ES)
Project Manager (in charge of the activities to be carried out in Spain)
- Ms. Floriana Nappini, **DROM** (IT)
Project Manager and Transnational Coordinator (in charge of the activities to be carried out in the Lombardia Region)
- Mr. James Churchill, **External Expertise**
Chair of the Board of the ECC - European Care Certificate Project (Facilitator for the benchmarking activities, with particular reference to the BESCLO - Basic European Social Care Learning Outcomes standards)

Coordinated by the **Peer Tandem Team**:

- . Ms. Dorotea Daniele, Diesis Coop (BE)
Peer Reviewer (internal and responsible for the Evaluation activity)
- . Ms. Marisa Marini, External Expertise
Peer Reviewer (external)

Part III – ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

The Cometa project deals with the health and social care sectors. It was specifically designed:

- to achieve transparency and recognition of a set of **soft skills** common to a cluster of social and care professions performed in different domains, such as child care, elderly care and social inclusion;
- to develop **a tool for the mutual recognition of these very same skills** (which could promote the geographical as well as the intra-sector mobility of social and care workers).

The partnership cooperated to achieve these goals by means of:

- the **identification** of a set of common soft skills (WP2 Adaptation) –*also referred to as “Competences”*;
- the **development** of a common tool for their validation (WP2 Adaptation and WP3 Testing) – *i.e. “the Testing Tools - Case Scenarios”*
- the **establishment** of a Memorandum of Understanding (*MoU*) according to the Ecvet model (WP3 Testing and Training) defining the qualification field in terms of learning outcomes and in transferable units of learning outcomes with allocation of credit points, and by means of its enforcement (Validation, Transfer and Credits Awarding) through related VET programmes.

Hence, the Peer Review Activity focused on the assessment of these main project features, recollecting them into 4 thematic areas (*referred to as „working Sessions” for the sake of the Peer Review Partners Meeting*), as follows:

- Validation Tools
- Recognition and Acknowledgement
- Transparency and Transferability
- Cooperation and Mobility

These have been evaluated against the following project elements:

- 1._the Process
- 2._the Outcomes
- 3._the Cooperation

In the following pages, the feedback and assessment for each above mentioned area.

3.1 The Validation Tools

Indicator / Outcome:

- The testing tools

The primary tool for the Validation of the identified “Cometa Evo transversal skills” (i.e. soft skills common to a series of different professional profiles in the care sector) is the **testing activity**. All core partners (except for Diesis coop) have been involved in carrying out this activity, each partner for the regional area/areas they are responsible for, respectively.

- . pre-test and (pilot) tests were therefore set into place, according to the work plan.

Overall goal of the testing activity was to assess the skills, acquired in formal, non-formal and informal context, which are common to the different professional profiles in the social and care sectors.

- . Around 84 stakeholders were engaged in the **pre-testing activities**: opinion leaders (representatives of the employers organizations, trade unions, public authorities at the different levels and associations of the social care sectors) and experts, (i.e. practitioners in the field of elderly and children care and that of social inclusion).

Criterion 1: Pre-testing activity

Strengths and areas of improvement by criterion considering the process, the outcomes and the cooperation

Feedback from the Peer Review

- ✓ The pre-testing phase has been a fundamental and very useful step in the fine-tuning of the tool.
- ✓ The methodology to perform the pre-tests has been well prepared. Instructions on how to organize the activity, to target the participants etc. were discussed within the Consortium and made available beforehand by the responsible partner.
- ✓ Comments and hints collected from the testees in this phase helped the partnership and especially the responsible partner to reconsider and adjust the inter-connection between the BESCLO testing tool and the Cometa Case Scenarios assessment tool.
- ✓ A general area of improvement and suggestion, could be the partners' level of involvement in specific content-related project activities, others than those assigned by the project plan. Dealing with a multiplayers partnership provides an arena to seizing the opportunity for exploiting the expertise detained by the relevant package leader and/or of another partner on a given content matter. To improve own competences, besides strengthening the effectiveness of the cooperation activity.

When having to decide which methods to use in the testing activities, to assess the identified Cometa Evo trasnversal skills, the partnership opted for a set of “**Case Scenarios**” (instead of, for example, multiple-choice questionnaires).

These consist of a set of **18 Case scenarios**: short stories describing real situations that can happen to workers in the social care sector. Each scenario has two possible answers, the testee has to choose what he/she would do in that situation.

At the time of the Peer Review Partner Meeting (July 2014), the Case Scenarios tool had been used by all partners in both the pre-testing activities and the (pilot) testing phase. Each partner had provided the responsible partner with the relevant testing report and the comprehensive data processing had just been completed. So, it was this the first time, after the accomplishment of the (pilot) testing activities and the issuing of the comprehensive report, that the partners could sit together pondering over the test results.

Criterion 2: Case Scenarios

Strengths and areas of improvement by criterion considering the process, the outcomes and the cooperation

Feedback from the Peer Review

- ✓ The Case Scenario tool has proved to be a user-friendly and yet somehow tricky tool towards the final users: if not well presented and explained it could be misleading (“too easy”; “what do I have to answer? Both answers are right, to me!...”; “I cannot answer, as the story does not refer to my present work sector”...; “how will I be judged if”).
- ✓ Special attention should be given in the presentation of the test. Underlining to the testees that “there are no right or wrong answers” per se. It was a decision to combine one scenario with one relevant skill/competence, but very often skills are transversal. So it can be said that each scenario can relate to different skills. This was one of the challenges of using scenarios instead of simple question/answer model.
- ✓ Although tackled in the pre-testing phase and in the preparation of the tool, issues on how far customised (i.e. set into the local context, changing names as an example of the role-players...) the case scenarios should be, are still open. And perhaps partners and potential users need to be prepared to cope with this fact, as these may remain so, up to a certain extent.
- ✓ The general opinion is, that it is sensible to localize the scenarios (e.g. changing the names of the role player in local languages). Yet, partners must be aware that the more the scenario is precise and customised, the more it is related to one country or context. Hence, risking to undermine the project backdrop idea of “mobility” – both geographical as well as professional i.e. intra-sectors.
- ✓ A further check point, when revising and/or customising the case scenarios, is that of the legal requirements. These may in fact differ from one country to another. Therefore it is suggested that each partner doublechecks the content further and sends, the case given, any further improvement suggestions on this area to the responsible partner.
- ✓ Area of improvement, the information on the use of the case scenarios, when running the test. Making sure that the guidelines for the use of the scenarios are carefully followed, so that simple and clear explanations are given by VET providers to final users/testees beforehand.

A total of 170 final users, coming from three different countries and six different regions, took part in the **(pilot) testing activities**. They were mostly elderly care workers (52%), followed

by social inclusion workers (18%) and child care workers (13%). The remaining share of participants were multi-sectorial workers (i.e. working for all three target groups).

- The primary purpose of the testing was to assess the functioning of the tool itself. Secondly, to assess whether or not the 6 transversal soft skills, identified by the partnership as common to the given professional profiles, are detected by the respondents.

A document - Pilot Testing Guidelines - with instructions on how to target and invite the testees, how to run the testing and how to report on the results was handed over to all involved partner by the responsible partner beforehand.

The Pilot Test was divided into three parts, two official parts and one informal, as follows: **Multiple-choice test inspired by the European Care Certificate** (so called BESCLO tool)* (**part 1**); **Cometa Evo Case Scenario** (**part 2**), as core parts; Your Opinion on some soft skills” (part 3) as extra assessment tool part, thus asking the testees views on some skills that the partnership consider important, but that are not part of most official education and training curricula in the social sector. The multiple-choice tests were used as benchmark to validate the scenarios.

(*) 'BESCLO' stands for **B**asic **E**uropean **S**ocial **C**are **L**earning **O**utcomes. These are 'learning outcomes' - ie things which a worker or student knows and can apply.

The BESCLO provides evidence of knowledge in the following main areas:

- The values of social care
- Promote life quality for the individuals you support
- Working with risk
- Understanding your role as a care worker
- Safety at work
- Communicating positively
- Recognise and respond to abuse and neglect
- Develop as a care worker

A worker or student that shows basic knowledge on these areas, which all care staff need in any country of the EU, can apply that knowledge correctly in a number of realistic workplace scenarios.

(BESCLO is part of the ECC – European Care Certificate tool, that was developed as a basic entry certificate in the care sector through an initial Leonardo Da Vinci project from the European Commission ending in 2008, that still runs today).

Criterion 3: (Pilot) Tests

Strengths and areas of improvement by criterion considering the process, the outcomes and the cooperation

Feedback from the Peer Review

✓ Results from the testing show that running a test covering both the **Multiple-choice test inspired by the European Care Certificate** (BESCLO) items and the Cometa Evo Case Scenarios can be “confusing”, for both the VET providers and the testees.

✓ In the original project plan, the BESCLO tool had a benchmarking function. And it proved to be very useful in helping the partnership to identifying those “common, transversal skills”, i.e. soft skills common to a series of different Cometa comparable professional profiles in the care sector (see the document: Comparison of Skills. Comparison between BESCLOs and soft skills declared in standard training curricula in Cometa profiles).

✓ As one participant in the Peer Review put it “with BESCLO you can answer if you have learned. With Scenarios you test behavior at work. Making use of both tools you reach the result of testing not only knowledge but also capacity of working in some contexts (e.g. to decide whom to employ)”.

✓ Nevertheless, despite the fact that the two tools (BESCLO items and Case Scenarios) have proven to be both effective and valid in ascertaining competences (see: Report on Pilot Testing Results), the advice, strongly supported by the partner responsible for the preparation of this activity, is to use them on a separate set, because the scoring system is different and it is difficult to mix and compare them. Because BESCLOs and Scenarios focus on different aspects and elements of the competences under scrutiny.

✓ In the end, since the aim of the pilot testing was to check the validity of the Case Scenarios tool rather than provide for an official certification, putting this practice in motion will surely help, since, as one participants in the Peer Review pointed out: “the most you have experience [in testing and comparing], the best results are”.

✓ Area of improvement, the analysis of the testing results showed interesting correlations between age / gender of respondents and results of the assessment. Therefore, it could be interesting to further analyze these aspects also after the conclusion of the piloting phase.

3.2 The Recognition and Acknowledgement

Indicator / Outcome:

- The Ecvet Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

A MoU is an agreement between competent institutions which sets the framework for credit transfer (i.e. for the acknowledgment of learning outcomes in view of obtaining a qualification). It formalises the ECVET partnership by stating the mutual acceptance of the status and procedures of competent institutions involved. It also establishes partnership's procedures for cooperation (*source: ECVET BASICS – MoU*).

The draft version (stand: June 2014) of the Cometa Evo Memorandum of Understanding, devised according to the suggested ECVET template, comprises:

- a general presentation (objective, participants, purpose of the MoU, ratification)
- a set of documents/tools as Annex (1. The List of Profiles Examined under Cometa; 2. The Six Common Competences; 3. Mechanism for the Implementation of the MoU; 4. The Tools for the Validation of the Cometa Transversal Skills; 5. Allocation of Ecvet Points;
- a format for the signature of the document by the partners (MoU Subscriber's Signature).

The MoU and its Annexes, issued in English, has been translated into each partner (and signatory) national language.

To facilitate the stakeholders involvement, the Cometa Evo Consortium has considered the signature of the MoU with different options, according to the signatory's engagement level:

- 1) Annexes 1 + 2 (general endorsement of the tool)
- 2) Annexes 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 (implementation of the tool)
- 3) Annexes 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 (allocation of points)

Criterion 1: The Memorandum of Understanding

Strengths and areas of improvement by criterion considering the process, the outcomes and the cooperation

Feedback from the Peer Review

✓ The key-role of the MoU, as a crucial framework agreement for the validation and recognition of credit transfer between relevant competent institutions willing to cooperate together, is evident to all partners. Yet, partners agree, that the present MoU version (stand: June 2014), although constructed in a very pragmatic way, still needs some improvements.

✓ The feedback collected so far by the partners from the relevant stakeholders (VET providers, local-regional bodies responsible for VET, social partners and social enterprises consortia...), in the different countries and regions involved show, that the MoU should be a somehow clear, „light” (not redundant) and self-explaining document.

✓ Furthermore, given the different level of involvement of the potential signatories and the differences at each national/local levels, a careful revision of the section „Rules and Procedures to Monitor and Enforce the MoU” should be taken into account. Focusing on realistic, sustainable and ready-to-use implementation rules.

3.3 The Transparency and Transferability

Indicator / Outcome:

- ECVET Classification of the professional profiles
- The Common Competences – Soft Skills
- ECVET points allocation

Given the Cometa Evo project scope, one of the first tasks tackled by the Consortium was the identification of which professional profiles could be clustered and compared, so to be able to run the tests for the transferability and recognition of learning outcomes common to different professional profiles, achieved in different learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal).

Four professional areas of the health and social care sector were therefore sorted, according to a set of agreed indicators, and taken into consideration. These are the following:

- . Nursing Assistants
- . Child Care
- . Home care for dependent persons
- . Professions focused on social inclusion

For each area and for each involved country/region, the partners listed the relevant profiles (name of the profile in the national language and in English) and added a short description of their main features (See: Report on Professional Profiles. Clusters of professional profiles on which the project will focus).

The resulting list, with a total of 15 profiles, is now integral part of the MoU, as Appendix 1.

As a consequent step, it followed the identification of those so called soft or transversal skills (what a worker knows, understands and is able to do) that are common to the chosen professional profiles in the social and care sector. Using both the BESCLO tool (**B**asic **E**uropean **S**ocial **C**are **L**earning **O**utcomes) as benchmark and the ECVET (**E**uropean **C**redit **S**ystem of **V**ocational **E**ducation and **T**raining)* as primary methods and reference point, the Partners **detected no. 6 common transversal competences**. They are the following:

1. Understand the need to promote the following values at all times: individuality, rights, choice, privacy, independence, dignity, respect and partnership.
2. Understand the importance of finding out the history, preferences, wishes, needs and abilities of the individual(s) you are supporting.
3. Understand the importance of working in partnership with unpaid carers/volunteers/significant others for the individual(s)he/she is supporting.
4. Understand the basic forms of verbal/nonverbal communication and how to use these in his/her work.
5. Understand why it is important to follow policies and procedures, legal frameworks and the aims and objectives of the organization he/she works for.
6. Is able to constantly monitor his/her activities and he/she is able to apply critically assessment tools/methodologies such as internal and/or external supervision.

The resulting list of the common competences is integral part of the MoU, as Appendix 2.

Following the ECVET methods, the Partners proceeded then in allocating to each identified profile/qualification the relevant ECVET points scale (*).

The resulting ECVET comparison chart is integral part of the MoU, Appendix 5.

(*) The ECVET points are intended as the “numerical representation of the overall weight of learning outcomes in a qualification and of the relative weight of units in relation to the

qualification.” (...) “ECVET allocates points to qualifications and not to education and training programmes. However, to decide on the number of ECVET points’ allocated to a qualification, one formal learning programme is chosen as a point of reference.” (Source: European Commission – Education and Culture, Get to know ECVET better: Questions and Answers)

Criterion 1: Allocation of ECVET points

Strengths and areas of improvement by criterion considering the process, the outcomes and the cooperation

Feedback from the Peer Review

- ✓ Out of the three items: „Ecvet Classification of the professional profiles”; „Common Competences” and „Allocation of ECVET points”, the two former, turned out to be for the partnership the most significant ones. When trying to compare, validate and transfer methods and competences, it is vital to have common methods and standards, such as the ECVET system. Yet, the partnership believes that the allocation of ECVET point is just as important as the necessary preparatory work. Which includes full transparency in comparing professional profiles and competences with constant data exchanges and reciprocal comparisons among partners.
- ✓ Bearing in mind that the Cometa Evo project is not focused either on acquiring a qualification, nor on acquiring full units, the methodology to allocate ECVET points needs to be adapted. The criteria must be acceptable for all the different partners and stakeholders, knowing that the ECVET points in themselves do not represent the objective value of a competence, hence they cannot be used to compare the different professional profiles. In this regard, following the proposal of the responsible partner, while drawing on the experience from a previous LLP-LdV (I-Care) project, an ad hoc score calculation and comparison basis has been developed and adopted in the Cometa Evo project. This has been highlighted and included in the introductory statement of the Appendix 5 of the MoU “Allocation of ECVET points”.
- ✓ As one of the participants at the Peer Review put it: “Cometa Evo project demonstrates that skills developed in the social sectors are useful in different sectors (elderly care, children, etc.) and this should be recognized. Hence, we should work more on transparency and recognition rather than on technicalities of the ECVET points.”
- ✓ Area of improvement, given that the whole MoU document (Introduction and relevant Annexes, including the “ECVET point allocation chart”) is in fact crucial for the transparency and the process of transferring the learning outcomes. Stronger efforts should be made in committing perhaps a larger number of organizations / stakeholders willing to sign the MoU. Hence willing to recognize the common competences, thus paving the way for an increased mobility of health and social care workers, at both geographical and intra-sector levels.

3.4 The Cooperation and Mobility

Indicator / Outcome:

- Seminars, Round Tables, Final Conference
- Exploitation Activities

Two out of the six work packages of the Cometa Evo project are devoted to the Dissemination and Exploitation Activities, i.e. the WP4 and WP5, respectively.

Tools such as: the project website, the newsletter, press notes, local seminars and the final conference/event to be held in Brussels were part of the Dissemination strategy and plan. These activities were targeted to a variety of audiences: project internal audience, other projects, external stakeholders and the community, i.e. a larger audience.

Whereas, a toolkit featuring the project results (Cometa Evo Navigator), the organization of round tables with policy makers and stakeholders at each regional/national level, the signing of memos of understanding (protocol) for a wider dissemination of project results with institutional bodies responsible and/or umbrella organizations involved in social and health care, the setting up of virtual thematic networks were the main outcomes of the planned Exploitation Activities.

These activities were targeted primarily to external relevant stakeholders, such as VET providers, practitioners, umbrella organizations of the social care sectors and decision makers.

The main WPs deliverables and outcomes have been made accessible, as the project developed, on the project website. Mostly in the English language and some (eg the Newsletter) also in the relevant partners' national languages.

Criterion 1: Dissemination

Strengths and areas of improvement by criterion considering the process, the outcomes and the cooperation

Feedback from the Peer Review

✓ As for other projects, also in the Cometa Evo operation, the underlying reason to collect and disseminate information is to assure that it is used in reaching decisions, making changes, or taking other specific actions designed to improve programs. The goal of all dissemination should be in fact utilization, through cooperation (firstly partners' cooperation).

✓ As it results from the Peer Review, it seems that the Cometa Evo dissemination tools and activities have been devised mostly for awareness raising (i.e. "Dissemination for Awareness") and for understanding the project work (i.e. "Dissemination for Understanding").

✓ Considering the Dissemination WP targeted audiences': "project internal audience, other projects, external stakeholders and the community, i.e. a larger audience", it emerges from the Peer Review, that special commitment on the targeted "internal audience" (i.e. the core and associated members of the project Consortium and of each partner institution) is always needed, in order to increase the mainstreaming of the project results ("Dissemination of Understanding").

✓ The strengths and advantages of being a multiplayer, multilateral and transnational Consortium, such as the Cometa Evo is, are not up for discussion. As a matter of fact, the

role of the associated partners (mostly Italian Regional Authorities) was considered an added value from the very start and is considered very important for the project impact. Yet, given that even within the same country, such as Italy, there are great differences in the social and care organizations and in the service provisions as well as in VET policies and programmes, dissemination activities towards the internal audience should not be given for granted.

✓ An area of improvement, for this kind of projects aiming at transferring innovation, could therefore be to target some “Dissemination of Understanding” activities specially towards the internal audiences. For example, using the “Local Seminars” dissemination vehicle and placing particular emphasis on the innovation range of the operation. Thus risking otherwise, as one of the participants in the Peer Review put it: “to have hard time in motivating my colleagues in taking part in new similar project ventures. As it is sometimes hard to explain innovation.”

✓ Furthermore, considering the critical subjects matter tackled, i.e. the still somehow “new” and sensitive area of “soft skills” (common to a series of different professional profiles in the care sector). Special awareness raising activities (“Dissemination of Awareness”) on this specific subject matter and its implication in the quality of the service provision should perhaps have been scheduled. As one participant in the Peer Review put it: “Raising awareness on soft skills is important, also because people themselves [i. e. social care workers, in this case] do not recognize that they need to have them”. The target groups could be, for example, external stakeholders (eg other decision makers and local authorities, and other groups/audiences), who will benefit from the outcomes of the project, as well as “opinion makers” such as teachers and researchers ect.

✓ Interesting to note, as some participants in the Peer Review highlighted, that in some countries/systems “soft skills” are already embebbed into the qualification system. For example, in UK “soft skills are part of the NVQs National Vocational Qualifications systems”. Whereas in Bulgaria, where “the professional profiles description are very detailed and so to say very much up-to-date (recently reformulated)”, soft skills are a current subject of the training offer.

✓ At the same time, the tackled subject matter “mobility”, both geographical and intra-sector in the social and care areas, could also be a subject theme for both carrying out “Dissemination for Awareness” and “Dissemination for Understanding” activities, these targeted to both the internal and external audiences.

✓ As one participant in the Peer Review put it: “soft skills and mobility subject matters are quite relevant for our own organization and system (i.e. a social enterprise with branches operating in different regional contexts). In fact, according to the each local framework, soft skills are detected and valued differently. Hence, tools like these developed under the Cometa Evo project and dissemination for awareness and understanding activities are important for promoting mobility among professions and profiles, even within the very same organization”.

Criterion 2: Exploitation Activities

Strengths and areas of improvement by criterion considering the process, the outcomes and the cooperation

Feedback from the Peer Review

- ✓ Exploitation Activities can be seen as part of the dissemination process, an activity otherwise known as “Dissemination for Action”. More specifically it refers to activities aiming at “a change of practice resulting from the adoption of products, materials or approaches offered by your project. The groups/audiences will be those people that are in a position to “influence” and “bring about change” within their organisations. These are the groups/audiences that will need to be equipped with the right skills, knowledge and understanding of your work in order to achieve real change”. *Source: “Creating an Effective Dissemination Strategy. An Expanded Interactive Workbook for Educational Development Projects”, TQEF National Coordination Team, Bristol-London UK 2000-2001*
- ✓ As reported above (see Criterion 1 Dissemination), for the Cometa Evo project, the regional and national authorities responsible for the social care and VET policies and umbrella organizations active in the social area are considered the crucial stakeholders for the project Exploitation Activities (i.e. Dissemination for Action). Since they add value to the project cooperation, in the first place, and not least, they are important for the project impact.
- ✓ At this stage of the project development, albeit the carried out activities, the participants in the Peer Review, with special regards to the Italian members, seem to be rather discouraged from dealing with the many different local rules & systems. The fact is that “every regional authority/local body has its own system and rules”. One participant in the Peer Review even suggested that operations financed under the EU schemes, such as the ESF measures, “should encourage at least for the same country a homogenization of the training qualifications and curricula.”
- ✓ A feeling of uncertainty arose from other participants in the Peer Review, also as far as the number of institution/organizations willing to really acknowledge and to adopt the MoU. To this regard, making the best use of the foreseen targeted project Exploitation and Dissemination Activities, as well as getting the best out of the Cooperation among the Consortium partners’ (core and associated), this seem to be the most pragmatic hint at the present stage of the project implementation.
- ✓ Last but not least, being all partners aware of the not easy task to effectively disseminate and exploit the outcomes of the project; and also, as one participant in the Peer Review semi-seriously commented, that “our project is like a drop in the ocean”. In spite of all this, efforts should be made in assuring the quality of translation of the different tools and documents (“to avoid the risk of misunderstanding”, as one Peer Participant suggested) and furthermore in the “packaging” of the project products.

Conclusions and Lessons learned

Conclusions drawn from the participant Partners'

It may have been a “drop in the ocean”, as one participant semi-seriously commented, to have identified “only” a set of **six soft skills**, common to a cluster of social and care professions performed in different domains (such as child care, elderly care and social inclusion) and countries/regions.

It may have been a “drop in the ocean” to have devised and customised tools for the **mutual recognition** of these soft skills, aimed at promoting the geographical as well as the intra-sector mobility of social and care workers.

Nevertheless the project helped **develop a methodology** that can be used in other projects, as one participant remarked.

For another participant, precisely the fact of having **focused and worked on a limited set of soft skills** and of having **customised the ECVET MoU template**, are lessons than can be transferred and capitalized in other projects.

According to another participant, dealing with **soft skills** is always critical, as they encompass **cultural differences**.

Some participants pointed out that, the present final rush in finalizing (stand: July 2014) some of the tools, in spite of the careful monitoring and managing of the activities and of the good climate among partners, show that “something did go wrong”. The lesson being that the **respect of the project timetable and milestones** allows, among others, a more effective and efficient cooperation and performance.

Other participants underlined as lesson learned the importance of continuing **raising awareness** towards the stakeholders on the subject matter “soft skills”. Thus highlighting once more how crucial it is to pay attention to the quality of translation, to targeted communication and to the “packaging” of the products.

The **Peer Review methods and approach** was a new experience and further lesson learned for most of the participants. And they believe it is an innovation for this kind of transnational projects, that should be replied and applied to other operations.

In the end, the project showed that addressing issues dealing with the “**transfer of innovation**” proves to be, in general, for all involved partners and stakeholders an **ongoing learning experience**.

Conclusions from the Peer Team

As closing feedback to the participants partners from the Peer Team. The Cometa Evo project, the issues that were addressed, the feedback gained from the assessment and evaluation activity carried out with the participant partners, seem to us that they are very much in line with results of the „Joint conference of ECVET pilot projects”, held in 2013.

We have therefore sorted out some impressions and statements collected from the participants at the two days conference, that seem to us mostly appropriate, as follows.

“**Joint conference of ECVET pilot projects and NetECVET project**”,

Brussels 24-25 October 2013

'We have seen many examples that ECVET can work.'

It requires authorities/organisations to make a strategic decision about what they want to use ECVET for. In other words: What problems do we have for which this instrument can be a useful solution? The issues presented varied from preventing and addressing early school leaving, recognising non-formal and informal learning to improving the quality of international mobility.

'Now that we see that it can work, we need to make projects meet the system.'

There is a lot of experience to build on. Several system level initiatives discussed built on the experience of earlier projects. For local and concrete activities to continue in a sustainable way there is a need for a clearer system level framework in many countries.

'We are building up our expertise on ECVET and the rest of the instruments.'

The quality of the questions received and the quality of the discussions in the rooms shows that we have all moved forward in our understanding of this instrument and its 'sister' instruments. There are more and more people with well-informed opinions and diversity of experience about ECVET.

'We now need to convince, encourage and empower the practitioners to use the tools.'

Don't wait until there is a top-level decision to take action. People should be encouraged to 'move from the passenger seat to the steering wheel' and be the drivers of the process. The experience shows that in many countries at least some aspects of ECVET can already be used in the framework of existing systems.

'Develop a culture of recognition that embraces diversity.'

There will always be differences in the formulations of learning outcomes and there will always be some differences in the expected learning outcomes. But the core of most professions and activities across Europe is very similar and therefore recognition should be possible and encouraged despite small differences.

'Bring the European instruments closer to create a comprehensive European and national framework.'

The EU tools complement each other. They should inspire national frameworks that work for the learner and enable education and training to offer high quality service to the citizens. The different authorities and organisations need to overcome their entrenched institutional positions and work together and towards common goals which are to support the learners.

Source: <http://www.ecvet-projects.eu/Seminars/SeminarDetail.aspx?id=50&>

Reflective Statement from the Peer Team

Peer Review procedures can be very articulated and a set of different tools can be used. Customising and applying some standard Peer Review tools and methods to the Cometa Evo Project Final Evaluation activity, following the guidelines of the European Peer Review Manual for VET, we believe, it proved to be functional and fruitful.

Particularly, having the Peer Review Partners Meeting (held in Milan on the 8th of July 2014), as main tool and vehicle of the Cometa Evo Project Evaluation Activity, proved to be a good, pragmatical way to combining and making the best use of standard Peer Review tools, such as on-site visits and interviews (to the main project players).

As general remark, all participant partners had a chance to contribute with their opinions and proved to be curious and open to the Peer Review approach and methods. This facilitated our work from the start.

We would like to thank each and everyone of the participants for their fine collaboration.

A special thank goes to the Project Coordinator, Floriana Nappini of Drom, for supporting us all the way through.

Brussels-Milano, September 2014

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Annex

ANNEX 1: PEER REVIEW MEETING

- Agenda & Goals

ANNEX 2: FINAL PROJECT EVALUATION

- Activity Plan



“COMETA” Project – LLP Programme
Peer Review Meeting
8 July 2014
Cooperativa CRM
Via Trenno, 15 - Milan, Italy

MEETING AGENDA (with GOALS & TASKS)

The meeting is part of the Final Evaluation Activity foreseen within the WP6. The methodology applied is that of the Peer review. The meeting working language is English.

Scope: *of the meeting is to assess the main project outcomes and the devised tools for the validation and recognition of the skills, with reference to the project objectives and goals.*

Goal: *of the day is to discuss among partners those issues that, at the present stage, prove to be crucial for the finalization, full application and transfer of the devised tools. A second goal is to share the further steps for carrying out the Project Final Evaluation.*

Tasks: *Participants should have at hand the results of their own local Pilot Testing, a copy of the MoU and the list of organisations that will be signing the MoU.*

9.00 Welcome & Introduction

- The Peer Review

9.30-11.00 Session I : Validation

- the Pilot Tests

11.00-11-15 Coffee Break

11.15-13.00 Session II : Recognition

- The MoU: application and dissemination

13.00-14.00 Lunch Break

14.00-15.00 Session III : Transparency and Transferability

- The EU Standards vs the Cometa Evo devised tools

15.00-15.30 Session IV: Cooperation and Mobility

- Quality of the cooperation (internal, external)

15.30-16.00 Conclusions

- Final Project Evaluation Report Outline

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FINAL PROJECT EVALUATION

Activity Plan

WP6 – Quality Management and Evaluation

The [Cometa Evolution Project] final evaluation will be carried out through the use of the peer-review methodology. (Application Form, WP6 Description)

Peer Review: In a Nutshell

Who is a Peer?

- **Peers are sometimes also called ‘critical friends’**

A Peer is a person

- who is an equal of or is on equal standing with the person(s) whose performance is being reviewed
- who works in a similar environment (and/or in a similar institution)
- who is external (i.e. from a different institution) and independent (has no personal/institutional "stakes" in the evaluation process) and
- who has specific professional expertise and knowledge in the field (shares values, professional competence and attitudes, language, etc.)
- who can thus bring a degree of “inside” knowledge of the object of review into the process and combine it with the external view of somebody coming from a different organisation (“external insider”).

“The core task of the Peers is to come to an understanding of the particular situation of the reviewed VET provider/institution and to give critical feedback. Recommendations and solutions to problems should only be given if expressly asked for by the VET provider.” (European Peer Review Manual in Initial VET)

Foreword

The Cometa Evolution is a multilateral project of transfer of innovation (MP ToI) realized within the sectorial programme Leonardo da Vinci of the EU Lifelong Learning Programme (2007-2013). „Cometa” stands for Care Operators Mobility through ECVET. In fact, the project target field is the health and social care sector.

Aim of the project is to promote transparency, transferability, validation and recognition of learning outcomes (LOs) achieved by individuals in different learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal) in the different countries

The partners’ Consortium is multiplayer as it involves different actors: ITALY, a national Consortium of Social Cooperatives (DROM), a not-for-profit organisation with an extensive experience in migrant care workers training (ANS), a training agency (ARIS), as core partners; and four Regional Governments, key-actors in the field of recognition of credits and competences for the selected target groups, as associated partners; SPAIN, a federation which represents more than 1000 cooperatives working in the field of social-health care sector (COCETA); BULGARIA, a SME specialised in consultancy on training issues (BALKANPLAN). BELGIUM, a social communication and promotion agency working at the European level (DIESIS).

Aims/Goals

The present Peer Review activity, to be carried out in the last months of the project implementation phase, aims at reviewing the COMETA Evolution project process and main outcomes in order to:

- **maintain the standards of quality of the co-operation**, such as stated in the Application Form and resulted from the Project Steering Committee Meeting decisions;
- **improve performance and provide credibility** within the present Consortium and towards all the involved associated partners and stakeholders, at the local, national and international level.
- **support European co-operation** in evaluation at VET provider level

It has a **formative function**, putting a particular emphasis on the identification of the strenghts and weaknesses of the devised tools and methods for the transferring and validation of the skills, with reference to the main EU quality standards.

It has a **development-oriented function**, putting a particular emphasis on the promotion of continuing quality improvement within the VET providers/institutions and in order to make the project results fully applicable, recognized and lasting.

It has a **benchmark and sustainability function**, putting particular emphasis on assessing the quality and the potentials of the co-operation between organisations and institutions providing learning opportunities in the social and care sectors, enterprises, social partners and other relevant bodies, thus allowing further innovation and cooperation, at the national and EU level.

To/With Whom

The Peer Review will focus on all core partners of the project Consortium that have been involved in both content-related activities -hence VET organisations and social services providers at the national, regional and local level- and in the transversal activities.

Methods and Tools

The tools and methods of the Cometa Evolution Project Peer Review and Evaluation are inspired by the European Peer Review Manual for VET providers/institutions. Out of the four „Core” Quality Areas that the Manual recommend to tackle, the present review focuses on that of „Assessment”. Since it lies within the decision-making power at the Partners’ level to take part in a continuous monitor and assessment procedure during the project life.

Composition of the Peer Team

The Peer Team is composed of a Peer Tandem, two professionals (one internal and one external Peer) with extensive experience in the social and educational field, as project managers and evaluators. Area of expertise: EU transnational projects and pilot programmes, field surveys, benchmarking and transferring of practices

What

The Peer Review will focus on the three following areas:

- 1. _the Process
- 2. _the Outcomes
- 3. _the Cooperation

How

The following activities will be carried out:

- Partners Meeting Milan 8 July 2014 (see Annex 1: Agenda & Goals)
- Targeted assessment interviews to peers (partners) (July 2014)
- Final Evaluation Report (August 2014)

When

- Final Evaluation Report including the relevant annexes to be presented and validated during the last SC meeting (Brussels, 19 Sept. 2014)

Outcome

- Final Project Evaluation Report.

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