

Units of Learning Outcomes of the Qualifications Framework for the Spa Therapist

**TRANSFERT DE LA CERTIFICATION EUROPÉENNE
D'AGENT DE SOIN THERMAL
(PROJET THERM 134098 LLP 2007 BG LMP) THERM_2**

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INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the project “Transfert de la certification européenne d’Agent de soin thermal (projet THERM 134098 LLP 2007 BG LMP) THERM_2”, co-funded by the European Union under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme, one of the sectoral programmes of the Lifelong Learning Programme, was to answer the problematics around the evolution of competences of the profession of the Spa Therapist, which the professionals of the thermalism sector have been facing, providing a solution in terms of vocational training and professional qualification.

The traditional activities of thermalism, first created with a therapeutic goal, have been losing ground, these last years, in benefit of wellbeing activities. Nowadays thermal spas give more privilege to their wellbeing offer than their offer regarding therapeutic care. This displacement of activities implies an evolution of professional behaviors and skills, making it necessary to adapt to the new needs and expectations of the spa clients.

In this context, the innovative results of the project THERM 134098 LLP 2007 BG LMP were transferred to the beneficiary countries - Portugal and Turkey - enabling them to create, implement and/or adapt the Spa Therapist qualification and its modular training offer within their national qualifications framework, which will answer the needs identified by the professionals of thermalism. This transfer of innovation was piloted by two of the countries participating in the first THERM project – Bulgaria and France –, with the quality assurance and control of Italy.

The qualification is composed by several frameworks of reference or standards designed according to the Competency-Based Approach: Framework of Reference for the Professional Activities, Qualifications Framework of Reference, Knowledge Framework of Reference, and Certificative Units or Learning Outcomes Units. These frameworks of reference can be implemented in all countries wishing to follow the European policy of harmonization of qualifications.

The THERM_2 project consortium was composed of 12 partners with recognized experience in the vocational education and training, tourism and thermalism sectors - Escola Profissional de Espinho, Groupement d’Intérêt Public Formation et Insertion

Professionnelles de l'Académie de Grenoble, Greta Savoie, South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Instituto Superior de Espinho, Caldas da Felgueira, Aqua Hotel, Süleyman Şah Üniversitesi, Tuzla Termal Kaplıcaları, Kaplıca Talasso ve Kür Merkezleri Derneği, İstanbul İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü, Università degli Studi dell'Aquila – which made possible to successfully achieve the following results in the beneficiary countries of the transfer:

- R1: Two qualification standards in accordance with national regulations, both comprising a vocational training offer articulated with the European Qualifications Framework.
- R2: A modular vocational training offer for Spa Therapists common to both beneficiary countries.
- R3: A training program for trainers of Spa Therapists in each beneficiary country.
- R4: A training program for nine trainers in the beneficiary countries of the transfer.
- R5: An experimentation of the training program contents created within this specific training program (qualification standard, modular training and training of trainers) through the implementation of a training program in each beneficiary country, aimed at training fifteen future Spa Therapists.
- R6: Tools for the diffusion of the outcomes: website, newsletters, posters, leaflets and CD-ROMs.

EUROPEAN SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE UNITS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union recommend that Member States promote the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) at all levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) with reference to Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications, in order to facilitate transnational mobility and the recognition of learning outcomes in VET and borderless lifelong learning¹.

ECVET is a common technical framework aimed at the transfer, recognition and accumulation of learning outcomes, within a mobility context, for the purpose of achieving a qualification. ECVET was designed to work in complementarity with other European instruments and aims at helping European citizens have their training, skills and knowledge recognized in other Member States.

ECVET is applicable for all learning outcomes that are achieved by an individual in different paths of teaching and learning and that are transferred, recognized and accumulated afterwards, with the objective of achieving a qualification. To this end, this system divides the national qualifications into "Units of Learning Outcomes".

A Unit of Learning Outcomes is a set of skills that constitute a coherent whole and correspond to a certain employability rate. The Unit gains meaning when considered in terms of its capacity of employability, allowing the individual to value his professional know-how. The Units are also considered as certificative, i.e., as its name suggests, the certificate that corresponds to the unit certifies skills. Therefore, the framework must consider the tests that the candidates will be asked to do, so that they can demonstrate their skills, putting them into practice.

The specifications of the Units of Learning Outcomes, as described in Annex 2 (ECVET - Principles and Technical Specifications) of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union, correspond to the elements

¹ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

indicated as follows - each feature mentioned was applied to the European Qualification for the Spa Therapist, resulting from the THERM_2 project.

European specifications	Specifications to be considered for the qualification of the Spa Therapist
<p>The units are components of a qualification and consist of coherent sets of knowledge, skills and competences that can be assessed and assigned with a number of associated ECVET points. In principle, a qualification comprises several units and is a result of the set of all units. Therefore, to get a qualification, the learner has to accumulate the required units, which can be achieved in different countries and contexts (formal and, if appropriate, non-formal and informal), in accordance with the national legislation related to the accumulation of units and the recognition of learning outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The qualification includes five units. • Each unit includes a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competences. • A number of credits may be assigned to each unit. • The unit is assigned independently of the formal, informal and/or non-formal learning context.

European specifications	Specifications to be considered for the qualification of the Spa Therapist
<p>The units that compose a qualification must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Described in readable and understandable terms, referring to the knowledge, skills and competences they enclose. • Structured and organized in a coherent way, considering the overall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The units of learning outcomes are described in terms of knowledge and skills. • The five certification units gather all the skills and cover the five major families of skills for the profession. • The assessment and certification tests are constituent parts of the units.

<p>qualification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to allow a separate assessment and validation for each expected learning outcome referred to in the unit. 	
<p>A unit may refer to a single qualification or to several qualifications. The expected learning outcomes, which constitute the unit, may be achieved independently of where or how they are accomplished. Thus, a unit cannot be confused with a component of a formal education or training program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The certification units are articulated with training reference frameworks and training units integrated in the National Catalogue of Qualifications. • The unit is assigned independently of the formal, informal and non-formal learning context.
<p>The rules and procedures set to define the characteristics of the units of learning outcomes and to combine and accumulate units for a given qualification are defined by competent institutions and partners involved in the process of training, in accordance with the national or regional norms.</p>	<p>The rules, procedures and certification units that make up the qualification can be adjusted, if necessary, according to the national rules and procedures.</p>

<p>European specifications</p>	<p>Specifications to be considered for the qualification of the Spa Therapist</p>
<p>The specifications of a unit must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The generic designation of the unit. • If necessary, the general designation of the qualification (or qualifications) the unit refers to. • The reference of the qualification, according to the level of the European 	<p>The units of learning outcomes for the qualification include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The generic designation of the unit and the generic designation of the respective qualification. • The reference of the qualification, according to the level of the EFQ and, if

<p>Framework of Qualifications (EFQ) and, if applicable, the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learning outcomes related to the unit. • The procedures and criteria for the assessment of these learning outcomes. • The ECVET points associated with the unit. • The duration of the unit validity, in case there is any. 	<p>appropriate, the NFQ.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ECVET points or credits assigned to the qualification (awaiting national guidelines) • The learning outcomes that the unit integrates. • The procedures and criteria for the assessment of the learning outcomes, i.e., the tests (content, form, duration). • The ECVET points assigned to the unit (awaiting national guidelines). • The unit validity period, if applicable.
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METHODOLOGY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE UNITS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The stages for the construction of the Units of Learning Outcomes are the following:

- Determining the characteristic professional situations (such situations will determine the units and their formulation).
- Identifying the skills used in these situations.
- Identifying the areas of knowledge involved.
- Conceiving the tests for the assessment and certification of skills.
- Assigning credits to the units.

a) Determining professional situations

This determination is set in articulation with hydrotherapy professionals (Directors of Thermal Spas, Directors of Spas and Spa Therapists, among others). Two issues were at the basis of this determination:

- The professional situations that characterize the daily routine of the Spa Therapists.
- The situations that can be regarded as critical. We have considered that a situation is critical when it potentially involves challenges – security risk, competitive advantage, service quality, among others.

b) Identifying the skills used

The skills that may be triggered within the professional situation correspond to the skills of the unit.

c) Identifying the areas of knowledge involved

The Knowledge Framework of Reference integrates a table that displays the correspondence between the domains of knowledge and the skills. The domains of knowledge and the skills of the unit are immediately identified.

d) Conceiving tests for the assessment of skills

The tests refer to the units and should allow the assessment and certification of the units' skills. In the scope of the project *Therm2*, it was decided to limit the number of tests. Thus, for each unit, there is only one test. Actually, skills can only be assessed in a complex professional situation; the candidate is required to have developed a large knowledge and appropriately use it. A large number of tests would mean a fragmentation of the professional activity and the assessment would not focus on a skill, but essentially on the know-how. In all cases, we have tried to realistically conciliate the constraints in terms of logistics and the pedagogical imperatives, conceiving tests as short as possible. The tests are representative of the skills to be certified, the number of skills is limited, but must correspond to real work situations, controlling the tests' feasibility and associated costs.

The tests are described in a standardized form (way, test duration, duration of the preparation, assessment team). The tests may take different forms: practical, written and oral. The duration is set for each test. The assumption is that the total length of all tests must be reasonable, not exceeding, in total, the equivalent of one day.

DESCRIPTION OF THE UNITS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Reference Framework of Qualifications for the Spa Therapist was designed to serve as a reference to:

- The pedagogical teams, so that they can conceive the programs, the pedagogical progression, and the assessment tests.
- The members of the certification juries or of the assessment teams, so that they can ensure that the candidates use the appropriate knowledge during the certification tests.

The description of the units of learning outcomes completes the Framework of Reference of Qualifications for the Spa Therapist. The units translate the requirements of the Framework of Reference of Qualifications under the form of assessment tests, theoretical or practical. Each unit of learning outcomes allows validating a coherent set of skills within a working logic.

UNIT 1 – RECEPTION AND COMMUNICATION

Skills and knowledge constituent of the unit of qualification	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5
C2. Know, interpret and use technical terminology.	X	X	X		
C5. Assess, direct and accompany the thermal spa customers, providing them with the necessary aid, according to the type of treatment and adapting the contact to the characteristics of their age group.		X	X	X	
C15. Identify the needs and expectations of the thermal spa customers in terms of the prescribed therapeutic processes.				X	X

Tests		
No.	Skills	Description
T1.1	C2. C5. C15.	<p>From the presentation of a specific case (the cases should represent the various types of thermal centers customers, describing the age, pathology, physical/ functional limitations) and respective prescription, the trainee must explain: how he will perform the procedures and the organization of the workplace; the reasons for proceeding that way.</p> <p>Duration: 20 minutes.</p> <p>Preparation: 20 minutes.</p> <p>Assessment: Oral test (0-20 marks).</p> <p>Assessment team: A teacher of the technical area and the course coordinator.</p>

UNIT 2 – ORGANIZATION AND PREPARATION

Skills and knowledge constituent of the unit of qualification	D3	D4	D7	D8	D9	D10	D11	D12	D13	D14	D15	D16
C1. Read and interpret the medical prescriptions of the clinical staff and/ or higher health technicians.	X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X	X
C3. Define and organize the activities, methods, techniques and resources related to the indicated therapeutic processes.				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
C4. Prepare the conditions concerning the use of the equipment, tools and spaces, respecting the rules of cleanliness and hygiene, as well as of personal and environmental hygiene care.			X					X				
C6. Apply the procedures concerning the preparation of the thermal spa customers for their treatments.			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Tests		
No.	Skills	Description
T2.1	C1. C3. C4. C6.	<p>The trainee is given a medical prescription with a set of thermal techniques prescribed by the doctor. The trainee must: interpret the prescription; propose the performing sequence of the techniques in an orderly and consistent manner, justifying the choice; explain the actions inherent to the preparation of the equipment, utensils and spaces related to the thermal techniques presented; describe the stages of preparation of the products and materials, as well as the conditions for implementing the techniques, identifying the duration, temperature, pressure, among others; explain how to react before problematic situations (high influx of customers, calling order, delays, ...).</p> <p>Duration: 45 minutes.</p> <p>Preparation: 30 minutes.</p> <p>Assessment: Oral test (0-20 marks).</p> <p>Assessment team: A teacher of the technical area and the course coordinator.</p>

UNIT 3 – PERFORMANCE AND SUPERVISION OF THE THERMAL TECHNIQUES

Skills and knowledge constituent of the unit of qualification	D9	D10	D11	D14	D15	D16
C7. Use the techniques for the natural mineral water regulation and for the preparation of the thermal techniques.				X		
C8. Apply and supervise the implementation of Otorhinolaryngology and Pulmonology techniques.						X
C9. Apply balneotherapy techniques (dipping, shower, steam).				X		
C10. Apply the thalassotherapy techniques.				X		
C11. Apply the hydrokinesiotherapy techniques.					X	
C12. Apply the electrotherapy techniques.		X				
C13. Apply the manual massage techniques.	X					
C14. Apply the sludge techniques.			X			

Tests		
No.	Skills	Description
T3.1	C7. C8. C9. C10. C11. C12. C13. C14.	<p>From a list of thermal techniques, the trainee must perform four techniques randomly chosen within the following categories: ORL, balneotherapy, hydrokinesiotherapy and manual massage. The trainee is assessed in terms of the implementation or supervision of all techniques that are chosen. After completing the process, the trainee must explain the procedure adopted, taking into account the following parameters: description of the care of the client (performance, description of the techniques, positioning, posture, monitoring); respect for the prescription (temperature, pressure, duration, sequence associated to the technique); description of the care of the space, equipment and materials assigned to the techniques.</p> <p>Duration: 1h30m to 2 hours.</p> <p>Preparation: Not applicable.</p> <p>Assessment: Practical test (0-20 marks) - 60% corresponds to the performance and 40% to the justification.</p> <p>Assessment team: A teacher of the technical area and the course coordinator.</p>

UNIT 4 – HYGIENE AND MAINTENANCE

Skills and knowledge constituent of the unit of qualification	D7	D12
C18. Use the equipment, tools and materials related to each thermal technique, taking into account the medical prescription and usage rules.		X
C19. Give instructions on the proper use of the equipment and thermal facilities.	X	X
C20. Apply the hygiene procedures concerning the equipment and thermal facilities.	X	X

Tests		
NO.	Skills	Description
T4.1	C18. C19. C20.	<p>From the thermal techniques previously chosen, the trainee must: carry out the hygienization of the workplace; describe the cleaning procedures and the hygienization of the workplace; identify the products for the hygienization of the equipment and materials; explain the intended dosage; explain possible undesirable reactions associated with the use of the products; describe the actions that must be performed to accomplish the process.</p> <p>Duration: 30 minutes.</p> <p>Preparation: Not applicable.</p> <p>Assessment: Practical test (0-20 marks) - 60% corresponds to the performance and 40% to the justification.</p> <p>Assessment team: A teacher of the technical area and the course coordinator.</p>

UNIT 5 – CONTROL, SAFETY AND WELLNESS

Skills and knowledge constituent of the unit of qualification	D4	D5	D6	D7	D8	D9	D10	D11	D12	D13	D14	D15	D16
C16. Detect signs or abnormal situations concerning the reaction of the thermal spa customers before the prescribed treatments.			X	X									
C17. Promote the satisfaction of the thermal spa customers' needs and ensure their welfare.	X	X											
C21. Record the data related to each treatment, considering the possibility of any further treatment by the competent services.	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
C22. Use log supports, noting the activities and occurrences that are observed or referred to by the thermal spa customers, as well as their therapeutic evolution.				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
C23. Apply the procedures and first aid techniques in accident situations.			X										

Tests		
NO.	Skills	Description
T5.1	C16. C17. C18. C19. C21. C22. C23.	<p>Taking into account the thermal techniques previously chosen, the trainee must: identify possible signs or abnormal situations concerning the response of the thermal center customers when applying the techniques, detailing the parameters concerning the customers' monitoring (skin color, appearance, breathing); describe the form of action before an emergency situation, as well as the limits of the intervention; describe the actions and the attitude to adopt according to the accident.</p> <p>Duration: 20 minutes.</p> <p>Preparation: 15 minutes.</p> <p>Assessment: Oral test (0-20 marks).</p> <p>Assessment team: A teacher of the technical area and the course coordinator.</p>

ECVET CREDITS

The procedure related to the assignment of ECVET credits that has been chosen in the scope of the project THERM_2, presented below, has been based on two European recommendations, namely:

- The credits must be related to the "learning outcomes", i.e., a large number of credits reflects the results of their importance;
- The dimension of the credits depends on the duration of the learning process, i.e., considering the idea that the training duration is proportional to the significance of the learning objectives.

In the event of a complete process leading to certification, the number of hours estimated for the technical training of the Spa Therapist is 1180 hours, plus 420 hours of training in a work context. Thus, the qualification comprises a total of 1600 hours of technical, technological and practical training.

The assignment of a number of ECVET points to the European qualification of the Spa Therapist result of THERM_2 project is based on the following European convention: "one year of full-time VET should be equivalent to 60 ECVET points".

One year of full-time VET is assessed in 1800 hours of learning work (all learning activities, courses, practical works, personal works and training at companies). The technical, technological and practical training related to the qualification of the Spa Therapist represents about 89% of a year. Thus, 53 ECVET points are assigned to the qualification.

The assignment of the ECVET credits has been based on the relative weight of each unit in relation to the overall qualification. Therefore, the result is the following credit distribution:

UNITS	ECVET CREDITS
U1	10
U2	12
U3	15
U4	9
U5	7
Total	53

TESTS TABLE

The tests inherent to the qualification of the Spa Therapist are described in the following table, which briefly shows the main features of each test.

UNITS	TESTS	ECVET CREDITS	FORM	DURATION
U1	T1.1	10	Oral	20 minutes
U2	T2.1	12	Oral	45 minutes
U3	T3.1	15	Practical	1h30m to 2h
U4	T4.1	9	Practical	30 minutes
U5	T5.1	7	Oral	20 minutes

CONCLUSION

The THERM_2 project was the opportunity to transfer to the two beneficiary countries – Portugal and Turkey – a methodology for the construction of frameworks of reference for the professional qualifications. Regarding the certification units or units of learning outcomes, the methodology is based on the following basic principles:

- The "professional situation" is the foundation of the unit.
- The objective of the assessment, allowing the validation of the unit, corresponds to a set of skills (learning outcomes).
- The skills are verified in the tests.
- The units do not have the same importance in professional terms.
- The units are identical, whether it is intended to seek the certification by training or by recognition and validation of skills acquired throughout life, if existing.

We believe that the units of learning outcomes that were described, component of the Spa Therapist qualification, consist of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence which can be assessed and validated using the proposed methods and processes.



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