



## **RESYFAC – Reference System for Facilitators of Learning**

Progress Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

Almost all European training systems are going through a change process to adapt to the demands and needs of companies being under high pressure to be able to deal with a globalising world. Especially SME have to make big efforts to keep their HR updated and to keep the business competitive. This is the reason why VET providers need to move themselves from traditional training methods towards learning approaches in which the actual problem situations of companies can become the pedagogical basis of their learning. In order to support these learning processes, it is necessary to promote facilitation of learning through facilitators able to stimulate learning more than providing teaching. Facilitation makes informal learning intentional and structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time and support. Facilitation raises the quality of non formal learning and can lead to further formal learning or validation processes (e.g. certification).

The **overall aim of the project** is to contribute to the recognition/transparency of qualifications of facilitators of learning in the European space and consequently to contribute to a sounder and effective mobility of these professionals in the European space through the setting up of a Reference System at the European level which will be the basis of a future ECVET System for Facilitators of Learning.

**To reach the project core objective, the partnership**, composed by entities from different countries such as Denmark, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia, The Netherlands and United Kingdom, made an investigation concerning the possibilities and the variety of facilitation processes using a cross-sectoral and cross national approach, involving 28 European countries; based on the results of this investigation, will develop a typology of knowledge, skills and competence (following the technical specifications of ECVET) and set up a European Reference System for the qualification of facilitators of learning based on the comparison of the investigation results and with the perspective of turning effective exchange/mobility of facilitators; will develop a tool which will support validation of individual work experience and learning outcomes, especially during periods of mobility and will establish a *Fora* of consultation with representative actors (VET providers, facilitators of learning, social partners and other strategic organisations) to discuss the project results.

At the beginning of the project, the partnership established a set of **dissemination and exploitation activities** involving the project target groups - training providers, SME's, facilitators of learning - that promote and insure a short-term impact of the project. The involvement of strategic partners as project partners insures, in the short-term and in the long-term, the transfer and the exploitation of the project results into the national systems of the countries participating in the project.

The involvement of other countries outside the partnership during the research phase is also another important tool to assure the long term impact and sustainability of the project, through the promotion of their adhesion to the network of national VET systems recognising the facilitators profile and qualification and the added value of mobility in the framework of a European Qualification Space. Finally, the development of an Internet Portal, as an online knowledge management tool and a sharing space in the field of facilitation of learning, insures the project results availability in the future.

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# 1. Project Objectives

The RESYFAC project has **two main objectives** that are related to each other: the first one is to contribute to the recognition/transparency of qualifications of facilitators of learning in the European space and the second one is to contribute to a sounder and effective mobility of these professionals in the European space through the setting up of a Reference System at the European level which will be the basis of a future ECVET System for Facilitators of Learning.

ReSyFac is focused on:

- the investigation of the facilitator profile in each european national context to set up a reference system containing the different elements that a FACILITATOR qualification could play;
- the identification of zones of mutual trust concerning the regions that can be grouped by cultural similarities and can offer points of common reference in the perspective of enhancing transnational networking and cooperation in the field of facilitation of learning in SMEs.

In order to accomplish these main two objectives, **8 different specific aims** were defined:

1. To make an investigation concerning the possibilities and the variety of facilitation in a cross-sectoral and cross national field: analysis of current practice in 28 european countries that have made progress with evaluating and defining the competence of facilitators of learning in their national contexts;
2. To investigate how can mobility be an added value to the European recognition of the qualification given by the intercultural specificities;
3. To develop a typology of knowledge, skills and competence (following the technical specifications of ECVET) based on the comparison of the results and with the perspective of turning effective mobility of facilitators;
4. To set up an European Reference System for the qualification of facilitators of learning;
5. To develop a tool which will support validation of individual work experience and learning outcomes, especially during periods of mobility;
6. To establish a Fora of consultation putting in place testing scenarios with representative actors like the direct target groups themselves, the social partners and other strategic organisations to discuss and get feedback on the results of the investigation, reason why the project involves 4 strategic partners from the VET system of different countries (Advisory Committee);
7. To establish an Internet portal that will be a tool not only for sharing and accessing information about the project progress, but also for presenting the countries based map experiences within facilitation of learning in SME's;
8. To disseminate the project results and empower target groups (mainly VET providers, companies, learning facilitators, social partners and other relevant stakeholders) through the implementation of dissemination and exploitation strategies.

## 2. Project Approach

The RESYFAC project **direct target groups** are the training providers and the SMEs in which external and internal facilitators are performing their work. **Long Term Beneficiaries** will be the facilitators themselves, who will gain the possibility of getting a wider qualification enriched by the different dimensions offered by the mobility of facilitators and a transparent recognition of their qualifications through the development of a common reference European system. But beneficiaries will also be the companies who will get better services done by professionals who dispose a European dimension and apply an approach to learning which is oriented towards the company's problems instead of being "catalogue-oriented".

In order to reach and involve the mentioned target groups since the beginning of the project, the partnership defined a **short term impact strategy** at several different levels:

- Through its own network of contacts within the target groups, each partner will contribute to reach the success criteria decided for the project products. Each partner country (9) will organize two empowerment workshops and will invite at least 20 participants, representing the main target groups: stakeholders and external/internal facilitators of learning. At the end of the project, one Final Conference will be organized and the partnership will invite at least 100 persons for the event, representing a different set of target groups: internal and external learning facilitators, VET providers representatives, social partners, European, national regional/local authorities in the VET field, etc.;
- On the other hand, the working methods decided to carry out the research phase of the project created the opportunity to involve and to know more about other countries' experience in terms of potential role of the learning facilitators in SMEs and to create the availability and interest of countries outside the partnership to adhere to the Reference System, recognising the common qualification defined;
- Along the project, the consortium has been involving other relevant stakeholders in order to contribute to the development of the project's products and/or to add value to the information and resources available in the internet portal - the involvement of other strategic partners is essential to the transfer of knowledge and the validation of the Reference System in other countries.

Besides the short-term impact strategy, it was also defined a **strategy for the long-term impact on the target groups, potential users and vocational training systems and practices**:

- the project dissemination and exploitation strategies seek to promote the project products' and results' visibility outside the partnership and after the funding period;
- Promoting the engagement of "strategic partners" - national bodies with responsibilities in the field of vocational education and training, vocational certification and assessment and recognition of competences - in order to facilitate the transfer and exploitation of project results into the national VET systems;
- Involving the operative partners in the organisation of national workshops involving representatives of the project target groups is also a relevant step taken to get the project results outside the partnership and as far as possible;

- Involving other countries outside the partnership during the research phase is another important tool to assure that organisations outside the partnership are open and interested in the use and exploitation of the project results - the involvement of other countries outside the partnership insures the sustainability and enlargement of the Reference System to other countries outside the partnership, through their adhesion to the network of national VET systems recognising the facilitators profile and qualification;
- Building several knowledge share and transfer spaces that are made available during the project (ex: internet portal) and will be maintained after the project end - the internet portal, as a knowledge management tool, is a relevant resource to store tacit knowledge collected along the project and can be reached by a very large number of interested parties, coming from very different and distant places.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

Until the moment, and according to the project application, within each work package (WP), the results/outcomes obtained are the following:

- **WP1 - Project Management:** in order to provide a good and sound management of the project and accomplishment of the goals defined in the project application, CECOIA – promoter of the RESYFAC project – elaborated and shared with the partnership a **Project Management Plan** that is constantly being adapted along the projects development. On the other hand, a project process evaluation was set up in order to assess the internal process quality of the project. This project process evaluation is made by an internal evaluator within **WP7 - Evaluation** and very interesting results are available in Product **“Interim Evaluation Report”**.

- **WP2 - Cross-sectoral and cross-national investigation - Comparative analysis:** the objective of this WP was to organise and conduct an investigation concerning the possibilities and the variety of facilitation in a cross-sectoral and cross national field and to analyse current practices in countries that have made progress with evaluating and defining the competence of facilitators of learning. In order to prepare and set up this investigation, GAB München (leader partner of this WP), together with the whole partnership, promoted and approved a common **Glossary** containing all the relevant key terms of the project and developed a **research package** which included the **Interview Guides and Questionnaires, the Investigation Manual and Background information**. The WP2 investigation was accomplished in 27 European countries and was articulated with the study being developed by DEL on trainers, facilitators and other education and training professionals (Education and Training 2010 objectives). At the end of the investigation, GAB München elaborated a **Final Report called “Facilitators of Learning. Framework and Profiles throughout Europe”** that includes all results mentioned above, plus all National Reports elaborated until the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2008, plus the interesting tendencies in terms of activities, tasks, knowledge, skills and competence of the facilitator of learning.

- **WP3 - Development of a Reference System for Facilitation:** the objective of this WP is to set up a reference system for facilitators of learning. Since WP 2 Final Report was only finished in late November 2008, until now it was only possible for AMU – leader partner of this WP – to start working on WP3. So far, AMU presented to partnership the **structure (Table of Contents) for the Guide “Reference System for Facilitation of Learning”**; a **List of Shapers** (entities/organizations involved in the promotion/establishment of the Zones of Mutual Trust) for all 28 European Countries and **28 Country Fiches** with information about each VET System context, about the Facilitator of Learning figure, about the respective Shapers and the Validation of non-Formal and Informal Competences.

- **WP4 - Establishment of an Internet Portal:** the main aim of this WP is to develop a cross-reference interactive system launched in an internet portal for the professional audience Europe wide. First, in order to accomplish this objective, RDA (Leader partner of this WP) examined **the State of the Art of the knowledge resources available on the internet in the field of facilitating learning**. Then, RDA elaborated the **functional concept of the RESYFAC Website Portal** (in EN) **and of the Sub-portals navigation Menus** (in PT, DE, SK, DK, LT, IT). Also, RDA proposed **several images for the Web Portal Banner** and launched the **Portal Test**

**version** (<http://www.facilitationsystem.eu/>). As soon as the first conclusions of WP3 final product are produced, AMU – leader partner of WP 3 - and RDA will work together in order to set up the cross-reference interactive system.

- **WP 5 - Development of a validation tool and empowerment materials:** until this moment there are no results produced within this WP. According to the project application, this WP starts in January 2009 and finishes in June 2009.

- **WP6 – Dissemination and WP 8 – Exploitation:** the objective of WP6 is to define and implement a dissemination strategy for the project and the WP 8 objective is to define and implement exploitation activities of the project products. At the beginning of the project, a Dissemination and Exploitation Plan was elaborated by each partner and send to these WP leaders CODEX (WP 8) and LEDA (WP 6) who compiled all the information in one single **Dissemination and Exploitation Plan**. This document was updated by all partners in November 2008, referring the dissemination and exploitation activities accomplished during the first project year. As for the project corporative image, LEDA elaborated and was approved by the whole partnership: the **project's logo**, the **Word and Powerpoint templates** (for final products and presentations) and a **marketing Flyer**. Also, LEDA prepared and launched the **Partnership Communication Platform** (<http://www.leda-partenariat.eu/>) through which the partnership communicates and shares each WP developments.

- **WP7 – Evaluation:** this WP objective is to monitor and evaluate the project using an utilisation focused evaluation approach. Having in mind this objective, ISOB (leader partner) elaborated the **Process Quality Questionnaire** intended to collect feedback from the partners, celebrate the project achievements and identify points for discussion and the **Project Self Evaluation Research Design** meant to be the document for the project's Internal Evaluation and, at this time, to elaborate the **Interim Evaluation Report**. In fact the project approach emphasise the importance of evaluation as a continuum feedback process reason why the project was a work package entirely dedicated to evaluation (WP7). The approach used in the project for the "Evaluation" is an approach that can be called "utilisation focused" because it is focused on the provision of useful information to the project partners as well as the project stakeholders. In fact the "Interim Evaluation Report" monitors and communicates the execution of the project and gives a compact overview of the aims, achievements and process of the project. These results give to partners and external stakeholders a very comprehensive and critical overview of the main achievements/results of the project, of the project development as well as of the project process quality.

## 4. Partnerships

The partnership was built up on the basis of the necessary competences and profiles and is organised in a **Steering Group** formed by the operative partners with overall coordination of the promoter and specific coordination of each WP leader and an explicit **Advisory Committee** formed by the strategic partners that provides feedback, guidelines and recommendation about the products quality and also takes care of the promotion and dissemination roles continuously.

Since the project addresses facilitators of learning, the **operative partners** are institutions and organizations providing learning opportunities, research institutes and bodies providing guidance, counselling and information services which work directly with SME and with a good credibility in their field in order to be able to create a high acceptance of the Reference System from the part of the stakeholders. On the other side it is important to have partners on board with a diversity of backgrounds to be able to collect a feedback as large as possible on the investigation made. A third important aspect is having partners with good networking contacts and credibility in Europe, being able to establish the necessary contacts with third countries being investigated but not being part of the partnership. All the operative partners fulfil these criteria:

**P1 - CECO**A is a big VET provider with wide recognition in the country and in Europe, being part of several European networks and with very good contacts in Spain and in France. CECO is a joint venture between the Employment and Vocational Training Institute, the public body in Portugal, that depending on the Ministry of Labour, is responsible for executing the employment and VET policies and the Portuguese Commerce and Services Confederation bringing, for this reason, the strong input of the employers' side of the social partners; **P2 - AMU** AMU Nordjylland, one of the biggest Danish CVET institutions, is built on the extensive and experienced regional networks of enterprises and employment service system, furthermore during numerous projects sustainable collaboration is established on national and transnational level with sectoral organisations, municipalities and other CVET providers. The social partners are present in the Board of Directors which governs the centre. **P3 - GAB** München besides also being a training provider conducts applied research in the field of Education and Training already since 25 years in Germany. Recently it has been the major actor of the conception of the new profession of facilitator of learning (certified by the Chamber of Commerce in Industry in Germany). In spite of a short transnational cooperation experience it has been very successful and the contacts in the countries investigated are very good. **P5 - RDA** is a very dynamic Development Agency that has been developing a lot of projects within European networks as well as in Phare projects giving support to other eastern countries and new Member States. By the presence of the Region of Bratislava in several European networks the RDA comes in close contact with almost all the countries in Europe. **P6 – KTU** is a leader University in Lithuania that has contributed to the development of the economy and has carried out successfully other international projects. The partner has an important role in the development of contacts and cooperation with companies. **P7 - MMS** is a society based on a volunteer basis of retired top managers of the Maltese industry bringing in this context a very strong contact with the companies' side. MMS has participated already in some European projects with good success and there is a good contact with the countries investigated as the members had business relationships with the other

countries in the past. **P8 - CODEX** is an organisation with a long experience of training provision especially for local authorities and SME, comprising a European Department that was one of the pioneers in the LEDA Programme of the Commission in the 80's. They are involved in several European networks and they have strong contacts in the countries investigated by them. **P9 - CfA** is the National Standard Setting Body for Business & Administration covering the whole of the UK, a body responsible for developing qualifications and approving a range of qualifications, frameworks and learning programmes for the Business & Administration sector in UK. They work as well in consultation in the learning and performance improvement fields.

These are the **Operative Partners**, which most of them have even already worked together with very good results, in previous projects. With their competences in the field they brought their own perspective into the methodological approach and the instruments necessary for the investigation phase and also worked together with the third countries in order to get the necessary information enabling the set up of a credible and feasible Reference System.

As **Strategic Partners**, the following partners are involved: **P10 - LEDA** is a European Network of practitioners and organisations related with local development and training/consultancy. It has an electronic platform – a collaborative platform for partners' communication and exchanges - that is being used for dissemination purposes and the network itself supports the identification of the most appropriate contacts in the third countries. The **P11 - Bratislava Region**, **P12 – IEFP** and the **P13 - City of Munich** are strategic partners that on one side have an important role in the field of competences recognition and also because with their support the results achieve credibility for other strategic partners like the social partners, VET authorities and employment agencies. On the other side the actors themselves are especially important for the mainstreaming and sustainability of the project results because all of them support programmes, at their level, in which several providers are working and being funded. An important last point is also the support they can give in winning the social partners with whom they are in regular contact.

**P4 - ISOB** is an institute specialised in evaluation that provides process evaluation with content inputs, which is an important success factor like it was already noticed in previous projects. ISOB is giving a very important support to the project management, since they are taking care of the collection of the materials from the partners and are conducting the formative evaluation. ISOB provides continuous feedback to the operative partners and assembles contributes of the Advisory Committee in order to integrate those recommendations in the project products and in the project evaluation suggestions package.

## 5. Plans for the Future

Within **Work Package 2 - Cross-sectoral and cross-national investigation**, after establishing a common glossary related to the Facilitation of Learning topic, the partnership studied and described the current practice of facilitation of learning in SMEs in the context of the European national systems (27 countries): main actors; respective profiles and tasks; how do they get qualified for the job; methods and instruments used... This investigation was done in 27 European countries and was articulated with the DEL study on trainers, facilitators and other education and training professionals (Education and Training 2010 objectives). At the end of this investigation, GAB – leader partner of this WP – elaborated a Final Report which includes all the investigation materials and tools, 27 National Reports and the first interesting dominances and tendencies identified concerning the Facilitator's of Learning Profile.

The next steps are, at the moment, being done by the partner AMU in the scope of **WP3 - Development of a reference system for facilitation** – who is identifying successful learning models for facilitation and, accordingly, uncover a systematic set of assumptions (benchmarking exercise). The comparative report produced will conclude on to what degree is it possible and feasible to build (a) model(s) of benchmarking and points of reference providing a basis for an ECVET system. Also, based on the WP2 Final report, AMU will elaborate a reference system and identify zones of mutual trust (ZMT) - regions that can be grouped by cultural similarities and can offer points of common reference in the perspective of enhancing transnational networking and cooperation in the field of facilitation of learning in SMEs. This reference system will represent a common frame of reference including the issue of validation of soft qualifications and will be organised as a Guide - Guide "Reference System for Facilitation of Learning". These results will be available for professional audience Europe wide on the Internet portal (<http://www.facilitationsystem.eu/>) as a tailor-made reference system - AMU and RDA (WP4 – Internet Portal leader partner) will work together to build the *Country Based Map Experiences* in which these results will be presented in a European map format that will contain the information, for each European country, about facilitators, shapers, validation of non formal and informal learning and respective national VET systems.

Based on these WP3 results, MMS – **leader partner of WP5** will build a **Validation Tool** – a self evaluation/assessment tool that will allow facilitators of learning to compare their actual profile to the one found out on results of the RESYFAC project investigation.

Meanwhile and during these project achievements, all partners – under the coordination of the LEDA partner (**WP6**) - will promote and implement all the activities declared in the beginning of the project, within the Dissemination and Exploitation Plan, in order to disseminate the project ideology and products close to the relevant actors. On the other hand, the exploitation activities of the project products by the target groups mainly VET providers, companies, learning facilitators and other relevant stakeholders will also take place under the coordination of **WP8** leader partner CODEX.

Finally, ISOB – partner responsible for **WP7 – Evaluation** will continue to monitor and evaluate the project, using a focused evaluation approach - focus in the improvement of project results by providing continuous feedback to partners.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

The EU policy in the field of vocational education and training and the recent European initiatives in this field, like the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and the ECVET System, aim to foster increasing transparency, mutual trust and mutual recognition and transfer of the qualifications of individual citizens in the European arena. In fact, the long-term objective is to create a European Qualification Space, where individual geographic and professional mobility of persons within their individual VET pathway are encouraged and where all formal, non-formal and informal training/education/learning processes are transparent, comparable, transferable and recognised in all the different European countries and at different levels of education.

One first step to reach this European long-term objective, is to know which are the specificities of the qualifications in each national context, to be able to identify which recognised added value may mobility bring to each qualification, to exchange views, experiences and best practices in order to verify the practical availability of the key elements that allows to set up a Reference System on the European level, accepted and recognised by all the parties involved.

In fact, the project aims to make a small but significant contribution to this process, by doing what the European ECVET System foreseen but within a specific professional profile and qualification level – facilitators of learning level. In fact, the project already investigated the national specificities of this qualification, and will further exchange national best practices and establish comparisons allowing the development of a Reference System for Facilitators of Learning.

As the project strategic partners are national bodies with responsibilities on the field of vocational education and training, vocational certification and assessment and recognition of competences, their participation in the project mean that the Reference System developed within the project will be validated by them and they will play an important role in the transfer and recognition of this Reference System into the national VET systems.

In a broad European perspective, the existence of a successful experience of mutual trust and mutual recognition of qualification and of recognition of the added value brought by individual and professional European mobility, must be seen as a “real example” that ECVET system in Europe is possible and an important step forward the idea of a European system where assessment, recognition and transparency of qualifications is a reality.

A good dissemination of the project results throughout European VET systems will certainly encourage other stakeholders and interested VET parties from all across Europe to take further steps in the creation of a European Qualification Space.

