



EQUIP – European Framework for Qualifications in Home Care Services for Older People

Final Report

Public Part

Project information

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Executive Summary

EQUIP – European Framework for Qualifications in Home Care Services for Older people (2007-2009)

The number of old citizens in Europe is increasing. Most of old people would like to live at home instead of an institution. To make it possible, home care services are vital. The shortage of home care worker is already common especially in older EU countries.

The project is targeted to home care workers, students and employers; vocational and EURES counselors; educators and policy makers in the field of home care services, education and training. It compares education and training, qualifications and good practices in home care services, in order to enhance mobility of workers and good quality in home care services. The project implements the EQF (European Qualifications Framework) and ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) by defining competences and learning outcomes, which are demanded in home care work, in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. Transparency and comparability of qualifications are the key factors in contributing to mobility as well as quality of education and training.

EQUIP is a project comprising of six EU countries. The partners are universities, vocational institutes and other actors in the field (e.g. trade unions) in Finland (the coordinator), Denmark, Estonia, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Spain.

The main outcomes of the project, along with research reports, are electronic tools:

- A home care competence test that shows the user how his / her competences and qualifications meet the requirements in another country. The tool also gives some practical advice how to proceed in order to get a job in home care in the particular country. It is to be sent or printed for further discussions with vocational, EURES or study counselors as well as eventual employers.
- A database with search engine to assist educators and policy makers to find detailed information on home care work and education in the field. It enables comparisons and hereby can improve home care education, training and practices in different countries.

The project has published a book where the creation of framework for qualifications in home care is described as well as good practices in home care explored. Further information on the project web sites (www.equip-project.com).

The electronic tools are settled on the web sites of the project (www.equip-project.com) for free public use. The project group attempts to maintain and develop the tools and also get new countries involved. The home care competence test is the more useful the more countries participate!

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1. Project Objectives

The number of old people is increasing in Europe. Nine out of ten of them want to live in their own home. To make it possible, home care services are vital. A lack of home care workers is common in several European countries. EQUIP project enhances comparability of qualifications and mobility of care workers between different countries.

Transparency of professional qualifications are keys to increased mobility of qualified workers in Europe. At the moment, comparison is difficult. There is particular difficulty in movement from countries with less regulatory demands to those where the professional qualifications are more precise. This project is targeted for educational providers, practitioners, employers, policy makers as well as vocational counsellors who are concerned with care work and care worker, their training and also services for older people in their own homes. The project concentrates on issues arising from the Lisbon strategy and the Copenhagen declaration. It also contributes to the ECVET process and the implementation the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

The project aims to develop tools for comparison of qualifications and education between the six countries in relation to home care services for older people, implementing basic concepts of EQF and ECVET. The first year was needed for exploration and research activities, in order to produce comparative information about home care practices and education and also describe qualifications framework for home care services, in terms of learning outcomes. On that basis, during the second year the e-tools were designed, tested and reported. Dissemination activities are still going on. The main outcomes of the project are e-tools:

- An electronic questionnaire which will help an individual person to evaluate how one's qualifications meet the qualification demands of a certain country. It gives feedback of eventual training needs and information how to proceed.
- A database which gives educators and politicians comparable information of home care qualifications, education and good practices.

Another important outcome is a report where comparison of qualification and the process of designing a qualification framework are presented. Also good practices in home care are presented and explored. Free download, see www.equip-project.com.

2. Project Approach

The project was carried out by a partnership of researchers and vocational educators, with a contribution of main stakeholders (for example trade unions, educational authorities, social and health care administrators) as members of national steering (home) groups. In this project exploration was made about national educational and training systems, qualifications, learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) and good practices, concerning home care for older people within six countries of the European Union.

Participating countries represent Gösta Esping-Anderssen's (1990) division of European welfare states to generalise the outcomes of the research. Finland and Denmark are Nordic welfare states. The UK represents a liberal welfare regime. The Netherlands is a country where the organisation of welfare services relates to membership in societies and employment. Spain can be regarded as a state in which welfare provision has historically relied on family and religious organisations. Estonia gives us a dimension to a former East European country moving rapidly to a totally open economy.

The data acquisition in participating countries was completed following the guidelines of a specified [Research Plan](#), using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Research Plan:

Work Package 2: Common design for the national surveys and data acquisition

Tasks involved:

A specified research plan will be made which will facilitate data acquisition in participating countries

The scientific quality of the work will be guaranteed by grounding the work in systematic literature search and scientific writing

The work will be carried out separately and the national outcomes will be distributed in the group

METHODOLOGY

Documents to be produced from work packages one and two

1) Profile: National Profile Report

2) Audit: Graphical representation of qualifications with explanatory notes.

3) Literature:

- Summary of main themes for each country (2000 words)
- A report that draws together themes from each country (1000 words)

Data to be collected:

Education and training of Level 2 and 3 home care workers. Specific to older people and general to adults who are over 65 and who pay rent for accommodation

Research design

1) National Profiles - Issues to be considered for each country (see profile diagram below). National profiles might comprise of the following (and see diagram in appendix 1:

Overview of the qualifications

Philosophy – social model, medical model

National policy for vocational education how far national policy reflects EU policies

Who determines what the qualifications are about and who they are for (level, curriculum, content (knowledge, skills, values) for example Universities, trade Unions, Lead training bodies

The meaning of qualifications and training programmes

Type of work upon qualification

Entry requirements

Costs – who pays

Quality assurance

Regulatory framework

Standards of training

Quality assurance and quality control systems

Accreditation issues – what is accredited and what isn't

Systems of validation

Validity of qualifications with respect to meeting fully national occupational standards – especially the practice standards

Students

Who are they; 16+, mature, in employment

Education and training for what kind of employment

Care workers, health care assistants, pedagogues, carers (informal learning) Each country needs to identify who are home care workers, for example do we include health care assistants in England, are we concerned with domestic tasks, personal care, health care or social activities (pedagogue, animateur)

Where does training take place

Social care agency (private, charity, local authority) University, College, Training agency, Hospital

Accreditation of prior learning systems

APL, APEL arrangements for each country, Credit system

We will need to consider how other qualifications can be validated against current occupational standards. Maybe this is a concern for APEL/APL systems.

Currency of qualifications: qualifications will need to be current and map across to national occupational standards

Teaching and learning approaches

Teaching learning and methods (curriculum, content, knowledge, skills, values)

Structure of programmes – delivery

Assessment systems

Training/Awarding bodies

Supervision of placements, qualifications of supervisors

Definitions of competence

Assessment approaches,

National requirements eg. police check, health check, language, visa (work permit) eg. bluecard/Europass?

Outcome: The first output will be National Profile Report

2) Audit of qualifications

2.1 Scope: Formal qualifications

The EQUIP framework is mainly aimed at people who already have any qualification in the field. Also people who don't have can get a good view of demands of home care work in a particular country.

2.2 Audit process

2.2.1 Scoping of qualifications (what to include and what to exclude)

2.2.2 *Review of scoping exercise with respect to each country (test for validity, viability, realistic with respect to objectives, timescales and resources of the project)*

2.2.3 *Rationalising data using EQF framework and a model that has been agreed by all partners*

2.3 Graphical representation of qualifications

Each country to produce a graphical representation of qualifications learning outcomes, compatible with EQF, with explanatory notes and appendices

2.3.1 Structuring of data using EQF and ECVET systems

- *Units, elements, skills, knowledge and understanding (or EQF coding/ECVET principles), learning outcomes*
- *Generic (transferable) and specialist competences (job specific)*

2.3.2 Translate profile and audit in EQF and ECVET terminology

- *EQF – level 2 and 3 general statements*
- *EQF description of a qualification*
- *ECVET credits per unit and relative weighting*

Outcome: The second output will be an Audit: Graphical representation of qualifications with explanatory notes.

3. Literature review

3.1 *Each country to identify national/international literature on what is considered to be best practice in **home care with older people** – emphasis on older people's perspectives*

3.2 *Each country to national literature/international literature to identify what is considered to be best practice in **vocational training** – emphasis on home care workers perspective*

3.3 *Summary of main themes for each country to be provided in 2000 words review*

3.3.4 *There will be a need to provide a further summary report that draws together themes from each country – we will need to identify how this is to be achieved*

Outcomes: The third output will be a review of literature as follows:

- *Summary of main themes for each country (2000 words)*
- *A report that draws together themes from each country (1000 words)*

4. Validation of methodology

4.1 *Review of progress and presentations at April partners meeting, recommendations for refinement of methodology considered.*

4.1 *Partners work in pairs to examine and map selected learning outcomes within a specific practice area eg. for 'communication', 'feeding' 'diversity'*

The aim of this exercise will be to establish commonalities and differences. It will contribute to developing common ideas for the proposed framework. It will also test data gathering approaches.

4.2 Partner seminar (Arhus, September), papers to be presented on:

- *review and evaluation of methodology and progress in developing a common ideas for the proposed framework*
- *good practice in education and training of home care workers*
- *good practice in home care with older people*

4.3 National partner meeting (July)

- *review and evaluation of methodology and progress in developing a common ideas for the proposed framework*
- *good practice in education and training of home care workers*
- *good practice in home care with older people*

4.4 National stakeholder seminar (October)

- *review and evaluation of methodology and progress in developing a common ideas for the proposed framework*
- *good practice in education and training of home care workers*
- *good practice in home care with older people*

The quality assurance was carried out following "The Quality Assurance and Evaluation plan". The external evaluator has assessed the progress and found it dynamic and successful, in spite of some minor delays. The quality assurance and evaluation plan:

The basic of quality assurance in EQUIP project is evaluation (internal and external; formative and summative), our capacity to learn from it and to proceed with new methods, when needed.

In internal evaluation the project group and national home groups evaluate both processes (formative) and outcomes (summative evaluation). Main method is consultative and cooperative discussion, in order to create mutually understood knowledge of the project needs and objectives as well practices. Work packages as described in project plan, are important tools in evaluation. Actual proceeding and achievements in the project are compared with what is designed in work packages. Partner group makes this comparative assessment in each partner meeting. Project manager is responsible for the documentation of it. National home group focuses especially on summative assessment (outcomes, dissemination, exploitation, impact and sustainability). The national partners are responsible for documentation of it.

Quality assurance of research design, see research plan.

The project is successfully completed when:

- *both electronic tools are working and widely in use in 6 partner countries (and in other EU countries as well)*
- *the future development and maintaining of the tools are secured.*

External evaluation will be carried out by LicBA, M.Soc.Sc. Leena Jokinen. She works as an Education Manager in Finland Futures Research Centre, at Turku School of Economics.

The external evaluator makes the assessment of

- *efficiency*
- *effectiveness*
- *impact*
- *relevance and*
- *sustainability*

of the project. She evaluates, how the objectives are reached and how the different tasks are fulfilled. The main source of information is the documents archived in OPTIMA workspace. Very important source is the Agreement with the Commission (comparing what was planned to do to the actual processes and results). Attendance in 2-3 partner meetings and discussions with the partner group are also important sources of information. The evaluator comments the first phases of the project (project work done from October 2007 to April 2008) in June 2008 (short report of 2-3 pages). The evaluator writes a project progress evaluation report in October 2008 (about 3-5 pages) and the final external evaluation report in October 2009 (about 15-20 pages).

More information:

*Aid delivery methods by European Commission
volume 1 Project Cycle Management Guidelines*

(http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/reports/pcm_guidelines_2004_en.pdf)

Robson, C. 2000: Small-Scale evaluation. London: SAGE Publications.

The dissemination and exploitation strategy that the project has adopted is described in "Dissemination, Exploitation and Valorisation Plan". Valorisation, dissemination and exploitation have been carried out in accordance with the plan. Partners have been actively communicating and co-operating with different stakeholders and taken part in seminars and conferences in the field. Also national steering groups have actively participated in dissemination. *Dissemination, Exploitation and Valorisation Plan:*

1. Content of the dissemination activities

Issues to take into consideration:

- *National and international level*
- *Communication during and afterwards the project*

The emphasis is placed upon:

- *The good quality of home care services and education along with the good practices*
- *The current situation and challenges in home care services*
- *The lack of home care service workers*
- *The mobility of labour*
- *The project outcomes: two electronic tools and their piloting (main topic in 2009)*

2. Target Groups and stakeholders:

- *Municipalities and private companies which provides home care services*
- *Home care services workers, home care service clients*
- *Students*
- *Policy makers who are responsible for planning the vocational education at EU and national level*
- *Employment offices (e.g. Eures Advisers) , trade unions and employers' organizations*
- *Researchers*
- *Vocational institutions and their teachers*
- *The general public who is concerned about their future care*

3. Implementation:

- *The channels of the members of the national steering groups are used*
- *Seminars and conferences*
- *Leaflets and a hand book (for the electronic tools)*
- *EQUIP Website*
- *Scientific articles*
- *Professional articles*
- *Local news papers and radio, nationwide news papers*

4. Responsibilities

- *Coordinator and the whole partner group at international level*
- *Each partner on national level.*
All partners make a brief national plan for public relations and media (supported by home / steering groups)

At the moment, comparison of qualifications, education and practices in home care between different countries is difficult. This project aims at making it easier. The project follows the guidelines of Lisbon strategy, the Copenhagen declaration, ECVET process and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The project aims to develop tools for comparison of qualifications, education and describe good practices in home care in participating countries. The research outcomes will be translated in two kinds of electronic tools:

- A home care competence test: an electronic questionnaire which assists an individual person to evaluate how one's qualifications meet the qualification demands of a certain country. It gives feedback of eventual training needs and information how to proceed in order to get a job in home care work in a particular country.
- A database with search engine which gives educators and politicians comparable information of home care qualifications, education and good practices.

During the first year in the project life cycle exploration and research activities were carried out, in order to produce comparative information about home care practices and education and also describe qualifications framework for home care services, in terms of learning outcomes.. The reports are for public use on the project web sites (www.equip-project.com). Also the book "Home Care for Older People – Good Practices and Education in Six European Countries" is free for download on the web sites. The project implemented EQF and ECVET sectorally, in terms of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) and reported implemented methodology as well as challenges and tension (see the article "Creating structure from a Chaos..." in the book).

During the second year the e-tools were completed. Both home care competence test and a database are available on www.equip-project.com.

VET policy makers will be able to use our tool to be well-informed about developments and requirements in home care education and training in some other EU countries. Employees, employers, job seekers, students and their counsellors as well as educators are welcome to use the home care competence test and the database to assess and understand qualifications from other countries. Eventually the home care competence test enhances mobility of care worker between countries as it also gives practical advice how to proceed in order to get a home care job.

4. Plans for the Future

The project partner group looks continues to disseminate project outcomes and maintain the web sites with a competence test and a data base. We are looking forward to eventual Transfer of Innovation project (a proposal will be delivered by 27.2.2010) which focuses on further dissemination and exploitation, especially concerning EURES and vocational counsellors and new nations involved. The competence test as well as the data base are the more useful the more countries are involved.

5. Contribution to EU policies

The European population is growing old, especially in older EU member countries. Most people do wish to live at home, not in an institution. Home care services are needed to make this possible. The demographic changes across Europe and the rights of older people to choice and independence clearly mean that constant expansion of residential care is not an option, and there will be increasing reliance on a high quality enterprising workforce in home care for older people.

There is a shortage of home care workers already in some countries. EQUIP project enhances mobility of care workers, by enhancing transparency and comparability of professional qualifications.

Even though most social and healthcare services are excluded from the implementation of the EU service directive, some parts of home care services are affected and may be open for foreign competition more extensively. This creates a need for reliable information about qualification demands.

Transparency and comparability of professional qualifications are keys to increased mobility of qualified workers in Europe, as well as to improvement of quality of vocational education and training. The project concentrates on issues arising from the Lisbon strategy and the Copenhagen declaration. It also contributes to the ECVET process and implementation the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

