

Recommendations for Furthering the Development of the Instruments *Agripass and Register of Agricultural Jobs*

These recommendations have been developed during the project AGRI-TRANS: Transparency in agricultural vocational training. European standards using the example of livestock farming (pig farming). The project has been financially supported by the European Union.

In the European agreement on vocational training in agriculture of 05 December 2002 (see website) the partners in the sectoral social dialogue in agriculture resolved to enhance the level of vocational qualifications of the employees, to improve their paid employment and facilitate their mobility within the European area. For this end methods for recording the competences (including those that have been acquired informally) were to be developed and implemented in the partner countries. An essential aim was to make the existing qualifications comparable.

By resolution of the social partners of 10 May 2007 the agreement was specified in greater detail and the partners agreed to develop the "Agripass CV" and a "Register of agricultural jobs" to make the use of the Agripass CV easier. The first vocation listed in the register of agricultural jobs with its competences was that of the animal farmer with a focus on pig farming. Currently the process of further development of the instruments does not advance since the social partners and the representatives of EURES have been unable to agree on the procedure of integrating the register into EURES and/or ESCO.

Agricultural trade unions from eight countries and actors of vocational training as well as social partners jointly discussed the two instruments and conceived the here present recommendations for the partners of social dialogue to further develop "Agripass CV" and "Register of agricultural jobs".

Facing the still precarious conditions in many rural areas, the European commission formulated an urgent need to fight poverty and social exclusion in rural areas in 2008.¹ Investment in infrastructure and vocational education and training were defined as essential tasks. The project partners picked up this initiative and developed proposals for improving training, working and living conditions in agriculture. They complement the here present recommendations and therefore, they are jointly submit to the European social partners in the sector agriculture.

The participants in the project "Agri-Trans" welcome the development of the two instruments. They provide orientation for employers and employees by trying to present the qualifications transparently and they can thus help to make it easier to search for jobs across the borders of the EU-member states. By presenting their qualifications employees can apply for vacant jobs

¹ European Commission (2008): Poverty and social exclusion in rural areas

more easily. On the long term these two instruments can improve the opportunities on the labour market especially for those employees who possess informally acquired qualifications but do not have evidence for them.

However, it was also found that the currently existing instruments still need a lot of improvement. A number of recommendations have been developed in the course of the project of which the project participants think that they improve the instruments and simplify their dissemination.

- The project participants welcome the activities of the social partners to integrate the Agripass and the register in existing structures. This applies in particular for the integration in ESCO/EURES. Yet, the instruments should also be presented to the stakeholders on the labour market and in vocational training in the sector of agriculture on the national level and they should be accessible through the web.
- For being successful the instruments would have to be revised and further developed and the national vocational institutions (in addition to the social partners) in the EU-countries would have to become more involved in implementing them. The situation is difficult for those enterprises and employees that are no longer part of the educational system (see comments on the lack of interest in further qualification in the sector).
- Although the final versions do not yet exist the basic structures and contents have been defined. Dissemination would be promoted very much if the intended users would have access already now. Any changes made at a later point in time can be made easily. It would not be a major effort, either, if individual users would have to renew their Agripass at a later time.
- The terminology and systems of Agripass and Register are still insufficiently coordinated. Greatest efforts should be made to ensure that the two instruments complement each other better to avoid misunderstandings.
- Moreover the two instruments have not yet been translated into all European languages although this had been announced in the resolution of 2007. Especially in agriculture many employees do not know any foreign languages. For that reason we recommend urgently to have the existing instruments translated so that they can be used.
- The instruments themselves should be revised and further developed. They are not yet sufficiently developed and do not yet really improve the comparability of qualifications and in turn enhance mobility. The register does list various fields of activities but they are as yet insufficiently differentiated and do not yet supply useful information about knowledge and competences. The same applies for the *Agripass* which is supposed to be a simplified form of the *Europass*.
- In addition to the above the demand in the agreement of 2002 to establish "national reference centres" for registering the existing diplomas and certificates must be fulfilled soon since otherwise it will hardly be possible to achieve comparability of the different educational pathways and certificates.

- Also the envisaged national procedures for "validating vocational experience" must be established that are demanded in the agreement of 2002. Only when they exist employees will be able to present transparent descriptions of their informally acquired competences and employers can get reliable information about the competences of applicants.
- In addition to the above more account should be taken of the two instruments in the European discussion about comparability, transparency and quality assurance. There are considerations and proposals to describe qualification levels in the register - similar to the European qualification framework. However, the register does not have a final appendix that would facilitate the use of the *Agripass*. We are aware that this last deficit is certainly caused on the one hand by the fact that the discussion is not yet finished on the European level and work continues in many respects so that any application of results would be rash - on the other hand it is due to difficulties to integrate the instruments with the nomenclature of EURES.
- We propose to add to the register an overview of the existing titles of jobs and available qualifications. Since there is an immense number of educational pathways and qualifications in Europe a summarised presentation will make it easier to settle disputes regarding the qualifications and thus simplify job application and employment decisions for employees and employers.
- The competences shown in the register should include references to the social and environmental aspects of the vocations. Soft skills and/or personal competences are insufficiently presented in the register. This should be improved. In this context we refer to the recommendations regarding the key competences issued by the European Council and Parliament in 2006.
- Finally, we need a transparent evaluation procedure for a continuous review of the instruments in practice and their adaptation to the ever changing requirements in the job of animal farmer (pig farming).

The project participants hope that the necessary measures are taken as soon as possible so that the two instruments can become fully effective and agricultural employees in Europe can improve their chances on the labour market.