

# COMMET

## Transfer of new methods to identify competence, based on the example of two professions, i.e. the electro-mechanical and metal-cutting technicians

Projet n°: DE/07/LLP-LdV/TOI/14036 COMMET

Report on work package V: Interviews in companies in the regional metal-working sector to analyse the practical applicability of the previously designed and developed competence grids (as per: 30 September 2009)

CEFORALP, France

In order to achieve this testing phase aimed at analysing the relevance and practical feasibility of the previously designed competence profiles for two specific metal-working positions, a series of interviews has been conducted in enterprises.

These interviews have been carried out using two techniques: through face-to-face meetings (duration: approximately 2h30) and through Internet with a questionnaire, sent by e-mail to several enterprises.

In both cases, a set of documents making up the interview had previously been sent to the company (prior to face to face meetings or to filling in the questionnaires electronically). This set included:

- a short introduction to the project, its objective and above all, the specific objectives of the interviewing process;
- the interview guide itself with questions, translated into French;
- the competence grids, designed and developed for France for the metal-cutting technicians and the electro-mechanical technicians (later on referred to as “instruments”).

It is to note that the making-up of the sample of companies has been purposely carried out with enterprises that had not been participating in the project before, for other on-the-field research. This bias was purposely used to avoid getting erroneous feedback from people which would have possessed a prior knowledge of the evaluated instruments and thus, preconceived ideas about them.

### 1. *The context*

#### *a. Basic facts about the sample of companies*

- Five different companies, active in the metal-working field and located in the Rhône-Alpes region (France) have been interviewed;
- The interviewees were either head managers or production managers (*none of the companies had a person dedicated to human resources – HR – management*);
- All five companies were SMEs, comprising from 15 to 72 persons

*b. Identity of the interviewed enterprises*

<b>Company</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Staff</b>
<b>N°1</b>	Production manager	Manufacturing of precision sheet-metal	72 (inc. 40 in production dpt.)
<b>N°2</b>	Head manager	Stamping, cutting and tool making	20 (inc. 18 in production dpt.)
<b>N°3</b>	Head manager	Precision machining	32 (inc. 26 in production dpt.)
<b>N°4</b>	Head manager	Manufacturing of moulds and models	15 (inc. 12 in production dpt.)
<b>N°5</b>	Production manager	Manufacturing of injection tools	22 (inc. 15 in production dpt.)

*c. Difficulties met while trying to make companies taking part in the interviews*

In the current situation of crisis experienced by all enterprises and more specifically SMEs, it is even harder than usual to make the latter accept to participate in an initiative dealing with the issue of human resources, which they often consider as a secondary issue. We had to contact many companies in order to find five of them accepting to take part in the interviews.

Many times and because of the pressure and uncertainty dictated by the changing and demanding environment in which they evolve, the strategies of industrial SMEs are confined to the very short-run and they don't have time or resources to think of future and more specifically, to optimize their human resources, and to work on the competences they need.

In spite of their relative hesitation to take part in the interviews, it is to note that all interviewed individuals expressed, at the end of the interviews, the significant interest they had had in participating in this phase of the project. According to them this period of time allowed them to raise questions and issues they had not thought of before and to make a first diagnosis on their situation regarding competences. They also mentioned that these interviews enabled them to perceive new approaches or ways to do things within their daily activities.

*2. Overview of the results*

*a. About the spheres of activity*

On the basis of the two available competence grids, interviewees were asked on the appropriateness of the design and segmentation of the "spheres of activity". The spheres of activity constitute the first "reading key" of the competence grid. It allows separating the description of competences, depending on the nature of undertaken activities. This idea was built on the assumption that within a job, one person has to carry out a series of activity that have different natures and thus, call on different types of competences.

The sphere of activities developed for France, were the following:

For the metal-cutting technician:

- *Sphere of activity 1: Preparing tools*









## Sectoral Qualification Framework and competence profiles: an answer to 2 different types of needs

- Competence profiles: a tool for describing jobs, very interesting for its process-orientation, i.e. link with the manufacturing process (*through the description according to phases*), it offers a more detailed perspective;
- Sectoral Qualification Framework: a tool for evaluating the individuals within the production line, it offers a very useful overall picture, helpful for taking all kinds of HR-related decisions.

### Suggestions and ideas:

- If combining both approaches, it would be good to share the same competence dimensions:
  - ✓ The Sectoral Qualification Framework dimensions allow separating the knowledge from the abilities (practical and cognitive). They are more appreciated by most interviewed enterprises, even though they are quite similar;
  - ✓ In a perspective of a combination of both approaches, it would be good to simplify the competence profiles, because they involve too many descriptions for each position (time consuming).

If enterprises had to choose between both options, they would only decide on the Sectoral Qualification Framework tool since it offers a global picture that cannot be replaced by existing job descriptions (*that are quite similar with regard to the competence profiles*). It offers thus a more innovative dimension.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.