

BORDER COMPETENCES

Education and training in border regions



With assistance of the European Commission Directorate –
General Education and Culture

A Pilot Project
under the leadership of the IAWM

*Institut für Aus- und Weiterbildung
im Mittelstand und in KMU*



Education and Culture

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Institut für Aus- und Weiterbildung im Mittelstand
und in
kleinen und mittleren Unternehmen (KMU)



Education and Culture

IMPRINT

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PRODUCTION: Layout: Rita Johans, Limbourg
Photos: shutterstock, ZAWM
Printed by Lithotec, Eupen

EUPEN, June 2009

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1. FOREWORD

The European integration process provides young people with new opportunities to complete their vocational training or parts thereof in another EU member state or in neighbouring regions, to work abroad or to undergo advanced training beyond national, cultural or linguistic borders. What is more: mobility on the European labour market and hence in initial and advanced job training is increasingly becoming a must for all stakeholders involved.

Playing an important role as a future-oriented, societal field of action, vocational training has been an area of European cooperation for many decades. Initiatives launched by the European Commission and projects co-funded by the EU institutions, such as this BORDER COMPETENCES pilot project under the Leonardo da Vinci programme, have been instrumental in Europeanizing vocational training.

National borders between the EU members states are vanishing more and more, offering border regions in particular a chance to become focal points of intercultural, multilingual and diverse forms of learning and work. Educational policymakers, training institutions and teachers working in border regions are therefore facing the challenge of preparing young people in their job training for the European dimension of life-long learning and working. To this end, a strategic concept of cross-border initial and advanced training is required; on the one hand, the specific competences required must be taught while, on the other, the stakeholders entrusted with providing this training need to have a specific profile of skills.

It is precisely this strategic concept that is offered by the BORDER COMPETENCES project under the form of a generic model for European border regions. It includes a competence profile for foreign language teachers in border regions which was developed, put to the test and evaluated in the scope of this project.

All names, designations and job titles mentioned in female or masculine form only are always meant to include both genders.

We would like to invite educational decision makers and training institutions in European border regions to use these templates for developing their own cross-border vocational training strategy and wish to acquaint them with examples of good practice gathered by the partner institutions involved in this project.

Patrick Bonni

Managing director
of IAWM

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2. BORDER COMPETENCES – A PILOT PROJECT

Educational programmes funded by the European Commission – such as Leonardo da Vinci in this case – are an important prerequisite for a trans-national exchange of experience and the joint development and dissemination of new ideas and innovation in the area of vocational training.

Thanks to this kind of project, border regions will be better placed to steer and monitor the complex processes of learning and working (which have an ever stronger European dimension), to establish their own structures for exchanging information as well as for cooperating in the area of vocational training and cross-border initial and advanced training and hence increasing the mobility of their apprentices and training stakeholders. It is not enough to imagine new opportunities, call for new concepts or promote initiatives. Instead, a successful strategy of cross-border vocational training in line with the linguistic, cultural, economic and (wherever necessary) geographic specificities of the respective European border region must be developed and the parties involved in training and education at local level, especially training institutions and teachers, be provided with concrete instruments for implementing European or trans-regional job training schemes.

Globalization means for the individual citizen that in many parts of Europe, especially where national borders used to constitute economic, cultural and practical borders in day-to-day activities, differences in work and lifestyle are becoming ever less pronounced. This is why the demands placed on pupils, apprentices, workers and thus training stakeholders often differ very little from one country or region to the next. The vocational training systems, however, are in some cases strongly divergent as they have developed differently for historic, socio-cultural and political reasons.

The differences between the vocational training systems in border regions often constitute an obstacle for cross-border education and training partnerships and mobility. Attempts to introduce uniform European job training schemes or simply harmonize the weighting and evaluation of job qualifications are often doomed to fail because of the multitude of different training schemes and organisational forms used to teach and record vocational competences.

2.1 Project objectives

The BORDER COMPETENCES project does not focus on the differences between vocational training systems or diplomas and structures but respects that training structures differ at national and regional levels. BORDER COMPETENCES rather centres on the specific challenges learners and teachers face in border regions that – this is the first insight gained from this project – are often the same in different countries and regions. The project looked for the common denominator educational decision-makers, training institutes, teachers (in particular those teaching foreign languages) and attendees have to embrace if cross-border learning and teaching are to be successful.

The aim of the BORDER COMPETENCES project is to develop and disseminate a generic instrument that allows European border regions to develop their own trans-national strategies for initial and advanced training. Based on proven competence profiles – in the course of the project, the profile of skills required from foreign language teachers was developed, put to the test and validated – training institutes in border regions can systematically prepare teachers in trans-national regions for their particular European educational work in terms of contents and methods. This work consists in making sure that a highly skilled future workforce will have the requisite linguistic, intercultural and job-relevant competences.

The above-mentioned objectives were fulfilled in the course of the project.

The BORDER COMPETENCES project is based on the Euregio Competence concept which is geared to the specific requirements of the Maas-Rhine Euregio and which was evaluated, complemented and reviewed from a pan-European perspective for the purpose of this project.

Furthermore, it was possible to develop a generic instrument for managing change processes during the course of the project. Change processes are an integral part of learning and working in a border region and, based on the early detection of training needs, they should result in the adaptation of existing training strategies, competence profiles of teachers and curricula. The generic instrument that was developed provides the scientific basis to do so.

It was possible to develop, test and validate the “ideal” profile of skills needed by a foreign language teacher. Based on this profile, the Europeanization of vocational training can be integrated in initial and advanced teacher training.

Thanks to the project partners involved and the high number of good-practice examples – ranging from the Euregio Competence concept and existing innovative initial and advanced training schemes for language teachers right through to international multiple diplomas issued to apprentices – the Maas-Rhine Euregio serves as a role model to other European border regions (also referred to as Euregios in this report) in the BORDER COMPETENCES project. The “Euregio” term encompasses two basic aspects: it does not only describe a geographic area of neighbouring countries or regions in a cross-border European space, but also an organizational framework for supranational cooperation. “Euregio” also means cross-border cooperation on a voluntary basis as this form of establishing partnerships between national, regional or local authorities and institutions does not necessarily imply the creation of new decision-making structures or government levels.

2.2 Project partners

The project coordinator – the *Institut für Aus- und Weiterbildung im Mittelstand und in kleinen und mittleren Unternehmen (IAWM)* (Institute for initial and advanced training in small- and medium-sized enterprises) – is the inspectorate overseeing the dual training scheme in the German-speaking community of Belgium. The partners of the BORDER COMPETENCES project include universities, language schools, advisors and providers of advanced training activities for educational authorities and institutions and other organizations active in the area of vocational training. The composition of the project partnership guarantees on the one hand that training-relevant change processes and teachers’ competence profiles are viewed from an academic-scientific perspective, while on the other a practical component deals with implementation in everyday life in euregional or European border regions. The present results could only be achieved thanks to the cooperation and exchange of experience between the various expert partners.

For more information on the project partners’ areas of work, please refer to their respective websites.

The **BORDER COMPETENCES** project includes the following partners



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3. VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN BORDER REGIONS

3.1 Learning and working in border regions

The European integration and creation of a single market oblige companies to think and act in European terms. Their most important asset in this respect is their workforce. Modern job training geared towards future market requirements is a crucial prerequisite. A global market requires a high level of intercultural, social and job-relevant expertise. Language skills are indispensable for companies to be competitive and for the professional development of their workforce; this is particularly true for globally operating companies but also for small- and medium-sized enterprises based in border regions. Here, even typical, small-scale handicraft businesses and service providers turn into supra-regional export companies.



There is no doubt about the necessity to promote the European dimension in initial and advanced vocational training, encompassing a stronger promotion of mobility, intercultural and language skills as well as enhanced cooperation between and European orientation of training institutions and curricula and transparency of the acquired qualifications.

The attractiveness of educational and training systems and providers will in future depend more strongly on the extent to which they can offer European

vocational training, job and career opportunities. This is why vocational training in border regions in particular needs to be made “Europe-proof”.

Making vocational training ‘Europe-proof’ does not mean transferring vocational training systems from one region to another and implementing them without any adaptation. Vocational training is not an isolated factor, but is always embedded in a specific regional, cultural and economic context as well as societal and political framework conditions.

In a process of cross-border and European integration of vocational training, teachers – and in particular foreign language teachers – play a crucial role. The general conditions for initial and advanced training of teachers must accommodate the aspect of multilingual, intercultural learning and the future prospect of pupils and apprentices working on trans-regional or international labour markets. Teachers are often key multipliers for institutional mobility (e.g. cooperation between educational institutions) and mobility of pupils and apprentices (e.g. internships abroad, exchange programmes, individual training modules being delivered abroad).

For teachers to be able to face up to these new pedagogic and organisational challenges, greater attention must be paid to the quality of initial and advanced teacher training and instruction quality. The targeted selection and fundamental improvement of competence profiles, instruction methods and communication between the various stakeholders involved are important milestones on this journey and an integral component of the present concept.

3.2 Euregio competence – good practice revamped

Previous concepts for developing skills were predominantly geared towards the needs of target groups undergoing advanced training or having an academic background. The innovative approach underlying the Euregio competence concept, however, centres on young people in initial vocational training. Training in border regions goes hand in hand with a growing need for Europe-compatible skills and qualifications. In order to tap into the potential offered by diverse qualification and labour markets in border regions that are within geographic reach – as is the case in the Maas-Rhine Euregio – this target group needs euregional competence. This consists of language and intercultural skills and information literacy as well as an internship of at least two weeks. The Euregio competence concept which has been validated and implemented provided an important role model for the BORDER COMPETENCES project.

Since 2002, the ‘Euregio competence’ training course has been offered with great success at various vocational training institutions in the Maas-Rhine Euregio; upon successful completion of the course, the trainees are awarded the ‘Euregio Competence’ certificate.



The ‘Euregio competence’ training course teaches the skills a person living in a border region needs if s/he wants to avail him-/herself of trans-national training and job opportunities:

The most important element of successful international and trans-regional learning and employment are **foreign language skills**.

In border regions, however, it is essential to be aware of the cultural particularities of the neighbouring regions and countries, which makes it easier to access initial and advanced training and job opportunities there. **Intercultural skills** are of the utmost importance, especially in the world of labour and business as misunderstandings are often the reason why job applications, cooperation or business contacts fail, while intercultural skills help to prevent this kind of misunderstanding.

Above and beyond the competences described above, being able to get information on the different economic and social structures and to use this information is also very helpful. This is why **information literacy** is indispensable for citizens wishing to learn, live or/and work in a neighbouring country.

The core element of the 'Euregio competence' certificate certainly is the requisite **internship** of at least two weeks spent in a neighbouring country. This job placement provides young people in particular with the means of applying their theoretic knowledge in a practical context and to experience speaking a foreign language; at the same time, they gather first-hand experience in companies in the neighbouring region and see for themselves that they are capable of getting accustomed to a different vocational and social context. This experience is beneficial for their personal development and helps them to overcome prejudices.

The following section provides a detailed description of the individual components of 'Euregio competence' that were reviewed in the scope of the BORDER COMPETENCES project, focusing on foreign language skills.

■ Intercultural skills

It is difficult to teach intercultural skills. The first step in this respect is to make the attendees aware of subtle cultural differences in the neighbouring country or region or other linguistic or cultural spheres. In order to reach this objective, the exchange of personal experience among attendees is very helpful, to name but one example, or to examine the origin and truth of prevailing prejudices, cartoons or jokes. As language is one of the factors strongly determining culture, intercultural skills are mainly integrated in the foreign language training.

■ Information literacy

Attendees acquire information literacy while they learn to recognize the specific and concrete challenges associated with their future training, life or employment in a foreign region. Above all, they have to know where to find reliable answers to key questions that are relevant to putting their project of moving abroad into practice.

The attendees are acquainted with the economic, social and cultural characteristics of the partner region. They are confronted with questions on social security systems and labour, tax and collective bargaining law in the country concerned. They get to know the education and training systems of the neighbouring country or region and compare them with their own educational context and the value of national diplomas. The comparison with the neighbours enables them to reconsider preconceived views and to elaborate a concept for their own training, work or life in the neighbouring country or region.

■ Foreign language skills

The globalization of economy and the labour markets changes the skills required from the workforce. It has been emphasized time and again that foreign language skills are gaining increasing importance in the world of labour, which holds especially true for European border regions.

In spite of all kinds of differentiations between various levels of language proficiency (which are often useful), it is important to maintain common reference points, allowing the language skills of a person having level B1, for instance, to be assessed in another country or training sector. To this end, the Common European Framework (CEF) defines so-called "common reference levels".

The 'Euregio Competence' concept is based on the model developed by the Council of Europe (Cambridge 2001). This model distinguishes between three general levels of language proficiency: A, B and C. Each level in turn differentiates between a lower and a higher sub-level:

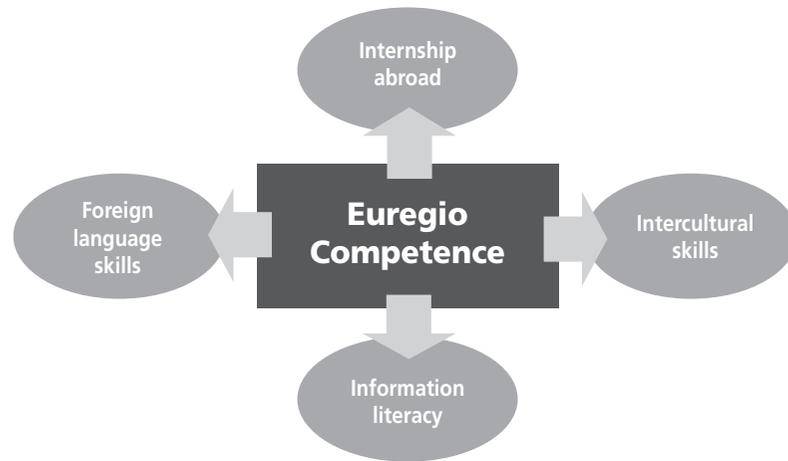
- A1-A2 (basic user)
- B1-B2 (independent user)
- C1-C2 (proficient user)¹

These levels are of a cumulative nature, i.e. the knowledge represented by a certain level includes the proficiency of all lower levels.

The 'Euregio Competence' qualification aims to help attendees achieve a level of proficiency in the language spoken in the respective neighbouring region that reflects the CEF A2 level. Attendees receive a minimum of 200 to 360 hours of foreign language training and hence achieve this level, even if they have no prior or little knowledge of the respective language before the course. The course ends with an exam that tests the attendees' hearing, reading, speaking and writing skills.

As this training scheme aims to provide the attendees with the basic knowledge required to act autonomously in the neighbouring region, the lessons focus on verbal communication and preparing attendees for their subsequent job placement. Depending on prior knowledge and the attendees' expectations, they can of course achieve a higher level of proficiency and focus on different contents.

¹ The C2 level represents a very high level of proficiency. This level is of no relevance for vocational training in Euregios or border regions.



■ Certification of Euregio competence

Upon successful completion of all Euregio competence modules and the related training or job placement in a neighbouring country or region, the attendee will be awarded the 'Euregio Competence' certificate. To this end, attendees must produce evidence of the following components:

- 1 exam on the information literacy sub-module
- Passing the foreign language exam for the neighbouring country's official language (the exam should integrate the Common European Framework of Reference for Foreign Languages, e.g. level B1)
- Completion of a two- or three-week internship

Schools, vocational colleges or training centres that want to issue this certificate to their pupils, apprentices or attendees of advanced training schemes have to subject themselves to a thorough quality inspection in order to acquire the status of recognized Euregio competence centre. An external audit guarantees that the requisite quality standards are met as attendance of Euregio competence courses is not meant to be a leisure activity, but shall constitute a recognized training that provides attendees with an important component of vocational and social skills.



If you would like to have more information on the 'Euregio Competence' strategy as an example of good practice or on the contents of the 'Euregio Competence' concept in the version revised for the BORDER COMPETENCES project, please refer to the documentation on the CD ROM enclosed – (Euregiokompetenz) heading.

3.3 Mobility of institutions and learners

Mobility must be made attractive; this applies to geographic as well as vocational and institutional mobility.

„Mobility is meant to describe mobility in a broad sense encompassing geographic, vocational and intellectual mobility at home and abroad and the requisite capacity to live in a multilingual Europe.“²

■ Advantages offered by learners', teachers' and institutions' mobility

The advantages offered by learners and future workers demonstrating a high level of mobility are obvious: better understanding of different cultures and forms of social interaction, more efficient use of foreign languages, in general higher autonomy and better communication skills, new work experience and improved capacity to act as well as open-mindedness and the ability of integrating themselves in new learning, working and living contexts.

For companies operating in an international economic context, mobility is an absolute must. This is why promoting the mobility of their apprentices and employees provides companies with the following benefits: it gives them an outward orientation and boosts their internationalisation, they gain greater social competence and the communication skills of their employees are enhanced, those employees who undergo initial or advanced training abroad acquire additional job-relevant skills, it is easier to establish contacts to clients thanks to greater linguistic or intercultural skills and to integrate "good work practices".

In order to be able to promote mobility, training institutions must have the right set-up, too. They reap the following benefits from institutional

² A. Hilligus, H-D. Rinkens, C. Friedrich, Europa in Schule und Ausbildung, Paderborn Centre for Teachers Training at Paderborn University, volume 6, p. 27

mobility: they can learn from other training institutions and adopt good ideas for vocational training, they can exchange experience on a trans-national basis, compare and update curricula and educational programmes and acquaint themselves with pedagogic methods and, above all, motivate their teachers by using cross-border cooperation to inspire an interest in foreign languages among their pupils and apprentices and to make them look beyond their own backyard.

■ Obstacles to mobility

There are certain obstacles making mobility of learners, teachers and competent authorities difficult which need to be taken into consideration in each border region when developing a BORDER COMPETENCES strategy. These obstacles can only be overcome in a structured way and if there is a political will to promote cross-border cooperation and the requisite motivation of teachers and educational institutions.

Some examples of obstacles to mobility in European border regions:

- Lack of framework conditions to promote mobility
- Fears and prejudices with regard to mobility and everything new
- Lack of long-term strategies for cross-border learning
- Lack of practical instruments and non-transparent funding instruments to support, finance and organise mobility
- Administrative and legal obstacles
- Lack of mutual recognition of qualifications and certificates and vocational training modules completed abroad

BORDER COMPETENCES provides scientific and practical approaches to overcoming these obstacles in border regions in a strategic way.

■ Triple diploma for car mechanics in the Maas-Rhine Euregio

One example of best practice illustrating the mobility of educational institutions and apprentices alike is set by the Aachen Chamber of Crafts (DE), Arcus College Heerlen (NL) and the *“Institut für Aus- und Weiterbildung im Mittelstand und in kleinen und mittleren Unternehmen”* (Institute for initial and advanced training in small- and medium-sized

enterprises) (BE) awarding the so-called ‘triple diploma’ for car mechanics in the Maas-Rhine Euregio.

Since 2006, apprentices training to become automotive mechanotricians in the Maas-Rhine Euregio have the opportunity (for the first time) of sitting just one trans-national journeyman examination and being awarded the Dutch, German and Belgium journeyman’s certificate for car mechanics. To this end, they train as car mechanotrician in their respective region and at the training institute responsible and recognized in this region. However, they have to sit a final exam in front of a joint examination committee comprising representatives of all partner institutions.

The starting point for successful introduction of the triple diploma and cross-border cooperation between the various chambers, schools and inspectorates was the realization that there are no major national differences between the job-relevant skills a car mechanotrician needs. In other words: the technical skills required to repair a VW Golf in the Netherlands cannot and should not be different from the skills needed to do the same job in Belgium or Germany. In spite of divergences between the job training systems in the border regions, joint cross-border certification could be achieved thanks to a competence- and output-oriented notion of qualifications.



After four years of preparation, the three partner institutions – each one in charge of vocational training and its certification in the respective country or region – signed a partnership agreement demonstrating

their mobility, i.e. the will to cooperate at cross-border level regardless of national, linguistic or system differences. This concrete form of institutional mobility offers apprentices direct added value and underlines the importance of cross-border cooperation in vocational training, which is indispensable for the smallest of the Belgian communities, while it enriches the other partners from the Maas-Rhine Euregio and serves as a role model for European border regions.

The triple diploma for car mechanics awarded in the Maas-Rhine Euregio is not only mentioned as an example of best practice as it provides the holders with a cross-border, competitive qualification in terms of their job-relevant skills – constituting as such a high added value for attendees who wish to work and live in a border region. Above and beyond this, as Euregio competence is part of the training scheme, the attendees acquire language and intercultural skills and information literacy. Apart from sitting the exam to give evidence of their automotive expertise (complying with the requirements of all three countries), acquisition of the 'Euregio Competence' certificate is compulsory for all attendees. Thanks to all the benefits described above, the triple diploma for car mechanics integrating Euregio competence is a major contribution to making European integration a reality.

4. COMPETENCES IN CHANGE PROCESSES – A GENERIC MODEL

4.1 Change processes in border regions

The process of European integration and the resultant right to free movement of labour not only have an economic impact. They also constitute new challenges for vocational training in Europe as citizens and foreign language teachers in particular need to be prepared in order to assume their new roles and tasks. Various studies on mobility in an integrated Europe and the language proficiency of its members have shown that there is a certain backlog. This is why it is necessary to review existing structures, especially in the area of education and vocational training, in order to pave the way for changes to promote Europe-wide cooperation and mobility.

Against this backdrop, the BORDER COMPETENCES project served to develop a **generic learning programme (learning model)** and two detailed parallel training programmes for general application.

This generic model is meant to accompany and organize the preparation, handling and implementation of change processes in vocational training. The model described can be applied to several target groups in vocational training and beyond. In our context, however, it concentrates on teachers and pupils who have to embrace change processes when committing to working or doing an apprenticeship in a border region.

The purpose of this model and the associated training modules is to make the resources and expertise existing in border regions available to all educational stakeholders – especially teachers – and to organise and support the related change processes in an optimum fashion. This takes us back to the basic idea of Euregio competence. Teachers and pupils alike who commit to mobility and cooperation between educational institutions engage in a multi-dimensional change process which results in the use of cross-border competences, when properly prepared and implemented, and can hence provide everyone involved with added value.

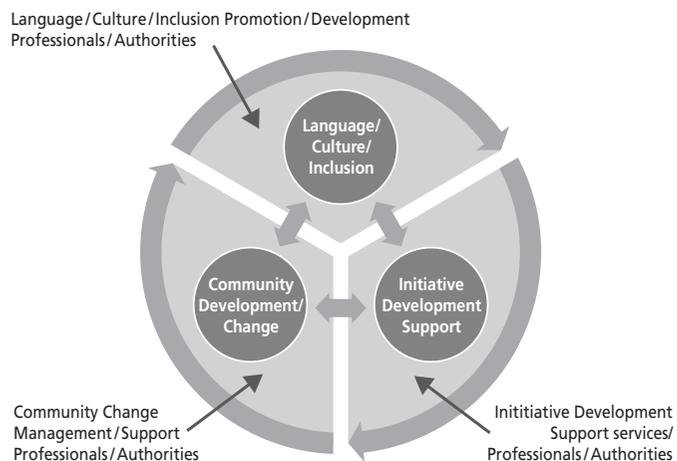
The generic model does not intend to carry out a pre-defined change process but rather to identify and implement such a process as the various modules – allowing for regional and national objectives (e.g. government plans) – are being put into practice.

Thus, the generic model is supposed to accommodate the special needs of border regions, while at the same time being embedded in the respective regional or local context and allowing the development of a strategic vocational or qualification concept for this border region.

4.2 Set-up and structure of the generic model

Foreign language trainers in border regions experience change processes and need good preparation and support. Using our generic model, we developed individual training modules – i.e. advanced training schemes – with different focal areas which are meant to develop the right skills for work in a border region. Depending on the particular needs of a European border region, three detailed theoretic documents can be adapted and complemented with individual contents. The BORDER COMPETENCES project applies this generic model to the competence profile of an “ideal” foreign language teacher.

Overall design proposal – Target categories



1. Learning model / curriculum

The generic learning model explains the components and structure of an actual change process and describes the general course of such a process. Furthermore, the learning model defines the key components, milestones and objectives necessary for a strategic change process.



For more information on the learning model, please refer to the documentation on the CD ROM enclosed – (Learning Model) heading.

2. Training programme ,A'

The general training programme model, including its modules, offers a tool for managing change processes in concrete terms and for developing advanced training schemes that are in line with the skills demand identified.

One example is illustrated using module 2 (stakeholder engagement, which looks at the necessary commitment or the services to be provided by all stakeholders involved in a change process in vocational training and qualification.

The module contains the following training components, i.e. skills development:

- The roles of the stakeholders involved in a change process
- Risk analysis based on a SWOT analysis (strengths and weaknesses)
- Definition of responsibilities for the individuals involved
- Teaching and instruction as such
- Consolidating results and insights gained from the training



For more information on training programme ,A', please refer to the documentation on the CD ROM enclosed – (Training Programme ,A') heading.

3. Training programme ,B'

Training programme ,B' is a logical extension of training programme ,A' and includes modules that specifically deal with coordinating initiatives in the scope of change processes, enabling in more concrete terms customized training of foreign language teachers that integrates the acquisition of targeted pedagogic skills. The objective is to provide

foreign language teachers with a sustainable advanced training concept that will allow them to handle change processes in their border region competently, while the model-like training programme can also be applied to teachers of other subject matters and educational stakeholders with their requisite competence profiles.



For more information on training programme ‚B‘, please refer to the documentation on the CD ROM enclosed – (Training Programme ‚B‘) heading.

The complex, clearly structured scientific character of the generic model developed and described above focuses on universal and flexible applicability to all conceivable change processes and the corresponding skills profiles of educational stakeholders to be developed and taught in European border regions. The fact that it can be used beyond this scope – e.g. by decision-makers responsible for political change processes in general or specific development potential for individual training and advanced education schemes – underlines the scientific character of this tool developed in the framework of the BORDER COMPETENCES project.

Cross-border cooperation and institutional or personal mobility come with particular, individual requirements that are not to be eliminated by applying a structured training programme. The BORDER COMPETENCES generic model therefore allows users to take particularities and regional characteristics of diverse European border regions and their impact on the requisite competences to be taught (e.g. foreign language teachers) into consideration as its design is largely abstract and hence flexible.

The programme developed within the generic model offers flexibility at various levels: not all of the training modules need to be completed and validation of results can be varied. The way in which the acquired knowledge is examined must be adapted to the respective necessities in the different border regions or to linguistic borders, just as the actual transfer of knowledge is.

The generic instrument described above therefore provides a theoretic, detailed grid for training various competences needed in change processes. However, it has to be complemented with specific subject matter and contents on a regular basis and geared towards the requisite skills needed.

5. DEVELOPING A COMPETENCE-BASED PROFILE FOR FUTURE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN EUROPEAN BORDER REGIONS

5.1 Developing the language teacher profile

Since the adoption of the Lisbon Agenda in particular, educational policy debate on European level has refocused on teachers' competence. The "Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications" developed in the context of the Lisbon Agenda make teachers the key persons in a knowledge society.

The following section will focus on the existing competences of foreign language teachers and the skills to be developed and explain the scientific competence and training models in practical terms. One of the major objectives of BORDER COMPETENCES is to develop a concrete **profile of future Euregio foreign language teachers**. Generally speaking, the competence profile can refer to all stages of education (kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, high schools and universities as well as adult education). The profile analysis, implementation and validation stages of the BORDER COMPETENCES project concentrated on vocational training in border regions.



A foreign language teacher crossing a border on his/her way to work instructs pupils with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds (that might be different

from his/her own background) in the use of foreign languages – as a native speaker teaching his/her own mother tongue. It is also possible that the teacher is not a native speaker of the official language being taught. This new situation requires a whole set of new competences that the teacher needs to acquire and embrace.

In order to define the characteristic and requisite competences of foreign language teachers in a typical European border region, Nederlandse Taalunie (NL) and Hasselt University (BE) organised a training seminar on foreign language didactics for teachers from the Maas-Rhine Euregio and international experts in the scope of the BORDER COMPETENCES project. The results obtained from the training seminar held in Diepenbeek (BE) reflect the pragmatic approach and day-to-day experience of the teachers attending the seminar – most of them foreign language teachers.

In conjunction with knowledge available from research on foreign language teaching and didactics, teacher competence, basic and advanced training of teachers and auto-evaluation, these results were incorporated in a first draft of a competence profile for Euregio foreign language teachers. The draft profile was optimized at subsequent workshops involving teachers and experts.

5.2 Validation of the foreign language teacher profile – survey

With a view to developing a universal profile for foreign language teachers valid for all European border regions, an international survey was conducted among selected foreign language teachers in the partner regions. To this end, a questionnaire was developed, translated into three languages (German, English and Italian) and made available to all potential respondents on the project homepage at <http://border-competences.euproject.org>. The project partners from Sweden, Finland, Italy, Belgium and Germany sent invitations to the foreign language teachers from various vocational training systems, levels and institutions that were selected for the survey. The evaluation takes account of 32 representative responses; the results were incorporated in the concept for Euregio foreign language teachers.

The respondents evaluated the importance of each competence surveyed (can-do statement) on a one-to-five scale (ranging from 'I fully agree' to 'I disagree'). The surveyed competences included knowledge as well as skills needed to teach a language professionally. In addition, respondents had the

possibility to add their own 'can do' statements or submit recommendations to political decision-makers and teacher training institutions.

Based on the results of the electronic survey, the existing profile could be optimised, restructured and completed so that a generic, universally applicable competence profile for Euregio foreign language teachers could be developed in the meantime.



The multilingual questionnaires are available in the documentation folder provided on the CD ROM enclosed – (BORDER Questionnaire ENG, IT, DE) heading

5.3 The Euregio foreign language teacher

The Euregio foreign language teacher profile underlines the privileged position of foreign language teachers in a border region and lists didactic possibilities and challenges with regard to the exchange and experience in border regions. The competence profile developed will in future promote exchanges between schools, intercultural contacts in the area of vocational training as well as between institutions, stakeholders and attendees and help learners acquire foreign languages better and in a more authentic way.

The profile described is not mandatory but is meant to serve as a guideline or checklist for foreign language teachers who are reflecting on their current work or considering future work as a teacher in a border region. Not having any regulatory character at all, it suggests potential improvements to foreign language teachers and vocational training institutions on the one hand and teacher training institutions, pedagogic universities or training facilities on the other.

The profile underlines the additional competences (knowledge, language-teaching skills and cross-disciplinary skills) enabling teachers to benefit from their privileged situation as multipliers of institutional and individual mobility in border regions.

For the sake of simplicity, the Euregio foreign language trainer will be referred to as "Euregio FL" in the following sections.

The competences of the Euregio FL can be subdivided into different levels:

- General teacher skills
- Language teacher skills
- Foreign language teacher skills
- Skills needed by foreign language teachers in border regions

The profile of an ideal Euregio FL that we identified in the scope of this project only targets the last two levels, i.e. additional skills needed in order to teach foreign languages in a border region. For this reason, the following profile is not meant to be seen as an exhaustive teacher competence profile.

The different skills of the Euregio foreign language teacher have been subdivided into five categories:

- Intercultural skills
- Didactic skills
- Language skills
- Information literacy
- Personal/Social/Professional/Attitudinal skills

Definitions:

- **Mother tongue:** mother tongue of the Euregio FL teacher or language spoken at home by the pupils (e.g. immigrant students)
- **Target language:** foreign language taught (e.g. French as a foreign language)
- **Target culture:** culture of the language taught (e.g. Dutch or Flemish culture for the Dutch language). In this context, culture is not to be defined (exclusively) in terms of the fine arts, geography, and history (culture with a capital -c) but also as "the set of basic values, perceptions, wants and behaviours learnt by a member of a society from family and other important institutions (culture with a lower-case -c)" (Kotler, 1999)
- **Target language-culture:** language and culture are intrinsically linked; foreign language teaching always includes the culture(s) in which the language is typically used.
- **Official language:** source language/ dominant instruction language at school/ language of administration/ official language of the border region

- **Culture of the region:** culture of the region where the Euregio FL teacher teaches a foreign language (possibly his/her mother tongue)

Several languages are involved in the quite complex Euregio teaching context. The mother tongue of the Euregio FL teacher is not the instruction language (official language) of the school/region in which he teaches. The Euregio FL teacher teaches a foreign language to his/her pupils, which can be the teacher's mother tongue or a foreign language to him/her too.

The mother tongue of the pupils (although often a dialectal variant of the standard language) is in most cases the language of instruction (official language) but can, in the case of immigrant pupils, who are bilingual at different levels, be a very different language.

In the same way, there are different cultures to take into account: 1. the teacher's home culture, 2. the border region culture where the teacher is working and which determines also the pupils habits and beliefs, 3. the target culture linked to the foreign language taught, 4. the immigrant pupils' original culture

5.3.1 Intercultural skills

Intercultural and multicultural environment

The Euregio FL teacher has a marked curiosity about other cultures: the culture of the border region, the target culture associated to the foreign language taught, the different cultures of immigrant pupils.

The Euregio FL teacher is aware of, recognises and can analyse the different habits and customs in different regions/cultures.

The Euregio FL teacher respects and promotes the diversity of languages and cultures.

The Euregio FL teacher has experience of an intercultural and multicultural environment characterised by distinctive or different social, cultural, ethnic, national, religious or linguistic groups.

Intercultural and multicultural environment

The Euregio FL teacher can raise awareness of cultural differences among his/her pupils and teach them how to recognise and handle them.

The Euregio FL teacher is aware that intercultural and multicultural approaches to teaching and learning involve teachers promoting dynamic interactions between teacher and learner and between learners themselves.

The Euregio FL teacher is prepared to work out and to promote multidisciplinary assignments with a cultural component with his Euregio colleagues.

Accommodation with the school culture

The Euregio FL teacher knows how to address pupils and colleagues (e.g. first name and informal 'you' / 'du' / 'tu' / 'jij' or rather family name and formal 'Sie' / 'vous' / 'u') in the border region. He has feeling for and knows how to deal with the specific relationship between students and teachers and with conventions linked to hierarchical distance and respect.

Teachers can adapt to the school culture and know their place within the hierarchy of the school (either clearly defined or implicit). Hierarchy within schools differs between relaxed and strict.

Behavioural flexibility

The Euregio FL teacher is ready to embrace and work with ambiguity. E.g. the temporal order of action or the division of labour in other cultures can differ from those of one's own culture. Some cultures have a more monochronous and rigorous time experience, which is centred on accuracy of schedules, while others have a polychronous time experience, where time is considered to be 'flexible'.

Pupils' views on politics, sex and gender politics can differ widely (e.g. the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, role of women, acceptance of homosexuality).

Behavioural flexibility

The Euregio FL teacher can handle stress consequent on ambiguity and manage ambiguous situations (due to different ways of behaviour, different habits...). The Euregio FL teacher is able to consider several perspectives and opinions when looking at a problem and is able to find a solution that satisfies all the people involved.

The Euregio FL teacher is willing to respect the diversity and coherence of behaviour, value and belief systems.

The Euregio FL teacher is able to adapt his/ her behaviour to different requirements and situations, finding a balance between his/her own personality and the new situation. The Euregio FL teacher is able to expand his/ her repertoire of behaviour.

Class management

The Euregio FL teacher is committed to classroom management, ranging from organisation to classroom decor, to discipline.

Recommendations for policy makers and teacher training institutes

- Future teachers should get the opportunities and the facilities to visit other countries while studying.
- One way to experience an intercultural environment is by teaching one's native language to non-native speakers.
- Trainee teacher placements in multicultural classrooms (for example, with children from immigrant communities) help develop an intercultural mindset.

5.3.2 Didactic skills

Motivation	<p>The Euregio FL teacher can achieve intrinsic motivation among pupils who learn the target language linking it to the proximity of the foreign language-culture. Extrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from outside an individual. The motivating factors are external, or outside, rewards (such as money or grades). Intrinsic motivation is when people engage in an activity without obvious external incentives.</p>
New teaching context	<p>The Euregio FL teacher can assess the language level of the students s/he is going to teach and can interpret new education attainment levels.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher knows how to find a balance between the education attainment levels and realistic objectives linked to his/her classes' competence level.</p>
Designing lessons	<p>The Euregio FL teacher can design and give lessons using authentic language and culture material in which pupils/students are motivated through the target language and culture.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can integrate authentic foreign language contacts into the lessons exploiting the presence and background of pupils originating from target language-culture border regions in the classroom or by inviting guests from border regions in the class.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can organise activities such as individual work, working with a partner, and working in groups in which pupils are given roles or tasks.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher has access to channels for organising activities such as class exchanges and knows how to organise other extracurricular activities (e.g. visits to the target culture).</p>

Use of target language and language of instruction	<p>The Euregio FL teacher can use the target language for improving language skills (correct pronunciation, intonation patterns, sentence models) but can also explain the language-culture using the official language (language of instruction).</p>
ICT skills	<p>The Euregio FL teacher can recognise the activation of good language learning strategies in lesson material including educative computer programmes.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher is able to make use of new media (ICT) at his disposal. These media should be regarded as a means to an end (functional), not an end in itself.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher knows where to find, and knows how to include interactive computer activities between students. S/he is aware of the existence of and knows how to use didactic internet initiatives such as Tandem Learning.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can take different learning styles into account (e.g. visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and appeal to these individual learning styles by making use of supporting media (e.g. with computer support) and techniques (theatre...).</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can provide tasks and material by means of an electronic learning environment and learning management system (LMS) of the new school.</p>
Feedback and remediation	<p>The Euregio FL teacher can give pupils verbal and written feedback both in the target language and the official language (of instruction) which motivates and is constructive, according to their needs.</p>

Feedback and remediation	The Euregio FL teacher can design and put into practise lessons, also using computer programmes and the Internet, in which motivating and constructive feedback on pupils'/students' language production is given.
Ensuring authenticity/ Realistic communication	<p>The Euregio FL teacher can construct integrated language tasks in authentic situations, using authentic material from the target language-culture and websites and knows how to take advantage from his/her privileged position as native speaker of the FL (i.c.).</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher is able to place language expressions in their context. S/he can explain that the target language must be seen in the context or situation in which it is used and thereby motivates the pupils for learning the foreign language.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can illustrate how language expressions and examples can be used in daily life.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher is able to use anecdotes and concrete examples from the border region to put into perspective language expressions associated with most subjects.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can use language exercises, which can be found in lesson material and language courses, in authentic situations such as asking for information in the country of the target language and can stimulate the pupils/ students to reflect on what they have learnt.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can adapt language exercises found in course material to authentic situations according to the school (or a partner school in the border region) and students.</p>

Contrastive approach	The Euregio FL teacher can recognise typical interference mistakes between official language and target language in pupils' output, mistakes which hamper effective communication, and can provide feedback to the pupils explaining the interference mistakes pointing out the differences between the language systems and organise specific remedying activities.
Self-improvement	The Euregio FL teacher regularly improves his/her teaching skills as part of in-service education or continuous education (participation to seminars, symposia, workshops ...).
Self-improvement	Teachers learn how to incorporate research into their teaching from fields such as teaching methodology, applied linguistics, language acquisition, testing and evaluation, special needs education and so on.

Recommendations for policy makers and teacher training institutes

- For future teachers, having an experienced and motivated mentor at the beginning of their career is indispensable.
- Final attainment levels should reflect a realistic view of the competences that can be obtained with most of the pupils and should be in accordance with the competences that employers are looking for.
- Schools should provide teachers with some support and practise in computer skills.
- Schools should also (have the means to) invest in supporting software programs and in-service training for their staff with respect to LMS.
- Schools should also give teachers the opportunity to improve their teaching skills by means of in-service trainings, workshop ...

- Schools should be open for and keep their teachers informed about border region collaboration initiatives such as Tandem Learning

5.3.3 Language skills

Language competence	<p>As far as (active) language production is concerned, the Euregio FL teacher should at least have achieved the C1 foreign language level of the CEF when teaching a target language in a vocational school.*</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher is open to lifelong learning and is willing to improve his/ her foreign language proficiency (courses, traineeships abroad, study time abroad ...), which corresponds with the learning scales outlined in the Common European Framework (CEF). This course aims to improve key skills and fluency in writing, reading, speaking and listening, and in the teacher's productive, receptive, interactive and mediating skills.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can add communicative language competences to linguistic competences.</p>
Use of target language	<p>The Euregio FL teacher is a good user of the target language and can as such improve pupils' language skills (correct pronunciation, intonation patterns, sentence models).</p>
Use of official language	<p>The Euregio FL teacher can use the official standard language to explain the target language (correct use of meta-language), for classroom management and to give instructions (ideally minimum of B2 for productive language skills).</p>
Language for specific purposes (LSP) competence	<p>When teaching in vocational secondary education, the Euregio FL teacher can learn and master the technical jargon in the target language in keeping with the type of vocational education VET (e.g. technically oriented).</p>

* The different levels of linguistic competence required to teach kindergarten, primary, secondary, university and adult level learners depend on the context and the particular group of learners.

European Language Portfolio

Teachers learn about the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and are aware of the importance of adding experience to the ELP based on periods of study, work and training abroad. Teachers refer to it regularly in order to evaluate their own language competence and to assemble evidence of their achievements and experience.

Assessment

Teachers are aware of the criteria that affect methods of assessment. Their assessment methods either correspond to the CEF scales, or can be directly compared with them.

Recommendations for policy makers and teacher training institutes

- With a view to the equal qualification of language competences, the European teacher training programmes should be entirely aligned with the CEF.
- Teachers should be trained in the use of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) during their initial training.
- The creativity of the teacher AND the students should not suffer from the pressure of "measurement" of achieved language competence levels.
- In their schools, teachers should be assisted for supporting matters such as statistics. The core business of the Euregio FL teacher must be "language + culture" !

5.3.4 Information literacy

Language teaching in the new school culturer

The Euregio FL teacher finds out what the attitude of the students is towards learning a language in the new region.

School culture

The Euregio FL teacher can determine the aims of the students and the normal amount of homework.

School culture	<p>The Euregio FL teacher turns to a mentor/contact person at the school to find out about the curriculum and school programme, school culture, (social) backgrounds, age groups and levels of the students.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher is able to get information on the cultural background of students and levels of competence (e.g. language competence). Teachers meet their colleagues before the first lesson to find out how they manage their classes.</p>
Communication with peers	<p>The Euregio FL teacher is aware of the diverse ways to communicate and exchange information and resources within the school and with partners abroad.</p>
Border region	<p>The Euregio FL teacher knows the difference in customs and habits between the original population groups and immigrant groups in the border region (and can relate them to his/her culture).</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher is aware of the class differences and their habits and customs and how these originated.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher teaching in vocational secondary education is informed about the organisation of vocational education and professional secondary education specialisations in the border region.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can access and handle information about the border region's economic area and labour.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can access and handle information about legal, social security, insurance ... matters linked to working in the border region.</p>

Youth and youth culture in the border region	<p>The Euregio FL teacher knows generally what the interests of the youth in the border region are and how young people spend their leisure time. Spending time with them during extracurricular activities can help him/her in this.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can recognise the differences between young people in the target culture and the culture of the region.</p>
Differences in the whole of the target language area	<p>The Euregio FL teacher knows other countries where the target language is spoken.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher can describe the historical background of the target language area.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher is aware of the position of the target language in other countries and the consequences this brings with it.</p> <p>The Euregio FL teacher is aware of the present day prejudices between different countries that speak the target language</p>
Lifelong learning	<p>The Euregio FL teacher knows his/her way to modular courses for self-study and lifelong learning and knows how to choose his/her specialisation. S/he knows how to initiate students to self-study (organisation, self-discipline).</p>

■ Recommendations for policy makers and teacher training institutes

- Teachers need support from the schools to achieve this information literacy!
- Working across the border could be made a lot easier (legal conditions, social security issues, insurance, application of European Qualifications Framework, ...)

5.3.5 Personal/ social/ professional skills

The Euregio FL teacher is committed to the job and should project an image of professionalism.

The Euregio FL teacher is motivated and open towards other people and cultures.

The Euregio FL teacher is a worthy representative of his country, its language and its culture. S/he knows how to raise interest for the euregio inside the school, e.g. by organising visits.

Teachers are able to keep their own personality intact but should also accommodate the school culture.

The Euregio FL teacher takes time for self-reflection and is open to lifelong learning.

The Euregio FL teacher is able to adapt to the specific school culture to a certain extent but has leeway to introduce aspects of the 'home system' as well.

The Euregio FL teacher doesn't let personal lifestyles interfere with the teaching assignment, nor have the school pry into his/her private life. The teacher knows how to adopt the schools' policy of colour- and gender-blindness, tolerance of homosexuality and egalitarian principles.

The Euregio FL teacher has interpersonal skills. S/he is a good judge of human character and acts upon it.

The Euregio FL teacher pursues a cordial and helpful relationship with the other teachers.

Teachers know when they have to be strict (e.g. the beginning of the school year) and have the full backing of the school administration. They are

open to communicate about class management, difficulties, etc.

Teachers can recognise and cope with learning disabilities among pupils, such as hyperactivity, auditory processing disorder, dyslexia (reading disability), dysgraphia (disorder of written expression), difficulty with memory, social skills and executive functions (such as organisational skills and time management).

The Euregio FL teacher expresses enthusiasm about language and culture learning and knows how to pass on this enthusiasm to his/her pupils.

Recommendations for policy makers and teacher training institutes

- Teachers need backing from their school to cope with pupils having learning disabilities. Efficient team information sessions about classes and pupils would also be very helpful.
- Training institutes should promote an attitude of self-reflection and lifelong learning on a regular basis.



For more information on the development and implementation of the survey, please refer to the documentation on the CD ROM enclosed – (Bibliography Survey) heading.

6. CONCLUSIONS

A border region must be understood as a living environment characterized by integration as well as differences, consensus and conflict. In order for vocational training to be successful in border regions, all stakeholders involved in education and training and – with a view to their future mobility on a cross-border labour market – pupils and apprentices need to face a number of specific challenges. It goes without saying that multilingualism is just as indispensable as knowing and understanding different cultures and societal structures. Efficient, cross-border vocational training cannot be guaranteed without a sound plan and the will of all individuals concerned to cooperate.

BORDER COMPETENCES provides educational decision makers and vocational training institutions with a model to develop their own competence strategy aligned to the needs of their respective border region. This model can be implemented in numerous European border regions.

Teachers, in particular foreign language teachers, are instrumental in promoting institutional and personal mobility in vocational training as competent and highly motivated multipliers.

BORDER COMPETENCES made it possible to develop a universally applicable competence profile for foreign language teachers based on the proven cross-border 'Euregio Competence' concept from the Maas-Rhine Euregio (DE, BE, NL). The various benefits and challenges associated with learning and instructing pupils and apprentices at trans-national level as well as the requisite skills became apparent in the scope of the project. The method used to identify the competence profile – for foreign language teachers in our case – can be extended to other stakeholders involved in vocational training. The fact that this model is based on good practice and direct input provided by teachers while at the same time benefiting from a scientific basis and its subsequent concrete evaluation implies that it is highly suitable for practical application and for updating the basic and advanced training of teachers.

Finally, it all comes down to the use that is made of the tools developed in the scope of BORDER COMPETENCES in the various border regions and beyond the linguistic, national or regional borders. Which concrete partnerships are built with other teachers, training institutions or companies, or to what extent can the interest of young people be drawn to exchanges and learning beyond the linguistic and cultural spheres they are used to? All these factors determine whether the strategy chosen for training in border regions will prove to be successful or not. There are plentiful examples of good practice, among others thanks to the present project.

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With the friendly assistance of



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Bildungsprogramme der Deutschsprachigen
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