



LLP-LDV-TOI-09-IT-04

Recognition of Experiences, Practices and Procedures: The Focus Groups Results

Introduction

At a European level there is renewed interest in the use of vouchers to encourage individuals to improve their employability through vocational education and training (VET). Schemes have been operating mainly at a regional level in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland. While there are some similarities to the various Learning Accounts, Skills Accounts and Vouchers schemes, there are also distinct differences.

Training vouchers enable an individual to access the vocational education and training they require by setting out an entitlement which can be used with one or more different service providers. In some models, vouchers are simply obtained by applying on-line for an almost automatic entitlement to, usually, a limited range of courses. In other schemes, they form part of a structured unemployment programme and can include access to a wide range of personalised support. The vouchers may carry a nominal value and may partially or fully cover the direct costs involved. Individuals choose which of the approved public or private providers to use when spending their vouchers. Providers then redeem vouchers through a regional administrative office.

In considering possible voucher schemes, it is important to give consideration to the following aspects:

- range of providers to be included – public, private
- eligible courses – existing, new provision
- costs covered – token individual contribution, matched, fully paid
- access by potential users – on-line, through providers, community bodies
- administrative body
- target audience
- subject areas (numeracy/IT/literacy, regional skills priorities, etc.).
- what are the priority issues that the scheme should address, the main benefits to be achieved and the key design characteristics – who should be eligible, what level of support to be offered, what type of provision should be supported
- what are the key steps for taking such a scheme forward

Here below the synthesis of the focus groups is provided

Report of 1st Focus Group in Chatham, Kent (UK) – 17th June 2010

1. Context

This focus group was designed for stakeholders and professionals concerned with economic development and vocational and education and training provision. The focus group was organised with the assistance of the Gateway Knowledge Alliance which is the strategic forum concerned with the regeneration needs of Thames Gateway Kent – part of the largest regeneration project in Europe. The attached briefing was circulated in advance to participants. The group was asked to consider the key added value and characteristics that a training voucher could bring to Kent and Medway. The Trento model was used as a reference for how a training voucher could operate; supplemented by information from other schemes, including the Kent ILA scheme.

2. Key Points

The discussion ranged across a number of topics, including the following key points:

- The group thought the training voucher scheme should be designed to fill gaps in existing public funding for training. Specifically this included:
 - Initially entry learning e.g. community learning designed to re-engage non-learners as a first step towards vocational training
 - NVQ Level 3/"A" Level – i.e. advanced apprenticeship, upper secondary school, pre-university entry level
- A proportion of the funding should be available for "re-entry" learning but the main proportion should be focussed on vocationally relevant learning. Where re-entry training was supported, there should be in-built mechanisms to encourage progression e.g. through information, advice and guidance, multi-year access to training vouchers
- Availability of impartial guidance, both at entry into learning and on completion of learning was important to help individuals identify and follow training that was relevant for them. This should be independent of specific training providers; though main providers do provide good advice to (potential) learners.
- Voucher holders Individuals should have freedom to choose which providers to use. This implies:
 - Effective mechanisms to make individuals aware of the range of providers and courses that are available
 - A light quality control system to ensure only good providers – public and private – were involved with the scheme
 - Complementary actions may be required to ensure that there is a good choice of providers and courses available. This could imply specific mechanisms to assist in the development of new providers and/or courses
- Existing technology and infrastructure should be used to operate the voucher scheme e.g. the local Mega-nexus system which is being developed across

the Thames Gateway Kent area. These systems help individuals log their progress and enable tracking of learners to monitor effectiveness of learning activity

- Individuals should be able to return for new vouchers each year because:
 - Some learning programmes may last more than one year
 - this will encourage progression from entry learning into higher levels of learning
 - new learning priorities may emerge following a piece of training
- Individuals should contribute towards the cost of training supported by the voucher, because it would give greater ownership of the training. In particular, the experience of the group is that this would increase completion rate – free training often has high drop out rates because of low commitment by the participants.

There was also an interest in whether the value of vouchers could be flexible according to the needs and circumstances of individuals. The balance would need to be found between simplicity, flexibility and application of fair criteria in making discretionary choices.

3. Follow-up Points

The group were interested in the idea that there should be a voucher scheme introduced. Finding suitable funding sources would be difficult – possibly a European project could be used to secure part funding.

The group were also interested to learn more about voucher schemes; especially that of Trento and the experience of Western Macedonia in transferring the Trento model.

4. Conclusion

The group were positive about the concept of a training voucher scheme for Kent and Medway and would be interested to learn more about the TAV project and other voucher schemes.

Report of 2nd Focus Group in Margate, Kent (UK) – 9th June 2010

1. Context

“Making Your Way” is a project which helps parents of children with disabilities to prepare for entry/re-entry into employment – including self employment. The project provides a flexible process based on:

- Identifying personal aspirations
- Self audit of knowledge, skills and personal characteristics
- Programme of confidence boosting activities
- Opportunity to attend a personally selected range of training courses
- One to one support from a range of subject experts

Although the project did not adopt an individual voucher system; a voucher system could have been adopted. Therefore this was an opportunity to test the views of potential voucher users. (A complementary focus group for policy makers, unemployment service adviser, guidance providers and training providers is planned once post-election environments have stabilised!).

The project has been operational for six months with the result that:

- 21 people have undertaken a range of 96 training and other activities within the project
- 5 small businesses have been started
- 2 people have entered/progressed their employment
- 7 people now actively seeking employment
- 1 has left the project
- 5 still undergoing confidence building and initial training activities

2. Focus Group Process

The focus group process consisted of:

- Letter of invitation sent to the twenty participants of whom twelve accepted and six arrived on the day
- Focus group was held as an informal working lunch session with sandwiches and fruit juice provided
- Focus group introduced by chair:
 - Outlining overall purpose of focus group is to gain feedback on project activity and potential (advantages/disadvantages) of using a voucher based system
 - Confidentiality of the discussion will be respected
 - Respect for individual opinions – each person’s opinion is valid, whether or not other’ participants agree or disagree
 - A finish time for the group has been set
 - A series of open questions will be used to guide the discussion
- A note of key points was made during the discussion by a separate “rapporteur”
- The project made a fixed contribution towards the incidental costs incurred by participants (transport, child care)

3. *Key points from discussion*

Pre-entry motivation for seeking employment

- The project participants had been engaged through a series of community based events during which the project officer had spoken to them about the work preparation support opportunities that were available
- Many participants were not thinking about employment because it was seen as an impossible reality
- Some participants had an idea but did not know if it was realistic or how it could be achieved
- One person had in mind to produce a specific product but had not thought about it as being an opportunity for self-employment

Effectiveness of different project components

- Beneficiaries reported that the flexibility of the project in terms of the training offered, level of support offered, pace of activity and responsive to individual circumstances was very important – a significant difference from other re-entry into employment programmes that they had previously considered but not followed
- Individual support from the project worker was highly valued in a variety of ways
 - Helping think through realistic ideas for employment possibilities on an individual basis; recognising constraints of personal circumstances (Dreamcatcher exercise)
 - Advising on sources of information and advice about training opportunities
 - Encouragement to overcome setbacks during the search for training and job opportunities
 - General mentoring support during the project – being an advocate for them
- Although the project had identified and/or arranged a variety of relevant training activities there were still gaps where training needs had not been met
- Preparation and regular review of a Personal Plan was a positive way of measuring progress and motivating towards achievement
- Comment was made that the complexity of the project

Potential Added Value of a Training Voucher

- The project beneficiaries were not aware of the money that was available for training nor, in many cases, the costs of training undertaken (project training budget was in fact underspent)
- Beneficiaries would want to be good users of project money and might of challenged the value for money of some training offers or seek to negotiate a better deal from training providers
- Some beneficiaries would have been willing to augment project money to get more/different training to particularly suit their personal needs

- Beneficiaries would have found it positive to control the training budget directly; feeling able to access the full range of training they wanted – where and when convenient to them

Achievements from participation

- The project is still in progress until the end of June; for most participants activity will in fact continue beyond the end of the project due to an artificially short project lifespan
- Many participants reported that through the project they now had a more realistic action plan to achieve a more realistic employment/self-employment goal
- Many other potential beneficiaries, who have previously avoided more traditional preparation for employment programmes, had asked participants how they could also join the project
- Participants seeking self-employment felt confident that they had now engaged with the learning and support they would require for success; with some very early real business successes achieved
- Some participants seeking paid employment had already done so much to their pleasant surprise
- Other participants still seeking employment felt considerably better able to achieve this

4. *Project Reflections*

This project was intended to reach a significant size target group of non-working adults and assist them back into paid employment. Existing programmes are unattractive due to their prescriptive and inflexible nature. The individualised approach which recognised their personal needs and circumstances was a key attraction in deciding to participate in the project.

The beneficiaries felt they had a low awareness of the existing training opportunities available. Most had low levels of confidence that they would be considered as suitable for entry. Some also encountered difficulties in engaging with some of the local major (public) training and support organisations. The support and sense of entitlement developed within the project helped beneficiaries overcome the barriers they thought existed.

It is likely that if the Trento Voucher Scheme had been replicated with this target group they would have found it a positive and useful approach in helping them back into employment or self-employment; in particular the following characteristics would be of special importance:

- Personal interview to produce a personal action plan
- The voucher statement of entitlement
- Directory of training providers from which to select training programmes
- Identification of sources of information, advice and guidance

Report of Focus Group in Trento (IT) – 20th April 2010

There were involved 12 stakeholders coming from 10 different vocational training bodies. The stakeholders were chosen among the organizers of courses dedicated to voucher system participants in previous years. During focus group there were discussed various topics as follows.

Difficulties encountered in courses organization

- A relevant problem was to homogenize participants knowledge; in fact, there wasn't a preliminary test in order to assign people to the right level. Some vocational training bodies solved the problem by administering specific test in order to create courses with people skilled at the same level, or creating a weekly *recovery lesson* with a teacher, in order to fill the gap among participants. In the starting phase of voucher system, there were very few people all skilled in a similar way, so it was easier to create the class; the problem of courses homogenization raised only with diffusion of voucher system among citizens.
- Stakeholders found that the time to enter in the monthly voucher assignation chart were too long for some people, but at the same time there were also people utilizing two different vouchers in the same year.
- A vocational training body coming from a peripheral area reported the difficulty to find the right number of participants in its country in order to activate the course, and proposes to prolong voucher duration only in these particular zones.
- Some voucher participants went to the vocational training bodies trying to obtain money instead of the voucher.

Difficulties in creating a catalogue training courses without knowing participants' characteristics

- Stakeholders decided to better define the proposed courses, by clearly indicating the target and its skills, in order to help also themselves in courses homogenization.
- Some vocational training bodies proposed to organize courses based on participant occupational skills (field, level, capacities, needs...) in order to avoid problems already encountered.
- Another vocational training body suggested that the training body could insert every voucher system participant in the right course, differentiated by level
- A vocational training body operating in peripheral areas solved the problem by organizing in those areas specific testing days, and then by suggesting to participants the better course.
- Another vocational training body suggested to allow courses organizers (themselves) to move a person in a lower or higher level course if the level chosen is not suited for that voucher system participant.
- There were suggested to adopt European framework for foreign languages in order to define courses level.
- A vocational training body complained about the incongruity of information given by branches employees.

- All bodies involved agreed in declaring that they had organized the catalog without knowing participants skills but then used to modify the courses on participants needs, that could be lower but also higher.

How we can reduce participants abandonment

- Participants inhomogeneity is a problem because both more and less skilled people can have a lack of motivation in course prosecuting. In that case course organizers has a relevant lack of money because no one refund it course cost.
- Asking a caution, as it was done, could be a problem because people follow the course in order not to lose caution value
- According to vocational training bodies opinion, some course were chosen because, apart from the course, course organizers gave also a mobile phone or a trip to each participant. In fact, they noticed the presence of some housewives in order to do a trip for the first time in their lives.
- Few people were very difficult to manage during courses because there were drunk or not keen on staying in the class, so stakeholders asked for a sort of *ward of state* for themselves too.

Participants recruiting

- Only some course organizers adopted advertising method (there were only a few allowed) describing course organization, in order to recruit more participants
- Sometimes participants contacted at first course organizers, who explained how voucher system works. The risk is that they explain the system but participants can choose another organization.

Improving active participation of courses participants

- It is necessary that voucher system participants understand voucher value. A solution could be asking to the participant some money (100-150 euros) in order to com-participate at course cost
- A relevant problem is due to the fact that it is necessary to activate a course only if there are at least 10 participants
- In another Province of Trento program (*Anti crisis plan*) it is possible to reorganize the courses based on participant needs: some stakeholders would like that it could be possible also in voucher system.

Respect to the previous editions there are important needs changed in voucher system participants population

- Customize the content of some IT higher courses: for example introducing "parental control" and functions more useful
- A very strict catalogue, as ours, does not allow to answer to all participants needs.

Report of Focus Group in Kozani (GR) – 15th July 2010

Proposals for counseling, guidance and job placement through CVT (Centers for Vocational Training). Examine the introduction of a voucher system into the regional framework

The focus group of Western Macedonia Region consisted of 5 representatives of the regional Vocation Training Centres. The discussion was held around the main problems and potential solutions for the improvement of continuing vocational training and turning to a more anthropocentric approach in planning and performing training activities to general public. Certain and concrete proposals were made towards reconstruction and upgrading of the quality of the provided services and the introduction of a voucher system in the regional training system.

Main issue that have been addressed was the certification of skills, especially for the unemployed, the placement of the trained employees in relevant jobs according to the subject of the training. Originally, it should be stressed that, in the context of the Operational Programme ' development of human resources ', the country is committed to open the services environment related with the supply and demand of work. In particular, it provides for the development and operation of an Internet portal, like the one of the Community portal EURES. The portal must be open to all operators active in the conjunction of supply and demand, such as public sector bodies and private sector, local Authorities, Universities, etc., with the condition of their certification. In order to meet a minimum quality assurance and the upgrading of the network of public employment services, a single system of centers shall develop providing integrated services –" the one-stop shops ", while the EMPLOYMENT AGENCY of the Region to be committed to promote contracts of active employment policies to other certified bodies.

However, in order to have comparable results of our work concerning the Advisory Support, vocational guidance and job placement, should also be promoted:

1. The development of a reliable system of Needs diagnosis at regional but, above all, at local level, in working categories and specialties and assigned them with the training programmes. This parameter is extremely critical to the functionality of the system and the exploitation of the comparative advantages of every Region of the country. In order to achieve that, it must use the knowledge and the available infrastructure to other entities such as chambers, social partners, but also the ELSEKEK. (Greek Association of Vocational Training Centers)
2. The Development and establishment of a comprehensive and rigorous certification scheme, not only of structures and of trainers, but mainly of the effective capacity of the actors, inflows and outflows of the regional training system.
3. The revise of consultation framework with recognition of Vocational Training Centers' role (VTC) and their certification as Advisory actors (unemployed, vocational guidance, workers). At this point, important is the existence of good

practices (Local Employment Plans, Positive Action Plans) and their incorporation into future action plans.

4. The definition and implementation of integrated policies for the development of human resources, Regional/Sectoral Skills Strategy

5. Strengthen Partnerships for the implementation of integrated local actions for the promotion of employment, with the active role of Government, business community and the education and training actors.

6. Global Grant Programmes. This proposal relates to integrated projects, which include actions to Learning-Advisory-vocational guidance – Work placement and promotional activities, looking for Contractors consortiums in a single geographic area (e.g. in a region or province), or an economy sector or by some other criteria. The potential candidates could bring together training operators, advisory bodies for employment promotion, certification bodies, etc. The logic of these integrated projects is the specification of concrete results, which buys the State of the operators' contractors who can deliver these services.

7. Introduction of a 'training voucher scheme' in the Region of Western Macedonia. A voucher system is a totally new procedure that the Vocational training Centers are open to that but with some prerequisites. There are a number of questions and preconditions in order to avoid significant mistakes and to form a functional and efficient voucher. Taken that into consideration there were important proposals with regard:

- i. The connection of a voucher system with a register of trainees in regional level. This is a certain prerequisite in order to obtain a clear idea about the qualifications and the training results through a anthropocentric approach of training and a following-up of the trainee to his or her way to the labor market.
- ii. The above-mentioned interconnection, links with the development of an Individual Training Action Plan (ITAP) where all the qualifications of the trainee can be show as well as the training programmes that has attended and the training results. Important parameter in this procedure is the transparency that such a system offers, showing the dedication of the trainee to the training activity and his or her will to attend a certain training program to cover specific training needs. This issue is very important for the training activity as a whole because in Region of Western Macedonia but in Greece in general there was not a clear dedication of the trainee to the training activity and from the other side there was low professional attitude in many Vocational Training Centers. This was related with the quality of services provided, the selection of trainees, the inability to track the training profile of the trainee and of course the ultimate result of the training which is the entrance or the re-enter in the labor market.
- iii. Connection of a co-finance training voucher system with the 0,45% of employers' provisions that is given for training. (This is a certain provision that each company provides obligatory by the companies in order to

provide training to their employees. Specified and targeting programmes are developed in order to cover the specific needs of companies for upgrade the capacities of their employees). Based on this scenario, the companies require specified training services to which improve the capacities of their employees and secure the efficiency of the training. (The companies apart from the provision given, the dedicate significant working hours of their employees to the training activities).

- iv. Connection of a voucher training system with a pre-establish and agreed lists of training programmes and services providers. This step is a prerequisite for offering quality services and securing the efficiency of the whole procedure. Having a certain number of training programmes is easier to establish quality criteria (minimum contents of training, educational material, theoretical and practical exercise of trainees etc.). In addition is much easier for the potential voucher holder to find the most suitable (in terms of location and easy access) and most reliable training provider where he or she can provide the most attractive 'package' of training.

The redesign of programmes shall be linked with the documented needs of enterprises. In order to have, however, real meaning in their implementation process, certain questions relating to the clarification of the role and position of Vocational Training Centers shall provide in support of employment, such as:

- What are the quantitative and qualitative criteria of the country or the Region about linking Training – Employment?
- Are these criteria related to other entities that offer educational and consulting services over the VTC's, and if so what are their results?
- Which are the evaluation indicators of top Agency for employment, the Organization for the Employment of Working Force (OAED) in training, apprenticeships, placing in the labor market and other related activities, Institute of Adults education, etc.).
- What measures are taken by the Employment of Working Force (OAED) to improve the quality of the service of the Centers for Employment Promotion?

Conclusion of the meeting

The training voucher system is a new approach for Greece, which should be attested through a pilot project first before its general acceptance in the regional/national training system. All the above-mentioned proposals shall be taken into account in the process of introduction of a voucher system in Greek framework and more specifically to a regional training framework like the one of the Western Macedonia Region.

Report of Focus Group in Barcelona (SP) – 10th June 2010

1) Difficulties in the organization of occupational training courses and in the training's design.

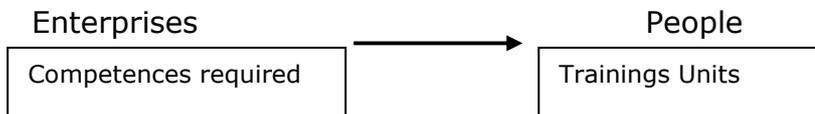
Occupational training is an emerging sector with key strategic importance, but currently there is much uncertainty because nobody knows what can happen here five years. According to on the training needs of individuals and taking into account previous experiences, a process carried out targeting framed in the following table:

Guidance System

	Guidance	Accreditation	Training
Occupation			
Unemployed			
Retrain			
To promote			

Definition of the itinerary → Units of competence + Training module (short-term)
 → Qualifications catalogue.

This guidance system includes the possibility of promoting. The promotion may be horizontal (when promotion occurs within the same area of training) or vertical promotion (when other means of qualification levels). The authorities that managing vocational training is intermediaries between:



One of the difficulties associated with the design of the training is the difficulty of covering certain qualifications required by the labour market. Another problem is the necessity to have a good labour market observatory and these sometimes have a lack of agility because they are very bureaucratic structures. Also be taken into account, it may be difficult to reconcile the organization of the vocational training with the European Social Fund requests. In Catalonia, the Occupation Service (SOC) is only 3% in brokerage contracts. It is important that all entities engaged in vocational training to networking. In addition, the discussion about whether the training is carried out or even outside working hours.

2) Process validation in European learning credits.

The recognition process for validation in European learning credits, organized through a joint plan with the Department of Employment and the Department of Education (General Office of Vocational Training and Continuing Education).

The itinerary that follows is:

- 1) Recognition of qualifications and previous job responsibilities.
- 2) Accreditation of competences.

- 3) Obtaining the necessary skills to work.
- 4) Work Experience.

In Catalonia, since 2004 have proven skills to 13,000 people. The orientation process is done from a module of 60 hours.

Accreditation offers two possibilities:

- 1) Obtaining a degree certificate in the education system approved.
- 2) Obtaining a professionalism certificate.

The criterion for obtaining accreditation is as follows:

- 1) Specific qualification → professionalism certificate.
- 2) Several qualifications → professional degree.

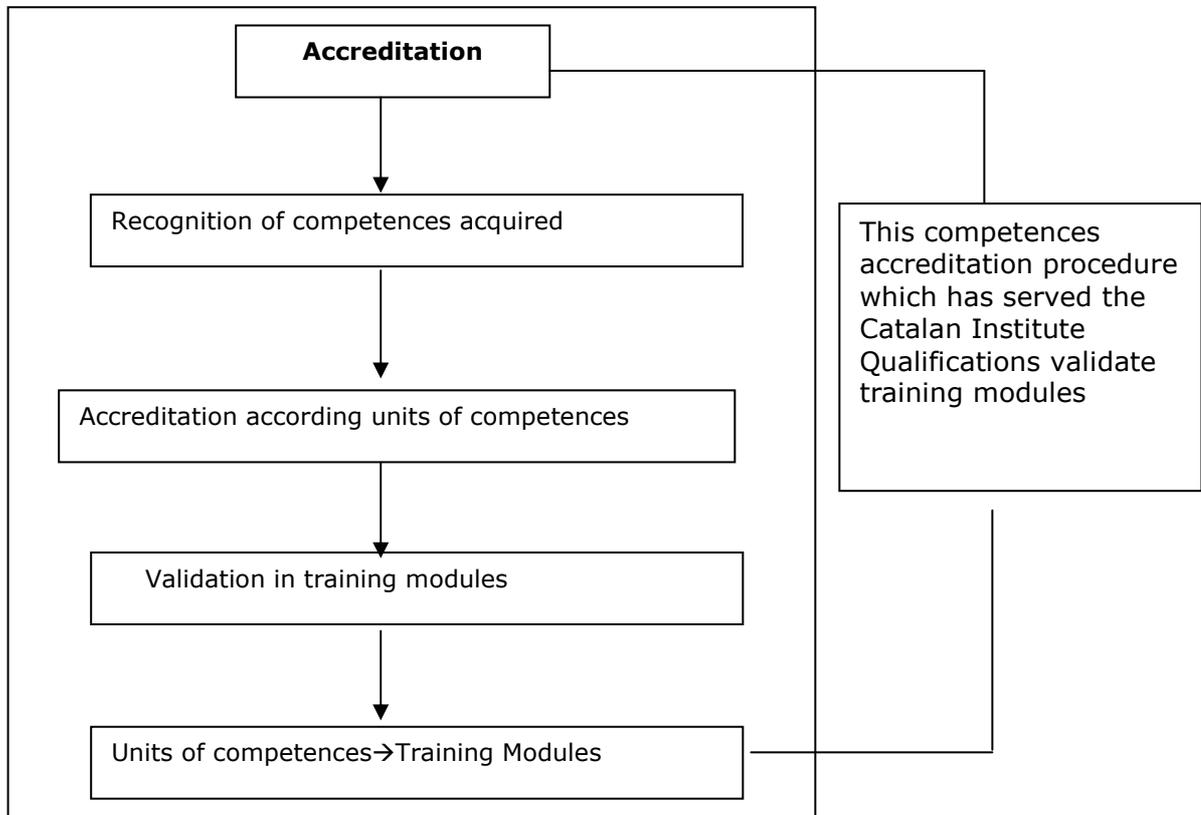
Information → General Guidance → Specific Guidance

Qualifications Catalogue → degree or professionalism certificate

Qualification = Σ Units of competence (UC) + Σ Training (MF)
 Σ UC + Σ Training Module

To obtain the professional qualification is required:

Units of competences + specific qualifications + training modules + training credits.



The qualification levels of the European Union for the European Qualifications Framework coincide with the six levels used in Spain.

3. Procedure for the selection the participants in training courses.

Often the selection of participants, corresponds to the needs of training centres to cover its educational offerings that both the needs of individuals or of the labour market. For example, in the current situation with high unemployment tax, the authority gives priority to attend to many people but with few hours of training. So, are offered training courses of short duration to meet the large number of unemployed people who require training. Currently, in Catalonia there is a plan to serve 25,000 people but with few hours of courses, 20, 30, 50 hours. This can cause a frustration of people who receive these courses are very short. It seems that priority is given to the control situation of unemployment people, rather than a good skill level obviously requires many more hours. In this time, with a high number of people unemployed, there is a danger that it will give priority to quantity over quality of it.

4. Methodologies that are carried out in the training room:

Regarding the methodology for vocational training and continuous training is considered the most important strategies are:

- 1) The simulated learning, where they develop skills that occur in the workplace.
- 2) Training in the same workplace from professional practice.

For the formative experiences that have been made within companies, it was considered that the practices are not only necessary, but must also be complemented with training units. The tutor's role is very important to know the culture of the company, training in the alternation is considered a good strategy to achieve a good level of professional qualification.

5. Can improve the system of vocational training in the use of training vouchers?

The use of checks in Catalonia has lasted eight years, began in 2000 to provide services. It was an initiative launched the trade union *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) to provide personal services to people in need. One of the possibilities was to make occupational training courses to people who gave these personal services. The system worked from the co-payment, which implies self-regulation, responsibility and empowerment of the user. He had a strong impact because occupational made possible the creation of many microenterprises.

The qualification process is follows:

- 1) Qualification for the person → implies an orientation process.
- 2) Competences accreditation procedure → from work experience.
- 3) Training and guidance itinerary → in what have to train.

We must emphasize the importance of training in all services, whether public or private must have a co-payment.

Report of Focus Group in Oslo (NO) – 23rd June 2010

The new national system NAV vs. a voucher implementation

The national system in Norway, implemented as a newly launched reform where three different public authorities governing employment, health and social welfare have been merged into NAV - the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, made up the background for the consultations. The general perspective on the use of individual vouchers was seen as an interesting approach, but in the present situation it was deemed unrealistic to implement a new initiative concerning individual support as this had been the main justification of the reorganisation of the different services into one.

The consultations were therefore changed into a discussion of additional means to support individual beneficiaries, public services and training providers. These discussions took into account the European initiatives on the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training – ECVET as well as the promotion of a systematic accreditation of all forms of prior learning – of special importance for unemployed people or for those on the brink of being.

With the different ideas on possible enhancements of services, the discussions took on the format of a preparation of potential new projects targeting individual support towards employability, educational and vocational attainment.

The international environment

There was an agreement in the understanding of how changes in the international environment implicitly would have effects upon the employment and social welfare conditions in every country. Topics under discussion were

- Contractions of the labour market due to turbulent financial conditions, combined with structural changes within the industries themselves, new measures for facilitating training, certification of an individual's operational competences will be of utmost importance
- Problems encountered by a mobile workforce coming from different countries is to a high extent linked to a need for a transparent documentation of their competences
- The increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in a country, carrying with them a broad range of KSCs, but very often badly documented and seldom supported by valid certificates

Individual attainment and vocational flexibility – a SkillsBank perspective

Taking into account a possible new project, several points were raised as concerns different perspectives to be promoted:

- Individuals are disadvantaged due to uncompleted formal training
- Minority groups and people temporary or permanently disabled caused by health reasons, are marginalised and are a growing concern for national and regional authorities

- Employers need to have a more transparent statement of an individuals' competence to help in recruitment – including candidates who with a small amount of additional training could be raised to an appropriate skills level
- Improved use of public funding to fill “curriculum gaps” in order for individuals to complete a formal unit of learning rather than paying for full curriculum programme; which could also speed re-entry into the employment market
- Pro-active encouragement of individuals to seek additional training to complete formal curriculum requirements for formal accreditation/qualifications
- A further development and integration of experiences with different voucher initiatives to optimise the use of resources
- An expected imbalance in the age cohorts relative to the employable work force, requires new approaches to give a higher proportion of the employable population opportunities in line with the EU slogan New Skills for New Jobs

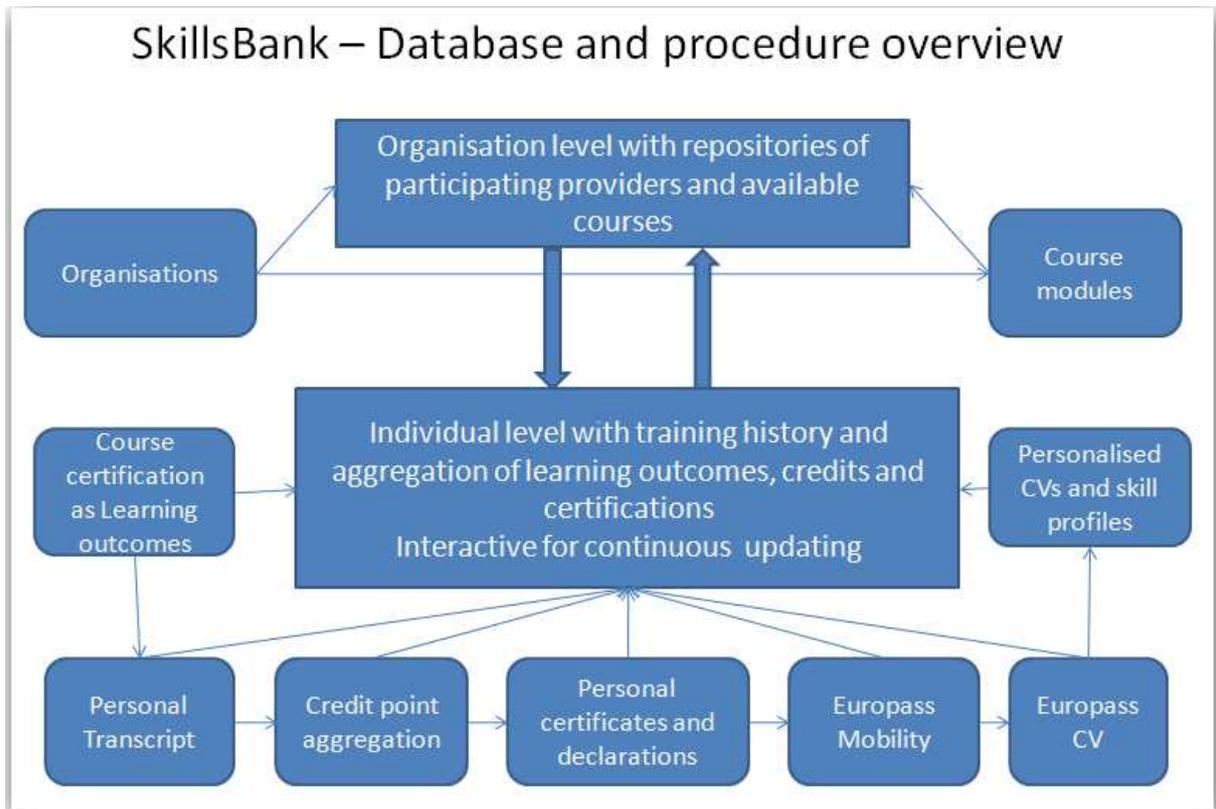
ECVET procedures in the guidance on career choices and the aggregation and documentation of individual skills and competences

The use of transnational initiatives like ECVET and Europass was deemed necessary, combined with

- Existing guidance services and career planning are lacking tools for tailoring relevant pathways for training at individual level , taking into account a skill profile and personal ambitions and motivation
- National regulations require a more systematic aggregation and tracking of training records at the interface between training provider and individual participant
- Individual aggregation of accredited skills and competences can, to some extent, be documented through a Europass procedure
- The continuous aggregation of knowledge, skills and competences (KSC), described by learning outcomes (LO) in separate units according to an ECVET procedure, is cumbersome to overview without an elaborated matrix of LO units and subunits
- There is a need for other means and measures to get a feasible solution for the individual, the guidance services, the training providers, the future employers, as well as the institutions and organisations at national or regional level, being responsible for training and employment
- Existing experiences from transnational projects and initiatives (VQTS, SME Master, PERMEVET, MultiPass, Rap4Leo, EuroApprentice....) indicate that a structured aggregation of educational attainments is profitable for the individual, the training providers and stakeholders related to the employment market

The proposed next steps

The different elements mentioned above will be the basis for an application targeting the setup of a Skillsbank.



In due time the project idea will be elaborated and the core focus group will be enlarged by interested and relevant prospective partners.