

[IQEA PROJECT FINAL REVIEW REPORT]

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1. THE CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The IQEA project addresses a number of challenges in elderly care in Europe. The focus of the project is on homecare givers for elderly people, an increasing task due to socio-demographic changes. The challenges addressed are:

- The need of appropriate qualification for homecare givers;
- A high diversity of qualifications for care staff between European member states;
- Increasing mobility of homecare givers between member states;
- A lack of standards and recognition of qualification for homecare givers between member states;
- An increasing staff shortage in the field of homecare.

These challenges address a highly relevant problem in the European labor market and the European health care systems. Already today an increasing mobility of Health staff can be observed within the European Union. At the same time most countries face a staff shortage and a he diversity of health systems and qualification standards. This is especially relevant in case of initial training for elderly homecare which is less regulated than nurses education. This situation implies problems in quality standards of care as well as labor market development.

The sector has a high potential to create jobs throughout Europe. However, the labor market development is slowed down by informal development and [precarious](#) working conditions. Employment potentials are not exploited sufficiently, wage systems are not developed appropriately and employment conditions are often insufficient. Therefore there is a high need for improvements which especially have to address qualification systems and their mutual recognition between different European regions.

2. THE APPROACH TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES

ECVET and EQF which are the conceptual basis of the EQEA project are appropriate means to address the challenges outlined above. The concept of ECVET to describe the processes of tasks and to define learning outcomes has the advantage that qualification concepts are assigned to the functions of tasks. Since these functions in elderly care are comparable in all countries the ECVET system can be designed on a common basis.

Within the ECVET system different tasks are described and different levels of necessary knowledge, capabilities and competencies to fulfill the tasks are assigned. The different levels can be described by learning outcomes which differentiate different degrees of independence in performing the tasks. This approach has the advantage

- that different levels of training can be described and operationalized;
- that the different levels can be made comparable;
- that acquired theoretical and practical competences can be made visible;
- that a rationale for recognition of qualifications is provided and
- that continuous lifelong learning is supported.

By using the European Qualification Framework (EQF) the different levels of qualification can be well differentiated. Credit points can be assigned to the different levels according to the learning outcomes and the level of qualification can be used as the basis for accreditation and the definition of further training needs in the different European member states.

These features of ECVET and EQF make the system appropriate to address the mentioned challenges of homecare giver qualification and employment development. Different pre-qualifications can be made transparent, the desired level of qualifications can be agreed, and respective curricula to meet qualification needs can be designed and compared.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE APPROACH

The implementation of the approach has followed different steps to develop the learning activities:

- the evaluation of existing training programs in participating countries
- the analysis of tasks to be performed by the different trained professionals
- differentiation of structures and identification of common learning areas
- comparison of learning outcomes
- the analysis of training standards
- the design of an ECVET Agreement
- the development of the curriculum
- the assessment of the curriculum
- the allocation of credit points
- the signature of a MOU
- Pilot testing

The evaluation of existing training programs shows the high variety of training for homecare givers within and between the different countries. For the three countries Italy, Romania and Poland seven different trainings have been identified. This underlines clearly the need for harmonization in order to provide transparency and to support mobility. It also shows the relevance of ECVET since it seems to be much more efficient to provide a task related common basis of different trainings rather than to attempt to redesign all the different approaches and achieve a common agreement for a unified education.

Although there are common tasks for homecare givers the training effort differs considerably between and within countries. This requires a translation tool between the different systems that has been oriented at common tasks which can be differentiated according to learning outcome levels. This is possible because the identified learning areas which describe the tasks of care givers can be agreed upon between the different regions and curricula and they meet the international standards of care models. Therefore they provide a common basis for the design of the curricula and can be used to describe differences in the learning outcomes.

In addition the project defined training standards. Although this is not a core issue in the ECVET system it shows to be important because it became a vital issue for the ECVET agreements. Therefore the concept does not only provide comparable content but comparable settings of the trainings as well. This includes important issues like success rates, inclusion of different groups of participants and the utilization of knowledge as well as satisfaction of employers and employees.

Based on these analytical works the curricula have been developed. They include all tasks that have been addressed by the different existing curricula, the respective learning outcomes and indicators for the operationalization describing the capabilities participants should achieve. The curricula was made comparable between countries by allocation ECVET points for each country and qualification. The allocation of ECVET points was discussed and agreed upon in several project meetings and provides an excellent rational to compare qualification levels and qualification outcomes between different regions and regulatory systems.

In Addition assessment tools have been developed and agreed upon that measure the outcome of trainings. This approach ensures a high quality of trainings and contributes to the comparability of outcomes.

On this basis a Memorandum of Understanding could be developed which ensures the application of all developed steps. This way a mutual acceptance of all participating parties can be guaranteed and high level outcome of the process supported.

Overall the implementation and procedures of the IQEA project can be considered as very sound and valuable. It seems to be very appropriate to make trainings more comparable, to support mobility, to enhance employment and employability and to increase quality of care. The testing n the pilot phase shows good results in all participating institutions and confirms the approach.

4. DISSEMINATION

The experiences and gained knowledge of the IQEA project have been widely shared. The project homepage provides respective materials that can be used by other interested parties. A number of conferences have distributed the results to a wider public and publications addressed the scientific community. The final booklet provides stakeholders with a synthesis of result, experiences and conclusions and supports dissemination.

5. ADDED VALUE OF IQEA AND FURTHER ACTIVITIES

The IQEA Project shows that comparability of training and lifelong learning in highly differentiated settings and contexts can be achieved. This comparability supports mobility of the workforce within Europe and contributes to the increase of employment opportunities. The following SWOT table summarizes the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threads of the approach.

The overall strength and opportunities have been described above already. It has to be emphasized however, that the ECVET approach as it was implemented by the IQEA Project can contribute to European labor market cohesion significantly. Therefore respective projects do provide high level added value.

It also has to be mentioned, that the ECVET process requires a high effort and needs considerable resources. Therefore project support at least in the pilot faces is necessary. This does not only include financial resources but support by stakeholders and political institutions as well. This support will also have to be tuned very thoroughly in order to avoid over regulation and unnecessary bureaucracy. However it will be necessary in order to ensure a wide public acceptance that helps to overcome national or regional interests to defend their existing regulatory conditions.

SWOT Analysis of the IQEA/ECVET Process

