



**Promoting the EQF Learning Outcome approach  
within European universities - UNILO**

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

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# Executive Summary

UNILO promotes the use of **Learning Outcomes** (LOs) within European universities and institutions which grant professional title. Running from March 2010 to April 2012, the project was founded by (but not restricted to) the *Career Services* units of three universities. The University of Granada is project contractor, supported by Scierter España as international coordinator and a further 9 partners from a total of 9 countries.

UNILO researched current understanding of LOs and practices across Europe, to identify successes and barriers to their introduction. It has developed a Toolkit of practical tools to assist universities to introduce and add value by using LOs. The web-based **UNILO Community of Practice** at [communityunilo.eu](http://communityunilo.eu) continues after the project has ended, with an on-going and growing community to sustain the approach in the longer term.

The project has published the following:

***State of the Art Report on the Implementation of Learning Objectives with the EHEA*** – the results of a major survey of the extent of understanding of LOs (and other EU/EHEA initiatives) across Europe, plus papers on the situation in each partner country

***Analysis of Learning Outcome Implementation in Europe*** - presenting **case studies** of the introduction and use of LOs in universities and professional institutions

***Improving Education's relevance to Society: the role of Learning Outcomes*** –analysis of the results of a series of workshops about LOs in each partner country

***Methodological Guide to LOs*** - containing:

- Policy context,
- LOs and their Applications,
- Writing LOs,
- LOs and Teaching & Learning,
- Assessment based on LOs,
- Quality Assurance based on LOs,
- Criticalities & Bottlenecks,
- Glossary
- References
- Annex on Bloom's Taxonomy

***Students Guide to LOs,***

***Teachers Guide to LOs,***

***Career Counsellors Guide to LOs,***

***Organisational self-assessment Guide*** – understanding of the LO approach, implementation status, and attitudes,

***ICT Tools for LOs and National Qualifications Framework***

Together these provide a practical **LEARNING OUTCOMES TOOLKIT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**.

The project partners have disseminated the LO approach and the UNILO products through the project website: [www.unilo.eu](http://www.unilo.eu), four newsletters (translated into 9 partner languages), the Community of Practice, their own networks, and by participation in a large number of conferences and meetings across Europe and world-wide.

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# 1. Project Objectives

The *Promoting the EQF Learning Outcome approach within European Universities* project aim has been to promote the use of and contribute to the full understanding and application of EQF, and particularly its learning outcomes (LO) approach, to the huge target group of European Universities, students and holders of professional qualifications<sup>1</sup> to:

- Explore the added value from use of LOs, particularly their additional applications beyond formal courses
- Explore the implications of LOs for assessment of university courses and professional qualifications
- Study the implications of LOs for recognition of informal and non-formal learning, (and of non formal short courses and modules)
- Clarify the relationship between the qualification framework for EHEA and EQF
- Identify the implications for international study and work mobility
- Explore the implications of LOs for University Guidance and Career Offices
- Explore the implications of LOs for QA systems and processes
- Develop the use of ICT to collect and show evidence of learning outcomes at individual and institutional level

Among the specific objectives we can find:

- To define the state of the art in LO implementation in EHEA
- To identify criticalities and bottlenecks in the implementation process
- To identify benefits and applications of LOs (including mutual recognition of awards, recognition of prior learning, improved assessment, QA, modularisation, improved access and equal opportunities)
- To set up a community of practice starting from the partner networks
- To develop awareness at institutional, sectoral and national levels
- To develop methodological instruments (applications) for HEIs and professional institutions and their employees, students and members
- To provide practical tools and guidance for universities to help introduce LOs
- To disseminate results and search feedback from HE and EQF implementation structure
- To coordinate the activities and liaison with EACEA.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: In most European countries and professions, the professional title is conferred by the university degree, but in others the professional institution is the assessor

## 2. Project Approach

The approach adopted by the consortium includes seven Work Packages that have been designed according to the objectives stated.

**WP1 Management:** Including overall coordination within the partnership and liaison with EACEA. UNILo held six face-to-face Meetings (Granada 4/3/10, Tallinn 5/9/10, Padova 3/2/11, Granada, 7/10/11 Vienna 2/11/11 and Granada 16-17/4/12) and 15 virtual meetings in between. A UNILo mailing list and a project management intranet system were also set up to support its work. The coordinator (Sciento España) has attended one coordination meeting in Brussels in January 2010, as required by the call. The project has received an amendment extending the project duration for 2 months, until the end of February 2012).

**WP 2 Overview of Learning Outcome Implementation in Europe:** All partners reported the status of LO implementation in their country, from which a consolidated analysis was prepared. A Survey has been conducted using an online survey tool based on the same principles as the European Commission's Interactive Policy-Making tool. It was available in English and kept open for a period of 3 months to ensure the maximum number of responses from a variety of stakeholders.

**WP 3 Creating Better Policy through Research & Dialogue:** Organisation of nine integration focus groups (in each partner country: ES, EE, IT, DE, PL, PT, CY, HU, and UK), organised with the main stakeholders, including those from guidance and career offices, quality assurance offices and agencies, university administration, student/teacher bodies etc, to discuss their understanding of LOs, their perception of the efficiency of the system, and the barriers they believe are hindering further adoption. 60 good practice case studies were collected, of which the 10 most interesting were studied and reported in greater detail. The good practices analysis provided insights on the benefits and advantages of adopting a Learning Outcomes approach in Higher Education, supporting the definition of the steps towards an innovative and coherent application of Learning Outcomes in European Universities.

**WP 4 Extending Implementation through Networking:** This WP includes:

- a) a Web 2.0 social community to promote academic networking, allowing for sharing of sources, best practice, upcoming events, results of events, latest publications etc. It is integrated with the project website, and thus is also a source of information on the project.
- b) Networking Workshops: each partner has organised a networking workshop at national level bringing together relevant stakeholders working in the field.

**WP 5 Dissemination Coordination & Impact Maximisation:** Including: a) Creation and maintenance of a project website. All partners were encouraged to post to the website, and to use its content within their own websites. b) Presentation at events: Including presentations at events and conferences, meetings, workshops, symposia, scientific and information "days", either organised by other associations or by the project. c) Dissemination materials produced according to the perceived needs of the consortium, including brochures, leaflets, posters, information DVDs etc. d) Dissemination of multilingual newsletter informing the interested audience about project achievements and events.

**WP 6 Creating Tools and Dialogue for Sustainability:** including Formulation of Key Policy Messages, preparation and participation in three conferences organised by others,

Development & Distribution of a toolkit on EQF/LO Implementation and design of a Development of Sustainability Plan. The Toolkit includes:

A methodological guide to LOs - containing:

- Policy context,
- LOs and their Applications,
- Writing LOs,
- LOs and Teaching & Learning,
- Assessment based on LOs,
- Quality Assurance based on LOs,
- Criticalities & Bottlenecks,
- Glossary
- References
- Annex on Bloom's Taxonomy

Organisational self-assessment guide

Students guide

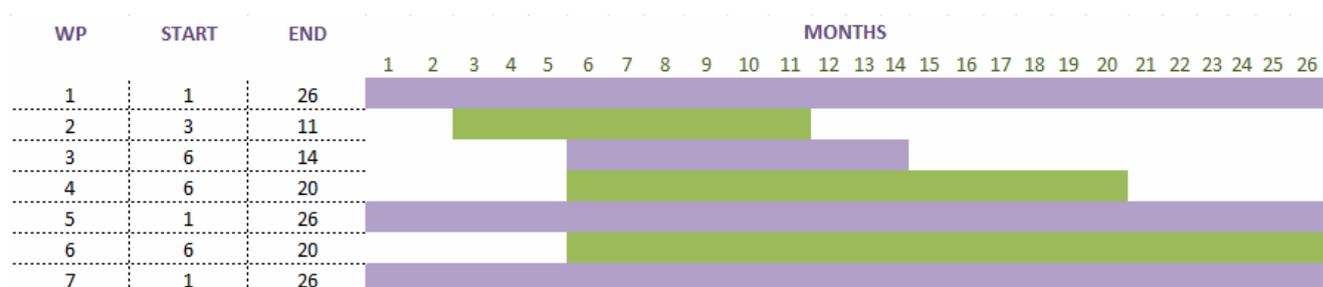
Teachers guide

Career counsellors guide

ICT Tools for LOs and National Qualifications Framework

**WP 7 Quality Management and Evaluation:** featuring the design and overall implementation of an Evaluation and Quality Plan, periodic reports, peer review of publications and monitoring of intra-WP quality procedures.

As illustrated in the GANTT and table below (project duration after amendment approval: From 1/03/2010 until 30/04/2012):



WORK PACKAGE	TIMEFRAME		WP LEADER / PARTNERS INVOLVED
WP1: MANAGEMENT	1	26	UGR/All partners
WP2: OVERVIEW OF LEARNING OUTCOME IMPLEMENTATION IN EUROPE	3	14	ILI/All partners
WP3: CREATING BETTER POLICY THROUGH RESEARCH & DIALOGUE	6	20	SCIENTER /All partners
WP4: EXTENDING IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH NETWORKING	6	26	UGR /All partners
WP5: DISSEMINATION COORDINATION & IMPACT MAXIMISATION	1	26	EQA /All partners
WP6: CREATING TOOLS AND DIALOGUE FOR SUSTAINABILITY	6	26	UPD /All partners
WP7 QUALITY AND EVALUATION	1	26	SCIES/All partners

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

During the 26 months of the project's lifetime, the following outputs and results have been produced:

- Updated **Survey report to define the state of the art in LO implementation in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)**.
- **Report on the focus groups carried out to identify issues and bottlenecks in the implementation process**, containing recommendations for policy, practice and research.
- **Report on benefits and applications of LOs** following a case study approach (including mutual recognition of awards, recognition of prior learning, improved assessment, QA, modularisation, improved access and equal opportunities) and a set of case studies of good practice in the use of LOs.
- **Community of practice regarding LOs in European Universities and professional institutions**, successfully launched in January 2012. The UNILo web community of practice under [communityunilo.eu](http://communityunilo.eu) has been prepared for all the stakeholders in European higher education institutions (HEIs) to participate. It is designed to facilitate exchange of information; media files etc. and aimed at networking in the field of learning outcomes in European HEIs: i.e. allowing for sharing of sources, best practices, upcoming events, results of events, latest publications etc. The platform is accessible on its own, at [communityunilo.eu](http://communityunilo.eu) and also redirected from the project website: [www.unilo.eu](http://www.unilo.eu). The **community website will be maintained indefinitely**. It provides a vehicle for everyone to discuss their experience and views on learning outcomes in higher education in Europe.
- Report on **awareness building and exploitation activities**.
- **TOOLKIT FOR HEIS AND PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS, THEIR EMPLOYEES, STUDENTS AND MEMBERS**. The toolkit contains guides addressed to different stakeholders:
  - A **methodological guide**, presenting wider policy context of LOs approach and describing major processes of LOs application, particularly:
    - Policy context,
    - LOs & their Applications,
    - Writing LOs,
    - LOs and Teaching & Learning,
    - Assessment based on LOs,
    - Quality Assurance based on LOs,
    - Criticalities & Bottlenecks,
    - Glossary
    - References
    - Annex on Bloom's Taxonomy
  - **Organisational self-assessment guide**, explaining how to conduct organisational self-assessments in HEIs in order to identify strengths and improvement needs and to foster a commitment to organisational change for improvement;

- **Students guide**, providing information about what LOs are, their relevance to the curriculum and assessment, their use in course selection, the Diploma Supplement and job hunting;
- **Faculty guide**, providing information about what LOs are, their relevance to the curriculum and course design, and assessment;
- **Career counsellors guide**, providing information about what LOs are, their relevance to the curriculum and assessment, how Careers Officers could influence writing them so they are relevant to the labour market, how they impact on Careers Services and work experience.

Each guide provides examples of good practices collected during the project.

- **Quality and Evaluation plan; interim and final evaluation reports.**

## 4. Partnerships

The UNILO partnership is formed by **seven Universities, three consulting/private research companies and one Quality Assurance institution (Estonian EQF national contact point)**. The blend of viewpoints and experience brought to the partnership by each of them provided a very good discussion ground and improved the quality of outcomes. Most of the partners have known one another from other networks and meetings or have worked together before.

UNILO builds on solid relations among partners and has a very clear networking approach, assured not only by the consolidated relationship existing among the participants, but also for the roles that they play in the main networks at European level. The activities within the various work packages were allocated according to the interest expressed by the partners as well as previous work references. It is important to highlight the complementary competences of the partners, which include universities, research centres and networks.

In addition, the strategic composition of the consortium allows the direct involvement of several other European association and networks where the partners are already active:

- **Coimbra Group:** task force “Career Guidance and Employability”. For more info: [www.coimbra-group.eu](http://www.coimbra-group.eu)
- The **European University Association (EUA)** represents and supports higher education institutions in Europe, providing them with a unique forum to cooperate and keep abreast of the latest trends in higher education and research policies. [www.eua.be](http://www.eua.be)
- **International Association of Universities:** IAU, founded in 1950, is the UNESCO-based worldwide association of higher education institutions. It brings together institutions and organisations from some 150 countries for reflection and action on common concerns and collaborates with various international, regional and national bodies active in higher education. [www.unesco.org/iau](http://www.unesco.org/iau)
- The **European Association for International Education EAIE** is a non-profit organisation whose main aim is the stimulation and facilitation of the internationalisation of higher education in Europe and around the world, and to meet the professional needs of individuals active in international education. [www.eaie.org](http://www.eaie.org)
- **EUCEN**, the European Universities Continuing Education Network was founded in 1991 and it is a European multidisciplinary Association regarding University Lifelong Learning. It is registered in Belgium as an international non-governmental non-profit making organisation and has 212 members from 42 countries. [www.eucen.org](http://www.eucen.org)

Moreover, it is to mention the participation in **38 EVENTS** in which the project has been presented and disseminated. Also, different **dissemination and liaison activities** have been launched in the frame of WP4 (Extending Implementation through Networking), such as the web 2.0 application and networking workshops, and WP5 (Dissemination Coordination & Impact Maximisation) – project Website, publication of project materials, presentations at events, electronic newsletter actively involved the target groups with specific activities for them (students, University Guidance officers, QA offices, policy makers, etc.).

The partnership has also produced a **CONTACT LIST** compiled by Kutsekoda, the Estonian EQF national contact point (Dissemination WP leaders) based on information submitted by partners includes 512 entries, most of them in turn networks.

**4 projects newsletters** have been published in EN-HU-EE-DE-ES-GR-IT-PL-PT dated:

- 29/07/2011
- 03/10/2011
- 13/12/2011
- and 30/04/2012

and sent to all the contacts and networks identified.

They include updated information about the project and its events, info about EQF and interesting news regarding EQF in EHEA.

They are all available at:

- <http://www.unilo.eu>
- and at: <http://communityunilo.eu/outcomes/>

## 5. Plans for the Future

The partnership has carried out an intensive SWOT analysis to agree plans to sustain and further exploit the UNILO outcomes. These are the results:

- As the main portal for communicating project activities and results to the public, the **website** [www.unilo.eu](http://www.unilo.eu) has been extensively updated throughout the project and it does include all the project outcomes. All partners are encouraged to continue to post to the website, and to raise overall awareness of the project achievements, using its content within their own websites and professional networks.
- Increase the membership of the **Community of Practice** ([communityunilo.eu](http://communityunilo.eu)): more participants, from more universities and professional institutions, in more countries, by keeping it current, and with discussion forums in more languages
- UGR has committed that the **community website will be maintained indefinitely**.
- Introduce “**UNILO label**” for HEIs, which have demonstrated excellence in implementing LOs approach. Add the Coimbra Group logo.
- **Explore possibilities of follow up approaches to receive funding from different sources** for the further development of the project to new languages, countries and institutions, emphasizing its relationship with the ESCO project.
- The thematic approach for future activities is: move further to the **assessment aspect of LOs approach implementation**.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

EU POLICY/OBJECTIVE	UNILO CONTRIBUTION
<p><b>Objective (k) to encourage the best use of results, innovative products and processes and to exchange good practice in the fields covered by the Lifelong Learning Programme, in order to improve the quality of education and training</b></p>	<p><b>LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME</b></p> <p>UNILO has contributed to many of the LLP objectives contributing particularly to objective (k) (Article 1.3 of the programme Decision) as the Community of Practice, the LO Toolkit and the dissemination will continue to promote the full understanding and application of European Qualification Framework, and particularly its Learning Outcomes approach, to the huge target group of European University students and holders of professional qualifications.</p> <p>The questionnaire demonstrated the current low level of awareness. By targeting a wide group of respondents to our questionnaire, focus groups and Community of Practice, we have raised awareness of issues related to LOs. The focus groups and our presentations on a variety of seminars and conferences made larger groups of people very much aware.</p> <p>UNILO's toolkit, case studies, website, newsletters and Community of Practice have provided participants with methods and benefits of introducing LOs to HE and professional institutions. Many universities have led open discussions and other activities to help the course developers to define the LOs and assess learners according to that specification. With time and more active participation in the forum there will be even better awareness and understanding of LOs and their benefits.</p>
<p><b>EQF Call</b></p>	<p>Our project promotes the 3 objectives of the call:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Support to the development, promotion and application of the learning outcomes approach for all qualifications at all levels.</i> <b>How:</b> UNILO has concentrated on the higher education, careers guidance and professional sectors. It has developed case studies, and a practical toolkit for them to use. The Toolkit includes guides for use by university teachers, careers service officers and students. and guidance on: the Policy context, LOs &amp; their Applications, Writing LOs, LOs and Teaching &amp; Learning, Assessment based on LOs, Quality Assurance based on LOs, Criticalities &amp; Bottlenecks, Glossary, Organisational self-assessment Guide, ICT Tools for LOs and NQF It has disseminated them through newsletters, presentations at conferences and national workshops, the website and the Community of Practice.</li> <li>• <i>Support to the development and implementation of overarching National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) based on learning outcomes at all level.</i> <b>How:</b> UNILO's Toolkit includes ICT Tools for LOs and NQF and the whole toolkit is dedicated to the practical introduction and promotion of the LO approach. UNILO has used its partners' networking channels to communicate with national agencies responsible for NQFs. It has disseminated to the main stakeholders in 9 EU countries to dialogue, exchange practices and produce key results (including the toolkit for guidance officers) to enrich and support the development of NQFs in the countries involved; in addition the partners have links with countries beyond the partnership (for example EQA links with all the other EQF National Contact Points, and is involved through ETF with other countries implementing NQFs (notably Azerbaijan and Georgia), the Coimbra Group universities (Granada, Jagiellonian, Padova) have been disseminating to the most prestigious universities across Europe, CamProf has been working at government level across Canada and in Afghanistan).</li> <li>• <i>Support the referencing of national qualifications levels to the EQF in a transparent and credible way supporting mutual trust between countries and sectors.</i> <b>How:</b> National referencing relies on the existence of LOs for</li> </ul>

qualifications at all levels. UNILo has created practical tools for teaching staff to introduce LOs, for teachers and students (and their universities and professional institutions) to benefit from their introduction. By exploring the implications of LOs in EQF and EHEA (research), comparing approaches and results at all levels (networking) and developing tools to help University career guidance officers to guide students and holders of qualifications in a transparent and easy to understand way. The greater understanding of each partner's processes for developing LOs for its degree courses has led to mutual trust and confidence in the comparability and quality of their degrees. This reinforces the trust in the referencing process, NQFs and the EQF generally.

## LISBON EDUCATION & TRAINING PROGRESS INDICATORS

**improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems**

the EQF is one of the European reference tools launched to support the Lisbon Education and Training Progress, UNILo will support the full understanding and application of European Qualification Framework (and its relation with EHEA), particularly its Learning Outcomes approach, to the huge target group of European University students and holders of professional qualifications. **HOW:** by developing web 2.0 networking tools and guides for University guidance officers to serve as link to clarify its benefits to the students and holders of professional qualifications.

The UNILo guides help to improve understanding of LOs' potential uses and benefits before, during and after the education is finalised. The elements of the Toolkit help to identify institutional shortcomings, design better courses, design appropriate assessment, improve quality assurance, overcome criticalities and bottlenecks, and to open better employability opportunities for the students. It even provides a suite of ICT tools.

**Key competences for lifelong learning are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context; they are particularly necessary for personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment.**

Several of the UNILo case studies describe the inclusion of employability competences into university courses. These employability competences are the key competences. Their inclusion encourages universities in other countries to incorporate key competences into their LOs. Our project, by supporting the understanding and application of the EQF (and its relation with EHEA) is aiding the University Guidance officers, University staff and managers in their understanding of the EQF. UNILo has provided helpful tools to the huge target group of European University students and holders of professional qualifications. Several of the UNILo partners have combined to undertake the PROPOUND project which builds on the work achieved by UNILo. PROPOUND is piloting the inclusion of employability skills into postgraduate courses.

## LLP HORIZONTAL POLICIES

***Making provision for learners with special needs, and in particular by helping to promote their integration into mainstream education and training particular by helping to promote their integration into making provision for learners with special needs, and in particular by helping to promote their integration into mainstream education and training***

LOs provide a mechanism to promote equal opportunities by providing objective criteria for assessment and accreditation, irrespective of the learning process. By focusing on LOs, the learners are empowered to use any appropriate learning process, and so they can each create a process that is least affected by their specific disabilities. UNILO consortium understands that the LO approach is a fundamental feature to help University learners with special needs to be better integrated. The model proposed has helped University and the key EQF/EHEA stakeholders and particularly University managers, staff and guidance officers to better understand the potential of LOs to help disadvantaged learners.

### ***Cultural and linguistic diversity***

By focusing on LOs, the learners are empowered to use any appropriate learning process, and so they can create special learning processes in response to their cultural and linguistic diversity (for examples courses in minority languages). For EU Universities cultural and linguistic diversity is one of the objectives to achieve in the frame of the Bologna process. The use of LOs can be used as a catalyst to improve transparency with regard to qualifications within Europe and thus promote the potential and "the bright side" of cultural and linguistic diversity.

By providing the Toolkit for the variety of University staff (including Careers Office staff) UNILO has helped to create understanding and better practice in HE programmes and help in students mobility and employability.

The UNILO Community of Practice includes Forums in English, Spanish and Italian, and it is hoped to add Russian and Polish. The UNILO newsletters have been in 9 languages and bring the concepts and practical tools to students and teachers through their own languages.

UNILO has addressed this area by focusing on ET2010 Strategic objective 1: *Improving The Quality And Effectiveness Of Education And Training Systems In The EU*. Our approach is aimed at this strategic objective by developing a community of practice using web 2.0 applications to share and better understand the potential of LOs in the frame of EQF/EHEA.

UNILO also addresses *Education and Training 2020 Strategic Objectives*:

- *making lifelong learning and mobility a reality* – UNILO tools support the implementation of lifelong learning strategies, the development of NQFs and more flexible learning pathways. Implementation of LO-based EHEA facilitates mobility of students and recognition of qualifications;
- *improving the quality and efficiency of education and training* – UNILO's Toolkit provides practical support for equal opportunities and the reform of higher education and professional training to ensure that provision is matched to assessment. The involvement of Careers Offices links education and training to the needs of the workplace. The tools emphasis on adding value for teachers and students promotes *uptake and efficiency*;
- *promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship* – LOs promote equal opportunities (see above) and the case studies give practical examples of using LOs to encourage universities to develop the skills and competences needed for students employability and foster their further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue.;
- *enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training* – LOs can be used to promote the acquisition of transversal competences by students. Partnerships between enterprises and educational institutions are particularly promoted by the inclusion of the Career Guidance Offices in the partnership and the Guide for Careers Counsellors.

### ***Education and Training 2010 Work Programme***