



Development of procedure for acquiring European wide valid certificates

Project Title	Internet based Business Coach for SME Managers
Project Acronym	NETCOACH
Grant Agreement Number	LLP/LdV/TOI/2010/IRL - 506
Deliverable Type	Creation of a common analysis tool
Deliverable Number	24
Date of Delivery	01/09/12
Author(s)	Euridice Cristo
Editor	Mike Ward
Related Work Package	WP5
Availability of Deliverable	Public



Internet Based Business Coach for SME Managers

POSSIBLE PATHWAY(S) TOWARDS NATIONAL, AND ULTIMATELY EC-VET CERTIFICATION



Lifelong
Learning
Programme

“Not all forms of validation of non -formal and informal learning result in award of a qualification.”

CEDEFOP, European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, Luxembourg, 2009.

Contextualization

According to the Benchmarking Report on RPL in five countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland and Portugal) all the countries have specific procedures to certify training courses, both at vocational and high educational levels.

In Ireland and in Portugal the procedures are complex but very well structured.

According to the article of Jens Bjørnåvold and Isabelle Le Mouillour, “La validation des acquis d’apprentissage en Europe: un sujet d’actualité”, Ireland and Portugal, in terms of the development stage toward European Certification, belongs to Group A: High level of development – The validation is an effective reality for the individuals. (<http://www2.centre-inffo.fr:8080/doc/armoire/tiroir/dossier/20120117135006/00001000.pdf>). Austria and Germany are catalogued in Group B: Medium Level of Development – Countries where validation is emerging, while Bulgaria is inserted in Group C – Countries where validation is beginning.

Being the Portuguese partner the responsible for Certification & Qualification, the partnership agreed to prospect and describe the pathways toward certification of the Netcoach learning contents in Portugal.

Certification of a training course at secondary and vocational level (NQF¹ award 1-5)

In Portugal, the National Association for Qualifications (ANQ) is the statutory body for coordinating the implementation of policies on education and vocational training for youth and adults and ensures the development and management of the System of Recognition, Validation and Certification, assuming a leading role in the fulfillment of goals set by the New Opportunities Initiative.

¹ National Qualifications Framework

For the certification of the Netcoach learning contents at secondary and vocational level (NQF award 1-5), the organization that offers the course has to be previously certified by DGERT (General Direction of Employment and Labour Relations) and registered in SIGO (System of Information and Management of Vocational and Educational Courses).

The course should be registered in the National Catalogue of Certifications (NCC).

<http://www.catalogo.National Association for Qualifications ep.gov.pt/Home/MAC>

Portuguese National Catalogue of Certifications (NCC) comprehends the courses that give awards (levels 1 to 5) – for instance there is a course named “Technician of Management Support) of level 4 – and also Small Terms Training Units (UFDS) with the duration of 25 hours each. In National Catalogue of Certifications (NCC) we have a training course named “Initiative Entrepreneurs: Management Skills” which have 3 UFDS related to Management: Leadership and Organization of Work, Strategy and Support tools for Management.

Any certified training organization can submit a course and/or Small Terms Training Units (UFDS) in the National Catalogue of Certifications (NCC).

For this reason, the NETCOACH promoter must either;

- A. Become a certified training organisation by following the process detailed in the Final Report “Benchmarking of Recognition of Prior Learning, in the section “The Netcoach Course – certification of awards” – Portugal” (p.48) of, or
- B. Enter into an agreement with an already certified training organisation whereby qualification/certification can be achieved through that organisation.

For the purpose of receiving accreditation and to determine the award level, the training organization has to follow some steps

Step 1 – Submission of a proposal and preliminary analysis

The training entity shall submit a proposal within the model defined by National Association for Qualifications (ANQ), IP. National Association for Qualifications promotes its analysis, deciding on its submission, or not, according to the advice of Sector Councils for Qualification.

If the proposal forms part of a regulated activity area, or its output profile correspond to a regulated profession, National Association for Qualifications, IP² must consult the regulatory entity.

Step 2 - Opinion of the Sectorial Qualification Councils

When the proposal is considered relevant by National Association for Qualifications, I.P. the Sectorial Council related to the sector to which the proposal refers to, will analyse it.

² IP: Public Institute.

In the case of qualifications which do not exist in the National Catalogue of Certifications (NCC) the proposal will only be submitted to the Sector Council if it includes the professional profile and the code of National Catalogue of Certifications (NCC).

Step 3 - Preparation of the Qualification references

In this step is carried out the design work, the revision or consolidation of the references to the classification proposed, namely: professional profile, the training references and the reference to the recognition of professional skills and their assessment instruments.

Step 4 - Assessment of the Qualifications proposals

The result of step 3 is presented to the relevant Sectorial Council for discussion and consideration.

Step 5 - Publication in the Bulletin of Labor and Employment

The integration of new skills comes into force immediately after publication in the Bulletin of Labor and Employment.

Proposals must be submitted via:

- Completing the forms provided by National Association for Qualifications, IP for submission of each proposal (Annex 1), depending on their nature, through the restricted access area available on the "Register of Training Entities". Note: the access to the restricted area requires mandatory prior registration of the entity in the site catalog.
- The use of reference models for the qualification provided by National Association for Qualifications (Annex 2), namely:
 - Professional Profile
 - Training reference models
 - Short Term Training Units (UFCD)

To submit a new proposal the training entity has to fill the form 2 that can be accessed only in the restricted area "Registration of Training Entities".

The reason why we describe above all this procedure is to demonstrate that there is not possible to submit for qualification only learning contents. They have to be concordant with existing Training Reference models and with UFCDs and to provide information about items that were not developed under the present project. In Netcoach project we produced learning contents but not all the information required to submit a course or a Small Term Training Unit for obtaining certification.

The planning of the course to be delivered would have to include the contents and respective duration, expected results and competences to be achieved, certified trainers who will

responsible for the contents, the number of sessions and respective duration, the number of hours of physical attendance, the number of hours of work at distance, venues, equipment and pedagogical materials, the summaries of the sessions, attendance sheets, methods and techniques of ministrations, and also the methodology of evaluation: grid evaluation, evaluation criteria, assessment tools, among others.

The process described above refers only to awards 1-5 and is applicable to courses submitted by Certifying Training Organizations others than Universities and Higher Education Institutes. The certification of a course at Higher Educational Level has different procedures, described in the section below. The University of Algarve, only can apply the netcoach contents to high level certification.

Certification of a course at Higher Educational level (NQF* award 6 -8)

If the award is above a Higher Certificate the award will have to be offered by a University or other High Education provider.

In order to understand if the University of Algarve could certificate the Netcoach learning contents and what were the requirements and procedures to do this, the representative of the Portuguese Partner had a meeting with the pro-rector of Education and the Director of the Academic Services.

It was transmitted that one of the concerns of the University of Algarve in the next two years will be to certify and to credit the competencies acquired by individuals through diversified ways.

They told that this process demands rigor and quality in order to maintain the Higher Education Standards. This statement is coherent with the preconized in the *European Guidelines for Education Validation*: «it is essential for status and trust that the summative element of the validation is based on the same standards as in the formal system.(...)The ways that non-formal and informal learning are defined, assessed, validated and certificated must be quality assured to raise trust and confidence».

Based on this principle all the documents certifying competencies should be examined by the University. It is not enough to say that one has made the module x; the University must have a process of qualifying the acquired competencies, provided, in principle, by the learning acquisition of the module x.

If a person accomplishes a certain module, he or she has to prove that has acquired the expected competencies by given evidences, through practical exercises, assessment tests, or other relevant and valid way.

After that, the obtained certificate (if the person fulfilled the minimum classification required), can be examined by the Scientific Council of the University, which will transform this qualification in ECTS.

According to these requirements and thinking about the Netcoach project we realize that there are some elements missing to be possible to certify the Netcoach learning contents. According to the procedures of the University of Algarve it is not enough to offer 'learning'

content, even if it is very relevant and useful, well prepared and easily accessible. The content must be accompanied by on-line mentoring and the platform must have also a mechanism to make a classified assessment of competencies (evaluation tests).

Actions towards Qualification and Certification

Being this information given to the partners, in the SC meeting held on 30th September 2011, in Graz, Austria, the partners responsible for producing the contents for the modules to be delivered on the platform were able to think and to produce also assessment tools, one for each module.

For each module were produced pre-assessment tests and post-assessment tests.

The post-assessment tests of each module are constituted by 5 questions (randomly selected of a group of 20).

The assessment tests were produced but further work would include qualifying and evaluating the answers, and then it would be necessary to attribute a score. A possible score could be the following:

- All the answers are right – maximum score, mark A
- 3 of 5 answers are right – good score, mark B
- Less than 3 answers are right – not enough, mark C

Having performed the evaluation tests and obtained a given classification, the individual would receive a certificate of competence, with the classification expressed in ECVETS.

However the process of expressing the expected acquired skills through the study of Netcoach learning contents in ECVETs is a complex matter that has to be carefully analyzed by qualified experts. This demands time and specialized expertise that were not foreseen for the current project.

After having the scores of the expected acquired skills in ECVETS, the individual who wishes to obtain the certification may request the Scientific Council of the University to examine the certificate and make the equivalence of ECVETs in ECTS.

Ideally, this whole process should be done online through the platform, which had to include a mechanism that allows the person to ask, via online, certification and accreditation of skills to the Scientific Council of the University but this was not contemplate in the application and cannot be done during this project. For the complexity, the time that demands and the specific expertise which requires this is willing to be subject of another LLP project.

For a more advance system of certification (awarding higher level qualification), it is suggested that the University in collaboration with Netcoach, would evaluate learning outcomes through setting, receiving and grading assignment work which is based on the relevant Netcoach modules.

Based on the needs analysis previously conducted, most potential users of Netcoach, don't need specific certificate for the training. The quality of content is of much higher import for most users. Therefore, based on available budgets, and cost/benefit, it may be prudent in the early stages of development to build up quality content to attract a critical mass of users before

A timescale for the implementation of a system of qualification during a later phase of the project will be developed in the Netcoach Business Plan.

Process of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC)

The Process of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC) - now integrated under the New Opportunities Program - is a bureaucratic process of the social program "New Opportunities" of the Portugal Government of Portugal, held in New Opportunities Centers.

The RVCC process enables adults to recognize, validate and certify the knowledge and skills resulting from experience that were acquired in different contexts, throughout his life (Professional, Personal and Social). The certification obtained through the system allows not only his personal, social and professional worth, but also further study and training in order to obtain a degree / academic level. The RVCC process gives the candidate an entry level certification (certificate of the 1st, 2nd or 3rd cycle of basic education - Level B1, B2 or B3 - diploma and basic education) or secondary level.

Recognition of skills is a reflection on the experience of adult life, through a set of instruments that are organized in a personal portfolio, with the aim to identify and recognize all the skills listed in the Guidelines to Key Competencies of each training areas. The dialogue established and work in group or individual sessions with the professional and the RVCC trainers from each of the areas of training, help you recognize these competencies, whose evidence will be gathered in a single portfolio.

This individual portfolio is a tool that presents in an organized and structured form, evidences of the skills listed in the key competencies referee.

In the case of training needs are diagnosed, the adult will be sent for further training which shall not exceed, at any level of certification (primary or secondary) 50 hours per adult, seeking recognition of the skills listed in the Referee, or referred for training of short duration.

These activities are developed around the areas of key competencies for Education and Training of Adults defined by the respective Referee (primary or secondary level).

Certification is the ultimate goal of the RVCC process. The skills that the adult identified are validated in a jury session.

The session of the jury include the RVCC technician who accompanied the adult during the recognition, by the trainers of the areas of key skills and also by an external evaluator, duly accredited by the Agency National of Qualifications (ANQ).

If the key skills were validated, the individual adult will obtain a certification.

The Reference Key Skills Education and Training of Adults (basic level) covers the following areas:

- Language and Communication (LC);
- Mathematics for Life (MV);
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT);
- Citizenship and Employability (EC).

The Referee of Key Competencies for Education and Training of Adults - Secondary Level covers the following areas:

- Society, Technology and Science (CTS);
- Culture, Language, Communication (CLC);
- Citizenship and Professionalism (CP).

In Portugal the National Agency for Qualification coordinates the New Opportunities Program.