



General Meeting – March 9, 2017

Welcome by Nick Davy

22 persons are present for this meeting, from a lot of different countries.

Board and Steering Committee

Welcome to the representatives of the countries that were not present earlier. New members are welcome. Toon Martens has left the steering committee because he has retired now. Hilda Bottu is his successor in the SG. Because of the connection between EURASHE and Chain 5, Alicia will join the Steering Group. She is also a member of the board of EURASHE. We have 7 people now in the SG. Tomorrow we will speak about the participation of students in the steering group. Nick invites everyone to join the meeting of the SG in April in Rotterdam – to listen and to contribute...

Hans explains that there is no fee for being a member.

Members of the steering group are also 'self-supporting', meaning that they are paying for their own costs – in most cases those costs are paid by their employers.

Position Paper

Herman ten Heeten: Is the community of practice sufficient mentioned and explained? More about sharing best practices? This aspect can have more attention. The SG will take note of this for the next version.

Arnesen: In general the mission and vision could be simpler, more compact... – if we want to communicate with our stakeholders. More about our challenges and what we have to do to reach our goals; in the beginning of the PP it is about 'learning outcomes' but later in the paper it is mentioned 'curriculum'.

Flanders: We should start by quality as basis for level 5, how to use qualifications – for the rest the other aspects, like visibility, will follow.

RA: Level 5 is not well known yet. The difference between level 4 and 5 is not emphasized enough in the Netherlands. The permeability between the level 4, 5 and 6 needs more attention, having more actions...

Helen Hoffmann: Breaking down barriers between different education and training sectors is very important. More input is necessary and very welcome on higher VET, since higher skills and higher qualifications should not be automatically equated with higher education. The situations and systems, and other circumstances in countries in Europe are different – but we have to look at what they have in common.

Beyer-Arnesen: We have to find ways to let the 'ice' disappear between the different levels in our countries. It needs a lot of time and efforts, but there is progress...

About Croatia: The educational system is similar to Slovenia.

About Spain, Bask: The term vocational is not popular. It means the lowest level of education. What to do?

Nick: the term 'Vocational' is not appreciated in England too. In England the idea is to use the term technical, and technical-professional.

About Flanders: We use professional, or higher professional education – for level 5.

PowerPoint presentation about Chain 5

We need a short one, and a longer one. We will work on this the coming weeks, for the next meeting of the SG in April. Then we can put them on the website. Just to be used for everyone who needs it for a presentation (institution, platform, events...).

Flyer, a level 5 publication and a possible summary of L5 qualifications across Europe

We work on them. And it will be available in PDF, on the website and Ronald informs us that it will be available on LinkedIn.

The flyer will be printed, for events, seminars... to inform other people.

Helen Corkill: Is it possible to mention the ECTS in combination with the study?

The brochure we want to make is a statement for policymakers, so not for students but for the institutions.

Herman ten Heeten: What do we have to do more to promote CHAIN5? A task for the SG... a group...

Membership issues

A small amount of money will be earned with the annual conference. We don't ask memberships fees now. We are a network, on voluntary basis – investing time – using your own expertise, as part of your job...

Will we keep it this way, for 2017 and 2018? Yes, we do that.

Agreements

We have a link now with EURASHE. We have signed an agreement to invite and be invited for the conferences and meetings of Eucen and EfVET. In this we have covered VET and HE at the levels 4, 5 and 6.

Representation and networking

The meeting is happy with the situation that CHAIN5 has so many connections, being active in networks and platform.

We will welcome in April in Rotterdam a representative of an organization of students – by Skype. But it is really difficult to involve an organization of adult learners.

Beyer-Arnesen: In Norway the voice of the students is heard well. We consider it as veBeyerry important.

National platforms and networks

Do we need national networks? Or is it sufficient to have individual members? Institutions?

Maybe we can work on that in the coming years, if we have enough members in a country – and if we start organizing seminars and workshops in regions (of Europe)...

Work-based Learning.

It is not everywhere a hot item, but everybody thinks that WBL needs more attention.

It is an important issue in Norway.

It is worth to ask attention for this. A two days conference? Perhaps one day and another day to visit the city of having a specific workshop.

Projects – Chain5 as partner

We act now as a 'broker' in partnerships and projects. We will continue with that. Chain5 doesn't have a legal identity. That makes it impossible to participate in projects of the European Commission, but it can be used for the dissemination of project results.

Study trips

Hans provides information about the trip to America, 2019. In 2018 a group from the States will visit Europe.

Next Annual Conference

The next AC will be in Flanders, Belgium. We are thinking of having in 2019 the AC in one of the countries in southern Europe.

Any Other Business

Helen Hoffmann: The European Youth Forum (EYF) and the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (Obessu) are currently in the process of setting-up a network of apprentices with the support of the European Commission, which will include secondary and post-secondary VET students. In this respect it could be useful for CHAIN5 to discuss possible synergies with Obessu and EYF concerning a network of higher VET students.

Helen Hoffmann: Participants commented that it is a nightmare to make an inventory of level 5. The European Commission Study on Higher VET made a first attempt to better map higher VET across Europe. Further reflections are needed on how to advance this work.....

Outcomes round-table-sessions

Working group I

Level 5 is often seen as insufficient, having a lower status – less than the Bachelor. So, it will in most cases compared with level 6 (by students, parents, influencers... politicians...). Often it is unknown what the competences are of someone having a diploma at level 5.

But level 5 is, next to the fact that it is a level in its own, has to be seen as a positive 'road' to come further, to have more possibilities. A step on the ladder...

We know that... but there has still a lot to be done, to give level 5 the value it deserves – in all countries.

For CHAIN5: we can and have to learn more from each other, within the network – involving all stakeholders, to have a consistent message – having CHAIN5 as a 'voice'.

Working group II

We speak about 'level 5', and in higher education about Bachelor and Master. For the status of level 5 we need a common name in Europe.

Most people (involved in VET and HE) have a feeling that level 5 has to be seen as qualification with less value than level 6. That is also the case in countries, in the eyes of policy makers. We need to make them aware of the fact that it is something different – having its own quality. Permeability is important, meaning that the diploma has to be recognized in other countries. Profiles are important, for instance thinking of the different profiles in nursery in different countries for level 5 and 6.

Working group III

Make a keynote paper / flyer, about the most important/unique characteristics of level 5. Profiles of L5 qualifications – such as nursing. Role of ECTS?

Level 5 is a valuable area with qualifications, important on its own. Take care for a flyer in different languages about the importance of level 5. We can be involved in making new study programmes – giving institutions ideas and good practices from other member states.

Working group IV

Level 5 is still not well known in the labour market (thinking of HVET, SCHE and more like this kind of formal programmes). Competences and responsibilities are often the same on level 4 and level 5 for jobs and positions in sectors. And the payment is often the same. So, work to do – based on research.

The implementation process of a developing a level 5 programme (HVET and SCHE) takes rather a long time and that makes it difficult to react on changes in the labour market. Most employers use tailor-made programmes, offered by private institutions. Can we have influence on this, knowing that level 5 programmes are also relatively short.

Need to capture employers views; and influence them to support Level5. Use case studies. An overview of the level 5 education in Europe is lacking. CHAIN5 can pick this up.

Working group V

There is a lack of permeability from level 5 to level 6. Level 5 is often unknown by HEIs – or those programmes will be ignored. Maybe those institutions are having the wrong 'images. Need to share examples of good L5 qualifications/characteristics across countries

So, much more promotion has to be done.

Notes made by Helen Corkill, based on the discussions

1. Name
 - A name for “Level 5”: a requirement for some sort of common denominator which can be used internationally
 - currently too confusing for employers, parents, future students, professional bodies (and universities)
 - “Bachelor” and Masters” are used and understood in normal conversation – “Level 5” is not
2. Award
 - Need for some sort of common level 5 award (e.g. Associate Degree) with common credit/EQF values
 - Cross-border recognition
 - Level 5 awards need to be recognised to aid student and employee mobility
 - There needs to be portability of awards across borders for “top-up” awards, professional recognition etc.
3. Commonality of paperwork
 - All Level 5 awards need to have programme level specifications/ descriptors which include a common core of information and detail
4. Benchmarking
 - If commonality of programme specifications existed, would aid benchmarking
 - How else can level 5 awards be benchmarked?
5. The use of “level”
 - The use of the term “level” can be unhelpful, when it is assumed that Level 6 is “better” than Level 5 etc. In reality, Level 5 awards may be “different from” and not of lesser value than a Level 6 award
6. Profiling
 - Need for profiling of different Level 5 awards in different employment sectors
 - In-country
 - Across-countries
 - Profiling to include: differences in payment for holders of level 5 and level 6 awards; differences in responsibility; actual differences in “on the job” performance
 - (Example used was nursing, which appears to have major variations and acceptance of qualifications. Suggestion that Nursing is used as a case study)
7. Curriculum for Level 5 made with employers
 - Is this case in all countries/areas?
 - If yes, how similar is content in different employment areas?
 - Is there any commonality in acceptance for professional accreditation between countries?

Workshop 11
(Helen Hoffmann)

The lack of knowledge on higher VET, as well as insufficient policy continuity in some Member States can act as an obstacle to strengthening this specific type of education and training pathway.

Although the EU has limited competences in the area of education and training, it can play an important role, together with the community of good practice of Chain5, in supporting Member States to make higher VET qualifications at level 5 and above better known and more visible, while promoting its relevance for the labour market and lifelong learning.

It was also proposed to better address European mobility access, portability and credit transfer issues at level 5.

A new Erasmus+ call for proposals under Key action 3 on "Joint VET qualifications, including at higher level" is set to be launched in the autumn.