



## 1 Introduction

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We are now quickly approaching the last days of 2017. It was a year with interesting developments concerning our community of practice for the 'European Level 5 Area'. We were able to gain attention for the desire to use this EL5A for flexible learning pathways - and more opportunities to get to higher levels via the more professionally oriented courses (especially in VET), including higher education. Within lifelong learning it becomes increasingly important for an individual to use training to move from one situation to another, with or without small steps.

In 2018 we will continue as CHAIN5 on the road that has now started to go on. We will do this together with other organizations in Europe and beyond, in order to increase the opportunities for our target groups. But of course, we are first and foremost there for you, as a member of CHAIN5 or a reader of the newsletters and other documents. You can also approach us in the coming year for questions, the provision of cases and the search for good examples.

We have also included a number of events in the planning for 2018. We hope to see many members and other experts there.

*The Steering Group of CHAIN5 wishes you happy Christmas holidays, a relaxed start of the new year and then a good, healthy, happy and successful 2018!*

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### **3 Call for experts**

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CHAIN5 is a community of practice, meaning that we want to be as practically oriented as possible with the issues that has to do with the EL5A. It is also necessary to be able to lean on the use of experts through the networks we have within CHAIN5 - and that we are building at the moment. These experts are the ones who, within their own job, with their specific work, make use of the competences for this.

As already mentioned in earlier newsletters, we want to create a 'platform of experts'. That platform will be based on several themes. For each theme we then look for experts who can be used for CHAIN5 and its members. In the January issue we will include a form with which you can register yourself as an expert. Here an example of what we have in mind for the use of the 'platform of experts':

- A member of CHAIN5 can organize a regional seminar about level 5 in general or one of the themes that we have defined as relevant for the EL5A.
- The organization appoints a number of topics for the seminar and sends a list of these to the secretariat at an early stage.
- We will look at which experts can best be engaged and also be available for this seminar.
- Further agreements are made between the relevant organization and the experts. In any case, we assume payment of the costs for the flights, the hotel and the seminar itself.

Of course, such a meeting can also be held by another organization in the CHAIN5 network. We can be asked for contributions from our experts, for presentations, workshops and other activities. That we as CHAIN5 will also use all experts for our own activities, per theme or in general (think of the annual conference), is only logical.

In the next newsletter we will mention the themes we have in mind for the 'Platform of Experts' and the concrete call, with a registration form.

### **4 Call for general workshops and sessions for the annual conference**

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*Of course, at this annual conference, we will make room for exchanging experiences and providing information about good examples. There are rounds where there is room for workshops, but in addition we provide a time slot in which in brief sessions the core of a project or a specific approach are explained, followed by questions.*

Further on you will find the latest information about the annual conference. We give you the four themes that have been designated as the basis for the program. They all have to do with the general goal of making an inventory when it comes to the state of affairs for the EL5A. We want to raise good practices, with the possibility of analyzing them together with the participants, on the opportunities for using them more widely.

This means that we would like to make an appeal among members and our readers for workshops and sessions.

#### **Workshop**

A workshop is meant to work with the group, to be interactive as possible. The start means that after a brief explanation of the subject (because we will also send material beforehand to the participants in the conference) several aspects can be discussed. Experiences can also be exchanged.

At the end of the workshop there are a few statements on the table, concerning the usability of the topic within our community for the further sharing of experiences (a separate seminar, more documents, discussion groups, etc.). In other words, we can show that CHAIN5 is a network that 'works'.

#### **Session**

In addition to the workshops, we also want to hold sessions, with a limited time for each of them, and for small groups. See a call for this below.

## **5 Call for sessions – based in workshops in the last 5 years**

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*If you have contributed to one of our annual conferences in the first 5 years of having CHAIN5 working as a community of practice, we think that it can be interesting to come to Brussels for a ‘follow-up’.*

CHAIN5 was founded in 2013. This means that we can celebrate in Brussels our 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (time flies...). It is a perfect moment to look back - and in the same time creating new ideas for the near future. That's why we have this specific call for the annual conference:

- In Amsterdam (2x), Aalborg and Bled we offered a range of workshops and round-table sessions, presented by our members and experts who has been asked by them to come over to the event.
- Those sessions brought us good practices, information about successful experiences and useful outcomes of local, national and international projects.
- What we want to do in Brussels is to give those presenters the opportunity to tell the participants what happened since then.
- The session can be about the situation now, the success factors, the problems that have been encountered, and the innovative solutions for new challenges.

The overall idea is to show that ‘it is happening in the European Level 5 Area’, in member states, in local situations and within networks.

If you think that Brussels is the place to be for your showcase, please let us know.

## **6 How to register for the annual conference**

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Registration for the conference is open!

Go to:

<https://www.ucll.be/content/registration-annual-conference-chain-5>

and fill in the necessary details. You will receive automatically a confirmation by e-mail.

The invoice for the conference (and dinner and/or social programme) some weeks before, by e-mail. Don't forget to mention the codes, if needed for the internal procedure in your organisation.

## **7 Information about the conference**

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Here the practical information of the conference, the preliminary programme and the programme for the Wednesday (the ‘social activity’) – and the ‘general meeting’ for members on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

***Let the European Level 5 Area Drive Change and Connect Talent***

***How to make qualifications at level 5 future-proof***

***and function well with the needs of the world of work and the challenges for all learners***

***8-9 March 2018, Brussels***

***There will be a social programme (visits to institutions in Gent, Flanders) on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2018***

1. Dates of the conference: 8 and 9 March 2018
2. Thursday 8 March: lunch / 13:00 – 17:00 / dinner in Brussels
3. Friday 9 March: 09:00 – 13:00 / lunch
4. Date of the visits to institutions in Gent: 7 March, 10:00 – 17:00 / possibility for having dinner in Gent
5. Venue: Hogeschool Odisee (University College), Brussels

6. The conference is a good opportunity to harvest good practices for the use of the 'Level 5 Area', and the qualifications that are used at the international level, being important for the national settings of learning pathways. Short Cycle HE is one of them, to feed the discussion about the use of this qualification (see item 4 in this newsletter, about the Bologna Process), and also Higher VET as a challenge for VET providers to offer vocational qualifications parallel to the higher education area.
7. Themes for the conference (for presentations and workshops), in the present version:
  1. The world of work as a partner in education (co-makership / curriculum development / quality insurance in cooperation with employers)
  2. Level 5 programmes in Flanders: From professional qualification to a programme with learning outcomes, and other developments at level 5, like building a curriculum and the use of work-based learning
  3. Learners as the key figures in offering programmes at level 5, needed for flexible learning pathways in HE, looking also to specific situations (students with special needs, dropouts and (re)orientation, internationalization...)
  4. Teaching staff at level 5 (training, counselling, cooperation with businesses...).
8. Brussels is easy to reach by plane and train, and the venue is within walking distance of the Central Station: <https://www.odisee.be/en/campus-brussels-en>.
9. We recommend that you find a hotel by yourself, knowing that it is difficult to make a general arrangement for the whole group.

*General meeting CHAIN5*

On Thursday morning from 10:15 till 11:30 we will have the general meeting for the members of CHAIN5. The meeting room will also in the building of Hogeschool Odissee.

The agenda and documents for this meeting will be send to the members the week before the conference.

*Preliminary programme*

At this moment we have this programme in mind for the conference. In the next newsletters we will give you more details, names and subjects of the presentations.

**Thursday:**

12:00 - 13:00	Lunch buffet and Registration
13.00 - 13.45	Opening session
13.45 - 14.45	Key-note speeches
14.45 - 15.15	Coffee break
15.15 - 16.05	Workshops, round 1
16.05 - 16.10	Short break
16.10 - 17.00	Workshops, round 2
19.30	Cocktail
20.00	Dinner (Restaurant in the center of Brussels)

**Friday:**

09:00 - 09.45	Key-note speech
09.45 - 09.50	Kick-off for the sessions
09.50 - 10.20	Sessions, round 1
10.20 - 10.25	Short break
10.25 - 10.55	Sessions, round 2
10.55 - 11.20	Coffee break
11.20 - 12.00	Interactive plenary session, based on the outcomes of the sessions – having a panel with employers, students and policy makers for 'feedback'
12.00 - 12.30	A summary... by the Steering Group of CHAIN5
12.30 - 13.00	Closing session: interactive – for setting the scene for the future of the community
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch buffet

#### *Social activity: visit to Gent*

On Wednesday, March 7, there is the opportunity to participate in the 'social activity'. It concerns visits in the morning and afternoon of educational institutes, related to level 5 in Flanders. Lunch is provided by one of the institutions.

In the second half of the afternoon Flemish students will act as a guide for a tour in the center of Ghent. Then there is the possibility to dine in Ghent (where we will recommend a few restaurants, and also reserve one of them for a group).

There will be collected around 9:30 at Brussels Central Station, to take the train to Ghent. Transport is provided in Ghent. The return journey is by train again.

#### **8 Call for articles (Journal of Pedagogic Development - issue November 2018)**

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*We will have the possibility to edit an issue of the 'Journal of Pedagogic Development' (UK), to be published in November 2018. The articles can be based on workshops and sessions to be held during the Annual Conference in Brussels. But we also welcome other articles about level 5 topics and developments.*

As you have seen, we have a call for workshops and sessions during the next annual conference in Brussels. This can be a presentation about a good practice, recent experiences with level 5, a project (just finished or still running), developments in a regional or national setting and the outcomes of earlier sessions.

But besides this we got the offer by the editors of the Journal for Pedagogic Development to use their November issue for CHAIN5 and its community, looking at Work-based Learning at level 5. We appreciate this opportunity very much, so we have accepted this offer.

It means that we need articles, not only written by members of the Steering Group. One of the ideas is to ask the contributors to the conference in March whether it will be possible to write an article about their topic for the workshop or session. After the conference the outcomes of the workshop can be used also, to show how 'level 5' is getting attention in a regional and/or national context.

If you think that this extra option can be used by you, and that you are able to provide such an article after the conference, mention it in your e-mail to us about the workshop.

But... of course we welcome also other articles about level 5 developments, without having the workshop in Brussels. In the next newsletter we will come back to this, with more background information and the instructions for the writing of an article in this magazine.

For more information, you can already take a look at <https://www.beds.ac.uk/jpd> and also at <http://wblearning-ejournal.com/contributors.php>.

#### **9 The importance of transition qualifications for adults: a case for EQF level 5 and work-based learning**

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Simon Broek was responsible for an interesting presentation during the seminar on Work-based Learning, last November in Luton. Based on this event he wrote a blog for the website of EPALE. Take a look: <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/blog/importance-transition-qualifications-adults>.

Here an interesting part of this blog, if it is about: *Importance of level 5 in easing transitions.*

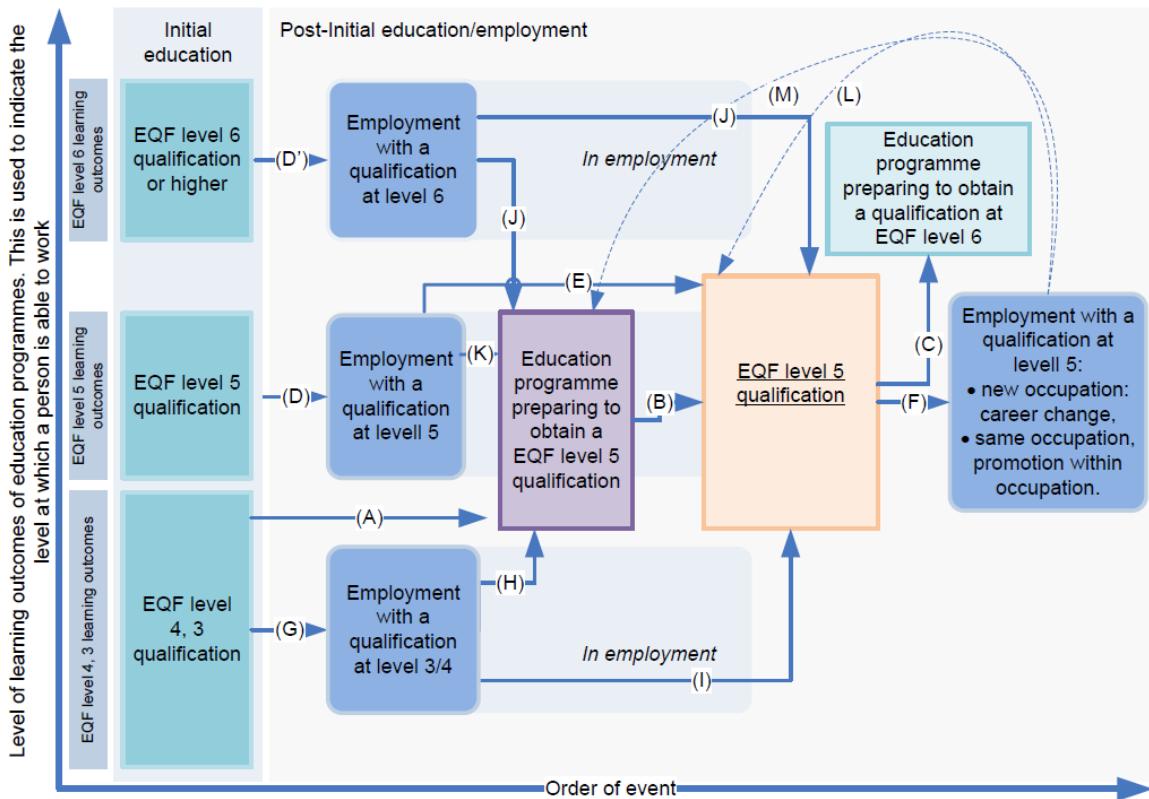
"For adults, EQF level 5 qualifications play a particular important role. These qualifications provide transition pathways from school to work, from VET to HE, from work back to school. In addition, in Europe a variety of different types of qualifications, having different orientations (labour market access, further learning) can be found. What I took from the seminar is that in many countries at level 5 a lot is going on.

It really is the transition qualification that connects VET and higher education, education and the labour market. These transitions are gaining in importance as well as no-one has the same

occupation for life. People need to be able (and need to be enabled) to make transitions. Level 5 qualifications in this context provide a key role for (see as well figure):

- adults who would like to upgrade their skills, competences and qualifications (horizontal transition);
- adults who would like to change their career (vertical transition)

Especially when the level 5 qualifications take into account work-based learning in its many forms, the learning can be best aligned with the needs of adults and their specific situation. For instance that most of the learning is taking place in the job they are in.”



## 10 Recommendations in the draft of the HE-communique (May 2018)

In November the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) had a meeting, and one of the big issues was to talk about the first draft for the communique for the ministerial conference in Paris, May next year. In the last newsletter we have mentioned the recommendations for the role of Short Cycle HE, to give this qualification the position that is needed for more flexibility in the educational systems.

The agenda and documents for this meeting (and also earlier meetings) can be downloaded at:  
<http://www.ehea.info/cid115326/bfug-meeting-56.html>

Here just a part of the draft-document, if it is about the system. A lot of issues will be put in the next drafts, but perhaps already more attention for SCHE in this phase of the writing is needed...

### **Implementation**

The development of the EHEA in the last twenty years has increased cross-border exchanges and cooperation and enhanced trust and confidence between the operators of our higher education systems. We reaffirm our commitment to paying attention to the shortcomings identified in the “Implementation Report” so as to ensure full and proper implementation of the goals which have been unanimously agreed upon.

To strengthen our national systems, to reinforce and support the quality and exchanges inside the EHEA, we have identified three key commitments:

1. A three-cycle system compatible with the Qualification framework of the EHEA and scaled by ECTS;
2. The compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC); and
3. A quality assurance system in conformity with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

The implementation of these commitments in all our national systems is necessary in order to make the EHEA more efficient.

To improve the implementation of the three key commitments, we adopt the “cyclic procedure” built on peer support as proposed by the BFUG.

## 11 Time for an opinion

In every newsletter there is room for ‘an opinion’ about aspects of the Level 5 Area, for qualifications at this level. It can be about instruments, developments and experiences – but thinking ‘outside the box’ can be leading to new discussions, comments and other opinions.

So, if you think that it is time for your opinion in one of our newsletters, feel free to send your contribution to us. During the conferences and seminars, it can also part of sessions, if we notice that the opinion is leading to the need for more information and discussions...

Here the first ‘opinion’...

### A **Brick** for the European Level 5 Area

Hans Daale

*We have ECVET and ECTS. Already for many years there are attempts for connecting those two systems to each other, having more options for permeability between level 4 and level 6, and VET and HE. But it turns out that the results are not clearly visible.*

*For the level 5 area such a connection would be helpful. That's why in a recent workshop the suggestion was done to find a 'linking pin' for the two systems. This can be called '**Brick**', to be seen as a package of Learning Outcomes' and to be used within the Level 5 Area to build learning pathways. Here some first comments.*

In recent workshops and peer-learning activities in which I was able to participate, the role of ‘credits’ has been discussed. Then it is about ECVET, for the VET sector, and ECTS, for the European Higher Education Area, looking for possibilities to connect those systems. The ECs are firmly integrated in higher education for defining the so-called study-load for degree programmes in countries that have adopted the system for that. For ECVET-credits it is not the case, knowing that a lot of countries are struggling with the implementation.

The VET providers are looking at the learning outcomes (LOs) of a study programme, leading to the competences for a job, having a relevant profile for a sector in the labour market. In VET ‘time’ does not play a leading role...it is more about the format to get those competences.

#### *EC and the use of it*

But the ECs are of course also ‘under fire’, being in most cases a management tool in the hands of institutions, to build programmes, to divide them in modules for teachers and professors, and to control the study success during the year. Also governments can finance programmes by having a clear picture of the study load, expressed in credits.

But progression is still difficult if for a package of LOs one institution is giving 5 credits and the other just 3 of them. Or what to do if the package is also offered in different phases of the programme, leading to discussion about the level...?

#### *A **Brick** for level 5...*

So, what to do for level 5 qualifications, knowing that Higher VET and Short Cycle SCHE are part of the area for those qualifications. SCHE is using the ECTS system, HVET not and also in just a few cases ECVET.

The suggested solution in one of the workshop is to start with the basic idea for modules, progression and the transfer of credits: the use of learning outcomes (LOs). A regular programme is consisting of ‘unities’ or modules, being all of them in itself a ‘package with LOs’.

The idea is to give such a package the name ‘**Brick**’. The provider of a level 5 qualification can decide about how many **Bricks** are needed for acquiring the competences at the end of a study year. For SCHE it means that those **Bricks** will need 60 EC all together. For HVET and other qualifications there can hours per **Brick**, or just a list of them in combination with the percentage of the study year for every **Brick**.

#### *Pathways and connection*

For learning pathways, using level 5 qualifications, a list of **Bricks** in an individual port-folio can be used for a next step (meaning progression to a qualification at level 5 or level 6, offered by another institution). Every **Brick** will contribute to the process of designing ‘the road ahead’, to the next ‘crossing’.

Of course, credits in VET, HE and in other educational systems, can be translated to study hours and leading to a description in a study guide, looking at the schedule for every semester. Or for the expected investment by students in time for a project or activities under ‘work-based learning’. But if we want to speak the same language in connecting several learning pathways to get a flexible ‘lifelong learning road’, a kind of ‘Google Translate’ can be useful.

Learning outcomes in a package can be used for this. Of course, this is not new, not being a real innovative idea. But if we want to use the European Level 5 Area as it can be, very potential for more flexibility, we need a ‘connector’ - also looking at ECVET and ECTS having their own positions in the sectors they are covering. Having the name ‘**Brick**’ leaves that undisturbed, giving level 5 the best role it can have: bridging levels, being part of chains...

Food for thought, maybe. For new events, workshops and PLAs. In the next newsletter some more details, and of course feedback from you...