

FOREWORD -----

Number 13 of the newsletters about CHAIN5, after the holidays, at the start of the new year 2015-2016. In this number you will find information about a number of activities foreseen, including the Annual Conference in Denmark and events as part of a project under Erasmus+ (involving CHAIN5... not our own one, but having the EVBB as project manager). In the meantime the Steering Group had its first meeting in Amsterdam: here the most relevant outcomes.

We are also pleased to give some information about a study, initiated by the European Commission, on the position and role of HVET in the 28 Member States. We hope to have this report as input for the annual conference.

We wish everyone a good start, with a lot of updated inspiration – and a new agenda, having already the dates 25/26 of February blocked...

Hans Daale

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NEXT ANNUAL CONFERENCE CHAIN5 IN DENMARK -----

As mentioned in Newsletter 12 we have decided to have the third annual conference for CHAIN5 in Aalborg, Denmark – hosted by the Aalborg CHAIN5 Consortium. The event will take place on the 25th and 26th of February 2016.

In the coming months we will keep everyone updated about the programme and the way all members of CHAIN5 can contribute to this event, with a focus on how CHAIN5 can play its role as 'community as practice' at the best.

See at 'meeting of the steering group' for more information about the overall theme we have in mind: 'The Identity of Level 5 – in a dynamic world'.

YEREVAN - SHORT CYCLE HIGHER EDUCATION -----

In May the Ministers responsible for the Higher Education policy and strategy in their country – or their spokespersons (the number of ministers being there in person is declining...) – decided in Yerevan to give a next boost to the implementation of the European Higher Education Area. They noticed that a lot of countries are 'staying behind', giving the idea that some countries are just a partner in the Bologna Process for 'being at the table' instead of taking the necessary measures based on the mutual agreements. But maybe it is also one of the consequences of the economic and political situation in Europe and the world around it: why investing in an EHEA, realizing that the priority lies with the internal situation, looking at the fast growing numbers of youngsters being unemployed, even having a diploma in higher education.

It was good to hear that most of the countries think that a firm position for qualifications at level 5, like Short Cycle Higher Education, can contribute to giving people more chances to make a better

living. That is not always the case – level 5 is not a magic tool - but knowing that people can take their own decisions getting a degree or diploma at a higher level, even more flexible, based on the needs of the labour market... is a message that must be clear for decision makers in countries without a full working system for level 5.

Commitment SCHE

In the Yerevan Communiqué there was a statement about the use of SCHE by countries as a member of the network for EHEA developments:

“...to include short cycle qualifications in the overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), based on the Dublin descriptors for short cycle qualifications and quality assured according to the ESG, so as to make provision for the recognition of short cycle qualifications in their own systems, also where these do not comprise such qualifications.”

There is a lot to say about the intentions of such a statement, but it is maybe still a ‘soft’ one... SCHE is now one of the four formal qualifications (‘cycles’) in Higher Education, but there is no obligation for a country to introduce it. Of course that is also not always the case for the other cycles, but SCHE can contribute to bridging VET and HE, in some cases ‘in good harmony’ with HVET (if the national system allows having more possibilities for level 5).

During the annual conference we will discuss this commitment, with most of the relevant stakeholders, based on a report that will be published before the event in Denmark. Possible issues that will be raised:

- Promoting HVET and SCHE
- Other qualifications at level 5 – recognized by VET and HE providers (exemptions, shorter programmes)
- Dublin Descriptors for SCHE – in line with descriptors for HVET and other qualifications that are relevant for the world of work
- Common name for SCHE
- Quality assurance and accreditation – common standards and guidelines
- Work-based learning / apprenticeships and SCHE
- International cooperation.

MEETING OF THE STEERING GROUP -----

The Steering Group had its first meeting in Amsterdam, on the 30th of June, in one of the rooms of the ‘head quarters’ of the University of Amsterdam. Here you will find an impression of the meeting, with most of the issues that have been discussed - and the most relevant outcomes and recommendations for the future of CHAIN5. The second meeting of the SG will be in London, the 13th of November, in the premises of the Association of Colleges (AoC).

Members of the Steering Group:

- Sylvie Bonichon, France
- Hans Daale, the Netherlands (chair)
- Nick Davy, England
- Ole Faaborg, Denmark
- Toon Martens, Belgium
- Jan Nienhuis, the Netherlands (secretary)
- Roland van der Poel, the Netherlands.

CHAIN5

Mission and vision: what is making CHAIN5 unique... and how can we deserve a place in the European field of education... stakeholders... aims... targets...

- Nick Davy and Ole Faaborg will prepare a draft for the mission and vision, as basis for CHAIN5.
- Looking at the members’ list, we need more employers’ organisations on board. Of course we have to keep the mission and vision in mind – and then we decide about the way we can

involve them in our activities – so, what can they contribute to our community? We will invite some European networks for the conference in Aalborg.

- We are noticing that in some countries and/or regions initiatives are taken for having a national or regional network for level 5. The existence of CHAIN5 can help such regional or national networks (communities) for level 5 to get a certain status. That can be promoted by us in the coming year...
- We can have categories for the members. Maybe we can use:
 - individual members
 - individual institutions
 - regional networks
 - national networks
 - international networks.

Surveys

- CHAIN5 can have its own surveys. The Cedefop study, done by Simon Broek (and 3S, also involved in the HVET study), will not be extended. So, we can have a role in that, to learn more about the situation in countries having a NQF.
- A survey like this can also help potential members in all countries (member states, countries involved in the Bologna Process, the EHEA) to get an idea of what we can do as CHAIN5.
- Another source for a survey by us will be the reports by the OESO, about level 4 and level 5. But we doubt whether the outcomes are reliable...
- We have the survey on the position of HVET, paid by the European Commission and done by 3S from Vienna. We think that this report can be helpful for us, as basis for an own survey. The idea is to have a presentation about HVET during our annual conference in Aalborg – plus the first results of our survey on the position of level 5 in general.

Membership

- We will discuss this in Aalborg, next year, during the General Assembly. Just low fee can be helpful to finance some activities – and in that way we can ‘bind’ the members (for free means ‘nothing’, some membership fee shows that they are willing to pay for taking part in a community like this).
- We can also use the system that we will ask some extra money for our activities – and the ‘profit’ can be used for CHAIN5. It is not a matter of building a complete organisation, but a budget for the website, the newsletter, the meetings of the Steering Group... can be helpful.

Annual Conference 2016 in Denmark

- In Aalborg, Denmark (thanks to Ole Faaborg)
- The dates are: 25 and 26 February.
- In the morning of the 25th: the General Assembly
- In the afternoon of the 25th and the morning of the 26th: the Annual Conference, including a lunch, and may be a social programme after lunch... (that is up to the Danish group...)
- We propose as overall theme: The Identity of Level 5. What makes L5 unique, what is the role in education, LLL, flexibility, permeability... so, we have to identify the crucial success factors for qualifications at level 5, what makes it that in a country level 5 can't be neglected... using its own position, its own strengths...
- We will discuss a first draft for the conference during the second meeting of the SG.

Other seminars (Autumn 2015)

- There is no time for a specific seminar in 2015...
- We are thinking of having one in autumn 2016 (under the Slovak Presidency, perhaps)...
- We can also offer other organisers and organisations to have a presentation or workshop during another seminar, on the role of level 5.
- We have to think about regional seminars, in parts of Europe, for experts who have not so much money for travelling to seminars in Western-Europe. Can we have a ‘pool’ of experts for that? To discuss this during the General Assembly?

Next meeting

- Friday 13 November
- London
- Starting 10 am, ending 3 pm
- Premises of AoC, in the center of London
- Best way to fly: City Airport...

CHAIN5 AS PARTNER IN A PROJECT UNDER ERASMUS+: TANDEM -----

As we have mentioned in the last newsletter, we (the Steering Group at that time) took in February the decision not to apply for a grant under Erasmus+. The situation was too difficult, to have the right partners for a project - with the focus on the role of CHAIN5 in all kinds of developments, in education, work-based learning, permeability and so on.

But at the same moment Leido was asked, as chair of CHAIN5, to be a partner in an application by EVBB, one of the four VET associations in Europe and one of the six members of VET4EU2 (see earlier newsletters for information about this platform). In June the good news came: the project was accepted and will have a grant for two years, 2016 and 2017 – starting the 1st of January. This project, named Tandem, is about VET/HVET and HE/SCHE, and the possibilities in European countries to use learning pathways for employees and adult learners, based on a 'smooth' combination of work and study - to get a diploma, certificate and/or degree at a higher level. As you can see, perfectly fitting in the way CHAIN5 is trying to operate as community of practice.

Leido is the formal partner, but of course the most important reason to be asked by EVBB was the possibility to bring CHAIN5 on board of the project. This means that members of the Steering Group will participate in partner meetings, conferences and other activities, as mentioned in the project plan.

But... there is also a part of the budget available for a group of CHAIN5 members to contribute to dissemination events during those two years. In Aalborg we can tell more about that (having a workshop there about Tandem) and the way we will select those members.

Here some parts of the application, more in general. Details will be provided in the next newsletters and - as said - during CHAIN5 conferences.

Partners in Tandem

There are six partners in the project, named here with some background information:

- The European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training (EVVB) is the European umbrella association of 56 educational providers from 21 EU-countries and from VN, CN and LK. Beyond single institutions from secondary and tertiary level, also umbrella organizations like BBB (73 members), Bulgarian and Romanian national associations are members EVVB is also a member of the European VET Providers Association 'VET4EU2' <http://vetproviders-group.eucen.eu/> the union of the 6 European networks EVBB, EfVET, EUproVET, EVTA, EUCEN (The European University Continuing Education Network) and European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE).
- EUCEN (183 members from 35 countries) is (beyond network VET4EU2) a partner of the project consortium.
- European Welding Foundation (EWF) is an European non-profit association whose principal aims are:
 - to collaborate in the study and solution of welding-related problems encountered within its fields of competence;
 - to encourage projects for cooperative research and contribute to the removal of technical barriers;
 - to provide the exchange for scientific and technical information;
 - to prepare harmonised rules for the education and training of personnel involved in welding, joining and related technologies;
 - to act as the representative of the welding community in Europe.

The EWF network is composed by 31 European members – the national Welding Institutes. Members of EWF, in each European and EFTA country are organizations active in Training (with more than 260.000 diplomas awarded), in RTD and transfer of technology and cover a wide range of industrial sectors in its membership which includes automotive, aerospace, metalworking, naval, appliances, etc.

Current EWF membership includes ~50.000 companies where around 75% are SMEs (~37500).

- Chamber of Oviedo, with 45.000 businesses (micro, small and medium size enterprises at local and regional level)
- Pyrsman (large size enterprise) with needs and demands on local conditions and workforce (in Mudanya in Turkey where they recruit their employees who run through Turkish education system) as well global demands (through their other plants worldwide). Pyrsman as a key representative of industry is a local (located in Mudanya) and global company with subsidiaries in 50 countries, 91 plants, and about 19,000 employees. From the employer's point of view, up-skilling employees is mandatory.
The partner will contribute to the topic 'current needs and anticipation of future skills and competences' as well with its concept of grey collar (between blue collar secondary level and white collar tertiary level) as a bridge allowing workers to enrich their educational and professional profiles. The traditional notion of the concept of separate skill sets is not appropriate to current conditions and must be revised and - last but not least involving industry and service sector, the project covers the whole 'business world' spectrum.
- Leido is a Dutch network for LLL, and is chairing Chain 5 (community for level 5), an international community for those who are involved in developments concerning qualifications at level 5 of the EQF, formal and non-formal to fill a gap between level 4 and level 6 in higher education.

All partners are advocating for flexible modular pathways with certified learning outcomes and the development of short cycle tertiary qualifications focused on identified areas of skills shortage; not only advocating they also are leading by example and committed to the partnership in this project with their experience and resources.

Aims of the project

The project aims to enhance the flexibility in vocational and professional education by taking into consideration the demands of business world and to contribute to the policy development for shaping more flexible learning pathways by connecting VET, HE and business world. Globalisation dictates that EU 2020 will only be succeed if member states bring out the best in people and their potential, with no limits to aspirations for upward mobility. The challenge is a global skills race and to extend education opportunities for all people.

Jobs that require routine manual or cognitive tasks are rapidly being taken over by computers or lower-paid workers in other countries, while jobs that require higher levels of education and more sophisticated problem-solving and communication skills are in increasingly high demand.

Additional the dynamic nature of the production of goods and provision of services constantly challenges the characteristics and shelf-life of skills and vocational knowledge. Work continues to form a major part of people's lives and, therefore, for their learning. The new economic realities and rapid shifts in the job market are fundamentally changing what we need from our education system. Traditionally, education and training systems have separate and distinct sub-systems (general, vocational and academic/higher education) and these sub-systems are usually related to one another in a strict hierarchy. Not only should access to higher education be widened to include a greater variety of student groups like adult learners, vocational learners and employed learners, but the teaching-learning environments and the guidance should be adapted to the diversified needs of lifelong learners. In order to reach a competitive and sustainable economy and create an inclusive society towards the 2020 goals more flexible learning pathways gains importance also by acting against 'dropping out of the system', opening new pathways for an inclusive future.

The lifelong learners - late learners, alternative learners and employed learners - are mostly characterized by having vocational experience. They need more flexible education systems and transition in between learning forms like step by-step transitions from VET to higher education by validation of their work experience and non-formal and informal learning and without losing the labour market focus.

For what stands the project:

- Vocationally - and professionally - oriented qualifications in tertiary (higher) education and training are important;
- People need to acquire advanced technical and/or management competences, improving their job prospects and helping them change or progress in their careers;
- There is a need of a double function – combining labour market orientation with progression opportunities to/within higher education – this makes them attractive to lifelong learners and valuable and relevant by employers;
- Stakeholders and policy-makers have to identify gaps in their own qualifications landscape and develop new pathways.

The project builds up upon the demands, analysis and good practices of consortiums partners and advocates for flexible modular pathways across education systems and more differentiation regarding the level of education with the aim to drive change and support the policy shift from a local, limited response, towards anticipating, and managing systemic changes.

For a forward-looking approach the project wants to outline the skills and workforce development from a number of different sectors and a collection of examples by consortiums partners and how they already developed flexible modular pathways focused on identified areas of skills shortage which are not (yet) covered by related policies. Project aims at strengthening the connection between policymakers and practitioners = business and educational community. European actors of VET, business community and HE should help that good practices, trans-national cooperation and mutual learning can be mainstreamed into concrete policy actions and to a systemic impact.

Based upon the experience of the partners the project wants to show how progression can take place in many directions, vertically as well as horizontally between education and training institutions and subsystems and promote interaction between VET and higher education by a proactively approach to labor market developments and demands.

CROWD RESEARCH: LEVEL 5... ANOTHER UPDATE -----

In Newsletter 12 we mentioned our initiative for having a survey as CHAIN5, to get a better idea of the recent developments concerning qualifications at level 5 in the member states (and other countries having members in our community). It would be based on a few rounds of sending questionnaires to our members, with the option to share them with partners in other countries and organisations. A good idea... but taking some time, of course.

But then we heard about a study initiated by the European Commission, to learn more about Higher Vocational Education and Training (HVET). This is one of the important type of qualifications at level 5 (higher than level 4 of the EQF), relevant for cooperation with the labour market, apprenticeships and transfer to SCHE programmes - having the economic changes in mind. Below, in the next paragraph, more information about this study.

And as mentioned here above, part of the Tandem project will be a survey just like we had in mind, for most of the aspects. We as CHAIN5 will use this project for additional questionnaires, starting after the Annual Conference in Aalborg, Denmark.

STUDY: HIGHER VET IN THE EU -----

The European Commission (DG EAC) has taken the initiative for a study, to shed light on the characteristics of Higher VET (vocational education and training) across the EU-28 and the main trends and outcomes of this form of education. Through this assignment, the European Commission wishes to receive an overview ('mapping') of Higher VET in all EU Member States, i.e. all

forms of VET beyond upper secondary level, without particular focus on one particular area or one level only.

Here some extra details. In the next newsletter more about the state of the study – and we have high hopes that we will have a presentation and a workshop about the outcomes during the conference in Aalborg (knowing that DG Employment can use CHAIN5 for comments on them, maybe for extra information and ideas for follow-ups).

“This study should fill in gaps which exist because available studies focus on a selection of countries and/or a certain level (such as EQF level 5 or short-cycle higher education – SCHE). Furthermore, this research is expected to shed light on the definition of Higher VET, and on what is understood by Higher VET across the EU-28. Special emphasis will be placed on identifying and understanding the main characteristics and distinctive features of Higher VET. The study will also refer to ‘grey zones’ of Higher VET, i.e. programmes or qualifications classified as Higher VET in some countries but not in others.

In addition, this study is expected to analyse the main trends and developments in the field of Higher VET, as well as their main drivers and barriers. Furthermore, it should also provide some insight into the permeability of Higher VET, i.e. the opportunities for progression it provides, as well as its labour market outcomes.

There is no clear, generally acknowledged definition of what is considered Higher VET. For the purpose of this study, Higher VET will be defined as vocational education and training provided beyond upper secondary level. Higher VET often contains aspects of both professionally- and academically-oriented training, but with a dominance of the former. These programmes/qualifications are often characterised by intense integration with the world of work in several aspects (teaching, learning, research and governance). They primarily prepare for direct entry into the labour market in a certain field or area, or, in some cases, may even provide access to a certain profession.”