

EDITORIAL

VIRQUAL is now in its final year. Since summer 2010 the consortium has concentrated in three tasks and in the preparation of webinars that will take place in spring 2011. The three tasks have now collected enough materials and results to be announced and to be shared widely. Below this short editorial you will see a summary of Task 2 and Task 3 (including some details about the webinars planned for this year). We hope you enjoy this newsletter and that our work encourages you to join our network!

TASK 2 – E-LEARNING AND EQF

Task 2 has produced a comprehensive analysis of the EQF implementation in Europe compiling 32 country reports on EQF/NQF implementation, at levels 5 to 8. Additionally, the situation of e-learning in what concerns legislation and practice in each of the 32 countries was also reported.

The information compiled will be edited in a report by country. For each country it will be included the following information:

Relevant topics to “e-learning and EQF”
Comparability of qualification levels
Use of learning outcomes in HE & CE
National legislation on EQF levels 5-8
Level of implementation of NQF
Recognition of prior learning
e-learning implementation
Virtual courses (undergraduate/graduate/continuing education levels) are legally equivalent to face to face courses?
Openness to virtual mobility

The analysis of this information pack will allow access to updated information on EQF, recognition of competences and e-learning legislation by country. As a consulting instrument this information will allow students, teachers and administrative staff to understand, for example, how **a student in Estonia** can attend an **online course in Hungary** with **competences to be recognized in Spain**.

TASK 2 – WEBINARS

Task 2 is organising **3 webinars**. Each one will have **one expert invited speaker** on the **general theme of e-learning and EQF**. Each one will be focusing in three different topics:

1. **Virtual Mobility**
2. **Learning outcomes and e-assessment**
3. **EQF - Recognition of competences**

The format of the three webinars will be: **a presentation by an expert followed by an online discussion with the participants**.

These 3 webinars will be integrated the online courses organized by task 1 and 3, and with the participation in the other dissemination events.

A final face to face event will be organized during the VIRQUAL event at EUCEN conference (Genoa, Italy, 16-18 November 2011). It will address not only the results of the webinars but also the results of the project.

Webinars	e-learning and EQF
27-April-2011	Webinar1 - Virtual Mobility
18-May-2011	Webinar2- Learning Outcomes an e-assessment
20-October-2011	Webinar3 - EQF and recognition of competences

Webinars will be in English, we expect active participation from all over the World. Participants' enrolment will be done by the TecMinho@ Universidade do Minho and by Université de Genève (that will manage the online room Acrobat Meeting). The format will be the same in all webinars, **moderator opening, presentation by an expert (15 minutes), followed by online discussion with participants (30 minutes), and a 15 minutes summary of the webinar, plus announcement of activities to come and further information about VIRQUAL.** Participants can prepare and submit questions during the presentation. Presentations, expert speech and discussion should take a maximum of 1h00m. Conclusions of the webinar and further comments and VIRQUAL announcement will be made by the moderator.

Registration to the webinars can be done via the e-mail anadias@tecminho.uminho.pt

TASK 3 – Towards a global architecture of intended learning outcomes

How can we support teachers and curriculum developers defining, writing, or choosing high quality learning outcomes? How can we contribute to a global architecture of learning outcomes / competences? What is a useful classification system for learning outcomes / competences? These are the central questions of task 3.

The means to answer them is a web-based data base, the ILO repository on www.learning-outcomes.net. One of the fundamentals of its data structure is the classification of learning outcomes according to EQF which distinguishes knowledge, skills and competences; this scheme is completed by adding the category attitudes (according to Bloom, 1964). Two more classification criteria of learning outcomes are used: domains of abilities (see Tippelt et al., 2003) and stages of competences (see Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980). For the classification of the corresponding subject matters we use the ISCED code (UNESCO, 2006) and the ERASMUS subject code.

The data base will be ready by end of February 2011. The next steps are:

- Collection of intended learning outcomes all over European HE and CE institutions in the ILO repository (user generated content)
- Improvement of collected learning outcomes by editing/rewriting them (user generated improvement)
- Construction of a global architecture of intended learning outcomes facilitated by metadata of collected learning outcomes and module descriptions (like pre-requisites and module objectives)

The very first experiences show that even experienced teachers have some difficulties to achieve both, a clear classification of learning outcomes (according to classification scheme delineated above) and to write explicit intended learning outcomes which can serve as a sound basis for educational design (on all levels) and valid assessment – both necessary fundamentals of (virtual) mobility.



ILO text [English]:	<input type="text"/>
distance learning feasible [0 - 100% of workload]:	<input type="text"/>
distance assessment [0 - 100% of total assessment]:	<input type="text"/>
Erasmus Subject code of ILO:	<input type="text"/>
SICED code of ILO:	<input type="text"/>
Domain of ILO:	<input type="checkbox"/> discipline related <input type="checkbox"/> methodical <input type="checkbox"/> personal <input type="checkbox"/> social
Ability:	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> Skill <input type="checkbox"/> Attitude <input type="checkbox"/> Competence
EQF cycle:	<input type="checkbox"/> 5: short cycle <input type="checkbox"/> 6: bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> 7: master <input type="checkbox"/> 8: doctor, phd
Stage of COMPETENCE [if applicable]:	<input type="checkbox"/> 1: novice <input type="checkbox"/> 2: advanced <input type="checkbox"/> 3: competent <input type="checkbox"/> 0: not applicable
ILO complete – development [rtf file]:	File <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Durchsuchen..."/> Filename (optional) <input type="text"/>
ILO complete – original [PDF file]:	File <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Durchsuchen..."/> Filename (optional) <input type="text"/>
Home module/s [Erasmus ISCED text]:	<input type="text"/>
Module details – distance learning [0 - 100% of workload]:	<input type="text"/>
Module details – distance assessment [0 - 100% of total assessment]:	<input type="text"/>
Module complete [PDF file]:	File <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Durchsuchen..."/> Filename (optional) <input type="text"/>
URL of module (description):	Url: <input type="text" value="http://"/> Text: <input type="text"/>
Home programme/s [Erasmus ISCED text]:	<input type="text"/>

Fig. 1: Structure of ILO repository

Significance in the field of modelling and measurement of competencies in higher education

Learning outcomes of high quality are the basis of academic mobility, reflected choice of degree, and state-of-the-art curriculum design. Learning outcomes can be a means for transparency – or opacity – of educational offers on local, national or international levels. To which side the needle will deflect highly depends on the quality of didactic reflection as well as on the standardisation of terminology for writing learning outcomes. For these reasons the art of writing learning outcomes still is a rare skill.

But, basic skills in mathematics e.g., will be completely the same in all these places as well as in different programmes like physics, psychology, or economy. What actually makes the difference is the way to describe these competences and, of course, the individual design of correspondent learning situations. The underlying learning outcomes are, in contrast to connected learning and teaching processes, universal.

Teachers and institutions could save a lot of time and simultaneously increase the quality of their educational offers, if they were able to utilize prefabricated, standardised, and quality-tested learning outcomes for designing and describing their curricula on all levels from single courses to complete study programs. In fact, a kind of a pool of professionally written learning outcomes already exists. Individual teachers and institutions all over Europe (and certainly also all over the world) have already produced a number of well defined intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for single courses or modules, and elaborated ILO architectures for complete programs. Consequently there is a – virtual – pool of good and best practice examples of ILOs scattered over some thousand European HE and CE institutions. But, even if those ILOs are published somewhere in the internet or in internal papers, they are not accessible and usable in an efficient way.

This is the starting point for www.learning-outcome.net, one of the outcomes of the VIRQUAL project <http://virqual.up.pt>.

VIRQUAL partners meeting in Guimaraes (PT)

TecMinho at the University of Minho (Portugal) has hosted the latest partners meeting of VIRQUAL, 24-25 January 2011. The meeting was attended by 11 representatives from 9 of the higher education institutions partners of VIRQUAL. Two of the partners which could not travel in this occasion joined the meeting via Skype.

The meeting enabled partners to establish the next actions to be undertaken for the first half of 2011 and plan well in advance some of the events that are scheduled for the end of the current year.



From left to right:

Rita Falcão – *Univ Porto*
 Antonio Teixeira – *Univ Aberta*
 Traul Jerlich – *Verein zur Förderung des Einsatzes neuer Medien in der Aus*
Branca M Miranda – Univ Aberta
 Carme Royo – *EUCEN*
 Alfredo Soeiro – *Univ Porto*
 László Komáromi – *Gábor Dénes Főiskola*
 Jüri Lössenko – *Eesti Infotehnoloogia Sihtasutus*
 Barbara Class – *Univ Geneve*
 Gottfried S Csanyi – *Tech Univ Vienna*
 Ana Dias – *Univ Minho*