



# **the Link between Learning Outcomes and Qualification standards, with the LO as Transparency tools**

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- **Malta, Learning Outcomes: A *Bologna* Process Training Conference, Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2011, The Palace, Sliema**

## **General information about EURASHE**

- Founded in 1990 as a European association for professional HEIs
- More than 700 members in over 30 countries in the EHEA and associate members in partner countries
- Members of EURASHE are National Associations of University Colleges, Individual HEIs, professional associations & stakeholder organisations
- Professional Higher Education in the Bologna Process, EU 2020, ET2020

# Features of Professional Higher Education

- A strong link with the world of employment & with enterprises in particular
- Close involvement of all stakeholders (incl. students)
- Regional embedding of education & research
- ‘Innovation’ as driving force for knowledge creation
- Practice-oriented & competence-based courses
- Accessible and labour-market oriented
- Flexible schemes and study programmes for new groups of learners

# EURASHE workprogramme: General objectives/ Priorities

Our priorities are set by and through members of our Working Groups, each with specific policy focus:

WG: Innovation & profile of professional programmes

WG: National QFs (linked to Student-centred learning)

WG: Mobility (linked to International Openness)

WG: Transparency Tools (linked to Quality Assurance)

WG: Employability (linked to Lifelong Learning)

# LO for professional higher education\*

- “NQFs must be elaborated with a strong emphasis on learning outcomes, ... allowing a variety of learning paths to a given qualification, including informal and non-formal learning.”
- “ ... explore the possibilities for sector- and/or profession-specific approaches in this context.”

*\* Ten Commitments for the European Higher Education Area in 2020 (Budapest Convention, 2010)*

# Overview on the topic: LO & QF; Q A, Lifelong Learning

1. Quality Assurance is there at the outset
2. Learning Outcomes a generally accepted concept in higher and vocational education
3. Learning Outcomes linked to Qualification Frameworks
4. LO and Stakeholders in (higher) education
5. LO in Lifelong Learning

# 1. QA principles

## *relevant for a focus on LO*

- Quality and QA is primarily responsibility of education and training providers as integral part of their management, respecting diversity (of countries, cultures, institutions, sectors, missions)
- involvement of all stakeholders, both internal and external
- both internal and external QA to be cyclical, systematic, structured and prolonged with enhancement measures based on conclusions

## **QA principles** *relevant for a focus on LO*

- QA systems include clear and measurable objectives and standards, guidelines for implementation, coherent evaluation methods linking self-assessment to external reviews, feedback mechanisms and appropriate resources

# LO are a tool for transparency

- QA guarantees that the intended LO, through the right processes, become achieved LO (or acquired competencies).
- Transparency tool for the benefit of the learner, the (prospective) employer, the institution
- European Standards & Guidelines for QA (1.2): “development and publication of explicit intended LO”.

## 2. Added value of LO in the Bologna process (Higher Education)

Vertically:

- links Short Cycle degrees to the Bachelor level
- SCHE - Bachelor – Master: a continuum

Horizontally :

- Specifies the position of programmes in a field
- Through LO: every programme is unique, but comparable
- Shows diversification: professional/vocational or academic orientation of programmes

# LO in vocational education and training

- ETF, Torino, 10-11 May: with partner countries (also from the Mediterranean area); ‘Copenhagen-Bruges-Torino processes’
- EC: difference between academic & professional/vocational HE is not always relevant
- Excellence can be achieved on all levels (of education); excellence in one field leads to excellence in other fields (levels)
- Partnership works better than confrontation
- Social cohesion requires the development of the entire population (all levels of education)

### ***3. LO link programmes to Qualifications Frameworks:***

- Qualifications are written as Learning Outcomes, and all Qualifications Frameworks, be it the QF-EHEA, EQF or NQFs, formulate generic learning outcomes on the appropriate levels as threshold outcomes.
- LO situated at different levels: sectoral, institutional, programme, module, etc.

# Learning outcomes

- ❑ open definition: *what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to demonstrate after successful completion of (a part of) a process of learning*
- ❑ ECTS, Tuning, ECVET, discipline & sectoral approaches
- ❑ formal, informal and non-formal education and training
- ❑ essential in designing learning process, teaching & learning forms & programmes, assessment
- ❑ LO or competenc(i)es (=integrated knowledge, skills and attitude in a particular context)

# Qualifications frameworks:

- Open Definition of Qualifications: *a formal outcome assessed by a competent body making clear that an individual has achieved the LO(s) to given standards*
- In formal, informal and non-formal Education & Tr.
  - QF-EHEA or the 'Bologna' overarching Framework for HE (2005) is compatible with the European QF for Lifelong Learning (2008)
  - National QF : for all levels, systems and modes based on LO (alignment of National QF with Bologna FW)
  - they all work with LO as cycle or level descriptors

# Quality Assurance:

- ❑ Open definition: *(ensuring that you) do what you claim you are doing in a (most) effective and efficient way*
- ❑ intended LO : input
- ❑ process : the way and resources to achieve the intended LO
- ❑ achieved LO : output (to be assessed internally and externally)

# From generic to specific LO

- EQF for LLL : generic for all countries, structures and systems, levels, sub-sectors, modes of learning and training
- Bologna' QF- EHEA : for all cycles: short cycle, Ba, Ma, PhD

domain or discipline specific; field (of study) or sector-specific; institution specific; subject specific; programme specific; module/unit specific

# LO on the institutional level

*LO can be used to enhance the profile of an institution:*

- We aim at formulating generic learning outcomes also on an institutional level, as these learning outcomes have a direct link with the mission of the institution (which in professional HE typically focuses on applied research, has a regional orientation and emphasizes vocational skills).

## ***LO - based study programmes enable institutions to choose a holistic approach***

- LO can be used for designing the learning process, teaching & learning forms, for making study programmes, and for their assessment.
- Link with student-centred learning : LO define generic competencies and learning in different settings (formal, informal, non-formal), including autonomous learning processes.

## ***4. A focus on LO brings the external world in the programmes (involving stakeholders)***

- professionally oriented programmes require the involvement of the external stakeholders (such as employers), when it comes to elaborating learning outcomes.
- also in VET is there a wide consultation of external stakeholders.
- Impact of globalisation of the labour market, and the growth of student impact (with the introduction of student centred learning)
- Impact of policymakers

## **LO have a dimension of employability.**

- The employable qualified graduate is the reference for structuring a programme, based on LO.
- “Education and Training 2020”: flagship actions
  - Reduce school fall-out to 20 %
  - 40 % of age group to attain higher education
  - 15 % of adults to participate in lifelong learning

## **5. A next step: LO in informal and non-formal settings**

- LO for practice-based work
- LO for student placements
- LO for the use of graduates and employers
- LO in professional and sectoral profiles
- Ultimate aim: enhance student and professional mobility; support easier pathways to Lifelong Learning

# LO in lifelong learning provisions

- LO start from a student-centred process of learning, where he attains/acquires competencies, while following own learning path.
- This requires a teacher/coach who monitors a quality-assured process of learning.
- Programmes are building stones, based on LO and modules, which take into account the personal and professional development of the learner

# Arguments for having flexible systems of learning

- Institutions/providers can offer tailored courses that are affordable for the learner
- Short courses allow for a greater flexibility for specific learners, in response to labour market demands; course programmes become less rigid, and allow for flexible learning paths, based e.g. on RPL
- Providers on a regional level can make arrangements on who offers what, depending on expertise

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Words of thanks go to the Dutch – Flemish Accreditation Agency  
for providing some of the materials

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