

ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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ABSTRACT

In conditions in which the market economy is running on the law of supply and demand, operators are interested to employ qualified personnel with experience in the eventually field.

To come to support both employers and the workers in the European Union has adopted an European model of qualifications and a comparison system of qualifications based on the results of learning. This can assess and certify skills acquired through any form: in the formal system, informal or non-formal

In Romania was founded NATB - National Council for Adult Vocational Training - the structure in charge of vocational training of adults. This structure works by 24 sectoral committees which include and CSFPM - Sectoral Committee training in environmental protection.

The European model of professional competence involves developing qualifications as units of competence described in the Occupational Standards.

Assessment and certification system of professional competences acquired other than in formal evaluation takes place in CNFPA authorization based on units of competence described in the occupational standards

Until now, environmental protection, have been developed and approved 25 occupational standards.

In side of the project POS DRU PROMEDIU led by UNIMED - Employers Association of Equipment Manufacturers and Users of Environmental Protection, the INCD ECOIND was a partner, developed and authorized the first center for environment professional competence assessment in Romania, for two qualifications: Environmental Auditor and Manager of environmental management systems

In this project the team INCD ECOIND:

- develop documents and procedures for operation of the center for evaluation
- develop assessment tools for occupation environmental Auditor
- performed by two evaluators five professional competenceevaluation for each qualification
- obtained the NATB certification for the two evaluators of professional competence

Through another project SOP HRD PRO COMPETENT led by CSFPM and that INCD ECOIND is also a partner, in the institute will develop and authorize a professional competence centers for the evaluation for Responsible environmental qualification.

Keywords: qualification, professional competence, assessment, centre, units of competence, occupational standards, certification

Introduction

Inside of the Lisbon European Council of 23 and 24 March 2000, Heads of State or Government decided to make Europe economy the most competitive system in the world, aiming numerous job and economic growth by 2010.

The overall objective of the "Lisbon agenda" or "strategy" is to make Europe the "Economy based on knowledge the most competitive and dynamic in the world, characterized by a sustainable economic growth, numerous jobs and better quality and a greater social cohesion" and "an environmental sustainability".

In order to facilitate the transition to a knowledge society, the EU promotes the introduction of strategies and special activities for lifelong learning

European Council adopted, in June 2002, a resolution on lifelong learning to motivate people to complete the knowledge and skills in all stages of life to meet labor market requirements. The objective is to provide for all age groups an equal and unrestricted access to educational offering and the abolition of barriers between different forms of learning.

Conclusions Lisbon European Council in 2000 show that a greater transparency of qualifications should be one of the main components necessary to adapt education and training systems, within the Community, to the demands of the knowledge society. In addition, the Barcelona European Council in 2002 called for closer cooperation at university level and to improve transparency and recognition methods in education and training.

European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008 recommends to Member States:

- to adopt an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications and promote the validation of non-formal and informal education, in accordance with the common European principles agreed in the Council conclusions of 28 May 2004;
- to use the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as a reference tool to compare the qualification levels of different qualifications systems and to promote both lifelong learning and equal opportunities in society based on knowledge, and continuing integration European market work, while respecting the rich diversity of national education systems;

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS:

(a) the European Qualifications Framework consists of eight reference levels describing what a person knows, understands and is able to make (learning

outcomes). EQF can be applied to all types of education, training and qualification. The system promotes change of approach based on "inputs" such as duration of learning experience or type of education or training institution, in approach based on "outputs" (learning outcomes) and encourages lifelong learning through the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

(b) qualification means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process, which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved result due to the learning to certain standards;

(c) learning is a cumulative process by which a person assimilates concepts gradually becoming more complex and abstract (concepts, categories and types of behavior or models) and / or acquires abilities and general competences. This process takes place in informal context, for example, recreational activities, as well as formal learning and work including.

(d) learning outcomes means what knows, understands and is able a person to learn, at the end of learning, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence;

(e) knowledge is the result of assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices in a particular field of work or study. In the context of European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and / or factual;

(f) skills means the ability to apply and to use knowledge to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments);

(g) competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and / or methodological capabilities in work or study situations and for professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Most European countries are in the development and implementation of methods and validation systems of non-formal and informal learning. This facilitates a person acquiring a qualification based on learning that takes place outside formal education and training - thus making a significant contribution to learning throughout life.

In Romania the bodies responsible for validation of non-formal and informal learning are:

- ♣ National Council for Adult Vocational Training NATB / National Authority for Qualifications;
- ♣ Sectoral Committees;
- ♣ Assessment Centers

National Council for Adult Vocational Training coordinates and controls the national level the following activities:

- a) approval of training providers by authorizing county commissions;
- b) development of occupational standards;
- c) evaluation and certification of professional competences acquired by adults through continuous training.

The sectoral committees are social dialogue structures, organized in the sectors of activity (economical). In a sector should create only one sectoral committee. Sectoral committees are established by agreement of at least two organizations, one of employers and one union, representative at sectoral level.

Sectoral committees validate qualifications and occupational standards associated to qualifications, except in higher education.

Currently there are 24 sectoral committees which include CSFPM - Sectoral Committee training in Environmental Protection.

Assessment centers are legal entities that evaluate and certify professional competence based on occupational standards

Occupational standards are documents that specify what a person should know and be able to do, to be considered competent to work.

THE APPLIED METHOD

Approval procedure for assessment centers and assessment of the candidate's professional competences is described in 468/4543/2004 Order for approving the procedure for evaluation and certification of professional competences acquired in other ways than the formal learning and in the Practical guide of professional competences assessor: NATB 2005.

Activity evaluation and certification of professional competences acquired in other ways than formal way is coordinated at national level by NATB.

The process for professional competences assessment obtained by other means than formal way is voluntary. Skills assessment is carried out in relation to performance criteria described in the occupational/ vocational training standards.

The evaluation process is independent of the training: evaluation, based on occupational standards / vocational training standards allows the recognition of skills acquired in other ways than formal.

Evaluation is based on evidence of competence from the activities described in the occupational standard / professional training standards.

Assessment is completed for each unit of competence, with the result of "competent" or "not yet competent".

Evaluation of professional competences may be done in centers for evaluation. Approval of evaluation centers and certification of professional competences acquired in other ways than formal way is done by the National Council for Adult

Vocational Training. The authorization is made for occupations/ qualifications for which exist occupational standards.

To be authorized a centers for evaluation must demonstrate that:

- has access to human resources and material resources available on which it makes assessments under this procedure;
- center evaluators have knowledge and recently experience in this area and are constantly preoccupied with their own professional development;
- center designs and produces appropriate materials to allow proper evaluation of professional competence in line with occupational standards / vocational training standards for that provides assessment services. These materials relate to assessment tools and materials to promote professional competences assessment system obtained by other means than formal way;
- offers equal opportunities and non-discriminatory to all candidates who wish to be evaluated to obtain a certificate of professional competence;
- has a transparent system that allows candidates to contest the assessment decision "not yet competent", reported in some units of competence, and to benefit from a new assessment for those units of competence, performed by another evaluator;

Evaluation can be done for all units of competence within an occupational standard / vocational training standard or just for one or more units of competence of that standard, according to the request of the person concerned.

A view to evaluating appropriate professional competences of occupations / qualifications of each candidate is assigned a professional competences evaluator responsible for the implementation of the whole evaluation process. A center must have at least two evaluators of professional competence certificate, in case the applicant contest the decision is distributed other evaluator.

Each center determines how specific evaluation methods applied so as to lead consistently to demonstrate competence as a whole.

It is mandatory that the written test and a practical demonstration of the power method to be part of any combination of methods chosen by the center / evaluator professional competences Evidence of competence during the evaluation of candidate products are reviewed and judged by the evaluator of professional competence in relation to the requirements of occupational / professional training standards. Decision on jurisdiction and the candidate is established for each unit of competency for which the candidate was evaluated. People declared competent after the evaluation process receive a certificate of competence for power units have been declared competent. The professional competence certificates have national recognition of diplomas regime.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

INCD-ECOIND concluded with UNIMED a partnership agreement on participation in project *Development and authorization of a center for evaluation and certification of professional competencies of adults in the environment - PROMEDIU*. The project is financed by European Social Fund financing contract POSDRU/20/1.4/G/9271.

INCD-ECOIND participates in the project as a national partner with three key long-term experts.

INCD ECOIND expert team attended a training course on developing professional competences assessment tools organized by Employers Association UNIMED and participated in a visit to the city Leidendorp the Netherlands, where international partner VAPRO-OVP BV organized a training course on the topic *Development of assessment tools based on occupational standards and procedures*.

The team prepared the documents and instruments required for the work developed by the project evaluation center:

- Status Center for evaluation and certification professional competencies of adults in the EC environmental protection PROMEDIU
- Regulations of organization and operation for the center, Certification Committee and the Commission for selecting evaluators,
- General procedures and working
- Code of Professional Ethics the assessors of professional skills
- Map with information documents,

The center for evaluation was developed for two occupations in the field of environmental protection: *environmental auditor* and *manager of environmental management systems*.

INCD ECOIND team was responsible to elaborate evaluation tools for the qualification *environmental auditor*.

In this regard the experts:

- Identify critical issues based on occupational standards of competence for each unit standard;

- Critical issues formulated according to the methodology the National Council for Adult Vocational Training – NATB;
- Established for each critical aspect formulated possible to the evaluation tools used;
- Set the combination of evaluation tools that will be used for each critical aspect;
- Elaborated evaluation instruments.

In order to authorize the Center for evaluation, developed working tools had tested by performing a number of 5 evaluations by two evaluators for each occupation.

Project leader determined that two evaluators of competences INCD ECOIND to do the evaluation of candidates, each for an occupation: environmental auditor and manager of environmental management systems

Each evaluator prepared by 5 cases assigned by the director of assessment center evaluation.

Next, each evaluator and planned way, according to assessment center procedures, the evaluation process.

The project was completed by certified evaluators professional competences NATB and authorization according to the methodology of assessment center. The certification was done by an examination which included assessment of theoretical knowledge through a written and practical test by direct observation and oral questions on the evaluation records prepared.

Through another POS DRU project, PRO COMPETENT, led by CSFPM where INCD ECOIND is also a partner, in the institute will develop and authorize a center for the evaluation of professional competences for the qualification *environmental responsible*.

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