



TOUCAN

*The future of tourism
without a carbon footprint*

Guide 'Tourism industry validation – benefits & importance'

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1. Introduction

1.1 Scope of the project

TOUCAN project wants to promote environmental learning in VET establishments by developing a new curriculum for hotel staff that will address environmental aspects for the tourism industry in line with the European environmental policies. The European "Green Deal" is the new strategy that targets transformation of EU into a fair and prosperous society with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy with zero net emissions of greenhouse gasses by 2050. TOUCAN project is going to help with the results of this strategy. The great numbers of touristic influxes cause great environmental burden in local communities, such as overuse of single-use plastics, excess waste, surplus food leftovers and higher carbon dioxide emissions due to extra energy used to cover additional needs. In view of the above, the project aim is to strengthen professional development of SMEs and young entrepreneurs and VET trainers through adoption or improving knowledge and skills in the field of implication Lowemission concept to modern tourism industry reality

1.2 Purpose of the document

The purpose of this document is to explain some basic elements of the validation in the tourism industry and to elaborate on the benefits and importance of validating, transferring and applying skills.

1.3 Project target groups

TOUCAN project will train professionals in the touristic sector to promote circular economy solutions in their businesses in order to make the touristic sector more sustainable and in compliance with the environmental goals set by the EU. SMEs will be able to use the tools created in the project to help them train their employees and help them engage into non-formal learning by validating their competences, whereas VET teachers will be the ones that have the tools that enable them to perform validation whenever needed.

1.4 Main outcomes of the project

The main results of the project are its two Project results: PR1: TOUCAN m-learning solution for tourism industry sector to reduce carbon footprint consisting of the following seven training modules: - Green reception basics of low-emission tourism activity, - Low-emission planning of tourist activities and services, - Energy saving at the place of accommodation, - The role of agropreneurs in the low-carbon process, - The role of tour operators and guides in the low-carbon process, - Digital technology for sustainable development, - Rethink the business model for sustainable development. PR2 TOUCAN Recognition and validation OER.

2. Guide 'Tourism industry validation – benefits & importance

2.1 Open Educational Resources creation & delivery methodology

Learning, teaching and research materials in any format that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license that grants no-cost access, re-use, adaptation and redistribution rights are called Open Educational Resources (OER). Licenses that respect the intellectual property rights of the copyright owner and provide permissions granting the public the rights to access educational materials are called open licenses. (UNESCO, Open Educational Resources, 2022)

Each OER project is different and requires a different approach. The pedagogical design and/or teaching style as well as the student population will vary depending on the project so the ground rules for creating OER materials are always applicable to each project. The pre-production phase of the OER creation process involves the curation of existing resources that may be applicable to the OER adoption and planning out the general design of the project. No new content will be adapted in this phase but a skeleton outline and project management documents should be prepared. Then comes the design phase which is the last planning part of the process before working on the content begins. Any existing content or/and graphic/visual design work are fit into places, while project outlines and skeleton documents are fleshed out. Then there is the development phase which is the main phase of creating content for OERs. Existing materials are being adapted or modified to fit better into the project, while checks for intellectual property are done, as well as checks for accessibility. Some platforms that may be useful for this phase are Google Docs, Word and OpenOffice.

The final phase is the publication stage which involves sharing and distributing the content that has been created. Exported versions are created and editable files (.doc, .xml, etc) are archived for instructors who wish to edit the content.

Most educational resources are mainly digital files before they are put into print or any other format. There are many tools that help with the creation and organisation of content. For example LibreOffice Draw can be used to produce anything from a quick sketch to a complex plan, which gives you the means to communicate with graphics and diagrams. Another common way to create and/or edit educational resources is to create a website or hosted resource. Some examples of that is the creation of a blog, a static website or a Wiki. (Elder, The OER Starter Kit, 2019)

2.2 Methodology to facilitate training implementation and delivery

A step-by-step process should be followed to build an effective training program because training initiatives that stand alone often fail to meet organizational objectives and participant expectations. Assessing and identifying training needs is the first step in developing an effective training program. The training needs assessment process will find and identify any gaps in your current training initiatives, gaps that should be analyzed and turned into the organization's current objectives. There is a need to bridge the gap between current and desired performance/knowledge through the development of a training program that has clear goals at its core. Creating a comprehensive action plan that includes learning theories, instructional design, content and training elements very crucial but the level of training and participants' learning styles need to also be considered. Implementing these initiatives is where all this comes to life. Organizations need to decide whether training will be delivered in-house or externally coordinated, while employee engagement and learning KPI goals should be considered as well as thoroughly planning a successful schedule of training activities and any related resources. Monitoring the participants's progress ensures that the created program is actually effective and engaging. If the training program is continually monitored, then it can be evaluated to determine if it was successful and met training objectives. Feedback should be obtained and considered to determine program and instructor effectiveness, plus knowledge or skill acquisition. If expectations are not being met then the training program or action plan can be revised or re-assessed. (Explorance, 5 Steps to Creating Effective Training Programs, 2021)

There are many types of training methods, each being suitable for different situations and categories. Instructor-led training is the traditional type of employee training, in which a teacher or trainer presents the materials. This is a highly effective method of training for complex topics because questions can be directly answered and it also allows for highly-skilled instructors to match the training level and style of the students in the room. A major drawback for this implementation method is the cost and time it requires. Another very popular method is eLearning which relies on online videos, tests and courses tailored especially for training. It is also one of the easiest types of training to roll out to larger populations but still keep students engaged. Hands-on training includes any experiential training that is mainly focused on the individual needs of the student. Lecture-style training can be important for getting large amounts of information to a large student population and is an invaluable resource for communicating required information quickly. Finally, some training topics are readily accessible through required readings, such as case studies. These can provide a quick way for students to learn about real issues but this method is considered great for focused topics but more complex topics will likely require more advanced types of training. (Corey Bleich, Top 10 types of Employee Training Methods, 2022)

2.2.1 Generic Methodological Framework

The entire TRAINING process has been designed, based on a standardised Methodological Framework, the philosophy of which are described in the following sections. The illustration below, gives the high-level overview, by defining the training processes.

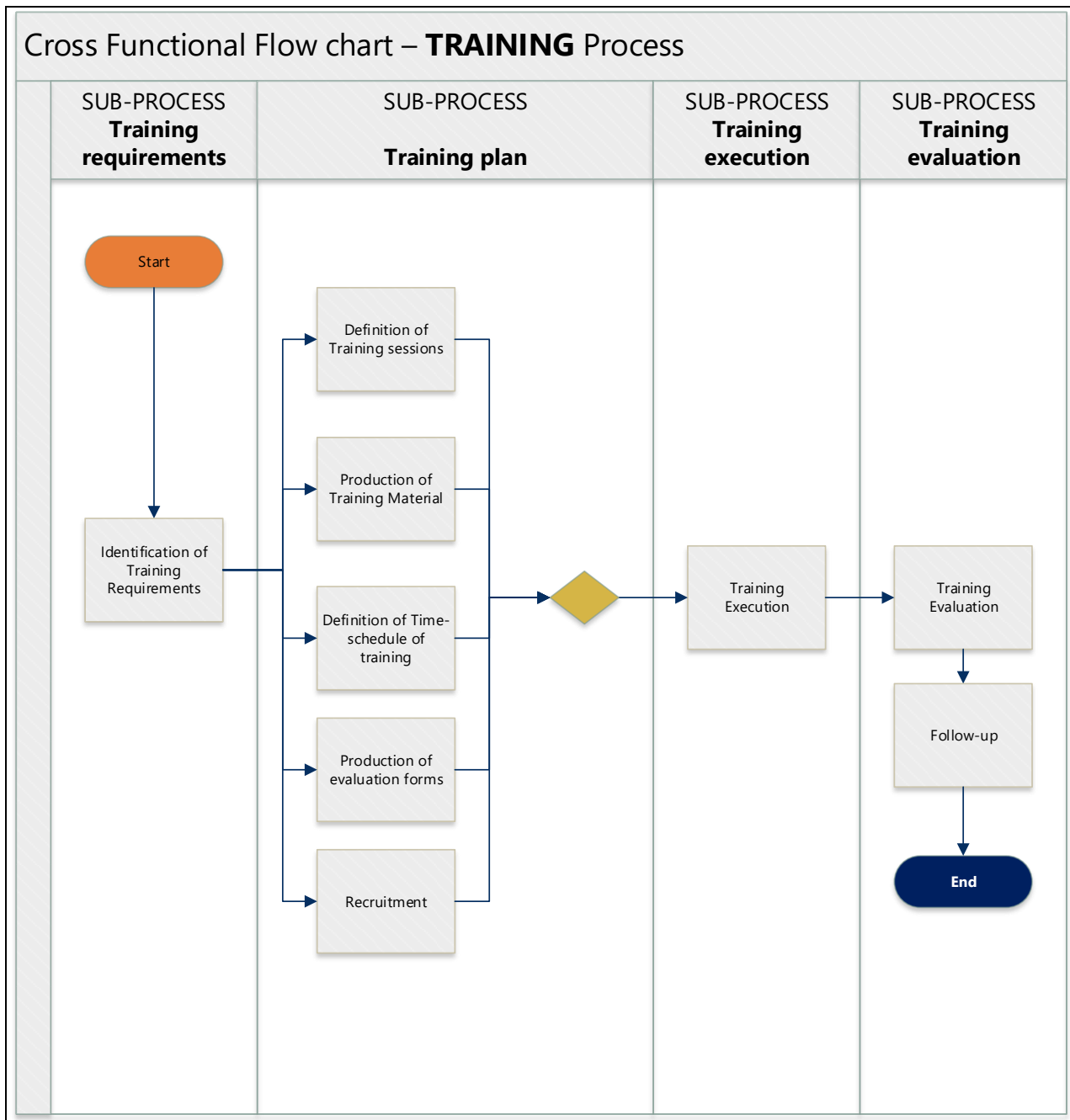


Figure 1: Generic Methodological Framework – TRAINING process

Sub-Process “Training Requirements”

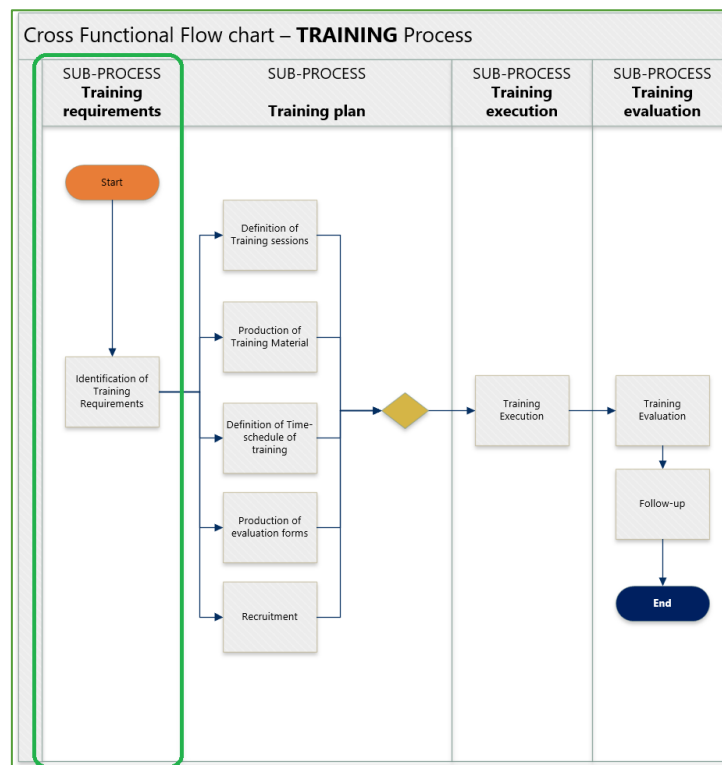


Figure 2: Sub-Process “Training Requirements”

Upon the commencement of the Sub-Process “Training Requirements”, the first task that will be performed will be the “Definition/identification of the training requirements” task, by analysing the scope of training and the target audience profile. It should be noted that training requirements will be usually defined in the context of skills management or continuous improvements activities.

Sub-Process "Training Plan"

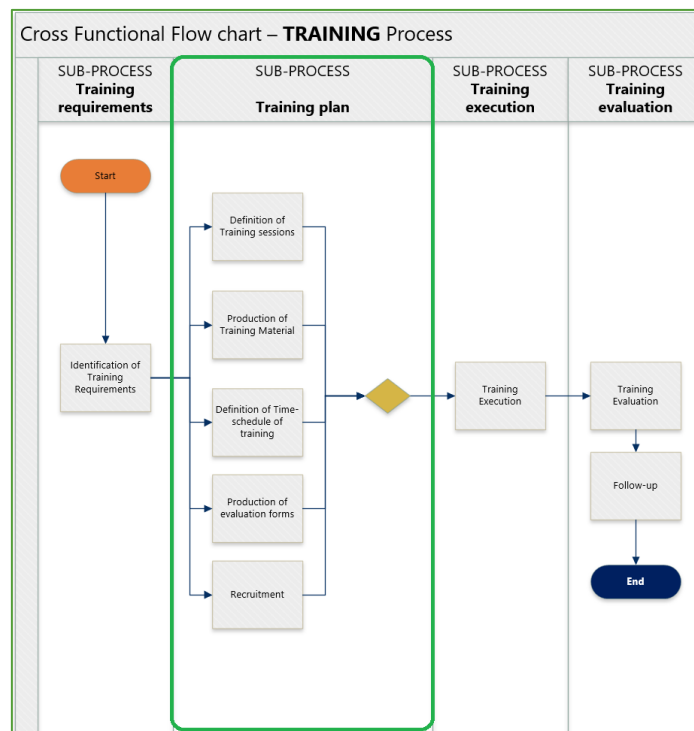


Figure 3: Sub-Process "Training Plan"

This Sub-process, consists of the following tasks:

- **TASK 1:** Definition of training sessions = > define the:
 - objectives of each training session
 - agenda
 - type of activities
 - any special hardware/infrastructure requirements (e.g. specialized equipment, licences etc)
- **TASK 2:** Production of training material
- **TASK 3:** Definition of time-schedule:
 - definition of time slots
 - allocation of human resources
 - allocation of financial costs
- **TASK 4:** Production of evaluation forms
- **TASK 5:** NEW task:RECRUITEMENT: it should contain the following
 - Definition of criteria
 - Identification and selection of participants

To summarise, based on the requirements that will be, a training plan will be produced that will comprise:

- The training courses will be conducted in accordance to the training plan;
- Training courses will be conducted allowing the trainees to participate actively in the course, express their questions, express their preferences in the topics that they would like to be trained, etc;
- Hands-on training or tests to the reference environment may be also performed;
- Training material and associated documentation will have to be produced;
- The specification of scenarios that will be used in the simulator;
- A time-schedule for training;
- Training evaluation form(s) to be used in the context of training evaluation activities.

Sub-Process “Training Execution”

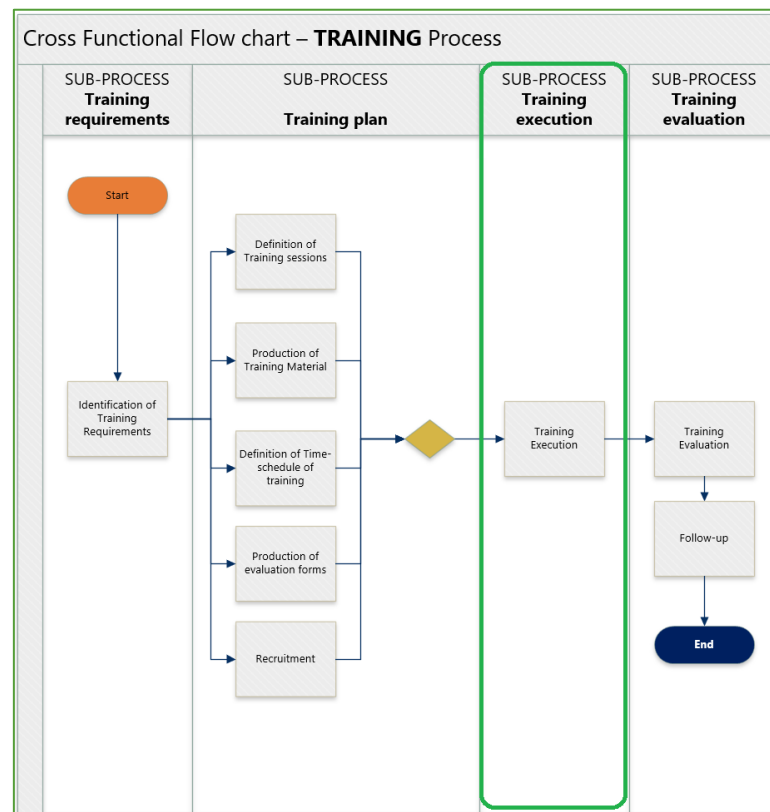


Figure 4: Sub-Process “Training Execution”

The training courses will be conducted in accordance with the training plan. Training courses will be conducted allowing the trainees to participate actively in the course, express their questions, express their preferences in the topics that they would like to be trained, etc. Hands-on training or tests to the reference environment may be also performed. Additionally, each trainee will execute the pre-defined scenarios in the simulator.

Sub-Process “Training Evaluation”

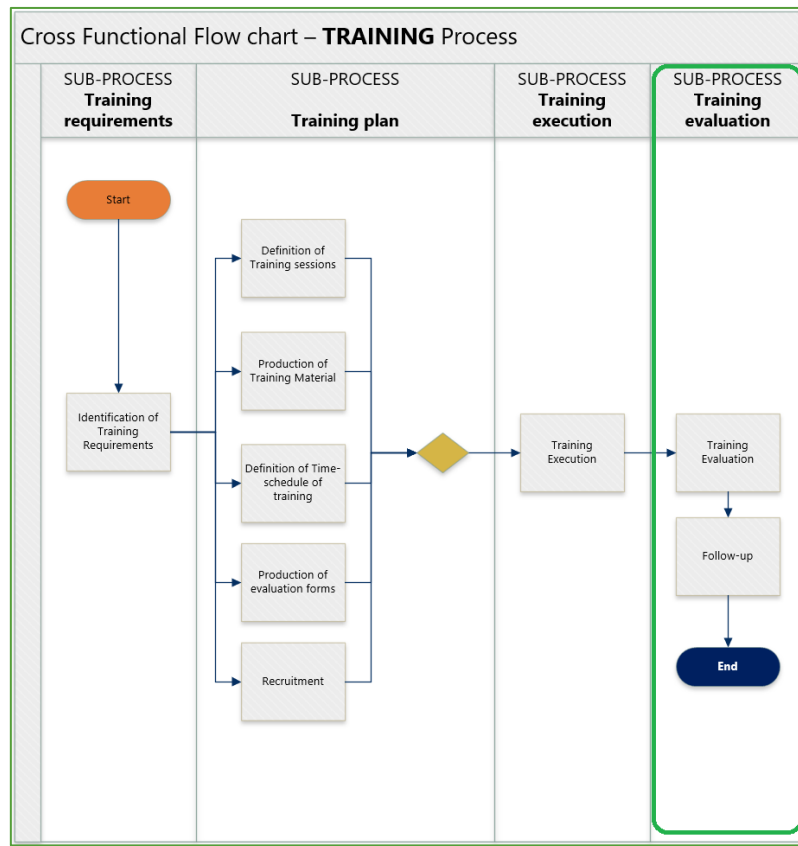


Figure 5: Sub-Process “Training Evaluation”

At the end of each training course, each trainee will be asked to complete the course evaluation form, aiming at the elicitation of information regarding the confidence that trainees have in their skills obtained through the courses and tests performed. In addition, an expert will evaluate the results of simulator/reference environment tests. The answers provided in the evaluation forms when processed, along with the evaluation results of simulator/reference environment tests, may result in the determination of further training requirements that will have to be satisfied by organising additional courses or hand-on training sessions.

2.3 Flipped learning practice

A flipped learning environment approaches learning methods that place the lecture or core learning content outside of class time so that the trainer can spend more time in class interacting and working with learners. This means that the students gain necessary knowledge before class and instructors guide students to actively clarify and apply that knowledge during class. A very common flipped learning practice is for course content

to be provided as interactive tutorials, screencast mini-lectures, audio clips and even traditional textbook readings and articles. Learners review this content out-of-class to prepare for in-class learning activities. The advantages of a flipped approach is that valuable class time is used to support a deeper-level of understanding through active learning activities. This way, learning is less about covering content and more about constructing a deeper understanding through analysis, application and problem-solving. In these scenarios, technology can play a very vital role. Flipped content can be interactive media such as videos or tutorials tailored for the needs of the training program. Flipped learning practice allows for the instructor to provide students with lesson content such as videos, text articles, gamified content and tutorials that the learners then review on their own. Then, they can work on in-class activities to gain a deeper understanding of concepts, get clarification and apply knowledge while the teacher guides and supports student activities. This allows for the teachers to provide immediated feedback and win a considerable amount of time. It is very important to keep in mind that students need to take ownership of of their learning instead of being passive receivers of content so that they can be engaged participants in activities that require knowledge application or a deeper level of concept mastery.

2.4 What is ECVET, EQF, EQAVET and how it can be combined with training delivery

ECVET stands for European credit system for vocational education and training and is one of the common instruments the EU has that help individuals transfer, recognize and accumulate their assessed learning outcomes, to achieve a qualification or to take part in lifelong learning. The ECVET allows learners to accumulate and use their learning in units as these units are achieved. This allows for the learner to build a qualification at his/her own pace from learning outcomes acquired in formal, non-formal and informal contexts, in their own country or abroad. It offers a framework for making learners more mobile and their qualifications more portable, laying down basic principles and technical specifications while making use of existing national legislation and regulations. It also applies to VET (vocational education and training) qualifications at all levels of the European qualifications framework.

EQF stands for European Qualifications Framework and has been developed by the EU as a translation tool to make national qualifications easier to understand and more comparable. It aims to support cross-border mobility of learners and workers inside the EU and to promote lifelong learning and professional development across Europe. It is designed as an 8-level, learning outcomes-based framework for all types of qualifications that serves as a translation tool between different national qualifications frameworks. This helps resolve issues regarding transparency, comparability and portability of people's qualifications and makes it possible to compare qualifications from different countries and institutions. The use of learning outcomes makes it clear what a person actually knows and is able to do. The level increases according to the level of proficiency with level 1 being the lowest and 8 the highest.

EQAVET stands for European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training. It emerged from the 2009 recommendation of the European

Parliament and Council as a European wide framework to support quality assurance in vocational education and training all across Europe. It is based on a quality assurance and improvement cycle that includes planning, implementation, evaluation and review/revision and a selection of descriptors and indicators applicable to quality management at both VET system and VET provider levels. EQAVET does not actually prescribe a particular quality assurance system or approach but provides a framework of common principles, indicative descriptors and indicators that may help in assessing and improving the quality of VET systems and provisions. It can be used to support the quality assurance of learning environments, public and private sector VET providers and VET awards and qualifications at all levels of the European Qualifications Framework.

The ECVET can is applicable to non-formal and informal learning because it facilitates the development of flexible and individualised pathways and also the recognition of those learning outcomes which are acquired though non-formal and informal learning. For applying ECVET to learning outcomes achieved in a non-formal and informal learning context or outside the framework of a MoU, the competent institution which is empowered to award qualifications or units or to give credit should establish procedures and mechanisms for the identification, validation and recognition of these learning outcomes through the award of the corresponding units and the associated ECVET points. The EQF has been vital for development of comprehensive national qualification frameworks based on learning outcomes. All countries that are committed to the EQF consider such national frameworks necessary to make their qualifications comparable across sectors and countries. The EQF leveling system can play a very important role if combined with the right training activities because of it can help make qualifications more readable and understandable across countries and systems. The EQAVET can be combined with training activities easily because if is used to support the quality assurance of different types of learning environments such as school-based provisions, work-based learning, apprenticeships, formal, informal and non-formal provision.

(CEDEFOP, European credit System for vocational education and training)

(EUROPASS, The European Qualifications Framework)

(European Commission, European Quality Assurance in vocational Education and Training)

(CEDEFOP, European Qualifications framework)

2.5 ECVET point system

2.5.1 Main principles

The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) allows learners to have a greater control over their learning experiences and motivates them to move between different countries and/or learning environments.

The system aims to facilitate the validation, recognition and accumulation of work-related knowledge and skills acquired during a learning experience. It establishes that this experience contributes to vocational qualifications.

ECVET aims to provide a common technical framework that establishes compatibility between the different vocational education and training (VET) systems in European Countries. This framework includes assessment, transfer, accumulation and recognition processes.

When it comes to flexibility in ECVET, an individual's learning outcomes are assessed and validated in order to transfer credits from one qualification system or learning pathway to another. Therefore, learners can accumulate the learning outcomes for a given qualification over time, in different countries or learning environments.

The system also allows the possibility to develop common references for VET qualifications and is fully compatible with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

2.5.2 ECVET and validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

Countries around Europe are focusing on the need fully exploiting and recognizing individuals' knowledge, skills and competences including those that are not only acquired at schools, universities or other formal learning institutions. Recognizing all forms of learning is therefore a priority of EU action in education and training (E&T).

Learning that occurs in formal E&T systems is traditionally the most recognized by the labor market and EU societies in general. Recently, however, there has been a growing focus on the importance of learning in non-formal and informal settings. New approaches are required to identify, assess and validate these 'invisible' learning experiences within the context of commonly recognized qualifications.

2.5.3 Description of Training Modules using ECVET

Modules shall be defined in commonly understandable terms referring to the knowledge, skills and competences included in relation to the Learning Outcomes to be achieved upon completion of the training.

Module specifications should include:

- Generic title
- Title of the qualification related to the module
- Reference to EQF level
- Learning outcomes

- Assessment process and criteria for achieving the learning outcomes
- ECVET points allocated
- Seat time

2.5.4 Elements of learning outcomes

Based on Bloom's Taxonomy for the definition of the learning process, three different domains of learning are linked to EQF's learning outcomes:

- The cognitive domain (KNOWLEDGE)
- The psychomotor domain (SKILLS)
- The affective domain (COMPETENCIES)

KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCIES
Select, recognize, mention, identify, name, place, define, describe, etc.	Explain, design, express, interpret, distinguish, classify, give, priority, analyze, judge, relate, etc.	Use, solve, produce, create, organize, etc.

In order to define and write the learning outcomes in the most understandable and appropriate way, the following principles must be taken into account:

1. Use of clearly understandable verbs: Verbs should describe measurable or observable actions, e.g. explain, represent, apply, analyze, develop, etc. Learning outcomes must be specified and contextualized. It is thus essential to provide an indication as to what the knowledge and skills of the learners refer to, and as to what kind of performance is concerned.
2. Avoid vague, open formulations. Learning outcomes should be described briefly and precisely, complicated sentences should be avoided. Clear (simple and unambiguous) terminology should be used as far as possible.
3. Learning outcomes should comprehensibly describe the minimum demands for achieving/validating a unit of learning outcomes, i.e. all learning outcomes which are necessary for fulfilling the tasks in the sense of a complete vocational activity should be listed.
4. Qualifications/competence level is described comprehensibly. Formulations, particularly verbs and adjectives should reflect the level of qualification/competence (EQF or sectoral framework) of a unit of learning outcomes.

Assessment criteria need to be designed for each training module related to a qualification. "Assessment criteria are generally designed to be more specific than the intended Learning Outcomes of a qualification and (even) a module" (Cedefop 2017, p.57)¹. The assessment criteria will be facilitated by the TOUCAN Validation Tool.

¹ Source: Cedefop (2017). Defining, writing and applying learning outcomes: a European handbook. Luxembourg: Publications Office. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/566770>

2.5.5 Levels in the European Qualification Framework

Source: Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Establishment of a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, 2008

EQF Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competence
Level 1	Basic general knowledge	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
Level 2	Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	Work or study under supervision with some autonomy
Level 3	Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study; adapt own behavior to circumstances in solving problems
Level 4	Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change; supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities
Level 5	Comprehensive, specialized, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; review and develop performance of self and others
Level 6	Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical	Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and	Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for

understanding of theories and principles of unpredictable problems in a specialized field of work or study

decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts; take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups

Level 7 Highly specialized knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research. Critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields

Specialized problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields

Manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams

Level 8 Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields

The most advanced and specialized skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice

Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research

Conclusions

Tourism Sector SMEs can adopt tools of non-formal methodology to be able to validate, transfer and apply skills. Using methods like the ones detailed in this document can benefit and add value to Tourism SMEs by:

- Accessing educational content through Open Educational Resources revolving the tourism sector.
- Assessing and identifying training needs when creating training programs. Continually monitoring worker's progress so the program can later be evaluated.
- Use the model of instructor-led training, where a tourism sector professional presents the training materials to workers and trainees.
- Conducting training courses in accordance to pre-designed training plans.
- Asking workers and/or trainees to complete a training course evaluation form to evaluate the skills obtained through the conducted courses.
- Considering a flipped learning practice which allows for the trainer to provide the trainees with content they can later review on their own time.
- Implementing eLearning methods to roll out training to larger a population while still keeping it engaged.

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