

Collection of possible organisational approaches / Model of collaboration

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In order to provide for sustainability of projects, organisational approaches should play a prominent role when activities after the funding period of a project are planned. As a rule, this should not be too difficult if it can be determined very concretely what the expected benefit for every partner is, and it has only to be decided how project results can be exploited in a proper and just way and it has to be organised how partners will work according to these issues in the future.

A different situation arises if project work can only create *conditions* for the benefits of partners. This is the case for the project *Common Grounds for Referencing NQFs and SQFs to the EQF*: One of the main objectives of the project is *to overcome the ambiguity of EQF level descriptors* and those of the related NQFs as well of SQFs in order to provide for real comparability of qualifications in Europe which is in the interest of private as well as of public stakeholders, of course including the project partners. However, it is not only dependent upon the partners' consortium if this objective can be reached, but on the whole range of stakeholders responsible for the right understanding of the EQF and national/sectoral frameworks.

These stakeholders have founded a forum where these issues can be basically discussed: *the EQF Advisory Group*, encompassing members of national competent bodies as well as representatives of sectoral organisations working at European level. They deal with the topic of referencing, but they do this in a way which is typical for discussions at this level: Agreements are sought with the intention to find the *smallest common denominator for differing approaches* that are not debated in order to possibly change them; these positions have often already been determined before and are not up for discussion.

This leads to agreements which have a rather *formal* character: They leave enough space for conserving differing positions, at the same time summoning a common spirit for dealing with the challenges of referencing.

However, this delivered just the starting point for the project *NQF-SQF*: Political agreements of this kind leave too much space for differing understandings; dealing with these issues in this way will at the very end not solve the problems, but perpetuate them. The *top-down approach* of a dialogue between national and sectoral stakeholders participating in the *EQF Advisory Group* should therefore be supplemented by a *bottom-up approach* intending to reduce different views on EQF descriptors by determining *content-oriented* criteria for the description of levels.

As members of the partners' consortium take part in the meetings of the EQF Advisory Group as experts or members, it was assumed that this would create a good condition for putting the project approach up for discussion. This assumption turned out to be justified as it is planned that the approach will be discussed in one of the next sessions of the *EQF Advisory Group*; however, it has to be stated that it cannot be estimated how far the approach has a chance to be taken in account seriously.

The reason for this doubt lies in the character of a committee composed of members who are expected to have in mind primarily their national or organisational interests; in this framework it is difficult to get to agreements that would possibly revise decisions that have been made *before* a debate within the *EQF Advisory Group* starts. The approach of the project *NQF-SQF* contrasts to this usual way of debates within groups devoted to *political* solutions; it is intended to deliver suggestions for *sustainability* of referencing NQFs and SQFs to the EQF, based on *content-oriented criteria*: those that are delivered by the structure of *work processes*.

This approach will only work if the EQF Advisory Group can embed it into their work, thus providing for its continuous application. This will require a consensus within this committee that cannot be visible before the approach *as such* could not yet be discussed, and it can be expected that the whole process of discussion will take more time as it was planned when the project proposal was set up.

Hence at this stage it can only be shown what would be imaginable and desirable from the side of the project consortium if discussions would be successful:

1. The establishment of a *bottom-up discussion process* supplementing the debate in the EQF Advisory Group that necessarily follows a *top-down approach*
 2. The establishment of sustainable procedures for future referencing NQFs and sectoral approaches to the EQF, based on content-oriented criteria
 3. The set-up of a juridical framework within which those procedures could be carried out
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1. The first topic refers to a process that exceeds the subject of mere referencing. It was one of the objectives of the *NQF-SQF* project *to overcome the "EQF information divide"* in order to enable a *Europe-wide stakeholders' dialogue* that deserves its name. Although the project partners' consortium put a lot of efforts on dealing with this issue, it cannot be claimed that the situation has basically changed since the time when the project proposal was submitted: Knowledge of possible users (individuals, enterprises, public bodies, even organisations where educational expertise can be supposed to be available – as universities, human resources development departments) about EQF, NQFs, and SQFs is still poor all over Europe, at a stage of EQF implementation where overall use shall be possible in the near future. It should be the interest of all organisations already dealing with framework issues to inform about these issues: an audience that considerably exceeds the current community of "EQF players" i.e. mainly representatives of public bodies, associations, trade unions, and some educational experts: The actually foreseen *users* of the EQF and frameworks related to them should be properly informed: enterprises, members of unions, education providers, and each kind of individuals working with them.

This would imply that the *EQF Advisory Group* informs about the work of this group, in a way that provides for a minimum of ambiguity, trying to ensure that more or less identical qualifications really

appear at the same level. Projects referring to this issue (as the project NQF-SQF) could support this as bottom-up activities

2. Procedures to be based on this kind of collaboration could refer to the following issues:
 - A model of accreditation of referencing processes based on an overall set of content-oriented criteria
 - A list of methods to be applied for monitoring referencing processes
 - An agreement of stakeholders considering procedures of accreditation, criteria for recognition of referencing and an organisational structure of the community
 - A definition of the role of a future *EQF discussion community* within a dissemination strategy
3. The last subtopic of 2.) suggests that it could be reflected how the EQF Advisory Group could be based on a broader fundament; this would, of course, also imply reflections on an adequate juridical form. However, developments are so far from this stage that it is not sensible now to come up with concrete ideas.

For further information on the project please consult:

www.project-nqf-sqf.eu

For further information on the paper please contact:

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