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Bolster-Up



Memorandum of Understanding for Cabinet Making and Upholstery

I. Purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding

The value of a qualification very much depends on trust, trust in its quality and trust in the learning process, i.e. the curriculum, the learning process and the various elements of the respective vocational qualification.

The signatories of this memorandum of understanding are therefore interested in an improved exchange of information, communication and collaboration regarding the various national systems of vocational education in the furniture industry. They are also interested in the learning content and further development of skills, knowledge and competence, new forms of working processes, new technologies used in the sector and the combination of these within a particular form of work-organization.

To remain champions of innovation and quality, the signatories are convinced that the European furniture industry needs to upgrade the qualifications of its workforce. Additionally, we consider it crucial to strengthen the link between product innovation and science and, likewise, to facilitate the permeability between vocational education and universities.

To improve the quality of vocational education structures and practices within the European furniture industry and promote the mutual recognition of certain levels of qualifications, independently of the way this qualification has been gained, and to foster greater flexibility of qualifications and the homogeneity of assessment systems, the present Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishes that each signatory organization:

- Recognises the “European Profiles” for cabinet makers and upholsterers as they were defined in the project
- Agrees on the MoU fields of activity and implementation measures
- Supports the establishment of a platform for the implementation and recognition of the “European Profiles” for the cabinet maker and upholsterer
- Identifies other stakeholders and competent institutions to involve in the process, and
- Supports ongoing work on the European Core Profiles and the extension of the concept to possible further occupations.

To this end and as a basis of common understanding, the following text operationalizes three main objectives of the project entitled “Bolster Up”. In this respect the signatories of this Memorandum of Understanding are convinced that intensified cross border cooperation of the various stakeholders in the area of vocational education for the furniture sector is crucial.

II. Operational Objectives

This Memorandum of Understanding pursues the following operational objectives for its entire period of validity:

Objective 1 - The description of the European Profile for the cabinet-maker and the upholsterer.

Objective 2 – The establishment of a platform for the implementation of the European Profile, including the enlargement of institutions and countries involved in this platform.

Objective 3 – Further development of the European Core Profile, including enhancement of the level of the qualification as well as the enlargement of the core profile concept to other professions within the European Furniture sector.

III. Operational Objective 1:

Description of a European Profile for the cabinet-maker and upholsterer

Two elements are of the highest importance for the future of the European Furniture Industry, the mobility of workers and a high standard of qualification for the sector’s workforce. Greater mobility will not only help to avoid labour shortages in

level presented by the European Profile for cabinet-maker and upholsterers as gained by an informal or non-formal way of learning.

- At the European level, it is intended to establish the platform for European Core Profiles not only temporarily but as a stable structure under the responsibility of the recognized European social partner organisations.
- Additionally, the concept shall also be promoted towards other sectors of economic activity.



Lifelong Learning Programme

Project carried out
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- Foster the idea of a sector skills council within the framework of the European social dialogue for the furniture industry by attracting further countries and stakeholders from the field of vocational training and to discuss/develop with them the basic concept of European core profiles.

V. Operational Objective 3:

Further development of European Core Profiles

The knowledge-based society provides more and more opportunities for “new combinations”. Innovation circles are accelerating and the resulting effects regarding the skills needed are also accelerating. If our analysis, as pointed out in the above chapter, is correct, that we witness a trend towards the harmonized implementation of these changes, there is good reason to reflect on the consequences for the VET of those professions concerned, also at the European level.

In this respect, it is a precondition to provide opportunities and structures for the stakeholders involved. The signatories of this document believe that the recognized European Social

Dialogue for the furniture industry could provide the anchorage ground for such a structure. However, we need specific means to establish a stable structure of communication. The social partner organisations will provide these means.

- Given that the national stakeholders recognize and apply the concept of a European Core Profile, the concept shall be promoted as a concept for the whole sector.
- The European Social partner organisations for the furniture industry will agree on the Profiles of cabinet-makers and upholsterers within the project defined and mutually recognize the qualifications achieved on the basis of these.
- The signatories will use the European Profile to improve the mutual recognition of existing national qualifications, where justifiable.
- The concept of European Core Profiles shall be promoted as a benchmark for all occupations belonging to the European furniture sector.
- Further, the European Social partner organisations will agree on recommendations regarding the recognition of qualifications at the

the European furniture industry but also provide a fruitful exchange of traditions, skills, knowledge, competences, work techniques and concepts of intelligent work organization, thereby potentially fostering innovation. The latter aspect also directly refers to the need for higher level qualifications which will pave the way to knowledge-based production with a high degree of innovative capacity and a flexible workforce and work processes (instead of standardized production). The signatories of this Memorandum of Understanding are convinced that the broad scope of the initial vocational training is the best guarantee for an individual to become more flexible in his/her working career and to facilitate further training.

To this end and in the framework of the “Bolster Up” project, the signatories have worked out a number of specific activities, listed below and explained with regard to their purpose:

- Evaluating the national structures of vocational education in the furniture sector and developing an inventory (synthesis report) with basic information on the systems. In the mid-term and after establishing a stakeholder platform for the European Core Profile, we envisage

including other countries in this mapping.

- The synthesis report provides transparency and allows easier comparison of the existing qualifications for cabinet makers and upholsterers in the countries involved in the Bolster Up project.
- The description of a European Core Profile for cabinet-maker and upholsterer, including the description of the qualification in terms of knowledge skills and competence. The profiles themselves are operationalized in learning units, each accompanied by a proposal for a possible timeframe.
- A European Profile for the cabinet-maker and upholsterer is not just the common ground detected for vocational education in the respective countries but shall ensure the quality of the education in various aspects, including:
 - the concept of comprehensive and reflective decision making and responsibility
 - the combination of theoretical and practical knowledge;
 - knowledge of materials, technologies and techniques utilised;

- the inclusion of the whole work process, i.e. preparation, choice of materials and tools, execution and quality control.
 - These aspects will also guarantee development towards improved permeability between vocational and higher education
 - The European Profile for cabinet makers and upholsterers shall become a point of reference for the national training providers in the furniture industry. The signatories' intention is to improve the vocational education for cabinet makers and upholsterers in those countries where the standards are below the level described in the European Profile for cabinet makers and upholsterers.
 - The European profiles are designed in a way that they can easily refer to the European Qualification Framework and so respectively to the national Qualifications Frameworks.
 - By using the concept of learning outcomes (Units) the European Profile is also applicable to non-formal and informal learning paths.
- The European social partner organisations for the furniture industry agree that the European Profile for the

cabinet-maker and upholsterer are mutually recognized as a basic qualification for the respective occupations. They will promote them at the national level and convince the stakeholders responsible to equally recognize this core profile as basic for cabinet-makers and upholsterers. In this respect we consider the concept of European Core Profile as supportive of the process of mutual recognition of qualifications throughout Europe and namely as supporting the implementation of European Directive 2005/36. Distinct to the formalized proceedings laid down in the Directive, the European Profiles are based on a voluntary approach and on the involvement of social partners and stakeholders in the sector concerned.

IV. Operational Objective 2:

Establishment of a platform for European Core Profiles

It is the conviction of the signatories that, in the midterm, the tendencies towards the harmonization of skill demands throughout the European furniture industry (and within the international furniture industry) are becoming more evident. The reasons for this harmonization are:

- materials and technologies are used commonly across Europe;
- transnational companies tend to use the same work processes and types of work organisation in all their businesses;
- the process of automation in manufacturing is similar in all EU countries;
- via new information and communication technologies, news and new goods are available everywhere at, more or less, the same time.

In this respect, the Bolster Up project and its close connection to the European Social Dialogue for the furniture industry is considered as a contribution to fostering cross border collaboration between the various stakeholders in the VET field and is also considered as a starting point for the establishment of a platform for European Core Profiles on the following grounds:

- to continue the implementation and testing of the European Profiles, the inclusion of more stakeholders from other, than the currently involved seven, EU-countries, is crucial.
- The main aim of the European social partner organisations for the

furniture industry is to establish a platform for European Core Profiles at the EU-level. They have agreed on a dissemination plan and they will connect their activities to the existing structure for vocational education, as provided by the European Social Dialogue for the Furniture Industry.

- Promoting the exchange of information amongst MoU signatories, peer learning through the participation of national representatives, information initiatives and workshops organized by the European Social Partner organisations (EFBWW, EFIC and UEA)
- Promoting the global concept of European Core Profiles to other sectors of economic activity.
- Future milestones, the European Social partner organizations will:
 - Disseminate the project results and announce the concept of European Core Profiles in all EU-member states during 2014/15
 - Apply for a follow up project in 2015 aimed at better dissemination of the project results and the translation of these results into various EU-languages.