



Tuning Sectoral Framework for Social Sciences

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The European Qualification Framework (EQF) is a common European reference framework which links countries' qualifications systems together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. In this context, the project examines how the Tuning Project could bridge the European Qualification Framework (EQF) for Life Long Learning (LLL) and the Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF EHEA) at the subject area level and from there to the sectoral level. The project proposes an approach to integrating, at the sectoral level, the general descriptors used by both qualification frameworks. At this level the first priority is to develop frameworks which offer descriptors and reference points at intermediate level, more general than at subject area level but more specific than at the eight levels of European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for Lifelong Learning (LLL)¹ and the Dublin Descriptors² of the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF EHEA)³.

The project is based on Tuning methodology and the outcomes of the Tuning project⁴ at subject-area level so far. These outcomes are, in particular, the cycle (level) descriptors and key features developed for the first, second and third cycle, that is levels 6 to 8 in the Qualification Framework for LLL. In practice, these are the Tuning templates which have been prepared by the Tuning subject areas and some subject-area-based (thematic) networks. Internationally renowned peers at subject area level validated this material in 2007. The planned objectives and outcomes of the Tuning Sectoral Framework for Social Sciences will be obtained by using the strategy of reflection, debate and consultation in the form of working groups, a method which has proven to be successful in the Tuning I to IV projects (2000 - 2008). Close cooperation with and consultation of experts in the field of non-formal and informal learning at both national and international level is also foreseen. This cooperation and consultation is of relevance in particular for mapping secondary formal, informal and non-formal level education. Cooperation with and consultation of secondary education is also essential for achieving the projects' goals.

The working groups consist of representatives of higher education institutions and representatives of associations at subject-area level. In the project, two types of subject areas are distinguished: first, areas which have developed Tuning cycle descriptors and reference points already and which have been validated at different stages, and, secondly, subject areas in the Social Sciences sector for which this had not been done so far. The availability of descriptors and reference points at subject-area level is, in the opinion of Tuning, a precondition for the satisfactory formulation and functioning of sectoral, national and European qualification frameworks. The first

¹ For a description of this approach, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm

² See Bologna Framework and National Qualification Frameworks: Appendix 1 at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/qf/national.asp>

³ For more information, see <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/qf/resources.asp>

⁴ <http://www.tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/>

type consists of the following subject areas: **Business, European Studies, Education Sciences, Occupational Therapy and Social Work**. The second type of subject areas, for which it is thought absolutely necessary to prepare the required indicators, is represented by the following: **Law, Psychology and International Relations**.

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1. Project Objectives

The main aims and objectives for the development of a credit based sectoral qualification framework for the Social Sciences, which will be consistent with frameworks for other Tuning sectors and which will cover levels 3 to 8 of the EQF for LLL, were the following:

- identification of (main) subject areas in the Social Sciences not covered by the Tuning project so far. Establishment of subject-area based working groups for these fields. Initiating preparation of key features and cycle (level) descriptors for these subject areas;
- mapping of secondary general education and vocational education and training level from the perspective of the sector as well as for each subject area involved. Identification of communalities and differences at national level;
- identification of communalities and differences at sectoral as well as at subject area level at European level;
- preparation of cycle descriptors for the levels 6-8 for the new subject area as well at levels 3-8 at sectoral level;
- identification of entrance and exit points as well as entrance levels at levels 3 and 4 and possibly 5 on the basis of different learning routes taken;
- identification of possible (ECTS) credit ranges for the levels 3 to 5 as well as exploration of the link to the ECVET initiative;
- identification of commonalities and differences between the existing cycle (level) descriptors for the first, second, third level, and levels 6 to 8 of the EQF for LLL;
- preparation of sectoral cycle / level descriptors. These descriptors should be written in such a way that both the Dublin descriptors and the descriptors of the EQF for LLL are covered;
- identification of suggestions for fine tuning and bridging of the Bologna (Dublin) descriptors and the descriptors of the EQF for LLL.

For the purposes of constituting clearly defined working groups amongst the participants in the project, these outcomes were grouped into six categories. These categories are set out below in section 4.

The following three main objectives and priorities of the EQF LLL Programme have been identified and have been addressed by this project.

- First, a credit-based European sectoral qualification framework covering the EQF levels 3 to 8 will facilitate the ability of individual learners to develop their competences further in a LLL context.
- Next, it will now be easier to obtain recognition of prior learning outcomes in particular within the same domain or sector and will avoid learners needlessly losing time because of the lack of recognition.

- Finally, descriptors set minimum standards for gaining credit(s) and will, therefore, contribute to the enhancement of the quality of education and training.

The outcomes of this project have been seen in relation to the outcomes of the Tuning Project regarding the enhancement of the EHEA, models for designing, delivering and quality enhancing of degree programmes, the use of credits for the purposes of accumulation as well as transfer, and the best teaching and learning strategies in relation to employability and citizenship.

2. Project Approach

The EQF is a common European reference framework, which links countries' qualifications systems together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. In this context, this project has examined how the Tuning Project could bridge the European Qualification Framework (EQF) for Life Long Learning (LLL) and the Qualification Framework (QF) for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) at the subject area level and from there to the sectoral level. It also attempted to see how to integrate, at the level of the sector, the general descriptors of both qualification frameworks. What is really required now are frameworks which offer descriptors and reference points at an intermediate level: more general than at subject area level but more precise than in the eight levels descriptors of the EQF LLL and in the Dublin Descriptors of the QF EHEA.

The Bologna Process has focused on re-structuring the qualifications' framework for higher education in terms of three/four cycles. Discussions about entrance levels and learning routes for admission to higher education institutions and programmes have been not been broached so far. However, in a LLL perspective, it is thought necessary to develop more transparency and clarity about entrance conditions and levels, recognition procedures regarding informal and non-formal learning to gain access to higher education. This requires that level descriptors are developed at sectoral / subject area level for learning between secondary (particularly at post compulsory level) and higher education. It implies the development of sectoral descriptors for the EQF levels 3 and 4. Furthermore, it is thought useful from the perspective of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)⁵ to develop sectoral descriptors for the levels 5 to 8. These descriptors have been based on the comparison of subject area descriptors and reference points as developed by Tuning. This will surely lead to insightful knowledge into differences and communalities between subject areas within a given sector. This will make it possible to identify more fairly the acquired and non-acquired areas of learning at the level of the individual, when recognition of prior learning outcomes (RPLO) is sought.

The project has been based on Tuning methodology and the outcomes of the Tuning project at subject area level so far. These outcomes are, in particular, the cycle (level) descriptors and key features developed for the first, second and third cycle, which may be taken to equate to levels 6 to 8 in the EQF LLL. In practice, these are the Tuning templates, which have been prepared by the Tuning subject areas and by a number of subject-area-based (thematic) networks. This material was validated, in

⁵ The Recognition of (Prior) Learning Outcomes is defined as:

a) *Formal recognition* – the process of granting official status to knowledge, skills and competencies through either

- the award of qualifications (certificates, diplomas, degrees or titles: or
- the grant of equivalence, or credit.

b) *Social recognition* – the acknowledgement of the value of skills and/or competencies by economic and social stakeholders. See: Konrad J (2009), Methodology of RPL, page 10, December available from http://www.rplo.eu/files/methodology_of_RPL1209.pdf

2007, by internationally respected peers at subject-area level. The planned objectives and outcomes of the Tuning Sectoral Framework for Social Sciences have been obtained by using the strategy of reflection, debate and consultation in the form of working groups, which has proven to be successful in the Tuning I to IV projects (2000 - 2008). Close cooperation with and consultation of experts in the field of non-formal and informal learning at national and international level has taken place. This cooperation and consultation has been of relevance, in particular, for mapping secondary formal, informal and non-formal level education. Cooperation with and consultation of secondary education has also been essential for achieving the project's goals.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

The preliminary to the work on the six identified outcomes has been the drawing up of a short definition of the social sciences sector:-

'The social sciences are concerned with the study of and the provision of services to society as articulated in individuals, groups and communities. They examine social structures and organizations (economic, legal, cultural, religious, political, etc.) in both space and time. They explore the dynamic processes and inter-relationships between them and how different meanings and attitudes are created and have to be negotiated. Their scope ranges from the minutiae of human behaviour and development to large-scale social movements. Social Sciences have a strong ethical dimension related to social justice, wellbeing, cohesion and citizenship.'

All the work conducted on the six outcomes below has been related to this definition.

The main outcomes and results of the project are:

1. a sectoral learning outcomes framework based on agreed cycle / level descriptors covering levels 3 to 8 of the EQF for LLL;
2. a report containing detailed information about formal, non formal and informal secondary education level identifying the main progression routes from the EQF levels 3 to 6 at national level for seventeen countries as well as a comparison at European level, with an identification of communalities and differences;
3. a survey of the link between ECTS and ECVET as credit accumulation and transfer systems and proposals for the translation of ECVET credits into ECTS credits (and vice versa) for EQF levels 3-8;
4. a report including proposals to bridge the Dublin cycle descriptors and the level descriptors of the EQF for LLL enabling the drawing up of sectoral/subject area descriptors commensurate with both frameworks;
5. the establishment of subject area based working groups for main academic fields within the social sciences not yet covered by the Tuning project;
6. the identification of cross border areas and/or areas overarching different fields of study.

The results for each of these are presented below:-

OUTCOME 1. A SECTORAL LEARNING OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK BASED ON AGREED CYCLE/LEVEL DESCRIPTORS COVERING LEVELS 3 TO 8 OF THE EQF FOR LLL.

The production of agreed cycle/level statements of generic learning outcomes for the Social Sciences sector is an absolutely key component of this overall project.

1. THE PARAMETERS FOR THE DRAWING-UP OF THE TABLE OF SECTORAL LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES.

This Outcome, which, to the best of our knowledge, is a totally pioneering piece of work, was conducted within very carefully defined parameters.

1. Since it would be extremely difficult to produce generic statements of learning outcomes for each and every subject areas taught in HEIs across the entire EHEA (and indeed the division of Social Sciences into specific subject areas can vary from HEI to HEI and from country to country), what has been attempted in this project is the formulation of a set of generic statements for the entire Social Sciences sector.
2. These sectoral descriptors are designed to serve as bridges between the necessarily very generalised statements in the cycle descriptors for the QF EHEA, that is the Dublin Descriptors, and the level descriptors for the EQF, on the one hand, and professional profiles and cycle/level statements of both generic and subject specific learning outcomes for individual subject areas within the Social Sciences, on the other hand. It should be stressed at this point that, whilst sectoral learning frameworks have recently come in for some heavy criticism (see, for example, *Footsteps and Pathways for Lifelong Learning*; Final Report EQF PRO Project, 31 January 2010)⁶, this criticism concerns sectoral providers and not sectors as defined by learning areas. It is, therefore, underlined that the sectoral work here is complementary to, and not in opposition to, previous work.
3. These sectoral generic statements have to accord, at one and the same time, with the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF Level statements. In order to assure themselves that both sets of descriptors were respected, all those members of this project working on this outcome had constantly before them not only the two sets of descriptors themselves but also a number of other documents, drawn up previously which examine the relationship between the two sets of framework descriptors. These documents demonstrate the very clear common and overlapping ground between the two sets of descriptors and this despite the fact that they were drawn up on the basis of somewhat different categorisations of learning outcomes. Both sets of descriptors were, however, constructed in the light of Bloom's taxonomy and their differences are ultimately more apparent than real.

⁶ See <http://www.eucen.eu/EQFpro/index.html>

4. The sectoral statements have also to accord with existing statements of generic and subject specific learning outcomes for individual subject areas, as produced in the course of the TUNING project or related projects. TUNING has developed its own categorisation of generic learning outcomes or competences, that is the instrumental, the interpersonal and the systemic. Once again, these categories may be different from those of both the QF EHEA and the EQF but there is no fundamental conflict between them. At the same time, the Social Science sectoral descriptors are intended to act as a guide for drawing up statements of learning outcomes for subject areas which have not yet produced their generic and subject specific statements. A number of these subject areas were included in this project (see Outcome 5 below). The members of the group associated with these new subjects were able to follow the work on the sectoral statements as well as producing those for their own subject areas.
5. It is accepted that these sectoral statements should be drawn up for more than just the three main Bologna cycles as, is the case, in the TUNING subject-area statements. When TUNING invited subject areas to draw up such lists of learning outcomes/competences, the Short Cycle had not yet been added to the other three main cycles of the Bologna process. Clearly, the Short Cycle could not be excluded here, even if not all subject areas in the Social Sciences across HEIs in the EHEA necessarily offer short-cycle programmes. In addition and since a large proportion of candidates for entry to HEI programmes in the Social Sciences will possess learning outcomes situated at EQF levels 3 and 4, it was seen as most important that descriptors should also be written for these levels as well as for levels 5-8. Again, it is clear that not much consideration in the Bologna Process has hitherto been given to the bridge between pre-HEI and HEI education or between Further/Adult/Continuing education and HEI education.
6. Since the projected table of descriptors was to be drawn up 'vertically' in terms of the EQF levels 3 to 8, it was obvious that 'horizontally' it should also be drawn up according to the EQF's tripartite division of learning outcomes into knowledge, skills and competence. Such a table would, therefore, enable the members of the group, already used to working with the Dublin Descriptors, to familiarise themselves much more thoroughly with the EQF level descriptors in order to accustom themselves to work with them.
7. This decision to adopt this approach was reinforced by the fact that it was also necessary to draw up these sectoral learning outcomes in such a way that they would relate not only to programmes and qualifications taken within HEIs but also those which are taken outside of HEIs in the Adult/Further/Continuing education sector, and, further, to learning which is either informal or non-formal, and which is situated at the equivalent level to one or other of the Bologna cycles. The EQF descriptors are specifically designed to cover all learning of whatever nature at all these levels, in contrast to the Dublin Descriptors.

8. The agreement to proceed in this manner was not, however, reached before considering a number of doubts felt by some members of the group over the precise coincidence between each of the EQF levels 5 to 8 and the four Bologna cycles. These questions of coincidence raised a number of conceptual problems, which were debated at some length, indeed at great length in respect of one of them. Since these conceptual debates touched on very serious questions concerning the precise relationship between the EQF levels and the cycles of the QF EHEA, they are discussed in some detail in the report on Outcome 4 below.
9. In the end, however, it was agreed that the only way to proceed in this project was to accept as unquestioned givens, the more or less strict correlation between the EQF levels 5 to 8 and the four Bologna cycles as suggested in the formal papers proposing the EQF and the ECVET to the European Parliament in 2006 and in the legislation of 2008. Any other conclusion would have made it impossible to proceed further. This does not mean to say that the conceptual and practical questions raised and discussed under Outcome 4 below may be ignored. They deserve far more debate than could be undertaken within this project. It clearly will not do, however, to suggest, as is the case in *Footsteps and Pathways for Lifelong Learning*, the Final Report of the EQF PRO Project of January 2010⁷, that the very close and over-simplistic coincidence between qualification frameworks and EQF learning levels is an almost perverse result of the work conducted to produce new or revised NQFs. The very way in which the EQF was presented to the European parliament, clearly underlining the coincidence between EQF levels 5-8 and the four Bologna cycles was an incitement to countries to proceed by identifying, first, post secondary but non-HEI programmes and qualifications with one or other of the four Bologna cycles and, then, to work back down their existing qualifications frameworks, whether explicit or tacit, identifying them all with one or other of EQF levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. This way of proceeding emphasises the understandable difficulty and unease, which is experienced by some stakeholders, who are used to qualifications frameworks, when being invited to move in one single step away from qualifications frameworks and towards learning frameworks. Time is needed for people to become comfortable with new conceptual frameworks and to place them at the centre of their thinking. Consequently and whatever the possible flaws in this proposed approach, the members of this project could see no alternative to it.

This, then, was the basic set of parameters on which the table of sectoral learning outcomes for the Social Sciences was constructed.

2. THE AGREED PROCEDURE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABLE

Once these basic questions of approach had been settled, the group decided how the work of constructing the table should proceed in practical terms.

⁷ See <http://www.eucen.eu/EQFpro/index.html>

1. Since the EQF divides each level of learning outcomes into three very closely defined categories, knowledge, skills and competence, it was agreed that, first, three groups, each consisting of members drawn both from a wide range of subject areas in the Social Sciences, which have already produced lists of learning outcomes within the TUNING project, and from a broad spread of countries, would draw up lists for all the EQF levels from 3 to 8 for each of these three categories. This would result in the production of three separate sets of 'vertical' lists. In so proceeding initially in this vertical manner, it was certain that each group would pay very careful attention to the central question of the progression of learning achievement from each level/cycle to the next.
2. On completion of this first step, a working group, consisting of selected members of the three original groups, would, then, ensure that each EQF level of the table was as consistent 'horizontally', between knowledge, skills and competence, as it was 'vertically' between the six levels of learning. Again, this group represented a broad spectrum of subject areas within the Social Sciences, already associated with TUNING, and of the countries involved in this project.
3. After this select group, had put the entire table together in a coherent manner, this would be presented for comment and possible amendment to the subject areas in this project which were new to TUNING, that is Law, Psychology and International Relations. This meant that overall eight subject areas in the Social Sciences were involved in the final production of these sectoral tables. After the completion of this project, other subject areas in the Social Sciences will be invited to comment on the table. This will provide the widest possible validation for the sectoral table proposed in this report.
4. The table resulting from this project's work will not, of course, be considered to be set in stone. In the light of comment coming from both those concerned with the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF level descriptors, on the one hand, and from individual subject areas within the Social Sciences, on the other hand, the table will be subject to periodic amendment.

3. PRACTICAL PROBLEMS IN CONSTRUCTING THE TABLE

The construction of the table presented certain practical difficulties. The major ones, which are likely to be encountered in future by other sectoral groups, are as follows:-

1. First, and after the initial attempts to make progress, the three different groups agreed that, for all the close definition of the three categories of learning outcomes provided by the EQF, they initially felt uncertain that the line of division between 'skills' and 'competence' was as clear as intended. So, a great deal of early discussion took place on what should fall either side of the line of divide between the two. These initial uncertainties were satisfactorily resolved as the work progressed.
2. Secondly, the members of all three groups understood that they would have to be very cautious in drawing up their lists of knowledge, skills and competence for EQF level 3 and 4. They were understandably worried about the degree of

coincidence between what they, as members of HEIs or HEI-related institutions, expect of candidates who wish to enter their teaching/learning programmes and that which those who construct and teach programmes in the Social Sciences at levels 3 and 4 expect students to achieve. In this, they were highlighting an age-old problem, namely that of communication between those who prepare students for entry into HEI programmes and those who oversee students' learning once they enter those programmes. This is not the place to rehearse anecdotal evidence about teachers in HEIs complaining of the lack of the requisite 'knowledge and skills' in those they take into their courses or, about teachers in schools constantly complaining of teachers in HEIs, with unrealistic expectations, failing to understand that students are not worse than in the 'good old days' but simply different. Maybe the EQF tables of learning levels will help to diminish these tensions in general and, hopefully, the table drawn up here may aid those specifically involved in the area of the Social Sciences.

Given that those, who participated in the drawing-up of the lists of learning outcomes set out in the table below, were highly conscious of being pioneers in this field, the work on this Outcome, not surprisingly, extended across the greater part of the project time. It is believed, however, that the results will be of very great use not only to those working in the area of the social sciences but to those in the other sectoral areas who will face the task of drawing up a table of learning outcomes for their respective sectors.

It is very much to be emphasised that the lists of generic learning outcomes presented in the table drawn up by and for this sector of the Social Sciences are not intended to cover merely that which is taught in HEIs. As stated above, the table covers EQF levels 3 and 4. It is worth reiterating that for levels 5-8, they cover, formal learning both inside and outside of HEIs. The table is, also, constructed in order to serve as a reference point for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. In addition and given that many formal qualifications in the Social Sciences are directly related to professional activities, the learning outcomes recorded here are as much work as academic-related. Finally, it was constantly kept in mind that many, who work in the social sector, do so on the basis of non-formal and/or informal learning⁸.

⁸ This is an important area of development in higher education. "The ministers responsible for higher education, for the first time in Bergen in 2005 encouraged the creation of 'opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, including procedures for the recognition of prior learning'. Recently in April 2009 in Leuven/Louvain la Neuve, they promoted the development by European universities of lifelong learning strategies, stating that "successful policies for lifelong learning will include basic principles and procedures for recognition of prior learning on the basis of learning outcomes regardless of whether the knowledge, skills and competences were acquired through formal, non formal or informal learning paths".

http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/conference/documents/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communicu%C3%A9_April_2009.pdf

However, for the time being, the development of validation of non-formal and informal learning, except in France and UK where the first arrangement appeared in higher education at the beginning of the eighties, is patchy. Nevertheless, the case studies show that validation is seen as part of the future in universities even if it is not yet widely used or used only in specific courses. The establishment of National Qualifications Frameworks should in the future provide support for building together with formal bridges validation-based bridges between university learning and learning that takes place outside the university in non formal and informal as well as other formal settings. See *Footsteps and*

4. THE TABLE OF THE SECTORAL LEARNING OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

With all these preliminary and explanatory points in mind, the results of the group's work may be presented in the following table. It is to be hoped that it will serve as a sure guide not only for all those learning and working in the area of the Social Sciences but, also, for those who attempt in the future to draw up similar tables for other learning sectors.

Pathways for Lifelong Learning, the Final Report of the EQF PRO Project, January 2010, <http://www.eucen.eu/EQFpro/index.html>

Main competences from Level 3 to 8 from the perspective of Social Sciences

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
<p>Level 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factual knowledge of societal structures and institutions. • Knowledge of processes of social change. • Knowledge of the dynamic inter-relationship between people, structures and the environment. • General knowledge of the professional context. • Knowledge of groups, their development and their interrelationships. • Knowledge of human development particularly in regards to self and area of professional practice. • Knowledge of the principles and values of citizenship. • Knowledge of social identities and differences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates effectively with individuals and groups in a variety of settings. • Recognizes, responds and adapts to new situations. • Follows protocols and rules taking account of cultures and social norms. • Recognises values, ethics, behavioural norms and structures needed to work effectively. • Analyses and solves practical problems by selecting and applying basic tools, methods, and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists in shaping the learning or working environment, presents processes and results to the appropriate recipients of such information. • Adapts own behaviour effectively to changing demands of working relationships. • Works within a group and occasionally offers support. • Reflects on own actions and the actions of others and responds appropriately • Learns or works autonomously within contexts which are familiar, taking responsibility for completed tasks • Acts in an ethical way in relation to individuals and groups, and tasks. • Demonstrates appreciation and

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
			respect for diversity and multiculturality.
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factual and practical knowledge relevant to the field of study and practice. • Factual and practical knowledge of the function of institutions, particularly of that related to the field of study or practice. • Knowledge of interpersonal interaction. • Knowledge of the bio, psycho, social, spiritual nature and development of individual. • Basic knowledge of ethical principles, particularly related to practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works within and establishes a range of networks. • Plans, organises, implements and evaluates a specific intervention in the short term. • Takes account of potential consequences of decisions and actions related to specific interventions. • Makes informal decisions based on ethics, values, cultures, behavioural and social norms. • Develops strategies for life long learning • Acts in unfamiliar environments. • Selects and implements a solution from a range of tools to resolve specific problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapts own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems. • Takes responsibility for the completion of tasks. • Acts with civic awareness and with social responsibility on the basis of ethical reasoning • Is responsible for motivating people to achieve common goals using established protocols. • Enables others to make choices and decisions based on information. • Contributes to effective team working

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
Level 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive, factual, theoretical and practical knowledge within a specific area of the social domain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – social theories and human development; – historical processes shaping society; – cultural phenomena; – the mechanisms of interaction and communication; – social justice, human rights, power, citizenship and ethical practice; – sources that may be used for further development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes and extends networks and partnerships. • Plans, organises, implements, evaluates and intervenes in the medium term. • Anticipates consequences of actions and interventions taking into account ethics, values, cultures, behaviours and social norms. • Proactively identifies creative and transferable solutions in relation to specific interventions. • Learns or works in changing environments and recognises and utilises available learning opportunities and scopes in action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercises management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change. • Reviews and develops performance of self and others. • Takes responsibility in a team. • Leads individuals and small groups, facilitating completion of goals with successful contribution of all participants.
Level 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad and integrated knowledge and comprehension of the interdisciplinary background of the field of studies or practice in social sciences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops networks and partnerships across a range of cultures and levels. • Develops creative solutions to abstract problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements appropriate development strategies and creates continuing learning processes autonomously. • Acts and resolves problems with

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced theoretical knowledge of the individual and society. • Advanced theoretical and practical knowledge of processes of social changes and especially those relevant to practice. • Advanced knowledge of group dynamics and their internal (power, influence, communication etc.) and external (environment) interrelations. • Advanced knowledge of self as dynamic actor within society. • Advanced knowledge and understanding of the processes of the development of power relationships and diversity in society • Advanced knowledge and understanding of ethical principles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates skill in a wide range of interventions in complex, unpredictable and international situations taking account of current evidence. • Contributes to the resolution of interpersonal and intercultural conflicts. • Communicates and debates professional issues and findings in research with experts and non experts of own field, ie. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulates, justifies and argues subject specific positions and problem solutions. - Discusses information, ideas, problems and solutions with experts and laymen - Collects, evaluates and interprets relevant information. 	<p>empathy, social responsibility and civic awareness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulates scientifically founded judgements which consider social and ethical findings. • Is responsible for own ethical practice and recognises ethical practice of others
Level 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly specialised knowledge, basis for original thinking and research in a specific field of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates and debates professional issues and findings in own and other research with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes responsibility to develop professional knowledge and practice work or study contexts that

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
	<p>or practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdisciplinary knowledge relevant to the specialist area of study or practice. • Advanced knowledge and in depth understanding of ethical issues. • Development of critical and autonomous knowledge related to the management of professional practice. • Critical knowledge of a range of appropriate methodologies to the perspective of the discipline. 	<p>experts and non experts of one’s field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates innovation, advanced problem solving and mastery of methods and approaches in complex and specialized fields. • Designs and manages networks, strategies and structures for the long term. • Designs and conducts research to add breadth and depth to knowledge and to inform and innovate practice. • Influences policy in the field. 	<p>are complex/ unpredictable and require both strategy and process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds and takes responsibility in challenging and unpredictable situations. • Takes responsibility for implementing new strategies and protocols in all situations. • Takes responsibility for good quality and ethical practice at an individual and collective level. • Demonstrates leadership and innovation in management when working in complex and unpredictable situations.
<p>Level 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative, research based, advanced knowledge of the specific field of social study or practice. • Expert knowledge of research methodology relevant to the specific field of study or practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designs, implements and evaluates a range of research strategies in order to develop new knowledge in the field. • Demonstrates independence, originality, creativity and ability in advanced analysis and synthesis of 	

Level	Knowledge	Skills	Competences
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical awareness of ontological, epistemological and complex ethical issues related to the specific field of study and practice. • Critical awareness of own theoretical development in relation to other fields of knowledge and society. 	<p>complex ideas with a variety of epistemological approaches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively communicates new knowledge and innovation in practice using a variety of media to expert and non-expert audiences. • Provides leadership on the development of policy. • Evaluates and resolves ethical dilemmas that have policy implications to practice and research. • Effectively builds contacts and cooperates with beginners and advanced researchers of own and other disciplines, coordinating and guiding complex interdisciplinary research projects. 	

5. CONCLUSION

It is greatly to be hoped that the construction of this table will act as a potent facilitator of mobility within the Social Sciences, whether this involves movement between different subject areas within the sector or between different categories of educational providers or indeed between the formal, non-formal and informal sectors. It is also hoped that as other sectors produce their own tables, mobility between all sectors will be facilitated by the identification of common learning outcomes. It is clear that, to date, the Bologna Process has so far resulted in only limited mobility of these kinds, as old barriers to effective mobility, even within individual member states, have proved hard to breach. This relative failure has recently been heavily emphasised in *Footsteps and Pathways for the Lifelong Learner*, The Final Report of EQF PRO Project. Even if the explanation proffered by that report for this relative failure is highly contentious, since it is clear that the low level of mobility in Europe as opposed to North America depends on many more factors than the purely intellectual/academic, it does underline the need for more projects of this kind to act as stimuli to the desired outcomes of the whole Bologna and Copenhagen Processes.

OUTCOME 2. A REPORT CONTAINING DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL, IDENTIFYING THE MAIN PROGRESSION ROUTES FROM EQF LEVELS 3-6 AT NATIONAL LEVEL FOR SEVENTEEN COUNTRIES AS WELL AS A COMPARISON AT EUROPEAN LEVEL, WITH AN IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNITIES AND DIFFERENCES.

1. INTRODUCTION.

The production of a table of sectoral learning outcomes for the Social Sciences was an absolutely key feature of this SQF project. This table is laid out above in the report on Outcome 1. Although drawn up with the previous work of TUNING on subject area competences in mind, it has several novel features. First, it covers not only Bologna cycles 1, 2 and 3 but also the Short Cycle. Next, these descriptors were written using the three categories of learning outcomes identified by the EQF rather than the five categories of the Dublin Descriptors. The adoption of this approach was rendered even more important by the fact that it was decided to introduce a further and most important innovation for the TUNING project, namely the writing of statements of learning outcomes for EQF levels 3 and 4 which concern that learning which, normally, most immediately precedes students' entry into higher and/or further education.

In order to facilitate the task of writing sectoral learning outcomes for EQF levels 3 and 4, it was understood that fifteen countries participating in this project would produce a report on their respective educational systems. At least one person from each participating country was invited to produce the national report.

These reports were designed to summarise the information given in the surveys of national systems published under the auspices of EURYDICE. Hence most of them would give an outline of primary education before moving on, in more detail, to secondary education.

These reports would, however, concentrate on several key features of these national systems. They would:-

- look at the way in which reform of the entire educational system is proceeding and, particularly, at the way in which that reform is shaped by the development of the EQF and of its associated credit system, the ECVET. It was understood that this would be closely associated with the new or revised National Qualification Systems (NQFs), which all nations subscribing to the EQF have agreed to produce.
- pay close attention to the teaching/learning of the social sciences in each of the fifteen countries. In practice, more than fifteen educational systems are reported here since Belgium and the UK each have more than one educational system operating within their borders.

- highlight the relationship between formal education, on the one hand and non-formal and informal learning, on the other hand.

The combined effect of these key features would be to make it easier to see how the transition from secondary (or secondary equivalent) education to higher education could be made much more seamless than in the past.

The fifteen national reports are to be found in Annex 1 to this report.

It should be noted that these national reports vary considerably in the degree of detail that their individual authors were able (or felt able) to provide. Some reports give much wider coverage than others. Not surprisingly, those colleagues reporting on countries where work in producing a totally new or revised NQF is more advanced were able to produce much more detailed reports than others were able to do.

Despite the differences between these reports and despite the fact that they do not cover the whole of the European Union, it is more than worthwhile here to underline some general points of close comparison (and some contrasts) which emerge from them. Although these general conclusions are primarily intended to be of help to those in the social sciences sector, it is also hoped that they may help in the work of other sectoral projects as they come on stream.

2. THE GENERAL STRUCTURE OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION.

It is most noticeable that, despite the very varied national histories, which have shaped the systems of primary and secondary education across member states of the European Union and the European Economic Area, the educational systems from country to country are, in their basic structures, remarkably similar. Most have a pattern of fundamentally (but not always exclusively) state-controlled education, which is divided into the Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary sectors, with Primary starting at around age 5/6 and Secondary at age 11. General compulsory secondary education ends mainly at age 16, although secondary education may continue until age 18. There are, of course, some exceptions to these age divides. Primary education in UK (Scotland) ends at age 12. In Austria, compulsory secondary education ends at age 15. Some countries, and France is the outstanding example, have a far more developed pre-Primary sector than others.

Great similarities are most notable across the various secondary sectors. Most countries have a formal division between lower secondary and upper secondary sectors. The upper sector, generally commencing around age 16, tends to be divided into two branches, the 'academic' on the one hand, and the vocational/professional/technical, on the other hand. Again there are clear exceptions, as in the Netherlands where the triple divide into VWO, HAVO and VMBO sectors concerns all from age 12 to age 17/18.

The secondary sector, taken together with the further/adult/continuing education sector, is complex enough to have produced what is often viewed by the writers of the national reports as qualifications 'frameworks' which have been and in many

cases remain diffuse, difficult to understand and work with for students, education providers and employers alike. These systems are, therefore, understood to be in great need of reorganisation and simplification in order to achieve real transparency. Most of these national reports indicate, as would be expected, that work on a new or seriously revised NQF is in progress. As yet, few countries have completed their (new) NQF. Moreover, there are great differences of degree of advancement among countries which are preparing such a framework for the first time or who are reshaping an already existing one. Those in the latter category often find it difficult to cast off old modes of thinking and to adapt to the new student-centred approach to the learning process. This is vital, however, as an integral part of this work lies, of course, in discovering how each of these national frameworks can be understood in terms of the EQF. As will be seen later in this report, this is not necessarily an easy task and it seems that different countries may be relating the EQF to their own systems in rather different ways, at least for the moment. Much international co-operation will be required in order to ensure that serious anomalies do not appear across national borders⁹.

3. REFORM, NQFs AND THE EQF.

Those national reports in which the authors were able to discuss, in some detail, the way in which reform is proceeding and the way in which this is associated with their NQF and with the EQF are as follows:- Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic (however briefly in this case), Finland, France, Slovenia, Spain, The Netherlands and the UK. All of these reported on the degree of relative advancement towards producing an NQF or, where one already exists, a seriously revised one. For several, they were only able to make suggestions about how their qualifications structures might equate with EQF levels, either because the NQF is still not completed or, if completed, has not yet been formally set against the EQF. Some tables suggesting equivalence of levels in an NQF with those of the EQF started with equivalence at EQF level 1, whereas others confined themselves to covering only levels 3 and upwards. Some stopped at level 6 since non-HE education ends at that equivalent level. Most reports identified EQF levels 1 and 2 with learning normally achieved in Primary education. Spain stood out, in this respect as an exception in that EQF levels 1 and 2 were seen in the suggested equivalences as relating, in the first instance, to Diplomas and Certificates of Professional Standard or Workplace training and, in the second instance, to Compulsory Secondary education, whereas level 3 is related to non-compulsory secondary education.

Only serious discussion with and between those making such proposals for the equivalence between national and EQF levels could sort out whether these differences are more apparent than real. The differences, however, do look real and, in themselves, they underline the difficulty which will be felt in most countries between relating the EQF which is defined by levels of learning, with NQFs which are essentially concerned with hierarchies of qualifications which have long been in place and which may be most diffuse. Of course, the two approaches are closely related but the relationship may be often a very subtle one and not that easy to establish with

⁹ For some of the practical issues involved, see the published Self-Certification Reports at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/qf/national.asp#B>

a reasonable degree of certainty. It may be, indeed, that those countries, which confidently relate their hierarchies of qualifications to the EQF, may need to return to the question in greater depth at a later date. It is very noticeable, that only one country to date, the UK, has manifestly tried to tackle at one and the same time both the issue of a hierarchy of learning and a hierarchy of qualifications. This shows in the acceptance of 8 levels of learning and a hierarchy of three categories of qualifications, Awards, Certificates and Diplomas. These different categories of qualifications are differentiated not by level (they may all be achieved at any of the 8 EQF levels of learning) but by the accepted (minimum) number of credits which must be accumulated in order to satisfy the requirements for each of them. This is achieved because the UK is one of the few countries in which a credit system has been set up to accompany the new qualifications framework. Only The Netherlands seems to have proceeded in a similar manner but here, the process has, for the moment, got no further than an attempt to relate qualifications to ECTS credits – curiously ECVET credits have not yet entered the equation. This seems to put the UK ahead of most others, but it will be noticed that it has adopted a credit system which, like the various HE credit systems in operation across the UK, is based on 1 credit being equivalent to 10 hours of student workload. This puts it in conflict (at least in arithmetical terms) with ECTS which works on the basis of 25-30 hours of workload for each credit. Assuming parity between the ECTS and the ECVET (a putative parity discussed below in the section concerning Outcome 3), this means it will also be in discord with ECVET. The reasons why the UK persists in retaining, both for VET and for HE, a credit arithmetic, which puts it out of step with European developments, remain a mystery to others. Clearly, ECTS has been viewed by UK HEIs with suspicion and it may be that ECVET will be treated with the same disdain. Finland is the only country that indicates in its report that ECVET credits are already being applied to some of its programmes in the upper secondary sector. What is being done in Finland and, for all its idiosyncrasies, the UK raises questions about how and when other countries will turn their NQFs into full National Credit and Qualification Frameworks by using ECVET credits for non-HE education and how they will relate ECVET credits to ECTS credits. This last question is taken up, in considerable detail, in the report on Outcome 3 (and in Annex 2) below.

In terms of relating secondary/further education to the EQF (and presumably its associated credit system), only The Netherlands has reported on the way in which a whole series of problems in using the EQF as the normal and accepted point of reference are being confronted. This openness in laying out the very obvious problems which have to be confronted and overcome in respect of all the stakeholders is extremely refreshing.

4. THE PLACE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN SCHOOL LEARNING.

The degree of information provided on the place of social science in school learning was very varied across these reports. Some reports offered virtually no information. Some had little to say because they reflected the fact that Social Sciences occupy only a very limited space in the national curriculum, as, for example, in Slovenia where they occupy only 9% of the compulsory curriculum. Some countries (for example the UK and Finland) reported the various subject areas within the social sciences, which are commonly, if not universally, studied in secondary (and maybe also primary) education. Some, for example Spain, underlined that different branches

of the baccalaureate had to be followed if students wished to concentrate on this or that particular social science or set of social sciences. Yet others went into considerable detail on the teaching of the social sciences. Bulgaria and the Netherlands were notable in this respect. In the first case, learning outcomes expected of those completing compulsory education were laid out in classic EQF terms of knowledge, skills and competence. Although less directly related to the EQF, impressive lists of what is expected of both primary and secondary students in terms of learning about Man and Society are laid out in the report of The Netherlands.

5. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING.

This subject was undoubtedly the most difficult to report on and few contributors did so formally, preferring instead to enter into discussions with the rapporteur to this project who agreed, on this basis, to produce a brief summary of the current state of play. The difficulty experienced by the national representatives is not surprising. A truly clear situation in any nation requires the coming together of a number of features linking formal to non-formal and, above all, informal learning. These are, first, a developed national qualifications framework, legislation concerning the right of citizens to have prior learning recognised and, finally, mechanisms for enabling citizens to exercise their rights. Among the fifteen nations reporting on their educational systems, only France at the moment has all three. In effect, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is particularly well developed in France. This results in large part from the fact that legislation on the matter defines the whole area very closely. It gives everybody who has a minimum of three years of experience in a field related to the qualification in which they seek to make application, the right to apply.

Under the latest legislation (2004), the following are outstanding characteristics of the system known as the 'Validation des acquis de l'expérience' (VAE):-

1. Everybody has an entitlement to initial advice and guidance on how to gain recognition.
2. There is a clear legal right to claim recognition even for a whole Qualification.
3. There is a right to expect the Decision on the claim will not only explain the result but will clearly indicate, in the event of a non-successful application, the work which may be required to achieve a successful outcome in the future.
4. A Qualification gained wholly or partly by VAE has equal status and currency to the Qualification gained by formal learning. This equates closely to the model given in the European guides on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in which Route 1 (formal learning) and Route 2 (non-formal and informal learning) have the same outcomes.

Strong advice is given to would-be candidates on their entitlement and the precise route they should follow. This is easily obtainable via the Internet. There are different websites since the route to be followed by individual candidates may and often does vary according to the particular qualification which they seek either in part or in toto.

This is largely explained by the fact that qualifications/diplomas/certificates, according to particular types, come under the control of a number of different ministries (Work, Agriculture, Culture, Education etc) and candidature for university qualifications comes under the control of the universities themselves. What follows is, therefore, one illustration of a general nature.

The following may be found on the website 'www.vae.gouv.fr' entitled 'Le portail de la Validation des Acquis de l'expérience.' This lays out the steps to follow in making application. These steps are summarised as follows:-

Information, advice and guidance

Getting the application form for validating the initial claim

Putting together the correct dossier for validating the claim

Drawing up the dossier for presenting Prior Learning Outcomes (PLO) and the possibility of being mentored in this activity

Decision by the Jury

Following up the candidate subsequent to the decision by the Jury.

The website goes on to give many further details for candidates under each of the above headings. For those without access to the Internet, there is a plethora of printed material available, all of which is extremely easy to follow.

Given that the precise steps to be taken vary when universities are involved, the website directs potential candidates to a heading on the 'specifics of higher education.'

Training courses are available for those who seek to accompany and/or assess candidates for VAE, many of them by the Association nationale pour la formation professionnelle des adultes (AFPA) and, more recently in certain universities¹⁰.

It is obvious that the existence of a national qualifications framework in France (the RNCP of which the current version dates basically from 1969) has facilitated much of this construction. It should, however, be noted that the present framework, which is very much defined in terms of teaching input, is due (by 2012) for a very thorough revision in terms of the learner-centred approach of the EQF and the introduction of ECVET. How far this will result in major changes to the present framework is hard to predict. There are clear problems, since the current framework is closely associated with salary levels, a fact which has caused some distortions, as highlighted in the Besson report cited below¹¹. It is certain that this linkage will not cease in the new framework (and it is predicted that the French NQF will not take account of EQF levels 1-3 which bear no direct relation to employment structures) but existing anomalies may be dealt with. On the other hand, it is unclear how far this learner

¹⁰ There is however a distinct lack of EQF-compatible approaches to the Certification of practitioners' knowledge, skills and competence for RPL. Currently, a Unit of Learning and Assessment "The Principles and Practice of RPL" has been accepted into the Qualification and Credit Framework [QCF] at Level 5. This is available at http://www.rplo.eu/files/RPL_level_5_proposal_outcomes.pdf Implementations of this approach are under development with an HEI context at Levels 6 and 7 and will be available in September 2010.

¹¹ See note 12 below.

centred approach will affect the way in which VAE candidates are assessed. Some observers, especially of juries operating in higher education, have expressed concerns about the lack of clear statements of learning outcomes to guide jury members in their work. This, no doubt, reflects the slowness with which French universities in general have moved to integrate statements of learning outcomes into their programme/course unit descriptors. Indeed, the common perception is that there is a great deal of indifference, even strong resistance, to the formulation of statements of learning outcomes in the universities. This would tend to explain why, at least on the basis of anecdotal evidence, the VAE system works appears to work more efficiently in the area of VET than in more strictly 'academic' areas. Even so, it remains to be seen in what ways the introduction of ECVET will impact upon the current system. VAE, as currently structured, has been subjected to heavy internal criticism for being cumbersome and overly complex (with so many different ministries being involved all operating variants of the VAE system) and, thus, detrimental to encouraging far more candidates to present themselves for recognition. This criticism is made in the Eric Besson report entitled *Valoriser l'acquis de l'expérience* (September 2008)¹². Amongst other comments, the report emphasises how vital it is to bring the French NQF into line with the EQF in order to render the whole structure of qualifications (of which over 15000 currently exist in France) more legible and comprehensible to candidates.

Whatever qualifying remarks may be made on the French VAE system it is frequently serving as a reference point for other countries.

Despite lacking one or more of the above features, other Member States and, where appropriate, regions, are developing a proactive response to the development of RPLO. Being less formal, juridically speaking, they are far less susceptible of brief description than is the case for France. Many naturally see developing RPLO as something to be constructed at the same time as, or, indeed, after, the completion of their NQFs and their referencing to both the EQF and ECVET. Spain, for example, is in the process of overhauling its entire VET system. All countries are, of course, helped in this task of introducing effective RPLO by the existence of the European Guidelines on this question and by various other publications of CEDEFOP. In developing their NQFs in the wider European context, several countries are involved in projects to transfer-in and adapt French technology to local conditions. Two rapid examples of the way in which RPLO has been integrated into systems may be cited for Scotland and for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For Scotland, see the documents related to RPL.¹³ For England, Wales and Northern Ireland, see *Claiming Credit. Guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework*¹⁴. These two cases have been chosen as illustrations because the

¹² See <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/08000590>

¹³ SCQF Handbook (updated December 2009); Social Services Sector RPL Toolkit and evaluation (2008). This report is available at http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Information_Resources/Bookshop/publication_details.asp?pub_id=494

¹⁴ The National Report for England and Northern Ireland explains "the qualifications systems in UK are inherently suitable for the validation of achievements in non-formal or informal learning. In addition, each framework has published policies and procedures and support materials for users in relation to the recognition of prior learning." (Page 14). For version 2, see http://www.qcda.gov.uk/images/tes-assets/Claiming_Credit_QCDA104726.pdf.

development of RPLO has been considerably clarified by the completion of the process of relating the respective national frameworks to the EQF (See Report Referencing the Qualifications Frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European Qualifications Framework¹⁵). Developments in RPLO across Europe as a whole may be followed at the European Observatory of Validation of Non Formal and Informal Learning¹⁶.

The next few years should see major and rapid developments as the process of elaborating or reworking other nations NQFs is associated both with relating these frameworks to the EQF and doing so in such a way as to be beneficial to making a reality of RPLO. On the simplicity and clarity of the structures and the way in which the systems are operated will depend the growth of numbers of citizens who are truly able to avail themselves of the opportunity to benefit from RPLO. With these provisos, it is obvious that this development will, undoubtedly, have a significant impact on learning and the acquisition of qualifications in the Social Sciences.

6. CONCLUSION

The information contained in these reports has proved vital in facilitating the work associated with several of the other outcomes of this project. Its usefulness extends, however, beyond the sector of the social sciences and it will no doubt be most helpful to the other sectoral projects as they come on stream.

Above all, these reports raise vital questions about the way in which the EQF and its associated CATS, ECVET will be introduced and will function. It is clear that if all the features associated with the QF EHEA, its preferred CAT system, ECTS, and international agreement on the basic features of quality control have not proved simple to introduce, all the same categories of problems will have to be resolved for the EQF and for its credit system, the ECVET. As stated above, a whole range of these questions/problems is raised in the national report of the Netherlands. Given that these questions and problems concern the whole range of learning, in whatever, sector in the EU, it is worthwhile citing the relevant passages here.

In introducing the general question of the relationship of the EQF to the reform process in the Netherlands, it is stated that:-

Agreement:

- » The importance of EQF is widely shared
- » EQF is seen as a solid system
- » The way of referencing qualifications is still unclear

Discussion:

¹⁵ Criterion 3 in each National Report covers: "The national framework or qualifications system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems." This Report is available at <http://www.scqf.org.uk/News/LatestNews/NewPublicationUKQualificationsFrameworksEQFReferencingReport.aspx>

¹⁶ See <http://www.observal.org/observal>

- » Referencing secondary education, overlapping VET levels
- » How to avoid (discussion about) system change
- » What about level 1 qualifications
- » The position of informal/non-formal education
- » National coordination

Remarkable:

- » Knowledge gap concerning EQF/NQF
- » Initiatives, but not much intersectoral co-operation (Ministry of Education).

A wide range of Dutch stakeholders have been involved in a European-wide consultation process and some of their major recommendations are cited as follows:-

The greatest challenge in the short term is recognition or rather understanding, and support of the EQF by business and industry at national and European level. It has been proposed to do this by:

- fine tuning the descriptors for the eight reference levels based on their relevance for the labour market;
- asking countries to integrate professional requirements and the EQF principles into their national qualifications;
- asking the various sectors at European level to apply the EQF principles into their sectoral qualifications.
- To try to avoid bureaucracy upon implementation, keeping the instrument simple by not adding too many supporting tables.
- One condition for effective implementation is to attune related developments at European level to each other and integrate them, for example, grafting with the Europass, the Diploma supplement and the European framework on key competencies.
- Instruments like the Europass/ the Diploma supplement and an integrated system for credit transfer in higher and vocational education, should be linked to the EQF.

It is obvious that the concerns and the proposed solutions expressed above are shared by many other nations and their stakeholders. The concern about the development of an integrated credit system, or at least of two completely compatible systems, is discussed in the report on Outcome 3 below.

In general, it is expected that these reports will make a further contribution to the ongoing discussions on the way in which the EQF and ECVET will be put in place and the way the two European frameworks and credit systems will function side by side.

OUTCOME 3. A SURVEY OF THE LINK BETWEEN ECTS AND ECVET AS CREDIT ACCUMULATION AND TRANSFER SYSTEMS AND PROPOSALS FOR THE TRANSLATION OF ECVET INTO ECTS CREDITS (AND VICE VERSA) FOR EQF LEVELS 3-8.

The way in which the Social Sciences in HEIs, engage, in the coming years, with one particular aspect of the EQF, namely that of its associated credit accumulation and transfer system (CATS), the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), a system, which is due to become fully operational in 2012, is of very great importance.

Many subject areas in the Social Science sector are vocationally oriented. So, they will shortly be facing a situation in which they will be obliged to deal efficiently and equitably with students, who attempt to move back and forth between the 'further' and higher education sectors, and who will wish to convert ECVET into ECTS credits and vice versa. The need to establish procedures in order to translate credits will be a particularly pressing task in those institutions across Europe which offer both FE and HE qualification programmes and who will be using both credit systems.

In addition, they, like subjects areas in other sectors in HEIs, will have to deal with would-be students who wish to enter HEIs but who have not pursued the more conventional qualification routes towards entry to one or other of the Bologna cycles. Such people will wish to use other qualifications, with their associated ECVET credits as a means to gain entry to HEI programmes. In addition, there will be those who seek recognition for prior learning outcomes acquired through non-formal or informal paths and for which they have gained ECVET credits. Some countries in Europe already possess very well developed legislation and/or practical mechanisms for dealing with the recognition of such learning, recognition which facilitates credit entry to, or credit exemption within, HEIs. Unfortunately, many others do not yet have clear frameworks and mechanisms and the European-wide development of the Recognition of Prior Learning Outcomes (RPLO) is accepted as a fundamental and pressing need.

Given that HEIs will have to decide soon how they are going to approach this new credit system in such a way as to facilitate the conversion of ECVET into ECTS credits in an equitable manner, it was decided early on in this project to request the project rapporteur to produce a background paper comparing ECTS and ECVET as two distinct credit accumulation and transfer systems (CATS) in both basic conception and in practical day-to-day functioning. Assuming fundamental agreement within this working group on the conclusions of this paper, it would be easier to identify the probable major problems and, consequently, to suggest ways in which ECVET and ECTS credits could be readily compared, understood and translated one into the other. This paper was produced for July 2009 and was, in effect, accepted as the basis of discussions in the third project general meeting in Brussels in December 2009. What follows, therefore, is, first, a résumé of the rapporteur's paper and this is followed by the necessarily tentative conclusions reached at the December meeting.

1. THE RESUME OF THE PAPER ON ECVET AND ECTS

The rapporteur's paper (constantly updated in the light of new publications since July 2009 and until the closing date of this project) which presents, successively, the main characteristics of ECTS and of ECVET, with, in the second case, a list of the problems, both conceptual and practical, which ECVET presents or is likely to present as it comes on stream, is included in Annex 2 to this report. So, no more than a rapid résumé need be presented here of its main conclusions which have a fundamental bearing on the question of how credits may be understood and translated from the one CAT system to the other. These include the following:-

1.1 Differences in the conceptual frameworks as between the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF Level Descriptors. The first obvious potential cause of difficulty lies in the fact that the ECVET, as part of the EQF, operates on a different set of categories (three in number) of generic learning outcomes from that of the Dublin Descriptors (five in number), adopted by the QF EHEA, descriptors with which HEIs have become used to operating during the last decade. HEIs will, therefore, be obliged to undertake a great deal of work to ensure that their professional profiles, their programme, level and course unit descriptors, as drawn up with the Dublin Descriptors as their guide, are also commensurate with the EQF descriptors at the levels appropriate to the various Bologna cycles, that is levels 5 to 8. In some ways, this task should not prove overly difficult: although segmented on the basis of rather different categorisations of learning outcomes, the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF level descriptors are basically in accord one with the other (see Outcome 1 above). Nevertheless, it is clear that there are challenges to be met. The Social Sciences group in this project decided that, for sectoral purposes, it would draw up descriptors for each level of the Bologna cycles in terms of the tripartite division of learning outcomes in the EQF, that is knowledge, skills and competence. They found this task initially very challenging indeed, as has been seen above in the report on Outcome 1.

1.2. Student workload and problems over the definition of the credit year in the ECVET. Apart from defining credit in terms of frameworks of learning outcomes, both ECTS and ECVET try to define credit in terms of relative student workload as a basis for calculating specific numbers of credits. Although both systems operate on the basis of 60 credits per year, there is a real difficulty in establishing whether this apparent arithmetical parity means true parity in all cases between the two systems.

In large part, this difficulty stems from the fact that it is still necessary for those who have designed the ECVET to define carefully, as has been done for the ECTS, the average length of the 'standard' learning year and to indicate, where learning years are not standard (years which are much longer or much shorter than the perceived norm), how many credits should be awarded in total for such 'years'. This is by no means a hypothetical question. ECTS has had to be adapted in order to deal with academic years involving a significant degree of deviation from the agreed 'standard' 38-40 week year and from the associated calculation that this standard year implies an overall student workload of somewhere between 1500 and 1800 hours (i.e. 25-30 hours of work for each ECTS credit). Significant tensions have been experienced between those who feel that the same number of credits can only be awarded when there is very close adherence to these figures (and some would like to see the figures cited above defined more narrowly) and others who have had a somewhat

more relaxed attitude to the measurement of student workload¹⁷. Nevertheless, all agree that deviations from the norms cannot be too great, otherwise the credits concerned, however well defined in terms of learning outcomes, seriously risk losing their credibility.

This need to define the teaching/learning year in relation to ECTS has been most obvious in dealing with second-cycle Masters programmes which have a great variety in length in virtually all countries within the EHEA. As a result of clear proposals put forward in the ECTS Users Guide, programmes consisting of 60 credits (one academic year of two semesters consisting in all of 38-40 weeks), 75 credits (one academic year plus the length of the ensuing summer 'vacation'), 90 credits (three semesters) and 120 credits (two years or four semesters) are now very commonly found, even if these recommendations are not universally accepted. In addition, questions have arisen within ECTS over short course units, especially where these are of a fast-track nature. Without a resolution of the knotty problems which are inevitably going to arise around this question of the standard length of the learning year, in terms of both weeks and of total hours of student work (resolved for ECTS by resorting to the extensive use of student questionnaires), and of the many variants from this standard, it is difficult to see how ECTS and ECVET credits may be translated, with total confidence, from one to the other on a strictly 1 to 1 basis. And where they cannot be so exchanged, on what basis should they be translated according to particular cases? The EQF/ECVET will cover a much wider range of learning situations and environments than does ECTS, so a great deal of work will have to be carried out here in order to clarify the situation not only for users of ECVET but also for those who will be asked to translate ECVET credits into ECTS credits. It is to be hoped that institutions (and indeed sectors and subject areas within HEIs) will compare their approach in such a way as to achieve consistency of practice.

1.3. Questions concerning the closeness of the link between credit and relative student workload in the ECVET. Whilst the ECTS has from the beginning operated on the basis of credit allocation by reference to relative student workload (for which very careful definitions have been given in the ECTS Users Guide), there are some fundamental questions arising out of the documents introducing future users to the EQF and ECVET concerning the firmness of the link in ECVET between credit and relative student workload. Whilst relative student workload seems to be understood in the explanatory papers for the EQF and ECVET, dating from 2006 to 2008, as the normal method for calculating numbers of ECVET credits, there still remains some suggestion that these credits might, alternatively, be distributed according to the relative importance of the component units of a programme. If those who made this suggestion meant that it may reasonably be assumed that the more important units will always imply greater relative student workload without having to resort to precise calculations of hours of work, then they should have been specific on this point because there is the potential here for serious confusion. The word 'importance' may all too readily be understood in a qualitative rather than in quantitative sense. This is

¹⁷ The measurement of student workload is a far more complex issue than might at first sight appear to be the case. The need for further work on how to establish much clearer guidelines is discussed most usefully in the TUNING report on the *Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degrees in Business*.

especially true given the fact that, even within HEIs using the ECTS, there have been those, in the past, who would have wished credits to be allocated purely according to the relative importance of individual subject areas within the academic scheme of things, or, indeed, according to the perceived relative importance of individual teachers! Such siren voices have, fortunately, always been firmly rejected by the guardians of the ECTS and the making of subjective judgments on relative academic importance of subjects and/or teachers eschewed. On the other hand, it seems to many, who have long worked with ECTS, that there are those associated with the EQF who would place so much importance on the definition of credit by reference to learning outcomes that this could be to the detriment of relative student workload as a means to making the arithmetical calculations necessary for precise credit allocation. Although it is true that student workload represents the input and not the output of student learning, and although the calculation of student hours of work can legitimately be criticised for being more of an art than a science, it is clear, from the experience of HEIs with ECTS, that a great deal of mutual trust and confidence between institutions and countries does rest on there being, for apparently equivalent learning outcomes, a reasonably close parity of student workload, as measured in terms of hours, weeks, semesters, or 'years' of work and translated into precise numbers of ECTS credits. It is essential, therefore, to keep the input (learning time) and the output (learning outcomes) in close relationship. Of course, there are those who say that learning time is a concept not applicable to the field of informal learning and all that can be 'measured' are the learning outcomes. This is true but it is clearly recognised by experts in this field that the number of credits which are to be awarded as a result of the recognition of informal learning, can only be calculated on the basis of comparisons made with credits awarded for commensurate learning outcomes within formal learning programmes. So, it is clear from every direction that clarification on learning time is vital within ECVET because, as things stand, there is fertile ground for confusion and even for conflict here.

1.4. Questions concerning the relationship between the relative levels of learning associated with ECVET and ECTS credits. In addition to these very basic matters concerning the calculation of numbers of credits, there are a whole set of other questions which will undoubtedly arise concerning the relative levels of learning between the EQF and the QF EHEA. It will only be possible to compare credit levels with a high degree of confidence once all those nations participating in the EQF have defined their National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs). This is the case because the EQF is, of necessity, no more than a meta-framework. Unlike the Bologna process with its four cycles, the EQF, despite its name, defines only the levels of learning and not the level of qualifications. In this sense, the QF EHEA is more closely a true qualifications framework than the rather inaptly named EQF.

Unfortunately, few countries have, as yet, produced their NQFs. Moreover, some of those which have, must now revise their frameworks because they were produced before the EQF came into existence and they do not necessarily identify only eight levels of learning achievement or define learning outcomes in the same way as the EQF. Whilst the work of formulating or revising the NQFs is being completed, attempts to identify any given set of qualifications with the various levels of the EQF may only be regarded as a highly speculative business. Of course, the fact that levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the EQF have been equated respectively with the Bologna

short cycle and cycles 1 to 3 seemingly offers considerable help but, even here, problems arise in transferring in ECVET credits. Many HEIs identify *within* each of the Bologna cycles a number of progressive levels of achievement. They will have to decide, therefore, when transferring in ECVET credits to which level within a given cycle those ECVET credits should be equated. Over and above such questions, what is being discussed here is not just the transfer of ECVET credits between institutions across the various partner countries but also the mutual recognition, across institutional and national frontiers of qualifications which will be defined in terms of the various levels of learning of the EQF. It is expected that the EQF will very much ease the problems, which have long existed over the mutual recognition of qualifications but it remains to be seen whether institutions and countries will accept, as readily as believed, the way in which partner countries have related their qualifications to the EQF. There are more questions involved in such mutual recognition than relatively simple matters of generic learning levels, particularly where vocational and professional qualifications are involved. Further negotiations between states, along with their associated stakeholders, will undoubtedly be needed on matters of course content and the precise associated programme learning outcomes in order for full mutual trust and confidence to be established. This may be compared, for example, to all the work undertaken within the TUNING Project (and elsewhere), over a large number of subject areas, to establish common criteria for programme design and delivery for first and second cycle qualification programmes within HEIs. The EQF may well help substantially in this task but it can scarcely be expected to act as a magic wand.

1.5. Questions arising from the differences in the respective degree of development of ECTS and ECVET. In terms of understanding both the relative numerical value of ECVET and ECTS credits and the learning outcomes which those credits represent, it must be underlined that ECVET suffers, at the moment, from what appears to be an insufficient provision of those written instruments which are associated with ECTS, written instruments which are rightly seen as being absolutely essential components of that latter system and for its efficient functioning. This difference in degree of development reflects the fact that ECTS has now been in existence for 20 years whilst ECVET is still very new. Even so, ECTS offered HEIs a full package of written instruments from the very beginning of its pilot phase. In contrast, the promised ECVET Users Guide, with, hopefully, a full range of standard formats for its proposed written instruments, has still to appear. The most important of the ECTS written instruments is, without a doubt, the institutional Information Package and Course Catalogue. This means that, beyond attaching mere numbers of credits to their courses and course units, institutions providing learning programmes inform everybody about the content of and the learning outcomes associated with their programme and course units, the level at which they are being taught, and the manner in which they are taught and assessed. Credit transfer, particularly between institutions, which do not know each other well, is absolutely reliant on the quality of this information which goes far beyond anything which can be offered in a Transcript of Record. This is so, even if such transcripts (whether purely internal in format or produced on the ECTS model) are vital as a certified record of what a student has successfully completed and for which s/he has been awarded credits and grades. Even before mobility occurs under ECTS practices, students have a learning agreement, an agreement involving the institutions involved and the student him/herself. This has gone very far to eradicating disastrous mobility, which

went disastrously wrong for students, an occurrence which was, unfortunately, too frequent in the early days of the ERASMUS programme. In addition to these instruments of ECTS, all those who now graduate from HEIs in the EHEA must now be given, in addition to a diploma document, a full Diploma Supplement, automatically, free of charge and in a language widely used in Europe. For graduates, this document is crucial in allowing them to enter higher Bologna cycles or in gaining them employment, especially where they are changing countries. In very sharp contrast, the whole body of such written documents has not yet been properly developed for the EQF/ECVET nexus and that will surely make credit transfer between institutions using ECVET and, *a fortiori*, the translation of ECVET into ECTS credits more complicated than it should be, at least until such times as these lacunae are filled.

1.6. Problems of grade transfer in ECVET. Curiously, no reference of any kind has been made in any of the publications concerning ECVET, to the important matter of grade transfer. Yet, this has been perceived, from the earliest days of its pilot scheme, as a serious question in ECTS. Many institutions/countries regard the acquisition by students of superior grades as being as important, if not more so, than simply achieving passing grades in order to be awarded credits. Hence the importance, for all HEIs, of learning about the grading scales of other institutions/countries and how they are used in practice. So, ECTS has constantly tried to find satisfactory mechanisms by which grades awarded in individual HEIs will be comprehensible to other HEIs especially where grade transfer takes place across national boundaries. It is, of course, true that many VET courses may consist of units for which no more than passing grades are awarded to successful students but many others do offer additionally a range of superior grades. In such cases, it is vital that the various grading scales of institutions/countries using the ECVET be understood, especially as these are, undoubtedly, far more numerous, varied and even more incoherent to outsiders than those encountered in HEIs across the EHEA. If satisfactory information is not forthcoming, this will only serve to exacerbate the complications listed above.

1.7. Questions relating to the way in which passing grades are related to the award of credit in both ECTS and ECVET. Of course, where credits are awarded on the achievement of a simple passing grade, it may be argued that the reporting of grades is not particularly important. However, it will be important, as in ECTS, to know whether credits for individual course units are awarded solely on the grade awarded as a result of the assessment for that particular unit or whether credits may be awarded as a result of the achievement of a grade-point average over a number of associated course units. The practice of what is known in Euro-speak as 'condonement' or 'compensation' is not properly in accord with the theoretical basis on which CAT systems are constructed. The learner demonstrates through the assessment for each and every learning unit that s/he has achieved the learning outcomes of that particular unit, in other words, each unit is discrete. The award of credit demonstrates that the learner can perform a given set of tasks or, alternatively, is apt to proceed to learning at a higher level in the same or in a related subject area. The practice of condonement is, however, so widespread across the EHEA, that it cannot be stopped. In ECTS, HEIs are encouraged to indicate, at the very least, in their Information Packages and Course Catalogues, whether they practice condonement, and to indicate, on their Transcripts of Record, those units for which

students have received credits for particular course units in this way. This is an important issue since students may be awarded credits for learning units where they have not satisfactorily demonstrated that they have achieved the learning outcomes. So, HEIs, which do not practice 'condonement' may well refuse, for this very reason, to accept credits awarded in other HEIs in such a manner, since a given student may not in their eyes have demonstrated satisfactorily his/her fitness to pursue studies to a higher level or cycle in the given subject area or another closely related to it. This may prove to be an even more important question in the EQF which is more closely tied to vocational qualifications than has been generally the case in the EHEA.

1.7. ECVET and the basic question of the language(s) of communication. All the various questions and problems outlined above are likely to be further complicated by the fact that, to date, no decision appears to have been made on the basic question of the language(s) in which communication on learning units, programmes and qualifications, and on student requirements and performance will take place between institutions and countries. In the EHEA, English has dominated the practice of mobility with the ECTS, whilst Diploma Supplements must be produced in a widely used language, that is, one of German, French, Spanish or English. This greatly facilitates credit transfer and the mutual recognition of HEI qualifications. As things stand, it is difficult to see what chance of success a candidate will stand with an informal document, produced, say, in Lithuanian, outlining his VET achievements leading to ECVET credits which he wishes to translate into ECTS credits for acceptance in, for example, a Spanish university!

1.8. The piloting of ECVET by comparison with ECTS. Some confusion in the practice of ECVET is all the more likely that its piloting before it is formally launched in 2012 is quite clearly far less lengthy and rigorous than that which was carried out for the ECTS before it was accepted as the predominant CAT system used in HEIs for the whole of the EHEA. The recent survey by the EQF PRO Project, has curiously cast a great deal of doubt on the validity of ECTS by stating that not all countries use it as their primary CAT system and that, in others, credits are simply not allocated in accord with the principles laid down in the ECTS Users Guide. It points to the fact that, in many countries, there is as yet little if any understanding of learning outcomes as the basis of credit. In others, not only learning outcomes but even student workload is ignored in credit allocation. France is quoted as a prime example of credits being allocated purely according to one or other of teacher contact hours or, worse, teacher prestige. Horror stories of this kind are widespread in many countries. But most are of an apocryphal nature and, even where true, have been wildly exaggerated. Where they have occurred, they have done so, not because of flaws in the design of ECTS but despite the lengthy piloting of the system, despite the production of the constantly updated ECTS Users Guide and despite the careful monitoring of the introduction of ECTS through the system of ECTS counsellors. In that case, how much more likely are such cases to occur with ECVET for which no Users Guide exists as yet and no system of counselling has been instituted? The believe that, because the EQF and ECVET are based on a recognition of successive levels of learning defined through statements of learning outcomes, such problems will be avoided is curiously naïve. All credit systems have to face teething problems, which must be resolved in a coherent manner.

2. THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES SECTORAL GROUP ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECTS AND ECVET

It was with all the problems and questions outlined above in mind that this Social Sciences group approached the overriding matter of how ECVET credits would be accepted in HEIs in the coming years as qualifications to enter schools/departments/faculties of Social Science, and this for all of the three/four Bologna cycles.

First, it has to be accepted that many of the problems outlined above will only be fully resolved as a result of further clarification provided by those who have constructed the EQF/ECVET. In the meantime, great care and sensitivity will have to be displayed by those to whom the task of dealing with EQF/ECVET credits and qualifications is entrusted in HEIs.

Given the fact that ECVET remains, at this moment, an underdeveloped CATS in comparison with ECTS, it is most important to emphasise for all those who have to deal simultaneously with these two learning/qualification frameworks and with these two CATS, that they should understand that they are, for the time being, pioneers in a very new relationship and that they should proceed with the utmost caution. It should, indeed, be reiterated that the ECVET Users Guide, which was promised some considerable time ago, still has not yet made its appearance. Hopefully, when it appears it will address many the questions outlined here.

Whilst waiting for these problems to be resolved and for the production of those formal written instruments which will have to be developed, even if in a more varied way, perhaps, than for ECTS (we are dealing here with a greater number and variety of teaching/training institutions), the members of this group tentatively recommends that credit transfer and translation as between ECVET and ECTS should normally take place on a 1 to 1 basis. There will no doubt be occasions on which this may be clearly seen as inappropriate and institutions will need to proceed with care. When more guidance is available on ECVET, dealing with the less clear situations will, hopefully become much easier.

It is important to underline the necessary conclusion that credit transfer between ECVET and ECTS (and vice versa) will go far beyond questions of credits and grades but will be vitally concerned with establishing equivalence of programme levels and their associated learning outcomes, as is already the case with credit transfer operating purely within HEIs using ECTS. Much goodwill, common sense and sensitive handling, in order to deal equitably with students who are attempting not only to transfer credit but, more specifically, to have ECVET credits translated into ECTS credits (and maybe in the opposite direction), will be required from all those involved in the process. Particular care will, no doubt, be needed in the case of candidates presenting themselves to HEIs with ECVET credits at level 4. In some, probably most, cases, these will be treated as acceptable for credit entry to short or first cycle programmes, but there may well be occasions where the learning outcomes of EQF level 4 ECVET credits may be considered acceptable for some degree of credit exemption. Examples exist already in the EHEA of candidates being

granted, for instance, 60 ECTS credits towards a short cycle or first cycle programme. But these cases are not as yet extensive.

Above all, it will be necessary for those responsible in HEIs to eschew notions that vocational courses are somehow innately of lesser value than those of a more strictly 'academic' nature. They will need to resist any temptation to view this as a reason why ECVET credits may be considered automatically have a lesser value than ECTS credits. It would seem, from anecdotal evidence at least, that the mentality, which insists on the persistence of the old divide between 'intellectual/academic subjects', on the one hand, and the 'mechanical arts', on the other, is not yet on the point of disappearing. Changes in mentality do not, however, occur spontaneously and a great deal of staff development will have to be devoted to effect a shift of attitudes, a shift which, in some academic subject areas, will have to be of near-seismic proportions. Nor are the problems all on the one side. There is already emerging some evidence of a guerrilla conducted by certain proponents of the EQF/ECVET, on the grounds that this is a far superior package than the QF EHEA/ECTS because from the start it has been constructed on the basis of credit defined by learning outcomes. Attempts of this kind to annex border territory, as it were, are distinctly not conducive to constructive co-operation between the two frameworks.

OUTCOME 4. A REPORT INCLUDING PROPOSALS TO BRIDGE THE DUBLIN DESCRIPTORS AND THE LEVEL DESCRIPTORS FOR THE EQF LLL ENABLING THE DRAWING UP OF SECTORAL/SUBJECT AREA DESCRIPTORS COMMENSURATE WITH BOTH FRAMEWORKS.

The Dublin Descriptors and the EQF Level Descriptors both offer statements of generic learning outcomes, in the first case, for the four Bologna cycles and, in the second case, for the eight levels of learning of the EQF.

All the partners involved in this sectoral project were concerned with both sets of descriptors since they needed, as stated above, to produce a table of sectoral learning outcomes compatible with them both. There are, however, some differences between these two sets of descriptors which made it necessary to estimate their degree of compatibility. These differences may be set out as follows:-

1. The descriptors for these two frameworks are based on different classifications of generic learning outcomes.

1.1 The Dublin descriptors are based on an identification of five categories of learning outcomes as follows: -

- a. Knowledge and Skills**
- b. Applying knowledge and understanding**
- c. Making judgments**
- d. Communication skills**
- e. Learning Skills.**

No further definitions are offered for each of these categories.

1.2 The EQF level descriptors, on the other hand, are based on three categories of learning outcomes which are closely defined as follows: -

a 'knowledge' means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of study or work. In the EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual

b 'skills' means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the EQF, skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)

c 'competence' means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and/or personal development. In the EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

This leads to the various descriptors being rather different in content presentation and style but the question is whether they are compatible or not.

2. The two frameworks do not cover the same overall range of learning.

The QF EHEA deals purely with higher education whereas the EQF was constructed to cover ALL learning. As its full name states it was conceived as a system for Lifelong Learning. Levels 1 to 4 of the EQF were not formulated to have any overlap with the Bologna Cycles, although it will emerge below that there may be one partial exception to this general rule.

3. Overlap between the eight EQF levels and the four Bologna cycles occurs most obviously at EQF levels 5, 6, 7 and 8.

In the materials presented to the European Parliament in 2006, it is clearly stated that, whilst the EQF does not claim to be more than a meta-framework for qualifications (it is more a framework for levels of learning) and whilst it is the task of individual countries to construct or to revise their NQFs in the light of these eight levels of learning, there is, nevertheless, correlation between levels 5-8 and the four Bologna cycles. This results, presumably, from the fact that the Bologna cycles are the result of international agreement for the whole of the EHEA, thus transcending the pre-existing frameworks for higher education of individual member countries. The assertion of this coincidence between levels and cycles is, in many people's eyes, one, which needs to be thoroughly tested to establish whether it is truly valid. Some promoters of the EQF are not happy that learning frameworks and qualification frameworks should be seen as being so closely aligned. This attitude is very clearly reflected in the Final Report of the EQF PRO Project of January 2010. On the other side, there are members of HEIs who find the EQF statements of levels of learning far too imprecise to enable clear identification with the qualifications framework constituted by the Bologna cycles. Some belonging to this second category of doubters were to be found amongst the members of this group.

All three of these differences were confronted during this project.

1. In respect of the differences between the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF level descriptors, it was rapidly discovered that they are, in many ways, more apparent than real.

Although it is true that the EQF places somewhat more emphasis on what people are able to do, occupationally, once they have attained a given level of learning, whilst the Dublin Descriptors are more learning programme oriented, it would be a serious error to overemphasise this difference which is more one of degree than of kind. Both sets of categories have been developed with reference to Bloom's taxonomy. In commencing its work, this sectoral group was able to refer to pre-existing attempts to identify the obvious correlations between the learning outcomes of these two frameworks. This greatly facilitated the work of producing a table of sectoral learning outcomes for the Social Sciences which were clearly compatible with both frameworks. In the actual construction of this table (see Outcome 1 above), it was clear that the EQF tripartite framework of learning outcomes was to be preferred as the basic working tool to that of the Dublin Descriptors. This conclusion was from the outset rendered virtually inevitable by the fact that the table was to be designed to include generic learning outcomes for those who wished to enter upon studies in HEIs or in HEI equivalents. This meant equating these sets of learning outcomes to EQF levels 3 and 4, levels which the

QF EHEA does not cover. Consistency of approach demanded that EQF levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 be used for the remainder of the table. Moreover, these tables were being designed to take account not only of learning in HEIs but in institutions which are not HEIs and/or of learning which is either non-formal or informal, learning which, in both cases, is equivalent to that which is achieved in HEIs. Once again, the EQF was the more appropriate framework to use. It is, however, to be reiterated that the differences between the categories of learning outcomes as between the two frameworks caused no serious problems. However, the precise nature of the relationship between the QF EHEA and the EQF did raise some basic questions which could have placed the work of producing the table much more difficult.

2. The first area in which the precise coincidence between the EQF and the QF EHEA was questioned was in relation to EQF level 4.

At first sight, it would seem that if EQF level 5, alone, is to be correlated with the Bologna Short cycle. In this interpretation, EQF level 4 has no direct relationship with the Bologna cycles. And yet, the Bologna short cycle is generally deemed to require the accumulation of 120 ECTS credits, normally corresponding to two years or four semesters of formal learning. But there exist, in some parts of the EHEA, qualifications which consist of no more than 60 ECTS credits or their equivalent. Thus, in the UK, there are the Higher National Certificates and Certificates of Higher Education which are quite clearly situated at a level below the complete Short cycle. So, should these, and similar levels of learning be equated with EQF level 4 or should they simply be classified as part of Level 5? The question is of a greater general importance than may at first appear to be the case. The EQF very clearly states that its levels of learning are just that and should not be simplistically equated with a given year of learning. Since the EQF leaves it to individual nations to work out where ALL their qualifications should be situated in the their NQFs, this means that an answer to a general question of this kind may vary from one country to another. In any event, a clear answer will only emerge when the small number of NQFs already completed is substantially augmented. This group did not feel entitled to make any sweeping suggestions as to how this particular question could or should be resolved. This area of doubt did not, however, substantially affect the approach of those who drew up the sectoral table as they worked on the assumption that Level 4 was normally at a level prior to that of learning in HEIs, one which is concerned, among other things, as a qualifier to enter higher education.

3. The question of the correlation between EQF levels and Bologna cycles became far more contentious when the precise correlation between the EQF levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 and the four Bologna cycles was tested.

Doubts started at one particular point. Several members of the group suggested that, since the EQF is a framework for LLL, then its level 8 must relate at one and the same time not only to doctoral but also to post-doctoral learning achievements. But given that post-doctoral attainments are, normally, considerably above those at doctoral level, the EQF is deficient in housing both these categories within level 8. This gave rise to a rather heated discussion. In the end, it was pointed out that EQF level 8 does house both these levels of attainment, regardless of the concerns of certain members of this group. Moreover, this grouping has now passed into European law. It was underlined that the correlation between Bologna Cycle 2

and EQF level 7 could also be questioned on the grounds that second-cycle qualifications in HEIs vary immensely in length, number of credits and, therefore, degree of achievement. Yet, all Masters programmes are covered by one set of the Dublin Descriptors which have been drawn up for the second cycle, and these are also covered in the unitary EQF statement for level 7. That different EQF levels, including level 8, may (potentially) encapsulate a number of 'sub-levels' of achievement does not invalidate them. It is obvious that the same phenomenon occurs within each of the Bologna cycles where institutions often recognise and write descriptors for a number of progressive levels of achievement, with the overall programme descriptor laying out the level of achievement required of students at the end of the given cycle. In any event, the only way in which the drawing up of sectoral learning outcomes for the Social Sciences could proceed was on the basis of accepting the more or less strict and near-universal correlation between EQF levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 and the four Bologna Cycles. The debate is, however, worth reporting because it may well be repeated elsewhere. It certainly underlines the possible tensions which may result from bringing together frameworks of learning levels and qualifications frameworks, since the former are of necessity of a more fluid nature.

In general, the outcome of this project has been that working simultaneously with the both the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF level descriptors, has proved, despite the general points raised above, far less difficult than many may have feared at the outset. This certainly proved to be the case once the members of the group familiarised themselves more thoroughly with the general framework of the EQF and with its individual level descriptors.

That being the case, this group does not feel that it is necessary to try to produce some 'magic formula' with which to 'reconcile' two systems which vary far less one from the other, in both theoretical and practical terms, than may at first appear to be the case.

OUTCOME 5 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUBJECT AREA BASED WORKING GROUPS FOR THE MAIN ACADEMIC FIELDS WITHIN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES NOT YET COVERED IN THE TUNING PROJECT.

The successful production of a sectoral framework for the Social Sciences demanded that a number of subject areas in the Social Sciences be added to those already participating in the TUNING Project. Consequently, to Business Studies, Educational Sciences, European Studies, Occupational Therapy and Social Work, were added Law, Psychology and International Relations, thus giving eight subject areas in total. This overall total constituted a very wide, if by no means exhaustive, spectrum of the Social Sciences. In order to widen the field even further, it was agreed that the results of the sectoral project, especially the table of sectoral learning outcomes for EQF levels 3 to 8, will, after the completion of the project, be submitted to a number of other subject areas in the Social Sciences for comment and validation, with the possibility that they may be somewhat modified.

An important aspect of the work of each of these new subject areas was to produce lists of learning outcomes for each of Bologna cycles 1, 2 and 3. These new subject areas would, of course, benefit from participating in discussions with those who were working on the production of the table of sectoral learning outcomes. The work of producing subject area and sectoral descriptors proceeded in parallel to the advantage of all involved. A further major task for each of the new subject areas was to produce, if possible, within the timeframe of this project, Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes. They were to do this on the template of such reports already produced by and published for a substantial number of the subject areas already participating in the TUNING Project.

International Relations has only been able to report on the first task. The same is true of Law which has, to date, concentrated on producing an introductory section to a longer report. Given that three very different major legal traditions have developed across Europe, the French, the German and the British Common Law (in this respect Law resembles a number of other subject areas producing Brochures on Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degrees within the TUNING Project) the team has been concerned to identify the chief similarities between the three so that the eventual final report shall not be culture specific. This has necessitated much discussion. Consequently, even the proto list of the competences required by students and future practitioners of law are still at this stage no more than embryonic. By contrast, Psychology which benefits from the substantial previous work accomplished within the Euro-psy thematic network, has produced a full report for Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes. Its only shortfall by comparison with the previous TUNING subject area reports of this kind is that it has not yet been submitted for review by eminent peers on the subject area.

The reports from these three subject areas are included in the Annexes 3, 4 and 5 to this report.

From the perspective of this Social Sciences sectoral project, the most important aspect of these reports is the way in which they relate their lists of learning outcomes/competences to both the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF learning level

descriptors, as well as referring to the TUNING categorisation of generic learning outcomes. Obviously, they also had access to the sectoral level descriptors for the Social Sciences as these were developed during this project.

Not surprisingly, the most important of the reports is that from Psychology which includes, *inter alia*, a lengthy and very closely considered general discussion of Learning Outcomes and Competences (section 5). It looks at all the major ways of categorising them and discusses their merits and shortcomings in respect of the needs of studies and professional activity in the field of Psychology.

First, its discussion lacks the distinction made in TUNING methodology between Learning Outcomes, which are that which teachers expect students to know and to be able to demonstrate) and Competences which are that which students actually possess at the end of a period of learning (see pages 19-20). This is discussed without a concluding statement as to the validity/usefulness of this distinction. The distinction does seem to be used later in the report but, in practice, the lists produced seem more to distinguish between 'learning outcomes' as that which students acquire during their period of academic learning/training and 'competences' as that which students are competent to do/perform as professional psychologists. This is a well-known distinction but it does underline the difficulties that arise in the whole field of learning outcomes resulting from the different usages of the common vocabulary of the field.

It is quite clear that the second TUNING distinction between generic and subject specific learning outcomes or competences has had an important impact on the lists drawn up for each of the cycles/learning levels in Psychology.

It goes without saying that the rationale and content of the Dublin Descriptors can clearly be seen behind the three tables laying out the learning outcomes/competences for (post) graduate psychologists. And the same is true for the learning levels (6-8) of the EQF. These descriptors, therefore, perform the essential task of demonstrating the compatibility of these two sets of descriptors.

It should, however, be noted that none of these is considered fully satisfactory for the construction of statements of learning outcomes /competences for Psychology. By contrast with the tripartite division of learning outcomes for the EQF, knowledge, skills and competences, those working on this report for Psychology underline the importance of 'Attitudes' among the fundamental categories of learning outcomes. Without suitable and satisfactory attitudes, it is conclusively argued, no graduate psychologist will ever be a competent professional practitioner. This argument is developed by reference to this quadripartite division of learning outcomes/competence developed for Psychology in the work of R.A. Roe. 'Attitudes', as a category of learning outcomes, are usually seen in the context of a quadripartite division of learning outcomes into knowledge, aptitudes, attitudes and values but it appears that in this EUROPSY report values are subsumed into attitudes.

So, a wide array of different models categorising learning outcomes/competences have had an impact on the tables of learning outcomes/competence drawn up by this working group but, in the end, a model developed specifically for Psychology (even if on the basis of a well-known and pre-existing quadripartite categorisation of learning

outcomes) has proved to be the major one. This would seem to suggest that the tripartite division used in and by the EQF is not considered sufficiently oriented towards the professional profile of psychologists. This is a conclusion which may need serious consideration by those who have constructed the EQF with very particular reference to VET.

This conclusion should in no way be construed as a serious criticism of the EQF but it does indicate that there will need to be a lot of interaction between general QFs and sectoral and subject area QFs. This is a conclusion which echoes others arrived at in the course of this project. The SQF has been built on the basis of using the Dublin Descriptors and, particularly, the EQF level descriptors but the work has proved to be also a test for these general frameworks. It should be noted that a considerable number of project members have expressed concern over the way in which the term 'competence(s)' seems to have so many different meanings according to different theorists and according to the way the term is employed. And that merely concerns the use of the term in the English language. Certain project members have pointed out that the term 'competence(s)' (and its derivatives and other closely associated terms) are even less clear in meaning in certain other European languages. In fact, it is clear that the whole vocabulary of learning outcomes is far from being developed in quite a number of European languages. It is obvious that only the construction of such vocabularies and, further, of a comparative vocabulary across, at least, the most widely used European languages will prevent misunderstandings occurring.

4. Partnerships

The composition of the consortium followed from the Tuning Project and the related Thematic Networks and Associations. It has included subject areas that have completed considerable work regarding the implementation of the Bologna Process at European level: description of subject areas at European level respecting differences and identifying communalities. The selected participants in this sectoral qualification framework have an obvious interest in this project because its outcomes are in line with the work previously done and will answer to an obvious need. The project has been based on the Tuning methodology and the outcomes of the Tuning project at subject area level so far. These outcomes are in particular the cycle (level) descriptors and key features developed for the first, second and third cycle, the levels 6 to 8 in the EQF for LLL. In practice these are the Tuning templates which have been prepared by the nine Tuning subject areas and some eleven subject area based (thematic) networks.

The working groups have consisted of representatives of higher education institutions and of professional associations at subject area level. In the project two types of subject areas have been distinguished. First, there were those which had already developed Tuning cycle descriptors and reference points, results which have been validated at various stages of their development. Secondly, there were a number of subject areas in the Social Sciences sector for which this had not been done so far. The availability of descriptors and reference points at subject area level is - in the opinion of Tuning - a precondition for the sustainable development and functioning of sectoral, national and European qualification frameworks. The first type is represented by the subject areas **Business, European Studies, Education Sciences, Occupational Therapy and Social Work**. The second type of subject areas, for which it is thought absolutely necessary to prepare the required indicators, is represented by: **Law, Psychology and International Relations**.

All persons, institutions and organisations directly involved and responsible for running the project have long standing experience in trans-national higher education. Many have well established links with secondary education. All have played leading roles in either the Tuning Projects and/or in European Thematic Networks. These persons belong to the most active and experienced group of European and national experts. Many act as adviser for their sector, higher education institutions and national and European authorities. Given the fact that the Tuning approach is based on professional and academic profiles and takes into account employability of its graduates, the experts involved have obvious knowledge about the relationship between the labour market and educational and training programmes at higher education level.

The complete list of participants is to be found in Annex 6 to this report.

5. Plans for the Future

SQF for Social Sciences is seen as a service to all stakeholders, in particular the HEIs in Europe and beyond as well as individual academics and supporting staff and individual learners. It is expected that the SQF will facilitate the work of admission offices and officers as well of bodies working in the field of recognition of prior learning. It is expected that the SQF as a whole and its individual level descriptors will also be used for quality enhancement, assurance and recognition purposes.

In relation to exploitation of results beyond the project period, the project presents very positive perspectives:

The project contribution is expected by a number of groups who will be exploiting the results further:

- People responsible for preparing degrees at university and vocational level
The projects provides an initial agreed starting point from where to develop and grow as well as a platform with whom to discuss further developments
- People working in the transition from school to either vocational training or university entrance. This was found as a particularly relevant gap which needs a great deal of attention.
- Professional Bodies in this field. The work has already started by it promises to be of high relevance for the future of the field
- The citizen wanting to improve their professional outlook in relation to the competences that they have acquired and want to adapt it and have them recognised
- Other similar projects, such as Humart (Humanities and Arts) who has already analyse the outcomes and are using them as reference points. Ideally, the different sectors should be integrated and dealt with systematically and the work of Tuning-SQF for Social Sciences will contribute to this task

A number of tools have been already set in place so that the outcomes of the project can be known and used by other groups:

- The web of the project
(<http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=202&Itemid=227>) with a reference to other related webs such as the Tuning webs with close to four million visitors
- Publications which will follow the project will also be included into in a very well known series of publications which have dissemination at world level.
- A third tool for exploitation, improvement and development of results will be the different regional Tuning Projects. A new major project is expected for EU region and several others are at different stages of implementation between EU and other parts of the world:
 - Feasibility Study for Africa
 - Tuning Russia (recently approved)
 - Second Project for Tuning LA (presented and pending the last stage of evaluation)

- Tuning USA, having gone through the first phase and preparing for the next steps
- Tuning Australia, Canada and Japan already accepted and in preparation for development
- Another three regions who have shown a significant interest are China, Neighbouring Regions and India

In all these areas of regional cooperation the SQF for Social Sciences will be a great reference point to start new developments and to exploit what has already been achieved

Thirdly, the work achieved in this project is at the bases and will be developed further in the work of the new development: The Tuning Academy which will be inaugurated on the 27th of September 2010 in Bilbao, Spain. It is not a coincidence that the first sector to be developed will be the sector for Social Sciences. This will consist of four thematic units:

- one related to research on issues such as issues of language identified in this project and others in relation to skills development in specific disciplines (social sciences will be the first to be developed and the experts from the project will be part of the task forces)
- one related to training of trainers with activities in fields related to this project.
- one related to observatories and policies related to employment, counting on the Presence of the DG Employment
- one related to implementation and dissemination

Finally, but of critical importance the members take part in a number of very significant initiatives at European level and they will take the initial outcomes of the project to develop further. Such is the case with the development of NQS and also Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks, the very relevant initiative of New Skills for New jobs or Skills for Jobs (with important connections in the fields of Social Sciences), the work of Thematic Networks and Professional Associations and the continue work at the level of Country Authorities where a significant number of these experts are playing an important role.

6. Contribution to EU policies

In terms of constituting a significant contribution to EU policies, the following were laid down from the outset of the project:-

One of the major aims of the EU policies is the search for adequate reference points. This need was brought about by globalisation, the increase in mobility of the citizen and the desire to gain recognition of learning whatever form that learning may take. In this respect, the outcomes of the project are meant for higher education institutions and their academic and academic-related staff in Europe, as well as organisations which have a role in recognition of prior learning, quality assurance etc. They are expected to be useful, for schools offering secondary education and for organisations / institutions offering vocational education and training in the field of social sciences.

Policies facilitating recognition. The elaboration of sectoral frameworks as it is the case with this proposal is an important tool from the perspective of European wide mobility and employability. Beyond frameworks at subject area level, other reference points can help to locate learning, to identify it at sectoral level as well as at the level of regions and nations. The citizens of Europe are expected to be more and more mobile and are expecting that their competences (knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities) will be recognized in other settings and regions without difficulties and bureaucratic procedures. They will also expect that prior learning outcomes will be recognized in a fair way, to facilitate continuous learning, eventually leading to the awarding of formal qualifications (diploma's and degree certificates).

In particular the outcomes of the project are expected to be useful for **streamlining procedures and criteria in different countries and institutions.** A united EHEA requires common reference points, which are accepted and universally used by the organisations and persons involved. Mapping, identifying and analysing the present situation in Europe regarding entrance conditions, recognition procedures of prior learning outcomes and standardized learning pathways for the EQF levels 3 to 6 will offer greater insight into the existing situation in Europe today. Examples of good and best practice can serve as examples for other countries, institutions and organizations.

One of the prime aims is to see **how the cycle level descriptors of the EQF for LLL and the QF for the EHEA can be bridged at sectoral and subject area level.** This could well lead to suggestions either to combine the two or – if this proves not feasible – to fine tune the two and bring them more into line. In the Higher Education sector an obvious need is felt for doing so, because working with two sets of descriptors, which are based on slightly deviating philosophies of learning outcomes, complicates comparisons and the recognition of (prior) learning outcomes.

Enhancement of learning outcomes approach and search for quality. Furthermore, the achievement of a sectoral qualifications framework, as of national frameworks and the two EQF's will boost the use of the learning outcomes / competences approach. The perceived quality of degree programmes is determined at international level nowadays. This requires the establishment of universally

accepted international, or at least European, reference points, i.e. learning outcomes and competences. This pioneer project is, thus, expected to play a pioneering role in this area.

This SQF project has been developed in the expectation of making an important contribution to all the policy areas outlined above. The above report detailing the results in respect of the six Outcomes identified clearly demonstrate that the project has fulfilled its aims.

Outcome 1. When the proposal were made to create the EQF, great concern was expressed that this new framework and the existing QF EHEA should be fully compatible, not only in theoretical but also in practical terms. In producing validated descriptors of learning outcomes for the Social Sciences sector this project has made a major contribution to that end. These descriptors are compatible with both the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF level descriptors, as well as with TUNING methodology on learning outcomes/competences. They provide, therefore, a vital bridge between the two Qualifications frameworks developed for European educational systems. They specifically help in this process by extending the descriptors for the Social Sciences to EQF levels 3 and 4 in order to demonstrate the seamlessness of the progression towards learning in HEIs. This is considerably aided by the adoption for these descriptors of the EQFs tripartite categorisation of learning outcomes into knowledge, skills and competences in preference to the five-part division of learning outcomes adopted by the Dublin Descriptors. In addition, these descriptors in being compatible with both qualification frameworks will surely advance the cause of the attribution of credit entry and exemption through RPLO. These descriptors for the Social Sciences can also form the basis for parallel descriptors produced by other sectors within HEIs. This conclusion is not invalidated by the very legitimate concern expressed by a number of the members of this project who were uneasy about the lack of what they perceive to be uncertainties in the meaning of some of the terminology of learning outcomes, especially the term 'competence'.

Outcome 2. In producing descriptions, for each of the nations participating in this project, of secondary education, whether compulsory or non-compulsory, and, in some cases, even primary education, the project significantly adds to the first outcome in showing the way to greater seamlessness between these levels of education, including further education, and learning which takes place in HEIs. The projects desire to offer a significant contribution towards the recognition of prior learning outcomes, is somewhat and unavoidably constricted, on the other hand, by the fact that too few nations have, so far, completed their new NQFs and referenced them to the EQF LLL. This is, of course, absolutely central in promoting RPLO.

Outcome 3. Just as the compatibility of the two frameworks for European education, the QF EHEA and the EQF is of great importance, so is the compatibility of their respective credit accumulation and transfer systems, ECTS and ECVET. This project underlines the fact that, although it may be expected that ECTS and ECVET credits may be transferred (on equivalent levels/cycles) on a 1 to 1 basis, there remain many practical questions relating to the detailed organisation and functioning of ECVET which make this far from a certainty. Although others (especially CEDEFOP) have raised, in general terms, the question of the compatibility of the two CATS, this

project, to the best of our knowledge, offers the first practical survey of the likely practical problems relating to future compatibility. This being so, the project members make it perfectly clear that a large part of that contribution lies in raising important questions rather than in necessarily furnishing clear answers to those questions.

Outcome 4. This relates specifically to the way in which the project addressed the fundamental theoretical questions relating to the relationship between the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF level descriptors. The resolution of these questions was vital for the successful completion of the sectoral level descriptors for Outcome 1 above. This group does not (cannot) claim to give definitive answers to all the questions but does believe that its discussion of them is a significant practical contribution to the ongoing discussions on such questions.

Outcome 5. This outcome was vital for widening the number of subject areas involved in this SQF project. Moreover, the production by Psychology of its brochure on *Reference Point for Design and Delivery of Degrees in Psychology* offered the perfect occasion for a fundamental discussion of the way in which different ways of categorising learning outcomes/competences, especially those of the Dublin Descriptors and of the EQF, related to the more specific task of producing statements of cycle/level descriptors for a specific subject area. That which it has been possible to produce within the timeframe of this project by three subject areas may well serve as the basis of future discussions of this question by other sectoral and subject areas.

Outcome 6. The full expectations of this Outcome could not be met since it was believed that this project would proceed in tandem with other sectoral projects who could compare their sectoral descriptors one with another and draw general conclusions from this comparison. Nevertheless, the production of sectoral descriptors for the Social Sciences lays a vital basis for future comparisons with and by other sectors.

Taken overall, this project has not sought merely to demonstrate the compatibility of the two frameworks elaborated for European Education, the QF EHEA and the EQF LLL, but also to raise questions concerning the relationship between the two, questions which need further investigation. Questions have been raised about the degree of compatibility between EQF levels, 5-8 on the one hand, and the short and three cycles of the QF EHEA, on the other hand. How closely do they relate to each other? If the EQF is truly for lifelong learning, then how does one relate it to post-doctoral achievement, since EQF level 8 is normally equated to doctoral studies within HEIs? How does one relate to the EQF levels training which make take place subsequent to completion of HEI qualifications at QF EHEA cycles 1 and 2? Is there any question (some would consider it a danger) of the EQF level descriptors being considered a suitable replacement for the QF EHEA cycles and the Dublin Descriptors? The answers to such questions may appear obvious to those who designed the EQF but various members of this project displayed a sufficient numbers of worries about them to suggest that they need to be further investigated and resolved. Questions have also been raised about the degree to which the tripartite classification of learning outcomes adopted for the EQF is sufficient for practical use in drawing up descriptors of learning outcomes/competences for specific subject

areas, especially subject areas which have very direct links to professional activity. The raising of such questions constitutes a vital additional contribution by this project.

In conclusion, this project has been a pioneering one and it has successfully fulfilled its expected outcomes.

7. Annexes

