

General introduction to the Policy background of Training and Education Issues

European Policy

The Lisbon European Council (2000) in recognising that Europe faces challenges in adapting to globalisation and the shift to knowledge-based societies, set a new strategic goal for the EU: to become 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society capable of sustained economic growth'. To achieve this, Europe's education and training systems needed to be transformed and, where possible harmonised. However, responsibility for educational policy and reform remains with Member governments. In 2000, the structures of education systems still differed considerably, both within and between countries. However, the impetus from the Bologna Declaration (1999) calling for the establishment by 2010 of a coherent, compatible and competitive European Higher Education Area, has continued to gain momentum. and its ten action lines are steadily being implemented by 45 country signatories. These action lines are:

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles
3. Establishment of a system of credits
4. Promotion of mobility
5. Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance
6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education
7. Lifelong learning
8. Higher education institutions and students
9. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

The Vocational level has not been neglected: Education Ministers of 31 European countries adopted the Copenhagen Declaration on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training in November 2002. This declaration, which gives a mandate to develop concrete actions in the fields of transparency, recognition and quality in Vocational Education and Training (VET), has now been supported by the Maastricht (December 2004) and the Helsinki (December 2006) Declarations with priorities which include:

- Improving the attractiveness and quality of VET
- Development and implementation of common tools for VET
- Strengthening and implementation of common tools for VET
- Taking all stakeholders on board.

The Strategy for the Sustainable Development of European Aquaculture highlighted the requirement to adapt training programmes to aquaculture needs – a position that is exacerbated by the geographic dispersion of operating sites.

It is recognised also that training should be applied so as to recognise the role of women who are working in the sector and also to reinforce training efforts in the rural and coastal communities – so as to reverse the decline in these.

Competency Approach

The description of curricula in terms of knowledge, skills, competences and learning outcomes was recommended in ministerial statements at Bologna and Copenhagen Process conferences in Prague (2002), Copenhagen (2002), Berlin (2003), Maastricht (2004), Bergen (2005) and Helsinki (2006). The competency approach thus plays a significant role in the recognition of learning outcomes and credit transfer (ECVET), in the recognition of prior and non-formal learning in lifelong learning, and in the development of national and international qualification frameworks. A pilot project named WAVE (Working in Aquaculture- Validation of Experience, 2003-2006) has made significant steps in this area for farm-based competences in aquaculture.

EC Projects related to Aquaculture & Fisheries

The changes taking place within European Education are the most significant in the history of the EU. The pace at which the changes are trying to be implemented has put significant added pressure on education systems in all EC countries.

AquaTT as the European Education and Training network recognized these challenges and over the past five years along with training and industry partners has accessed EC funding in several important projects with the aim of helping the European Aquaculture sector adjust to the ongoing policy changes.

Summaries

The summaries (technical leaflets) relating to training and education include:

- ASEFAF
- AQUALABS
- AQUATNET
- WAVE