

The participation of Gabrovo Chamber of Commerce and Industry as a partner at the IT:BSE Project was a great challenge for us for two reasons:

- the transition to a “green economy” and the central objective of the ET-2020 Strategy - increase of the energy efficiency and reduction of CO₂ emissions - is of great importance for Bulgaria nowadays;
- Facility Management is an occupational field completely new for Bulgaria. There is a necessity of vocational training in this professional area meeting the requirements to the competences acquired. The project promotes the transferability of the acquired competences between the EU member states – an important fact for Bulgaria because of the increasing number of Bulgarians are currently living and working abroad.

Because of the new, specific terminology we had to clear the terms used to agree on a “common language” in order to facilitate our mutual understanding. Thus, a glossary was developed that was very useful for us because of the fact that this occupational field is quite new for Bulgaria and the terminology has to be defined more accurately.

The project’s intention to describe the qualifications needed for an occupation in the field of Building Service Engineering (BSE)/Facility Management in a competence-oriented way and to make them comparable across the borders of the different vocational systems in Europe demanded filling in questionnaires by companies and persons involved in this occupational field. These questionnaires have shown that most companies are not well grounded in BSE/Facility Management, they are not familiar enough with the legal requirements regarding rights and obligations of operating buildings, reduction of operating and running costs during the operation etc.

Although the Competence Matrix was developed in collaboration with all partners, some time was needed for its testing until it became a working tool. The internships realized during the project have proved that testing is necessary to make the Competence Matrix perfect.

The IT:BSE Project demonstrates the advantages of partnerships between representatives of institutions with different positions within the VET system from different countries. This partnership makes the project work more difficult (communication and language problems, different VET systems, different legislation), but the project outcomes and the delivered products are of great value, more precise and transferable between and within the particular countries.

Future perspectives and European added value

The Competence Matrix developed in the project includes several professional qualifications from different occupational fields that can be allocated to different EQF levels. In Bulgaria the matrix can be used for developing/updating of State Educational Requirements for professions from these occupational fields.

Some institutions have already appealed to the National Agency of VET for approval and legalizing of a new profession of Facility Manager. It is a profession of present interest for Bulgaria because of the following circumstances:

- A great number of the real property is intended for a seasonal use (mainly in the sea and mountain resorts);
- A great deal of the real property is purchased by foreigners and Bulgarian citizens as an investment and it is not used regularly by the owners.

But the occupational tasks, respectively the competences of the Facility Managers, are still not clearly defined in Bulgaria. Hence, the IT:BSE Competence Matrix can contribute to solving this problem.

The questionnaire – approved by the project partners and tested in their countries - can be offered to the institutions involved in VET as an instrument for competences identification of employees in the field of BSE.

The questionnaires, internship assessment documents etc. can be used as a base for the development of instruments for testing knowledge and skills, respectively for their validation both within the VET and higher education system.

The IT:BSE Competence Matrix can be applied for further development of competences acquired by previous education and training in the same occupational field.

The Matrix is also interesting because of the possibility to use it for validation of knowledge, skills and competences acquired by formal and non-formal learning. The validation process in Bulgaria has already been regulated by the new VET Act. Procedures and instructions have been developed but the main prerequisite is still missing – clearly defined learning outcomes for most professions. Besides, employees in the field of BSE and sales and

marketing of real estate cannot validate their competences because these professions are not included in the List of Professions for VET.

The defining of competences by the Matrix and their assessment should be considered as European added value. Without the support of experts from another EU state with experience in this area we will not be able to cope with this task.

The facilitating of work force mobility and recognition of professional qualifications in the countries of the project partners, the possibility for getting acquainted with their VET systems and achieving mutual trust between the project partners should also be considered as European added value.

The IT:BSE Competence Matrix can be transferred to other areas of civil engineering, i.e. design and construction.