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(VET) to support policymaking

BGFMA

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Introduction

This position paper is addressed to bodies and stakeholders that are active in the sector and/or participate in policy-making consultation (key sectoral players, national regulatory authorities for certification, NQF agencies, social partners, and qualifications awarding bodies). The purpose of the paper is to influence policy-making towards initiatives that aim to increase the quality, supply and accessibility of VET for facility managers, facilitate the establishment of a single European certification scheme for digital and green skills in the field, and bring closer the world of VET with the needs of the labour market strengthening the skills-employment linkage.

This paper provides policy-makers with suggestions and recommendations on:

- a) How to set forward a national skill development strategy to boost digital capacities.
- b) How to implement and support mechanisms that promote the quality, accessibility and relevance of VET.
- c) How to encourage enterprises, individuals and other stakeholders to invest in VET, for example, through awareness-raising campaigns about the benefits of investing in learning.

The paper will also briefly present the validation results, the statement of support, and the list of endorsers (signatories), to support the relevance of project outputs with occupational needs.

The need for a continuous renewal of the citizens' knowledge, skills and competence is crucial for the competitiveness and social cohesion of the EU and, in this respect, vocational education and vocational training have a key contribution to make. However, complexity and a lack of cooperation between different providers/authorities and between different national systems weaken its impact. These barriers hinder individual citizens from accessing education and training and from combining and



accumulating learning outcomes achieved in different learning contexts. They make it difficult for citizens to move within the European Vocational Education and Training (VET) area and the European labour market and to pursue genuine lifelong learning without borders. On other hand, lifelong learning is taking place increasingly in different countries and in a wide variety of contexts, formal, non-formal and informal.

One of the most important challenges to be faced is the diversity, even fragmentation of education, VET and qualifications systems in Europe. A large number of qualifications and of different competent institutions and actors may be involved. Their activities may include the definition of qualifications, methods for assessing and validating learning, setting training objectives, determining the content of learning outcomes, implementing training programs. A wide range of providers may also be involved: ministries, agencies, occupational sectors, companies, social partners, chambers, non-governmental organizations, and so forth. In some cases, a national authority may accredit or empower training providers or other actors to prepare and issue qualifications, points, etc. In other cases, these functions can be devolved to the regional level, or to the providers.

Countries have a national framework defining levels of qualifications or a classification for these levels. These frameworks may or may not be geared towards the organization of education or training cycles. Moreover, depending on the systems, qualifications may be obtained either after only one type of formal training program or following several kinds of learning processes.

Considering the diversity described above, common conventions and technical principles are required in order to ensure mutual trust and to enable the transfer and recognition of learning outcomes in the context of trans-national mobility.



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The DEFMA project

The DEFMA project has formed a Strategic Partnership to modernize and enrich the current vocational educational and training of the facilities management workforce in Europe. The specific objectives are to:

- Enhance labour market relevance of VET for facility managers to address digital and “green” needs, by designing an innovative and comprehensive training course in environmental technologies and sustainability issues.
- Introduce modern training delivery methods and innovative open access pedagogical resources, enabling learners to acquire and self-assess digital and environmental skills.
- Facilitate mutual recognition of the developed learning outcomes and establish a framework towards an EU “green” qualification for facilities managers.

Special emphasis are given to middle-aged and approaching retirement facility managers, who are less likely to take part in training than their younger colleagues. By creating an engaging methodology and exploiting project partners’ network, the project motivates older facility managers (45+), which constitute the majority (55%) of the facility management workforce, to pursue the necessary training in key energy efficiency technologies, fostering thus access of the aging workforce to Continuing VET.

Facility managers, apart from technical and management competencies, require a combination of digital and environmental skills to be able to maintain high-performance buildings capable of significantly reducing energy and water consumption. There is thus an increasing need to equip facility managers with the skills and capacities required to:

- a) Support carbon emission reduction measures.



- b) Monitor resources consumption.
- c) Use “smart” building controls and up-to-date environmental technology systems (e.g. building automation).
- d) Identify energy losses and water leaks, rectify small faults, and carry out simple maintenances. The project addresses this challenge by increasing the relevance and quality of VET provision for facility managers to match their competences and skills with environmental and sustainability needs of the built environment and promote employability and mobility within the sector.

Facility managers are responsible for a broad range of services including management & execution of maintenance activities, coordination of catering, security & daily administrative tasks, and advising on energy efficiency and environmental management. The introduction of energy efficiency measures (e.g. Green Agenda) designed to reduce resources consumption and greenhouse emissions, is shifting the wider building sector towards environmental technologies & services, bringing fundamental changes on workplace requirements. FM requires a workforce that has the ability to manage these innovative technologies to enhance maintenance management and increase energy efficiency, whilst communicating sustainability issues to the users of the building facilities.

The **DEFMA MOOC** is a comprehensive online course on environmental technologies and sustainable building services that allows learners to follow flexible learning pathways as regards the acquisition of digital and environmental skills relevant to modern facilities management.



The **DEFMA MOOC** consist of six learning units and namely:

Learning unit 1: Sustainability and Environmental Issues and their Impact on FM.

This learning unit introduces the learner to sustainability and environmental management and provides basic facts and principles that improve resource efficiency in or for buildings, covering different types of FM operations. It introduces to the key EU and national legislation on environmental issues.

Learners should understand key concepts of the environmental and sustainability principles in order to develop a coherent and efficient saving energies policy. In addition, learners should comprehend what EU and national environmental laws address and know which the main legislation covering the various topics related to energy saving practices for the building industries.

Learning unit 2: Energy efficiency and energy management in buildings.

This learning unit covers the processes and technologies applied in energy saving and carbon emissions reduction for buildings as well as the impacts from the use of energy saving practices. It introduces the learner to practical and cost effective ways of energy management, such as developing an energy policy and energy management plan.

Learners should understand the role of the energy efficiency practices in buildings, appreciating the range of approaches and technologies available in order to select the appropriate strategy. In addition, they should understand the importance of communication of the agenda to the users of the building.

Learning unit 3: Sustainable buildings.

This learning unit introduces the learner to the concept of sustainable building and provides basic facts and principles on efficient use of energy, water and other resources; waste reduction; indoor environmental quality enhancement; operations and maintenance optimization; building rating & certification systems.

Learners should develop innovative thinking in the design and operation of buildings and be able to analyse and evaluate sustainable design options for buildings.



Learning unit 4: Building management and intelligent building solutions.

This learning unit explains how to utilise complex building information & maintenance technology systems and to operate these to ensure the highest building performance. Learners should appreciate the role of the digital innovation for energy efficiency maintenance and quality, health & safety issues in building in order to apply proper solutions to energy saving.

Learning unit 5: Maintenance and repairs to prevent energy losses.

This learning unit introduces the learner to technical issues related to the installation of energy saving technologies and services in new and existing buildings, detecting faults and performing the necessary repairs.

Learners should be able to apply the proper tools to detect heat, water and air losses in buildings in order to rectify small faults and carry out simple maintenance to increase energy efficiency. In addition, learners should understand the technical skills required to incorporate smart metering technologies in automated home infrastructures.

Learning unit 6: Occupant & Operator Health and Wellbeing.

This learning unit introduces the learner to the main health and wellbeing aspects relevant to FM operations that focus on respecting the environment through efficient integrated waste, energy and water management, and managing the carbon emissions generated by FM activities.

Learners should understand key rules and requirements for Health & Wellbeing when organizing and performing facility management operations, securing total customer satisfaction through the use of innovative technology and organizational excellence in a sustainable and environmental friendly manner.

Every learning unit is oriented to 4-5 EQF level; its duration is 20 hours and gives one ECVET credit.



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The consortium of DEFMA project consist of the following partners:

- South West College (SWC) – Northern Ireland – is a Further and Higher Education College.
- PROMEA – Greece – is a Hellenic society for the promotion of research and development methodologies.
- Scuola Nazionale Servizi (SNS) – Italy – is a foundation that supports public and private administration and facility management companies.
- Bulgarian Facility Management Association (BGFMA) – Bulgaria – is the professional facility management organization of Bulgaria.
- Vilnius Builders Training Centre (VSRC) – Lithuania – is one of the main providers of quality vocational education and training in Lithuania.



Policy recommendations

Stakeholder	Policy recommendations	Level
National Facility Management Organizations	The National Facility Management Organizations have to play as a driver for the implementation of the DEFMA MOOC in the national VET systems.	national
European Commission	The European Union is supporting, by specific common principles and tools (in particular, European Qualification Framework - EQF, European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training - ECVET, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System - ECTS and Europass), the transparency and recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications. The creation of a European common model for the ECVET Credits Awarding for the new European common qualifications in social entrepreneurship sector will improve employability and mobility of social entrepreneurs and social enterprise managers.	international
National VET authorities	To adapt the national job profiles of the facility managers with the content of the learning units of the DEFMA project.	national
National VET authorities	To involve requirements in the national VET strategy in order to strengthen the options for digital training in the field of the sustainable development and in particular for facility managers.	national



Stakeholder	Policy recommendations	Level
International Facility Management Association (IFMA), European Facility Management Network (EuroFM), etc.	To adapt the professional certificates of the facility managers with content of the learning units of the DEFMA project.	international
International Facility Management Association (IFMA), European Facility Management Network (EuroFM), ISO, etc.	To enhance the European standards (EN 15221) and the ISO standards (ISO 41001, 41011, 41012, 41013) in the field of the facility management with the content of the learning units of the DEFMA project.	international
VET providers	To organize trainings for facility managers using the MOOC of the DEFMA project.	local
VET providers	To organize trainings for trainers/tutors using the MOOC of the DEFMA project and thus guarantee the provision of the professional training for facility managers.	local
National VET authorities, VET providers	To develop a national certification system for facility managers that have finished training within MOOC of the DEFMA project.	national local
National Facility Management Organizations	To support the National VET authorities and VET providers for organizing certified trainings based on MOOC of the DEFMA project.	national



Stakeholder	Policy recommendations	Level
National Facility Management Organizations	To organize own certified trainings based on MOOC of the DEFMA project and thus enhancing the profile of professional education and training.	national
National Facility Management Organizations and National VET authorities	Close cooperation for recognition and validation the DEFMA MOOC on national level.	national
National Facility Management Organizations and National VET authorities	To adapt the DEFMA MOOC to the specific items of the national legal and institutional framework.	national
National Facility Management Organizations and National VET authorities	To develop and validate a national quality assurance system for the provision of proper and state-of-the-art requirements of a training based on the DEFMA MOOC.	national
National Facility Management Organizations and VET providers	Close cooperation and exchange of trainers/tutors in order to guarantee best resources for most possible quality trainings based on the DEFMA MOOC.	national local
National Facility Management Organizations	To organize a pool with VET providers and support them in organizing training courses based on the DEFMA MOOC.	national



Stakeholder	Policy recommendations	Level
National Facility Management Organizations, National VET authorities and VET providers	To create a steering committee and thus to successfully manage the training process based on the DEFMA MOOC on national level.	national
National Facility Management Organizations, National VET authorities	To include the profession Facility Manager in the National List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training if not yet included. As a basic document for the organization of vocational guidance, vocational training and vocational education, the National List of Professions for VET is binding on all institutions, which provide vocational training for acquiring professional qualifications – vocational high schools, vocational schools, vocational colleges and vocational training centres.	national
National Facility Management Organizations, National VET authorities	Involvement the European tools for VET like European/National Qualification Framework (EQF/NQF), European Credit System for VET (ECVET) and Europass in the training process based on the DEFMA MOOC in order to encourage the transnational mobility.	
National Facility Management Organizations, National VET authorities	To use the European Funds and the Lifelong-Learning Program (since 2014 Erasmus+) to enhance the options of the training based on the DEFMA MOOC	



Stakeholder	Policy recommendations	Level
National Facility Management Organizations and VET providers	To organize on regular base awareness raising campaigns about the benefits of investing in learning and the benefits of using the DEFMA MOOC.	national local
International Facility Management Association (IFMA), European Facility Management Network (EuroFM) and National Facility Management Organizations	Given the variety of training providers in the sector of the facility management and the variety of courses proposed all over Europe, the establishment of a European network of training providers in the field of the facility management would greatly benefit the sector. Such network should be able to facilitate the exchange of good practiced between different Member States and the recognition of common qualifications.	international national