



Programm für
lebenslanges
Lernen

TRIFT Transfer of Innovation into the Field of Foreign Trade

Projektresultate

EU-Geschäftsstelle Wirtschaft und Berufsbildung
Bezirksregierung Köln
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EDITION

Introduction

Within the 27 states of the European Union, there are 27 different ways to become qualified in the field of foreign trade on different levels: e.g. in Germany, the vocational training is embedded in the Dual System whereas in Great Britain it is mostly included in a system of further education for qualified merchants.

Those differences make it difficult for trainees to spend time abroad during their vocational training since it is not clearly recognizable what can be learned abroad and how this relates to the vocational training in the home country. Applicants in this field encounter similar problems: applying for a job in a European country which is not their home country is fairly difficult since some of the competences obtained cannot be related to the requirements of the target country. There is a lack of transparency and comparability within Europe.

This is where TRIFT (a Leonardo-da-Vinci-Transfer of Innovation-Project) starts: a Transfer of Innovation Project within the programme Leonardo da Vinci 2010–2012. On the methodical basis of VQTS (Vocational Qualifications Transfer System), partners have developed a *competence matrix* for the field of foreign trade which allows comparability and transparency of working processes in the field of foreign trade (see chap. 1).

Within the competence matrix, *competence profiles* can be developed for individuals, companies' needs or even Vocational Education and Training (VET) Programmes by putting together different competences within different competence areas and on different competence development steps at this competence matrix (see chap. 2).

The practicability of the competence matrix for the professional field of foreign trade has been tested in internships abroad in the second half of the project (see chap. 4). The project has also developed suitable test- and *assessment-procedures* on the basis of the matrix in order to determine required skills and competences so that they can be validated and recognised in the home country (see chap. 3). Thus the project fits very well to support the ECVET-process (see chap. 1.5).

The results of this project have been achieved by intensive cooperation of all partners. The European Agency for vocational education and training, Cologne Government Regional Office (Germany) as coordinating institution, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Gabrovo (Bulgaria), the HECl,

Lycée St Louis – Ste Barbe, St. Etienne (France), Burgardens Utbildningscentrum, Gothenborg (Sweden) and The Manchester College, Manchester (United Kingdom) have done determined and fruitful work throughout the two years of the project. Eleven students have undergone the TRIFT-internships and gained – among many new professional and non-professional experiences – the TRIFT-Certificate (see chap. 5).

The project partners hope that TRIFT will not end with the end of the TRIFT-project. We hope that other colleges and institutions will use the project's results, refine and adapt them to their requirements, and contribute in this way to the sustainability of a two-year project work.

I would like to thank all participants in the project for the good partnership and the very good cooperation as well as the members of the EU-Geschäftsstelle for their hard work for the project and the publication. Also I would like to thank the EU Lifelong Learning-Programme for funding this Transfer of Innovation Project and the Germany's National Agency Education for Europe at the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (NA-BiBB) for their guidance and support.

And – last but not least – we thank the students who have undergone the 'adventure' of a TRIFT-internship and the hosting companies for their collaboration.

Dr. Christian Schottmann
EU-Geschäftsstelle der Bezirksregierung Köln

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1 The Competence Matrix for the area of foreign trade (TRIFT-Matrix)

1.1 Preface

(Matthias Becker, Universität Flensburg)

Several descriptions of competences in different technical fields are developed within the VQTS projects (see Luomi-Messerer/Markowitch 2006 and Luomi-Messerer 2009). Beside the vocational area of mechatronics VQTS-Matrices are developed for electricians and electronic workforce. In the meantime a couple of projects are using the “VQTS approach” to describe competences and competence development (see the list on the VQTS website www.VocationalQualification.net).

The VQTS model provides a ‘common language’ to describe competences and their acquisition and also offers a way to relate these competence descriptions to the competences acquired in training programmes.

The VQTS model focuses on competences related to the work process. It identifies the core work tasks within the context of the particular occupational field. In a second step the VQTS model follows a ‘development logical’ differentiation of a competence profile (known as a competence development or acquisition model): it describes the acquisition of competences. The description of the competence development in relation to core work tasks can be seen as an attempt to bridge the terminological and ideological gap between the world of education and the world of work (see Becker et. al. 2007).

1.2 Developing the VQTS-Matrix for the area of foreign trade (TRIFT-Matrix)

(Matthias Becker, Universität Flensburg)

1.2.1 Principles

A VQTS matrix describes the competences of a person in a table and is able to show the progression of competence development. Competences are described as a contextualized bundle of knowledge, skills, abilities and

attitudes which is needed to fulfil the requirements of specific work tasks in a domain.

The first column in the table or matrix describes the competence areas of a person in the professional field. These competence areas are fields in which the person has to be able to act in a competent way – they are usually called core work tasks.

For each competence area different levels of competence are described as “steps of competence development” in the horizontal axes of the table or matrix. Each of these steps phrases the competence for acting in the competence area (“He/She can...”) on a certain level. For the way of describing competences without separating them into “knowledge, skills and competence”-descriptions (like in the EQF) refer to Markowitsch et. al. (2008).

Further and much more detailed information on the background and the principles of the VQTS – Matrix can be found in Luomi-Messerer (Ed.) (2009), p. 9-42; there you will also find VQTS-Matrices for the professional fields ‘Mechatronics’ and ‘Electronics/Electrical Engineering’ from the projects VQTS I and VQTS II. This information can also be found on the homepage of VQTS: www.vocationalqualification.net.

1.2.2 The development of the TRIFT-Matrix

In the beginning of the TRIFT-project, the TRIFT-Matrix was developed by a group of experts in the area of foreign trade within moderated expert workshops. The development process was embedded in a development concept, consisting of the following steps:

1. *An analysis of the ISCO and ESCO structure* in the field of foreign trade.
This step was necessary to define the field of foreign trade and to determine the areas which are connected to it. The preliminary result was that the following ISCO classifications are relevant:
 - 33 Business and administration associate professionals
 - 332 Sales and purchasing agents and brokers
 - 3322 Commercial sales representatives
 - 3323 Buyers
 - 3324 Trade brokers
 - 24 Business and administration professionals
 - 242 Administration professionals
 - 2421 Management and organization analysts
 - 243 Sales, marketing and public relations professionals
 - 2431 Advertising and marketing professionals

- 2433 Technical and medical sales professionals (excluding ICT)
- 2434 Information and communications technology sales professionals

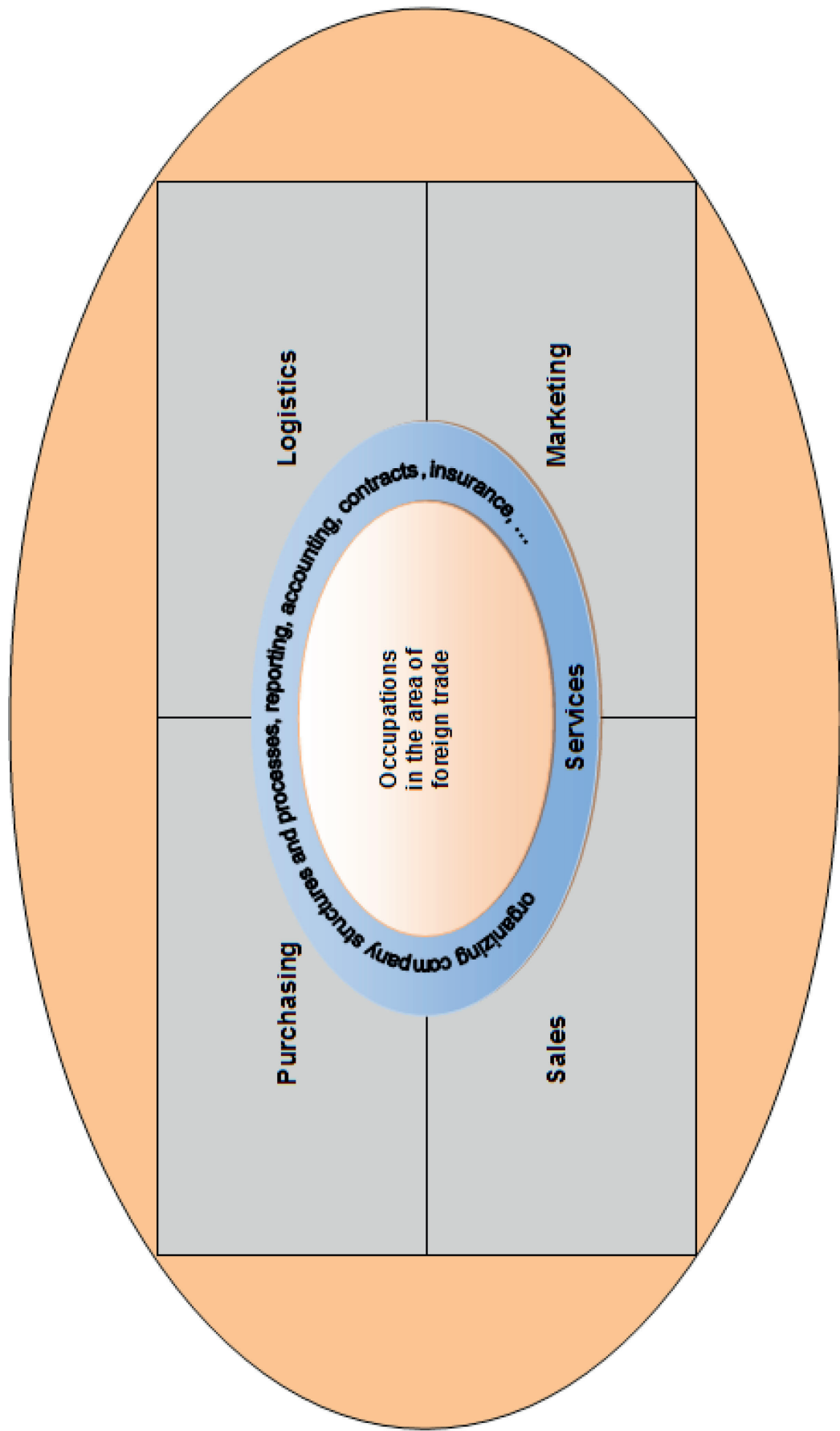
These descriptions have been used for characterising the vocational action fields; they act as starting points for the discussions of the expert-workshops.

2. Identified work areas and skills have been clustered to *vocational action fields* of persons in the field of foreign trade to provide and structure the discussions during the Expert-Workshops (see figure 1).
3. *Expert Workshops* with 8 experts from the different partner-countries are carried through (see table 1) to determine competences related to core work tasks. Also terms and definitions for the discussion process have been made available (see below, chap. 1.2.3).

Table 1: Structure of the Expert Workshop to develop the TRIFT competence matrix

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the experts • Objectives of the workshop • Clarification of essential terms and definitions: foreign trade, occupational work task, competence, competence area / core work process, competence development step
Career Development of competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of careers on the basis of stations and paradigmatic tasks • Collection of examples of work tasks • Business processes and work processes
Compilation of Occupational Work Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of occupational work tasks • Description of occupational work tasks with the help of essential objects, methods, organization and requirements of work • Groups of work tasks
Labeling of Core Work Processes/ Competence Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining competence areas • Defining competence development steps
Analysis Core competencies and competence development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaping of a competence matrix • Reflection of the core work tasks / core work processes / core competencies • Conditions for evaluating competences / requirements for construction of competence profiles

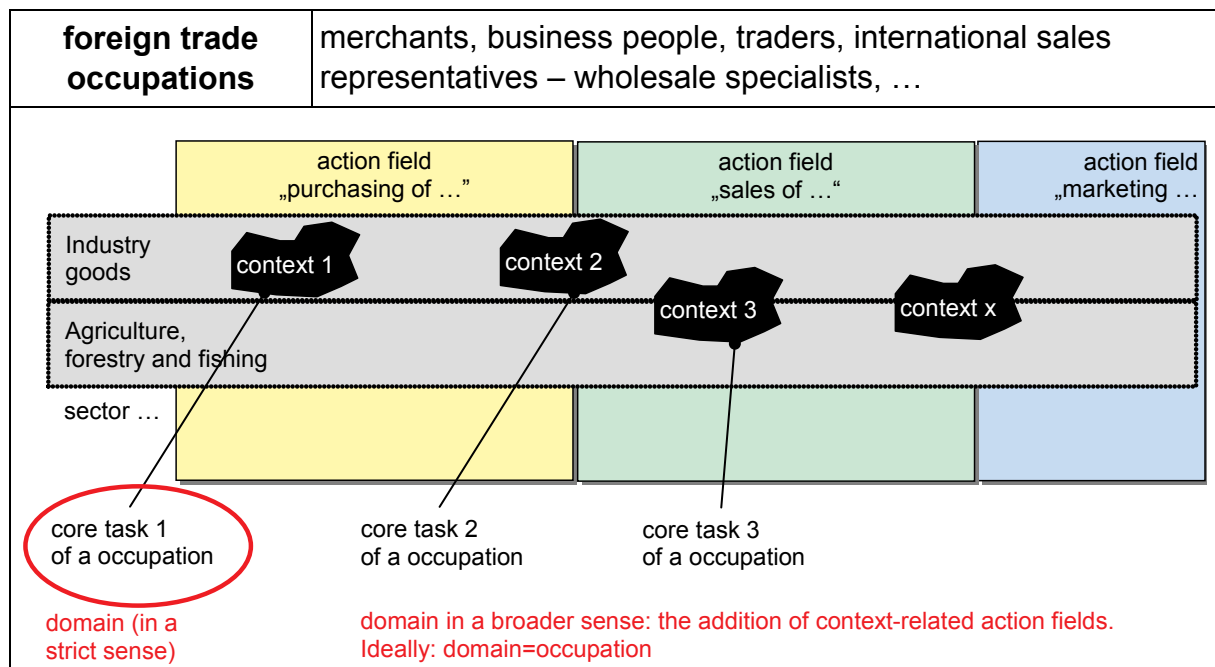
Figure 1: Action fields of persons in the area of foreign trade



1.2.3 The process of the expert workshops and terms and definitions used

The project group uses specific definitions to determine the work areas, the range of occupations and the meaning of competence. These definitions for occupations in the area of foreign trade are based on the ISCO descriptions as a first step. Additionally there is a need to determine the action fields for these occupations in combination of business areas like “industry goods” or “agriculture, forestry and fishing” in order to detect occupational work tasks within context related fields.

Figure 2: Occupational work tasks and context related fields



A second step then is to produce “career development stories”. That means that the experts explain their competence development, their positions in the companies, their typical work tasks and the work processes which have produced paradigmatic requirements and help to understand the competence development in the field of foreign trade.

To reach a compilation of occupational work tasks a definition for these terms is necessary to avoid the description of isolated jobs and only restricted competences. This helps also to determine the core and the common principles of different work tasks. In the end with this approach it is possible to describe core work tasks of people from the field of foreign trade and to define typical competence development steps in combination with a progress in carrying through occupational work tasks with different levels of difficulty.

Table 2: Definitions used within the expert workshops

occupational work task	Task which is typical for the occupation and which includes a comprehensive area of activity (planning, carrying through, checking, evaluating) e.g. number of interconnected operations. They are described by skilled work covering the sense of work coherence and characteristic orders or problem solving tasks.
Competence	<p>“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 personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy. (Source: The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF))</p> <p>Competence is the ability of a person which appears in the process of execution of work tasks and during problem solving. A competence comprises different abilities, skills and knowledge without separation from the context of work.</p>
Core work process / competence area	A core work process is a complete process of a person during his work with the aim to perform a work order of a company and to achieve a work result. A competence area comprises various forms of competences necessary to master core work processes.
Competence development step	Competence within a competence area which deals with a part of a core work process and which can be identified as a standalone occupational work task.

And – last but not least – the experts had to agree on a final version of the competence matrix which fits to all the participating partner countries.

1.3 Results

(Christian Schottmann, EU-Geschäftsstelle)

The result of these expert workshops is the TRIFT-competence matrix for the professional field of foreign trade which these experts have agreed upon.

See the results in Annex A in the different languages.

During the project and during the discussions of the matrix with foreign trade professionals and teachers it became clear that the matrix does not