



Presentation of
the « import export sales assistant »
common certification



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Introduction

This leaflet is dedicated to the vocational education and training systems not yet involved in the process pursued by eight national vocational education and training systems. It should enable these potential partner countries to foresee the best way of joining the network of initial partners.

The aim is the implementation, fully or partly, of the *import export sales assistant* certification elaborated in common, in each interested system. Awaiting for a stabilisation of the European qualification framework implementation, each system, considering the content suggested, finds the best correspondence in its national system. For information, it would be level 4 or 5.

The results presented in this document have been built up in the framework of a close dialogue with representatives from the professional organisations concerned and competent bodies from each country. A set of midway working documents is available, but for a better legibility, has not been enclosed in the leaflet.

The process leading to these results consisted in:

- Defining a reference trade, « import export sales assistant », and describing the profile in terms of activities and tasks;
- Defining knowledge, skills and competences to master in order to obtain the certification;
- Grouping together these learning outcomes into relevant units to enable a progressive achievement of the certification, taking into account the mobility experience;
- Fixing flexible procedures enabling the adaptation, fully or partly, of these reference units in each system, taking into consideration its specificities;
- Consulting each other to define training programmes, to enable mobility during the training period;
- Suggesting a method for the allocation of credit points to units, knowing that most of initial partners do not have credit points currently in their system ;
- Suggesting a methodology to update the qualification, in order to ensure the sustainability of cooperation between systems.

More than forty initial vocational training centres, in close link with local enterprises and national professional organisations, have undertaken to build a network allowing mobility of their students during their training period.

Countries and organisations involved in the implementation of the common certification

FRANCE

- Ministère de l'Éducation nationale
- AGEFA PME
- Confédération française du commerce interentreprises et du commerce international (CGI)
- Conseillers du commerce extérieurs de la France (CCEF)

GREECE

- Organization for Vocational Education and Training (O.E.E.K.)

ITALY

- Ente Bilaterale Nazionale del settore Terziario
- Ministero Istruzione Università e Ricerca

ROMANIA

- National center for technical and vocational education and training development

SLOVENIA

- National center vocational education and training

THE NETHERLANDS

- Kenniscentrum Handel - knowledge centre for vocational training courses in the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors
- International Business School Alliance – IBS
- Nederlands Verbond van de Groothandel - NVG

PORTUGAL

- Centro de Formacao Profissional para o Comercio e Afins, (CECOA) – Centre de formation professionnelle pour le commerce et les services

SILENT PARTNERS

SPAIN

- Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia - Subdirección General de Formación Profesional

SWITZERLAND

- Istituto Universitario Federale per la Formazione Professionale (IUFPF)

This project will be actually implemented in all these countries from now on, except in Spain where the regions have to be involved before.

IMPORT AND EXPORT SALES ASSISTANT

JOB DEFINITION

The import and export sales assistant contributes to the sustainable international development of the company through the marketing of goods and services in overseas markets and the optimising of purchases in the context of globalization.

PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

This trade is practised in many different contexts :

- All industrial and commercial companies, particularly SME's
- Trading companies (distributors, wholesalers...)
- Service providers (transport companies, freight agents..)
- Consultants and support organisations (International Chambers of Commerce and Industry , Local government organisations)
- Companies providing international development support

LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY

In the context of the company's international development, he or she is responsible for putting strategic decisions into practice and for coordinating international operations between the different functions of the firm and/or external partners. Thanks to his/her analysis and passing on of information, he or she enables the company to react to evolutions in its environment.

As a young graduate, the Import and export sales assistant

- collects all types of information from overseas markets and informs the information system to make strategic decision making easier
- looks for and detects purchasing opportunities for goods and services overseas
- prepares, carries out and checks on the follow-up of import-export operations
- carries out these tasks with profitability, quality and customer satisfaction objectives in mind.

His/her efficiency is linked to competence in information and communication technology, practice of several foreign languages and intercultural openness..

Following a period of adaptation to the company and its culture, his or her knowledge of the techniques and practice of international trade and his skills will mean a rapid evolution to the posts of international sales representative or international buyer.

SUMMARY OF PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND TASKS DEFINED IN COMMON

Activity 1: Carrying out studies and business monitoring

1. Permanent market monitoring (desk research)
2. Collecting information abroad
3. Preparing decision making

Activity 2: Export selling

1. Prospecting for elaborating adapted offers (pre-sales activities)
2. Selling
3. Following up sales

Activity 3: Import buying

1. Preparing the import buying activities (supplier database)
2. Supporting the buying negotiations
3. Following up the import buying activities

Activity 4: Coordinating services for successful import buying and export selling

1. Choosing service providers (insurance, logistics, financing etc)
2. Insuring administration for operations
3. Coordinating quality control / good business activities

Activity 5: Managing relations and contacts in different contexts and cultures

1. Producing messages integrating socio-cultural elements
2. Constituting and maintaining a pluricultural network of contacts

A detailed table of activities and tasks, with corresponding procedures, resources and expected results, is available.

Descriptive table of the common reference units

Certification units	Skills (S)	Competence (C)	Knowledge(K)
CU1 : International marketing			
CU11 : Market research and market planning on foreign markets	<p>CU11S1 Collecting information through permanent market monitoring (desk research) and field research abroad and checking reliability</p> <p>CU11S2 Analysing and selecting relevant commercial information and regulation constraints about foreign markets</p> <p>CU11S3 Formulating requirements for the subcontracting of studies and following up on the studies on foreign markets</p> <p>CU11S4 Proposing a general outline for a concrete action plan based upon the commercial policy of the company and the SWOT analysis</p> <p>CU11S5 Making a summary and communicating to superiors to prepare decision making</p>	<p>CU11WC1 Organising and planning work activities, being autonomous</p> <p>CU11WC2 Being alert to opportunities and threats</p> <p>CU11WC3 Applying commercial insight</p>	<p><u>1 International marketing</u></p> <p>1.1 Introduction to marketing 1.2. Market principles and structure 1.3. Marketing plan 1.4. Monitoring and Market studies 1.5. Export « swot » 1.6. Internationalization strategies 1.7. Internationalization support networks</p> <p><u>2 Computing</u></p> <p>2.1. Information research techniques</p> <p><u>3 Environment</u></p> <p>3.1 Economic</p> <p>3.1.1. Economic, human and social indicators 3.1.2. Development and international trade indicators 3.1.3. Insertion of national into international economy 3.1.4. Principles of organisation of international exchanges 3.1.5. Principal trends of world exchanges</p> <p>3.2.Geopolitic</p> <p>3.2.1. Different zones 3.2.2. Country risks and rating</p>

			<p>3.2.3. Identities 3.2.4. Natural and human resources</p> <p>3.3.Laws and regulations</p> <p>3.3.1. Legal system 3.3.2. .Regulations fields (norms, certification, exchange regulations) 3.3.3. International legal frameworks 3.3.4. Fiscal, customs regulation</p> <p><u>4 Management tools</u></p> <p>4.1.Statistical analysis (descriptive statistics and prevision methods)</p> <p><u>5. Communication</u></p> <p>5.1.Professional written communication</p>
CU12 : The business information system	<p>CU12S1 Using appropriate techniques in picking up available information in all forms</p> <p>CU12S2 Organising and pricing the collecting and information handling process</p> <p>CU12S3 Using and updating a database of business contacts</p> <p>CU12S4 Updating and enriching regularly the business information system</p> <p>CU12S5 Communicating in order to prepare the decision</p>	CU12WC1 Critical information monitoring	<p><u>2 Computing</u></p> <p>2.2.Making of and composants of a hardware / software architecture 2.3 Electronic communication tools and collaborative work 2.4. Data security 2.5. prospects and clients data base</p> <p><u>5. Communication</u></p> <p>5.2.Cost and efficiency of information 5.3.Information management</p>

CU2 : Export selling			
CU21 : Prospecting and customer/partner follow up	<p>CU21S1 Identifying and selecting targets according to the specific characteristics of foreign markets</p> <p>CU21S2 Assessing the value of existing clients</p> <p>CU21S3 Organising prospection and communicating in a foreign language with potential foreign clients/partners</p> <p>CU21S4 Analysing, assessing and following up the prospection</p> <p>CU21S5 Constituting, managing and updating a reliable, multicultural network of contacts</p> <p>CU21S6 Animating the network of contacts and sales</p>	<p>CU21WC1 Communicating with contacts, using and enlarging his professional network</p> <p>CU21WC2 Being loyal and securing the company's interests</p> <p>CU21WC3 Working in a team</p>	<p><u>1. International Marketing</u></p> <p>1.8. Prospection plan 1.9. Market demand 1.10. Commercial and financial credibility of prospect and client 1.11 Customer service quality assurance 1.12 Sales network support, distributor and agent</p> <p><u>5. Communication</u></p> <p>5.4. Oral communication : face to face and telephone interviews, sales discussions 5.5. Written communication : commercial correspondence</p> <p><u>6. Foreign languages</u></p>
CU22 Negotiating	<p>CU22S1 Formulating a suitable offer</p> <p>CU22S2 Preparing and organising the sales mission</p> <p>CU22S3 Negotiating in a foreign language with a foreign client/partner</p>	<p>CU22WC1 Listening actively, empathizing</p>	<p><u>1. International Marketing</u></p> <p>1.13. Appropriate offer according to customer's expectations</p> <p><u>7. Negotiation</u></p> <p>7.1. Negotiation strategies and techniques 7.2. Sales supports and pitches, 7.3. Commercial reporting</p> <p><u>4. Management tools</u></p> <p>4.2. Costs, margin, price and tariffs</p>

			<p>4.3. Statistical analysis of sales 4.4. Customer value analysis 4.5. Sales and treasury budget 4.6. Invoicing, VAT</p> <p><u>6. Foreign language</u></p>
CU3 : Import buying			
CU31 Identify potential suppliers and sourcing	<p>CU31S1 Identifying potential suppliers</p> <p>CU31S2 Selecting potential suppliers</p>	<p>CU31WC1 making a working plan and list of priorities</p> <p>CU31WC2 Paying attention to quality standards and norms</p>	<p><u>8. Marketing for suppliers</u></p> <p>8.1. Buying policy and organizing buying 8.2. Sourcing and procurement 8.3 Market place, buying platform, auctions on line, e-sourcing 8.4. Selection and assessment of potential suppliers 8.5. Decision making support tools for choosing suppliers</p>
CU32 Organising the negotiation	<p>CU32S1 Sending a buying offer to pre-selected suppliers</p> <p>CU32S2 Preparing and organising the negotiation with a foreign supplier</p> <p>CU32S3 Assessing offers and suppliers</p>	<p>CU32WC1 Being loyal and secure the company's interests (Adopter une attitude loyale et savoir préserver les intérêts de son entreprise)</p>	<p><u>8. Marketing for suppliers</u></p> <p>8.6. List of requirements /mission statements 8.7 International calls for tender 8.8 Customs, risk management 8.9. Tools and methods for assessing and comparing offers and suppliers 8.10. Purchase contract 8.11 General buying conditions</p> <p><u>4 Management tools</u></p> <p>4.7 Managing supply 4.8 Purchasing costs 4.9 Buying budgets 4.10 Financial assessment of supplier</p>

			<p><u>7. Negotiation</u></p> <p>7.4. Purchasing negotiation</p>
CU4 : Managing international trade operations			
<p>CU41 : Choosing service providers</p>	<p>CU41S1 Selecting existing or new service providers for international trade operations (insurance, logistics, financial)</p> <p>CU41S2 Making a qualitative and quantitative analysis of different service providers according to the defined criteria</p> <p>CU41S3 Assessing service providers performance</p> <p>CU41S4 Communicating and negotiating with potential service providers</p> <p>CU41S5 Providing elements for establishing service providers contracts in consultation with relevant departments of the company</p>		<p><u>2. Computing</u></p> <p>2.7 Commercial and export management software</p> <p>2.8. EDE (Electronic Data Exchange), Web EDE, EDM (Electronic Data Management)</p> <p><u>9 Management</u></p> <p>9.1. Decision making</p> <p>9.2. Project management</p> <p><u>10. International trade techniques</u></p> <p>10.1 Support services and service providers</p> <p>10.2 Selection criteria of service providers</p> <p>10.3 Internal or external management of services</p> <p>10.4. Piloting support services</p>
<p>CU42 : Managing the international business administration</p>	<p>CU42S1 Managing the coordination the buying and selling administration</p> <p>CU42S2 Keeping track of document files (import and export)</p> <p>CU42S3 Identifying setbacks, applying alternative and appropriate solution to overcome setbacks</p>	<p>CU42 WC1 Making sure the work plan is carried out according to appropriate procedure to avoid problems</p> <p>CU42 WC2 Allocating time and resources</p> <p>CU42 WC3 Liaising with relevant parties</p>	<p><u>10 International trade techniques</u></p> <p>10. 5. International logistics,</p> <p>10.6. Incoterms</p> <p>10.7. Means of transportation, tariffs, and selection, contracts</p> <p>10.8. Documentary management</p> <p>10.9. Means and techniques of payment</p> <p>10.10. Financing of commercial operations and export sales</p> <p>10.11. Customs management</p> <p>10.12. Risks and cover techniques (non payment, exchange, transport, non conformity)</p> <p>10.13. Sales and distribution contract law in an international context</p> <p>10.14. Export tariffs and offer</p>

	CU42S4 Carrying out quality control CU42S5 Assuring Service Relationship Management (SRM)		10.15. Settlement of disputes 10.16. Intellectual property, patent and trade mark <u>4. Management tools</u> 4.11. Accounts, results, cash flow 4.12. Follow up tables 4.13. Financial maths <u>9 Management</u> 9.3. Planning, and time management
CU5 Working in a multicultural context			
CU51 Business foreign language A	CU53S1 European language portfolio – level B2		
CU52 Business foreign language B	CU53S1 European language portfolio – level B2		
CU53 Intercultural management and communication	CU53S1 Collecting, analysing and selecting relevant information about worldwide practices in business CU53S2 Distinguishing the context of the relationship with contacts using socio-cultural elements CU53S3 Constituting, managing and updating a reliable, multicultural network of contacts CU53S4 Animating the network of contacts and sales	CU53WC1 Using experiences, evaluations and good practices CU53WC2 Being sensitive to cultural differences in business behaviour	<u>11. Intercultural management and communication</u> 11.1. Intercultural communication models 11.2. Intercultural management models 11.3. Managing multicultural teams (interpersonal communication, meetings, group communication) 11.4. Cultural practice (customs) <u>3 Environment</u> 3.3.5. Legal framework for individual and group relations at work (labour law) <u>1. International marketing</u> 1.13. Animating the sales network (agents, importers, final distribution, virtual teams, pay, motivation, stimulus, control of objectives)

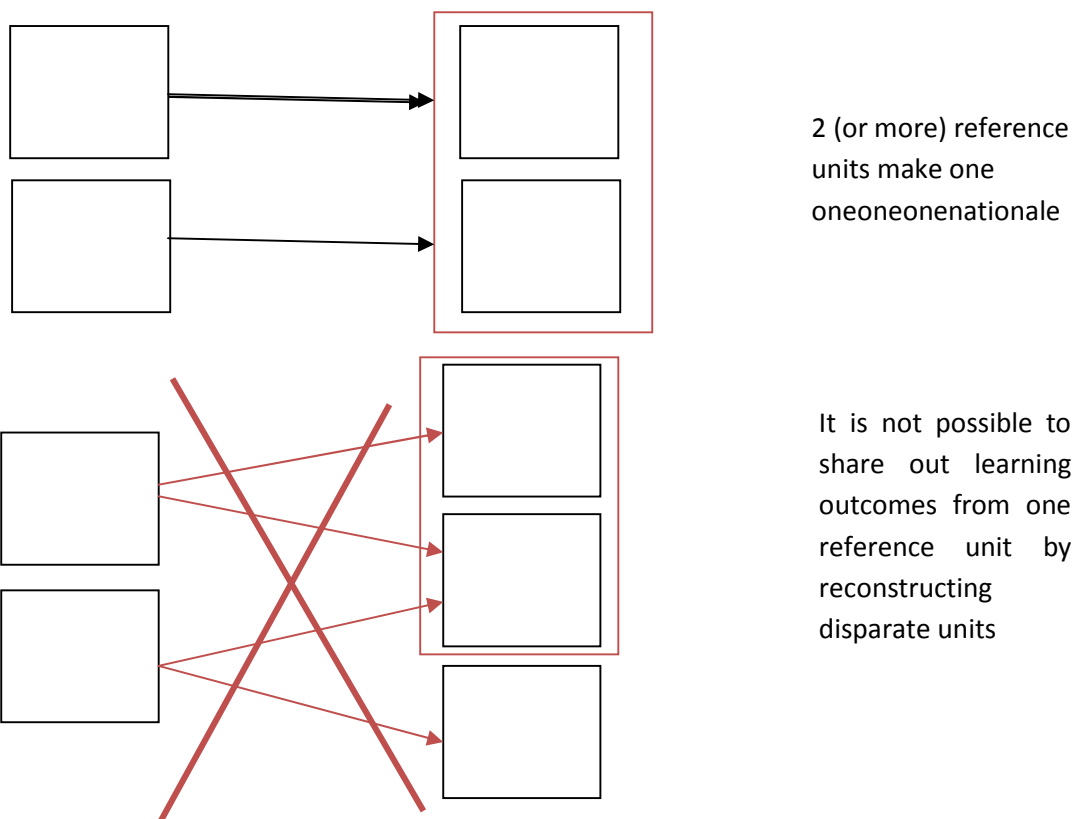
RULES FOR TRANSFERRING COMMON REFERENCE UNITS INTO NATIONAL UNITS

The common description of the “import export sales assistant” certification, in terms of learning outcomes units, must allow a flexible adaptation into each national system. Therefore, in each specific system, the common description can:

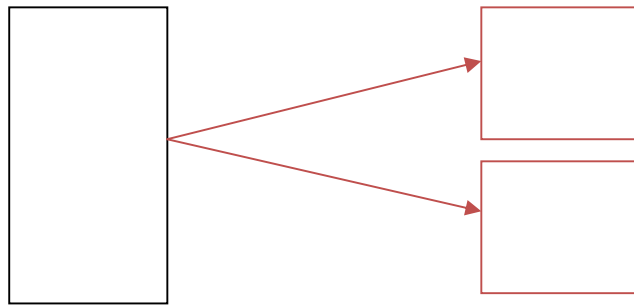
- Make up a certification in itself: all units and them only are thus retained;
- Make up a part of a wider certification: other units can thus be added to the reference units;
- Be divided into several certifications: only a part of the units is thus retained and makes up an autonomous certification in itself.

Units as they have been defined are coherent groupings of learning outcomes, but it is always possible to find other coherences. In that case, units can be grouped together to form larger units, or units can be subdivided to form a set of smaller units. Therefore, it is important to respect a few simple rules to maintain compatibility with other systems and retain mobility possibilities.

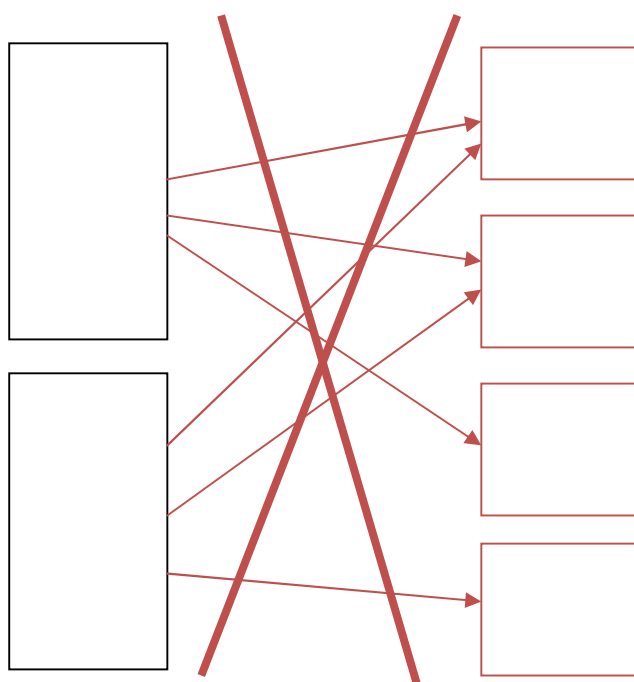
From reference units to wider national units



From reference units to smaller units



Learning outcomes from one reference unit can be spread out into several national providing that the integrity of the reference unit is maintained.



Learning outcomes from one reference unit can not be spread out into several national units if this leads to building disparate units.

Combined solutions can be envisaged providing that the integrity of reference units is preserved.

COMMON CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE ALLOCATION OF CREDIT POINTS TO UNITS

The purpose of credit points is to provide additional information about learning outcomes units and their relative value compared to the whole certification. Allocation modalities of credit points, even in the planned text of Recommendation from the European Commission, are not stabilized. Consequently, it was difficult to make consolidated proposals, even more given that most partner countries of the project had not credit points in their own system at the moment.

Nevertheless, a certain number of principles have been defined in common:

- Credit points have been allocated to common reference units, knowing that these units can be adapted in each national context and thus can not be found under exactly the same form in each national certification;
- To maintain the coherence of the common work, the transcription of points allocated at a national level must not lead to a variation higher than 10% in comparison with the common definition. This constitutes a certain form of “currency snake” for the value of a unit.
- This relative value of the unit is expressed under the form of a percentage, in comparison with the totality of units defined in common, because this whole can be meant for integrating itself in a wider whole or be subdivided in each system.

This convention will be effective only when each system will have defined its own rules.

Therefore, the table here-below only has a relative value. It will need to be precised when all systems will have defined its own rules of allocation of credit points. The allocation is based on the relative importance of each unit in comparison with the job profile concerned.

Guideline table for the relative allocation of credit points

Certification units Sub units	Credit points/%
UC1 International Marketing	20%
UC11 Market research and market planning on foreign markets	10
UC12 Business information system	10
UC2 Export Selling	20%
UC 21 Prospecting and customer/partner follow up	10
UC 22 Negotiating	10
UC3 Import Buying	20%
UC31 Identifying potential suppliers and sourcing	10
UC32 Organising the negotiation	10
UC4 Managing International Trade Operations	20%
UC41 Choosing and working with service providers	10
UC42 Managing the international business administration	10
UC5 Working in a Multicultural Context	20%
UC51 Business English language A	8
UC52 Business foreign language B	8
UC53 Intercultural management and communication	4
TOTAL	100

CONSULTATION ON TRAINING PROGRAMMES

To enable mobility with recognition of learning outcomes gained in another system it seems advisable to give indications about the training programme. The principle recommendations concern :

- A clear link between certification units and the training programme. A simple means would be to make the training units /modules correspond exactly to the certification units.
- Grouping within a fixed time period of some subjects teaching/ lessons to facilitate mobility over a short time period. This grouping of subjects would be referred to as training modules.;
- A suggested time duration for these modules taking into account that they can be subdivided and that they can cover either time in training centres or work placements in companies.

Indicative table of training programme

Certification Units Sub units	Training units (modules)	Number of hours
UC1 International Marketing		
UC11 Market research and market planning on foreign markets	International Marketing	112
UC12 Business information system	Managing Information systems (MIS)	112
UC 2 Export Selling		
UC 21 Prospecting and customer/partner follow up	Customers canvassing	140
UC 22 Negotiating	Export Negotiating	140
UC3 Import Buying		
UC31 Identifying potential suppliers and sourcing	Bying	112
UC32 Organising the negotiation	Import Negotiating	112
UC4 Managing International Trade Operations		
UC41 Choosing and working with service providers	International trade operations	168
UC42 Managing the international business administration	International Business Administration	168
UC5 Working in a Multicultural Context		
UC51 Business English language A	Business English language A	140
UC52 Business foreign language B	Business foreign language B	140
UC53 Intercultural management and communication	Intercultural management and communication	84
TOTAL		1438

THE MAINTAINANCE OF THE “COMINTER” PROFILE

A methodology for updating the Cominter profile at European level.

INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH

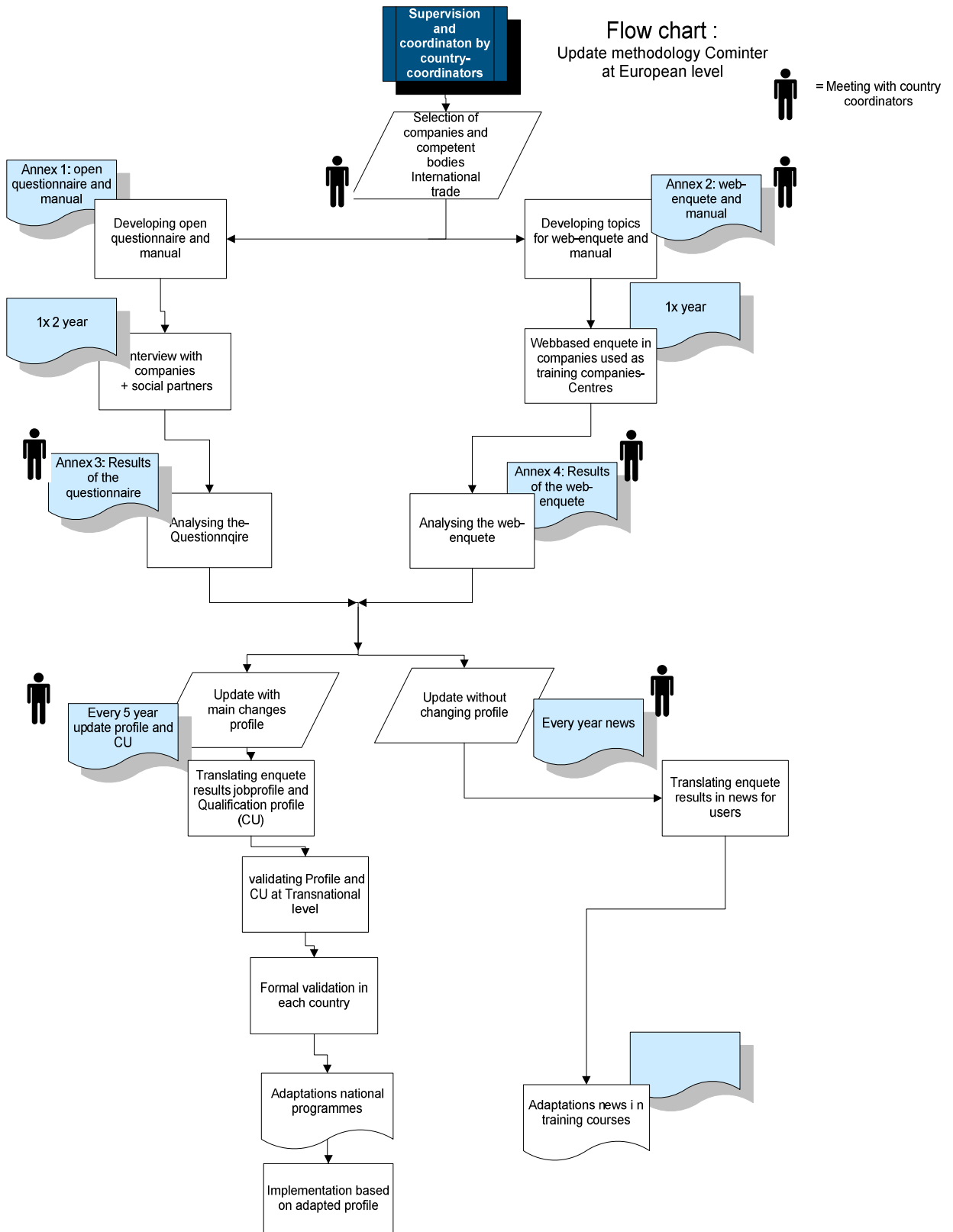
For the update methodology of the COMINTER profile, the following issues have to be taken into account:

- All the relevant parties have to be involved (i.e social partners, training companies, training centres, national bodies etc.);
- The update methodology has to include a procedure for changes with major impact and “news and trends” with minor impact on the competence profile;
- The methodology has to foresee a procedure of feedback of the national results to the transnational COMINTER team;

In the update methodology for the COMINTER profile an approach is used in order to cover all the three items above.

The general approach is the following:

- In order to make sure that the update procedure will be carried out and the results will be collected at European level, the current national project leaders of the COMINTER project will be determined as the country coordinators. These coordinators have the responsibility to set up the procedures for updating at national level, collect the results at national level and bring them in the COMINTER project team at European level.
- A two way approach is used in order to involve the companies and social partners on one hand and users like training centres, trainers etc. on the other hand. Each year with the users an online questionnaire will be carried out. Once in two years the social partners and training companies will be involved in a more thorough interview. This two-way approach allows us to get, at least every year, practical feedback at user level in a very efficient and effective way.
- Every year there will be input from all the participating countries. In concrete terms this means that the COMINTER profile will be updated every year with the latest news, recommendations and tips. With the results of the questionnaires and interviews which will have a major and/ or sustainable impact on the COMINTER profile, the COMINTER profile will be updated once in 5 years. The reason for not updating the profile officially more often is that a formal update of the COMINTER profile will have impact on the certification units, curricula and training and certification methodologies.



The update: a 10 step methodology

1. The country coordinators will participate in a transnational meeting in order to set up the procedure for updating the COMINTER profile. For the updating procedure, companies, training centres and social partners have to be selected. During the meeting the country coordinators take care of the development of the online questionnaire and the topics for the interviews;
2. A two-way approach is used:
 - a. Once a year via an online questionnaire with the users (training centres);
 - b. Once in two years via an interview with the companies and social partners;
3. Results of the questionnaire and/ or the interviews have to be analysed, translated and discussed during a second transnational meeting;
4. During the transnational meeting the country coordinators decide whether the trends and developments of the analysis will lead to a significant change of the COMINTER competence profile or not;
5. The information of the analysis which will NOT lead to significant changes in the COMINTER profile, will be selected and compiled as practical news and information for the users, applicable in training courses;
6. The trends and developments which will lead to significant changes have to be collected. Once in five years the trends and developments have to be translated and transferred to the COMINTER profile;
7. Validation and adaptation of the revised COMINTER profile by the COMINTER project team at European level;
8. Formal validation of the revised COMINTER profile at national level;
9. Adaptation of national programmes and methods;
10. Implementation of the revised COMINTER programme in the training centres and training companies.

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