

# International Co-operation Common Standards for Education and Training in Europe

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Harmonisation is a word that enjoys popular currency throughout Europe as we move towards 1992. Depending on one's own view of the opportunities or threats presented by a single market, the concept of common standards, procedures and structures has its supporters who, one assumes, form the majority.

As far as education and training are concerned, the actions already taken suggest that there is strong support for, if not harmonisation, then compatibility and certainly recognition of each country's standards in *vocational* education and training. (VET).

Work on analysing these VET standards to determine comparability of such things as vocational qualifications has been difficult, resulting in the change of emphasis from comparability to recognition. What this means in practice can already be seen in one small area of work, that of pan-European recruitment. Increasingly, one will observe jobs being advertised across Europe, specifying the requirement for a vocational qualification appropriate to the country in which the advertisement appears. This is a small example of a wider objective of encouraging mobility of qualified labour across Europe, something which is commonplace in the mainland but still comparatively rare as far as UK and Ireland are concerned.

The single market will also be accompanied by people offering professional and business services across borders increasing the need for recognition of competence across national boundaries.

In short there can be no doubt that a method whereby an employer in one country can recognise the meaning and worth of a vocational qualification obtained by an individual in another European country would be of value both to the employer and the individual concerned.

Some countries are setting the pace, having previously established a culture of formalised and

structured VET programmes. Others are following and some haven't started. Generally, Britain is in the second category but as far as book and journal publishing is concerned, it could be said to be at the forefront.

But what of the VET structures in the EC as they relate to publishing? Whilst it is invidious to group countries in terms of like strategies, for ease of understanding but with no disparagement intended the position look like this:

Group 1.

Germany  
France  
Netherlands  
Great Britain

Group 2.

Belgium  
Spain  
Ireland

Group 3.

Denmark  
Greece  
Luxemburg  
Italy  
Portugal

In Group 1. (*See Appendix A*)

VET is well established and each country has its own dedicated publisher training organisation. The government of each country either by statute or by encouragement (usually in the form of funding) see VET as vitally important to the success of sectors of industry including publishing. The most structured system is that of Germany where publishing is included in one of 380 professions and trades where there is a nationally specified occupational standard which must be examined for every person wishing to pursue a nominated career. The resources available to train for these standards are comprehensive.

**In Group 2.**

Whilst these countries may not have the infrastructure to support a high level of VET in publishing (or that numbers do not justify it) there is nevertheless a commitment to train which is evidenced by the desire, and indeed the practice, to collaborate with other countries.

**In Group 3.**

Either because of the size of the publishing industries or because of a distinct lack of government involvement, there is very little VET in publishing among these countries. It should be said however that there are individuals in each country who would welcome the introduction of training for publishers.

In January 1990, BHTC initiated the formation of ABPTOE whose principal aim is to further the cause of professional training in bookselling and publishing in Europe by:

- a) exchange of information
- b) influencing bodies who are responsible for national and international initiatives re bookseller/publisher training
- c) develop cooperative training programmes and attachments
- d) assist other countries in developing training effectiveness

While the exchange of views on training matters is justification enough for the formation of ABPTOE, it has already turned words into action and a number of bi-country courses have taken place in such subjects as co-editions, DTP and international marketing. ABPTOE may also be the organisation through whom common "publishing" standards are established.

Since 1989 BHTC has been engaged in a government initiated project of

- a) establishing standards for nine occupations specific to book and journal publishing.
- b) introducing a system of nationally recognised vocational qualifications based on these standards.

Perhaps the best way to explain the standards and to show the relevance of any commonality throughout Europe is to briefly take you through the first draft (of 4) for the occupation of Journals Publishing. (See Appendix B)

With the possible exception of Germany I doubt whether any other European country has developed such detailed standards for any of the 9 occupations, let alone for journals publishing.

There is obvious merit in publishers from any part of the world studying these standards to see if they are relevant to their own publishing procedures but further than that, is there merit in establishing a European standard along the lines of those shown? Why even think of common standards - what benefits would accrue? It really depends on how you see the future of publishing and indeed of Europe. Is your vision that of a multi-ethnic publishing workforce, or of Euro-national publishing companies with employees moving from one subsidiary in one country to another in another country, or, because of the pre-eminence of English as the international language of publishing, an expansion of co-editions / co-publishing / Euro-publishing requiring common standards across all disciplines? Whatever the vision, one thing is certain - change is constant.

Lastly, before I summarise it may just be helpful if I explain how these standards are to be used for NVQ's. In Britain a new body is about to be set up called "The Publishing Qualifications Board" (PQB). This body will administer, validate and award NVQ's for the book and journal publishing industry. In this way the credibility and acceptability is ensured. The precedent has been set in catering for a European Vocational Qualification. Could this be something we should be aiming for - an EVC in journal publishing?

Publishing could be said to be at a disadvantage when considering common standards if you were to compare it to such sectors as engineering, IT, catering or food processing since they already have standards and qualifications which are capable of being recognised by Europe if not necessarily comparable. In publishing, there are few countries with standards and even fewer with qualifications. It may be we are at a crossroads where we can either work together in creating common "publishing specific" occupational standards or alternatively go our own individual ways. Is there a majority saying "No matter in what country the competences required of a professional journal publisher are the same - so why not have an agreed European standard and qualification"? If it is a majority then perhaps we should work towards it, through the EC.

What do you think?

## Appendix A

### Vocational Education & Training in Publishing

#### Group 1

Germany France Netherlands United Kingdom

- Considerable government involvement and support
- A number of academic / vocational pre-entry courses
- High level of in-service training programmes
- Dedicated publisher training organisations
- Very active in collaborating with partners in Europe
- Founder members of ABPTOE (plus Spain)

#### Group 2

Belgium Spain Ireland

- Moderate or responsive involvement by government
- Minimal access to vocational pre-entry training
- Small but growing level of in-service training programmes
- Active in collaboration with other countries

#### Group 3

Denmark Greece Luxemburg Italy Portugal

- Little or no government involvement
- Minimal or no pre-entry training
- Minimal in-service training
- Willingness to collaborate

## Appendix B

### Produce Journals

#### Obtain Journal Contributions

##### Performance criteria

- Papers are solicited for early issues of journals and calls-for-papers signals given at appropriate times via leaflets, advertisements and letters, to ensure an adequate and even supply of high-quality contributions
- Preliminary papers are assessed for subject relevance, quality, length, and compatibility with journal specification
- The flow of copy is monitored in terms of sufficiency, subject coverage, quality, stage of development and adherence to schedule
- Book reviews, list of books, conferences, notice and news items are acquired/commissioned on topics relevant to the journal
- Correspondence is reviewed, collated and selected for publishing

#### Control Journal Production

##### Performance criteria

- The copy-editing of text is organised which conforms to journal house style and meets agreed schedules
- Suppliers of typesetting and printing are selected capable of producing the journal to the agreed quality specification
- Production costs from suppliers are negotiated on terms favourable to the company and are regularly monitored against alternative suppliers' terms
- Proofs are despatched to authors with queries and all proof corrections processed to schedule
- Artwork and illustrations are proofed to schedule
- Offprint requirements are identified and reprints processed to schedule
- Supplier invoices are checked for accuracy and passed for payment
- The journal subscription department is kept informed of production schedule for individual issues