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Application form "AEBR-Cross Border Award" 2012
Deadline: 20.09.2012

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CROSS-BORDER LABOUR MARKET MOBILITY – EXPERIENCES, PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES

1. General information

1.1 Applicant border / cross-border region:

European Grouping on Territorial Cooperation Galicia - Norte Portugal (GNP-EGTC) in representation of Euroregion Galicia - Norte Portugal

Title of the cross-border cooperation measure* [project(s), programme(s) / strategy(ies)]:

"LABOUR MARKET MOBILITY IN THE EUROREGION GALICIA-NORTE DE PORTUGAL. RECOGNITION AND EVALUATION OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING CERTIFICATES.":

1.3 Period:

This project began in 2010, when the GNP-EGTC carried out the study - "Labour Market Mobility in the Euroregion Galicia - Norte Portugal. Recognition of Vocational Training Certificates". The development of this ongoing project continues today through the Working Group for the recognition and evaluation of vocational training certificates between Galicia and Portugal.

1.4 Lead Partner:

European Grouping on Territorial Cooperation Galicia -
Norte Portugal (GNP-EGTC)

Contact:

Juan Jose Lirón Lago, Director of GNP-EGTC

1.5 Partners:

Xunta de Galicia (Galicia Regional Government)
- Regional Ministry of Education and University Regulation. General Directorate of Education, Vocational Training and Educational Innovation

Contact:

Manuel Corredoira, General Director of Education, Vocational Training and Educational Innovation

Employment and Vocational Training Institute (IEFP) of Portugal

Cesar Ferreira, North-Regional Delegate of the Employment and Vocational Training Institute of Portugal.

1.6. Financing of the cross-border cooperation measure (e.g. INTERREG):

The GNP-EGTC is funded by the Cross Border Cooperation Program Spain - Portugal (Interreg IVA Spain-Portugal) to carry out this project

1.7 Links to other projects, measures and/or programmes (only if applicable):

Ibermovilias project, funded by the Cross Border Cooperation Program Spain - Portugal, to boost cross border mobility throughout the border between Spain and Portugal, led by the Xunta de Galicia.

2. Contents

2.1 Objectives of the cross-border cooperation measure:

The project arises to overcome the handicap in the process of recognition of Vocational Training (VT) certificates between Galicia and the north region of Portugal. This problem also takes place between Spain and Portugal and even at European level. The ENIC-NARIC network (European Network of Information Centres - National Academic Recognition Information Centres) admits that the recognition of Vocational Training certificates in Europe is a time-consuming process, where the decision of the authorities can take up to five months, it also has economic costs for the applicants and the process can be different in different countries and for each profession/trade. This obstacle hinders labour mobility, even to the degree of discouraging workers to move to another country, not knowing if their formative and training efforts would be recognized outside. This obstacle makes that foreign workers cannot compete under the same conditions with national workers in the domestic labour market. Not having a recognized certificate has two main implications. The first one is that the foreign worker will not be allowed to enter an occupation if his/her chosen profession is regulated (medicine, veterinary, public administration ... as well as mechanical technician, tour guide, town gas fitter or plumber, etc.) If the applicant pursues a non regulated profession, where recruitment depends on the employer, the applicant will be in disadvantage respect to domestic workers due to the lack of recognition, which in practice means not getting the job or accessing to occupations with lower wage and / or lower rank.

The GNP-EGTC has a strategic action plan agreed with its two main partners, the Government of Galicia (Xunta de Galicia) and the Regional Government of North Portugal (Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte - CCDR-N) The plan is intended to achieve the objective of promoting cross-border cooperation (CBC) between Galicia and northern Portugal, fostering deeper social, cultural and economic integration. In order to do so, the GNP-EGTC works in diverse sectors, such as culture, tourism, infrastructures, sea related economy ... and obviously the labour market.

An important way of increasing social and economic integration in the working field of the Euroregion´ citizens is to facilitate labour mobility between the two regions, improving their competitiveness through labour market dynamism. This is the main objective of this GNP-EGTC initiative, that it is also supported by Xunta de Galicia, the CCDR-N and the Employment and Training Institute of Portugal (IEFP), the institution having authority on educational and employment issues in Portugal.

To encourage the labour mobility and to improve the competitiveness of the Euroregion, matching working supply with demand and boosting a more cohesive labour market, it is expected to improve and to fasten the evaluation and recognition process that currently exists for the Vocational Training certificates on both sides of the border. The idea behind this initiative is to develop, for Vocational Training, a similar process as the Higher Education took through the Bologna process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which has reached a high degree of integration for European higher studies. This project initially focuses on the top 5 most important sectors of VT in the Euroregion Galicia - Norte Portugal, where more labour relationship take place: Automotive, naval (shipbuilding), Building, Health and Tourism. Subsequently it will be extended to other labour sectors.

The operational objectives of this project are:

- To identify the current procedures required for citizens in order for the evaluation and recognition of their certificates on the other side of the border (which is the authority responsible for the evaluation and recognition of every certificate, what procedure should be follow in any particular case, what documentation must be submitted,
- To provide specific information on the evaluation and equivalence of certificates on both sides of the border.
- To disseminate the information obtained as a first step to facilitate the evaluation and recognition of qualifications for citizens, through case studies.
- To find out cross border obstacles affecting individuals as well as public authorities when executing the process of evaluation and recognition of VT certificates. Working Group to remove the obstacles found and to develop a common process.
- To establish the equivalence and correspondences between VT certificates in Galicia and North Portugal, as well as defining the additional training, if needed, in order to have the recognition of certificates.
- Developing a faster and more agile evaluation and certification process, both for individuals and for public authorities, by working together and achieving agreements between the Xunta de Galicia and IEFP, allowing automatic evaluation and recognition processes. If contents of a certificate are considered equivalent, then automatic recognition of the certificate will be reached. Another step would be required for those certificates not having equivalent contents, by the accurate definition of the additional training required.
- Creating an on-line evaluation and recognition application, to facilitate the process for applicants from both sides of the border, thus saving time and travel costs for citizens. It also results in less administrative burden for authorities in both areas.
- To develop common VT studies in the Euroregion.

2.2 Organisational structure and activities to implement the objectives (e.g. joint secretariat, contract, etc.):

The first stage of this project, the study "Labour Mobility in the Euroregion Galicia-North Portugal. Recognition of Vocational Training Certificates" has been developed by the GNP-EGTC. The following steps, which are based on the conclusions and recommendations of the Study, are being developed through a joint working group with representatives of the

GNP-EGTC, the Directorate General of Education, Vocational Training and University of the Ministry of Education and University of the Government of Galicia and Northern Regional Delegation of the Employment and Vocational Training Institute of Portugal.

2.3 How far has the cooperation measure been implemented?

The first part of this project, the Study, was completed in the beginning of 2011. Since that moment, information on the current procedures to get the evaluation and recognition of VT certificates between Galicia and Portugal is available, as well as the correspondence and equivalence of all vocational training certificates on both sides of the border. Also available are the case studies analyzed, which can be used as guides for concerned applicants.

At present, the Working Group is developing its work, according to the findings and suggestions for improvement of the Study, to streamline and simplify the evaluation and recognition process and to establish an automatic process for it. As mentioned above, the work is based on the integration process of European higher education, the EHEA, although in this case applied to vocational training. These tasks are well advanced.

Subsequently, an informatic application will be available on-line to expedite and facilitate applicants to further this process of recognition.

The last step will be the definition and development of common VT studies in the Euroregion

2.4 Special framework conditions (geographical, political, etc.)

Thus Galicia and the North Portugal are both peripheral territories at European level and also in their national contexts, taking into account the distance that separates them from their national capitals. In a context of economic crisis, the peripheral regions further suffer their distance from the center of Europe and the core locations in their own countries.

Both Spain and Portugal face high unemployment rates, the largest in Europe, which reflect a depressed labour market, especially in the case of young people, with rates reaching up to 37.6% for the Galician youth and 28.5% for young people in Northern Portugal. The necessity of working to improve and revitalize the labour market, exploiting the potential of cross-border areas is more than evident in this situation.

Politically, there are differences in terms of competences in education and VT. The Galician Government has the authority related to the evaluation and recognition of VT certificates. In the case of Portugal, the regional structures do not have those competences and is the IEFP which has the authority and reports directly to the Ministry of Economy and Employment of Portugal. Therefore, an agreement between the North Portugal region and Galicia, is in fact an agreement between Galicia and the whole Portugal. Furthermore, the similarity between the processes in this area in Galicia compared to the rest of Spain, would make possible a fast adaptation of the agreements reached between the two territories at national level, promoting the implementation of this initiative across the whole border.

Other aspects to be taken into account in the relationships between Galicia and northern Portugal have to do with the similarity of language, the Galician (regional official language in Galicia together with the Spanish) and Portuguese, making easier every exchange in the Euroregion. In the labour market, the interrelationships in the sectors of building, shipbuilding and automotive, together with livestock farming and winemaking and in the field of tourism are outstanding.

3. Contribution of the measure (added value) to the development of the border/cross-border region, particularly to the labour market:

(not more than half a page)

One of the major failures of the European labour market is the lack of mobility of their workers. This means that there are large differences on unemployment rates between countries, keeping these great differences over time without the logical movement of workers. Besides the already known cultural and linguistic reasons, there is another problem with the recognition of qualifications. This problem is even deeper in cross border regions where the mobility of workers should be easier. The obstacle has been removed for higher education through the European Higher Education Area, which has improved labor mobility ratios of university graduates. But, despite the Directives 89/48/EEC and 92/51/EEC or the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, it is noteworthy the lack of a system of automatic evaluation and recognition for non-university education, especially in the case of vocational training. Currently there is no community mechanism whereby certificates obtained in one EU country are generally officially recognized in the other EU countries. Current processes are solved independently according to each country's procedures on a case by case basis depending on the profession, being costly for applicants and lasting up to five months or even more.

This obvious obstacle to labour mobility implies that many workers, in spite of the economic crisis and the high unemployment level both in Galicia and the North of Portugal, do not consider the option of working across the border because of these administrative hurdles. The reality for those who try it, is that, despite the spirit of European legislation, they are in an disadvantaged position compared to national applicants when applying for a job. Meaning lower wages and / or lower rank. It can even lead to informal economy, with jobs not fully complying the legislation.

The border between Galicia and Portugal has a high level of socio-economic exchanges. The average daily traffic of vehicles for this part of the border represents 50% of the whole border exchanges. The 22% of Portuguese companies im-

- 5.1.4 Official translation of documents
- 5.1.5 Authentication of academic documents issued in foreign countries.
- 5.2 Procedure for evaluation and recognition of certificates in Portugal.
 - 5.2.1 Professional Recognition of certificates issued in other countries.
 - 5.2.2 Certificate of Professional Aptitude (CAP).
 - 5.2.3 Recognition of acquired for Professional Certification (RVCC-PRO).
 - 5.2.4 Access to the professions.
 - 5.2.5 Entities responsible for the recognition of diplomas / professional certificates
- 6 Obstacles detected.
 - 6.1 Barriers identified in Galicia.
 - 6.2 Barriers detected in Portugal.
- 7. Analysis of practical cases.
 - 7.1 Case Study.
 - 7.1.1 Case Studies in Galicia.
 - 7.1.2 Case studies in Portugal.
 - 7.2 Best Practices.
- 8. Table of experts.
- 9. Conclusions and recommendations.
- 10 Annexes

Working Group for the recognition and evaluation of vocational training certificates between Galicia and Portugal:

- Objective: To establish automatic procedures for evaluation and recognition of vocational training certificates between Galicia and North Portugal, minimizing the time from the application until the actual evaluation and recognition.

Main areas of work for the accreditation of VE certificates in the automotive, building, shipbuilding, health and tourism sectors:

- To analyze more operational ways to overcome the obstacles identified in the study that both individual applicants and public administration have to face when making the evaluation and recognition of VT certificates in the neighbour country.
- Implementation of administrative procedures for homogenization the evaluation and recognition processes of VT certificates on both sides of the border.
 - o Analysis of the families of Vocational Training Studies in Galicia and northern Portugal.
 - o Five different working groups according to the five sectors (automotive, building, shipbuilding, health and tourism).
 - o Identification of any different VT study, taking into account the subjects taught, the total number of formative hours and labour practice.
 - o Comparative analysis of each VT study individually with its equivalent on the other side of the border in order to establish potential matches.
- Establishment of agreements for automatic recognition in those cases where the training is found to be equivalent. Definition of additional training required for those situations where automatic recognition is not possible.
- Definition and implementation of administrative procedures for public authorities to make agile and fast evaluation and recognition processes.
- Development of informative materials (both on-line and off-line) to distribute among workers and students about the possibilities that the evaluation and recognition of their certificates could provide in the neighbour country, in order to promote labour mobility.
- Development of an online software application allowing the management of applications for the evaluation and recognition of VT certificates.
- Implementation of agreements and administrative procedures for homogenization of VT studies on both sides of the border, developing common VT careers.

b) **Link to the study “LABOUR MARKET MOBILITY IN THE EUROREGION GALICIA-NORTE DE PORTUGAL. RECOGNITION OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING CERTIFICATES.”:**

- <http://www.gnpaect.eu/multimedia/adjuntos/1332840487.pdf>



Date 19/09/12

Signature

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* A cross-border cooperation measure is given, when partners from both sides of the border participate as regards contents, organisation, staff and finances.