

“WAVE”

Validation of working experience in aquaculture

Much of the acquisition of skills in professional aquaculture occurs outside the scope of the awarding of accredited University/College tertiary degrees or diplomas. Such skills may be acquired through formal certification (termed ‘vocational’) or by informal means (experience-based, workplace assessment, lifelong learning).

One of the priorities of current EU Vocational Education and Training (VET) policy is to develop a credit transfer system for VET (ECVET), which will perform the same function as ECTS credits currently used in Higher Education.

The proposed ECVET system is based on the **description of qualifications in terms of knowledge, skills and competences**, organised into units that can be transferred and accumulated, and the allocation of credit points to these units. The units can be placed within the over-arching European Qualifications Framework (EQF) which can also include sectoral frameworks. **Currently there is no agreed Europe-wide system for accrediting such types of training in aquaculture.**

The **WAVE project**, funded under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme, has played an important part in developing a common currency of qualifications and competences in aquaculture, with an emphasis on quality control in order to improve the standing of vocational qualifications and competences at international level. It had the following goals:

- **to create an accurate Master List of competencies related to aquaculture production for all of Europe (all species, all technologies, and differences around Europe)**

- **to create a set of WAVE guidelines for using such a Master List**

The project has created a database of current occupational competencies and skills across the European aquaculture industry. The **Master List of WAVE competencies (248 in 16 groupings)** is based on existing practices in aquaculture across Europe, which allows comparisons to be made between countries, techniques and methods. In order to verify its comprehensiveness and authenticity, the list has been translated in the 10 important languages for European aquaculture (English, Norwegian, French, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Dutch, Danish, Czech, Hungarian) and subsequently been distributed throughout the length and breadth of Europe (10 countries were surveyed). By means of specially designed questionnaires directed towards different parts of the workforce, the WAVE partners have been able to examine the needs of workers, managers and employers and uncover gaps and/or omissions in the Master List.

The WAVE Master List and **WAVE Guidelines** were also circulated to industry leaders, vocational training organisations and



Project acronym:

WAVE

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Working in Aquaculture, Validation of Experience

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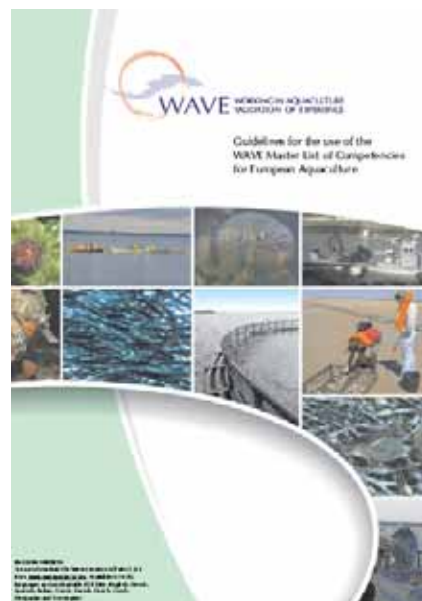
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accreditation bodies to ensure their acceptability as a resource for assessing recognised VET skills and competencies at all levels and its possible incorporation into national qualifications frameworks at the appropriate level. The guidelines show how the Master List can be used by different target audiences:

- Producers and farm managers
- Training organisations
- Regulatory, awarding bodies and other education experts
- Individuals

As well as the Master List and Guidelines, the WAVE project has also developed a multi-lingual online tool which allows potential users to create their own customised Master List of Competences in 5 quick steps. The Master List and guidelines are freely available on the project website.



“WAVE HAS CREATED A DATABASE OF CURRENT OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS ACROSS THE EUROPEAN AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY.”

The WAVE partnership has succeeded, by its exhaustive surveying techniques, in creating an integrated approach by bringing together the whole European sector, and has been able to provide a broad overview of what skills are required on farms.

The Master List of Competencies created in the project can be used to

- Provide managers with a tool for a wide variety of workforce management and quality control
- Provide a way of identifying gaps in skills and/or knowledge
- Offer a framework for training and development
- Describe good practice in particular areas of work
- Set out a statement of competence which brings together the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to do the work
- Form a basis for the development of a relevant qualifications framework

In this way it will contribute to the **facilitation of the recognition of prior achievement**, to **motivation enhancement** and to the **promotion of job satisfaction**.