

Competences in Education and Recognition 2

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

Project acronym: CoRe 2
Project title: Competences in Education and Recognition 2

Project number: 142789 – LLP-1-NL
Sub-programme or KA: ERASMUS - EMHE
Project website: www.core-project.eu

Reporting period: From 1-10-2008
To 31-08-2009

Report version: Progress Report
Date of preparation: 31-08-2009

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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

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Executive Summary

Learning outcomes, formulated in terms of competences, are becoming increasingly important in defining the goals and end results of a learning experience. Instead of focusing on the input (duration of a programme, subjects taken), the output of education (competences and skills obtained) is now the central focus. This approach is being reinforced by major developments within the European higher education area, such as the Bologna process, the Lisbon Process and the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The CoRe 2 project is a follow up of the CoRe 1 project, in which it was evaluated whether the Tuning degree profile (which summarizes the character of a HE programme) would also be useful in the field of credential evaluation and recognition within higher education. CoRe confirmed that the degree profile is in principle a useful tool for recognition purposes. However, CoRe also demonstrated that current degree profiles show such a strong variation, specifically in the description of learning outcomes, that comparison of degree profiles is highly problematic.

Aim

Therefore, the present project (CoRe2) will produce a Brochure /Guide containing:

1. A template for the degree profile and instructions on how to use this;
2. Guidelines on how to write learning outcomes of a higher education programme;
3. A glossary of terms to ensure a common use of language for transparency purposes.

With this guide, higher education institutions will be able to produce effective profiles of their programmes, providing specific and measurable information on competences. The appropriate section of the Diploma Supplement will gain in readability. All this will help students to clarify their competences, which will improve recognition of their qualifications, and thus increase their opportunities for mobility and employability. It will also help institutions in making their programmes more attractive to students, and in finding suitable partners for cooperation (both with other education institutions and with business/industry). Credential evaluators, admissions officers and employers will also benefit, as they will profit from more transparent descriptions of competences in the process of admitting students or selecting employees.

Project team

The project is carried out by a consortium consisting of 5 NARICs (Nuffic, UK NARIC, CIEP, Czech NARIC and Archimedes Foundation) who are experts on international recognition of qualifications, 4 Tuning coordinators (nursing, history, physics and overall coordinator) who are very active in the Tuning Process, and NVAO (Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organisation, also member of ENQA and ECA).

Plans and prospects

The duration of the CoRe 2 project is two years and the project consists of three phases. Currently, one year has passed and the first phase is almost complete. The main activity of Phase 2 will be the testing of the first draft of the brochure by 9 higher education institutions. The focus of the third phase will be the writing of the final draft of the brochure.

The CoRe 2 project website can be found at: www.core-project.eu

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1. Project Objectives

Background

EU Policies

The CoRe 2 project has been undertaken in the context of the shifting focus of the higher education experience from the institution and staff responsible for delivery of the programme, towards the students enrolled on the programmes.

This change stems for the most part from the need to define partial or full qualifications in uniform terms, thus improving recognition and increasing mobility, which will contribute towards a stronger and more competitive Europe of knowledge.

A number of initiatives and policy developments have contributed towards this developing outcomes-based approach to higher education in Europe, of which the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Process are key.

Learning outcomes have begun to play an increasingly important role in these developments. More specifically the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and national qualification frameworks (NQFs), brought the debate on how qualifications can be expressed in terms of learning outcomes and competences to the forefront.

CoRe 1

In addition to these developments, CoRe 2 is also a follow up project of CoRe 1 (www.core-project.eu), which has been undertaken in order to evaluate whether the Tuning degree profile was useful for recognition purposes.

The Tuning degree profile summarizes the character of a HE programme. Learning outcomes form an important part in describing the character.

The analysis and evaluation in CoRe 1 of the Tuning degree profile showed that it is useful for recognition, but that it also suffers from a number of shortcomings, which can be summarized as follows:

- 1) program descriptions are presented in very different formats;
- 2) the description of learning outcomes and the number of competences described varies strongly;
- 3) the 'competence language' differs significantly, especially in indicating the level and scope of a competence.

CoRe 2 aims to address these shortcomings.

Aim

The aim of CoRe 2 is to produce a Guide containing the following 3 elements:

1. Template degree profile & instructions

A standard template for the degree profile and instructions on how to complete this. In this way the transparency and comparability of information will be ensured for recognition and mobility purposes.

2. Guidelines on how to write learning outcomes

Guidelines on how to write learning outcomes of a higher education programme to provide clear and precise formulations and by enabling connection with the Dublin Descriptors and the EQF (see chapter 3 below).

3. A glossary of terms

The glossary will be included to foster a common use of language for transparency and recognition purposes.

Target user groups

European higher education institutions

The final brochure is primarily aimed at end-users working at higher education institutions, who have the task to provide descriptions of their programmes in terms of learning outcomes. The brochure will help them to formulate clear, precise and specific descriptions in a uniform way.

The development of a degree profile will also provide HEIs with the opportunity to define the competences acquired by the student on successful completion of a particular programme. This can then be used to complement existing information (contained, for example in the Diploma Supplement and/or Transcript) to facilitate recognition, mobility and recruitment, as well as for promotional purposes.

Credential evaluators

In general the template, guidelines and glossary combined in the guide are expected to contribute to the transparency of qualifications. Credential evaluators will be able to use the degree profile to ensure a more effective and accurate assessment of the qualification it complements. The profile will also indicate whether programmes meet specific accreditation requirements (e.g. for professional education programmes).

Students

Students can use the extra information on the degree profile for credit transfer, progression or programme selection purposes.

Employers & others

For other audiences, the completed degree profile will provide much-needed additional information on the competences held by a graduate of a specific programme. This extra background will help employers to identify whether an individual is appropriate for entry into a specific job role, based on the competences acquired rather than simply a list of modules studied.

Duration

The CoRe 2 project is a 2 year project which started in October 2008 and will end in October 2010.

2. Project Approach

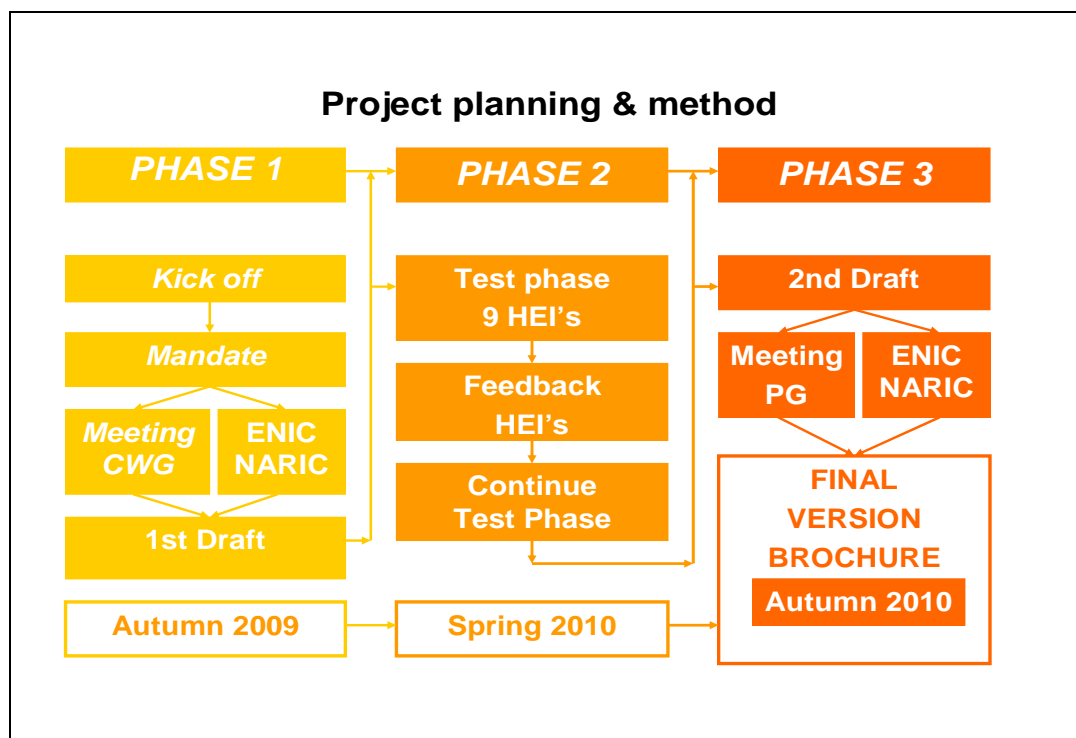
This chapter will describe the 3 phases of the project and the different roles of the project team.

Phases

The project comprises three phases, during which the template degree profile, guidelines and glossary are developed and combined into a user friendly guide.

In short, the overall aim of the first phase is to write the first draft of the guide. This will be followed by a second phase in which 9 higher education institutions (the main end users) will test the first draft by using the template degree profile, guidelines and glossary to complete the degree profile of their program and more specifically to write their program in terms of learning outcomes. Using this feedback, a 2nd draft will be designed that will be finalized in the 3rd phase.

Table 1: Project planning & method



The different phases are described in detail below:

Phase 1 (1/12/2009 – 31/08/09)

In the first phase of the project the following activities have been carried out:

Kick-off meeting

The objectives of the meeting were: 1) to launch the project, 2) to discuss and formulate the mandate by which the CoRe II working group will develop the format, glossary and

guidelines, 3) to share examples of good practice, and 4) to share information on the overall project management.

Mandate

The outcome of the research phase was a mandate for the core working group to write the 1st draft of the guide.

Meeting core working group

The core working group met in May 2009 to discuss the writing of the 1st draft and agree on the template of the degree profile and the structure of the guide.

ENIC/NARIC meeting

The results of the meeting of the core working group and especially the template of the degree profile were presented at the annual ENIC/NARIC conference in June 2009 to collect feedback from the perspective of recognition and transparency.

First draft competence guidelines

On the basis of the mandate and the feedback of the ENIC/NARIC meeting, the working group started to write the first draft of the guide which will be completed beginning of September.

Phase 2

Phase 2 will start in the autumn of 2009 and will consist of the following activities:

Start testing phase

9 selected HEI's (test team) will test the Guide, by using them to complete the degree profile for a programme, using the instructions. This will include the writing of the selected programme in learning outcomes.

Mid term evaluation meeting

A mid term evaluation with the test partners will be organized to collect their feedback and make improvements where necessary

Continue test phase

The test phase will continue, taking the outcomes of the mid term evaluation meeting into consideration.

Phase 3

The third phase will start in spring 2010 and consist of the following planned activities.

2nd draft of the Guide

The guide will be re-drafted following the feedback of the testing phase.

Meeting project group

The project group (all consortium partners) will discuss and provide feedback on the 2nd draft in order to write the final version.

ENIC/NARIC meeting

The 3rd draft will be presented at the annual ENIC/ NARIC Conference to collect feedback from the perspective of recognition.

3rd and Final version of the Guide & distribution

Taking the results of the project group meeting and the feedback of the ENIC/NARIC network into account, a 3rd and final version of the guide will be developed and distributed.

2 activities that are carried out during all three phases of the project are:

The overall project management

The coordination, organisation and administration of the project.

Project website

The website will contain all project results, including the brochure.

Project group

The project group consists of three different levels, each responsible for different tasks within the project.

The project is carried out by 3 different ‘sub-groups’, each involved in a different task in the project:

1. The project group, consisting of all members of the consortium
2. The working group, consisting of all members of the 5 NARICs involved and Tuning
3. The ‘core working group’, consisting of 2 NARICs and Tuning.

In the table below the different responsibilities of each group are reflected.

Table 2: Project group & Responsibilities

PROJECT GROUP	WORKING GROUP	CORE WORKING GROUP
Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kick off (phase 1) ▪ Consultations (all phases) ▪ Feedback meeting phase 3 	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The mandate (phase 1) 	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The drafts (all phases) ▪ Mid term evaluation meetings (phase 1 &2) ▪ Test phase (phase 2) ▪ Final draft (phase 3)
Partners involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 NARICs ▪ Tuning ▪ NVAO (all project partners)	Partners involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 NARIC's ▪ Tuning 	Partners involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NARIC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nuffic ○ UK NARIC ▪ Tuning

Dissemination

The dissemination of the project results is centred around the production of a user-friendly guide. It is expected that the guide will be so useful that it will create its own demand.

The project team members (especially those involved in the Tuning project) will see to it that the manual will be widely spread to all of their colleague institutions and to relevant stakeholders.

Furthermore, the brochure will be made available for the public as a download on the project website. In this sense, the final version of the project website is also to be considered as a tool for exploiting the project results.

Moreover, each of the team members has and will continue to participate in relevant national and international conferences and meetings, which will provide further opportunities to spread the (preliminary) project results as well as collect feedback during the duration of the project.

In addition, at various stages in the project the preliminary project results are disseminated, such as during phase 2 to the 9 test institutions, to the ENIC/NARIC network at the annual meeting and on Tuning conferences.

Finally, a couple of Tuning partners made an application under the EACEA Call European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Projects – KA Policy Cooperation and Innovation – in order to extend the Tuning methodology to the two sectors: *Humanities & Fine Arts* and *Natural Sciences*. The CoRe 2 project is mentioned there as an associated project and the large platforms of university partners envisaged in the two applications will benefit from the CoRe 2 results.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

As described under 'project approach' the project consists of three phases at the time of publication of this report the first phase is almost complete when. As the 1st draft is being finalized while writing this report, the focus here is on the structure of the draft.

The Brochure/Guide

The structure of the brochure has been agreed upon during phase 1. The brochure will consist of the following 3 main chapters, according to the 3 goals of the CoRe 2 project:

- Template degree profile & Instructions
- How to write learning outcomes
- Glossary of terms

Template degree profile & Instructions

One of the main outcomes is the template of the degree profile. In the guide this section is accompanied by instructions on how to complete this template, section by section. Below, a shortened draft version of the template degree profile is presented.

The final version of the template will be further developed during the testing phase and the consultation rounds. The final version will be made visually attractive.

Figure 1: The draft template degree profile

0	Title- name	The name of the degree as awarded by the validating /awarding institution
	Level	The level of the qualification as awarded in the NQF
A	Purpose of the degree	Summary (2 sentences) of the aim of the programme with respect to the theoretical and practical achievements of the student.
B	Focus of the degree	
1	Disciplinary orientation (mono, multi, inter)	Indicate the main subject and/or subject specific areas (in case the degree title <u>does not</u> represent the major subject areas).
2	Focus (general/specialist)	Indicate whether the degree included a specialist and/ or general focus (this might include the dissertation topic).
3	Orientation (research/applied)	Specify the orientation of the degree
C	Competences achieved on programme completion	
4	Main subject specific competences	State here the most important subject specific program competences
5	Main generic competences	State here the most important generic competences obtained in the program
D	Employability	
6	Employability	Summarize the employment opportunities. NB: For regulated professions, indicate the relevant legal framework
7	Further education	Indicate further educational opportunities, if any (in addition to B.1)

E	Education style	
8	LT Approaches	Indicate the main learning and teaching strategies and methods
9	Assessment methods	Indicate the main assessment strategies and methods

How to write learning outcomes

This chapter will cover the following points:

- provision of guidelines for a set of learning outcomes;
- to be written from a European perspective;
- focus on programme outcomes (not on units);
- defining the complete set of learning outcomes for the particular program;
- take the main factors used when constructing the program outcomes in consideration;
- include the lifelong learning and Dublin Descriptors and how they relate to the qualification frameworks;
- make use of examples of good and bad practice to illustrate the guidelines.

Glossary of terms

The third chapter is also being developed while this report was written. The glossary of terms will only use those items that are of key relevance and only when they appear in the guidelines. Hereto it will make use of existing glossaries for definitions.

Project website

Information on the CoRe 2 project can be found on the projects' website: www.core-project.eu.

4. Partnerships

The CoRe 2 consortium

The consortium consists of a variety of experts who are bringing in their specific skills and competences into the project. In all, the consortium contains 8 organisations that were also active in the previous CoRe project, in which they have already demonstrated that they are capable of efficient cooperation and obtaining high-quality results.

The CoRe 2 consortium consists of ENIC/NARIC's, Tuning and the NVAO. Furthermore 9 higher education institutions will be subcontracted to ensure feedback from the main end-users.

CoRe 2 clearly has a European added value: the character of the project is such that it could not be carried out on a national level.

Within the project team 6 European countries are represented, while the testing team of 9 European HEI's will increase the number of European countries directly involved in the project. The Tuning coordinators also represent a large number of countries as they are dealing with institutions (in their specific subject area) all over Europe. The NVAO is providing the European perspective of accreditation through their networks and international experience. The NARICs represent the European network of information centres on recognition. All this input will ensure that the results should be applicable all over Europe and supported on a European scale.

ENIC/NARIC

ENIC/NARICs are involved in the project in order to contribute their expertise on international recognition of qualifications to the transparency and comparability of the format degree profile, guidelines for writing learning outcomes and the glossary.

The NARICs involved are:

- Nuffic;
- UK NARIC;
- CIEP;
- Czech NARIC;
- Archimedes Foundation.

Nuffic and UK NARIC act as the CoRe 2 project leaders.

Tuning

Tuning experts play a key role in the project, since the format degree profile, guidelines for writing learning outcomes and the Glossary will be developed within the framework of the Tuning methodology and will take the following three subject areas as their base:

- History;
- Physics;
- Nursing.

NVAO

The NVAO (Nederlands Vlaamse Accreditatie Organisatie) is involved to deliver expertise on quality assurance and accreditation from a European view, especially with regards to the development of the learning outcomes.

Other

Apart from the abovementioned consortium partners, **9 higher education institutions** are involved in the project to test the prototype competence guidelines. The 9 European higher education institutions are to be selected during the project (at the time of completion of this report these HEI's were not yet confirmed).

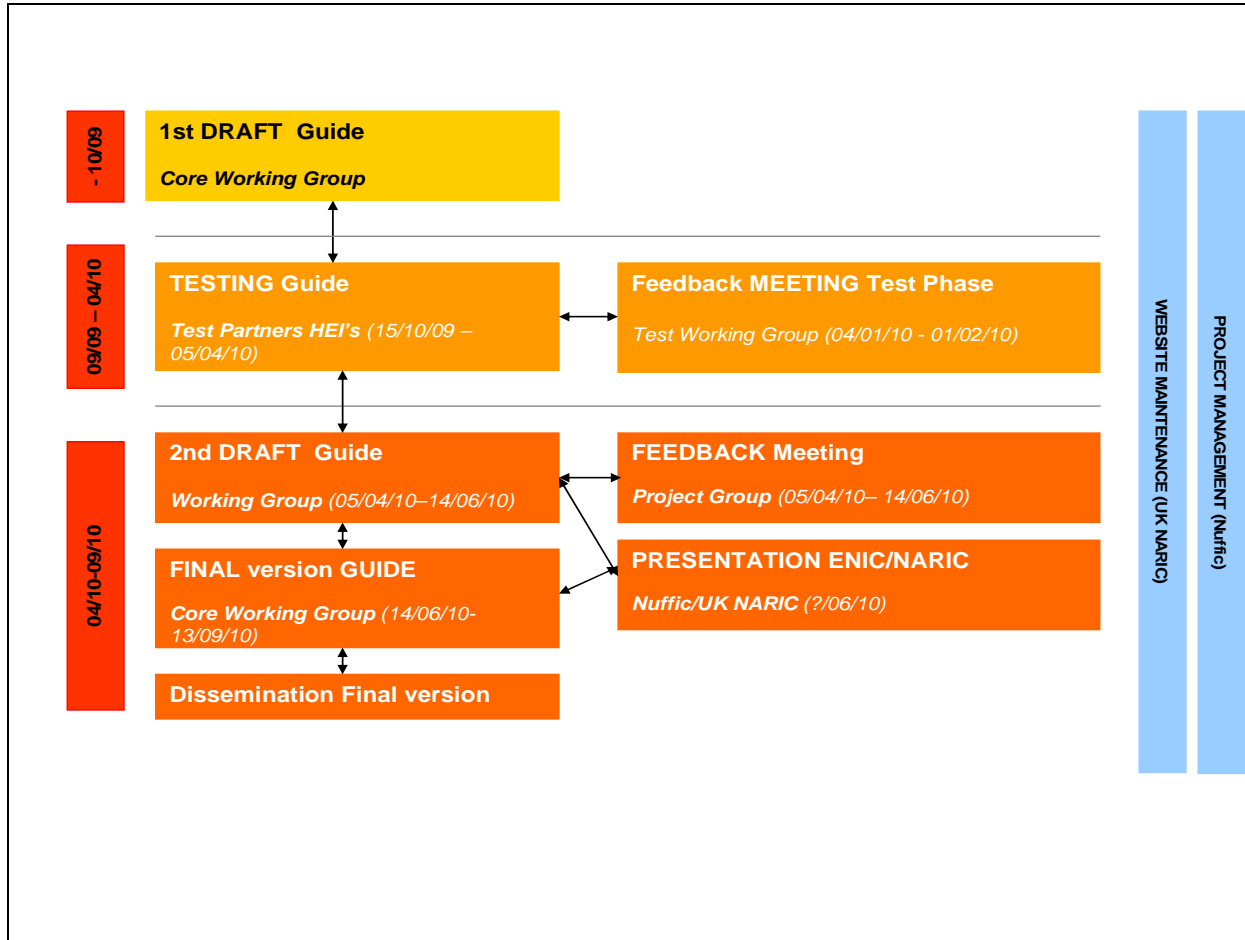
The institutions are selected on the basis of the subject area (3 HEI's each for nursing, history and physics) and higher education system (3 countries for each subject area). Their results will serve as feed back into the development of the final format of the competence guidelines, and their finished products will be used as examples of good practice.

5. Plans for the Future

The CoRe 2 project is a 2 year project (as indicated above). The end result – the Guide – is expected in the autumn of 2010. Until then, phase 2 and 3 of the project will be undertaken.

The main activity of Phase 2 will be the testing of the 1st draft by 9 higher education institutions. The focus of the third phase will be the writing of the 3rd and final draft of the brochure. Below the activities still to be performed are presented.

Table 3: Remaining activities of the CoRe 2 project



6. Contribution to EU policies

The following contains a selection of how CoRe 2 contributes to key EU policies, objectives and priorities:

The Louvain/Leuven Communiqué

The Louvain/Leuven Communiqué of the Bologna 6th Ministerial Conference on 28-29 April 2009 stated in regards to learning outcomes the following:

“Successful policies for lifelong learning will include basic principles and procedures for recognition of prior learning on the basis of learning outcomes regardless of whether the knowledge, skills and competences were acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning paths.”

“We reassert the importance of the teaching mission of higher education institutions and the necessity for ongoing curricular reform geared toward the development of learning outcomes... Academics, in close cooperation with student and employer representatives, will continue to develop learning outcomes and international reference points for a growing number of subject areas.”

The project addresses these priorities as it clearly contributes to the development of learning outcomes and furthermore to the transparency of qualifications based on learning outcomes.

Several objectives within the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) of the European Commission

The Core 2 project addresses several objectives of the LLP, of which some are highlighted below:

- *“..to contribute to the development of quality lifelong learning and to promote high performance, innovation and a European dimension in systems and practices in the field..”*
- *“..to support the realisation of a European area for lifelong learning..”*
- *“..to help improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of the opportunities for lifelong learning available within Member States..”*
- *“..to support the realisation of a European Higher Education Area..”*
- *“.. to encourage the best use of results, innovative products and processes and to exchange good practices in the fields covered by the Lifelong Learning Programme, in order to improve the quality of education an training.”*
- *“..to increase the degree of transparency and compatibility between higher education and advanced vocational education qualifications gained in Europe..”*
- *Decision 1720/2006/EC establishing the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), Chapter V, Article 32 (transversal programme), 1(b) (to promote quality and transparency): “..the specific objectives of the transversal programme shall be: ...(b) to promote the quality and transparency of Member States' education and training systems”.*

- *Decision 1720/2006/EC establishing the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), Article 5.1.f states that the Lifelong Learning Programme shall comprise "...actions to support transparency and recognition of qualifications".*

The following objectives specifically focus on the 2008 LLP priorities:

- *"Strategies for modernizing curricula and making them more transparent (e.g. by describing qualifications in terms of learning outcomes), governance and funding, making institutions more responsive to the needs of the labour market, citizens and society at large."*
- *"Strategies for modernizing curricula and making them more transparent (e.g. by describing qualifications in terms of learning outcomes).."*
- *"Improved access arrangements for people with non-formal or informal learning backgrounds or with alternative qualifications such as those derived from prior experiential learning."*
- *"Strategies to enhance the attractiveness of higher education institutions, to reinforce the provision of guidance, and to inform the public at large more effectively about their work."*

European Qualifications Framework

A recent breakthrough in improving the transparency of qualifications is the introduction of the European Qualifications Framework, which will link the national qualifications frameworks as developed by member states. In turn, higher education institutions have to link their programmes to the national qualifications frameworks. This will be a major task, requiring the description of all of their programmes in terms of learning outcomes. The results of the CoRe2 project will be very helpful in performing this task.

Lisbon partnership for growth and jobs

The project meets the goal of the WP to develop Europe into 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economic area in the world by the year 2010'. It specifically contributes to the following Lisbon key competences: 1) Learning to learn, 2) Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competences, 3) Entrepreneurship, and 4) Cultural expression.

