

Review of the WAVE project and competencies

1. Background

The WAVE initiative targeted the aquaculture industry throughout Europe - the workers and employers in SMEs, trade associations, colleges and training organisations and regulatory authorities. It drew up a Master List of Competencies for the sector with the aim of identifying the skills, knowledge and competencies needed.

In order to ensure that the Master List was appropriate and understood and accepted by both workers and managers, WAVE interviewed 151 individuals working on fish farms in 10 different European countries, and adjusted the Master List in accordance with their reaction. This 'bottom-up' approach was time-consuming but necessary if the List were to have acceptance and approval by the whole European industry. Such a Master List becomes an inventory of technical competences incorporating variations in work practices and variations according to species, types of farms and farming methods across Europe.

It was of great importance for WAVE that its methodology should be capable of undertaking its aims, should be able to initiate and sustain dialogue with providers, employers and employees on a trans-European scale, and also be able to bear intensive scrutiny by all interested parties.

An innovative WAVE surveying tool allowed interviewers in 10 countries to upload results to the database, view statistical overviews and allow partners to view and make comments on specific competencies. Industry, trade associations, colleges and regulatory authorities have all contributed to the Master List.

2. Outcomes

The outcomes of the WAVE initiative were extremely impressive and are listed below.

- A Master List of the competences (248 competencies, 16 groups, 10 EC languages) used in primary production in aquaculture based upon existing national lists with industry input.
- Printed and online Guidelines (in English, French, Spanish, Italian, Norwegian, Greek, Danish, Dutch, Czech and Hungarian), for 5 different target audiences detailing how to use the Master List.
- Website containing all products (<http://www.waveproject.com>)
- Online competency database, developed by partners, essential for managing the extended discussions concerning the draft competency lists with features such as online editing, tracking, historic archives, comments section, remote translations, online surveying and results
- Online surveying tool allowing interviewers in 10 countries to upload results to the database, view statistical overviews and allow partners to view comments on specific competencies resulting from the surveys
- Online glossary with definitions of 132 VET terms, available online in 10 languages
- Online competency tool giving users the opportunity to generate individualised list of competences, which is then emailed directly to them.



3. Relevance to current EU reforms

The WAVE project was designed to be directly in line with EU vocational educational policy. One of the current developments at the heart of the EU's Lisbon Strategy (to deliver stronger economic growth and to train and/or retrain the European workforce), is to develop a credit transfer system for Vocational and Educational Training (VET), called the European Credit System for VET (ECVET), in order to promote transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels. "Yet the specificities of VET require a credit transfer system that is fully, from the outset, a competence-based system" (Maastricht Ministerial communiqué, December 14, 2004, Maastricht).

The evolving ECVET system is based on the description of qualifications in terms of knowledge, skills and competences (KSC), organised into units that can be transferred and accumulated, and the allocation of credit points to these units which can be placed within the over-arching European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF).

The first formal step towards establishing the EQF took place in the EU on Sept 5 2006. One major feature of the EQF is its inclusion of sectoral frameworks (of which the WAVE project is a prime example). The WAVE partners, in order to ensure that its aims were compatible with EU vocational policy, met individually with members of the CEDFOP community, in particular Mr J. Bjornasvold (Brussels 2006), and also individual country EUROPASS representatives. All these meetings were extremely positive and all expressed interest in seeing the project continue, particularly in view of the approaching EQF and its inclusion of sectoral frameworks.

However with the ongoing changes in EU education policies, it was clear that the WAVE outcomes had to be capable of integration into the proposed National Qualifications Frameworks, as well as the European Qualification Framework. WAVE reflects these ongoing developments. WAVE created valuable tools:

- a) the **WAVE competency database** (online), developed by the partnership and essential in managing the extended discussions concerning the draft competency lists;
- b) the creation of an online tool giving users the opportunity to generate their individualised list of WAVE competences (choosing from the total of 248), which is then emailed to them. This online tool is also available in the above 10 languages.

A detailed analysis of how the Master List of Competencies can benefit all parts of the sector is given in the Appendix **WHAT WAVE CAN DO FOR YOU**.

APPENDIX

What WAVE can do for You

Uses and Benefits of Master List of Competences

WAVE is a pan-European project supported by the Leonardo Da Vinci Fund that seeks to identify and recognise the skills and knowledge needed for work in Aquaculture across Europe. WAVE has compiled a master list of the competences used in aquaculture which can be used to recognise and measure experience in the workforce and provide a benchmark for work performance. The Master List demonstrates the diversity and multi-disciplinary nature of the sector. It highlights the relationship between primary food production, local traditions/work practices and marketability.

These *competences* provide descriptions of skills and knowledge required to work in a variety of aquaculture environments. They recognise variations in work practices and variations according to species, types of farms and farming methods across Europe. They cover the key activities undertaken within the occupation, aiming to cover all the circumstances the job holder is likely to encounter. The competences are defined in the form of statements of knowledge/skills/performance.

Who can use the WAVE Competency List?

Employers/Managers
Employees and individuals
Education and training providers
Regulatory and Awarding Bodies

Summary

Competences 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 knowledge, skills and understanding necessary to do the work
- Form a basis for the development of a relevant qualifications framework

How can the WAVE Competency List be used?

Uses for Employers/managers

The Master List can be used to form a checklist for Employers which can be used to assist with a range of activities in the workplace:



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Business planning
Selection and Recruitment
Staff Development
Developing and evaluating training
Benchmarking

Business Planning

Employers/managers can use the list as an internal checklist to:

- Identify and describe the skills they need in their workforce
- Assess the skills already in their workforce
- Equip the business with the skills and expertise to deliver a quality product to the highest standards
- Fill identified gaps in current workforce skills and knowledge
- Show where further recruitment may be needed
- Develop training and development plans to fill any identified gaps in current workforce skills and knowledge

Selection and Recruitment

The Master List can be used to:

- Form the basis of job descriptions
- Form the basis of person specifications and job roles
- Evaluate CVs by providing a reference point to crosscheck qualifications and/or experience required to work on their farm
- Assist with the identification of potentially suitable employees whose skills and experience complement the identified needs of the business

Staff Development

The Master List identifies generic and specialist tasks used throughout the Aquaculture industry across Europe. As such, it contains descriptions of good practice that can be used as the basis for:

- Skills analysis
- Identifying and confirming existing skills and knowledge in staff
- Identifying gaps in knowledge and competence levels
- Training Needs analysis
- Objective setting
- Appraisal and reward
- Developing a career pathway

Developing and Evaluating Training

The Master List can be used to:

- Develop plans and training courses to meet organisational requirements
- Develop/identify the need for training to meet individual learning needs



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- Inform the content of training packages as it specifies in detail what the job role entails
- Provide a tool to evaluate training by defining the expected outcomes

Benchmarking

The Master List can provide a basis from which to:

- develop benchmarking exercises to measure/compare performance within the farm
- compare against other similar farms

Education and Training Providers

The Master List can be used to

- identify gaps in curricula in available training
- facilitate the development of focussed courses
- map provision to assess the validity of current programmes
- plan future developments to update courses
- highlight areas of specialisms for further development
- provide students with the opportunity to develop practical skills required for the industry and/or placement experience
- tailor education and training to industry needs/demands

Regulatory and Awarding Bodies

By identifying and defining the competencies needed to work successfully in the industry, the Aquaculture sector has a definitive industry standard which can be used for workforce analysis, workforce planning and determining training needs. Furthermore, the strength of the Master List is that it is pan-European and could be of use to professional bodies/organisations and awarding bodies in order to:

- influence practice in the industry
- develop education and training frameworks for the industry
- allow for comparisons to be drawn on practice in different countries
- promote harmonisation of practice and quality standards across the industry
- develop policy for the sector
- drive up quality in education and training for the sector

Uses for Individuals

Employees, potential employees, students, work placements can all utilise the Master List

Self Assessment

- To confirm current skills and knowledge, further develop and improve their performance
- Assess their competence against the job role/specification for their own or other jobs
- Identify gaps in skills and knowledge or level of competence
- Identify CPD requirements for their personal and career development



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- Help them seek formal recognition/credit of their work experience

The above can be extremely useful for individuals seeking

- promotion
- opportunities to specialise in a different area of Aquaculture
- education/training opportunities
- career change

The Master List can facilitate the recognition of prior achievement, learning and experience, enhance motivation and promote job satisfaction.

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