

European standards for qualifications and skills in the e-commerce sector



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Newsletter n°1, April 2016

ALL-ECOM



WHY?

Commerce is one of the most dynamic sectors in the European Union and is undergoing a major transformation, driven primarily by the rapid expansion of new technologies and the digital economy. **E-commerce** is increasing every day, offering new opportunities for business and has dramatically changed consumer's behaviour and expectations. For traders, e-commerce offers new ways to interact with costumers and to serve them through different channels and platforms.

In fact, the **ALL-ECOM** project vision is that the current commerce is, above all, a **connected commerce**; a commerce where the dynamic relationship between the presence on the Internet, the physical space, the participation in social networks and the use of mobile communications exists in a combined way, making the shopping experience a multifaceted process where technological interaction is increasingly present but not in opposition or as an unique alternative to shop "offline".

To improve business performance in a technological driven world a greater focus on different types of skills and competences is required. However, studies show that a mismatch between the skills needed and those available in the market need to be addressed by the qualification and education and vocational training systems at a national and European level, allowing a clear improvement of the commerce sector human resources' qualifications in e-commerce and new technologies applicable to business.

That's here the **ALL-ECOM** project comes across as a **"Sector Skills Alliance to set European standards for qualifications and skills in the e-commerce sector"** in 3 European countries: **Spain, Portugal and Austria**.

ALL-ECOM project seeks to **address the challenge of skills and competencies imbalance within the commerce sector by improving commerce human resources' qualifications in e-commerce** through the integration of new technologies in the strategy of both retail and wholesale commerce and by contributing to ensure **harmonization at national and European level of standards of qualifications and skills in the e-commerce**.

TO WHOM?

The project activities are addressed to the following target-groups:

- ◆ Workers (employees and self-employed) and employers in the commerce and e-commerce sector including entrepreneurs and start-ups working in the e-commerce field.
- ◆ Organisations/key stakeholders involved in the commerce sector: social partners (trade-unions and employers organisations), sectorial associations, VET providers and other public and private authorities with a regulatory function for education and vocational training systems, policy makers, bodies providing professional guidance in the sector.
- ◆ National regulatory bodies for qualifications.



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WHAT?

To address the challenges identified and the project objectives, several results/outcomes are expected to be developed until the project end (October 2017):

- ◆ National and comparative reports regarding skills needs related to e-commerce.
- ◆ National and comparative reports presenting an analysis of training offer and innovative learning methods identified in each partner country.
- ◆ Common methodology for the design of qualifications as well as for the recognition of competences in the commerce sector, resulting from an exercise of compilation, comparison and best practices sharing of partner countries own methodologies.
- ◆ New learning outcomes regarding e-commerce to integrate in the commerce sector qualifications.
- ◆ Common map of qualifications in e-commerce.
- ◆ Training material (training curricula and training contents) generated from the learning outcomes designed.
- ◆ Report with the results of the validation process of training material in each partner country.
- ◆ On-line tool for the recognition of competencies related to e-commerce acquired through non-formal and informal learning settings.
- ◆ Open educational resources (MOOC).
- ◆ National reports and conclusions on the training materials and recognition tool testing.
- ◆ Dissemination events: National and Transnational Conferences.



BY WHOM?

ALL-ECOM gathers a multistakeholder partnership, coming from 3 Member States. Each country is represented through a cluster of organizations, each one composed by **organizations representing the sector, by VET providers in the commerce sector and by institutions having a regulatory function within the national education and vocational training systems.**

Spain

FETICO - Federación de Trabajadores Independientes de Comercio (**promoter**)
(*Federation of Independent Workers of Commerce*)
Website: www.fetico.es
Contact person: Ignacio Granado Paz
(ignaciogranado@fetico.es)

IBECON 2003

(*VET Provider*)
Website: www.ibecon.org
Contact person: Ramón Zayas (rzayas@ibecon.org)

Servei d'Ocupació de Catalunya

(*Catalan Occupation Service*)
Website: www.oficinadetreball.gencat.cat
Contact person: Esther Estany
(esther.estany@gencat.cat)

Portugal

CCP - Confederação do Comércio e Serviços de Portugal
(*Portuguese Commerce and Services Confederation*)
Website: www.ccp.pt
Contact Person: Rita Siborro (ritasiborro@ccp.pt)

CECOA - Centro de Formação Profissional para o Comércio e Afins
(*Vocational Training Centre for the Commerce and Services*)
Website: www.cecoa.pt
Contact person: Cristina Dimas
(crisrina.dimas@cecoa.pt)



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ANQEP, I.P. - Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional
(National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training)
Website: www.anqep.gov.pt
Contact person: Sandra Lameira
(sandra.lameira@anqep.gov.pt)

Austria

ÖGB/GPA-djp - Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund/Gewerkschaft der Privatangestellten-Druck-Journalismus-Papier
(Austrian Trade Union Federation/Union of Salaried Private Sector Employees, Graphical Workers and Journalists)
Website: www.gpa-djp.at
Contact person: Mag.a Verena Nussbaum
(verena.nussbaum@gpa-djp.at)

Nowa Training□Beratung□Projektmanagement
(Nowa training□counselling□projectmanagement)
Website: www.nowa.at
Contact person: Eva Janusch (eva.janusch@nowa.at)

Wirtschaftskammer Steiermark(WK)
(Economic Chamber Styria - WKÖ)
Website: www.wko.at/stmk/handel
Contact person: Dr.in Isabella Schachenreiter-Kollerics
(isabella.schachenreiter-kollerics@wkstmk.at)

WHAT'S NEW IN THE PROJECT?

“Skills needs, training needs and innovative learning methods related to e-commerce in Spain, Portugal and Austria”

Led by the Portuguese partner CCP - Confederação do Comércio e Serviços de Portugal and the Austrian partner Nowa Training□Beratung□Projektmanagement - following a participatory process (focus groups, questionnaires, interviews) and involving commerce sector target groups representatives (employers, employees, VET providers, other relevant stakeholders such as political actors) and

using desk research and qualitative and quantitative research methods, a work of investigation was carried out in each partner country (Spain, Portugal and Austria) aiming at:

- ◆ Analyzing the state-of-the-art of the commerce sector regarding e-commerce, opportunities, barriers and challenges.
- ◆ Identifying skills, competences and training needs related to the use of ICT and digital competences in the commerce sector.
- ◆ Analyzing the sector existing training provision as well as identifying the most innovative learning methods in the sector, specifically concerning the development of e-commerce related skills with a view to establishing the basis for the definition of new learning outcomes to be included in the NQF (National Qualifications Frameworks) as well as in the training offer in the participating countries.

The **main conclusions drawn from the research** carried out are as follows:

The commerce sector is characterized by a low education level. In Portugal and Spain, a very significant percentage of people employed in the sector had level 2 of qualification or lower. In Austria 63% of all employees have completed an apprenticeship or middle vocational school, 15% have none vocational training, but only compulsory education.

Related to the use of ICT in the sector, the results show that more than 85% of enterprises have internet connection. However, only 39% of them use e-commerce to give or receive orders by electronic networks and it is very low the proportion of companies with human resources with expertise skills in this area.

The fast evolution of e-commerce requires an increased investment in technology and human resources in the sector, to train employees and employers in key skills, technological skills and soft skills in order to achieve a higher business performance.



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It is important to take into account the rather low qualification level of employees and employers who face a multichannel situation of business in various forms in their practical work, for which they are unprepared.

Given the gap between the required and existing skills in e-commerce, it is an urgent need to focus on the improvement of skills in this area and review the qualification references currently in place, assuring the possibility for their restructuring, so that they can be more adjusted to market needs and more easily upgradeable.

Qualification frameworks (NQF, EQF)

The answers obtained from commerce sector employees during the analyses carried out within the project show that most of them have a qualification level between 1 and 3 EQF: 38% of Austrian, 50% of Portuguese and 66% of Spanish respondents have only level 1 or 2.

New and different skills are increasingly required - a mix of technology skills, business and entrepreneurship, a strong customer orientation, foreign languages, negotiating skills and contracts management, project management and the ability to work in multidisciplinary teams.

The current qualifications have to be improved and updated, in order to respond to the skills needs resulting from the trends identified in this research.



Training offers

Requirements are not compatible with the (low) qualification level of the current staff in commerce. Therefore certain key competences

have to be increased and/or developed to enable employees to deal with the field of e-commerce.

Prerequisite for this personnel development are efforts to promote lifelong learning, reduce fear of this new field of work, increase affinity to new technologies and to provide target group oriented access to innovative learning methods.

The result of the survey regarding “training offers used in companies” show a striking difference in the perception of employees and employers concerning existing training offers, especially “on-the-job training” where employers estimate a substantially higher proportion, and “none” which is indicated by significantly more employees. In general employers see more training offers used in companies than employees.

Innovative learning methods

To provide access to employees to the various forms of e-learning in the commerce sector the “online socialization” step is indispensable. The analysis show, that the respondents preferred only those innovative learning methods they knew which does not automatically mean that these methods are the most suitable.

It is logical that if the skills to be developed are around “e” (e-marketing, e-consumer, e-commerce, etc.), then the “e” teaching/learning methods should be more appropriate and should cover different levels. The pedagogical and technical components must be seen as two essential parts of a whole. We cannot value one and neglect the other, both are essential for a proper and effective training and learning process.

Life-long-learning, in general, has to get a more central position in life and work-concepts. The fact that it is as an essential requirement for personal and professional development, as well as an investment in the competitive performance of the company has to be recognized. The company



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has to be seen as a “learning place” by employers and employees.

The connection between educational institutions and companies and the urgent adaptation of training offers to the needs of employers is essential, as well as high quality trainings and a framework that guarantees trainees employability.

As mentioned, one of the aims of this investigation was to identify **trends in the commerce sector and how those trends influence the occupations/professions/functions of the sector, namely in terms of new knowledge, skills and competences** required.

Developments in the commerce sector have been influenced by several drivers, like globalization, demographic changes, the economic crisis and the resulting decline in purchasing power, technological innovations and the use of e-commerce. The markets globalization has led to the setting up of global supply and sales networks, and to the implementation of ICT supported business activities.

Consumers are more demanding, look for products that have integrated services and are increasingly using ICT, resulting in new consumption patterns, as the multi-channel approach to the market (cross-channel).

A growing use of ICT in all functional areas of business is foreseeable (not only in sales), as well as the individualization of lifestyles and consumption habits.

The increase of new technologies in the commerce sector has brought several challenges that need to be taken into account in the development of new profiles and jobs (or functions) in the sector. These trends lead to monitoring the integration of these technologies in the development strategies of business activities and in the anticipation of more skills, so that companies can be more competitive.



New occupations

There is an awareness concerning the fast development of e-commerce which leads to new occupations in the sector. In the commercial area, we can highlight the following needed profiles:

- ◆ **Buyer** who should have the ability to negotiate and to make purchase orders at the best price, expanding the function to the buying services and to the knowledge of other markets;
- ◆ **Sales-manager** and **commercial technician**

In the area of logistics, we can identify:

- ◆ **Logistics manager; shopkeeper; responsible for deliveries; maintenance technician and expert**

Concerning the supporting functions, we highlight:

- ◆ **Administrative worker; financial, accountant, internet and information system specialist; marketing technician; quality and sustainable development technician**

New Skills

Depending on the level of qualification and the field of work trainings covering “key skills”, “digital and technological skills” and “soft skills” have to be developed:

Key skills

- ◆ Learn to learn / motivation to be updated / Lifelong learning
- ◆ General computer literacy skills

Digital and technological skills

- ◆ General e-commerce skills
- ◆ Role and function of e-commerce



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- ◆ Working with new technological applications
- ◆ Training concerning online consumers, motivation, purchase, marketing
- ◆ Using social media to communicate with clients
- ◆ Using of e-commerce and social media to increase sales

Soft skills

- ◆ Communication: ability to communicate via new technologies “at distance” (spoken and written communication)
- ◆ Foreign languages and intercultural skills
- ◆ Planning skills: using IT-supported tools for planning connected with “traditional” planning tools
- ◆ Problem solving skills: multichannel business models “create new problems”
- ◆ Stress management: new technologies cause expectations that everything has to be dealt quickly; multichannel customers are well informed and critical

National reports in each country have been produced and a **comparative report** has been also prepared. Read more: project website, section “Results”.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE SECTOR?

Ecommerce Europe has recently announced the launch of the Ecommerce Europe Trustmark website

The lack of confidence in online transactions by consumers hinders the growth of the European e-commerce. The association Ecommerce Europe with the aim of increase consumer trust in e-commerce has launched a European trustmark website, available for those who choose to commit with this non-profit initiative. The association also calls on the European legislators to a more balanced approach of consumer rights and contractual policies.

Under <http://www.ecommercetrustmark.eu> both online merchants and consumers can enjoy access

to simple, hassle and cost-free complaints handling solutions.

Read more: <http://www.ecommerce-europe.eu/news/2016/new-ecommerce-europe-trustmark-website-paves-the-way-for-increased-consumer-trust-in-e-commerce>

“Accenture Technology Vision 2016” Report

The report put the focus on the Primacy of People in a Digital Age. The digital transformation is considered as a challenge of people, not of technology. Winners in the digital age do much more than tick off a checklist of technology capabilities. They know their success hinges on people. The ability to understand changing customer needs and behaviors is, of course, vital. But the real deciding factor in the era of intelligence will be a company’s ability to evolve its corporate culture to not only take advantage of emerging technologies, but also, critically, embrace the new business strategies that those technologies drive.

Read more:

https://www.accenture.com/t20160202T102002_w/us-en/_acnmedia/Accenture/Omobono/TechnologyVision/pdf/Technology-Trends-Technology-Vision-2016.pdf

Global E-commerce Summit

This Summit is the leading international event that focuses on the most important trends and developments in global e-commerce, cross-border trading and omnichannel retail.

From May, 29 to June, 01, in Barcelona.

For registration and more information please go to <http://e-commercesummit.com/>

MORE INFO?

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