

CERTIFICATION AND QUALIFICATION FOR EUROPE'S JOB BROKERS



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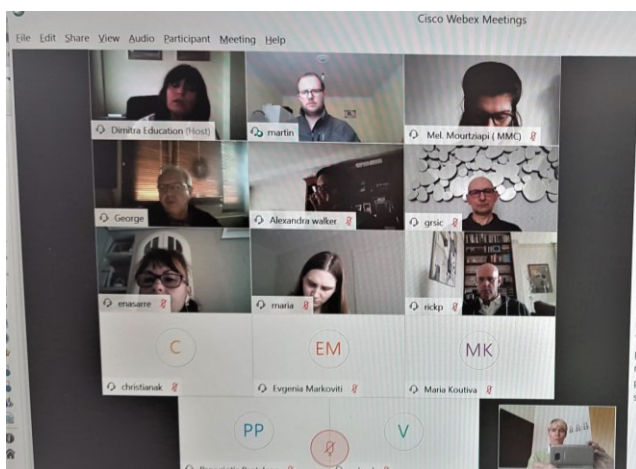
Welcome to the third issue of the CQJB's E-zine

The project is setting up a new joint qualification to back the validation requirements, professionalization and mobility of Europe's Job Brokers. The project will therefore develop a new curriculum programme and joint certification model as a mobile and transferable qualification, the *European Professional Certificate for Job Brokers*.

Fourth project meeting

The fourth meeting of the project was scheduled to take place in Akureyri, Iceland on 2 - 3 April and to be hosted by VMST, our Icelandic partner. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic it became impossible to hold the meeting in person.

In view of the international situation we were facing, we decided to schedule an online meeting for the same days we had originally planned. So finally, this e-meeting was hosted by DIMITRA, the coordinator, and all the partners participated as scheduled. Although it was the first time we had an online meeting, everything went smoothly on both days, which of course was expected with an experiences partnership like the CQJB one



CQJB partnership e-meeting

Project progress until now

Since the last meeting in Berlin, all the partners have been focused on the **piloting of the CQJB training material**. However, due to the COVID-19 panorama each partner has followed a different rhythm. Cypriot, Swedish and German partners have been through all the piloting activities. In the rest of the partner countries the piloting was disrupted due to the restrictions imposed upon live training. For this reason, most of the partners have delivered the training as an online course, and it seems that the material is easily transferable in this environment as well. The aim is to proceed as smoothly as possible and to let trainers and trainees adapt to this situation.

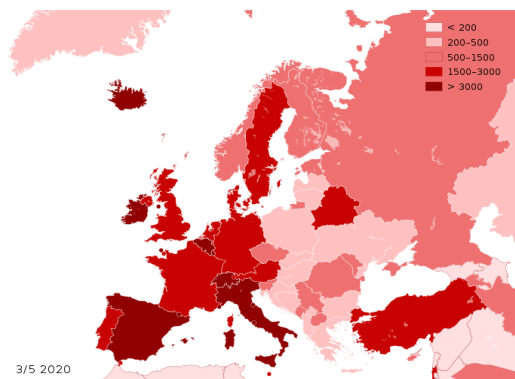
In many countries the participants of the pilot, who are staff in employment counselling services, are overwhelmed by this situation. They have shifted priorities and are really busy with the huge amount of new unemployed people in need for their support as the number of job seekers has suddenly risen due to the closure of so many companies due to the crisis arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Icelandic partner, VMST, which is the country's public employment service, is being especially affected by this situation. Due to the restrictive measures imposed to avoid the spread of the COVID-19, there are many newly unemployed people, something unprecedented in the country since the financial crisis of 2008. It has had to prioritise and focus on providing help to these new job seekers, thus, the piloting activities are going slower in Iceland. All the partners are dealing with their specific situation the best way they can but the work cannot be expected to run as it would in a normal everyday situation.

The certification scheme that has been developed by the project's partnership is according to the standards of ISO17024 and has been accredited by ESYD. Folkuniversitetet, our Swedish partners, has developed the **ECTS recognition procedure** which can be operated in a complementary fashion by the awarding of ECTS points to the students of institutions that are able to do so. Once the document is ready, Universities will have the option of implementing the CQJB course and validate learners' competences by awarding ECTS points.

- COVID-19 pandemic in Europe -

As of 13 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) considered Europe the active centre of the COVID-19 pandemic after the situation improved in China. Cases by country across Europe had doubled over periods of typically 3 to 4 days, with some countries showing doubling every 2 days.



COVID-19 Outbreak Cases per capita in Europe.

Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

As of 17 March 2020, all countries in Europe have reported at least one case of COVID-19. At least one death has been reported in all European countries, apart from the Vatican City. As of 18 March, more than 250 million people were in lockdown in Europe. It is the continent most affected by the pandemic in the world with more than 1.5 million confirmed cases and more than 150 000 deaths, approaching 200 000.

- Partner countries -

The COVID-19 pandemic is rapidly evolving, and outbreak investigations are ongoing.

The overall situation in Europe is worrying, in some countries the situation is particularly delicate and very restrictive measures have been taken for citizens, which has had a significant impact on the implementation of Job Broker training at the local level. Briefly, the project partners summarised the situation in their country as follows:

GREECE:

On 26 February, the first case in Greece was confirmed. Health and state authorities issued precautionary guidelines and recommendations, while measures up to confinement were taken locally in the affected areas. By March, with no deaths in the country, the government decided to suspend the operation of educational institutions, religious, cultural and social activities and nonessential transport and movement of all levels nationwide. Moreover, the government announced a series of economic supporting measures to support the economy, businesses and employees. Greece was one of the countries with the least deaths per capita in the UE so after a 42-day lockdown Greece has begun easing its restrictions, with the gradual lifting of movement restrictions. Due to the above, most of the educational activities have been transferred online, as it happened with the CQJB training. The participants were very excited to participate, however, the piloting period was prolonged in order for the last training to take place face to face, when the educational activities have started again.

UNITED KINGDOM:

The new coronavirus was first confirmed in the UK at the end of January, but the number of daily confirmed cases and related deaths began to increase significantly mid-late March. Although strict social distancing measures introduced at the end of March have helped bring the daily death toll down, the UK now has the highest official death toll in Europe and the second highest in the world. Lockdown restrictions in England were recently eased (but less in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) but many businesses and offices remain closed.



A message from the Queen Elizabeth II in Piccadilly Circus.

GERMANY:

In Germany, the first case of COVID-19 was recorded on January 27, 2020. Nowadays, Germany is the world's 4th and Europe's 3rd worst-hit country in terms of total cases. The coronavirus mortality rate is, however, reported comparatively lesser at 1.3%, ranking 8th in the world and 5th in Europe in the total number of deaths. In April, unlike other European countries, Germany stopped short of ordering its over 80 million population to remain at home — instead opting for strict social distancing measures. In May, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced the slow re-opening of schools and smaller shops, as long as physical distancing and strict hygiene measures remained in place.

ICELAND:

Iceland's Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management declared a state of emergency on 6 March after two cases of community transmission were confirmed. On 13 March, a four week ban on public gatherings of more than 100 people was announced. Universities and secondary schools closed for four weeks. International airports and harbours remained exempt from these measures. The Directorate of labour in Iceland, our partner VMST, is one of the main factors in the Government's resources for the Icelandic labour market as 50.000 people were registered unemployed in April, 17,8% unemployment (was 5% in February) as a direct effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SWEDEN:

On 31 January, Sweden confirmed its first case. The Scandinavian country has not followed the example of many other European countries and refused to implement a full lockdown. Some social distancing measures have been implemented and many people are choosing to cut down on travel or work from home.

CYPRUS:

The Government took several measures to tackle the spread of the COVID-19. The government banned the entry into the country to Cyprus without the presentation of a medical examination certificate for coronavirus. For everybody else the airports were closed. Cyprus is examining randomly selected samples from each district and samples collected from people who return to Cyprus based on the gradual and controlled repatriation program. On March 24 the government decided to ban the unnecessary movements except for essential purposes. Additionally a daily curfew was imposed between 9 pm and 6 am that was then changed from 10:00pm to 6 am.

AUSTRIA:

Austria banned its nearly 9 million citizens on March 16 from entering public spaces except in certain basic situations. All sports fields were shut, but people were still allowed to go on runs or take walks. Groups of more than five people were not permitted in public and only food delivery services were available. The borders with neighbouring Italy and Switzerland were closed, with train and air travel significantly cut back. In April, Austria began relaxing its lockdown measures and people are required to wear face masks.

SPAIN:

The first COVID-19 active case in Spain was confirmed on 31 January 2020. The Spanish government declared a state of emergency on March 14, issuing a nationwide confinement order. Non-essential shops, schools, hotels and tourist accommodation were ordered to shut completely for two weeks, then workers in construction and manufacturing were allowed to return to work, although other restrictions were extended for the general citizens. Spain also closed its external borders with its European neighbours. Medical professionals and those who live in retirement homes have experienced especially high infection rates. On 25 March the death toll in Spain surpassed that of mainland China. The actual number of cases and deaths is believed to be an underestimate due to lack of testing and reporting.



The field hospital set up at Ifema, Madrid's exhibition center.

- Next Steps -

Partners are due to carry out the certification procedure for the pilot group of CQJB candidates. However, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, none of the partner countries can gather people in training rooms to take these examinations. Furthermore, ACTA, the certifying body, confirmed that they have already faced this problem with multiple certification exams so they are developing an online certification procedure in order for everyone to participate in a safe mode. Moreover, the examination procedure will run during a wider time spectrum than initially planned, in this way the aspiring Job Brokers will be able to participate as soon as they finish their training

In the last meeting, Martin Stark, ABIF, presented the concept, work plan, responsibilities and next steps concerning the **"Association of European Job Brokerage Certification Authorities"**. This will have as a result:

- a **Business Plan**, including a summary of the business case in each of the partner countries for the on-going offer of the qualification.
- an **Operational Framework** through which the Qualification Profile is adopted as a 'Licence to Practice' standard and the Association can be extended to other partner countries and contexts.

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