

Wadden Sea Board

**WSB 18
3 November 2016
Wilhelmshaven**



Agenda Item: 5.10

Subject: Proposal by University of Oldenburg regarding a research project on certification of visitor competencies (CVC)

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Date: 19 October 2016

Submitted by: CWSS on behalf of University of Oldenburg

Proposal: The meeting is requested to take note of the project proposal

**Proposal
research project:**

Certification of Visitor Competences (CVC)

of Centers of environmental education / Museums of natural sciences / Science parks, etc.

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**Basic idea: Handing out a certificate to visitors who acquired competences on topics
that are provided by centers of environmental education**

(e.g. international wadden sea school, museums of natural sciences, science parks, etc.).

The intention of the project goes back to an empirical investigation into the sociodemographic structure and interests of (museum-) **non**-visitors. Since long museums try to get new parts of the society as visitors, especially younger visitors. However, the resulting number of “new” museum goers was small. Hence, a more detailed knowledge of interests of younger non-visitors was necessary (age range 15-35 years). We had more than 3000 participants in an (intensive and broad) online-survey that was announced as “leisure-time investigation” (the word ‘museum’ had to be avoided in the title as in that case non-visitors would not have joined the study). The most spectacular result was (a) that these people complained that a visit in a museum “does not contribute to my vocational career”. This was the more striking as we also asked (b) “would you go to a museum if you would get money for it?” We learned that people do *not* vote for this alternative (getting money), but clearly documented that they “would go more often” to museums and environmental education centers “if this could be applied in a career-context”.

Therefore, the plan was developed to empower environmental education centers and museums (as institutions of non-formal learning) to make visits a career-contributing measure. If this could be done by giving certificates to the visitors, a number of questions have to be solved beforehand as in the long run such an initiative could be developed into a European-wide system of continuing qualification. Such a measure would not only support younger people but also persons with migration-background or people who want to successfully complement their careers by (documented) life-long learning. Also, as environmental knowledge is required in many fields (in science, society, vocations, etc.) and both environmental education centers as well as museums provide most recent scientific knowledge for a number of vocationally relevant areas it should have considerable effects on

- increasing the number of visitors and

- combining the non-formal educational system with the formal sector of learning (schools, apprenticeships, dual-education, etc.). This is one of the long-term goals of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as well as the Copenhagen Declaration (Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, 2002, on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training).

Of course, it is necessary to validate such certificates (CVCs) by a real check of competences acquired by visitors. As it is a very innovative way to combine formally and non-formally achieved competences, the functionality of CVCs should be identified before installing a system by a research project focusing these aspects:

1. What measures are appropriate to check the competences of visitors?

Currently, the best solution seems to be computer-aided application of a test that examines visitor competences that have been acquired at the exhibitions visited.

2. What will be the addressees that visitors may present their CVC-certificates to? i.e. how to achieve acknowledgement of certificates?

It must be verified that institutions of formal education take CVC-documents into account within formal educational systems (like schools, apprenticeships, dual education, universities, internships etc. and in application for jobs). Especially, the value of life-long learning and personal competence portfolios can be increased by CVCs.

3. What criteria must be met to make the Certification of Visitor Competences (CVC) a valid basis for life-long learning?

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) aims at making “national qualifications more readable across Europe, promoting workers' and learners' mobility between countries and facilitating their lifelong learning”. Hence, the CVCs must be signed by an authority that can assure the correctness of the topics certified. Also, certificates should be given in two languages (mother tongue + English) similar to the diploma supplements of Bachelor and Master degrees.

Currently, the Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU; German Federal Environmental Foundation) showed interest in this project and could provide financial support (however, limited to German institutions). Also, several museums supported the plan. Hence, we would be very pleased, if the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (as a cooperation of three European countries) would support this project by sending a Letter of Interest (LoI) or even by providing financial help.

A more detailed description of the project is available in German language.