

# REFINE – Proposal to the European Commission (June 2003)

## 1. Rationale, objectives and target groups

### **1.1 Rationale and background**

This proposal – Refine - addresses the agenda and objectives of the Commission in the field of recognising non-formal and informal learning and builds on the Transfine project (2002-0498/001-002 JACB-Joint Actions-Projets (REPORT 2001)-EUR.18) funded under the first Joint Action call, and which will be complete at the end of July 2003. The results of the first phase of that project have been sent to the Commission; the results of phase 2 and the preliminary results of the final phase (phase 3) are on the project website ([www.transfine.net](http://www.transfine.net)) and have been widely discussed (including with members of the Commission) and disseminated. In brief, the final recommendations of Transfine will be that the best way forward for a European architecture for valuing and recognising non-formal and informal learning is a methodological framework that will promote the use of common tools by different sectors for different purposes with a common understanding of the principles and procedures to guarantee quality and legitimacy of the outcomes of recognition. These recommendations flow from the work done in the project with practitioners in a range of different learning settings: academic, vocational, work/employment, youth and third sectors, concerned with recognition for a range of purposes: personal development, entry to work or to further training, the award of part or whole qualifications. They are also compatible with the developments in the Objectives Working Groups in the Commission, which focus primarily on the vocational sector.

The nature and extent of arrangements and procedures for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning vary enormously from one country to another and one sector to another; experience and expertise are also very unevenly distributed. Much of the development has sprung from European projects and/or is confined to one sector (usually the vocational sector or the university sector). The countries involved in this proposal similarly have varying degrees of experience and are at different stages of development. Among the five involved in Transfine, (EE, FR, IT, NO, UK – see country reports on the Transfine website: [www.transfine.net](http://www.transfine.net)), France probably has the most experience of national initiatives in universities and vocational training using a range of different approaches (although little in the youth/third sector) and is currently implementing a radical reform in this field. The UK similarly has considerable experience of different approaches in different sectors but has no single generalised coherent framework. In Norway, there has been significant development in recent years, co-ordinated and supported at national level within a general framework with variations on the general outline in different sectors at different levels; but there is little activity in the universities. In Italy, a general reform of vocational training is being implemented and provisions for bridging between different kinds of learning, particularly non-formal and formal are being developed. However, although there has been some experimentation with credits, there has been very little activity in the universities or the youth and third sector organisations. In Estonia, there are pockets of activity bubbling up in some universities and the vocational training sector and considerable interest in building these experiences into a more coherent body of practice. Among the new members of the partnership, the French Community in Belgium has begun to work in this field; currently some universities and higher vocational schools are beginning to work out procedures and processes and there are pilot projects in the vocational training sector. However, as yet there is very limited concrete experience. In the Czech Republic, a 1998 law enabled higher education institutions to award up to 60% of a diploma on the basis of non-formal learning but there is very little development of procedures for the recognition of learning that goes on outside the HE sector and little mutual understanding between sectors or institutions in the same sector. In Lithuania, again there is very little development underway; in Finland there are a number of different initiatives in universities and adult education but no overall common framework; in Romania, considerable work has been done in the vocational training sector under the PHARE programme but there is little coherence, no clear bridges between the education and employment fields, and the universities are not involved in certification of non-formal or informal learning to any significant extent. In Greece and Portugal, there are recent reforms in the vocational training sector and some projects are beginning but there is virtually no development in the universities.

The common problem in all these contexts is the fragmentary nature of the experience and expertise, the lack of co-operation across sectors, the lack of common tools or a lack of mutual understanding about how the tools are used in different contexts. These elements together mean that there are large gaps where very little development has taken place, a low level of knowledge about the practices that have been developed, and a general lack of confidence and trust between sectors.

Transfine has demonstrated that many tools that could be adapted for this purpose already exist either at European level (EuroCV, ECTS etc) or at national level through the considerable work that has been done in several countries (eg France, Norway, UK) over the last few years. However, in most countries in Europe there has been very little sharing of experience between the sectors and indeed there is frequently a great resistance to bringing the academic and vocational sectors closer together. Such collaboration is however, very fruitful as Transfine has shown – the project has been very successful in breaking down these barriers and demonstrating that it is possible to take different approaches but within common underlying principles and a shared methodological framework. But there is an enormous amount of work still to be done to establish real dialogue between the sectors in order to promote the mutual understanding, confidence and trust that is necessary for mutual recognition. This Refine proposal builds on the work already done in this regard in Transfine, involving the partners and the countries that participated in that partnership and adding new partners in different countries and different sectors (see para 6 below).

## **1.2 Aims and objectives**

The aims of this project are: to test the tools for a European methodological framework for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning; to foster trans-national and trans-sectoral collaboration; and to build understanding of and confidence in the practices and procedures involved.

The objectives of the project are:

- 1) To undertake concrete experiments and laboratory testing of a range of European tools – ECTS, the Euro CV, the European language portfolio, Europass, codes of practice and guidelines for practitioners, the European language portfolio, Computer Driving Licence, and some national tools - eg VAE dossier in France, code of practice in UK - for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Europe
- 2) To test the tools in a range of different institutional and organisational contexts: universities, vocational training schools at different levels, youth and third sector organisations, and employment; and in 12 countries
- 3) To compare and evaluate the results of the tests and recommend modifications to the tools and/or variations for specific purposes and specific settings within the general framework.
- 4) To evaluate the quality assurance arrangements and propose modifications
- 5) To share the experience of the testing across sectors within countries, transnationally, and within sectors across Europe
- 6) To create real and virtual meeting places of candidates, practitioners and managers

The fulfilment of these objectives will address the fragmentation of expertise and experience, the low level of knowledge and the lack of confidence and trust between sectors identified in 2.1 above.

## **1.3 Categories of people who directly use the results**

The concrete testing will be done by practitioners: the people on the ground who operate recognition arrangements. Depending on the sector these could be advice and guidance workers, youth and voluntary sectors workers, teachers and trainers, assessors/examiners/juries, or workplace supervisors. The results will inform managers, stakeholders and decision makers in the development of institutional and sectoral policy making and policy makers at regional/ national level. At European level it will inform the developments taking place within the Bologna and Copenhagen processes and the Objectives working groups.

## **1.4 Nature and size of the target groups who will ultimately benefit from the project**

There are no statistics that we know of that have attempted to measure demand for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in all the countries involved in this project. Indeed it would be difficult to measure, since demand is unlikely to exist or at least to express itself unless there are procedures in place which have credibility in the education and training system and/or the workplace and until there is

widespread knowledge about the existence of such possibilities. This is not the case in most countries involved in this project at the present time. However, it is clear that for a number of economic, social and political reasons – changes in the way work is organised and the operation of the labour markets of Europe, movement of people, and recent changes in the political regimes and the qualifications systems of many countries, particularly the candidate/accession countries – the need for such arrangements is widely accepted. It is clear that socially excluded groups and those without formal appropriate qualifications for entry to education and training or to the labour market are the key target groups and these are likely to include a high proportion of women, people from lower socio-economic groups, people with disabilities and migrant people. It will also include those who have acquired high levels of skills and knowledge through non-formal and informal learning, often in the workplace or social and civic activities and may be in relative senior positions but blocked in career moves through a lack of formal certification.

## **2. Planning of the activities**

### **2.1 Stages of the project to produce the results - commentary on table.**

The overall workplan will be co-ordinated by EUCEN; the sectoral association partners (EAEA, FIEEA, AFPA) will co-ordinate transnationally the work in their respective sector (see para 4 below).

Year 1 will address objectives 1) and 2) in 2.2 above and will include stages 1- 3 in the work plan table. Each country co-ordinating partner (partners 4, 8-17) will work with their associate partners in the national network to plan and carry out the testing of the selected tools with 4 or 5 candidates in each of the sectors represented in the network; they will each produce a report on those tests at the end of the year.

At the end of year 1 there will be a full meeting of all the partners and representatives of all the associate partners to share experience and compare results across countries and across sectors

Year 2 will address objectives 3) and 4) in 2.2 above and include stages 4-8 in the work plan table.

Each country co-ordinator will bring together the results from the testing by the national network partners in the various sectors and national level for comparison, evaluate the results, suggest modifications; they will also review the quality assurance arrangements.

The European associations will compare the results for their particular sector ie EUCEN – the university projects, EAEA - the adult education projects and so on (see figure 2, para 4.1 below).

An overall comparison and synthesis will be carried out to identify what can and cannot be measured by which tools and to undertake a comparative analysis of the possible convergence and points of divergence in the format of the tools. Towards the end of year 2 there will be a final meeting of all the partners to share the experience of the testing and comparison and to confirm the final recommendations. There will also be a final event to disseminate all the results of the project (stage 7) and a final report to the Commission (stage 8).

Stages 9 and 10 will effectively be on-going through years 1 and 2: a website (with internal and public parts) will be set up and maintained throughout the project; management, monitoring and evaluation will be also be on-going with regular formative reports and a summative report.

More detail on the activities is set out in para 5 below.

### **2.2 Plans or intentions to link with other projects or networks**

Key European associations and networks relevant to this work are represented in the the Expert Panel (Youth Forum, ECTS Co-ordinators Group, ETUC) and in the partnership (EUCEN for the universities, EAEA for the adult education sector, FIEEA for the youth sector, and AFPA for the vocational sector). Each of these associations has in membership, national networks as well as individual and institutional members in all the European countries and beyond.

In addition, EUCEN (partner 2) is the leading partner in the Grundtvig 4 network EQUIPE - European Quality in Individualised Pathways in Education (100291-CP-1-2002-1-PT-GRUNDTVIG-G4 ), currently in year 1, which includes a strand on the quality issues surrounding the formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning by universities. The contact person for Partner 14 (the Business School of

Ostrava) is also the co-ordinator of another Grundtvig4 network proposal in a closely related field, ECAS-LLL - European Credit Accumulation System for Lifelong Learning in the European Area (110331-CP-1-2003-1-CZ-GRUNDTVIG-G4), currently awaiting a final decision from the Commission; EUCEN is also a partner in that proposal.

Michel Feutrie, the representative of partner 1 (USTL) and Pat Davies, the representative of partner 2 (EUCEN) are members of the expert panel for a project currently under consideration by CEDEFOP for an inventory of tools for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning led by the Kenniscentrum (NL); John Storan, the representative of partner 11 (UEL) is also chair of a national network for adult and continuing education and chair of a regional network for APEL in the UK; partner 12 (Universities Scotland) is a core member of a regional partnership for credit and qualifications and has operational links to the national UK agencies in the same field.

Through the Transfine project we already have links with many existing Leonardo, Grundtvig and Youth projects that are in progress and it is our intention to make links with new relevant projects as they emerge and with other Joint Action projects funded under this call.

### **2.3 Development strategy – how will the partnership be continued**

The core partners (partners 2, 3, 5 and 6) are permanent European associations and are developing strong links with each other – this has built on the experience of Transfine and now involves mutual membership where that is possible within the statutes of the associations. Each of these partners also has a working group or a task force consisting of members with a specific interest and/or expertise in this field and these will continue to exist and to maintain links with each other. In addition, the project itself has been constructed as a network of networks – each country has brought together a number of associate partners from different sectors, and together these form a European network. The sheer scale of the network is an indication of the level of interest and commitment and provides a sound basis for the continuation of the partnerships on this theme beyond the life of the project and to seek further funding at national and international level to support further work on a broad front (see also Dissemination strategy under 5.2 and 8.3 below).

### **2.4 Sustainability – how will the activities be continued**

This project will involve people at different levels in the organisations – practitioners, managers, stakeholders, administrators and political actors, all activists and committed to the development of this kind of work; often they have Ministerial support and/or support from relevant quasi-governmental agencies. Several of the partners (partners 1, 5, 10, 11, 12) are leaders or co-ordinators of national or regional actions relating to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as are several of the associate partners in particular fields. Refine will therefore provide a strong base for embedding the work in institutional practice and regional and national policy developments. In addition, most of the networks and agencies involved in this proposal are permanent organisations and will therefore be in a position to continue the work through conferences, workshops, interest groups, task forces and working groups and to seek additional funding from a range of national and other agencies if necessary. The actors in this project will also be able to provide advice, guidance, training and consultancy to other organisations developing work in this field after the end of the project.

### Work Plan

<b>Project: REFINE</b>					
<b>Stage in life of project</b>	<b>Outputs: By the end of this stage we will have achieved / produced</b>	<b>Activities leading to this output</b>	<b>Activity to be started by this date and completed by this date</b>	<b>Partners / Persons involved</b>	<b>Time input (person / days)</b>
<b>YEAR 1 2003-4</b> 1 Preparation of testing activities Preparation of the website	Concrete plans and a detailed work programme in each country and sector Live website	Virtual planning meeting of all partners National group meetings Technical and design work on website	November 2003 to December 2003	All partners National networks	140
2 Testing	National reports on results of the tests	Testing of range of tools with real candidates in all sectors by partners and associate partners	January to September 2004	Partners and associate partners	220
3 Partners Meeting 1	Meeting report	Preparation of meeting Report from each test activity Working meeting to share experiences and develop methodology for comparative work	October to November 2004	Partners + 3 representatives from each national network Expert panel Evaluator	185
<b>YEAR 2 2004-5</b> 4 Comparison of results	Comparative reports from sectoral associations and national networks	Work in national groups and virtual groups to compare result and review tools Work by European associations to compare results in each sector transnationally	December 2004 to April 2005	Partners and associate partners	140

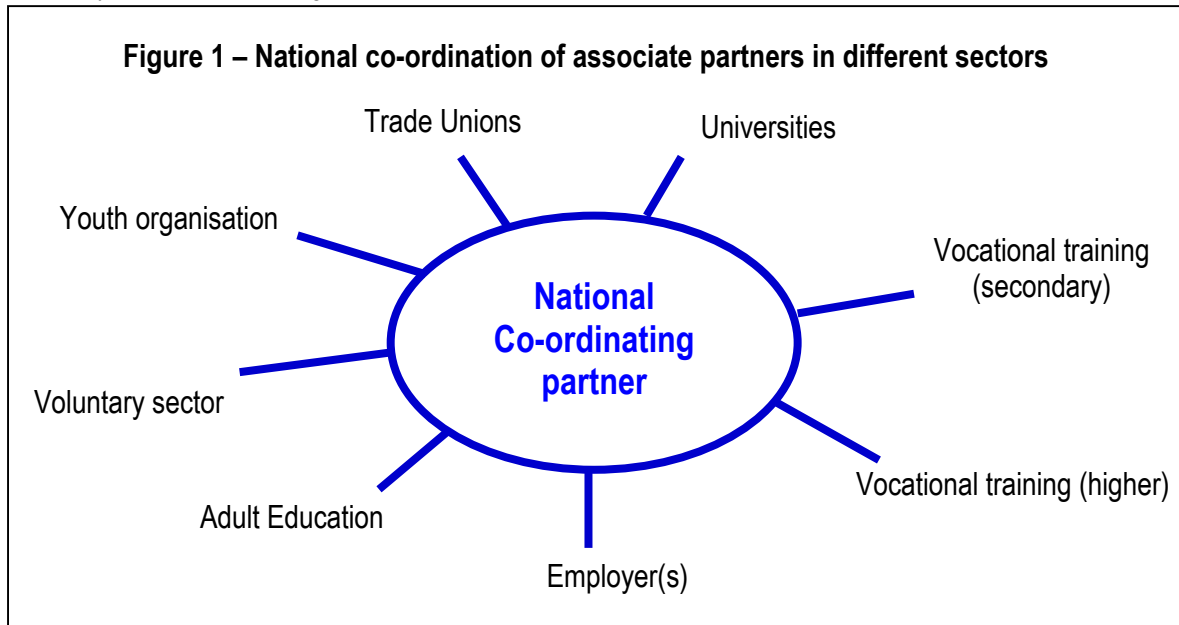
5 Evaluation of testing and quality assurance arrangements	Recommendations for modifications	Work in national and European networks to identify modifications to tools, procedures, and quality arrangements	May to September 2005	Partners and associate partners	40
6 Partners Meeting 2	Final report on comparison of second round of testing	Preparation of meeting Working meeting to compare Comparative analysis	September to October 2005	Partners and associate partners Expert panel	90
7 Dissemination of results	Dissemination event	Preparation of event 2-day conference with workshops	September to October 2005	Partners and associate partners Expert panel Open invitation to participate	90
8 Writing of report and recommendations	Final report to Commission	Liaison and writing	October to November 2005	Co-ordinator and partners	13
<b>YEAR 1 and 2 – 2003-5</b> 9 Updating and maintenance of website	Live up-to-date website	Technical work and updating of content	January 2004 to October 2005	Co-ordinator	40
10 Management, monitoring and evaluation of project	Management and monitoring of progress	Receiving and discussion of regular reports; advice on direction of project Formative evaluation of process and emerging results; summative evaluation of final results and overall effectiveness of management and co-ordination	November 2003 to October 2005	EUCEN Steering Committee and Expert Panel	88
	Evaluation of management and results of project			External evaluator	10



### 3. Coverage across sectors

#### 3.1 Co-operation across sectors

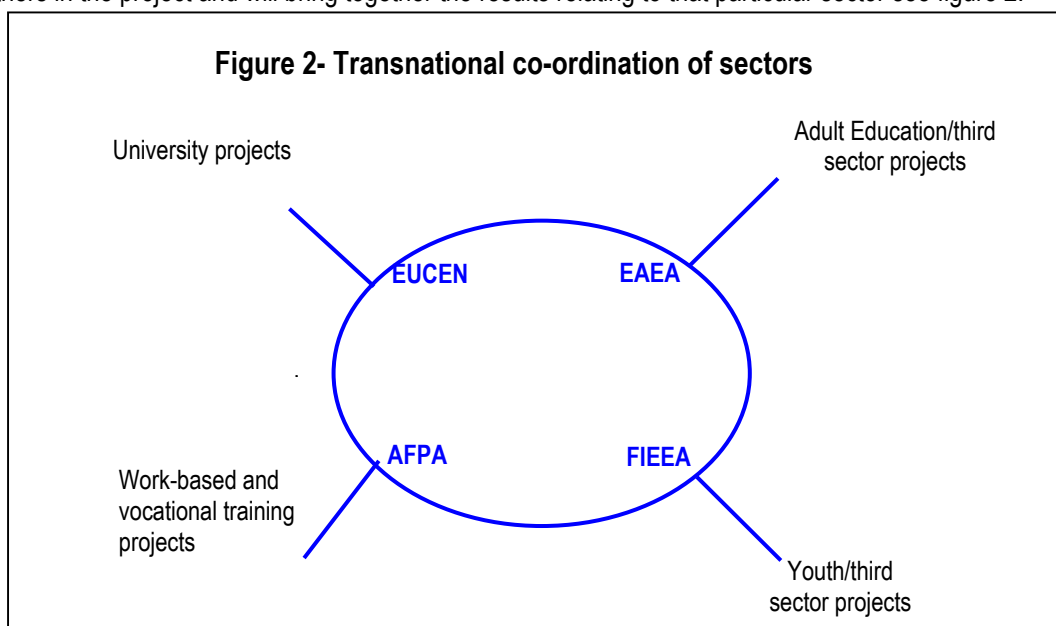
National groups have been put together, led by one partner in each of the participating countries – these groups will constitute the Refine networks at national level. Each comprises at least 3 associate partners from different sectors covering the education, vocational training, youth, voluntary and employment sectors see figure 1.



The national co-ordinating partners include 7 universities (partners 4, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16), 2 adult education providers (partners 14, 17), and 3 regional/national associations: 1 for universities – partner 12 (self financing), 1 for adult education – partner 10, and 1 for youth organisations – partner 7.

The associate partners include universities, applied higher vocational schools and continuing professional development providers, vocational training organisations, adult education organisations, popular universities and folk high schools, associations of employers and businesses, trade unions, third sector and youth associations, qualifications agencies, quality assurance agencies and awarding bodies. A full list of partners and associate partners is set out in para 6, table 1 below.

In addition, the European associations for lifelong learning in universities (EUCEN), for adult education (EAEA), for youth exchanges (FIEEA) and for vocational training (represented by AFPA) are full partners in the project and will bring together the results relating to that particular sector see figure 2.



### **3.2 Cultural dimensions**

Links have been established with EUROEDULT a project which focuses on museums as learning places and certification for the learning that takes place in them. We will seek to include at least 2 cultural organisations (2 museums – 1 in France and 1 in UK) in the group of associate partners when the project begins.

### **3.3 Added value of cross sector approach**

The added value of the cross sector approach is strong. The European associations worked together on the Transfine project and have established strong and positive relationships. Our experience of the cross sector working in the Transfine project, particularly in the national studies has demonstrated how this way of working forges new links, new understandings, new insights, new ways of approaching problems and their solutions, and new ideas for all those involved. Despite the resistance that often exists at national policy level, on the ground practitioners and institutional managers have found such collaboration extremely fruitful and the willingness to work together is demonstrated in the national networks that have been mobilised for this proposal. Refine will develop those links established in Transfine by adding new partners in the 5 countries that were involved and building new partnerships in 7 additional countries. The different sectors will thus add value at local, regional and national level by sharing expertise and experience of the testing activities among the national group and at European level by collaborating across sectors and national boundaries.

## **4. Methodology and innovation**

### **4.1 Overall methodology**

In general the methodology is to test a range of different tools for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning with real candidates in different sectors – universities, adult education and vocational training institutions, employment, youth and third sector organisations – in 12 countries. Different levels of comparisons will be made of the results of these tests and points of similarity and difference will be identified. Discussions will take place to explore the extent to which convergence is possible and/or divergence is necessary. An evaluation of the tools, the procedures and the quality arrangements will be carried out. Recommendations for modifications and variations of the tools in different contexts for different purposes will be made to develop a range of common tools. This testing and comparison of results will take place in national and transnational networks of activity and in virtual and real meeting places to promote mutual trust and confidence.

### **4.2 Specific methodology to achieve each outcome under 7.**

**Outcome 1: A range of tools** (ECTS, Europass, EuroCV, European language portfolio, Criteria, Guidelines, Codes of practice, Portfolios, Computer driving licence) that have been tried and tested. This outcome will be undertaken by the national networks who will agree precise details of the tools to be tested by the various associate partners in the different contexts. An attempt will be made to work in pairs/threes of different kinds of organisations to explore different comparative dimensions: each with a similar level of diploma in a similar subject or with a similar subject but at different levels or with the same tool in different contexts or different tools in the same context. These different dimensions of comparison will enable the differences and similarities, the points of convergence and divergence to be brought out more clearly. Each associate partner will test a tool with at least 4 or 5 real candidates and an attempt will be made to achieve a reasonable proportion of men and women, different age groups and target groups in different sectors. The national networks will have virtual and real meetings to plan these activities and to share the results.

**Outcome 2: Comparative analyses of the results** of that testing. This outcome will be achieved at a number of different levels and in a number of different ways. Within the national networks comparisons will be made between the various test sites; the European associations in the partnership will draw together the results in their sector from each country: EUCEN will bring together the results from all the tests in universities; AFPA will bring together all the results from the vocational training and work-based

tests; EAEA will bring together all the tests from the adult/third sector and FIEEA will deal with the youth/third sector organisations. At transnational level, EUCEN as the overall co-ordinator will bring together and compare the results of all the activities.

All the comparisons will be designed to identify:

- which tools work best in which situations,
- what are the common elements of all the tools,
- what are the necessary different elements for different purposes in different settings
- what can each tool measure and what can it not measure
- to what extent are different tools compatible or incompatible
- what are the similarities and differences between the Eurotools and the national tools that are in use
- what kind of bridges are possible between them
- what is missing – can the local practices supplement the tools in any way
- how can the tools be improved
- what differences should there be or not be between tools used for local, national or European purposes
- what bridges can be built between the local/national requirements and the elements necessary for a European tool
- can we identify a common core or a common format but also allow for variation depending on institution, sector, country

**Outcome 3: National reports.** All the partners will agree a standard outline for the reports so that they can easily be integrated at different levels. Each associate partner will produce a short report of the testing that they have conducted in their specific context; the national co-ordinator will bring those together in a national report.

**Outcome 4 and 5: An overall report and recommendations.** EUCEN with the other European associations will bring together all the national and sector reports and undertake an analysis on the points of convergence and divergence in the way in which the tools are used in different sectors and national contexts; what similarities and differences are there; how can they be understood as a European methodology and produce a report. The report will also include recommendations for a common methodology.

**Outcome 6: National and European networks of expertise and experts.** This outcome will be achieved by working together on the common task and sharing the experience and the results at different levels. At national level partners will set up web pages for their activities, which will constitute virtual meeting places for the national network. They will also hold national meetings as appropriate to discuss and progress the work. At European level there will be a website with links to (or incorporating) the national web pages – this website will act as a virtual meeting place for the project partners and associate partners at European level. In addition, the whole partnership (with at least 3 representatives from each national network) and the Expert Panel will meet twice during the life of the project – in autumn 2004 and 2005. All these virtual and real meetings will act as zones of mutual trust for the development of sector and cross sectoral, national and transnational exchanges and understanding.

**Outcome 7: Dissemination.** The project website at European level will be managed by EUCEN and will link to the European association sites where there is relevant information and to the national project pages. The national pages will contain national network activities and links to other national sites that are relevant, including the NARIC sites and other national agencies with information for stakeholders. The national networks will also bring together information for potential candidates in the various sectors and make these available on a website. The possibility of a single website with information for candidates and stakeholders in each country will be explored by the partners with the relevant national agencies. These linked websites will act to disseminate the on-going work of the project and the results.

A final 2-day event will be held at the end of the project (autumn 2005) to disseminate the final results.

### 4.3 What is innovative

This project is innovative in a number of ways:

- It includes a very wide range of types of organisation and stakeholders in concrete activities with real candidates
- It provides the opportunity to work on a cross sectoral basis on a grand scale with 12 countries and 60 organisations of very different kinds
- It promotes constructive comparison designed to bring about convergence and the development of common tools but also clarity and transparency about divergence where that is necessary.
- It includes comparisons of results at different levels and across different dimensions – cross sector, national and transnational
- It has an innovative structure of partner and associate partners thus creating a large network while maximising the use of the resources and ensuring effective management of the activities; the structure of the network can also accommodate additional associate partners and additional groups working in collaboration with the project.
- It takes the experience and knowledge acquired and range of contacts with activists and interested parties developed in a previous project and develops that in genuinely different and new ways

## **5. Partners**

### **5.1 Partnership composition and contribution**

Table 1 sets out the partnerships that have been set up for this project: the partner institutions with contact person's name, the country and code for type of institution, the associate partners, and the type of tool that the group will test; the relevant letters of intent are attached as annexe 1.

**L'Université des Sciences et Technologies de Lille (USTL)** (partner 1) will act as the contractor and take responsibility for the financial management and administration of the project; it will also be a member of the French team carrying out the testing of tools in the university. The university has a long experience of developing and managing European projects and in particular is the contractor for the Transfine project. USTL is particularly well regarded for its continuing education and in recent years for its 'validation des acquis de l'expérience' (VAE). In 2002-3 it considered 1600 applications from candidates for validation/accreditation VAE. The university is now a national reference point for the implementation of the new law on the validation/accreditation of experience passed in 2002.

**EUCEN** (partner 2) is an association registered under Belgian law; it was established in 1991 and has almost 200 members – mostly universities but also some higher education institutions as associate members, with 10 national networks for university lifelong learning and other European/international associations (EAEA, EDEN, NUCEA, ICDE) as affiliate members. Its main purpose is the development of lifelong learning in universities and activities to support that. It has been a leading partner in a number of European projects and is currently acting as scientific co-ordinator of Transfine (see 2.1 above) and EQUIPE (see 3.2 above); and is a partner in a number of other projects. EUCEN has had a long standing interest in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the Executive Secretary (Pat Davies) and the Vice President (Michel Feutrie) are leading experts in this field (short CVs for Pat Davies and Michel Feutrie are attached as annexe 2). EUCEN will take responsibility for the website and for the overall management and co-ordination of the project: the Steering Committee will monitor progress and receive regular reports, the Executive Secretary will lead on the scientific content of the project and co-ordinate the activities at all levels. EUCEN's conferences, EUCENews and the website will provide an important channel for dissemination.

**The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)** (partner 3) is an association registered under Belgian law whose purpose is to link and represent European organisations involved in adult learning; it has some 100 organisations in membership in 34 European countries. EAEA participates in 5 of the working groups of the European Commission (A, B, E, G, H) and is involved in a wide range of European projects. It is also a partner in the Transfine project and works closely with EUCEN on a number of fronts. In this Refine project, EAEA will take responsibility for advising and supporting all the testing in adult education organisations, comparing the results in that sector transnationally and disseminating the results to the wider adult education community.

**Fédération Internationale d'Echanges Educatifs d'Enfants et d'Adolescents (FIEEA)** is an international association registered under French law with 34 national associations in membership; it

deals with educative actions in the youth sector to promote international understanding among young people and organises training for those working in the actions. FIEEA is also a partner in the Transfine project and has worked closely with EUCEN in that action. In this Refine project, FIEEA will take responsibility for advising and supporting all the testing in the youth sector organisations, comparing the results in that sector transnationally and disseminating the results to the wider youth sector community.

**Association Nationale pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes (AFPA)** is an association registered under French law in 1949 with 265 training centres throughout France that offer training, information, skills assessment and vocational guidance services. AFPA's core mission is to enable people of working age to gain professional qualifications throughout their working life. It has been involved in many European projects and co-ordinated a large Leonardo project on the recognition of skills and competences in various occupational sectors. It is been active in Transfine as the representative of the vocational training sector on behalf of the European Vocational Training Association (AEFP/EVTA). In this Refine project, AFPA will take responsibility for advising and supporting all the testing in vocational training sector, comparing the results in that sector transnationally and disseminating the results to the wider vocational training community. AFPA will also be a member of the French team testing tools in its vocational training centres.

**The 7 Universities, Francas, FAEA, Universities Scotland, the Business School of Ostrava and ANUP** will each will co-ordinate the national network activities as set out in this proposal, testing the tools as set out in table 1 below and will take responsibility for bringing together the experience from their different associate partners into a national report.

**Seven Universities** are full partners: Ioannina (GR) – partner 4, LUMSA (IT) – partner 8, Aveiro (PT) – partner 9, UEL (UK) – partner 11, Bergen (NO) – partner 11, Tartu (EE) – partner 15 and Kaunas (LT) – partner 16. All are established and prestigious universities offering a wide range of disciplines and the full range of national diplomas. They have varying degrees of expertise and experience in terms of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning: UEL has a long experience of around 20 years of development of this kind; Tartu developed internal regulations in the last 2 years and has begun some experimentation during its involvement with the Transfine project; LUMSA has some experience in a particular discipline – social work; Bergen has been involved in the Transfine project and works closely with VOX where a great deal of work has been done but does not have a great deal of experience itself; Aveiro has some recent experience; and Ioannina and Kaunas have very little experience on the ground but an institutional interest in developing such arrangements. All have mobilised existing and new linked organisations in other sectors to work with them on the project and to share experiences of the testing activities.

**Francas** (partner 7) is an association registered under French law whose main purpose is to offer education and leisure activities for children and young people, and is recognised by the French Ministry of Youth and Sport for the provision of training for people working in the field and for volunteers. It has a federation of 2500 leisure centres and employs a total of 1500 people, in addition it co-ordinates the work of many volunteers. It has experience of European projects and has been closely involved in the work of the Transfine project.

**The Finnish Adult Education Association (FAEA)** (partner 10) is an umbrella organisation for adult education in Finland. Its members are the association of adult education centres, the High Schools Association, the 11 popular organisations which maintain the study circle centres, and Swedish speaking Folk High schools. In 2000, it began a 5 year national programme called Knowledge and Competence in Popular Adult Education and one of the main fields of activity is enhancing and developing tools for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. One of the co-ordinators of that programme will represent the association in this Refine project.

**Universities Scotland** (partner 12) is the regional association of universities in Scotland and in Refine represents the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework which is a partnership between Universities Scotland, The Quality Assurance Agency of HE, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department. This partnership includes all the relevant actors in the Scottish context including the students unions, the trade unions, various professional and employers associations, local government, and careers services. This group will be entirely self financing and will test their guidelines throughout Scotland in a range of institutional settings. They will work with the Refine project to share experience and compare results.

**Business School of Ostrava** (partner 14) is a private Higher Professional School of Business in 1997, providing study programmes for adults and professionals and services to SMEs and is accredited by the government to provide higher education courses in entrepreneurship, management and a range of business related subjects. It is also the Regional Centre for lifelong Learning developed as a result of a PHARE project. The representative of the institution in Refine is also the co-ordinator of a Grundtvig 4 project network on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (see para 2 above)

**Association of Romanian Popular Universities (ANUP)** was founded in 1993 and is the largest network of adult education centres in Romania with about 100 popular universities in urban and rural areas, providing training and re-training courses for adults to enable them to adapt to the changing needs of the economy. One of its principal areas of activity is language training; it has been involved in a number of European projects funded under PHARE, Leonardo and Socrates

## **5.2 Complementarity of the partnership**

The partnership involves European associations in the key sectors of the Socrates, Leonardo and Youth programmes: EUCEN, EAEA, FIEEA, AFPA and an Expert Panel with similarly cross sector representation. At national level through the partnerships in each national network, a wide range of actors and stakeholders are involved: universities, higher applied vocational schools, vocational training and youth sector organisations, voluntary/third sector organisations, employers' associations and trade unions. Several national networks have the explicit support from their Ministry of Education and/or national agencies for certification or qualifications. In addition a group in Switzerland will be associated with Refine on the basis of federal funding and self financing.

Twelve countries are represented in the partnership – this includes the 5 countries that were involved in Transfine (EE, FR, IT, NO, UK) (but with a new group of partners in Italy) with an additional 7 'new' countries. In particular we will encourage a pairing of 'old' and 'new' countries where this is appropriate (eg Belgium and France; Estonia and Lithuania) to maximise this effect. We will also endeavour to promote countries and institutions with considerable experience to work with those who have little or no experience.

Refine will therefore valorise the results of Transfine by building on and sharing the experience and expertise developed by adding new countries, new kinds of organisation and new actors, creating a powerful network for the sharing the experiences and expertise built up in Transfine and using it to undertake new kinds of activities: the concrete testing of tools for recognising non-formal and informal learning. The wide-ranging membership of the networks will also ensure the embedding of the work in practice beyond the life of the project, the future development and the sustainability of the work.

## **5.3 Cooperation and communication – working language and arrangements for resolving conflicts**

The European associations, 8 of the institutional partners and 16 of the associate partners have worked successfully together before in Transfine or other European projects and established a mutual respect and understanding of different perspectives on the topic. The national networks are also not new – many of the associate partners already have links of various kinds and a successful track record of collaboration before this project, although not necessarily on this topic. So these groupings have not been put together on the spur of the moment but are part of a strategic approach to networking by the various institutions involved. The potential for conflict has therefore been minimised in the way the partnerships have been put together.

However, should conflict occur in the national networks it will be the responsibility of the partner co-ordinating that group to overcome the problem in the first instance if possible – for this reason it is important to note that the representatives of the partner institutions are all experienced managers of projects and in their institutions. The overall project co-ordinator, who is also an experienced manager will assist and advise and will deal with any conflicts between partners at transnational level. The Expert Panel and the external evaluator will also be asked to comment and advise if appropriate and the EUCEN Steering Committee will arbitrate in consultation with USTL (the contractor) as a last step if necessary.

**Table 1**

<b>Partner number</b>	<b>Partner name</b>	<b>Country/ Type of institution</b>	<b>Role in project</b>	<b>Associate partners</b>	<b>Tools to be tested</b>	<b>No. of personnel involved/ person days</b>
1.	USTL – Michel Feutrie	FR/EDU.4	Contractor; financial management and administration	-	-	2/58 days
2.	EUCEN – Pat Davies	BE/ASS.2	Scientific co-ordination of content and activities; project management and monitoring; reports	-	-	11/248
3.	EAEA – Ellinor Haase	BE/ASS.2	Co-ordination of adult education sector testing	-	-	1/20
4.	University of Ioannina – Jenny Pange	GR/EDU.4	National Coordinator for Greek testing activities	-Ergon Kek (Vocational Training) - University of Macedonia	EuroCV, portfolio	3/50
5.	AFPA - Ulrike Josenhans	FR/ASS.1	Co-ordination of vocational sector testing	-	-	2/20
6.	FIEEA - Jean Yves Crenn	FR/ASS.2	Coordination of youth sector testing	-	-	2/20
7.	Francas (Youth sector) - Isabelle Dufau	FR/ASS.1	National co-ordinator for French testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ USTL</li> <li>▪ CUCES, Universite de Nancy</li> <li>▪ Universite de Bretagne Occidental</li> <li>▪ Université de Haute Alsace</li> <li>▪ Universite catholique de Louvain (BE)</li> <li>▪ AFPA (Vocational training)</li> <li>▪ La Croix Rouge Francaise (third sector)</li> </ul>	Europass ECTS EuroCV Examples of other tools in use in France eg Dossier VAE, portfolio	8/72

8.	LUMSA - Consuelo Corradi	IT/EDU.4	National coordinator for Italian testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Centro Italiano di Solidarieta (Adult education)</li> <li>▪ Universita di Tor Vergata</li> <li>▪ Consorzio Il Solco (Third Sector)</li> <li>▪ Cnos-Fnap (Vocational training)</li> <li>▪ Acli Giovani (Youth)</li> <li>▪ AIESEC (Youth)</li> <li>▪ Confcooperative (Employer's association)</li> <li>▪ Asvi (Adult Education)</li> </ul>	ECTS and EuroCV	9/90
9.	University Aveiro - Manuel Assuncao	PT/EDU.4	National co-ordinator for Portuguese testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AUPEC (National network for university continuing education)</li> <li>▪ AIDA – Aveiro District Industrial Association</li> <li>▪ ENGIL – large construction company</li> <li>▪ Cenforaz – Continuing Education Centre for Teachers</li> </ul>	ECTS, portfolio, EuroCV	5/58
10.	Finish Adult Education Association - Annelina Torronen	FI/ASS.1	National co-ordinator for Finnish testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ University of Lapland</li> <li>▪ Youth Academy</li> <li>▪ HUMAK – Humanities Polytechnic</li> <li>▪ Workers Educational Association</li> <li>▪ Confederation of Finnish Industry and Employers</li> <li>▪ AIKE – vocational adult education</li> </ul>	Europass, Study Book, Porfolio, ECTS	7/58
11.	University of East London - John Storan	UK/EDU.4	National Coordinator for UK testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NIACE (Adult Education)</li> <li>▪ TUC (Trade Unions)</li> <li>▪ EYF (Youth)</li> <li>▪ NOCN (Qualifications Awarding body)</li> <li>▪ FACE (UK network of universities and colleges)</li> <li>▪ QCA (National Qualifications and curriculum Authority – including vocational quals)</li> <li>▪ Queens University, Belfast</li> </ul>	Code of practice on using a range of tools	7/70

12.	Universities Scotland - David Caldwell	UK/ASS.1	Regional co-ordinator for Scottish testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scottish Qualifications Authority</li> <li>▪ Quality Assurance Agency for HE</li> <li>▪ Scottish Executive – Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Dept</li> <li>▪ Youth Link Scotland</li> </ul>	Guidelines for use of credits	4/32
13.	University of Bergen - Frank Moe	NO/EDU.4	National co-ordinator for Norwegian testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ VOX (Adult education)</li> <li>▪ VOFO / NAAE (Adult education)</li> <li>▪ NKF (Folk High Schools)</li> <li>▪ ELBUS (Business Association)</li> <li>▪ LNU (Youth)</li> <li>▪ NOKUT (Quality Assurance agency)</li> </ul>	Criteria for award of part qualifications	7/70
14.	Business School of Ostrava plc (Adult professional training) - Martin Poboril	CZ/EDU.5	National co-ordinator for Czech Rep testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ University of Ostrava</li> <li>▪ Intermundia (Third Sector)</li> </ul>	ECTS	3/44
15.	University of Tartu - Aune Valk	EE/EDU.4	National co-ordinator for Estonian testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Estonian Association of Youth Counsellors</li> <li>▪ Tartu Kutsehariduskeskus (vocational education)</li> </ul>	Portfolio and EuroCV	3/44
16.	Kaunas University of Technology - Violeta Kauneliene	LT/EDU.4	National co-ordinator for Lithuanian testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Association of Kaunas Region Industrialists and Employers</li> <li>▪ Kaunas Region Educational Centre (Adult education)</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Education support</li> </ul>	EuroCV	3/44
17.	National Association of Popular Universities (ANUP) (Adult education provider) - Ileana Boeru	RO/EDU.5	National co-ordinator for Romanian testing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Romanian Association for Civic Responsibility (Youth)</li> <li>▪ Association for German Folk Universities</li> <li>▪ West University of Timisoara</li> <li>▪ Fiatest Educational Centre (vocational training)</li> <li>▪ Quest – Romanian Assoc for Quality Language Services</li> <li>▪ Prosper ase - Language centre</li> </ul>	European Language Portfolio and Computer Driving License	6/58

## **6. Outcomes and impact**

### **6.1 Describe outcomes and for each explain the nature, volume, structure, contents and language**

**Outcome 1:** A range of tools (ECTS, Europass, EuroCV, European language portfolio, Criteria, Guidelines, Codes of practice, Portfolios, Computer driving licence) that have been tried and tested by different organisations (universities, vocational training organisations, adult education, youth and voluntary sector) for different purposes (personal development, entry to work, entry to education and training, the award of part or all of a qualifications), in 12 different countries. The tools will be tested in the language of each country.

**Outcome 2:** Comparative analyses of the results of that testing:

- between the results of different tools
- between sectors in the same country
- between countries in the same sector

Comparisons at national level between sectors will be conducted in the language of that country; comparisons transnationally in the same sector between countries and generally between different tools in different contexts will be conducted in English.

**Outcome 3:** National reports on the testing and comparisons - these will be in the national language in the full version with a summary in English

**Outcome 4:** A report (in English) on the points of convergence and divergence in the way in which the tools are used in different sectors and national contexts; what similarities and differences are there; how can they be understood as a European methodology.

**Outcome 5:** Recommendations (in English) for a common methodology

**Outcome 6:** National and European networks of expertise and experts who have worked together on a common task – these constitute virtual and real meeting places (zones of mutual trust) for the development of cross sector exchanges and understanding. The national networks will work in the national language; the European network will work in English. They will also be available to provide advice, guidance, training and consultancy to other organisations developing work in this field after the end of the project.

**Outcome 7:** A web site to dissemination information about the on-going work and a final event to disseminate the results of the project.

### **6.2 For each output – the beneficiaries inside and outside the institutions, context and impact**

Outcome 1 - the concrete testing - will benefit practitioners: the people on the ground who operate recognition arrangements. These will include advice and guidance workers, youth and voluntary sectors workers, teachers and trainers, assessors/examiners/juries, or workplace supervisors.

Outcome 2 and 3 - the comparative work and the reports of tests will benefit managers, stakeholders and decision makers in the development of institutional and sectoral policy making and policy makers at regional/ national level.

Outcome 4 and 5 will benefit in addition the policy makers at European level and assist in the developments taking place within the Bologna and Copenhagen processes and the Objectives working groups.

Outcome 6 will impact on all levels of policy and practice and be of use to all interested parties as a resource

Outcome 7 will benefit the partners of the project as a site for virtual meetings and the sharing of resources; it will also benefit other actors and institutions not directly involved in the project as a source of information and contacts for support and sharing of experience.

The website will also be a source of information for potential candidates about the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the countries participating in the project.

### **6.3 How and to what extent the partners will implement the results in their institutions**

All the tests will be conducted in the institutions with the involvement and support of managers and reports will be given internally to the appropriate committees and groups. All the partners will be undertaking staff development activities as part of their internal dissemination activities and visits from the overall co-ordinator will be used as an opportunity to promote the work of the project to wider groups

in the institution. The project will also have a wider impact on systems that the partners and other institutions may adopt.

## **7. Evaluation and dissemination**

### **7.1 How the project and progress will be monitored**

The project will be managed and monitored at a number of levels:

- A Project Group of the contracting institution (partner 1) and the European associations (partners 2,3, 5 and 6) will be established chaired by EUCEN to co-ordinate the various sectoral activities. It will meet alongside the 2 autumn meetings of all the partners and before and between these points it will communicate by e-mail and the website.
- An expert panel has been brought together: Roising MnCabe (European Youth Forum), Maria-Helena Andre (ETUC), Volker Gemlich (ECTS) and Betgtina Schwartzmayr (ESIB). Other members (eg for the vocational sector and the employers) will be invited once the project is approved. The panel will be sent plans, papers and reports for comment and advice and will attend the 2 autumn meetings.
- The EUCEN Steering Committee and the contractor (partner 1) will take responsibility for monitoring the progress of the work. It meets 4 times per year and at each meeting it will receive reports from the Co-ordinator, the evaluator including summaries of the national and sectoral reports as they emerge; it will review progress and ensure that the outcomes of the project are achieved.
- The website meetings and the live meetings of all the partners in autumn 2004 and 2005 will also review progress

### **7.2 Evaluation strategy**

A key role for the Scientific Co-ordinator (Pat Davies, EUCEN) will be the continuous formative evaluation of all the activities of the project. She will be assisted in this by Professor Ina Grieb, Vice President of the University of Oldenburg and Director of its Centre for Continuing Education; she is also a member of the Executive Board of AUE (the German umbrella organisation for university continuing education (a brief CV is attached as annexe 2). Professor Grieb will produce short papers providing formative feedback at key points in the project: on the detailed national workplans, at the end of year 1 and mid-way through year 2. The precise focus and criteria for this feedback will be agreed at the start of the project in collaboration with the EUCEN Steering Committee and the EQUIPE project (see 3.2 above). These will be designed to improve and enhance the outcomes. In addition, Professor Grieb will attend the live meetings of the full partnership and the EUCEN Steering Committee meetings if this is necessary (see 6.3 above). She will produce a summative report at the end of the project for inclusion in the final report to the Commission.

### **7.3 Dissemination in participating countries and beyond**

The partner ship for the project – 17 full partners and around 60 associate partners – together with the expert panel, itself represents a strong network for dissemination (see table 1 and para 6.2 above). The website will promote communication between and beyond the partnership and will include as many links to and from other relevant sites as possible. It will also include a part aimed at potential candidates in each country (see para 5.2 above. The conference at the end of the project in autumn 2005 will provide a major event for dissemination of the final result beyond the partnership.

The Transfine project has generated a database of around 400 names of people with an experience of and/or an interest in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, drawn from Socrates, Grundtvig, Leonardo and Youth projects, ECTS co-ordinators, and regional and national agencies for accreditation and qualifications. This database constitutes an important resource for further networking and dissemination and will be added to throughout the life of the Refine project. Transfine also generated a large number of invitations to present the project, the emerging results and to engage in debates and discussions on the theme. These contacts are still 'live' and will be used to further develop the Refine links as we engage in a continuous process of dissemination, contributing to seminars and conferences with presentations and workshops in a range of countries as we are invited or deem it to be appropriate and important.

## **8. Contribution to transversal policies**

In terms of a) impact and b) participation in the project – how and to what extent it will actively promote equality between men and women, equal opportunities for disabled people, fight against racism and xenophobia, and promote social and economic cohesion

It is clear that socially excluded groups and those without formal appropriate qualifications for entry to education and training or to the labour market are the key target groups for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and these are likely to include a high proportion of women, people from lower socio-economic groups, people with disabilities and migrant people. It will also include those who have acquired high levels of skills and knowledge through non-formal and informal learning, often in the workplace or social and civic activities and may be in relative senior positions but blocked in career moves through a lack of formal certification. Thus the development of tools that seek to promote good practice across all sectors in 12 countries will contribute to the improvement of the position of these groups in society and contribute to policies for social justice as well as economic benefits. In the testing of the tools we will endeavour to ensure that these groups are represented among the real candidates participating in activities thus further enhancing the impact of the project on these groups.