Eurotrainers learning pathway

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Introduction

The training of Eurotrainers (ETT training) is designed in order to develop the individual teaching skills of trainers from member organisations who fit the defined profile and who have already acquired experience at national or sectoral level, as an investment in the future of the teaching strategies of their organisations.

The main objective of this training is to extend the scope of the learning programmes beyond national level and to give them a European dimension, putting the priority on a European trade union identity and promoting greater visibility for the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI).

This learning pathway contributes to the reinforcement and quality improvement of European Trade union training. Its recognised value and importance within the field of adult education is attested and certified by an external European accrediting body, the University of Lille, France.

This reference document aims to explain the foundations, objectives and structure of this learning process, which is unique in its essence and a valuable contribution to strengthening Trade Union education and values.
1. **Training with a European dimension**

Participants on the Eurotrainers’ courses come from their organisations with training-related skills and know-how acquired over the course of a permanent process based on personal or trade union experience. For the most part, they have undergone personal or trade union-based education and training, taken part in trade union training activities as facilitators in their own organisations or at European level, while some have upgraded their skills on their own initiative.

For all these reasons, each participant in the ETT training has very different levels of needs, with inevitably wide-ranging frames of reference and specific cultural and trade union practices.

This is why the educational process must be centred on the learners, to allow them to acquire knowledge and know-how and to be familiar with the processes involved\(^1\). It allows everyone to take advantage of the experiences brought to the table in order to develop knowledge, build on existing experiences and to analyse them in the light of new contributions. This capacity for critical analysis, in conjunction with the new skills, allows participants to develop new forms of training activities on their own initiative. It is the combination of this wide-ranging knowledge and know-how, experienced and applied, finalised and put into context, which allows them to go on to deploy and implement them in turn. The skills are the result of the right blend of knowledge, attitudes, values, learning strategies and behaviours, which enables their application in specific circumstances.

This approach can be seen as constructivist\(^2\), knowledge being a social construct that includes group work and the personal and social context, which is becoming fundamental for skills acquisition. Participants’ motivations, expectations and objectives play a necessary and important role.

Assessment is the natural corollary of this learning process. A formative assessment that validates and certifies the learning outcomes. This approach takes account of what has already been defined at a European level for the recognition of skills, by the ECVET system\(^3\).

2. **An individual learning pathway**

The learning pathway for the Eurotrainers takes into account the way in which the various activities involved are linked, at national and European level, either through face-to-face courses or distance learning courses, and is spread over a period of two to four years. It is used to construct a real learning pathway leading to a validation and certification of competences.

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1. This is in line with a constructivist approach, where the process is more important than the knowledge itself. It is through the process itself that the learning process develops in a continuous manner.
2. Or social constructivism.
Table 1  Process of validation of the Eurotrainers learning pathway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An individual training pathway</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Diagram showing the process of validation]</td>
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</table>

The assessment process is continuous and formative with the first stage taking place before participants arrive at the first face-to-face course in the form of personal preparation. The level 1 training course (ETT1) allows them to get to know each other better and to become a productive group. It also allows them to put together their own training pathway and to reach agreements on the different stages and activities required to reach level 2 (ETT2).

ETT1 is intended to train participants as Eurotrainers, as they are able to evolve in a multicultural and transnational context within differing systems of trade union and industrial relationships. Within this first level course, participating trainers enrich and enhance the quality of training at national level, by developing a strong cooperation with other organisations and with other participants.

The knowledge, abilities and skills acquired are put into practice during national/sectoral courses in order to give them a European dimension. Knowledge, abilities and skills are improved through participation in thematic and pedagogical workshops run by the ETUI Education Department.

Level 2 (ETT2) trains Eurotrainers to develop their knowledge, abilities and skills which will enable them to design, conduct and assess training activities within their national member organisations and also in cooperation with the ETUI Education Department training teams.

The knowledge, abilities and skills acquired are put into practice by involving Eurotrainers in activities and courses organised by the ETUI Education Department.
3. General information and context for the training of Eurotrainers

The training of trainers operating at European level, known as Eurotrainers, is an important component of the strategies of member organisations and the ETUC. The ETUI Education Department has decided to make it one of its strategic focuses in its bid to secure high-quality training.

In view of the demands raised by the Eurotrainers themselves – to work towards having a recognition and validation of their professional skills – and the wish expressed by the ETUC and its member organisations (national confederations and European trade union federations) to improve the professionalism of their members in order to maximise the potential of training activities to translate ETUC guidelines and strategy into concrete trade union action – it appeared necessary to reorganise the training course into a multi-year training system operating at several levels. The training of Eurotrainers has been evolving over a period of more than 10 years, the new structure and programmes of both ETT1 and ETT2 have been implemented since 2012 and is constantly updated in terms of the methods and materials used.

This upgrading of high-quality training has become a necessity in order to validate the knowledge, abilities and skills of European trade union representatives in the light of the European Commission communication "The European Qualifications Framework: major benefits for citizens and employers throughout Europe"⁴ and the recommendation on "The European Qualifications Framework: promoting mobility and lifelong learning"⁵.

4. A profile for Eurotrainers

Eurotrainers are key players when it comes to enhancing an organisation’s quality of training. To be able to carry out their mission at European and national levels, Eurotrainers need a mix of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that include:

— Knowledge about trade union related issues, about pedagogical methods and practices, about the specificities of working at the European level and also know-how about dealing with multicultural aspects;

— Cognitive skills (understanding, analysis, ability to act on the basis of the needs of the training system);

— Practical skills or “doing skills” (implementing methods and processes);

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— Interpersonal skills (ability to establish and maintain relationships with both participants and colleagues and an ability to see the links between specific trade union contexts and an increasingly globalised society).

**Profile required to access the training system for Eurotrainers**

The training system for Eurotrainers aims to develop participants' training skills. To be accepted onto the training programme, participants must meet the following conditions:

— Be Trade Union trainers who have completed a national basic training programme, undertaken in the context of, and certified by, a national body;

— Have at least 3 years' experience of organising, developing, delivering and evaluating learner-centred trade union training on a national programme for trade union members or professional officials; have an interest in taking part in and promoting Trade Union training on European issues at both national and EU level;

— Have good communication skills in English or in French.

**Profile of Eurotrainers as regards knowledge, skills, attitudes and values**

The profile covers the range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values acquired in the course of formal education (primary, secondary and tertiary levels), non-formal education (training programmes), informal education (individual experiences, workplace, social activities, etc.) and throughout the ETT training itinerary.

There are 3 main descriptors identified within the Eurotrainers' profile:

— Knowledge: being the result of the assimilation of information - a collection of facts, information, practices and skills - acquired through experience, education and training;

— Skills: the observable capacity to use knowledge, abilities and personal, social or methodological acquis for professional or personal development. In the context of European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments);

— Attitudes and values: two important variables influencing cognitive process and behavior and which should be applied in different trade union contexts, namely within training contexts.
After completion of the training for Eurotrainers, participants will have the following profile:

**Knowledge:**

- knowledge of the role and function of training as a key strategy to help trade union organisations achieve their mission at both national and European level; awareness that skills-based training can promote the exchange of best practices throughout the training system;

- understanding of the concept of learning “as a process rather than an event“ - a process with clear objectives, principles and specific practices;

- a clear notion of, and a distinction between, the roles of the different players in training - trainers, experts and learners – which contribute to the success of the learning process;

- understanding of the values, the ethics and the standards of the profession of trade union trainer and knowledge of how to include and strengthen these in all training activities;

- self-awareness and self-analysis of one’s own personal characteristics, of the possible impact of both verbal and non-verbal communication, of body language, of voice intonation on the quality of the delivery and on the impact on the listeners;

- understanding of the need to respect deadlines laid down for the design, preparation and implementation of training activities;

- respect for the different stages of group development and individual characteristics of learners;

- knowledge of a range of group management strategies;

- familiarity with a diverse range of assessment tools and methods to implement before, during or after training in order to measure its impact.

**Abilities:**

- ability to work in a team in order to design and apply the effective transfer of learning before, during and after training activities to the identified needs of both the learner and of trade union organisations;

- ability to develop a coherent programme, to produce suitable training materials, to set specific objectives for learning and development of competences;

- ability to develop and apply active learning methods and interactive training techniques;
ability to use a variety of communication tools and emerging digital tools which are suitable for different styles of communication;

ability to take account of the diversity of cultural contexts, learning styles and learners’ levels of expertise;

ability to recognise potential conflict situations and to manage them wisely and effectively;

ability to present an approach to transcultural meetings characterised by an open mind, a wish for mutual learning, mutual respect, objectiveness and rational critique, and the ability to create a training environment which appreciates and encourages the expression of transcultural content and constructive dialogue.

**Attitudes and values**

- Trade union values
- Assertiveness and communication skills
- Pedagogical leadership
- Creativity and innovation
- Motivation
- Team work
- Managing change and innovation
- Respect for cultural diversity

**5. An assessment process**

The ETUI is now able to offer all participants the opportunity to have their competences accredited, via the APEL procedure (“procedure VAE” in French) with the University of Lille, France. After completion of ETT level 1, participants are offered the possibility to follow this accreditation procedure by developing a reflective ePortfolio. For the purposes of the Eurotrainers assessment, the ePortfolio is the most suitable tool for the characteristics and purposes of this learning pathway. This self-reflection tool on their professional and personal growth is very effective, as it stimulates a deep analysis of acquired and developed skills and makes professional and learning pathways visible. The ePortfolio has to be produced in English or in French, as these are the two official working languages of the ETUI.

The accreditation process is completed once candidates present themselves before the APEL jury at the University of Lille to present their own itinerary as trainers, the contents of the reflexive Portfolio produced and also their perspectives into the future after having completed this itinerary at the European level.
6. **The ePortfolio, an essential educational tool**

There are several types and classifications of a portfolio. If we consider trainers as agents of education and change, within a constructivist perspective, a trainer is also a learner — a life-long learner. A trainer is an agent capable of building, analysing, evaluating and changing his/her practices. Also, if we see training as a collaborative process, it forcefully implies a collaborative reflection. A portfolio provides a means to make this collaborative reflection visible and shareable with others and becomes, first and foremost a learning tool. “The process of reflection is what makes portfolio a tool for lifelong learning and process rather than a mere collection of work”, (Foot and Vermette 2001).

The portfolio serves as a showcase for the individual’s professional development as a Trade Union trainer. It gives trainers an opportunity to choose their best achievements and to justify their choices. They learn to look critically at their work and this is a step towards the development of self-knowledge. They identify their strengths and weaknesses as well as their motivations and they focus on the skills to be developed.

As a self-assessment tool, it is part of a continuous process of formative and, above all, insightful assessment, based on the accumulation of information, evidence of learning, observation and acknowledgement of a solid and continuous development of competences.

**Why a portfolio as an assessment tool?**

The portfolio is a tool for educational management, which puts the learner at the heart of the learning process. The underlying pedagogy enhances their ability to analyse, select, debate, plan and carry out a task, individually and in a team.

In the case of the Eurotrainers, the portfolio is in electronic format and is called an ePortfolio. Software solutions, the choice of an online platform, the organisation of essential content and portfolio assessment criteria are matters which are developed in the operational part, in agreement with the candidate’s coach. The ETUI education department organises one pedagogical workshop every year on “ePortfolio building: an educational and assessment tool”. This workshop has two main objectives: to help all colleagues undergoing the accreditation procedure to develop their digital skills in order to produce electronic portfolios, and also to help them to step out from mere description of training actions into reflecting on their performance, competences and achievements as trainers at both the national and European levels.

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6 The integration of e-portfolios into learning practices is also a way for the institution to record a new learning status: a resource for productivity, and this time not only as an outcome or evidence, but as a process, as an analytical approach to the regular dynamic examination of what is experienced, done, thought and believed.
Table 2  Summary of the three portfolio types by function, as identified by Robert Bideau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
<th>Persons concerned</th>
<th>What to do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Learning  | Retrieve the work which demonstrates the progress achieved thanks to the course | — Support the entire pathway  
— Improve understanding of the author’s learning process  
— Learn to conduct self-assessment  
— Become aware of what is learnt | Learner  
Coach                                           | — Enclose evidence of all the work produced.  
— Enclose comments and thoughts  
— Analyse and retrieve evidence  
— Recognise possible improvements  
— Set targets  
— Present the documents to the coach |
| Presentation | Selection of best work as sub-materials for presentation | — Learning to assess and select  
— Helping learners to talk about their learning | Learner  
Coach                                           | — Choose the best or most significant materials  
— Enclosed comments and thoughts  
— Analyse and retrieve evidence  
— Choose the presentation medium  
— Present the dossier |
| Assessment | Choose material accompanied by comments | — Demonstrate that one or more skills have been developed | Learner  
Coach  
Course team                                      | — Comment and append thoughts  
— Analyse and retrieve evidence  
— Interpret and build an assessment  
— Assess (self and external-evaluation)  
— Communicate the assessment |

7. What are the benefits of the ePortfolio in the reflexive analysis?

First, it must be emphasised that the portfolio is not a simple collection of documents. It is much more than that. Reflexive analysis lies at the heart of the self-assessment approach embodied by the portfolio. For the trainer, it is rather a matter of taking on a work of introspection – “what I feel”, “what I’ve learnt”, “what I think”, “where do I go from here”. Reflexive analysis is an element which supports the process of construction of knowledge. Similarly, instead of isolated formal assessment of activities taken out of context, here there is a contextualisation: in other words, the assessment is linked with the situation in which the learning takes place.
The assessment of learning through the portfolio makes learners aware of what is expected of them and what they still have to improve in order to achieve the standard which has been set in the profile of competences of Eurotrainers.

Because it is longitudinal, the portfolio can identify the progress and difficulties encountered by the participants, individualising the assessment and cross-referencing the backgrounds and individual characteristics of learners. There is no competition here between learners, the only real competition is between each learner and him/herself.

In the case of this training for Eurotrainers, we cannot forget that these are trade union trainers who, in most cases, do not do this work on a full-time basis. They are also trade union activists who act, who think about what they do (what they have done or what they intend to do), who play their part in joint trade union action groups and who take part in other trade union actions.

The work of these trade unionists therefore demands planning, critical thinking, reformulating, assessing, re-inventing, risking, accepting and understanding mistakes, accepting criticisms, achieving the targets and success in what they do, persisting. These are free, responsible and confident citizens and the reflexive portfolio is ideally suited to this profile.

8. Support from a coach

Continuing work on building the portfolio is supported by a coach, in this instance an experienced Eurotrainer from the ETUI EToT (European training of trainers) network. Each trainer who has followed an ETT1 training and who wishes to develop a reflexive ePortfolio will benefit from practical assistance from the coach in the form of advice and consultation. This coaching system allows them to take stock of what they have learnt and to define which areas of improvement there may still be for each portfolio.

Coaching is defined as a relationship which continues for a determined period of time and which enables the trainers to obtain measurable concrete results in their professional and personal lives. Through the coaching process, coachees extend their knowledge and improve their performance. Coaching can be conducted in a one to one session, on the telephone, via skype sessions or in collective sessions, or in a specific place. In the case of the Eurotrainers, geographical distance is a reality, which makes it essential to establish a coaching relationship from the beginning of the process, and also to agree on the means for communicating between the coach and the coachee.

The role of the coach during the learning pathway is to provide support for reflection on experiences and activities, allowing each trainer/coachee involved in the accreditation pathway to incorporate and establish the link between theoretical learning and the context of its application in national and trans-national contexts. The coach advises, assists and supervises the development of the portfolio.
Coaching approach

The Education Department has defined rules to serve as a code of conduct which can be summarised as follows.

Laying down the foundations:

- Respect the rules of professional ethics and standards;
- Draw up the coaching contract: understand what is required and reach agreements with the coachee on coaching procedures and the nature of the relationship.

Working together with the coachee to forge the working relationship:

- Build a climate based on trust and respect;
- Create a spontaneous relationship with the coachee through open communication;
- Help plan and set goals;
- Focus attention on what is important for the coachees and let them take responsibility for their actions;
- Clarify, rephrase, help to put things into perspective;
- Help sort out evidence of achievement;
- Facilitate the skills diagnosis, which requires an awareness of what has been achieved.

Communicating effectively:

- Listen attentively to what is said and what is implicit and encourage coachees to express themselves;
- Ask relevant questions which will elicit the information required;
- Encourage to continue.

9. Organisation of the process leading to certification

This Eurotrainers’ training is conducted on the basis of an agreement between the affiliated organisations and the ETUI, which recognises the latter as the body responsible for the principles of conducting and leading the certification and validation of competences with the University of Lille, as the accrediting body working jointly with the ETUI Education department on this matter. Together, the parties involved define their respective commitments, a schedule for work and their communication procedures. Every coach responsible for providing support to each coachee is present
throughout the whole accreditation process until the appearance before the jury at Lille University.

Participants to the ETT learning pathway are trained in different training related issues at a European level, while themselves experiencing the situation of being participants to pedagogical workshops organised and set up by the ETUI. These pedagogical workshops cover a wide range of subjects which are essential for the development of competences and skills of a trainer working at the European level. As part of its annual work-programme, the Education department organises workshops on “Training design”, “Active learning methodologies”, “ePortfolio building – from description to reflection”, “Communication skills in Trade union context”, just to name a few.

Apart from the pedagogical training offered by the ETUI, participants are quite often requested to be part of ETUI training teams, which allows them to integrate, and also test, many of the training skills developed throughout this process. It is important that every participant / trainer takes ownership of their development and learning process in order to fully integrate acquired skills and competences. Their professional and personal growth is, therefore, visible at many stages of the procedure while, at the same time, their individual characteristics, needs and potential are looked after and respected.

10. A training itinerary with clear objectives and validated outcomes

One of the core objectives of the ETUI is to deliver high-quality training with a clear aim of validating the competences of national Trade Union trainers working at the European level. Over the years, different approaches have been discussed on how to define a clear and consistent accreditation system for the Eurotrainers' pathway.

This process for accreditation of competences is in line with procedures initiated by the European Commission at the Lisbon European Council towards improving the transparency and certification of lifelong learning. That step was reinforced by the Copenhagen and Bologna processes and the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) supported by the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET), which facilitates the recognition of learning outcomes acquired abroad and via the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. In addition, many different systems for validating learning through experience have been set up in the Member States. The APEL procedure (accreditation of prior experiential learning) is a catalyst for Lifelong learning. The French system for the accreditation of prior experiential learning, called “Validation des Acquis de l’Expérience” (VAE), accredits prior learning from past experiences (via professional, personal, social or other contexts) and can lead to an equivalence to full university degrees or diplomas. In the case of the Eurotrainers, the level obtained in the EQF is level 6 and the participants are awarded equivalence to a university degree in Educational Sciences. The system implemented is, therefore, transversal to other European education systems and formally recognised at the national level in all other EU countries.

With the two official working languages of ETUI events being English and French, it became also a
priority for the ETUI to work closely with an accrediting body in a French speaking country. After several exchanges and meetings with 3 different Universities, the ETUI has found a solid basis for cooperation with the University of Lille, in France. The process for defining the profile for the Eurotrainers and of establishing a provisional skills set has been recognised by the University of Lille, and the full implementation of this process has become a reality. The basis for this joint work has been structured and consolidated throughout the years.

The training of Eurotrainers stands out as an important training programme, unique in its essence at the European level and now accredited and transferable within the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The Eurotrainers’ training has a clear adult learning approach and is based on active learning methodologies which stimulate every participant to have an active and essential role, not only throughout the learning process but also in their daily lives as trade union members, activists and engaged citizens of Europe.