

# **Quality Impulse for the Validation of Prior Learning and Career Management**

Getting ahead with the CH-Q System of Managing Competencies

CINOP, 's-Hertogenbosch

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## Colophon

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# Getting ahead with the CH-Q System

## Preface

One of the foremost challenges in education and work is to help people to make choices for their futures and their careers, choices they have made themselves. The working world and education is changing rapidly and it is therefore of the essence that individuals have an active influence on their own careers.

Both the Association CH-Q and CINOP are active in the field of validation of prior learning, career development, self-management of competencies, competence-related training and counselling as well as lifelong learning. In 2003, the Association CH-Q and CINOP launched an experimental collaboration based on the above concepts.

Taking a pragmatic approach, CINOP joined with ROC Nijmegen (Regional Training Centre), Scouting Gelderland (regional Scouts centre) and the 'Loopbaanproject Bouw' (a careers project in the construction industry) in putting the CH-Q System and concepts into practice in the Netherlands. The Association CH-Q provided the principles and necessary structures on which to base these practical schemes.

The main target is the sustainable management of one's own skills and competencies which is also the goal for the future collaboration between the Association CH-Q and Dutch partners. This booklet gives an idea of the pilot programmes carried out in 2003 and 2004 and describes their added value for the Dutch situation. It also outlines perspectives for a European competence-related culture that serves the learner, at every level and in every context.

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# Introduction

Lifelong learning is an important policy issue for the knowledge economy, and hence also for education, vocational training and social partners. Operating from its position as centre of expertise for vocational and adult education, CINOP approaches this subject from several angles, highlighting the significance of lifelong learning at a structural level, at trade and sector level, as well as in terms of creating new roles for Regional Training Centres (ROC's). Finally, it considers the importance of lifelong learning for the individual.

This booklet centres on tools for the individual: accreditation (validation) of prior learning (APL) and career development. The main aspects are quality, professionalism and quality assurance. APL has been broadly acknowledged as a 'novel' tool for shaping career development: 'It is necessary to make APL operational as soon as possible. APL (assessment) can be broad and include agreements on guidance and time line.' (SER, 2002a). APL visualises learning activities and achievements from every stage of life. This harmonises with the broad approach towards learning favoured by the Social and Economic Council (SER) and others. APL can be used in a variety of contexts, such as education, work, mediation and return-to-work schemes, and for a variety of purposes, such as certifying competencies, providing effective training and counselling, career development, and HRD. Preference is given to a flexible APL system that can be used for various target groups in various situations (Education Advisory Council, 2003).

The Social and Economic Council, the Government and the Education Advisory Council attach great importance to anchoring these policy tools. APL and career development can facilitate flexible transitions between the fields of learning, caring and working. Many recommendations have been made to introduce APL and to focus on individuals and their careers, but we feel that more attention should be paid to quality in career management as well as to quality assurance. In fact, tools and ad hoc policies aiming at professionalisation seem to be mushrooming in the Netherlands. There is no formal framework of standards for those involved in career management, portfolio management and APL assessment. Neither are there any formal development processes.

In Switzerland, a System with specific methods has been designed for individual career development that goes hand in hand with guaranteeing the quality of guides and of tools: the CH-Q System of Managing Competencies. Because this System is being taken up by more and more countries, and because there is the perspective of co-ordination at a European level, we have looked into whether it can enrich individual career development and assure the quality of guidance in the Netherlands, and if so under which conditions. This booklet describes our experiences with this System in various settings: education (a Regional Training Centre), business (Loopbaantraject Bouw, a career project in the construction industry) and voluntary work (Scouts). What kind of advantages does it bring to the individuals and to the guides? What would be the use of it in the Netherlands? And what are the critical conditions to be met before it's introduction?

#### **DIRECTIONS FOR USE**

**Chapter 1** discusses in detail the reasons underlying the study of the usefulness of the CH-Q System of Managing Competencies in the Netherlands:

- individuals as managers of their own careers
- APL needs a quality impulse
- The CH-Q System and Europe

The tenor of this chapter is described in greater detail in 'Een leven lang leren: de leervraag centraal? Jaarboek 2004' ('Lifelong learning: the learning question at the core? Yearbook 2004'), a CINOP expertise centre publication in which various authors take different approaches to highlighting the significance for the knowledge economy of lifelong learning. The recurring theme is how a balance can be struck between the individual's needs and potential and the requirements of the knowledge society.

**Chapter 2** paints a picture of the experiences gained using the CH-Q System of Managing Competencies in three different settings. We show the duality of the professionalisation route followed by career guides and the route followed by their participants, and describe what these routes deliver for both groups.

We conclude with a reflection on the added value and usability of the CH-Q System for the Netherlands (**Chapter 3**). What opportunities are there with the CH-Q System? What are the critical success factors?

The appendices include background information on CH-Q. Please visit [www.ch-q.ch](http://www.ch-q.ch) for more details.

# 1

## A quality impulse for careers and for APL

### 1.1 Three motives

There are three motives for promoting the quality of career management and APL: individuals should become the managers of their own careers, the diversity of current APL practices in the Netherlands, and the wish for harmonisation in Europe.

Lifelong learning is essential for future security and the success of employees, organisations and countries. The old patterns of learning first and working later are no longer enough to ensure permanent participation and employability. 'The traditional career, determined to a great extent by the employee's previous education and investments made by employers, is shifting towards a flexible career that is managed mainly by the employee.' (Kuijpers, 2003). As an employee, the individual should take on greater responsibility and as a learner, take centre stage. The Education Advisory Council and the Social and Economic Council state that by taking up a pro-active stance, individuals will have to take on greater responsibility for their own schooling and employability in the labour market. Individuals should have a better insight into their strengths and skills if they are to 'manage' their personal development and career. This is something that has to be learned. Using methods and tools such as APL and career management, relevant parties can support individuals in developing and managing their competencies. Services offering these facilities are growing in the Netherlands, spreading out slowly but surely much like an oil spill. As yet, however, neither quality criteria nor formal standards are in place – there is no nationally recognised system of training and certifying the professional approach on all levels to the Managing of competencies. Nor is there a system of quality assurance. These are key ingredients for the quality of the support and for building confidence in the results of APL and career management.

Switzerland is one of the lead countries for quality assurance of APL and career management in Europe. Thus the CH-Q System and approach is currently introduced in several countries. It might well answer the need for quality and quality assurance of APL in the Netherlands. After all, learning from one another is not only good for individuals and organisations but for countries too.

## 1.2 **Managing your own career**

The main focus of the CH-Q initiative is to enable individuals to manage their own careers, articulate their own development needs and build up their own competencies. Education and vocational training should respond to this, becoming more flexible and demand-driven. Formal systems such as qualification structures and vocational education will then have less of a prescriptive function in terms of personal development, and serve more as a reference framework and repertoire within which there is individual choice. These formal systems retain a function as pegs for defining the direction and level of personal development and the relevant external communication with employers, mediators, referrers, schools, etc.

The concept of lifelong learning embraces a high degree of individual responsibility. The individual is not on his own, however; relevant stakeholders will have to be assigned to assist individuals in developing competencies and managing their careers. Stakeholders not only include organisations, whose task it is to prepare people for long-term participation in the labour market and in society, such as vocational and other educational institutions, but also organisations who assist individuals at crucial junctures in their careers to find new perspectives.

The transitions from school to work, from the period between looking for work and finding it, from sick leave to returning to work, from one job to another, or from work to retirement are cases in point. If lifelong learning is the motto, then personal development and career management will always be a focus of attention, not so much in the sense of repairing breaks in personal resumes, but woven into the normal learning and working setting. Increasingly, this interdependence takes shape in personal development plans (PDPs), in which employees and students are required to articulate their personal learning goals. Methods and tools for identifying, evaluating and recognising non-formal and informal learning can also be helpful.

Providing guidance and counselling to individuals is a priority in encouraging them to become proactive, take on responsibility and deal with what is required and expected of them. Personal wishes and status quo are not the only normative criteria, however – these aspects have to be related to social and economic contexts. This calls for a set of policy tools which can help individuals on their way to self-management on the one hand, and which links competencies to external norms on the other. Accreditation of prior learning (APL) is one such tool. APL supports the construction of work profiles that allow individual's to understand and compare with their own capacities and competencies, motives and ambitions. As a System geared both towards self-management and towards stressing the distinctive features of competencies, the CH-Q system has the same objective – its added value lies mainly in the assurance of quality.

### 1.3 **APL needs a quality impulse**

In the Netherlands, experiments have been carried out for some years now using APL as a tool for accrediting competencies irrespective of where they were acquired. There is a reasonable degree of enthusiasm among policymakers for APL (Dungen et al, 2003). The level of enthusiasm in day-to-day practice is not so high, however. In the practical examples that can be found, the certification or summative function of APL is predominant. Be that as it may, both providers and participants are attaching more and more importance to the development-based (formative) function of APL: the function it can fulfil in career development in the context of lifelong learning. Accordingly, there are currently two main streams in APL. In the first, APL is an alternative diploma route and in the second, it functions as a system of career development (Duvekot, 2004). This dual function can also be found in European principles drawn up for the 'validation of non-formal and informal learning' (EU, 2004).

APL goals can be formative or summative. It is up to the individual to decide. In both cases, the individual's total package of skills, competencies and of qualifications comes under review. The still prominent emphasis on the certifying and qualifying character of APL has everything to do with the very first key stakeholders, namely those in senior secondary vocational education (mbo) and knowledge centres, and the use of the national qualification structure for senior secondary vocational education as an accreditation standard. Gradually, new parties have emerged, such as the Centre for Work and Income (CWI), return-to-work companies, social partners, trade organisations, businesses (in particular officials in human resource development and education and development) and voluntary organisations. These organisations are looking for ways to shape APL to fit their own context.

Certification is not always the final goal, sometimes it is enough to get a good idea of an individual's potential. Nevertheless, the communicative value and the transparency of results is also a concern. The portfolio plus a jointly employed competence terminology can provide such transparency. Portfolios already act as a collective base for the formative and summative function of APL. Despite the various manifestations of APL, almost all such procedures start by accrediting and evaluating competencies being documented in portfolios. The recognition is very individual-based, evaluation (and, as the case may be, accreditation) can take place in relation to an external standard (a national or sector-specific qualification structure or a professional competence profile) or the object may be to develop a personal competence profile as a standard. (See also Hövels et al, 2002).

Whatever the APL function or standard that is eventually selected, we recommend developing tools that can be used in various contexts, situations and stages of life, and, where possible, are valid outside the Netherlands. In today's western society where career shifts and labour mobility are the rule rather than the exception, developing a system that can be put to broad use is to be preferred. A system that is not bound to a specific profession or institution requires a quality

assurance base that transcends individual education or business-related quality frameworks, for instance. A system of personal accreditation comes closest to that. In such systems, it is irrelevant where the accredited individuals work, be that in vocational education, adult education, in business or voluntary work, or whether these people are assessors, portfolio managers, process or career guides. What does matter is that they are capable of helping people enhance their competencies and further their career development.

The CH-Q System has integrated a system quality assurance of APL and career development. It sits well with the challenges advocated by the Social and Economic Council (SER) and the Cabinet, such as engaging in lifelong learning, a core position for the individual, and career development. The system enhances transparency between education and the labour market and is not institution-specific. This does away with various limitations of domain-specific portfolio and APL systems, as we know them in the Netherlands. The policy of 'let a thousand flowers bloom' in the Netherlands was crucial for creating grassroots support, but it led to an array of tools and portfolios for all manner of ends, contexts and target populations. The result of this mushrooming of portfolios is that the value of a portfolio is not recognised outside the context in which it was developed. Neither is there an unequivocal conceptual framework, making communication about results awkward. Other disadvantages include non-committal development of expertise, no quality assurance system, assessments of dubious independence, and a one-sided, internal use of the outcome of procedures as tools for deciding whether or not to grant exemptions when administering training courses (Knowledge centre APL, 2004). If APL is to contribute positively to individual career development, then improvements in transparency, accessibility and quality are needed. Even so, some initiatives have been taken in the field of APL quality assurance, for instance the creation of an APL code by the APL Knowledge Centre, competence profiles for guides and assessors and a system of furthering expertise. These have not been formalised, however, and there is no support for a more generic application of these quality impulses, which would serve to align practice.

The CH-Q System can be used in the fields of education (initial and post-initial, funded and non-funded), of the working world, of the return to work or preparation for work. It is set up as a independent concept and features a comprehensive system of quality assurance, thus making it a system that meets requirements as regards independent character of career development and APL, much advocated in the Netherlands. The system endorses current ideas and is based on a broad APL approach, i.e. aiming not only at certification but especially also at career development and employing various standards. Moreover, it leads to transparency and quality of provision as well as autonomous management, supervision and control.

## 1.4 The CH-Q System and Europe

In Europe you come across innumerable policies, learning cultures, systems and development processes that are used for the accreditation of prior learning. The publication 'EVC in Europe' (Schoor et al., 2003) describes achievement levels that can be used for APL purposes in the Netherlands. The authors outline five main streams of APL development in five countries, which, given their development and experience, act as lead countries, providing achievement levels for developing APL in the Netherlands.

CH-Q is the abbreviation of 'Schweizerisches Qualifikationsprogramm zur Berufslaufbahn', i.e. 'Swiss Qualifikation Programme for Job careers'. It is promoted by the Association CH-Q an independent, non-profit organisation. In Switzerland, the CH-Q System has grown into a national initiative with a large network of qualified trainers and guides. It is controlled and advocated nationally by the Association CH-Q, something that is sorely lacking in the Netherlands, as the OECD report on career guidance shows. The CH-Q System is applied on a broad scale in education, in the working world, in trade organisations and trade unions as well as voluntary organisations. Widespread support helps to make it more accessible to all kinds of groups and organisations. There are no institutional restrictions like those often encountered in the Netherlands.

Transparency is enhanced through the system of quality assurance implemented by an independent commission elected by the assembly of CH-Q members. Relevant accreditation standards are laid down by the assembly body. Professional development and certification, on a license basis, are key anchors in assuring quality. This process of certification is open to all and hence not bound to a specific institution or type of profession, as is the case in the Netherlands. The process of qualification and certification can be followed at different levels: from level 1 to expert level 4 (see appendix 3). The quality of guides is checked by independent experts. An approach such as this means that guides trained in an educational context can use this expertise in preparation for work programmes or business, or vice versa. The APL motto applies here, too: 'The point is not where you have learned something but that you have learned it and can demonstrate you have.'

The success of the CH-Q System is also mirrored abroad, where it has been introduced in Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, the German-speaking area of Belgium, England, and in experimental form in the Netherlands. The great advantage of introducing this System is that trainers and guides implementing it can go through the process themselves first. They then plan how to define and deliver the programme to their own groups and in their own situation and then implement it. Certification takes place once the programme has been completed. The programme thus developed is assessed and the trainer's or the guide's approach and experience are subjected to a critical evaluation. The system as such hinges on both participants and guides

demonstrating that they can self-manage their competencies. Organised in this way, training and certification actively contribute towards innovating the training of career managers and assessors as urged by the OECD: 'Career managers need better training based on modern criteria.'

# 2

## Learning and trying out

### 2.1 The ‘teach what you preach’ approach

In order to find out whether the CH-Q System can be used in the Netherlands, we looked for practical situations in which career development and APL play an important part. In order to find out whether the system could be put to wide use for several kinds of target groups, practical settings in wide-ranging contexts were chosen, in education, in the business community and in voluntary work. The result was a collaboration with ROC Nijmegen, Loopbaantraject Bouw and Scouting Nederland, Gelderland branch.

#### **ROC Nijmegen, career development**

ROC Nijmegen sees the encouragement of career development in vocational education as essential. The demand for career competencies is growing as society and the economy are in a constant state of flux. This has consequences for the labour market. That is why the ROC focuses on student's careers. For one thing, it is important that a student's competencies are mapped out early on and for another, they need to be given the opportunity to find a good training position or job.

#### **Loopbaanproject Bouw**

The Loopbaanproject Bouw is a joint initiative of employers' and employees' organisations in the construction industry. The collective bargaining agreements (Bouw and Uta) concluded in March 2001 for the construction sector include agreements to that effect. Initially, the project targeted all employees included in the collective bargaining agreements in the province of Noord-Holland and employees in the scaffolding sector nationwide. APL is used as a career development tool in this project.

Employers' and employees' organisations in the construction industry regard it as essential that more is done in the way of career development in the construction industry. By taking preventive measures and responding to situations that indicate problems or dissatisfaction of some kind, such as absenteeism, they are looking to reduce the numbers of people applying for invalidity benefits. Moreover, the aim is to give personnel who do not belong to this risk group more opportunity to develop their careers. Finally, it is hoped that improved personnel policies will have a positive effect on the industry's image.

### **Scouting**

The literature defines voluntary work as 'work performed in an organised setting on an optional and unsalaried basis and for the benefit of others or society in general'. In the Netherlands, an estimated three million people perform voluntary work as defined above, often in the health care, education or welfare sector. There are 670,000 full-time jobs in these sectors. In Tijdbestedingsonderzoek (TBO, 2000), a study of time use and time structuring, the Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands noted a sharp decline in voluntary work both in terms of numbers of volunteers and the average number of hours spent doing voluntary work. The most important reason for giving up voluntary work is lack of time, due mainly to the time required for paid work. Volunteers and voluntary organisations hold appreciation and the recognition of competencies in high regard. Scouting Nederland has been active in this field for some years now, and is looking to consolidate these efforts in a way that matches the unique nature of voluntary work.

Pilot schemes were set up and run with these organisations. The pilots took a dual approach, which is typical of the quality assurance system integrated in the CH-Q System. The Guides first complete the basic training in Managing their own competencies themselves. After that, they devise a project plan using this approach in their own target group, carry it out and then evaluate the results. They present and account for their approach to external CH-Q assessors. Based on an assessment of the written material and verbal explanations, the assessors decide whether the guides meet the certification requirements.

In this study, guides are understood to mean both career managers and process guides in the various organisations in which the schemes took place (primary guides), the project and process guides of the schemes as such, and advisers from CINOP and the APL Knowledge Centre. The entire project was based on a co-operation agreement with CH-Q. This association used the services of a certified qualification and certification expert. It was the first testing of the system and the system in the Netherlands.

## **2.2 Experiences gained by guides during the certification route**

Career and process guides of the Loopbaanproject Bouw, the ROC Nijmegen student service and the area executive of Scouting Gelderland followed the training and certification route with four CINOP and APL Knowledge Centre advisers.

Level 1 and 3 trainings comprise at least 20 hours of group meetings over a period of four to six weeks, and in some cases longer. Individual guidance takes at least eight hours. Participants work at home in between meetings, searching out and applying for proof of their competencies such as diplomas, certificates or references. The time each specific group needs or the kind of learning goal set or the advice given can all be tailored. During the training or individual guidance,

participants work systematically assembling a portfolio and a records dossier. The training or individual guidance comprises the following steps:

- 1 Documentation/analysis: systematically identifying, assembling and ordering data and facts. The participants look carefully at what they have done in the past (recent and farther back) and arrange the information into private, school and work sections.
- 2 Reflection, an essential aspect of managing competencies: regularly contemplating development steps; critically scrutinising the circumstances in which the participant lives, learns, and performs professionally, and coming to conclusions with regard to personal competencies.
- 3 Planning and implementation: preparing and charting a training or individual guidance; formulating realistic goals in an action plan or a personal development plan (PDP).

The learning process progresses through successive stages and comprises working on one's biography, identifying one's potential and creating an up-to-date profile.

Standard level certification comprised three meetings focusing on the 'self-management of competencies'. Participants worked through the portfolio process on their own, a process in which 'awareness' features prominently – who am I, what do I want and what skills and competencies do I have? The Swiss experts used tools and assignments from the CH-Q System to support the process. The standard level was rounded off with a presentation in which participants were required to demonstrate that they were capable of self-managing their competencies. They presented a plan showing how these competencies can be used in their further development. This was then followed by standard level certification.

In successive meetings, participants made a project plan for developing and implementing a basic training programme for their own specific group. CH-Q experts assessed these plans in accordance with the quality criteria as formulated in the CH-Q System. The guides then put the project plans into action in their groups. Experts again assessed the results on the basis of a written presentation, which included invitation letters, information brochures, assignments, work files, but also a written reflection on one's own process of development, as well as a verbal explanation and validation. If the assessment was positive, this phase was concluded with certification at level 3. All guides were eventually certified at this level.

### 2.2.1 Reflection and added value

It was new to all guides that they had first to work with their own methods and tools for becoming aware of one's own competencies and then developing and enhancing them, a process they would normally only use with participants. This resulted in the following reflections, which are unique for the CH-Q System:

- Experiencing this for oneself helps to provide a better insight into one's own competencies in general and in particular one's professional, career-based competencies. It builds on and strengthens both the individual and his or her self-awareness and empowerment.
- The fact that guides go through this experience themselves leads to an intensification and enhancement of the quality of the participants' career management; this gives a more lasting insight than that gained using methods and tools whose effects do not go to the heart of the matter.
- Besides that, this approach produces tools that can be used for guidance (concept and methods through training) and for implementation purposes (programme, tools and assignments). With a certain amount of tailoring, they can also be used in the process with participants.
- The concept can be used for heterogeneous target groups and organisations. Pilots involved volunteers, employees, job seekers, people with differing educational backgrounds, motivated and less motivated participants. Working with young people whose motivation levels are low is more difficult. Awareness grows once attractive assignments have aroused their interest. Because their concentration spans are shorter, meetings should be shorter. The training itself will then take longer.
- All guides possess proof of their ability in the form of the CH-Q quality mark (levels 1 and 3 certification), which they can use for their own career development. Certification level 3 stands for a qualification as 'CH-Q Trainer and Guide'.
- Certification entitles guides to carry out a basic training or individual guidance programme for similar target groups in their organisation, and to certify participants at that level (on the basis of the CH-Q license).

Reactions of guides given in the evaluation:

- My self-image has improved.
- I have discovered new and different competencies.
- I have learned to put my competencies into words.
- I have learned to back up my competencies with proof.
- I am now more focused in my search for a job.
- I have learned that you can acquire competencies outside school or work, for instance at important junctures in your life.
- My job applications no longer hinge on the position as such but more on my own qualities.
- I have been working on my portfolio for quite some time already, but it wasn't until I went through the process myself that I started to understand it properly.

## 2.3 Experiences gained by participants during the certification route

This section discusses the experiences during the participant certification route in the pilot schemes at the ROC, the Loopbaantraject Bouw, and Scouting as the group representing voluntary work. Carrying out a basic 'self-management of competencies' programme for one's own group is, as we have seen, part of the certification route for guides. The aim of the basic programme is to get a more comprehensive picture of oneself (awareness), learn to make practical and optimum use of your strong points (reflection), and to design an action plan for further development (e.g. job applications, learning route, consolidation).

*Guides help participants achieve the following learning goals:*

- Self-reflection and self-management.
- Develop an insight into the relationship between qualifications (diplomas), competencies (abilities in a broad sense and personal qualities) and requirements.
- Learn to present themselves to employers.
- Learn to go on with the process of developing and validating their competencies and portfolio (assembling proof and references) in future activities such as work placements, work experience or salaried work.

A framework of methods, tools and organisation models was established beforehand. During the pilots, guides and stakeholders tried out, evaluated and modified these frameworks. The concept and the frameworks were then recorded in various documents. The concept was presented to individuals and groups.

ROC Nijmegen ran two pilots:

- Pilot Rotonde: candidates with career concerns who were looking to build on their personal development and learn to self-manage their competencies. The final aim was to select a suitable training or individual guidance programme. The CH-Q approach was integrated into the introduction programme for the new intake group.
- Pilot RMC: for candidates of the Regional Registration and Co-ordination Centre (RMC) for premature school leavers. The people in this group had few opportunities to acquire placements as part of a theoretical vocational training route, or were not able to find a job or chose a particular course of training. The standard route open to these people consists of the following steps: intake – further examination – drawing up a PDP – carrying out the PDP – aftercare. The CH-Q concept and development of the portfolio were integrated in the steps 'further examination' and 'carrying out the PDP'. The course was held in a group.

Portfolio training and guidance programme for the RMC group of ROC Nijmegen:

- Step 1: Describe life stages using photos or situations, define competencies and complete 'life line assignment'.
- Step 2: Biography assignment, performance assignment.
- Step 3: Fill in last CV column (translate to competencies); weaknesses and strengths assignment.
- Step 4: Quality game, personal qualities assignment, commercial assignment.
- Step 5: Draw up a personal profile, make an action plan, present competencies profile and action plan to the group.

In the Loopbaantraject Bouw, the CH-Q Concept was integrated into the process guidance. The aim of the pilots was to permanently transfer the participant to another company or an alternative position, based on personal development plans. The process guides worked on an individual basis.

Pilot schemes:

- Applying the CH-Q Concept at three locations in three schemes, targeting the group with medical problems leading to career concerns and where the focus was on prevention. These candidates were not clear as to their career opportunities and were struggling with questions such as who am I, what do I want and what competencies have I got?

The aim at Scouting Nederland, Gelderland branch, was to find out how the CH-Q Concept could contribute towards acknowledging and recognising the value of volunteers' competencies, at individual level and at the level of the organisation as a whole (Steunpunt Scouting Gelderland, 2004):

- Pilot scheme for group guides and group leaders at Scouting.

#### **Portfolio for volunteers: how you can demonstrate what you have learned**

It goes without saying that voluntary work can be a valuable experience. But how can you show your new employer or the people at your training institution exactly what you have learned? Some people have no trouble with this at all, they know precisely what they have to offer and are good at 'selling' themselves. However, most of us, and particularly young people, can do with some help with that. Portfolios can be a good solution.

The CH-Q portfolio was tested with several volunteers in the pilot to see whether it was of help. The aim was to design a volunteer portfolio that is easy to access and open to all.

### 2.3.1 Reflection and added value?

The attraction of the CH-Q System is that it does not prescribe how training or individual guidance programmes should look like. It is a concept that guides can use and adjust so that it is tailored to their own context and group. The experiences of the guides tailoring the concept according to their needs (for instance how the programme should blend into the given practical setting), are described here, as well as the benefits for the participants.

Benefits for the given situation (the organisation):

- A better understanding of the specifics of the participant group through personal development plans. This leads to a better quality of the training and the individual guidance. For instance, Scouting sees more opportunities for helping with the development of volunteers.
- An evaluation/report describing the pilot, the process, the programme, the tools and assignments for career development. ROC Nijmegen integrated the concept into a portfolio training course. Scouting opted for the term Skillfolio. In its report, Scouting discusses opportunities for formal and informal accreditation of volunteers' competencies.
- Recommendations for using the system in an individual organisation, for example advice for Scouting Nederland with regard to the pros and cons of the Skillfolio for enhancing volunteers' personal development plans.

Benefits for participants:

- Adds to participant's self-awareness and empowerment, strengthens the individual.
- Participants can use their personal development plans to prepare career steps. Guides in the Loopbaanproject Bouw notices that participants are now better equipped for the labour market and for applying for jobs. Participants learned to see themselves and their future opportunities in a broader perspective.

#### **Benefits for one of the Loopbaanproject Bouw participants**

After much deliberation, this participant decided to become a sports masseur. He made frequent use of his portfolio when applying for jobs. The responsible guide is convinced that this participant would not have taken these steps had he not completed the CH-Q training programme. He is now more sure of what he actually wants and is capable of doing it: in brief he is ready to answering the challenge.



# 3

## Added value and serviceability

### 3.1 Introduction

In the light of the various reflections, we have studied the value and serviceability of the CH-Q System for the Netherlands. The experiences gained in the pilots played a part as did the ongoing contacts with the CH-Q Association and the APL Knowledge Centre. Other aspects were experiences with developing and introducing portfolios, and APL in the Netherlands, the discussion on quality assurance of APL and the increasing need for standardising tools. Another important aspect was the fact that while widespread discussions are being held in the Netherlands on the importance of focusing on careers, their operational realisation is still lagging behind. Unlike in Switzerland with the CH-Q System, there is no unequivocal conceptual framework here, nor is there an infrastructure to speak of. As ROC Nijmegen's vision shows, the Regional Training Centres are aware that one of their future tasks will be to provide career management and guidance. That said, the ROC front offices, i.e. student services, central intake bureaus or student counselling facilities are to be or have already been disbanded (Van den Dungen, 2004).

After this first acquaintance with the CH-Q approach, we conclude that it is a system that constitutes an added value for the Dutch situation and that it is serviceable provided certain conditions are met. A key factor is the system's flexibility. Applying it in another country means tailoring it to a different culture, a different system and different conditions. In the following section, we will discuss the various aspects of this added value in greater detail. Some aspects may be useful to the reader what does not mean to introduce the CH-Q System across the board.

### 3.2 Added value on different levels

The added value is achieved at different levels.

### 3.2.1 National support

One of the advantages of the CH-Q System is its strong support base in Swiss society as well as the fact that the strategy for introducing it combines a top-down (building networks and anchor points) with a bottom-up approach (experiments in all kinds of context). A policy impulse sped up its introduction, namely the education reform in the early 1990s that focused on flexibility, modular training routes, harmonisation of official and non-official competencies and achievement levels, and the creation of classification tools (APL taxonomy). Recent years have seen an explicit linking up with European developments such as the European CV and Euro Pas.

The question is whether such a support base can be found in the Netherlands. In this country, there is no comprehensive systematic framework that has allowed APL to come to effect and there is no control system on a national level. There are great differences in the way APL is used in education, the labour market and preparation for work programmes. There is no transparency and little communication about the results between these sectors. A great deal of new structuring work is still needed to make APL a success: more flexibilisation, a cultural switch, funding, control system and a greater focus on career development of individuals. There are opportunities for introducing competence-related concepts in vocational education but that is just one of the fields in which the development of competencies and careers is of importance.

### 3.2.2 A single language of careers and competencies

The fact that the CH-Q System is based on a distinct central principle and has a single conceptual framework – career development based on the self-management of competencies – is a strong point. Both the business community and the education sector endorse this principle and the conceptual framework it is embedded in. This concept unites several components that are often developed separately and in isolation from one another, such as the central position of careers and the individual, portfolios and APL, flexibilisation and customisation, and competencies-related teaching and competencies management.

Self-management is supported by unequivocal tools and modules (competence passport, competence biography, dossier, modules), which may be flexibly tailored to various contexts and target groups. Informal competencies acquired in various activity fields such as education, work, leisure, private circumstances, etc., form the basis of self-management. In addition, THE CH-Q SYSTEM uses a behaviour code, i.e. a code of ethic principles (see Appendix 2). This code serves as a guideline for The CH-Q experts and their organisations. Candidates seeking certification at levels 2, 3 or 4 undertake to apply these principles in their work.

The Netherlands has no clear-cut conceptual framework for careers-related and other competencies (Van den Dungen, 2004). The education and business sectors have their own

interpretation of these ideas and that leads to linguistic confusion. The same problem applies to methods and tools used in the Netherlands such as portfolios and APL. The lack of transparency and the diversity of products, tools and effects breed confusion among policymakers, providers and participants. Additionally, the lack of a single central concept delays introduction of a single language system.

Critical success factors for the development of a single language of competencies in the Netherlands include introducing a competence-related qualification structure and competence-related vocational education, creating a language that the business community can also identify and use, linking this to thinking in terms of careers and moving from the philosophy of 'letting a thousand flowers bloom' to greater uniformity.

### 3.2.3 Dual professionalisation

The dual training of guides – experiencing the training process themselves before replicating it with participants – improves the guidance of participants so that they learn to develop and manage their careers. In the Netherlands, dual learning is not a routine feature in the professionalisation of career, portfolio and APL guides. Dual learning can be a model for innovating the training of career managers and assessors, as urged by the OECD. Essential conditions for this form of professionalisation in the Netherlands include flexible programmes, time, funds and the right attitude (willingness to show vulnerability and start learning again, despite years of experience).

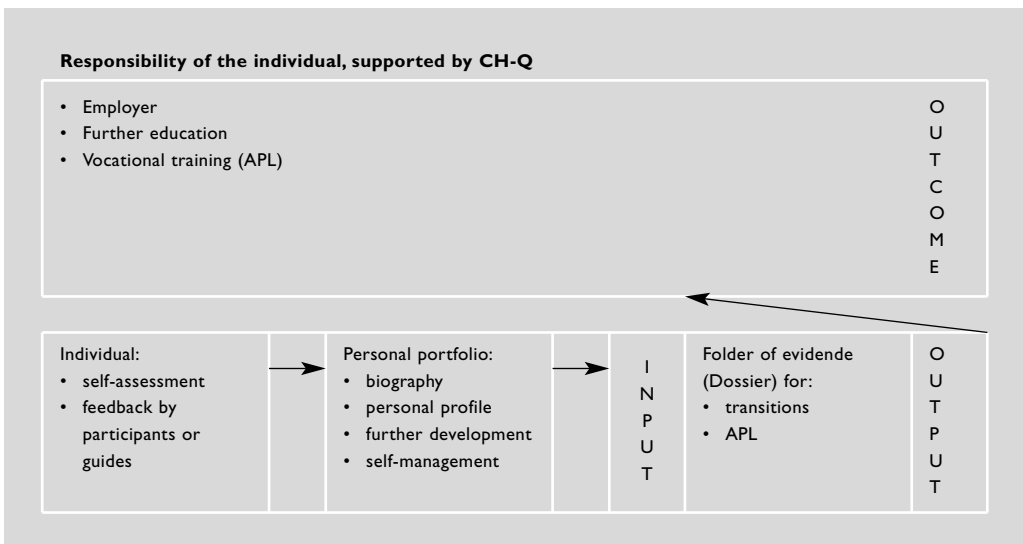
### 3.2.4 Quality assurance

The training programme is linked to a multi-stage certification system. Quality assurance underlies the entire concept. The CH-Q System integrates a quality system and a quality mark that has gained the trust of several stakeholders. There is a significant measure of consistency between the CH-Q approach and the practical fields in which it is applied – proven competence is vital at all levels. The central feature throughout is career development and lifelong learning. The possibility of an APL quality mark that would link up the various fields of application (education, preparation for work, voluntary work, business) and APL functions (formative and summative) is being considered in the Netherlands. A critical success factor for implementing this system in the Netherlands is whether stakeholders are prepared to subordinate their own interests, applications and tools to the common goals of transparency and communication, and whether quality marks are regarded as added value.

### 3.2.5 The individual at the core, applicable to all groups

The strength of the CH-Q System is that it puts the individual at the core of its activities. Individuals develop their own career goals, and these can range from developing one's career to certification. Organisations need to respond in a flexible way to the individual's expectations in terms of personal and professional development. Accordingly, the CH-Q system connects national policies (union policy → macro level) with institutional policies (responsiveness of the organisation, flexible provision → meso level) and links it with individual needs (demand articulation → micro level). In Switzerland, both individuals and organisations have access to the CH-Q system. The CH-Q approach is open covering the full range of occupational fields and target groups. Information on career management according to the CH-Q approach and the offers of guidance is available on the CH-Q website – thus creating a one-stop-shop function, another aspect that is likewise lacking in the Netherlands.

The Social and Economic council (SER) and the Education Council put the individual and his or her career centre stage. Individuals should be responsible for their own employability. To do so and depending on the possible career steps they should get support and guidance from educational institutions, employers and intermediary facilities. A critical success factor for an effective introduction of such concepts in the Netherlands is that it hinges consistently on the individual as the central focus in strategies, methods and tools. The individual should become the owner of his or her own career. This requires thinking in terms of a demand-driven, individual-gear approach rather than a supply-driven one.



### 3.2.6 Enhancing APL quality

APL is no longer used exclusively for certification purposes in the Netherlands, but increasingly with the aim of developing careers and promoting lifelong learning. Identifying, evaluating and accrediting competencies prompts people to make career choices and define personal development plans. Both providers and users underline the importance of these two functions of APL (Dungen et al., 2003). This has the effect of gradually bringing together the aim and the potential of both these approaches (APL and the CH-Q system). However, a design for the formative function of APL is by no means fully crystallised yet in the Netherlands. As a result, APL is used both in a retrospective sense (certification) but also and in particular in a forward-looking sense (individual development: i.e. what effects should certification have for an individual's career? See 'EVC, brug tussen competenties en kwalificaties', 2003 ('APL: a bridge between competencies and qualifications' for further information). The framework of the CH-Q System is an ideal base for a forward-looking approach. It supports a career concept that is considered successful only if the participants are able to put their strong and weak points into words and integrate their competencies in future career steps. These steps are not necessarily linked to specific curricula or certification. This makes the CH-Q System more widely applicable than several APL procedures since it can also be used outside the context of education and the qualification structure. The CH-Q System is applicable in various sectors, including further and vocational education, working world and voluntary work.

As a rule, four aspects drive quality thinking in APL procedures in the Netherlands: the quality of the assessment standard (e.g. the qualification structure in vocational education), the quality of the procedure (steps), the expertise of the coach/assessor and the quality of the tools used. These quality elements are also found in the CH-Q System. However, the Swiss quality framework is broader in scope; considerable importance is attached to the communicability of competencies (transparency), to wide backing within society (support and trust) and widespread use (embedding).

A central question of the entire CH-Q System is the training and certification of the guides. The quality of the different programmes and learning processes is dependent on their qualification. In the Netherlands, the professional development of career counsellors and assessors (these are mostly new roles rather than separate positions) receives little attention, most of which is directed towards the development of criteria and procedures.

### 3.2.7 Increasing harmonisation in Europe

The booklet 'EVC in Europa, Europese leerpunten voor EVC-benutting in Nederland' (Kenniscentrum EVC, 2003) ('APL in Europe, European achievement levels for using APL in the Netherlands') describes the similarities and the differences in Europe with regard to APL. Each European country is aware that combining formal and informal learning processes constitutes an individual and a social accomplishment. Developments in the field of lifelong learning and career management and guidance, which could be termed APL, are taking place in several countries, though each has a different designation (The CH-Q System in Switzerland, Kompetans Reform in Norway, AP(E)L in Ireland, Bilan de Compétence in France). The differences that exist between these countries are not primarily the results of their using different definitions but are due to the fact that the labour market structures are different, as are the collaborations between stakeholders, the education systems, the social implications, the rules for formal and informal learning and the infrastructure of APL and career development facilities.

The publication of the APL Knowledge Centre contains recommendations that provide a guideline for enhancing APL in the Netherlands and for harmonising it in Europe. The common EU principles of 'validation of informal and non-formal learning' form a basis for further harmonisation. These principles also put considerable emphasis on individual career development as well as on the formative and summative function of APL. We note that the tools established at European level are gradually finding their way into the various countries and organisations. Well-known examples are the European CV and the European Language Portfolio in accordance with the European standard (A1 through C2).

The instruments which the Association CH-Q has developed to accompany career processes on all levels do match with European developments. New portfolio and APL approaches in the Netherlands are using the structure of the European CV. A future vision would be if the link of a CH-Q approach and APL results were not only applicable in a single country but between different countries. A first step towards achieving harmonisation and communication is to adopt each other's best practices. Using the CH-Q System in the Netherlands would be a good start. It is already implemented in various European countries such as the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and England. Several countries are therefore convinced of the merits of this approach.

## Selfevaluation of Performance-related competencies

### Description of the assignment

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### Description of the competencies applied to the assignment

Personal competencies	
Social competencies	
Organisational methodological competencies	

### Selfevaluation of the performance

A1:	A2:	B1:	B2:	C1:	C2:
With help, I can handle simple and familiar situations.	I can handle simple and routine situations on my own.	I can handle daily routine situations on my own and without preparation.	I can handle complex, familiar situations on my own.	I can handle complex, unfamiliar situations.	I can handle complex, unfamiliar situations, under pressure if need be. I can recognise mistakes and correct them.

*CH-Q competencies diagram with reference to the European Language Portfolio ELP*



# 4

## Conclusions

CINOP has studied the added value and the serviceability of a procedure of quality assurance of managing competencies and APL in various practical settings in the Netherlands. The Swiss CH-Q System offers an effective introduction to the self-management of competencies and a powerful trainingsystem. It follows quality criteria linked to a quality mark. Several European countries are adopting the CH-Q System. European collaborations and internationalisation therefore provide opportunities for learning from good practices.

CINOP opted for three pilots in three different fields: education (ROC), voluntary work (Scouting) and business (Loopbaanproject Bouw). The experience gained in the pilots was for the most part positive. The training guides were enthusiastic about the approach. The process led to a greater self-awareness of competencies and empowerment, career-related and related to the personal development. The guidance process itself resulted in an improvement of its quality.

The only fact that the CH-Q System can be used in various contexts already means a significant gain. Moreover, it facilitates communication on individual competencies between referees, users/clients and employers as well as communication among the network partners. The success of this System stands or falls on whether it is widely adopted in the diverging fields of education, working world, voluntary work. In Switzerland, the System proved to be successful. In this sense it means an equally added value to the Netherlands. However, introducing it depends on a number of critical success factors such as a national support base, a readiness to building up a common language as well as to investing in professionalisation and quality assurance, and most important, a willingness to actively place the individual centre stage. The conviction is gaining ground that dual programmes towards self-management of competencies in both individual participants and guides might be a critical success factor for introducing competence-related learning and working. The question remains of how this shifting could after all work out if professionals themselves were not aware of the actual significance of general and career-related competencies?

With others, the CINOP and the APL Knowledge Centre are attempting to harness support and explore what conditions are needed to set up an independent organisation in the Netherlands that can further these principles and take on the task of quality assurance. Effective tools promoting the self management of competencies and an adequate infrastructure can build a bridge between demand and responsiveness and between career development and career realisation.

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# 1

## Appendix **Background information on CH-Q**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

A system known as CH-Q System of Managing Competencies, widely accepted in the German-speaking part of Switzerland has been in use for some time now. The abbreviation CH-Q stands for 'Schweizerisches Qualifikationsprogramm zur Berufslaufbahn' ('Swiss qualification programme for job careers'). The CH-Q System – in a wide sense – is to be considered as a procedure for Accrediting Prior Learning (APL). Its main goals consist in analyzing and recording (self-assessment), evaluating and validating formal and informal professional and general competencies in a variety of areas. The underlying principles are to make use of one's strong points and, where required, convert them into qualifications. The CH-Q System is different from Dutch APL practices on several key counts:

- It has created a better link between personal as well as career development and accreditation.
- Products are coherent and services are transparent and set up nationally.
- A system of quality assurance is in place: it includes the professionalisation (certification) of trainers and guides, and the accreditation of providers
- Implementation is not limited to a specific area of work; both individuals and institutional organisations can implement the system within the agreed quality framework.
- The system enjoys considerable direct or indirect support from the government, social partners, education, the business community, and voluntary organisations.

### **2. ORIGINS**

CH-Q evolved out of a national initiative of in education in the early 1990s. It developed into a 4 year project, supported by the Federal office for professional education and technology. The main targets of this initiative were the flexibilisation of the educational system and the equivalence of formal and informal learning. In that context, a system was developed for identifying, assessing and recognizing skills and competencies. It included respective guidance tools matching the needs of specific target groups. The Association CH-Q was subsequently set up in 1999 in order to manage, expand and promote the system.

The responsibilities of the Association consist in ensuring:

- the frame conditions
- the development

- the quality assurance
- the national and international coordination.

### 3. CH-Q SYSTEM OF MANAGING COMPETENCIES

The CH-Q System of Managing Competencies is an **overarching concept** which includes an open and flexible system consisting of a set of contents, methods, procedures and supporting actions that are mutually consistent. The system comprises the strategies and concepts to guaranty the quality as well as a frame of reference determining the application and development through experts in training and counselling.

The **main targets** of the CH-Q System are empowering individuals and groups as users, clients to make use of their own potential in a deliberate and realistic way and accept full personal responsibility for it, to take charge of managing their own skills, competencies and qualifications in a sustainable way and last but not least to focus on resources and solutions while planning their careers.

To this effect the Association CH-Q has defined the **contents and procedures** to be followed by the trainers and guides. **The contents** focus on recording and providing skills and competencies from all walks of life allowing thus to raise the awareness of existing resources and to make achievements visible. This process includes the assessing of skills and competencies through self-evaluation and the providing evidence of the existing competencies in view of external requirements.

**The procedures** focus on three main steps: the documenting and analyzing of activities and performances, the reflecting of developmental and learning processes and finally the solution-oriented and context-specific planning and strategic decision-making of the realization.

The CH-Q System includes **principles on two levels**

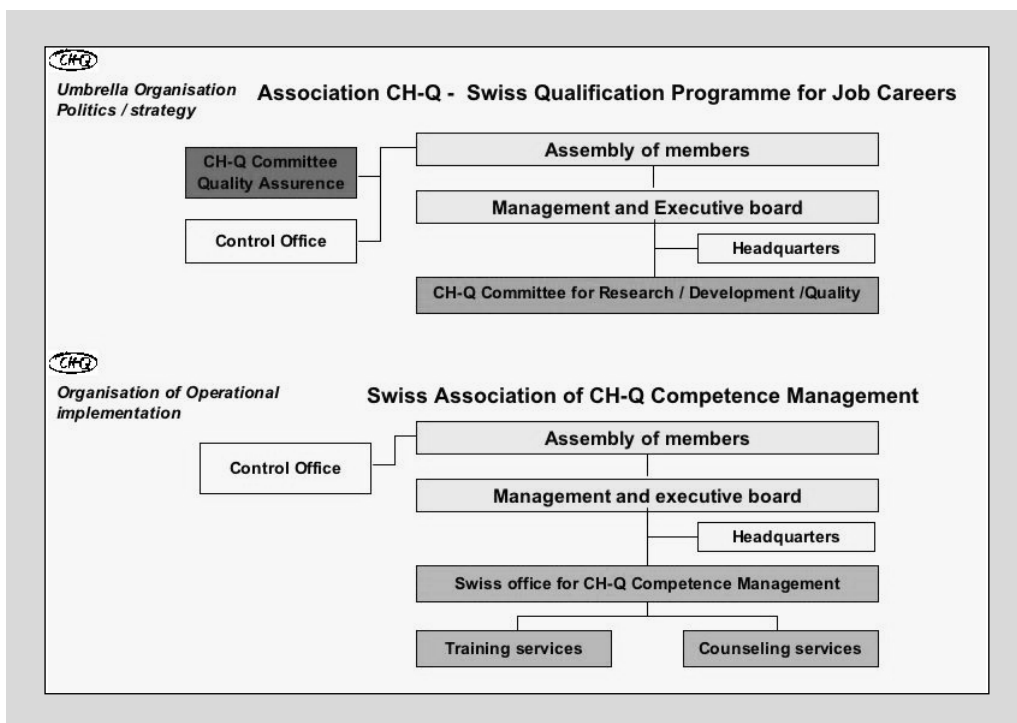
- 1 on the **level of the educational policy** it aims at
  - linking various different areas of life and activities
  - linking cultural, general and vocational education
  - ensuring the equivalency of formal and non-/informal learning
  - including all types of competencies (technical, methodological, social, personal)
  - challenging equal chances.
- 2 on the **individual level** it aims at enhancing
  - the understanding of oneself and one's own possibilities (consistency / self-identity)
  - the competency of acting autonomously (steering one's own decision making)
  - the career flexibility and mobility (marketability).

A great importance is given to the **CH-Q tools**. Their key features are on the one side the coherence: they are aligned with each other and mutually complementary (unite de doctrine) and

they are based on a common, unified language (identity). On the other side they are oriented towards users and practical applicability: they are geared towards the needs of target groups, they are reflecting research findings in academic disciplines (developments in education, management, cultural affairs) and they are flexible and easy to be linked with existing programmes.

#### 4. ORGANISATION CH-Q

Today the Association CH-Q has divided the political, normative functions and the operational activities into the following two separate structures with two separate managing organisations.



#### Explanation

- The CH-Q Association: responsible for products and services. The association itself is not a provider, but as a non-profit organisation, it is charged with the preconditions, development, quality guarantee and co-ordination of CH-Q. In realising its aims, the association is supported by various institutes in the field of schooling and by social partners.
- Committee for quality assurance: responsible for maintaining and monitoring quality, for issuing CH-Q certificates and accrediting CH-Q products and services.
- Development committee: responsible for developing tools for working with CH-Q and the expertise of those working with it.

In short, the Association CH-Q consists of a legislative branch (assembly of CH-Q members), a judicial branch (committee for quality assurance and development) and an executive branch (executive board). Committee members have also completed a training in selfmanagement of competencies and have a knowledge of assessment and qualification procedures. All executive parties are obliged to work with the products, procedures and quality requirement developed by the committees. Both individual providers (advisers, trainers) and institutional organisers (institutions and organisations) can act as implementers. Implementers enter partnerships with the Association CH-Q, in which agreements are concluded as to conditions of working with the CH-Q System (requirements, rights, obligations, including endorsement of the ethical standards), the transparency of products and services (clear and comprehensive information and documentation) and target group orientation (adjusted learning objectives, achievement levels and fundamentals).

## **5. SUPPORT FOR CH-Q**

One of the key success factors of the CH-Q System is the wide support it enjoys in society and in collaborations between several stakeholders. About twenty-five national organisations are currently supporting the main ideas of the CH-Q System, some of them actively. These include the Swiss Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (BBT), the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (seco), the confederation of Swiss employers, the Swiss trade unions SGV, SGB and Syna, the association of Swiss women's organisations, the Swiss career advisory services (SVB), as well as various education and research institutions. The Association CH-Q pays considerable attention to information and public relations, marketing and knowledge development (based on dialogues on a national platform). At present, the CH-Q System is being used in several European countries, including Germany, Italy, Austria, Luxembourg, Belgium and England, as well as ongoing experiments in the Netherlands. A European structure with foundations in various countries is being developed.

## **6. FUNDING CH-Q**

The funds for the CH-Q organisation come from various sources:

- member subscriptions
- certification of training personnel and users
- certification of CH-Q products and services of providers/organisers
- label licences for quality guarantees from abroad
- other income from the sale of products (e.g. the 'Qualifikationsbuch' costing approx. CHF 50)

Various opportunities are available for those looking to take part in CH-Q programmes, ranging from self-funding to funds from interested organisations.

**Some examples**

- For individuals, costs depend on the provider. A government organisation charges between CHF 0 – 200, a commercial organisation between CHF 300 – 400. This covers the cost of guidance and materials.
- CH-Q is sometimes free of charge for students at state schools; costs are then paid by the canton. Private schools pay the costs themselves.
- CH-Q can be a component in HRM policies (e.g. Siemens) and businesses will often pay for employees.
- Volunteers have to pay the costs themselves. The Red Cross and churches buy CH-Q in bulk and this lowers the costs for group activities.



# 2

## Appendix Ethical standards of CH-Q

### 1. RESPONSIBILITY

Certified CH-Q experts...

- 1.1 ... are required to be aware of the personal and social effects of working with the selfmanagement of competencies model. They define the conditions that help avoid potential and foreseeable crisis situations.
- 1.2 ... create transparency with regard to the roles of the participants and are responsible for them.
- 1.3 ... take any preventive measures needed to stop third parties (e.g. participants, managers) from using the services in such a way as to jeopardise these standards.

### 2. OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCE

Certified CH-Q experts...

- 2.1 ... endorse the binding standards prescribed by the CH-Q Association in all their activities (selfmanagement of competencies and quality criteria).
- 2.2 ... guarantee the quality of their performance by regularly taking part in further training or other relevant schemes.

### 3. DUTY OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

Certified CH-Q experts...

- 3.1 ... undertake to treat all information about persons and organisations as confidential and actively protect such information.
- 3.2 ... only pass on information if the person concerned has given explicit consent.

### 4. CO-RESPONSIBILITY

Certified CH-Q experts...

- 4.1 ... undertake to comply with these standards.

## **5. SANCTIONS**

As the body issuing CH-Q certificates, the CH-Q Association ...

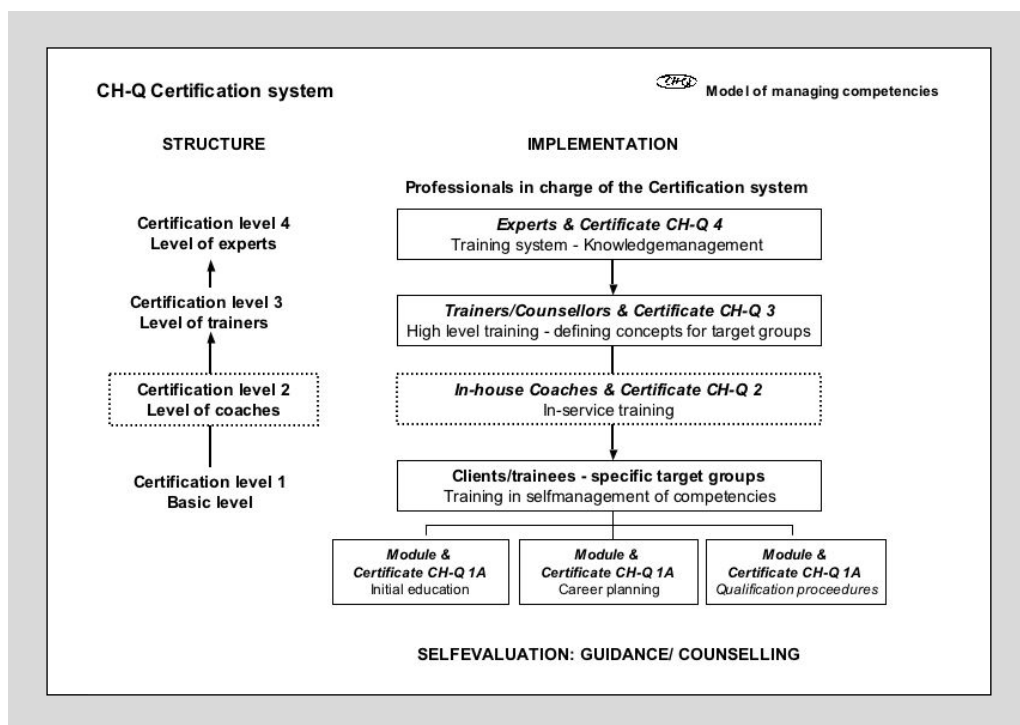
- 5.1 ... is entitled to expel members who seriously contravene these standards and revoke the certificate in particularly grave cases.
- 5.2 ... issues a simple code that establishes the procedure to be followed in the case of sanctions as stated in Article 5.1.

# 3 Appendix Certification and quality assurance

The most important element of the ensuring the quality of the whole system is the qualification of the trainers and guides. The training of professional guides and counsellors is modular by design and integrated in the official building brick 'CH-Q System of Managing Competencies building'.

## I. CERTIFICATION OF INDIVIDUALS AND PROFESSIONALS

The CH-Q System of Managing Competencies comprises a training programme at four levels:



***Certification level 1: basic knowledge directed towards self-management of competencies***

Three parts:

- Ia: stepping stone towards a working career
- Ib: positioning oneself, building a career
- Ic: preparation for a job application and qualification procedure

Target groups: a wide range of users, irrespective of origin, level of education, job or position, age group:

- obliged to attend school, or not
- from primary, secondary or further education
- at a transition point between school /training and job, or not-working and working, or returning to work
- in professional life

Result: participants can:

- manage skills, competencies and qualifications in a planned, sustainable and independent fashion;
- plan and execute career moves consistent with their own potential and the defined objectives.

***Certification level 2: in-depth knowledge geared to teaching and process guidance***

Target groups: trainers and advisers who:

- have a diploma (as teacher, in educational theory, psychology, career counselling, adult education) or can prove that they have attained an equivalent level,
- have experience in training and/or counselling,
- are prepared to coach and advise people on managing their skills and competencies and assembling their personal portfolio documents.

Result: certified learning and process guides who, in the case of internal programmes in their own organisation can document that they are qualified to coach and support users in the process of becoming aware of their strong points, recording them, reflecting critically on them and providing proof of their capability.

***Certification level 3: expanding knowledge geared to training and advice***

Target groups: see level 2

Result:

- use the CH-Q System of selfmanagement of competencies to develop and implement concepts in one's own specialisation;
- align these concepts with current circumstances surrounding training policy, economy and social developments.

#### ***Certification level 4: expert level***

Target groups: professionals with level 3 certification. Given that the development of CH-Q is still at a fairly early stage, detailed information has not yet crystallised. European experts will shortly be meeting with CH-Q to give it further shape and direction.

Result: develop a framework of certified specialists in the CH-Q training system (expert committee), capable of bringing guidelines into line with practical demands as well as qualify experts at certification levels 2 and 3.

#### ***Cohesion between levels***

All participants, trainers, teachers and experts first follow the basic training programme. People wanting to use CH-Q professionally then develop a basic pilot course for their own target group tailored to their own specific situation. Based on written material and a verbal presentation, an assessment is made of how the trainers deliver the course and account for the programme. If the assessment is favourable, the participant receives a certificate at level 2 or 3. Professionals with level 3 certificates can train professionals at level 2 (train-the-trainer principle), as well as providing courses, advice or both for level 1 participants. Those with level 2 certification can give advice and give courses at level 1 but are not entitled to organise certification for the target group on their own. This requires a professional with level 3 certification.

### **2. ACCREDITATION AND ISSUING OF THE LABEL**

An accreditation system is in place for CH-Q products and services, and those that are accredited carry the CH-Q label, which is a quality mark. Accreditation applies to the course and advice programmes and materials at level 1 and 2 given by certified trainers and advisers. It likewise constitutes proof that the programmes meet the quality criteria of the CH-Q Association. The CH-Q committee for quality assurance is responsible for the procedure and for issuing the label licence.

### **3. QUALITY GUARANTEE ABROAD**

Partners abroad can obtain a label licence for CH-Q products and services at certification level 3. This then represents a regional or national quality guarantee. A licence is granted on the basis of references from the CH-Q Association. Specific requirements and interests of the organisation in question are taken into account in the concluded agreements.



# 4

## Appendix Assignments

### 1 Drawing a life line

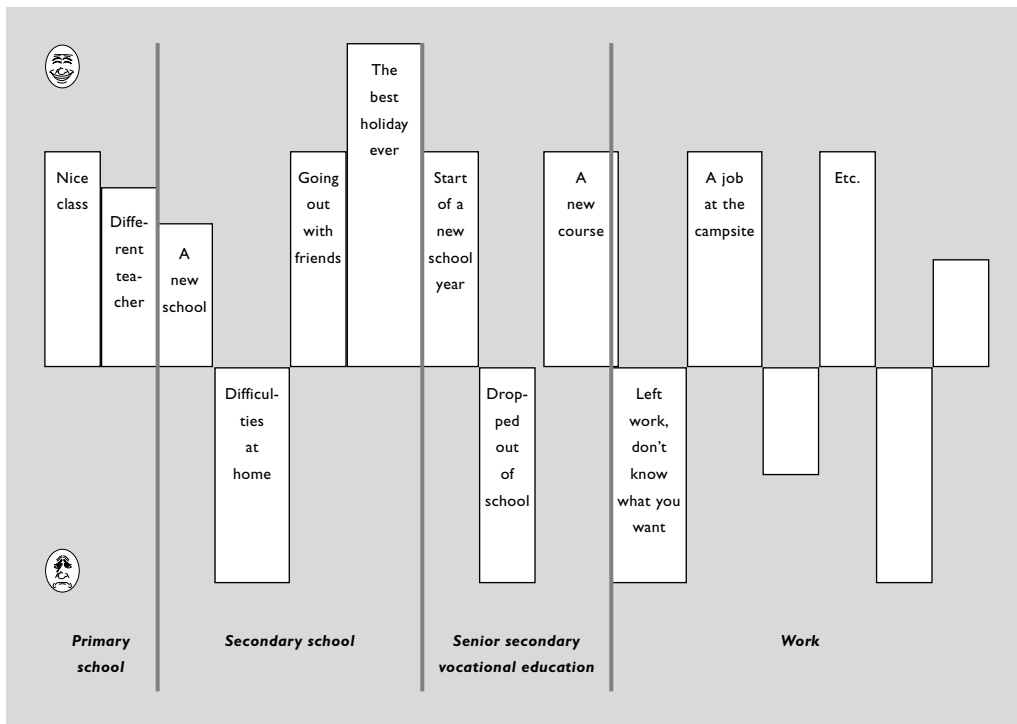
#### **EXPLANATION**

The assignment 'draw your life line' takes place at the beginning of the course, in most cases on the second day. This assignment was used in the Nijmegen pilot and is useful for groups of people with lower education levels. Positive and negative experiences are visualised and form a starting point for discussion and further analysis. To achieve self-awareness, you first need to look back on your life and your career to date and how you rate it. In that way, you attach a significance to it that is relevant for your situation as it is today; it is a step towards describing your biography in your portfolio.

#### **ASSIGNMENT**

Divide your curriculum vitae into large sections and make a sketch of your life! Bring the assignment with you to the meeting.

A simple example:



These are possible ways of dividing up your CV into periods:

- changes at school/work
- a period in which you had a job on the side
- a period during which you were with a particular group of people
- changes at home
- moving house
- illness
- a book you read that meant a lot to you
- a person who had a great influence on you
- etc.

NOTE: the periods above the line are positive for you and below the line negative.

## 2 Peer assessment

### EXPLANATION

This assignment is done during the second half of the training sessions. Though the CH-Q System concentrates mainly on people's positive points, they do get the chance to examine their weaknesses as well. Subsequent discussions focus on the positive aspects, however. The principle of the self-management of competencies is that you work towards improving them.

Involving others in your self-assessment can complement and adjust your self-image. The aim of peer assessment is to develop a better self-image. Peers are asked to give concrete examples so as to make the assessment more clear-cut. The results can be recorded in a simple diagram.

### ASSIGNMENT

Strong and weak points of ..... Date .....

We all have strong and weak sides and the more aware we are of our strong points, the better able we will be to use them. Identifying weak spots gives you a handle on how to address them.

Which strong and which weak points (or limits) have you identified in the person named above? Try and find concrete practical examples to underpin these qualities and characteristics. Then discuss your findings with your partner. He or she will meanwhile have carried out a self-assessment.

### 3 Personal commercial

#### EXPLANATION

As a final part of the 'awareness' section, you will be asked to present your competencies. The assignment 'personal commercial' is used to practise this in a light-hearted manner. This assignment is a concluding exercise that follows on from others in which all the participants mapped out their competencies and underpinned them with practical examples. They arranged the skills and competencies they identified in themselves in categories and areas (professional, social, methodological, personal competencies). The exercise can be done alone or in twos. If it is done in pairs, the partners can use additional questions to help one another.

#### ASSIGNMENT

Try to make a short personal commercial that highlights your professional, methodological and social competencies. Present your commercial verbally to one of the other participants, keeping it short and to the point! The idea is that your fellow participants get a first impression of who you are and then give you feedback.

Describe your skills and competencies in brief:

- a using the examples you have worked out;
- b as a general overview. Answer the following questions:
  - Who am I?
  - What am I good at?
  - Where are my limits? (General strengths and improvement points)
  - What can I do well / what do I know? (Principal qualities and experience)

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Date .....