

CREATING A COMMON FOUNDATION IN SOCIAL CARE

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Background

There is a general lack of consistency across the EU in the provision and requirement for training and education in the area of social care. In the Irish context training and education for social care workers is in a state of flux in part due to the Health Professionals Act 2005 which provides the framework at a national level for the future registration of social care workers. The programme, *Creating a Common Foundation for Social Care*, includes partners in 14 EU member states in the further development of a transferable award in social care at a foundation level. This award, known as the *European Care Certificate (ECC)*, is assessed through an unseen examination.

Research Aims

This research aim is to increase the uptake of the ECC in the participating countries so that at the end of the project a realistic and growing ECC network in each country will exist. The Project has the linked objectives of placing the ECC on the participating countries' National Qualifications Framework and to get the Certificate placed, at an appropriate level, on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) either via a country or 'directly' by the ECC Board as an EU wide sectoral award.

Methods

Communication with stakeholders in the social care sector will be established to increase the recognition of and the demand for the ECC. Students on the Social Care programmes in NUI Galway will be offered the opportunity to sit the ECC exam.

Progress to Date

The target for the project as a whole is to achieve 1,200 passing the ECC examination. To date internationally 700 people have done so with 80 of those from Ireland. It is planned that the ECC examination will be offered to further students on the NUIG social care programmes in 2011. Three additional partners have joined the project resulting in further development of the network. Reviews of the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) in each partner country have found large variation in the interpretation and stage of development. In the Irish context it is unlikely that the ECC can be recognised as an award on the NQF a situation similar to the majority of partner countries. The UK lead partner is in negotiation with an accrediting agency that may facilitate the ECC award to be registered on the UK's NQF so providing a potential route to the European Qualifications Framework.

Dissemination

The projects website is at <http://www.eccertificate.eu>.