



**Hecos for Ethics – Higher
Education and Companies
FOsteRing ETHICAl Skills**

HECOS for Ethics Guidelines



“Guideline document for planning HECOS FOR ETHICS training experiences”

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List of abbreviations

AICCRE- Associazione Italiana del Consiglio dei Comuni e delle Regioni d' Europa – Federazione Veneta

CSO - Civil Society Organisation

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

EC – European Commission

ECTS - European Credit Transfer System

EQF – European Qualification Framework

HECOS - HECOS for Ethics: Higher Education and Companies FOsteRing ETHICal Skills

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

NGOD - Non-governmental organisation for development



Summary

“HECOS for Ethics (HECOS) is a worldwide network offering training opportunities on skills, attitudes and knowledge in cooperation with 3 different stakeholders (companies, NGOs, training providers) aiming for a sustainable way of living and working.”

HECOS for Ethics - Higher Education and Companies Fostering Ethical Skills (HECOS) first started as a three years project implemented by AICCRE from 2014 to 2017, funded by Erasmus+ programme through the Italian National Agency. This project strives to develop new methods and tools to assess and certify learning outcomes within European Qualification Framework (EQF), enhancing non-formal training as a vehicle to let businesses, civil society and non-governmental organisations meet and, at the same time, to foster the adoption of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by the private sector.

Recognising non-formal training and experiences at the field level as a major learning opportunity and eventually life changing, HECOS as a network offers its participants a three-step path in order to develop ethical skills that can be applied to CSR practices. In the first place participants will attend a non-formal training which is followed by a field experience. To close participants will have a final meeting to assess the learning experiences and to draw upon follow up actions. Organisations such as NGOs, Companies, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Universities and training providers are the main HECOS target groups. Each organisation can select one or more modules of interest from the set of suggestions and from there draw the experience it wants to provide to its students, collaborators, professionals, etc.

The first aim of HECOS was to enhance the role of ethical competencies in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) for managers by developing an innovative and attractive training format which would hit, assess, and recognise learning results and set common learning results standards related to ethical competencies whilst also developing organisational skills in non-formal and informal training contexts.

A second aim was to facilitate the enrichment of ethical skills in managerial curricula and to foster the promotion of CSR in both the tertiary education sector and companies, by raising the awareness within private companies of the issues related to human rights, respect for the environment and the consumption of land and resources; values that are part of the ethical skills area of EQF for managers.

The third aim was to create a network of companies interested in experimenting with innovative training methods of non-formal and informal education for adults on the issues of the environment and human rights aimed at improving the organisational and management skills through the adoption of positive actions in the field of CSR and local, national and international solidarity.



The guideline document for planning a HECOS for Ethics training experience intends to provide general insights for the design of a HECOS for Ethics training experience. It is thus organised in the following sections: 1) the three stages learning path; and 2) the practical training guidelines.

1. HECOS Experience — Training course

In the last few years the search for new ways in which to train companies' executives and managers to develop managerial and organisational skills has been increasing. It requires a kind of training that does not only concern formal learning, but rather, increasingly inductive methodologies that put the learner in a concrete experience facing real problems, as a way of fostering problem solving skills and organisational strategies as a group.

Before an institute participates in a HECOS experience it should choose the specific areas in which it wants foster ethical competencies development, according to their goals and expectations. It is up to the stakeholder universities/ training providers, business companies or NGOs based in the global North to begin leading a HECOS learning path. Despite the fact that the learning stages come subsequently the institution leading the process should plan the experience as a whole. In this way it is possible to develop a non-formal training that is better suited to that which is desired by the institutions and eventually the participants.

HECOS proposes eight specific areas in which institutions and participants can develop Ethical and Sustainability Competencies that correspond to the eight modules presented in the Training Guide and in the Training Catalogue. Moreover, there is also the training option 'crosscutting issues', which is focused on addressing common issues and/or tackling two or more of the eight modules. The area/module mapping is a result of research led by the University of Stockholm in the beginning of 2015 closely linked to HECOS potential stakeholders and partners. Research report findings show that amongst CSR and Sustainable Development respondents the following themes were considered the most relevant in which to develop competencies: Human Rights; Labour; Environment; Safety & Security; Non-discrimination; Anti-corruption; Supply Chain Management and Responsible Marketing.

To develop ethical competencies within HECOS for Ethics implies a three-stage learning path rooted in the conceptual and methodological principles already mentioned. The three stages are sequential and should be implemented by the order presented here: 1) non-formal training, 2) informal experience, 3) final assessment.

Non-formal training

Non-formal training, as the first stage of a HECOS experience, is a classroom training course based in non-formal education methods. This course aims to train and prepare HECOS participants for the following stage of training: their experience at the field level. It is up to the institution to decide and develop a training plan. Participants can attend one or more training modules depending on the specific area(s) chosen. Each module has a range of different topics embracing the different possible



contexts and expectations. Moreover there are four schedule options within each module. These options allow each institution to fit its training plan to the time and financial resources available.

Ideally throughout the three-stages training process should be developed in partnership with business companies and chambers of commerce and industry, training providers (i.e. universities) and civil society organisations (i.e. NGOs):

- Companies, Universities and NGOs making the decision to engage HECOS and to take the lead of the process (individually or as a group); mapping a group of participants and drawing a HECOS experience plan based on group and institutional expectations (area/module, timeframe, schedule, group of trainers, informal training context and location);
- Training providers/Universities preparing and facilitating non-formal training as well as conducting the final learning assessment. Alternatively the training can be ensured by a consultant or independent trainers connected with these institutions. It is up to the leading organisation to choose which is more suitable.
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) and other institutions hosting a participant in their informal experience in local or international development programme/projects implemented both in the Global North and Global South contexts. CSOs should support the non-formal training, particularly in aspects related to local/national contexts and their scope of work.

Informal training

As the second stage of a HECOS experience, informal training is a volunteer working experience at the field level that will allow participants to consolidate learning from the non-formal training. This experience is expected to last one to two weeks¹. Informal training venues will take place in several countries around the world — particularly in Europe and Africa²—, in settings where CSOs carry out their development projects. These informal training initiatives can be found in the Training Catalogue, which is a comprehensive mapping of sustainable development initiatives related to the modules of the training guide. It is noteworthy that they all share the pursuit for sustainable development. Thus, the trainees have a wide range of informal training options, which allows them to select the one that best meets their interests and expectations, as well as time and resources.

Final assessment

The last step of a HECOS experience is the final assessment of participants learning and particularly the competencies developed throughout the earlier stages. Back from the field experience, participants are invited to a final meeting with the leading institution(s) representatives and/or trainers. They will facilitate an individual process of mapping and assessing learning and competencies.

¹ Occasionally, when the informal training takes place in countries such as Mozambique or Angola, the experience might last for up to 4 weeks.

² Some initiatives take place in South America and Asia.



Building on each module’s specific learning outcomes every training experience should aim to develop organisational, management, problem solving, organisational and ethical skills. To this purpose, leading institutions choose the non-formal training methodology and informal training context most appropriate to accomplish its CSR policy aims.

HECOS Experiences: four options

Taking into consideration stakeholders’ available time and learning path pursued, it is possible to choose one of four HECOS experiences. Each of this option is aligned with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)³ framework. Thus, by choosing options A, B, C or D and completing the course, participants will be able to accumulate a different number of credits (see below).

Stage	HECOS Experience			
	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
1. Non-Formal Training	40	30	20	18
2. Informal Training	100	56	40	30
3. Final assessment	8	8	4	2
Total (h)	148	94	64	50
ECTS (1ECTS=30h)	5	3	2	1

As mentioned in the training guide, every training module has been planned to correspond to a level 6 learning experience within the European Qualification Framework (EQF). Level 6 “is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications”⁴.

2. HECOS Experience — practical training guidelines

This section provides general considerations aimed at institutions (e.g. training providers, Universities, NGOs, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, etc.) interested in creating a training programme based in the HECOS model and participants interested in one of the training experiences offered in the scope of the HECOS experience. It should be noted that one can request at any time from a HECOS partner a full proposal designed to meet the needs of each applicant entity or group of participants.

³ “ECTS is a credit system designed to make it easier for students to move between different countries. Since they are based on the learning achievements and workload of a course, a student can transfer their ECTS credits from one university to another so they are added up to contribute to an individual's degree programme or training.” (http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/ects_en.htm)

⁴ Source: “Descriptors defining levels in the EQF” <https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/content/descriptors-page>



I wish to organise a HECOS training programme

- Check the profile of potential applicant entities/clients, namely profit or non-profit; field of work/ industry sector; key objectives and concerns.
- When providing guidance on the selection of the non-formal and informal training experience, take into account the profile of potential participants: job position; expectations and motivations; available time to undertake the training, etc.
- Ensure beforehand that participants are aware of what is (and is not) included in the training fees. At the time of the informal training selection, contact the HECOS partner associated with that particular initiative and also confirm that the participant(s) is fully aware of the existing conditions in the host country, namely healthcare facilities and precautions (e.g. mandatory vaccines, etc.), communication services (e.g. place without reliable internet access), bureaucracy (visa procedures), among others.

I wish to participate in a HECOS training programme

- This training programme will be adapted to the participants' needs and expectations, so the participants can get the most of this experience, whilst not compromising his/ hers professional constraints (e.g. time off for training). The modules, duration and training schedules — both for the non-formal and informal experience — can be adjusted according to the participants' field of activity and training expectations; the HECOS for ETHICS approach is grounded in a methodology that goes beyond the learning process and knowledge acquisition, also taking into account the participants' own experiences, their interests, emotions and attitudes. It is thus important to consider these and other aspects when choosing a particular training experience.
- The participants must request from the training promoters a proposal designed to meet his/hers needs and interests, along of his/hers company's. At a minimum, the proposal must include the following sections:
 - i. **Technical:** makes reference to module topics, learning outcomes, duration and schedule of training, number of participants, etc.;
 - ii. **Operational:** states the pre-requisites and conditions for the informal experience, namely bureaucratic arrangements before travelling, existing conditions and available services in the host country, etc; and
 - iii. **Financial:** comprises a detailed and comprehensive budget for both the non-formal and the informal training experience.

For further enquiries, please contact any of the project's partners.



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