

Supervision of Coaches in Europe: Situation and Trends

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All helping professions share a basic principle that is illustrated with the following analogy: « *It is difficult to make your bed if you stay in it* ».

In other words, a coachee needs a dialogue with someone else, a coach, to find fixes to his or her concerns, challenges and issues. Similarly, a coach needs a dialogue with someone else to find responses to his or her professional difficulties and development ambitions.

More specifically, what is unknown by the coach about him/herself, but which the coachee can see, might impact the coaching process. Blind areas, blind self, blindspot, deaf spots, limiting beliefs and values, implicit theories, etc.... need to be made conscious. More generally, the coach might need *support* if something in his or her activity make him or her feel bad, need some kind of help for his or her *development* and need some kind of help to understand why some of his or her professional acts do not work as anticipated.

David Sleightholm, EMCC VP Standards says:

“There is a body of opinion in the coaching and mentoring worlds that in order to practice safely and to develop and provide the best service to the client, the coach or mentor needs to engage in a process of review and reflection.”

The term “supervision” is used to describe the dialogue that the coach has with someone else called “supervisor”. The definition of the word “supervision” varies with the countries, the professional bodies and the professional environment.

Edna Murdoch (CSA) summarises coaching supervision in a very comprehensive way:

"I think of it as a three-pronged practice. It provides insight, reflection and support for the coach.

The reflection is about the whole conversational space so that all the lids can be lifted on a piece of work. The supervisor creates a space where a coach can really look at all aspects of their work collaboratively where they can gain a new understanding and bring things up to the light.

This support can be under-valued but it is a vital piece, as coaches are working intensively with people. They are often working to deadlines, the expectations on them are considerable and there is wear and tear on the system as they work. All of that needs support and affirmation.

A coach is often working alone in a room or on the telephone and it is vital that they can hear when they are doing well. The responsibility they hold is considerable. A

supervisor can motivate and encourage the strong elements of the work and point out why these are working.

They can support that developmental journey and be a resource."

There are a lot of professional bodies in Europe for coaching and supervision and the terminology varies a lot. Some are international and many are local. Their implementation varies from country to country. In Germany there are about 30 associations for coaches and a big one (2000 members) for supervisors. In France, only four coaching associations are active, assembling about 2000 coaches and only a quite small association of coaching supervisors (PSF, 30 members).

“How many divisions does the Pope of Rome have?” Stalin asked in 1944, interrupting Churchill’s argumentation about Poland. We have to ask ourselves the same question about European bodies of coaches and supervisors before we can consider the scenarios of the future. Let’s take them briefly one by one:

APECS

Founded in 2004, APECS (Association for Professional Executive Coaching and Supervision) has the ambition to be the top level professional body for executive coaching and supervision.

Located in UK this association has 120 to 150 members out of which about 20 accredited supervisors.

AOCS

AOCS (Association of Coaching Supervisors) is located in UK and has 120 to 150 members. It has Country Coordinators in the USA, Spain, Benelux, France, Ireland/Northern Ireland and Asia Pacific region.

One element of AOCS strategy is to focus on research considered as a key component of monitoring changes in this area. AOCS has formed mutual partnership with several other associations: EMCC, LVSC (Dutch national association for supervision and coaching, 2400 members, ANSE affiliate) and AC (Association for Coaching).

EMCC

EMCC (European Mentoring and Coaching Council) was founded in 1992 and is made up of Affiliated Country EMCCs and direct members where a local EMCC does not yet exist.

It is an association for coaches, mentors and supervisors that has about 5000 members in 24 European countries.

EMCC has developed a competence framework for coaching and mentoring (8 competences) that has recently been updated. It has also a competence framework for supervision (7 competences) that is inherited from the work of the “UK coaching bodies’ roundtable”, a workgroup active in 2006 including EMCC UK, ICF UK, AC, APECS and later AOCS.

EMCC is currently revisiting its supervision competence framework. Converging with EQF (European Qualification Framework, see below “The role of EU”) is a possible direction.

The EMCC has developed in partnership with the ICF the “*Professional Charter for Coaching and Mentoring*” which has been approved by the European Union and appears on the website dedicated to Self-Regulated industries.

ICF

ICF is a worldwide association for coaches. It has about 5000 members in Europe in 26 European countries.

ICF has developed a competence framework for coaching (11 competences). In 2013 a joint ICF-EMCC compared the two respective frameworks and found them very close. ICF has not developed a coaching supervision framework but the traits and duties of the supervisors are described on the ICF website.

About supervision ICF says: *“One area of confusion around the concept of coaching supervision is about the differences in terminology, between supervision and mentoring. (Currently, ICF defines **Mentor Coaching** as coaching for the development of one's coaching, rather than reflective practice, coaching for personal development or coaching for business development, although those aspects may happen very incidentally in the coaching for development of one's coaching.).* The definition of supervision is given in the same document: *“**Coaching Supervision** is the interaction that occurs when a coach periodically brings his or her coaching work experiences to a coaching supervisor in order to engage in reflective dialogue and collaborative learning for the development and benefit of the coach and his or her clients.”*

So, ICF makes clear distinction between *Mentor Coaching* and *Coaching Supervision*. A number of Mentor Coaches are already accredited but how they are selected is unclear.

AC

AC (Association for Coaching) is an association of coaches and supervisors located in UK. It has about 1500 members in different countries.

AC has developed a competence framework for coaching (9 competences) and a competence framework for supervision (9 competences). AC delivers an accreditation to **Coaching Supervisor** (coaches who supervise coaches, 11 already accredited) and to **Supervisor** (non-coaches who supervise coaches, 65 already accredited).

ANSE

As supervision, not only for coaches but for all helping professions, has grown rapidly national large associations were founded in several European countries. In 1997 the national professional organisations for supervision of Austria, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Switzerland agreed to establish a European umbrella association called ANSE.

ANSE is based in Vienna and has more than 8.000 members, qualified supervisors and more recently coaches in 25 European Northern and Eastern countries. It aims at promoting information exchange, experience sharing, dissemination of supervision and coaching and quality assurance of supervision and coaching through standards.

There is a mutual agreement with ANCKNZ (Australia/New Zealand association) and EASC.

ANSE strategy is to promote the use of the ECVision Competence Framework of supervision and coaching (see below in “The role of EU”), especially in the affiliated countries in order to reach a *Mutual Recognition* of their supervisors. This would allow the creation of a *European Supervisor Professional Card*.

EASC

EASC (**European Association for Supervision and Coaching**) was founded in 1994 as EAS, then EASC in 2010, by experienced supervisors and supervision trainers. The objective was to create a supra-regional European association that stands for the highest quality. EASC is located in Berlin and is represented in Spain, Czech Republic and Switzerland. It has 200 members.

As coaching became more and more professionalized many members started offering coaching too. The association then developed quality standards for coaching and training in coaching based on the quality

standards for supervision. EASC distinguishes between the two autonomous professions of coach (and master coach) and supervisor.

LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

Just like EASC there are many local coaching, mentoring and supervision associations in the European countries such as SF Coach in France (Société Française de Coaching, 200 members), SR Coach in Switzerland (Société Romane de Coaching), AICP in Italy (310 members), SGCP in UK, etc... There are about 40 to 50 such small and medium size local associations of coaches and supervisors.

All of these associations are present in one or more countries with 60 to 300 members. All of them are more or less involved in developing their own simplified supervision competence framework and their own accreditation system for supervisors.

ACCREDITATIONS

Several of the European associations that have developed a competence framework for supervision also propose accreditations:

- EMCC has launched in September 2013 an accreditation for supervisors' training. The certificate is called ESQA (European Supervision Quality Award). Currently 7 schools hold an ESQA.
- Several local organisations have also developed an accreditation for supervisor's training, for instance LVSC, mentioned above, has accredited 12 supervisor schools in the Netherlands.
- Universities (Oxford Brookes in UK and several universities in Eastern countries) propose supervision academic graduations.

We estimate that there are about 150 supervisor's schools or universities in Europe delivering a one to three years training. Between ten to twenty Ph.Ds.' in supervision are completed or in progress.

AC (Sept 2013), EMCC (May 2015), ESIA (individual supervisors of mentors and coaches), APECS and AOCS have launched individual accreditation for coach supervisors.

DEMOGRAPHY OF THE PLAYERS

Let's summarise: there are four big players in Europe that have got the hang on supervision: they have a large number of members, a position or a strategy, possibly a supervision competence framework and an accreditation process. Resources are enough to have a team of assessors and enough volunteers to maintain the standards and offerings.

Apart from these there are about 50 small players having difficulties to define a position or a strategy and too limited resources to be able to create and maintain a framework. Most of them want to keep their identity and do not want to ally with any of the big players.

Another demographic cut is between two categories that have different views about any supervision competence framework:

- the "For", those individuals who believe that supervision is a profession distinct from coaching, therefore needing specific competences, training and control or recognition by their peers,
- the "Against", those who believe that supervision is an art or a gift and need nothing else than the firm conviction that they deserve this position.

Anyway, all the players want to gain ground on the worldwide chessboard of supervision.

THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN UNION

European Union has deployed a number of processes that will impact the coaching and supervision industry on the long term.

The **Bologna Process** that aims at ensuring comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications.

The **Lifelong Learning Programme** (LLP) is a European Commission's programme designed to enable people to take part in developing education and training at any time in their life. Part of it is the **Leonardo da Vinci programme** focused on the teaching and training needs of those involved in vocational education and training (VET). Launched in 2002, the **Copenhagen process** helps to improve the performance, quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training (VET).

The **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** is a common way of describing qualifications across Europe in order to help mobility between countries. It also helps to facilitate the lifelong learning of workers. The EQF proposes a common European reference framework that eases the comparability of professions, training programmes and experience. It uses two validation systems called ECTS and ECVET.

Some of the coaching and supervision bodies (especially ANSE and EMCC) plan to comply with the EQF principles on the medium and long term.

In 2011 a Steering Committee (ECVision) was formed with representatives from VHS GmbH, ANSE, and EUROCADRES to apply to the Leonardo programme "Development of Innovation".

The ECVision project was selected by the European Commission in 2012 in order to develop a *European System of Comparability and Validation of Supervisory Competences*. This system contains several products already published, especially:

- A **glossary** of Supervision and coaching,
- A **competence framework** of Supervision and Coaching using the EQF principles and consisting in 24 competences. It is focused on interaction of persons, professional tasks and organisations.
- A **competence validation system** using ECTS and ECVET.

The existence of such a competence framework compliant with the European Union strategy and programmes would normally be a revolution. However, except ANSE, the European bodies (EMCC, ICF, AC, AOCS, APECS) have not yet decided what to do with this piece of excellent work done by ECVision. At the same time several international companies and institutions are extremely happy to include in their tenders the coaching and supervision competences related to leadership and organisation understanding.

How this will evolve?

"How many divisions does the Pope of Rome have?" We are back to this analogy with the situation of supervision in Europe: the future will rely upon the alliances that the different players will make.

The question of *diversity* will be a central factor that will allow progress or slow it down. Also the question of *identity* will be raised as well as the resistance of the population of "Against".

We can imagine three scenarios.

Scenario 1: The market will not put pressure on associations.

The current understanding of what is supervision by the users and sponsors of coaching is quite limited. Very few large companies are asking questions about the person who supervises their coaches. Consequently the associations will not put the issue of supervision on the top of their priority list. Alliances will be limited and even those in place like GCMA (Global Coaching and Mentoring Alliance, formed in 2012 with EMCC, ICF and AC) will work at a very quiet pace.

Scenario 2: Alliance between the largest bodies

The four large bodies will agree that they should use the ECVision framework as much as they can. This will help to make clear their different identities. The small associations will follow, completely or partially.

Scenario 3: Governments like the ECVision framework

The concept of comparability might be a strong incentive for governments that want to have some control on the coaching industry. In this case the use of a common and EU stamped framework is a logical decision. Universities and public institutions will have no choice.

Western associations will have to make a choice: either change their frameworks, and possibly converge, or establish a dual system with a framework applicable only in their business with public sector.

TEMPORARY CONCLUSION

The workforce of the associations is principally made of volunteers. Consequently the evolution of the standards is slow, furthermore it is probably slower than the changes in the world. Unfortunately the most probable scenario is 1...