

Draft of Module 13

Regulation on the professional education EQF level 5 and its implementation

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It is a module in a series examining the role of education law in the modernisation of education systems in Europe. Information included in this module is gathered from the best contemporary publications and authors, while the cases are selected from the education systems of Albania, Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia.

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Learning outcomes

Conceptual framework of European Qualification Framework (EQF)

- To understand the logic and need for developing a Framework on qualification and training in Europe and beyond
- To analyze the historical developments that lead to the development of the EQF
- To critically reflect on the future of the qualification in Europe based on a common qualification framework, its benefits and flaws

Qualifications to the NQF and linking to the EQF

- To understand the diversity of the national frameworks and their goal to bring them closer to a more unified European qualification network
- To critically analyze the different qualifications of the countries
- To understand why quality assurance is important
To reflect how the quality assurance can help to align the NQF to the EQF.

Diversity of approaches to the EQF level 5

- To understand aim and goals of the different forms of education in level 5
- To reflect how labor market can shape the aim and content of education specifically in level 5
To analyze the different approaches of specific countries and their rationale in order to align education at level 5 with the labor market

The right to access and progress for education and employment

- To understand the legal perspectives of different programmes across Europe towards level 5.
To critically assess the diversity of EQF level 5 qualification in different countries.

Indications of EQF level 5 in the context of study and work

- To understand the organization of programmes, the workload, the duration, etc
- To understand the qualifications and descriptions leading to the completion of the level 5 programmes.
To analyze whether such organization and workload do respond to the needs of the labour market.

Recognition and validation of non formal and non-formal learning linked to level 5

- To understand the need for such recognition and validation in the viewpoint of the new waves of emigrants coming to Europe
To propose possible ways on how such assessment and recognition can be doable vis-à-vis the labour market

Introduction

In this module, the focus will be on understanding the rationale behind the need for European countries to develop a Qualifications framework. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a European-wide qualifications framework which joins the qualifications of different EU members together. In a way, it is a translation of different national qualifications which makes qualifications in different EU countries easier to understand. The EQF aims to facilitate mobility of students and workers within the EU in order to encourage development mobile and flexible workforce throughout Europe and to help develop lifelong learning.

The EQF was formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in April 2008. The UK has completed the cross reference of its frameworks – the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) but so far, only a minority of the EU member countries decided to do the same. The EQF is voluntary and the member countries are not obliged to cross reference their frameworks but the number of completed cross references is expected to increase in the near future.

In this module we will explore the actual offers of EQF, as well as future opportunities and promises. The EQF enables the learners, learning providers and employers to compare qualifications between different national systems. This is thought to help increase mobility in the labour market within and between the countries because it makes it easy to determine a person's level of qualification which in turn will improve the balance between demand and supply of knowledge and skills.

We will then understand the scope and opportunities of EQF, as well as its opportunities to develop the individual countries' National Qualification Framework (NQF). The EQF is a lifelong learning framework and covers all types of qualifications ranging from those acquired at the end of compulsory education (Level 1) to the highest qualifications such as Doctorate (Level 8 in the QCF and Level 12 in the SCQF). It also includes vocational qualifications. Just like the QCF, the EQF consists of 8 levels which indicate the difficulty level. And just like the QCF as well as the SCQF, the EQF is focused on the outcome of learning and the person's actual knowledge and skills rather than the amount of study needed to complete the qualification programme.

We will also critically analyze the limits and the difficulties to incorporate the EQF in its full potential. The EQF is intended to provide information and facilitate comparison between different national qualification systems. But it will not:

- replace the national qualifications or require any adjustments
- include or reference individual qualifications
- have any regulatory role or power
- have any qualification awarding functions or power
- describe levels of qualifications in terms of outcome of learning

Chapter I. Conceptual framework of European Qualification Framework (EQF)

1.1. Aim of implementation of the EQF/NQF in fostering (labor) mobility and lifelong learning.

The EQF, is a common European reference framework acting as a translation device in comparing the qualifications and qualifications levels, in order to promote the labor market mobility between countries and as well as lifelong learning. The EQF is adopted by the European Parliament and Council in April 2008 and consist of 8 qualifications levels described in terms of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) (Official Journal of the European Union, C111, 6.5.2008). The EQF is designed to act as a reference to different qualifications systems and frameworks in different countries in Europe. In this sense the EQF is a framework and/or systems and it can therefore defined as “Meta-framework” (European Commission 2008, p. 4), which include a reference level for all qualifications and all learning whatever route the learning takes. Countries, in an autonomous national process, are asked to link the levels of their national qualifications levels (in terms of diplomas, certificates) to the neutral reference defined by EQF. The entire referencing process consist in two stages: first, levels of national qualifications frameworks will be referred to EQF (on 2010) and second, all qualifications awarded in Europe should have a reference to the EQF (in 2012). EQF can broaden the understanding of national qualification systems of participating countries, especially for people from outside these countries Once they have related their national frameworks to the EQF, the EQF will help individuals, employers and education and training providers compare individual qualifications from different countries and education and training systems.

The EQF aims to support lifelong learning and in particular lifelong recognition of learning. EQF includes all kinds and levels of qualifications, regardless of where learning has taken place. Through EQF is possible to compare qualifications levels in national qualifications systems of different countries. Learners who would like to start or continue their studies in another country would prefer that their skills and competences from their earlier qualifications to be recognized. Those the EQF provides a useful reference on the recognition of qualifications in educational and training institutions. This means that a specific country in the referencing process needs to make clear statements about the focus on lifelong learning and the means of achieving more of it. The same is for employers of the European labor market, which in describing the requirements and the skills level of employees will refer to the learning outcomes and the levels of the EQF (indicated in certificates, diplomas and Europass documents). This entire process will help learners and workers wishing to move between countries or change jobs or move between educational institutions at home.

As an instrument for promoting lifelong learning, the EQF encompasses general and adult education, vocational education and training as well as higher education. The levels of EQF span the full scale of qualifications, from very basic (level 1, for example elementary school leaving certificate) to highly advanced (level 8, for example PHD). From level 1 to level 8 of qualifications the associated learning becomes more complex and greater in demands on the learner/worker. This means that increasing from level 1 to 8, the knowledge and the understanding becomes more deep and complex, more instruction is needed and students learning process becomes more independent and requires greater creativity. National qualifications systems or frameworks might include more or less levels. In some fields there

might be or not qualifications on a higher/lower level available. For example, in many European countries a PHD will be ranked at level 8 in the EQF and in some countries exist post-doctoral studies formal qualifications, such as in Germany. The levels in national frameworks or systems can be compared with these eight levels to make it easier and to make national and international links between qualifications. For lifelong learning is necessary that the EQF referencing process of national qualifications system and practices linked to lifelong learning, to be conduct concurrently with the Qualifications Frameworks for the European Higher Education Area. This means that a specific country in the referencing process needs to make clear statements about the focus on lifelong learning and the means of achieving more of it.

The EQF uses 8 references level based on learning outcomes (defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences). In the EQF a learning outcome is defined as a statement of what a learner knows, understand and is able to do on completion of a learning process. The EQF descriptors shown in table 1 with three columns intend to facilitate understanding of the EQF and the respective qualification. Qualifications levels varies considerably as regards their focus on knowledge, skill and competence. For example academic qualifications might focus on knowledge, whereas certain vocational qualifications might focus more on skills or competence (Ibid., p. 6). The three general descriptors mentions these differences in the process of assigning qualifications. The EQF level descriptors should be used as a starting point for NQF descriptors because national framework may require different approaches taking into account specific traditions and needs. But obviously, the structure and number of qualification levels of these other descriptors can be orientated toward the EQF. The EQF describes levels of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes. The awarding of qualifications remain a matter of national qualification authorities.

1.2. Legislative overview and the EQF in a comparative perspective (National Qualification Frameworks)

From historical perspective, countries with NQF are divided in two groups: first, the countries with NQF before 2005, when the EQF was introduced: France, Ireland and UK; second, the countries with NQF that were developed in close connection with EQF (38 countries until 2015). In the countries of the first group, the development of the NQF and the referencing process are clearly separate processes. Numbers of levels of NQFs and their learning outcomes descriptors differ from those of EQF. The countries of the second group have started the NQF development around the time of development and implementation of the EQF. Many of these countries have developed their NQF-s based on the EQF for classifying the existing system.

1.2.1 NQF and their development in some countries

1. Albania: Albania has developed a NQF (AQF) with eight levels. A new law was approved nr. 10247 date 04.03.2010 “Albanian Qualification Framework”, describing the main features of the AQF (structure, scope, objectives and functions), as well as arrangements for governance (Council), institutional management, quality assurance and financing. However, many clauses of this law have not been implemented, yet. The AQF role consist in reforming the education and training system; facilitates access to and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths etc. The AQF is described in the law as a comprehensive 8-level structure (figure 1 in the annex) that corresponds to the European Qualifications Framework and recognizes three types of qualifications: general or non-vocational

qualifications at secondary school level AQF 1-4; higher qualifications offered at universities – AQF levels 6-8; vocational qualifications offered at VET schools, training centers and in the workplace. For the first time, according to this law the qualifications are defined as specifications of the standards in terms of knowledge, skills and broader competences developed to accomplish a predefined aim, which are officially recognized.

For the first time through this act the three study cycle of higher education are linked with AQF. Albania in principle has decided to implement a qualification framework, but has not yet reached a system in which such a framework has been defined in detail. The awareness of AQF in the country is still low, legal framework has to be improved; capacities and resources are needed to further develop outcome based qualifications, to systematize and register qualifications, and linking them to curricula, teaching materials, teacher training etc. the AQF referencing process with EQF is missing.

2. Belgium: Belgium has developed three NQF-s, linked to the Dutch-, French- and German speaking communities respectively. An amendment of to the Belgian federal law on general Structure of the Education System was adopted in 2012, stating that EQF levels will be used as a common reference for the three communities in Belgium. This means that the three NQFs shall be link with each other in order to facilitate mobility of Belgian citizens within the country. The three frameworks will be referred separately to the EQF: the Flamish and French speaking communities have completed this process and the German-speaking community intend to do it in a near future.

Dutch speaking community. Belgium Flanders has adopted its NQF through the Act on Qualification Structure in 2009 (Government of Flanders, 2009). According to this Act there are two main categories of qualifications: educational and professional. The descriptors of learning outcomes are: knowledge, skills and context, autonomy and responsibility. An educational qualification is based on a set of competences for a person to continue education and/or to exercise an professional activity. This qualification is acquired only through education and institution recognized by the Flemish authorities. A professional qualification is based on a set of competences allowing a person to exercise a profession and this can be achieved inside and outside education. The Flemish qualification framework (FQF) is operational, following the adoption of a number of decrees in 2011-2013 covering educational and professional qualification. The FQF was referenced to the EQF in June 2011 (AKOV 2014).

2.2. French -speaking Community. The French-speaking community of Belgium has developed a qualification framework for lifelong learning (*cadre francophone des certifications pour l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie, CFC*). of eight levels structure. Its learning outcomes are based on the same descriptors of the FQF: knowledge, skills and context, autonomy and responsibility. The framework is seen as integral part of the exciting education and training system and intend to improve the transparency of qualifications, facilitate the mobility and support the learner progress. It does not have a regulatory role and is not foreseen as a device for reforming existing education structure and institution. In the first phase of implementation only qualification delivered by public providers will be included with the aim opening up at a later to other qualifications (Malarme 2013).

Legal adoption of the CFC is still pending and actual qualifications have not yet been placed in the framework. An authority for the implementation of the CFC and its follow up will be established as soon as the legal adoption is carried out. The CFC was referenced to the EQF in December 2013.

2.3 German- speaking community. The German-speaking community adopted its qualification framework (*Qualifikationsrahmen Deutschsprachiger Gemeinschaft, QDG*) in November

2013. As the smallest part of Belgium, in terms of population, its framework reflects the achievements of the Flemish and French speaking parts of Belgium and in the same time is strongly inspired by the German Qualification Framework). It is based on eight level that includes qualifications from the general education, VET and higher education. It is mainly based on the Action Competence (handlungskompetenze). The location of this community raises possibilities for citizens to cross regional or national borders for learning and working purposes. That makes the priority to clarify the relation between n own qualification and those awarding in the neighbouring countries. The decree on QDG in 2014 define that a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning will be linked to the QDG, and a central validation point will be established in the next five years. The QDG has not been yet referenced to EQF.

3. Poland. Poland, since 2006, has developed a NQF (PQF) with eight levels, including all levels and types of qualification from general education, VET and higher education, based on skills, knowledge and social competences. From 2010, large project financed from ESF supporting developing assumptions on the PQF and qualifications register in Poland The framework is open to qualifications from the private and non-formal sectors with the condition to meet the quality criteria. Through developing the PQF, Poland aims to modernize the education and training system, to promote lifelong learning and respond better to labor market and social needs. Unlike in many other east countries, the reform is mainly managed by the public sector ministries and other public institutions. Social partners and civil society representatives are include to a limited degree. The legal base that make PQF operational is the adoption of the law on integrated qualifications, in December 2015. The law which covers PQF, a national register of qualifications and the role of validation, entered in force on January 2016. On July 2016 a qualification portal and the integrated register of qualification is launched. The register includes qualifications from general and higher education. Until December 2016, almost all relevant legal acts (including government decrees) are in place, first 5 requests to include non-statutory qualifications are being proceeded. The referring process of PQF to EQF and self –certified to the QF_EHEA as a joint process was conduct in 2013 (Slawinski et al. 2013).

4. The Russian federation

5. Belarus

6. Ireland. Ireland has implemented a national qualification framework with 10 levels. Each level is based knowledge, know-how and skills and competence. The framework covers all types and levels of qualifications form formal educational and training and is open to those awarded by professional and international organizations. Four classes of award type have been determined: major, minor, special purpose, and supplemental. The Irish NQF was launched in 2003 and its development was part of a policy agenda for a “lifelong learning society” in which learners can benefit from learning opportunities at various stages throughout their lives. Since 2012, a change in governance, through an establishment of one single national qualification and quality assurance body, has led to reinforce coordination and quality assurance. EQF and NQF levels are indicated in Euopasss Certificate and Diploma supplement (NQAI 2009).

7. Italy. Italy, since 2003, had undergone under serious reforms in education and training (upper secondary general education and VET) and higher education. Italy does not have a NQF for lifelong learning but it has its qualification framework for higher education which was officially published in 2010. Italy has a very complex qualification system, it is governed by different legislation, and competences from regional and national authorities in designing and awarding qualifications. The parliament has approved the law 92/2012 on labour market

reform that contains provisions on lifelong learning, approaches to a national system of certification of competences and services for validation of non- formal and informal learning. Although the fact that Italy does not have a NQF, it has referenced its formal qualifications (general education, VET and higher education qualification) which are under the responsibility of Ministry of Education and those awarded by the regions in the framework of the state regions agreement, directly to the eight levels of EQF using the EQF level descriptors. Other qualification awarded by regions, licenses for regulated professions and private qualifications are not included in this phase of referencing (Italian Ministry of Labor 2012).

8. Latvia. Latvia has developed a NQF with eight levels classification defined as knowledge, skills and competences. Educational programmes from formal education (general, vocational and higher education) are referred to Latvian qualification framework (LQF) and linked to EQF. Master of crafts, qualifications acquired in informal and non-formal learning will be attributed level of NQF implementation and referenced to EQF in a second phase (2013 – 2015). This process is associated with possible amendments in legislation and project results (for example, on sectorial qualification framework). LQF expect to experience revision and introduction of new qualification. Reforms for the LQF started in 1990 with the adoption of a five-level structure of professional qualifications through the Vocational education law 1999. LQF has started the operational phase in an early time due to several European Social Fund projects that support the implementation of the LQF. The LQF was linked to the EQF and self-certificated to the QF-EHEA in October 2011 and as a result of this process, the 8-level LQF was established (Ramina et al. 2011).

9. Croatia. The Croatian qualification framework (CROQF) Act (2013) establishes CROQF of eight levels based on knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy. It includes qualifications from all levels and subsystems of formal education and training (general, VET and higher education). The framework has entered an early operational stage. Implementing structures such as National Council (2014) have been set up with respective responsibilities. The CROQF Act foresees the development of two by-laws: an ordinance on the CROQF register that is been approved and the ordinance of validation of non formal and informal learning is in preparation. Croatia linked the CROQF to the EQF and self-certified to QF_EHEA in March 2012.

Chapter II. Qualifications to the NQF and linking to the EQF.

2. 1. EQF as a reference to NQF qualification levels.

Qualifications are classified at national level and allocated to NFQ, which are then referenced to EQF levels. In order to have transparency in the referencing process, a clear link between the levels of NQF and respective descriptors of the EQF should be established. An important purpose of referencing process is the design and implementation of national qualification frameworks as tools for implementing the EQF at national level. Based on EQF Recommendation countries are invited (on 2010) to relate their qualification system to EQF by referencing transparently, their qualifications levels to the levels set out by the EQF where appropriate and by developing national qualifications framework in accordance with national legislation and practices (recommendation of EP and Council: 2008). Therefore, the coordination national levels and EQF levels is not always over ground process and approximation is needful.

The number, diversity and complexity of qualifications on offer is increasing to respond to the needs of learners. Work practices are also diversifying and becoming more complex, so labor market need for different types of qualifications. Some countries tent to introduce different market mechanisms by increasing competition and diversification among them. This diversity in qualifications means inconsistencies between qualifications and this can reduce quality, confidence and trust. This explains why qualifications systems need reference points outside the institutions providing education and training. (Added value of national qualifications framework in implementing EQF, European Qualifications Frameworks series: note 2 p. 15).

The EQF recommendation uses a definition of NQF: an NQF means an instrument which aim to integrate and coordinate national qualification subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labor market and civil society.” With an NQF in place, national referencing can be achieved by referencing each NQF level to an EQF level. “Referencing is the process that results in the establishment of a relationship between the levels of national qualifications, usually defined in terms of a national qualification framework, and the levels of EQF” (Referencing national Qualifications Levels to the EQF, European Commission 2013 pg 6). Through this process, relevant stakeholders and authorities for the qualification system, in corporation with respective national stakeholders, define the relationship between the national qualification systems and eight levels of the EQF. For any specific qualification the national qualification system is the only concrete point of reference and it will be given an EQF level only if the national system has been officially referenced to EQF. The referencing process leads not only the referencing of all qualification levels concurrently to EQF also to the Qualifications Frameworks for the European Higher Education Area (QF-QHEA).

The success of the EQF as a tool for transparency and mobility depends on the ways countries reference their national qualification systems to the EQF level descriptors. As mentioned in chapter 1 of this module, the descriptors of EFQ levels are general in order to accommodate qualifications from diverse national systems and different learning context.

Meantime, the EQF is compatible with the qualification framework for the European Higher Education Area EHEA formed ad developed under the Bologna Process (1999). Specifically the EQF descriptors at level 5-8 are compatible with descriptor defined under Bologna Process. The formulation of level descriptors differs from the EHEA descriptors especially for

higher education needs, because as a lifelong learning framework the EQF also include vocational education and training VET and work contexts, including at the highest level (Ibid).

The EQF Advisory Group endorsed ten criteria to guide the referencing process and structure the referencing reports for countries that undergoes such process. Criteria and procedures for classifying qualifications in the NQF levels, had already been in place, and qualifications had already been allocated to NQF levels before EQF referencing process was conducted. These criteria and procedures are important elements in qualifications design.

2.2 Cross country analysis: (legislation of NQF)

Development of NQFs in Europe and beyond demonstrate that visions and strategies for NQFs countries differ greatly. The differences in qualifications system means that there can be no single model for the referencing process. Each country has its own educational tradition, education policy priorities and institutional differences that lead to a unique approach to referencing. The creation of an NQF that meets national expectations may present a challenge in the referencing process. These main differences will require the application of the best –fit principle.

2.2.1 Differences in levels. Most of countries uses the eight level structure (Belgium, Latvia, Poland, Italy, Albania, etc). Several countries have differences in numbers of levels in their NQF to the eight used in the EQF. For example, in Ireland there are 10 levels. This 10 levels have been related to the EQF levels using best fit. Sometimes there is a level below level 1, the entry level (the Netherland) or sublevels are used (Croatia and Netherlands).

2.2.2. Differences in category descriptors and descriptors. Several countries use the EQF level descriptors for their NQF (Italy, Albania, Ireland). Some countries also use the same categories for the level descriptors but with varying definition, in a different way that are used for the EQF. For example, in Ireland the competence category has been subdivided into a range of subcategories such as context, role, learning to learn, insight (NQAI, 2009) or in Poland the descriptor of competence is referred to social competence. In some other countries additional descriptors are used specifying the EQF descriptors for the national context. For example in Finland are used as descriptors of learning outcomes, responsibility, management and entrepreneurship; in Dutch speaking community in Belgium autonomy and responsibility.

2.2.3 Different kinds of qualifications. NQFs reflect the different kinds of qualifications that exist in a country. Qualifications of one kind can be valued in one country and be absent from the provision in another. “For example, the level 5 is used differently in national contexts and that it accommodates a variety of different qualifications since it operates at the crossroads of general, vocational and higher education and training. In some countries level, 5 include a wide range of different qualifications (such as short cycle HE programmes, different types of higher professional qualifications, master craftsperson qualifications) while other countries might decide to link only certain types of qualifications or even only individual qualifications to EQF level 5 via referencing their national system or framework to EQF. In some countries, EQF level 5 does currently not include any qualifications” (CEDEFOP 2014, p. 43).

2.3 Quality assurance of NQF

Development of frameworks have played an important quality assurance role in the respective

qualification systems. As is mentioned in this chapter, NQF level descriptors are closely designed with formal system of qualification by reflecting key types of qualifications linked to the respective level. Procedures and criteria for allocating new qualifications to NQF levels, are recognized and trusted and often used by quality assurance bodies. That is the reason that NQFs are considered to be a kind of gateway for quality assured qualifications. “For example in Ireland, for new qualifications, there is a well-established practice of linking learning outcomes to the NQF descriptors. The owner of qualification is required to make a case to quality assurance agency and show that learning outcomes for the respective qualification meet the descriptors for a specific NQF level. Each awarding body (accreditation agency) demonstrate that their qualifications comply with the relevant qualification type description and that appropriate quality assurance processes are in place. In turn, providers demonstrate to awarding bodies that their programmes and processes meet particular requirements and that delivery and assessment satisfy quality assurance requirements” (Ibid. p. 92). From this it is clear that the NQF, to be a quality education and training system, must provide a beneficial impact on peoples. In order to provide this impact, standards set in participatory and representative processes need to be delivered and assed in ways assure all users of this framework of lifelong learning, that such standards are being achieved, maintained and continually improved.

Allocation of respective qualifications to NQF levels is based on level descriptors of the NQF. In some countries, depending on subsectors of qualification systems additions regulations are required. For example, in Belgium (Flanders) higher vocational education programmes (HBO5) are considered part of higher education qualification and as such they need to be accredit by the accreditation agency of higher education (NVAO). Meanwhile, they still have to fulfill other requirements defined to VET qualifications, to be based on competence profile (In Flanders, a professional qualification is a set of competences allowing an individual to exercise a profession) of professional qualification (Ibid. p. 93).

Chapter III. Diversity of approaches to the EQF level 5

3.1. Hovering between general education, VET, higher education and the labor market

The education and training systems are organized in a hierarchic manner in subsystems (general, vocational and higher education). In every country each subsystem has its own regulations and organization. But EQF level 5, interfere among this subsystems by a mix of qualifications types under the responsibility of VET and higher education institutions. EQF level 5 qualifications aim to immediate employment, career advancement, and further learning. Their focus on advanced technical and managerial skills makes them valuable for labour market. EQF level 5 is used differently in national context. It includes different qualifications since it operates as a bridge of general, vocational and higher education and training. It also plays a role in the transferability of qualifications and the promotion of lifelong learning. A qualification type is a group of titles/diploma and or/certificates within a country, sharing similar characteristics in terms of level, duration or related education pathway, and level of labour market entry. Within a qualification type, there can be different qualifications according to content” (Ibid. p. 28). According to this definition, depending on prevailing type of level 5 qualification, countries fall into 4 groups: i) countries where these qualifications are obtained outside the formal system: Czech republic and Estonia; ii) countries with a single qualification type linked to level 5. Half of level 5 qualifications type are regulated by higher education system and delivered by higher education institutions (Belgium, (Flander), Ireland, Latvia, Albania,. Or as Austria which has only vocational education and training linked with EQF level 5; iii) countries where higher education and vocational qualifications linked to level 5.: Ireland, Croatia, Belgium (Flander).; iv) there is another category of countries which offer several options, sectorial, private and or general education qualifications (Ireland, France, Malta, UK). In addition, in Scotland general education qualifications are linked with level 5. In some countries, EQF level 5 qualifications might be recently introduced (Netherlands) and some others does not have a qualifications linked to the EQF level 5 such as Poland or Lithuania (where students and learners have to start bachelor programmes from the beginning, without recognition of what they have done in other programmes) (Ibid. p. 1).

A typical level 5 qualification is provided by short-cycle higher education programmes but as mentioned in countries experience above they also can be find in vocational education and training and general education. Half of qualification types of this level 5 are regulated by higher education. When focusing on the learning outcome of these qualifications, the difference between VET and higher education is unclear and connection between institutions and qualification types are looser. So, in Albania for example, VET higher education diploma is increasingly offered by higher education institutions as the bases of an (undergraduate) degree programme. In Italy it is offered by higher technical institutes, part of higher education system.

EQF level 5 provide opportunity between higher education and VET education but meanwhile it represent a second choose for students who do not have access to academic roles, or had fail in it.

The opportunities between higher education and VET are for the continuity and progression between levels 5 and 6. The Bologna process has made short-cycle higher education more visible but its integration into bachelor programmes is still a work in progress. For example,

in some countries such as Albania, learners holding qualifications at level 5 wish to access to bachelor programmes, they are entitled to enroll without additional conditions. According to the bachelor program they are enrolled they can transfer credits from the short cycle program to the bachelor one. In some other countries such as Belgium, students and learners are allowed to enroll in bachelor programmes on the basis of their result in transition programmes (of varying length).

Despite the diversity, the common characteristic is that EQF level 5 qualifications are labour-market oriented and directly in employment. In that sense, the level 5 qualifications have the position of a self-standing qualification, with their own profile and labour market relevance.

3.2. Different types of degrees awarded to students completing EQF-5-programmes

For EQF 5 level qualifications there are two possible routes, the first being to use the qualification to enter a level 6; in this case the level 5 qualification is used to continue studying a bachelor programme. The second possible route is to enter the labour market with a level 5 qualification.

A typical level 5 qualification is provided by short-cycle higher education programme. The provision of short cycle post-secondary education varies from country to country with no clearly distinct pattern. In Albania for example, these professional study programs are non - university programs, after secondary education, with not less than 120 credits offered by public and private higher education systems, Their normal timeframe is 1 – 2 academic years and in the end of the programs is issued “Professional Certificate/ Diploma” in the respective field of education. Dures University has opened an applied sciences faculty with seven specialities (at 120 ECTS points) to bring ‘matura’ students to a qualified professional level. In Ireland the major 'higher education' award at EQF level 5 (NFQ level 6) is called the 'Higher Certificate'. In Italy, although higher technical education is considered to be post-secondary non- tertiary education, qualifications issued by higher technical institutions are situated in higher education at level 5 of the EQF. Moreover, the credits earned can partly be used for courses at university or non-university higher education. In Latvia, Professional higher education is divided into first-level and second-level professional higher education. First-level professional higher education programmes lead to Level 4 professional qualifications; second-level professional higher education programmes lead to Level 5 professional qualifications (the highest professional qualification that provides planning and research possibilities in the respective branch). Programmes last at least four years. In Flemish community in Belgium the short cycle programmes (HBO5) leading to an Associate degree (graduate) and offered by centres for adult education, university colleges and one programme offered by secondary schools. In Croatia short-cycle tertiary education is at level 5B (vocational) and 5A (academic). In Croatia, level 5B is considered post-secondary non higher education, as in Germany, Austria and Hungary. While in the Netherlands, Ireland, France and Belgium (Flanders) level 5B is the first stage of higher education. On the other hand, the same education level in Cyprus, Malta, Norway, Sweden and the UK is known as a ‘sub-degree’ and is part of an integrated system that can eventually lead to a full degree.

In France and Luxembourg the distinction is made between awards received in HEIs (Diplôme or diploma) and the awards in the higher education sections of secondary schools (Brevet or Certificate). With the exception of the French Community of Belgium all these qualifications refer to Technology or Technician. This is also the case for Denmark where the Academy Profession degree uses the term teknolog referring to the relevant field of study.

Also in Spain (Técnico superior), Portugal (Diploma de Especialização Tecnológica) and Slovenia (Engineer / inženir(male) /inženirka(female)). In the Czech Republic they have Diploma Specialists.

Chapter IV. The right to access and progress for education and employment

4.1. Routes that lead to EQF-5-programmes throughout Europe from a legal perspective

The introduction of comprehensive NQFs adds value by creating overview. The introduction of learning outcomes-based levels, and the placing of qualifications according to these, makes it possible to identify gaps in existing qualifications provision. Cedefop study Qualifications at level 5 (Cedefop, 2014a) shows that EQF level 5 (and the relevant NQF levels) has been used as a platform for the development of new qualifications. This is exemplified by the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and the UK. These new qualifications might be initial vocational qualifications, as in Estonia. In other cases, as currently being discussed in the Czech Republic, these qualifications may be academically oriented. Lithuania currently has no qualifications linked to this level, although there had been qualifications of this level awarded in vocational colleges until 2004. The demand for qualifications at this level has now been documented and both the VET and the higher education sector are considering responses: initial VET schools are seeking to revise part of the qualifications they provide and to upgrade them to level 5. Colleges of higher vocational education are seeking to introduce short study cycle programs and to link these qualifications to level 5.

EQF level 5 qualifications play an important role in providing access to employment and career advancement, as well as enabling further learning and progression to higher education. This double function makes them attractive to learners and employers. Although the extent to which countries use qualifications at EQF level 5 differs, their importance is growing in all countries investigated for several reasons. First, they are developed as response to increased needs for advanced technical and/or management skills in a rapidly changing labour market and ageing workforce. Second, the data show that EQF level 5 qualifications are especially attractive to students with vocational education and training (VET) backgrounds and those already in employment. They contribute to lifelong learning by being accessible and attractive for adults and non-traditional learners. Third, they are seen as valuable and relevant by employers, as most include some form of work-based learning.

The development of comprehensive NQFs – including qualifications at all levels and of all types – in most European countries has shed new light on the potential of EQF level 5 qualifications. By acting as a bridge between education and training institutions and subsystems, these qualifications support permeability (vertically and horizontally), allowing learners to move more easily between different types of education (such as academic and vocational) and between different levels (such as VET and higher education), as they decide. The study also shows that EQF level 5 is increasingly being used as a platform for developing new types of qualifications, whether initial (IVET) or continuing vocational education and training (CVET) qualifications or short-cycle higher education (SCHE) qualifications.

4.2. Diversity of EQF level 5 qualifications

Countries fall into four groups, depending on the prevailing type of level 5 qualification.

Countries where these qualifications are obtained outside the formal system: **xxxxx**;

Countries with a single qualification type linked to level 5: **xxxxx** (short-cycle higher

education): Albania (post-secondary vocational education and training, read below);
Higher education and vocational qualifications linked to level 5: **xxxx**
Countries offering several options, such as sectoral, private and/or general education
qualifications **xxxx**.

Case study: Implementing level 5 post-secondary education in Albania

Background: The ILO-EU IPA 2010 Project on Human Resources Development

The expansion, diversification and improvement of post-secondary vocational education and training are strategic priorities for the Government of Albania. The IPA 2010 project on “Human Resources Development” in Albania is supporting the Albanian Government in pursuing this strategic goal. The project is implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and funded by the European Union (EU) in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MoLSAEO) and their implementing agencies. The overall objective of the project is improving the labour market functioning and quality of human capital in Albania.

The project has three technical main components:

Component 1 focuses on the Modernisation of the State Labour Inspectorate (SLI);

Component 2 focuses on Modernisation of the National Employment Service (NES);

Component 3 focuses on the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Reform.

The VET Reform Component aims to provide assistance for addressing the policy aspects through the elaboration of appropriate and sustainable national strategies and its related action plan, also working for improving the attractiveness of the vocational education and training offers, including a LLL perspective, and the involvement of other partners throughout public-private partnership mechanisms.

The main outcomes planned are:

- The definition of the policy framework for a systemic and sustainable VET reform;
- The further development of the Albanian Qualification Framework; and
- The expansion of the post-secondary VET system.

The IPA 2010 HRD project explicitly suggests the expansion and implementation of post-secondary VET offers as an instrument for the effective expansion of the VET system in Albania according to the recently proposed Vocational Education and Training and Lifelong Learning Strategy 2013-2020. The project has offered advice and support to MoES and MoLSAEO with regard to the identification of the appropriate measures to be implemented in the post-secondary VET system.

In particular, the IPA 2010 project has supported the Albanian stakeholders to elaborate a feasibility study on post-secondary VET offers, including the identification of the most feasible offers, VET providers, financial resources, organizational and governance model, economic sectors and qualifications needed in the Albanian labour market. Furthermore, a study tour to Germany- targeting senior officials having a key role in the reform of the Albanian VET system was organized. The study visit provided insights into different types of initial, further and post-secondary programs for different target groups and in different fields of qualifications. In addition, the participants had the opportunity to make themselves familiar with different ways of organizing post-secondary VET and steering mechanisms for VET systems.

Based on the feasibility study, the IPA 2010 project will support the development of up to four new post-secondary study programs. In this report, the main framework requirements for

an expansion of the post-secondary system as well as the necessary steps for developing and implementing the study programs are analysed and described.

The support of the IPA 2010 project includes the necessary technical assistance for the design of the accreditation and quality assurance framework and the development of the study programs. Financial assistance, i.e. for teacher training, infrastructure or technical equipment is not planned to be part of the project, but the identification of the main features is already included in this implementation plan.

Post-secondary VET in Albania

There are still few post-secondary vocational education and training programmes available for upper secondary education graduates that provide the relevant qualifications to the labour market. Both the Vocational Education and Training Law and the Law on Higher Education provide for the possibility of universities and vocational education and training providers to offer post-secondary education and training programs.

So far, all post-secondary programs – with one exemption – have been developed and implemented in the higher education sector. The public Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durres has taken a leading role in promoting post-secondary programs in Albania. The Professional College of Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durres offers not only several regular higher education post-secondary programs, but also acts as a partner of Shkozet Vocational Education School “Beqir Cela”, with the support of Swisscontact. In a joint project with the University of Durres, ”Beqir Cela” School is responsible for the implementation of the practical part of a post-secondary program in the area of applied information technology and is up to date the only VET provider being involved in post-secondary education and training. Other universities involved in post-secondary education and training are the Agricultural University of Tirana with its branch in Lushnja, the University of Elbasan, the private Polis University Tirana and the “New Generation” higher education institution.

Currently, post-secondary programs are mainly targeted at: (a) graduates from general schools who cannot get to public university bachelor programmes, who cannot afford private universities or who do not want to take up full first-cycle traditional Bachelor programs; and (b) graduates from vocational schools who want to complete a further VET qualification at an advanced level.

The Ministry of Education and Science favours three different models of post-secondary education and training based on the findings of the feasibility study:

Model 1: Post-secondary programs with a strong vocational orientation but mainly academic driven. These programs are developed and implemented in universities/professional colleges.

Model 2: Post-secondary programs with a strong vocational orientation that require intensive practical training in workshops. These programs are developed by universities and/or NAVETQ and implemented in universities and vocational schools or multifunctional centres.

Model 3: Post-secondary programs that build upon initial vocational education programs like the 2+1+1 and the 2+2 programs offered by vocational schools. These programs will be developed by NAVETQ and implemented in vocational schools and/or multifunctional centres.

The 2-year Professional Diploma post-secondary programs currently run at the above mentioned professional colleges are equivalent in credit terms (120 European Credit Transfer points/ECTS) within the Bologna Framework to the first two years of a bachelor degree and allow for the progression into the third year of a bachelor program. Post-secondary programs are expected to focus on knowledge, skills and competencies that are needed on the labour

market and to develop learning outcomes within the level five of the Albanian Qualification Framework.

Chapter V. Indications of EQF level 5 in the context of study and work

5.1. Education programmes (e. g. organization of the programme, the workload, duration etc)

This section examines qualifications at level 5 of the European qualifications framework (EQF).

It shows that EQF level 5 qualifications play an important role in providing access to employment and career advancement, as well as enabling further learning and progression to higher education. This double function makes them attractive to learners and employers. Although the extent to which countries use qualifications at EQF level 5 differs, their importance is growing in all countries investigated for several reasons. First, they are developed as response to increased needs for advanced technical and/or management skills in a rapidly changing labour market and ageing workforce. Second, the data show that EQF level 5 qualifications are especially attractive to students with vocational education and training (VET) backgrounds and those already in employment. They contribute to lifelong learning by being accessible and attractive for adults and non-traditional learners. Third, they are seen as valuable and relevant by employers, as most include some form of work-based learning.

The development of comprehensive NQFs – including qualifications at all levels and of all types – in most European countries has shed new light on the potential of EQF level 5 qualifications. By acting as a bridge between education and training institutions and subsystems, these qualifications support permeability (vertically and horizontally), allowing learners to move more easily between different types of education (such as academic and vocational) and between different levels (such as VET and higher education), as they decide. The study also shows that EQF level 5 is increasingly being used as a platform for developing new types of qualifications, whether initial (IVET) or continuing vocational education and training (CVET) qualifications or short-cycle higher education (SCHE) qualifications.

5.2. Qualifications and descriptors (learning outcomes) in EQF-5-programmes

EQF level 5 qualifications play an important role in providing access to employment and career advancement, as well as enabling further learning and progression to higher education. They appeal to both learners and employers. This is one of the main conclusions of the Cedefop study which explored the key functions and purposes of EQF level 5 qualifications in the countries involved. It also examined how learning outcomes and ‘best fit’ approaches have been applied for assigning qualifications to the EQF level 5 across countries.

As countries have been working to link comprehensive NQFs to the EQF, it became evident that qualifications at level 5 are very diverse and developing dynamically. An overview of the diverse landscape of qualifications operating at this level, analysing the roles they play in relation to the labour market and further learning will be presented, which is an opportunity to understand better how the learning outcomes approach is applied in qualifications design and qualifications frameworks across Europe, using level 5 as a reference point.

Legal challenges posed by the use of alternative methods of education delivery and credentialing at the EQF level 5 (e.g. use of ICT, distance learning, learning on the job etc.).

European qualifications framework (EQF) levels reveal what a learner knows, understands and can do at the end of a learning experience. Thanks to the comprehensive nature of the EQF, these learning outcomes can also provide policy-makers with a fine mesh of data about each particular level and every kind of qualification. Nowhere is this mesh more intricate than at level 5, where learning outcomes cut across several subsystems. Moreover, these qualifications serve to test the degree of permeability between subsectors of our education and training systems.

Traditionally, education and training systems have distinct subsystems – general, vocational and higher education (academic and professional) – which are organized and regulated separately. Usually they are related to one another in a hierarchical manner. EQF level 5 operates across these subsystems, with a heterogeneous mix of qualifications awarded by a wide range of VET and higher education institutions. Half of the qualification types identified at level 5 are regulated by higher education or delivered under the responsibility of higher education institutions. Most are awarded through SCHE programmes. When focusing on the learning outcomes of these qualifications, the distinction between VET and higher education is not always clear-cut: for instance, in Albania, the VET specialisation diploma is registered as NQF/EQF level 5 VET qualification. However, the programme leading to this qualification, technological specialisation courses is presented as level 3.

Case study: Albania

Both the Albanian vocational education and training system and the higher education system are seriously under-financed. For the near future, it is expected that the Albanian financial resources for education and training will remain on a relatively low level. At the same time, the government has the objective to raise significantly the number of male and female students in vocational education and training, including post-secondary education. Although demographic trends will provide some space to revise the structure of education and training financing in the coming years, there are still huge efforts needed to remove the investment-backlog in the two education sub-sectors.

Higher education institutes and vocational schools offering post-secondary programs, although relatively small in terms of numbers, are an integral part of the education system. They usually face the same financial constraints as most other education and training providers and need to be included in an overall reform of the financing system. Alternative funding options for vocational education and training as well as for higher education are currently discussed. These options may include additional funding from public and private employers (i.e. via a VET levy) and from students (i.e. tuition fees) as well as innovative incentive mechanism (i.e. incentives for employers for the provision of internships or incentives for education and training providers for the successful placement of their graduates on the labour market).

The actual situation (human resources, infrastructure, technical equipment, financial resources) of education and training providers in Albania may vary significantly. Over the past 20 years, considerable investments have been undertaken by international donors like EU, BMZ, SDC, ADA, USAID (to name only a few). Several donors have signaled or committed support for further investments in modern buildings, workshops and equipment and related capacity building measures.

Among the professional areas that have been supported by international donors so far are

several which have been prioritized in the feasibility study on the expansion of post-secondary vocational education and training in Albania (i.e. mechatronics, textile and garment).

These developments have to be taken into account when considering the development and piloting of EU supported post-secondary VET programs. Potential education and training institutions need to be analyzed carefully and should provide detailed cost-estimations.

The plan for the development and implementation of the selected post-secondary programs outlines costs for all main activities, including curriculum development, accreditation, set-up of counseling and guidance, training of teachers and lecturers and measures on the improvement of the attractiveness of post-secondary programs.

Chapter VI. Recognition and validation of formal and non-formal learning linked to level 5

6.1. Forms of identification and recognition of formal and informal learning.

The main demand for systems for the recognition of learning outcomes comes from the labour market. The labour market is typically the focal point for some of the overriding concerns of the present time in the economies studied. These concerns have been strengthened by the crisis at the end of 2008. Unemployment, skills, competitiveness, employability, labour market integration and productivity are terms often featuring in official statements. Another set of concerns stems from the existence of groups in the population which are regarded as requiring greater attention. For these groups which are targeted because they are at a disadvantage in terms of education and training in particular, and more broadly for all stakeholders in the labour market, there is a strong demand for strategies, or even simply procedures, that are capable of rapidly satisfying labour market needs. The idea of speed is essential here, and recognition stands in natural opposition to training on an initial assumption expressed by countries with varying degrees of clarity, namely that the time needed to train is long and does not therefore correspond to time in the labour market, which is often much shorter. Supposedly faster, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is thus clearly one of the strategies studied by countries. Moreover, the latter are very clear about the link between the recognition of learning outcomes and the labour market, but a range of different motivations stand out to an extent that varies from one country or region to the next.

Belgium (Flemish Community) took it as its main concern and adopted a pragmatic approach. The aim should be to match skills and labour market needs and thus angle the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes towards skills in short supply on the market, while offering employment opportunities to disadvantaged groups, thereby achieving two aims at once. *Country xx, country yy.*

Employers in all countries without exception are quick to point out that the most important non-formal and informal learning probably takes place at work. This is crucial in explaining why they logically often demand more direct involvement in devising the standards used in a recognition process, especially if it leads to certified qualifications.

Another point linking the labour market to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is the need to deal with the skills shortages that occur when the demand for knowledge, skills and competences exceeds the supply. In general, this results in a situation in which large numbers of job vacancies go unfilled, even though the general unemployment rate may often be high. The link between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and skills shortages is self-evident in virtually all countries and the disarmingly simple reason is that knowledge, skills and competences are often present but are not visible because they are not recognised. For example, they are not certified. This is all the more important given the fact that often, as in Spain, the job creation rate is higher for skilled posts, such as those involving proficiency in new technologies. In Albania, the formal education and training system does not seem to be in a position to evenly and sufficiently produce the knowledge, skills and competences required by the labour market.

Generally speaking, these certificates represent an interesting case because they compete with qualifications awarded in the formal education and training system of the Ministry of Education, and it is not uncommon for them to have greater currency. The most likely reason

for this is that users know exactly what these certificates correspond to in terms of content. Perfect visibility is synonymous here with recognition and thus with value. This point is worth remembering in the implementation of systems for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The opposite also occurs, even if far less frequently, when there is a glut of graduates. For example in Albania there are about 20 universities per million inhabitants, (161500 students for a population of 2,8 million people), nearly eight times more than countries like UK. This reflects the fact that the labour market integration of its young people in Albania poses a problem. The more general nascent problem of a mismatch in the supply and demand of knowledge, skills and competences is apparent in many of the countries (example from countries). This problem of mismatch occurs typically when there is little information about the local workforce or workers that should be recruited. In theory, it is both a personal problem (workers are less effective in their jobs) and a macroeconomic problem (the economy is less effective overall). Many countries are studying these matters closely, and view the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes as a partial solution to the difficulty of ensuring the visibility of knowledge, skills and competences.

Similarly, there is a shortage of personnel per se, irrespective of whether or not this means qualified personnel, even though many background reports and players encountered during the field visits tended mistakenly to confuse the two situations, 3 doubtless because most countries confront both types of difficulty. A partial solution to this kind of shortage may be to bring non-working people back to the labour market. However, that means giving them knowledge, skills and competences that they probably lack, since otherwise they would be on the market. Training thus tends to be regarded as the solution. Yet it is here that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes appears to be a credible alternative or complement to training. If so, the aim is “solely” getting them to appreciate that they have the knowledge, skills and competences needed. It is this second solution that is the focus of this paper.

The shortage of personnel is a problem relating to an insufficient number of available workers. Skills shortages reflect a lack of certain knowledge, skills and competences.

Another point clearly linking the labour market and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is the fact that entry to certain regulated professions depends on possession of a certified qualification. By means of recognition, it is possible to certify the learning outcomes of those keen to practice such a profession without necessarily having to undertake a potentially long and costly period of training for the qualification required. It would be interesting to test the hypothesis that there is a relation between weak labour market regulation and delayed possibilities for recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes. This represents a considerable challenge which the recognition of learning outcomes, if it leads to certified qualifications, may help to overcome. Furthermore, many countries have adopted official policies regarding key competences, some of which may also be acquired – or even primarily so – outside the formal education and training system. All in all, the literature on key competences is somewhat perplexing as there are as many lists of key competences as there are specialists who refer to them. However, the need for experience appears to be included in all lists either in outline or specifically. It may well be that many of the competences indicated are not necessarily learnt – and not necessarily taught either – in the formal system.

The question of productivity is an issue in many countries but few draw attention to it. Yet it is recognised as a foremost 10 concern in international competition. On the other hand, attention is often paid to employability, and especially the employability of young people who have left the initial education and training system. The difficulty in securing the labour market integration of young people is generally attributable to a problem of qualifications and skills.

However, concern in this respect tends to focus on initial education rather than on adult learning and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. However, the large number of young people who leave the system with no qualification that they can turn to good account should stimulate a reappraisal of this approach and the inclusion of a component involving experience and the recognition of those outcomes. The labour market is a natural impetus for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. There are plans to introduce an “educational passport” or “school passport” and to develop a modular system in initial vocational education programmes in the health sector. Unemployment is clearly one of the topics to feature alongside those noted above. In some sectors in which the workforce has customarily consisted of women, there is a strong demand for semi-skilled workers. People who find it hard to obtain a job also have literacy-related problems. One of the difficulties identified is the low level of entrepreneurial culture. Mobility – and above all occupational mobility (involving a change of occupation) – is reported to be on the increase everywhere. It more often results from necessity, because of unemployment or relocation, than from an independent decision, but many countries report it nonetheless. And it will still give rise to a demand for assessment of the real knowledge, skills and competences of workers.

6.2. Assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

While there is general agreement about the fact that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes may be beneficial for all levels of the population, many countries are examining the possibility of using this approach to deal with the problems faced by certain groups likely to be especially vulnerable to professional or social exclusion because they lack significant knowledge, skills and competences or, more precisely, recognised knowledge, skills and competences. Thus many countries describe their groups at risk, and their policy responses when to a greater or lesser extent they rely on the recognition of those learning outcomes. Many countries are accordingly trying to help people with a modest level of literacy, a concern often but not necessarily associated with immigration (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000).

There is nothing specific in these measures on part played by the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in providing for greater proficiency in the written language. It is more a question of establishing the initial level of literacy to adapt future provision to optimal effect.

Immigrants are the focus of special attention in general and in the area of recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in particular. In fact, migrants do not necessarily have a low level of education and training. Recognition of their hitherto invisible knowledge, skills and competences, is thus a possible line of development in Belgium (Flemish Community), Experience is an essential concept for the First Nations. The educational level of migrants is far from uniform. There appears to be a somewhat unusual correlation between age and level of education, since the best educated tend to be older and their proportions are growing.

Finally, unemployment is highest among young people – between 12 and 14% since 1984. Even if it is claimed that poverty is scarce (Germany, Austria, Denmark) or declining (Ireland, Netherlands), poor people in general and poor workers in particular are often described as potentially interested in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes,

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is regarded as an interesting possible approach given that there is a strong correlation between income and level of qualification, even though unemployment as such appears uncommon. However, the two approaches are not inconsistent since they focus on the individual as a unit within a group

whose members face common difficulties. Next, poverty is far greater, with a very imbalanced distribution of wealth. More important, therefore, are the questions of people who are not gainfully employed and of dropout from the education system (many adolescents are at work), both of which are interrelated as everywhere else. However, the real target group appears to comprise workers without any qualifications and especially those with considerable experience. They are involved in training activities which one may reasonably assume do not lead to certified qualifications. Yet such people are the most vulnerable group in the labour market, above all when the economy is being restructured. These situations reveal the importance of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The aim is to offer stability to those who possess knowledge, skills and competences but who have received no recognition.

Glossary

Academic recognition

Approval of courses, qualifications, or diplomas from one (domestic or foreign) higher education institution by another for the purpose of student admission to further studies. Academic recognition can also be sought for an academic career at a second institution and in some cases for access to other employment activities on the labour market (academic recognition for professional purposes). As regards the European Higher Education Area, three main levels of recognition can be considered, as well as the instruments attached to them (as suggested by the Lisbon Convention and the Bologna Declaration): (i) recognition of qualifications, including prior learning and professional experience, allowing entry or re-entry into higher education; (ii) recognition of short study periods in relation to student mobility, having as the main instrument the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System); (iii) recognition of full degrees, having as the main instrument the Diploma Supplement.

Accreditation

The process by which a (non-)governmental or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or of a specific educational programme in order to formally recognise it as having met certain pre-determined minimal criteria or standards. The result of this process is usually the awarding of a status (a yes/no decision), of recognition, and sometimes of a license to operate within a time-limited validity. The process can imply initial and periodic self-study and evaluation by external peers.

Awarding body

Body issuing qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles) that formally recognises the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) of an individual, following an assessment and validation procedure.

Competence

A dynamic combination of cognitive and metacognitive skills, knowledge and understanding, interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills, ethical values and attitudes. Fostering competences is the object of all educational programmes. Competences are developed in all course units and assessed at different stages of a programme. Some competences are subject-area related (specific to a field of study), others are generic (common to any degree course). It is normally the case that competence development proceeds in an integrated and cyclical manner throughout a programme.

Credential evaluation

Comparing and assessing foreign qualifications.

Degree Profile

A Degree Profile describes the specific characteristics of an educational programme or qualification in terms of learning outcomes and competences, following an agreed format.

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

ECTS is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes. It aims to facilitate planning, delivery, evaluation, recognition and validation of qualifications and units of learning as well as student mobility. ECTS is widely used in formal higher education and can be applied to other lifelong learning activities.

European Qualification Framework (EQF)

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe, promoting workers' and learners' mobility between countries and facilitating their lifelong learning. The EQF aims to relate different countries' national qualifications systems to a common European reference framework. Individuals and employers will be able to use the EQF to better understand and compare the qualifications levels of different countries and different education and training systems.

Formal Learning

Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

Informal learning

Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or "incidental"/random).

Licensing

Licensing is considered to be the approval to conduct business as an educational institution. Licensing is not equated to accreditation and does not necessarily require demonstration of quality or ability to meet performance standards. The term "licensing" may be slightly differently defined in different countries.

Level (cycle) descriptors

Generic statements of the broad expected outcomes of each of the three cycles. A good example of general cycle (level) descriptors are the so-called Dublin Descriptors, which have served as one of the foundations for the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Life-long learning

All learning activity undertaken throughout life, which results in improving knowledge, knowhow, skills, competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons.

Module

In ECTS Users Guide module is defined as a course unit in a system in which each course unit carries the same number of credits or a multiple thereof.

National Qualifications Framework

An instrument for the development and classification of qualifications (e.g. at national or sectoral level) according to a set of criteria (e.g. using descriptors) applicable to specified levels of learning outcomes.

Non formal learning

Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

Professional recognition

Refers to the recognition of the right to work in a specific country in a regulated profession (e.g. medical doctor) in the European Union or European Economic Area. These situations are subject to the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC whereby if a citizen is a fully qualified professional in one Member State, he or she has a right to exercise that profession and be recognised as a professional in another Member State.

Qualification

Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a recognised programme of study.

Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)

The QF – EHEA is an overarching framework for qualifications in the European higher education area, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle (Dublin Descriptors) based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. The overarching framework sets the parameters for each Bologna country to develop its own national framework.

Quality assurance

The process or set of processes adopted nationally and institutionally to ensure the quality of educational programmes and qualifications awarded.

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning The process through which an institution certifies that the learning outcomes achieved and assessed in another context (non-formal or informal learning) satisfy (some or all) requirements of a particular programme, its component or qualification.

Skills

A skill is the learned capacity to carry out pre-determined results often with the minimum outlay of time, energy, or both. Skills can often be divided into general/generic and subject specific skills.

Transparency of qualifications

Degree of visibility and legibility of qualifications, their content and value on the (sectoral, regional, national or international) labour market and in education and training systems.

Workload

Indication of the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations)

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Annexes

Table 1 : Qualifications/ Awards received

Country	Award (s) qualification(s) received
Albania	Vocational Certificate/ Diploma
Croatia	Professional higher education VET post secondary development and training certificate
Ireland	Higher certificate
Latvia	Diploma of first level professional education First level professional higher education (college)
BFL	Associate degree (graduaat)
Spain	Tecnico superior : Higher Education Technician
Danimark	Academy Profession Degree in + the relevant subject title In Danish the titles are unique for each degree but will generally involve the term "teknolog" combined with the relevant subject title.
FR	DUT : Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie : University Technology Diploma BTS : Brevet de Technicien Supérieur : Certificate of Higher Education Technician
Luxemburg	DUT : Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie (integrated in the professional bachelor) BTS : Brevet de Technicien Supérieur BTS : Brevet de Technicien Supérieur Spécialisé (nursing
Czech republic	diploma specialist" (DiS.)- the Czech equivalent is <i>diplomovaný specialista</i>
Portugal	Diploma de Especialização Tecnológica
Russian federation	
Belarus	

Table 2: Albanian qualification framework

AQF levels	General education	Vocational education	Professional formation	EQF levels
8	Doctorate (University diploma of scientific degree)	Study programs/qualifications for expert specialist (University diploma for specializations or qualifications post Master)	Specialization courses based on professional demands, updating or leaning new, broader knowledge or competencies (Professional Certificate)	8
7	Master study programs (University Diploma)	Study programs/Qualification and specializations for high level managers and specialists (professional University Diploma for Post-Bachelor qualifications or specializations)	Courses for high level managers, specialists and technicians based on the Professional Education Levels (Professional Certificate)	7
6	Bachelor study programs (University Diploma)	Professional Bachelor study programs for managers and specialists (University Diploma)		6
5	Study programs up to two years post Upper Middle School (Professional Diploma)	Study programs up to two years post upper middle school/Qualifications for junior managers and high technicians up to two years post upper middle school (Professional Diploma)		5
4	General Matura (State Matura Diploma) Study programs/Passing courses (School diploma/certificate) Study programs/mid-term courses (School diploma 3)	Professional Matura (State Matura Diploma) Study programs/passing courses (School diploma/Professional certificate) Qualifications for supervisors and technicians (Certificate)	Passing courses (Certificate). Specialization courses based on professional demands, earning or updating new knowledge or broader competencies (Competencies certificate and Supervisor's and technician's certificate)	4
3	Study programs up to two years in upper middle schools/ mid-term courses (School diploma 2)	Study/training programs up to two years for qualified worker (School diploma/professional certificate)	Courses for qualified worker (Certificate for qualified worker)	3
2	One year Study programs in upper middle schools/ mid-term courses (School diploma 1)	One year Study/training programs for assistant or semi-qualified worker (School diploma/professional certificate)	Courses/training for assistant and semi-qualified worker (Certificate for assistant or semi-qualified worker)	2
1	Minimal qualifications for work or social life entry (Release diploma)			1

Source: Ministry of Education and Sports

Table 3: Belgian qualification framework of the Flemish –speaking community (FQF)

NQF levels	Educational qualifications	Professional qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctor		8
7	Master (January 2014, 55 included) Master after Master (January 2014, two included)	Recognized professional qualifications (January 2014, one included)	7
6	Professional bachelor (January included, 19 included) Academic bachelor (January 1014, 21 included) Bachelor after bachelor (January 2014, sic included)	Recognized professional qualifications (January 2014, one included)	6
5	Recognized professional qualifications (January 2014, two included)	Recognized professional qualifications (January 2014, 17 included)	5
4	Upper secondary general education Technical secondary education (third stage) Artistic secondary education (third stage) Supplementary general adult education	Recognized professional qualifications (January 2014, 38 included)	4
3	Secondary vocational education second year (third stage)	Recognized professional qualifications (January 2014, 41 included)	3
2	Adult basic education Second stage of secondary vocational education	Recognized professional qualifications (January 2014, 18 included)	2
1	Primary education		1

Source : *Referencing of the Flamish qualification frameworks to the European qualification framework (AKOV, 2014)*

Table 4: Belgian qualification framework of the German –speaking community (FQF)

NQF levels	General educational qualifications	VET qualifications
8	Doctoral or post-doctoral degree/habilitation	
7	Master degree (long duration)	Master degree upon successful completion of dual track higher education (long duration)
6	Bachelor degree	Master craftsperson certificate upon successful completion of a three year master craftsperson programme Professional bachelor degree upon successful completion of dual track higher education
5		Master craftsperson certificate upon successful completion of a three year master craftsperson programme Successful completion of supplementary secondary vocational education
4	Successful completion of upper secondary general education	Successful completion of upper secondary technical and arts programmes Attestation of competence upon successful completion of year 6 in vocational education Successful completion of year 7 in vocational education Journeyman certificate upon successful completion of apprenticeship
3	Successful completion of lower secondary general education	Successful completion of lower secondary technical, vocational or arts programmes Certified partial qualification acquired in year 2 of an apprenticeship
2	Successful completion of “common” years 2 in secondary education	Successful completion of years 3 in vocationally oriented education Attestation of competence certifying lower secondary special needs education
1	Successful completion of primary education	Certificate upon successful completion of year 2 in vocationally oriented education

Source: Belgian Ministry of German-speaking community, 2014.

Table 5: Irish NQF

NQF	Qualifications	EQF
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		levels
10	Doctoral degree	8
9	Master degree Postgraduate diploma	7
8	Honours bachelor degree Higher diploma	6
7	Ordinary bachelor diploma	6
6	Advanced certificate E. g. Level 6 certificate in horticulture Higher certificate	5
5	Level 5 certificate e.g level 5 certificate in hospitality operations leaving certificate	4
4	Level 4 certificate e.g level 4 certificate in engineering skills leaving certificate	3
3	Level 3 certificate e.g level 3 certificate in engineering skills junior certificate	2
2	Level 2 certificate e.g level 2 certificate in general learning	1
1	Level 1 certificate e.g. level 1 certificate in communications	1

Source: Referencing Irish national framework of qualifications (NQF) to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2009))

Table 6: Linking Italian formal qualifications to the EQF

EQF levels	Italian Formal Qualifications
8	Research Doctorate Academic diploma for research training Specialization Diploma Second level university master Academic specialization diploma (II) Higher Specialization diploma or master (II)
7	Master degree Second level academic diploma First level university master Academic specialization diploma (I) Higher specialization diploma (I)
6	Bachelor degree First level academic diploma
5	Higher educational technical diploma
4	Professional technician diploma Upper secondary education diploma Licei Upper secondary education diploma- technical schools

	Higher technical specialization certificate
3	Professional operator certificate
2	Compulsory education certificates
1	Lower secondary school-leaving diploma

Source: Italian Ministry of labour, ISIFOL 2012

Table 7: Latvian NQF (LQF)

NQF levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma	8
7	Master diploma Professional master diploma Diploma of professional higher education, diploma higher education Diploma of higher professional qualification Second level of professional higher education	
6	Bachelor diploma Professional bachelor diploma Diploma of professional higher education Diploma of higher professional qualification\second level professional higher education Length of full times studies –at least four years	6
5	Diploma of first level professional education First level professional higher education (college) Length of full time studies –two to three years	5
4	Certificate of general secondary education Certificate of vocational education Diploma of vocational secondary education	4
3	Certificate of general basic education Certificate of vocational basic education	3
2	Certificate of general basic education (for students in special educational programmes for students with mental development disorders)	2
1	Certificate of general basic education\ (for students in special educational programmes for students with severe mental development disorders or several severe mental development disorders)	1

Source:

Table 8: Poland NQF (PQF)

NQF levels	Qualifications included in the PQF (indicator)	EQF levels
8	diploma certifying the academic degree of Doctor in specific discipline	8
7	Diploma certifying the title Magister Diploma certifying the title of magister inzynier Diploma certifying a title equivalent to	

	magister or Inzynier	
6	First cycle vocational title Diploma certifying the title Licenjat Diploma certifying the title of Inzynier Diploma certifying a title equivalent to Licenncyat or Inzynier	6
5		5
4	Matura certificate Vocational certificate Vocational diploma	4
3	Vocational certificate Vocational diploma	3
2	Certificate of completing lower secondary school	2
1	Certificate of completing primary school	1

Table 9: Croatian NQF

NQF levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8.2	Doctoral Diploma	8
8.1	Postgraduate diploma research master of science diploma	
7	Master Diploma (graduate university studies) Professional Master diploma (specialist graduate professional studies) Post –master specialist university studies	7
6	Bachelor diploma (undergraduate university studies) Professional bachelor diploma (undergraduate professional studies)	6
5	Professional higher education (short cycle) VET post secondary development and training certificate	5
4.2	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate Upper secondary VET certificate (four years) Upper secondary VET certificate (five years) for nursing technicians	4
4.1	Upper secondary VET (three years)	
3	Upper secondary VET certificate (two years) Upper secondary VET certificate (one years)	3
2	Vocational training certificate	2
1	Primary education certificate (eight years)	1

Source: Croatian Minister of Science, Education and Sports, 2013.

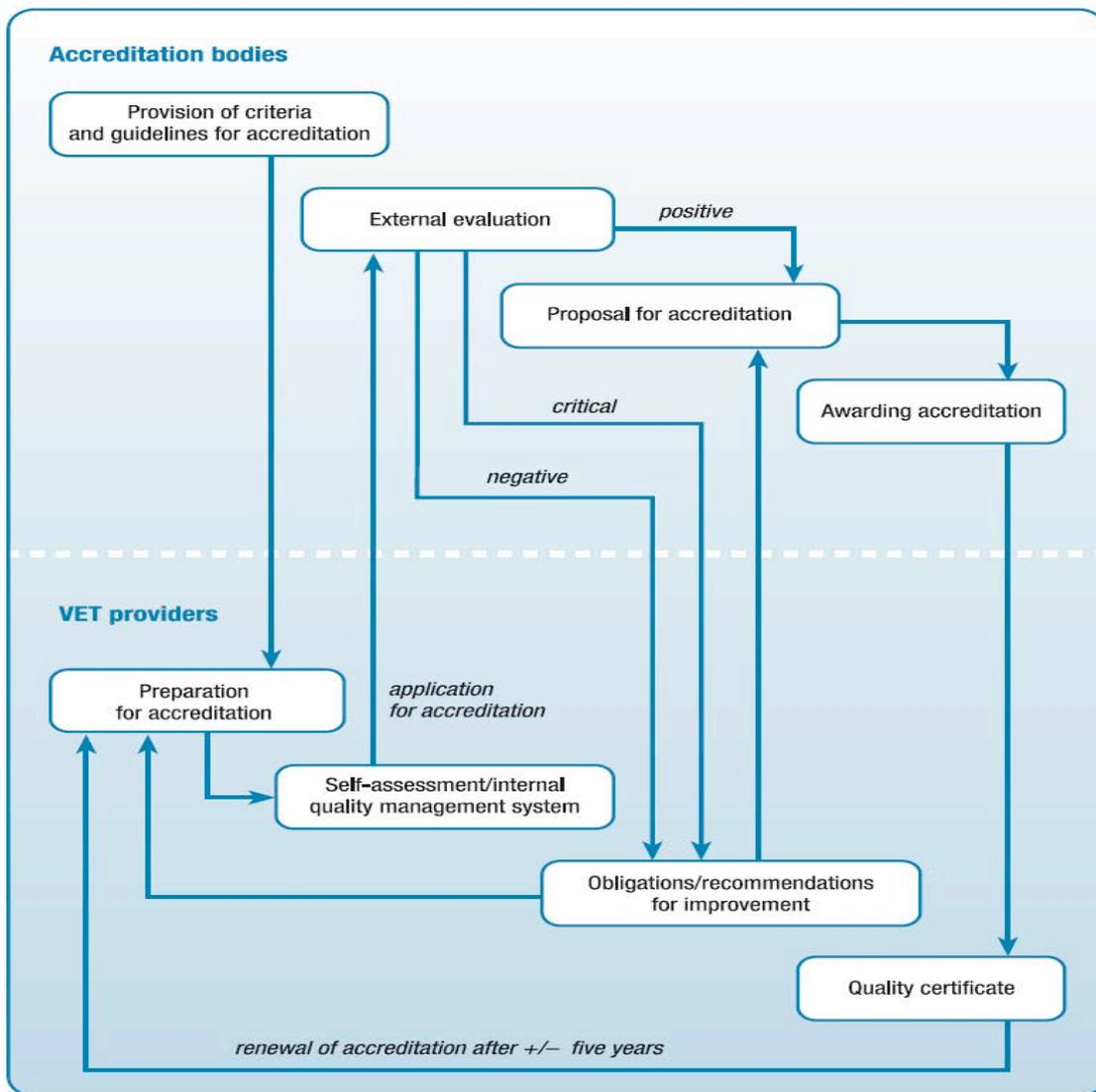


Figure 1 A common model of the accreditation process

Source: Cedefop (2009a), p. 12.