



# THE RELEVANCE OF THE ACTIVE LEISURE SECTOR & INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK TO THE EQF (SIQAF)

## FINAL REPORT

Active leisure is a combination of fitness and outdoor-based activities that are generally unstructured and non-competitive. They promote active, healthy lifestyles through activities, events and exercise. They are commonly provided under the direction of qualified animators or instructors so that the activities are tailored to match the abilities of the participants and meet their needs in an enjoyable and safe way.

***“The European Active Leisure Sector is growing at 3-4% per year. It generates annual revenues of more than 30 billion EUR, it employs nearly 1 million people, and is characterised by high mobility levels of its workforce”***

### **Improving Labour Market Mobility in the EU Recognising International and Sector Qualifications**

Harmonisation of sector-specific qualifications have been identified to be the key for improving labour market mobility. With the EU-funded project SIQAF (2016-2018) and its follow-up project Blueprint for the Sector Skills Alliance for Active Leisure (2018-2020) is striving for European and national recognition of its qualifications.

*International Qualifications are defined as “awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, sector or company), or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body that is used in more than one country, and that includes learning outcomes assessed with reference to standards established by an international body”.*

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. About the report

The Council of the European Union defined an international qualification as “a qualification awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, sector or company) or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body that is used in more than one country and that includes learning outcomes assessed with reference to standards established by an international body”<sup>1</sup>. Unlike national qualifications and their frameworks (NQFs), a clear relationship to the European Qualification Framework (EQF) has not been defined for international or sectoral qualifications although the possibility was considered when the EQF was first officially launched in 2008. With the Council recommendation of May 2017, this possibility has now been firmly denied by the Member States of the European Union, and has been replaced by supporting “the setting up of voluntary procedures on the levelling of international qualifications through national qualification frameworks or systems [...]”.

This report is written with the intention to share the experiences of the Active Leisure sector in referencing sectoral and international qualifications to National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and the European Qualification Framework (EQF). Hence, this report includes a proposal for a possible procedure to include international/ sectoral qualifications in NQFs and the EQF under consideration of member state’s autonomy, provision of transparency and assuring the quality of international/ sectoral qualifications.

The action took place as an EU-funded project under Erasmus+ (Key action 3) from August 2016 to July 2018 and involved the European Health and Fitness association, EuropeActive and the European Confederation of Outdoor Employers, EC-OE whose experts came together in a task force. However, it is important to notice that the work has been not finished yet, and the methodology developed is yet to be tested in practice under another Erasmus+ co-funded action during 2018-2020 which is being led by EuropeActive. This document is intended to inform sector and industry representatives, policy makers and interested individuals with the purpose of facilitating sectoral efforts to harmonise qualifications at the European level.

**Active leisure** is a combination of fitness and outdoor-based activities that are generally unstructured and non-competitive. They promote active, healthy lifestyles through activities, events and exercise. They are commonly provided under the direction of qualified animators or instructors so that the activities are tailored to match the abilities of the participants and meet their needs in an enjoyable and safe way.

The chapters of this report reflect the different phases of the project. For the first 12 months the task force focused on the content and context, whereas the second 12 months were dedicated to developing the structure and methodology for informally referencing Active Leisure qualifications against the EQF. Due to the Council Recommendation occurring in May 2017, the task force had to

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<sup>1</sup> Council Recommendation 2017/C 189/03 of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning

adapt its originally intended project structure and method. The result of the discussions, deliberations and interventions from many experts in this area has been to identify what is now called a “pathway”. The report describes the different steps which were successively processed, to end with its recommendations and pathway model which could be used by other sectors and international organisations.

Chapters one and two introduce the context of the project and its relationship to the specifics of the Active Leisure sector. Chapter three covers the different steps which the task force has identified to be crucial for a sector or international organisation to follow so that they can demonstrate transparency, responsibility and validity. This requires the engagement of stakeholders, proof of representativeness, solid research and the understanding of their own sector/context. Hence one of the main outcomes is the setting-up of a sector skills alliance which develops a comprehensive Sector Qualification Framework (SQF). The task force decided to test its framework with two European Qualifications (Personal Trainer and Outdoor Animator) which were developed from earlier occupational standards into a comprehensive structure based on units of learning outcomes.

Sub-chapters 3.3 and 3.4 are a theoretical exercise and cover the future steps for the task force and the proposal of a European Certifying Organisation to formally bring forward and reference international qualifications against NQFs, and to oversee the necessity for trusted quality assurance arrangements.

Chapter four focuses on developing a qualification in the European context and demonstrates the ‘state of play’ for international qualifications. The report finished with a conclusion in chapter five. All relevant documents developed during the project e.g. the SQF matrix, the EU Qualifications, country fact sheets about international qualifications can be found in the appendices.

## 1.2. The SIQAF project

In late 2015 DG Employment opened a call for proposals for the “Key Action 3 Support for Policy Reform Support to European Policy Tools - Quality assurance at European level for enhanced transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications.”



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The application made by EuropeActive in response to this call was successful and the awarded project was given the title of “Relevance of Sector and International Qualifications and Frameworks to the EQF (SIQAF)”. The project started in September 2016 with some specific objectives:

1. Propose how a sectoral qualification framework could be related to the EQF. This will include identifying the conditions and characteristics that will be needed by a sector considering referencing and its relevance of its qualifications and/or framework to the EQF. This also addresses the key issue of transferability.

### SIQAF PROJECT ID CARD

Programme Erasmus+, KA3 Support  
for Policy Reform

Coordinator EuropeActive

EU Grant 157,290 EUR

Duration 1/08/2016 to 31/07/2018

Agreement number 576009-1-  
2015-1-BE-EPPKA3-TRANS-SQ

2. Quantify and qualify the criteria required, and the way that they would have to be applied to the process, and such that they will embed convincing and plausible quality assurance criteria.
3. Explain how a sectoral qualifications system/framework needs to establish a body for the demonstration of good governance, and to gain its validation from employers, employees, VET experts, accreditation bodies and other stakeholders in their sector.

### 1.3. Project summary & results

The first half of the project was inspired by the findings and recommendations of the ICF Study on International Qualifications <sup>2</sup> and a workshop of experts, organised by DG EMPL that was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016. The indication for options included the possibility for a direct relationship between sectoral/international qualifications/frameworks and the EQF. The SIQAF task group considered this proposition in the context of the 10 steps that an NQF would have to fulfill to be referenced to the EQF. The final 2 stages of this 10-step process were not appropriate as there could not be any legal relationship or recognition under current arrangements for non-NQFs.

In March 2017 at the Mijoux (FR) project meeting of the task force it was indicated that the option of a direct relationship/relevance to the EQF was unlikely and that through the New Skills Agenda review of the EQF which was ongoing, the Council was likely to draw different conclusions.

In May 2017 the Council Recommendation on the EQF was published and it firmly closed the expectation on any sectoral or international qualification/framework having a direct relationship with the EQF. In consultation with officers from DG EMPL and the Executive Agency EACEA the SIQAF project team agreed to investigate and make some recommendations in response to the EQF Council Recommendation 11:

“Support the setting up of voluntary procedures on the leveling of international qualifications through national qualification frameworks or systems and information exchange and consultation between Member States on those procedures to ensure consistency.”<sup>3</sup>

And within the context of the definition of an international qualification:

“An international qualification means a qualification awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, sector or company) or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body that is used in more than one country and that includes learning outcomes assessed with reference to standards established by an international body”<sup>4</sup>

The SIQAF project team decided to investigate the attributes and characteristics required by a sectoral or international organisation to demonstrate responsibility and credibility when presenting qualifications or frameworks to national qualification frameworks. The need to seek a cooperative

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<sup>2</sup>Auzinger, M., Fellingner, J., Luomi-Messerer, K., Mobilio, L., Ulicna, D., & Zaidi, A. (2016). Study on International Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks and Systems Final Report. <https://doi.org/10.2767/115>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 1

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 1. The definition for an international qualification applies as well to the sectoral qualification. Synonymously used, the term “sectoral qualification” will be used through the report as sector organisations were working on the SIQAF project and related activities.

solution with NQFs was quite clear and the following work included visits to 8 countries to explore the possible relationships. It was quickly discovered that inclusion procedures between sector qualifications and NQFs would likely to be rather protracted, and that at present the opportunity to propose the inclusion of a sectoral qualification on an NQF is currently non-existent.

There was a strong desire to improve processes for linking to NQFs but also in the context of retaining the ambition of ‘harmonising’ at the European level, and acknowledging that by working with NQFs it is possible to see a direct and coherent linkage to the EQF. The SIQAF project therefore focused on developing a pathway which is described in later sections of this report. The resultant pathway is essentially formed of two parts – the identification of the sector and the work it has undertaken to be the representative body to propose an international/European/sectoral qualification and then the steps towards implementation through NQFs.

#### 1.4. Project context

For more than 10 years EuropeActive and the European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE) have recognised that skills are a pathway to employability, mobility and prosperity for the Active Leisure sector. With the right skills, people are equipped for good-quality jobs and can fulfil their potential as confident, active citizens. In a fast-changing global economy skills will, to a great extent, determine competitiveness and the capacity to drive innovation growth in the sector.

Tackling the skills challenges for the fitness and outdoor sectors requires significant policy efforts and coordination and systemic reforms or development in the current provision and recognition of education and training. It challenges the European organisations involved to have some smart thinking about how to invest in developing human capital from both public and private sources.

The goal is to reach a vision and commitment to work together on improving the quality and relevance of skills formation in order to keep step with the rapidly changing skills requirements of the labour market, to equip everyone with a minimum set of basic skills and make qualifications easier to understand, helping workers and learners to move around more easily within the EU.

As sector leaders EuropeActive and EC-OE have held a central role in the successful development of this agenda, building on initiatives at European and national levels, drawing on specific sectoral expertise, and working with its stakeholders and across the broader industry.

One of the chief goals of the European Commission’s New Skills Agenda has been to raise political awareness of the critical importance of skills for Europe’s jobs and growth prospects, and to address this issue at the highest political level. A continued involvement through EuropeActive’s EU and EC-OE’s affairs strategy in this area is critical to ensuring the Active Leisure sector has a good profile and a clear message that it wants to work with EU initiatives to support its growth and development of human capital.

Vocational education and training (VET) has been valued in the fitness and outdoor sectors for fostering job-specific and transversal skills, facilitating the transition into employment and maintaining and updating the skills of the workforce. VET is the usual route for qualifying fitness trainers and

outdoor animators but for many young people VET remains a second choice and is seen to be second-class when compared to higher education. VET in the Active Leisure sector needs to increase its attractiveness through quality provision and in providing people with the skills that employers need and respect. More awareness of the good employment outcomes of VET can make it a genuine first choice for most people. From around 2008 onwards the fitness and outdoor sectors realised that there were many synergies which has fostered a growing alliance as explained in later chapters. The term 'Active Leisure' is now used to describe this collaboration and cooperation.

In 2016 the New Skills Agenda for Europe<sup>5</sup> launched a number of actions aimed at making better use of skills development. The simple idea is to equip people with the new skills to help them find quality jobs and to improve their life chances. The European Commission have invited the EU Members States, social partners, and other stakeholders to work together to:

- Improve the quality and relevance of skills formation
- Make skills more visible and comparable
- Improve skills intelligence and information for better career choices

To support continued growth, entrepreneurship and employment the two main sector organisations need to articulate compelling solutions which provide realistic and lasting solutions and they have been testing some of these through this EU-funded action (SIQAF). This project has set out to show how a sectoral qualification framework could be related to the EQF and includes identifying the conditions and characteristics that will be needed by a sector when considering referencing and its relevance of its qualifications and/or framework to the EQF.

Qualifications signal to employers what people know and are able to do, but rarely capture skills acquired outside formal learning institutions, which therefore risk being undervalued. Differences between education and training systems in the EU, however, make it difficult for employers to assess the knowledge and skills of people with a qualification from another country than their own.

Mobility across borders can help labour markets work well and opens up people's life chances. But low understanding and recognition of their qualifications means that EU and non-EU workers who move abroad often face more obstacles to find a job or are paid less than workers with comparable qualifications gained in the host country.

A more in-depth analysis of the regulation (Dir. 2005/36/EC) and the obstacles observed in the recognition of qualifications are presented in chapter 4.4.

With this context the two sector organisations agreed for the need to extend the Active Leisure Alliance which they first formed as a cooperation in 2012 to become something much more concrete in working to develop permanent methods for developing skills and improving employment cooperation across the sector. It proposed, and launched in November 2016 the concept of the Sector

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<sup>5</sup> Communication COM(2016) 381 final of 10 June 2016 From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions on A New Skills Agenda For Europe – Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness.

Skills Alliance for Active Leisure that saw the New Skills Agenda as an opportunity to work further in the area of skills development. In the meantime they also acknowledged the reality that Europe is a complex place with many considerations of national positions to respect and not least that education and training is a sovereign responsibility of each country and an area where the European Commission is reluctant to go too far. This leaves the opportunity for the Active Leisure sector to prove its position as sector leaders to be convincing and compelling in finding its own solutions and to look closely at improving the transparency and comparability of qualifications.

There is no denying that across the Active Leisure sector there is a strong need for delivering an increasing range of products and services which require new skills. The rapid digital transformation in our lives is an example. The advent of smart phones and accessibility of WI-FI means that almost all jobs now require some level of digital skills. People who visit fitness centres and go into the outdoors have access to limitless information and connectivity, and can know more about themselves than many fitness trainers or outdoor animators. This is a new way of working unheard of just a few years ago which might be called the 'collaborative economy' and it is changing business models by opening up opportunities and new routes into work. They demand different skill sets, and bring challenges such as accessing up-skilling opportunities for existing workers who now need to keep.

Current and future skills needs vary across different sectors of the economy and Active Leisure is a relatively new sector to have emerged, but is already radically changing. As previously mentioned, this is mainly, but not exclusively driven by technological developments, but also in the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the importance of regular physical activity. The sector is increasingly innovation-driven which requires the supply of right skills to support its competitiveness and constant innovation. It is also the case that higher skills are needed as operators and employees are increasingly working in an independent way. With the pace of technological change, a major challenge for the sector, and in particular SMEs which characterise the sector, is to better anticipate and manage the transformative change with regard to skills requirements.

The Active Leisure sector is above all characterised by a huge mobility of both the workers and their clients. For example, holidaymakers visit fitness facilities regardless their destination, skiers move from one ski resort to the other more often than their instructors do. Moreover, these holidaymakers are very often on the brink of new trends, innovations and certainly also new expectations. Consequently the workforce in the Active Leisure sector undeniably needs the workforce skills to adapt to new and challenging innovations.

2016 also saw a new initiative coming into effect from DG Employment to promote the concept of Sector Skills Alliances <sup>6</sup> which are being designed to tackle skills, aligning vocational education and training (VET) systems with labour market needs. Both EuropeActive and EC-OE have had this role as one of their main business objectives as not-for-profit European associations and so took the initiative in November 2016 to launch the **Sector Skills Alliance for Active Leisure**.

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<sup>6</sup>Sector Skills Alliances. (27 August 2018). Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/sector-skills-alliances\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/sector-skills-alliances_en)

The purpose of this new industry body is to establish a permanent Sector Skills Alliance (SSA) designed to tackle the skills agenda for the Active Leisure sector by aligning Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems with labour market needs. This will be done by:

- Modernising VET by adapting to skills needs and integrating work-based learning,
- Strengthening the exchange of knowledge and best practices,
- Improving labour market mobility,
- Increasing the recognition of qualifications.

The SSA for Active Leisure offers the opportunity to increase sectoral cooperation in order to design and deliver joint curricula and methods targeting the sector specific professions and occupations while providing the identified vocational skills required by the labour market. The main goal is a systemic impact on vocational training in the Active Leisure sector in order to boost the quality and relevance of VET provision and increase competitiveness and growth of the sector and beyond.

The SSA will help develop vocational skills from the perspective of labour market needs (and especially as it will be employer-led), and to ensure cooperation between education and employment. The SSA will address the challenges of vocational skills mismatches and shortages - and to project future skills needs for the Active Leisure Sector.

To gather relevant labour market intelligence, to understand employer needs to support growth, develop more sustainable jobs and promote entrepreneurship, a coordinated approach is required. This will also need to have empathy with the capacity to deliver relevant training programmes through VET, in formal, informal and non-formal settings, and also through partnerships across higher education.

The general picture of the European labour market remains characterised by persistent high levels of unemployment in many areas, and especially with young people. Conversely, there are blocks in vacancies in some of the higher-growing regions and sectors such as within Active Leisure. The structural mismatches between labour supply and demand are a cause for concern, and require a sharpening of policy and implementation programmes that could better support the EU's stability and growth.

Job and career guidance services will need to be more creative in their solutions to make the most of available employment opportunities and to be able to signpost skills development to support new occupations. Therefore, the SSA will have an ambitious programme of aiming to facilitate dialogue between the labour market and education and training stakeholders and to increase the sectoral cooperation and exchange of knowledge and practices:

- To identify skills needs, gaps and shortages in the Active Leisure market; to deliver a joint curricula and common qualification (i.e. for personal trainers and outdoor animators);
- To assist policy makers;

- To improve cooperation and coordination at European and national level for the benefit of the sector;
- To help in the recognition of qualifications and to increase mobility;
- To support entrepreneurship.

The structure of the SSA sector alliance (where EuropeActive and EC-OE will have the lead through employer representation), also includes VET providers and their association, fitness and outdoor national associations, employers, accreditation organisations and employee representatives (e.g. trades unions). Through this open, transversal, cross-border and sectoral approach, the aim is for the stakeholders involved to assist policy makers and the Member states positions.

As major outcome of the SIQAF project (objective 3), it is expected that the SSA will also provide the representative organisations for meaningful social dialogue for Active Leisure.

*“Qualifications are seen as an instrument of choice for allowing cross-national and cross-institutional coordination of professional content, despite the absence of licensing or mandatory training.”<sup>7</sup>*

The SSA is viewed as a body which can directly relate and track what is happening and expected at ‘grassroots’ level. Expectations for how it will work in the future are rapidly changing, and so the way that we learn should also change to reflect this diversity. For example, work-based learning, such as apprenticeships are a proven springboard to good jobs and to developing labour market-relevant skills, including transversal and soft skills, where typically social partners play a key role but are virtually unknown in the Active Leisure sector.

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<sup>7</sup> European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2013). The role of qualifications in governing occupations and professions (Working Paper No 20). <https://doi.org/10.2801/30225>

The number of **independent professionals**, commonly referred to as freelancers, in the EU-28 rose by a quarter (24%) from 7.7 million to 9.6 million between 2008 and 2015 according to the Association of Independent Professionals.

Research shows that more people are taking the plunge and launching themselves as a business in almost every EU Member State. The largest number of new freelancers is in Western Europe – specifically the UK, France and the Netherlands – which between them saw 1.2 million more people launch a solo business in the seven years to 2015.

The job market is rapidly changing with a profound re-shaping through e-market recruitment dominating the future, and skills have to change with it. We need to be constantly curious about learning as who knows what the jobs might be in 5 years from now?

A qualification is no longer for life but is probably the entry point to career as a fitness professional or outdoor animator and from then on personal and career skills need to be developed to keep up with new ways of working. Regular employment is quickly disappearing as new, independent professionals offer their services as required – not just to clients, but to operators as well.

The SSA therefore, is the purpose-driven body that should be capable of tracking and relating to what is happening in the labour market. But, it also needs its own authority, and this comes from the 2 main sector organisations of EuropeActive and EC-OE who have to provide the responsibility and validity of the sector when working

across the EU and especially with member state NQFs.

Both EuropeActive and EC-OE have followed, supported, and implemented the principles of the European Lifelong Learning Programme and especially the wide understanding of the European Qualification Framework (EQF), which is now arguably the most effective part of the LLP. The position of sectors and international organisations with the EQF remained rather vague with an emphasis being placed on the need for national qualification frameworks (NQFs) to develop, describe and successfully reference to the EQF.

Nonetheless, many sectors and international qualifications have informally used the EQF as a reference tool whilst still recognising that there can be no legal relationship. The ICF Study<sup>8</sup> in 2016 identified over 250 different qualifications, frameworks and international organisations who were already using EQF levels as a description or showing a reference and the expectation is that this number will continue to grow.

In April 2010 the Dublin conference on the EQF produced a final statement which included 2 relevant sections to provide some context for further sector/international involvement in the development and use of the EQF:

Sectoral Qualifications and Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks:

The level of understanding that exists within and between sectors adds value to overall cohesiveness at national and European level. The relationship of sectoral qualifications to national qualifications frameworks and the two meta-frameworks needs to be clarified in order to realise lifelong learning

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 2

and to facilitate permeability between vocational education & training (VET) and higher education (HE). Further clarity should be sought on appropriate ways to achieve such recognition through national and meta-frameworks.

In 2010 this was seen as a 'green light' for hastening the development of sector qualifications which in turn led to comprehensive sector qualification frameworks as outlined in the ESCO work described later.

In 2016 the New Skills Agenda included some expectations around sectoral qualification relevance and recognition through the EQF review. Specifically, the New Skills Agenda EQF review was seeking to reflect on:

The growing internationalisation of products and services value chains has triggered an increasing number of international (sectoral) qualifications industry-based training and certifications, based on standards developed by international companies or sectoral organisations, such as the e-competence framework or the banking and welding sectoral frameworks.

The previous EQF Recommendation stipulated that international and sectoral organisations should be able to relate their qualifications systems to a common European reference point and thus show the relationship between international sectoral qualifications and national qualifications systems. However, the Recommendation did not create explicit provisions on how this direct relation to the EQF should be achieved.

International and sectoral initiatives in the area of education and training are a widespread phenomenon as confirmed in the recent ICF Study<sup>9</sup> for DG EMPL and over half were, in some way, referencing themselves to the EQF.

The organisations involved cover a range of sectors and many have a high number of users and have been established for many years, which is similar to the position with fitness and the outdoors. Another typical feature is that in the description of these qualifications most of them are expressed in units of learning outcome – and this also is the case with fitness and outdoor qualifications and standards, which were being developed since 2010.

According to the ICF Study the most commonly mentioned reason for having or wanting to create a link with the EQF is to improve their recognition. This is also the case for Active Leisure where the representative organisations of EuropeActive and EC-OE want to improve all aspects of the recognition of the work towards developing a sector qualification framework. This extends beyond qualification delivery itself where, for example, in fitness EuropeActive has established the recognition of workers' individual achievements through the European Register of Exercise Professionals which deliberately uses an EQF level to help with transparency from one country to another, and from one employer to another.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 2

## 2. The Active Leisure Alliance

### 2.1 Who are the sector stakeholders?

The Active Leisure sector is a combination of the fitness and outdoor sectors and has a workforce estimated at over 1 million people, and an annual revenue turnover in excess of 30 billion euro's. This makes it more economically important than the rest of the entire sport sector, but where it historically still remains connected under the broader sector heading of 'Sport and Active Leisure'.

Active Leisure is characterised by many new innovative businesses, a high percentage of self-employed or independent professional workers, and with high levels of mobility both in terms its workers and businesses. The fitness sector has been represented by EuropeActive (EHFA) since 2002 and the Outdoor sector by the European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE) since 2008. They are two main stakeholder organisations for employment, skills development, and the sector operators and employers at a European level as described in the following sections.

#### 2.1.1 The fitness sector

The European fitness industry first started coordinated action in 1995 under the European Network of Fitness Associations (ENFA). Following the schematic representation for the sport sector proposed by Prof. Jean Camy in 2001 the European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA) was formed in 2002 as the not-for-profit representative organisation for the fitness industry. In 2008 EHFA opened a permanent office in Brussels, and in 2014 it changed its name to EuropeActive.

EuropeActive is governed by statutes and by Belgian law. Each year there is a General Assembly of its members where the Board members are elected for a three year period and the Board elect an Executive President who is currently Sir Graham Watson. The General Assembly and elections, resolutions, budgets and performance are annually notarised to show compliance with its statutes. The Executive Team and officers (currently the equivalent of 10 full-time people, with a 50:50 gender balance) report to the Board.

There are approximately 160 different members of EuropeActive which include national associations, operators, suppliers, training providers and universities. EuropeActive acts as a platform organisation connecting mainly through 21 national associations which reaches over 50% of the entire European fitness market. Following the Eurofound Study on Representatives for Sport and Active Leisure in 2013 that recognised EuropeActive as an employer organisation for the fitness sector it formed another not-for-profit association called EHFA-Employers which is the specific vehicle for employer engagement in social dialogue. EHFA-E meets annually and provides the mandate for action in social dialogue and employer-employee relationships.

In 2008 EHFA divided its activities into two main areas – first as a trade body, and secondly as an independent standards council of experts with a focus on developing the educational systems and content for the training and recognition of the professional capacity of fitness instructors. The block grant awarded by EuropeActive to the standards council since 2008 to facilitate its work now exceeds 500,000 euro. Following the principles of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme the standards council has developed a comprehensive sector qualification framework, detailed

occupational standards, and an accreditation programme for VET providers (with over 150 participating) and the European Register of Exercise Professionals (EREPS), which operates across 32 different European countries and links with similar registers in Russia and Turkey.

EuropeActive has developed a prominent position of advocacy on behalf of the European fitness sector where its promoters, protects and informs. It is a strong supporter of EU policy development, and has been a committed member and contributor to numerous expert groups, high-level groups and platforms. Its two main policy areas are for skills and human resources development (supporting the continued growth of the sector), and in promoting health-enhancing physical activity which underpins its broad mission of “more people more active more often”.

EuropeActive also has a significant history of achievement in EU grant-aided actions which help to develop its policies and importantly to put them into practice. In recent years it has completed actions to promote healthy lifestyles to children, in active ageing, through the European Week of Sport (where it is an original member of the Advisory Board), in anti-doping, and through skills development with DG EMPL. It has also concluded 2 capacity-building projects in social dialogue.

For many years it has undertaken independent research into the sector covering its size, growth and trends (employer perspective with the annual Deloitte Market Report), working in fitness (employee perspectives) and skills analysis (annual employer skills forecasting). Findings and policy development are tested through extensive consultation in a number of meetings and conventions which are held on an annual basis:

- European Health and Fitness Forum – 500 industry leaders attend the annual event
- FIBO exhibition – the largest trade show in the world with over 120,000 visitors
- European Leaders Forum – invite only for top 20 operators and business school leaders
- International Standards Meeting – 150 experts from across Europe and around the world to promote innovation and cooperation in education and training.

EuropeActive actively promotes the role that fitness can play in providing employment and routes to employability and is a sector characterised by young people with high levels of mobility. In October 2017 EuropeActive proposed as part of the outcome of the SIQAF project a “pathway” for recognising Active Leisure qualifications at the European level to the EQF Advisory Group as a response to the Council EQF Recommendation 11 (May 2017). The basis of the pathway now supports the delivery of EuropeActive’s Erasmus+ BLUEPRINT project which started in January 2018.

In addition to attending many Commission events EuropeActive also connects with the European Parliament Sport Intergroup and holds regular bilateral meetings with MEPs.

EuropeActive has a large website which covers all of its activities, projects, and a range of information/position papers that are free to use and download. In addition to posting news items EuropeActive has a detailed communication plan which covers the wide use of social media, blogs and the weekly Brussels Bulletin. Information is regularly distributed to over 24,000 contacts on its database. Additionally, EuropeActive runs the knowledge centre which brings together a considerable range of books and papers, that it has commissioned written and published on relevant subjects to aid the progress of the sector.

### 2.1.2 The outdoor sector

Officially the **European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE)** was established as a non-for-profit organisation on 30/08/2008.

Employers from Belgium (BFNO), The Netherlands (VeBON), France (France Plein Air), Portugal (APECATE) and Ireland (ILAM) got to know each other during a European Leonardo da Vinci project called European Qualification Framework for Outdoor Animators (EQFOA).<sup>10</sup> During the EQFOA project these employer federations decided to join forces and to establish the EC-OE.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, a few years later ILAM did not survive the economic crisis in Ireland.

In 2009 EC-OE welcomed Spain (ANETA), in 2010 Switzerland (SOA), in 2012 Greece (HATEOA) and finally in 2015 the Czech Republic (CF-OA) as new full members.<sup>12</sup> Alongside the formal structures EC-OE also developed several informal networks e.g. in Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Hungary and Romania.

From day one it was clear that 'Outdoors' was used - as a concept - by many to describe activities such as canoeing, mountain bike, sailing, survival, hiking, skiing, etc. On the other hand it was barely understood that apart from existing regular training and competitions organised by sport clubs and governing bodies these kinds of outdoor activities were also organised on a recreational level by many thousands of Small and Medium Sized **Enterprises** (SME's), and consequently provided an income for many more thousands of people throughout the EU.

Until 2008 when EC-OE was set up, organising and selling outdoor activities was hardly recognised as an economic activity. Even in those few countries where Outdoor employers federations existed, these federations mostly focused on trying to solve day-to-day local problems. The business as such was not really scrutinised.

Properly identifying the sector was paramount for the EC-OE partners, and accordingly a general assembly was set-up in 2009 to identify the 'denominators' of the 'Outdoors'. In other words; input was collected by means of brainstorming amongst the delegates of 8 European Outdoor employer federations. Afterwards the same brainstorming exercise was repeated several times at national employers meetings.

The main outcome of this extended brainstorming exercise was the publication of 'Defining the Outdoors (revised in 2016).<sup>13</sup>

The Outdoors – through EC-OE – really claims **its unique identity**; which is an identity of Outdoor employers **organising** and **selling** 'outdoor activities'.

The mission of EC-OE can be summarised along the following lines:

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<sup>10</sup> [www.eqfoa.eu](http://www.eqfoa.eu)

<sup>11</sup> [www.bfno.be](http://www.bfno.be) ; [www.vebon.nl](http://www.vebon.nl) ; [www.francepleinair.fr](http://www.francepleinair.fr) ; [www.apecate.pt](http://www.apecate.pt) ; [www.ilam.ie](http://www.ilam.ie)

<sup>12</sup> [www.aneta.es](http://www.aneta.es) ; [www.swissoutdoorassociation.ch](http://www.swissoutdoorassociation.ch) ; [www.hateoa.gr](http://www.hateoa.gr)

<sup>13</sup> [http://ec-oe.eu/?page\\_id=11](http://ec-oe.eu/?page_id=11)

- To look after the interests of entrepreneurs established within the European Union that professionally offer and execute outdoor activities and related activities and that offer guidance to the participants of these activities;
- To unite the federations of these entrepreneurs into a confederation;
- To assist these federations in the realization of their objectives;
- To represent, promote commercial outdoor activities, both to the public at large as to national and supra national authorities.

Whereas in order to achieve its objective EC-OE aims at the following actions:

- To organize consultation and cooperation between the federations in the EU member states that unite the ‘outdoor’ entrepreneurs and to inform them regarding commercial outdoor activities;
- To take actions in order to promote commercial ‘outdoor’ activities, both to the public at large as to national and supra national authorities;
- To negotiate with third parties for example the authorities in view of the sectors interests;
- To establish, participate and enhance social dialogue at European level;
- To intervene with the authorities, to consult and to inform them regarding the present or the future regulation concerning the execution of activities in the outdoor sector;
- To install a European information and documentation centre;
- To participate in research programmes;
- To register and protect intellectual property rights relating to standards, definitions, rules, frameworks, procedures, norms ... and any other common works and intellectual research published by its members.

### 2.1.1 The Active Leisure sector

From around 2008 the description of sport and Active Leisure has been increasingly used to define the sector and specifically the concept of for profit sport (including elite and sport professionals), not for profit sport including volunteering and grassroots sports, and Active Leisure – as a combination of the fitness and outdoor sectors. In 2014-15 through the ESCO<sup>14</sup> sector referencing of its main occupations, the Active Leisure sector confirmed its definition as:

“Active Leisure is a combination of fitness and outdoor-based activities that are generally unstructured and non-competitive. They promote active, healthy lifestyles through activities, events and exercise. They are commonly provided under the direction of qualified animators or instructors so that the activities are tailored to match the abilities of the participants and meet their needs in an enjoyable and safe way.”

“The fitness sector uses qualified instructors and trainers to deliver diverse, structured exercise programmes that help people of all ages and abilities to improve their health, muscle and cardiovascular endurance, coordination, balance, agility and flexibility. Fitness programmes also build

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<sup>14</sup> ESCO is the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations. ESCO is part of the Europe 2020 strategy. More information on <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>

a feeling of individual wellbeing that establishes and helps to maintain a healthy balance of mind, body and spirit.”

“The outdoor sector uses outdoor related activities (canoe, rafting, horse riding, ... etc.) as the basis of delivery of a recreational or personal development service. Outdoor providers do not generally offer competitions. The outdoor sector uses qualified animators or instructors to deliver these outdoor activities in a context of fun, recreation, tourism, outdoor learning or engagement with the natural environment.”

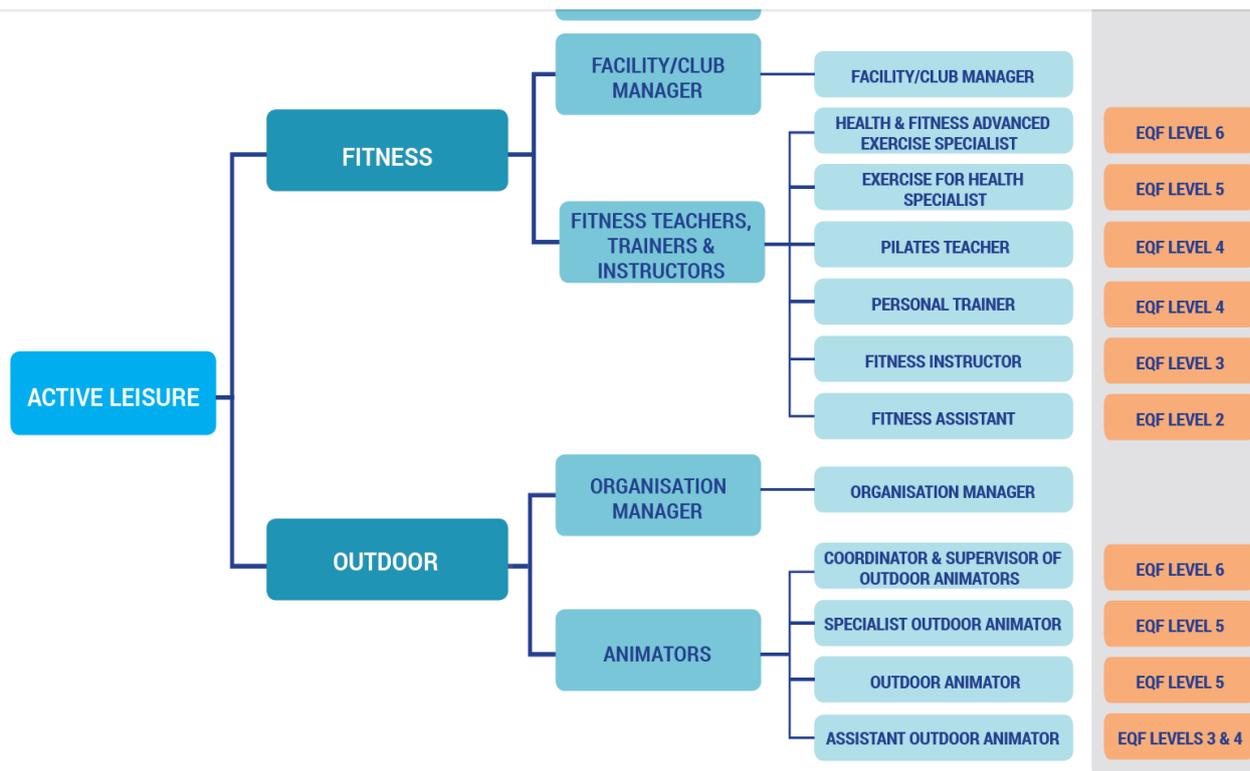
As the EU-wide representatives of the Fitness and of the Outdoor sectors identified as the main actors of the Active Leisure sector according to the Eurofound Study on Representativeness<sup>15</sup> and as defined within the NACE Rev.2 classifications 93.13 (Fitness facilities) and 93.29 (other amusement and recreation activities). There are an estimated 1 million workers in the Active Leisure sector and in 2012 EuropeActive joined with European Confederation of Outdoor Employers (EC-OE) to launch the Active Leisure Alliance, which has since developed into the sector skills alliance in 2016.

The cooperation between EuropeActive and EC-OE was deepened during the ESCO referencing work in 2014-15 and resulted in the Active Leisure sector occupational framework.

**Figure 1. ESCO – Sport and Active Leisure Organogram (v12 April 2015)**

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<sup>15</sup> European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2013). Representativeness of the European social partner organisations: Sport and active leisure industry. Retrieved from [https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef\\_files/docs/eiro/tn1105058s/tn1105058s.pdf](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_files/docs/eiro/tn1105058s/tn1105058s.pdf)



#### ESCO – Sport and Active Leisure Organogram\_v12 April 2015

### 3. Organising the structures – a pathway for the recognition of sector and international qualifications at the European level

#### 3.1 Sector definition

##### 3.1.1 Sector identification

The word 'sector' is a very broad term that describes the segments of the economy into which businesses are categorised; in turn, categorised businesses within a sector comprise certain types of companies, with certain specific activities, certain type of employees with certain occupations requiring certain knowledge, skills and competencies.

As a consequence, and prior to engaging in any description of what a sector is in terms of employees' occupations and qualifications, it needs to be identified in a broad approach to determine its type of economic activities, and the type of stakeholders that are intrinsically involved.

In other words, step one should be to identify the sector (the bottle) in order to be able in step two, to describe who and what is inside (the wine).

##### 3.1.2 Engagement of its stakeholders

Since early 2000, (and even earlier in some EU Member States) both the Fitness and Outdoor industries worked on identifying the companies and businesses (employers) involved, and the type of economic activities they were producing, developing and delivering.



The formation of Unions, Trade Associations and Federations at the EU Member State level and later on of Confederations at EU level helped in structuring the stakeholders, in getting to know each other and to give some juridical existence to different bodies constituted by members who slowly recognised each other and accepted their resemblances and similarities. Hence key stakeholders started to mutually engage with each other, and such an approach is crucial to be able to ‘work together’ and to scrutinise in detail what makes the sector and its unique identity.

The EU comprises many different people with different cultures, histories, languages and people so ‘getting to know each other’ can only be done through collective adhesion to ad hoc bodies to determine the governance of a given sector.

The mutual recognition process indeed took many years and the way the stakeholders are legally structured today is far more advanced than what it was only 15 years ago.

It is through such evolution that the Outdoors and the Fitness only finalised The Active Leisure Alliance (ALA) in 2012 and subsequently agreed with all its stakeholders on the definition of what is now called the Active Leisure sector.

### 3.1.3 Representativeness

Getting to know each other and mutually recognising each other as happened in the Outdoor and Fitness sectors is one thing, but there also needs to be recognition by other trade bodies, government agencies, and civil society organisations as well.

This was yet another challenge, but it must be said that today the organisations involved in the associations constitutive of the Active Leisure Alliance comprise the vast majority of the existing national organisations, which includes a large majority of individual companies at national level as their membership.

No other Confederations or Associations than those forming the Active Leisure Alliance exist at European level.

Apart from the trade recognising its EU organisations – and those only – and accepting that they should represent them at EU level, third parties also have to acknowledge the representation of the key EU confederations in order to validate their status and ensure then a ‘mandate’ to take decisions engaging the trade.

A key exercise in the EU is that of ‘Representativeness’, as defined by Article 154 TFEU as follows: “Representativeness is a criterion **used by the Commission to identify the ‘management and labour’ whom it must consult** and who may initiate the social dialogue. While the Treaty provisions do not refer to the criterion of ‘representativeness’, the Commission was clearly drawn to this criterion **for identifying organisations which can claim to be the ‘management and labour’ with the rights to consultation**, to initiate social dialogue, and to reach and implement agreements.”

In 2013, such an exercise was conducted by Eurofound who, in its final report, concluded that “As outlined in greater detail below, three sector-related European associations on the employee side (...)

and five on the employer side ( ..., EHFA<sup>16</sup>, EC-OE) are particularly significant in the Sport and Active Leisure sector.”

Acknowledgement of the Active Leisure Alliance signed between EC-OE and EuropeActive on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2012 was also part of the main conclusions of Eurofound’s report. Another outcome was the formation of the European Health and Fitness Association Employers (EHFA-E) as a not-for-profit Association representing the interests of fitness employers only. EHFA-E is now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year of work.

All of these steps are considered essential in the definition of a sector.

#### 3.1.4 Researching and understanding the skills and human resources issues

EU funded projects as well as trade conferences, round tables, Annual General Meetings, employers get-togethers and other professional gatherings are key in the process, to scrutinise the sector situation and that of its employees.

A sector definition in general, and that of a sector in the service industry necessarily includes a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of its human resources requirements in terms of knowledge, skills and competences: In the service industry (such as that of fitness and the outdoors) the quality of employees’ training has a direct, immediate and highly visible impact on the quality of the service delivery.

In industrial sectors, a final product may still be accepted by the market in terms of quality even if the workforce that produced it is not trained to its best; in the service sector, employees are **the** service or at least **the service deliverers**, and the quality of the service is only as good - or as bad – as the quality and pertinence of the training of the member of staff who is delivering it.

As a consequence, and amongst all the various aspects of the definition of the Active Leisure Alliance sector, the one concerning human resources issues and more precisely that concerning education, training and qualifications remains absolutely essential to the sustainability of the sector.

### 3.2 The Sector Skills Alliance

#### 3.2.1 Sector definition

A ‘**Sector Definition**’ is a common broad description of a field of economic activities relating to the same economic area. Economists traditionally recognise 5 economic sectors: primary (agriculture, mining and other natural resource industries), secondary (manufacturing, engineering and construction), tertiary (service industries), quaternary (intellectual activities, education and research) and quintary sector (high level decision makers in government and industries).

Within these 5 meta-sectors, it is for each ‘trade’ to determine its sector, and to suggest a one-sentence sector ‘key purpose’ definition.

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<sup>16</sup> EHFA – the European Health and Fitness Association which changed its name to EuropeActive in 2015.

For example, the Active Leisure sector can be defined as such:

**Outdoor Sector Key Purpose:** “To provide positive opportunities for managed experiences in challenging outdoor activities to enjoy, learn or develop through the provision of effective services and products that meet and/or exceed individual’s expectations and potential. “

**Fitness Sector Key Purpose:** “The Fitness sector uses qualified instructors and trainers to deliver diverse, structured exercise programmes that help people of all ages and abilities to improve their health, muscle and cardiovascular endurance, coordination, balance, agility and flexibility.

Fitness programmes also build a feeling of individual wellbeing that establishes and helps to maintain a healthy balance of mind, body and spirit.”

A ‘**Sector Definition**’ can also include a short ‘management report’ type presentation of the key elements that specify the sector, such as its organisational structure, the leading activities of the sector, statistical and labour market information, key drivers, EU and national governance drivers, partner organisations, workforce, and so on.

### 3.2.2 Occupations<sup>17</sup>

Occupations consist of all the jobs and positions that can be found within a given sector.

A sector ‘**Occupational Description**’ is developed for each occupation listed within its occupational map under ‘specific main’ and ‘specific related’ occupations. Indeed, transversal occupations may also be described as an option, but it does not help to specify the unique characteristics of the sector as such.

The job-purpose descriptions should include such descriptors as the occupational title, occupation description, occupation responsibilities within determined sectoral key areas, person specification / requirements, continuous professional development and career progression, etc.

In countries where collective bargaining exists, this exercise is used to determine different levels and specifications of each occupation and can influence pay-grade levels, for example.

An ‘**Occupational Map**’ consists of an identification of the occupations within the sector, that can be split into ‘specific’ occupations that truly determine the sector and make it what it is, and the ‘transversal’ occupations that can also be found in other sectors – for example in management, sales, etc.

Within the ‘specific’ occupations, two groups can be established, the ‘Main occupations’ which are ‘exclusive’ to the sector and the ‘Related occupations’ which are directly linked to the sector but can also exist in ‘cousin’ sectors.

An ‘Occupational Map’ can therefore consist of 3 Levels of occupations:

- Specific main occupations,

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<sup>17</sup> E.g. the Outdoor Occupational Map: [http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/EQFOA\\_A\\_Industry\\_Occupational\\_Map\\_for\\_the\\_Outdoor\\_Sector\\_en\\_.pdf](http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/EQFOA_A_Industry_Occupational_Map_for_the_Outdoor_Sector_en_.pdf)

- Specific related occupations,
- Transversal occupations.

**Occupational functions and tasks**’ is an identification of the main functions of each ‘specific main’ occupation of the sector. It can indeed be extended to other occupations, and is only truly necessary when or if leading to the rest of the pathway.

As a matter of example, this exercise is very similar to that carried out by the Active Leisure sector within the 2014-2016 ESCO<sup>18</sup> work programme.

### 3.2.3 Functional map <sup>19</sup>

The key functions mentioned above, must then be regrouped into a ‘**Functional Map**’ that gathers the function descriptors of all determined occupations; each key function should be split into performance indicators. This functional map should include reference to the job purpose of each identified occupation, the occupational description and the occupational roles.

The exercise may be limited to the functions relating to the specific main occupations but may also be conducted for the specific related occupations although determining the functions linked to the related occupations may be tedious and unnecessary to apprehend the sector.

### 3.2.4 Sector indicators (or Sectoral indicators) <sup>20</sup>

Sector indicators are a key requirement for the sector as they determine the competencies necessary to carry out sector-specific professional tasks or necessary to complete its most important goals.

The sector indicators, in the Context of the Active Leisure sector, should relate to such issues as:

- Delivery of various forms of Active Leisure,
- Personal preparation for Active Leisure session delivery,
- Health and Safety,
- Psychological aspects of Active Leisure participation,
- Professional attitude, development and responsibilities
- Selection and Use of equipment,
- Promotion of active and healthy lifestyles,

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 14

<sup>19</sup> E.g. the Outdoor Functional map: [http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/EQFOA\\_A\\_Industry\\_Occupational\\_Map\\_for\\_the\\_Outdoor\\_Sector\\_en\\_.pdf](http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/EQFOA_A_Industry_Occupational_Map_for_the_Outdoor_Sector_en_.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> E.g. the Outdoors Competence Framework: [http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/EQFOA\\_D\\_The\\_Outdoor\\_Animator\\_Competence\\_Framework\\_en\\_.pdf](http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/EQFOA_D_The_Outdoor_Animator_Competence_Framework_en_.pdf)

### 3.2.5 Occupational descriptors <sup>21</sup>

Occupational descriptors have to be very precise and should succinctly describe the job role and function. For example, in the ESCO referencing the occupational role of a fitness personal trainer was determined as:

“A personal trainer’s role includes designing, implementing and evaluating exercise/physical activity programmes for a range of individual clients by collecting and analysing client information to ensure the effectiveness of personal exercise programmes. A personal trainer should also actively encourage potential clients/members to participate in and adhere to regular exercise/physical activity programmes, employing appropriate motivational strategies to achieve this and to assist them with behavioural change as a result.”

### 3.2.6 Occupational standards and competence framework (for Active Leisure)

In addition to the occupation-defining issues developed above, during the ESCO work it was then necessary to outline the specific skills and competences required by an Outdoor Animator or a Fitness Instructor to deliver an Outdoor or a Fitness session **in a safe and effective way**. These have to be organised to specify the skills and competences in such a way that anyone could clearly understand what represents a worker as an Active Leisure Professional.

In a sense, the competence framework to be developed by the sectors is a virtual description, a sort of graphic illustration of the **‘behaviour, knowledge and skills that anyone wishing to deliver an Active Leisure session should possess’**. It is designed to illustrate how the sector Professional **must be** and **must behave** and what he/she **must know and understand**. In a way, the descriptor (Competence Framework) should present who is a key sector professional.

This is the purpose of the **Outdoor Animator Competence Framework**, which has been designed primarily by the employer representative organisations from the Outdoor sector and the occupational standards for Fitness roles designed by the EuropeActive Standards Council professionals.

### 3.2.7 Quality Assurance – a Certifying Institution

The role of a certifying institution or awarding organisation is to issue “qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles) formally recognising the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) of an individual, following an assessment procedure” (CEDEFOP, 2014). This must be done in a manner that maintains impartiality and should be separate from the standards setting by the sector bodies. The quality of operation and the scheme proposed should be compliant with international requirements for certifying bodies such as described and required in ISO 17024: 2012. Furthermore, to be considered a competent body it will have to satisfy the requirements of the sector and National Qualification Frameworks (SQF and NQFs), and to ensure that the student is the “ultimate beneficiary of the education and training process” (EQAVET, 2012).

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. the Outdoors Occupational Descriptors: [http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/EQFOA\\_B\\_Industry\\_Occupational\\_Description\\_for\\_the\\_Outdoor\\_Sector\\_en.pdf](http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/EQFOA_B_Industry_Occupational_Description_for_the_Outdoor_Sector_en.pdf)

To effectively fulfil this remit, a Certifying Organisation (CO) as used in the pathway developed in the SIQAF project, must develop qualifications that are fit for purpose, containing units of learning outcomes, assessment criteria and assessment methods that are valuable to all stakeholders (e.g. employers, professional organisations, students). The qualification developed from the sector-based occupational standards must be valid - that is they facilitate the demonstration of competence in the key areas required to ensure value for the stakeholders. The CO must do this in a transparent manner that synergises the requirements of all European recognition instruments (including EQF, ECVET, ECTS, EQAVET) and takes account of documented stakeholder feedback on a periodic basis, as well as each of the relevant qualification framework requirements (SQF and NQFs). This collaborative consistency will facilitate the development of transportable qualifications that are recognised across Europe and Internationally.

Qualifications must therefore be developed following strict, transparent procedures which incorporate stakeholder feedback – and which ultimately will need to be given an approval of use through intellectual property rights/copyright of the occupational standards developed by the SSA. Once a qualification has been launched, the CO will need to monitor, document and respond to all feedback to ensure the ongoing validity of the learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and assessment methods in the current occupational sector.

### 3.2.8 Recommended Stages of European Qualification Development Process

In order to develop a European Qualification that facilitates recognition in as many EU Member States as possible, it is essential to complete initial investigations of the legislations, professional standards, requirements, current delivery models and assessment strategies in each nation. Evaluation of these must begin to highlight similarities and differences that would limit/enhance the transferability from state to state. The sovereign responsibility for all education and training matters in the EU Member States must also be fully recognised and respected.

The main outcome of any European qualification must be that the learner can gain employment in country(ies) of their choice, therefore the initial investigation must identify any factors which may result in limitation of achievement of the main outcome. Evaluation of whether these factors can be addressed, or risks mitigated should take place to ensure integration of solutions into the specific development.

Stakeholder feedback from employers, professional standards and recognition bodies, national communication points, technical experts is an essential component of any development. The development process must therefore incorporate collation, evaluation and usage of this feedback to amend and adapt the development accordingly. Often feedback is gathered using working groups and consultations and findings evaluated by developers to identify the appropriate amendment.

Once a draft qualification/assessment has been developed it is important to test and trial to ensure that they are fit for purpose and facilitate demonstration of competence in the required knowledge or skill. Relevant stakeholders contribute to evaluations, tests and trials as required. Testing and trialling must be relevant to the development and diverse needs of stakeholders (including learners). It may also be necessary for some developments to perform tests, trials and evaluations in different

member states. These must be identified early in the process and incorporated into plans for development and implementation.

The recognition of what a qualification stands for is an essential factor in achieving the overall outcome of a qualification and as such the final stages of development should include evaluation against all the specific recognition standards. This would be a progression of the initial investigation, applying the specifics of the qualification and assessments back to the requirements of recognition for each state. It is highly recommended that this is presented to as many relevant national representatives as possible to encourage inclusion and buy-in. If this stage is delayed until after qualification launch, there is a risk that some key considerations have not been addressed and amendment of the qualification is no longer possible. This may limit recognition and therefore achievement of the overall outcome.

In the event that a particular nation/professional body's requirements need to be considered post-launch, a review of the qualification should be made to identify the appropriate solution. This may involve the inclusion of additional/alternative assessments, guidance and implementation strategies; however wherever possible a pragmatic, simple approach should be taken. Complex solutions applied post-launch (e.g. adaptation of the source learning outcomes and assessment criteria) should be seriously considered and risks analysed as they may have a negative effect on the recognition already applied by other nations. In these circumstances other, more simple alternatives should be investigated in the first instance.

Figure 2. Key stages of the qualification development process



### 3.2.9 Developing a qualification in units of learning outcomes and a common assessment strategy <sup>22</sup>

The qualifications developed as part of the SIQAF project are indicative of this qualification development process and feedback collected during the development process forming and informing the final outcomes in a number of ways.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. the Outdoors Learning Outcomes Framework: [http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2\\_Learning\\_Outcomes\\_Matrix\\_English.pdf](http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2_Learning_Outcomes_Matrix_English.pdf)

At the heart of the SIQAF qualifications is the use of learning outcomes (LOs) to design and implement these qualifications.

The 2008 EQF recommendation defined learning outcomes as:

“... statements of what an individual should know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a learning process”.

Learning outcomes (LOs) are an established principle within the EU policy agenda for education, training and employment. They are central to the structure and content of qualifications and will determine the nature of both qualification delivery and assessment practices.

It is the learning outcome statements that provide the basis for the development of the assessment criteria that underpin assessments. These criteria precisely describe to the learner exactly what will be required of them in the assessment process as evidence that they have achieved the various learning outcomes necessary to perform the occupational role described in the qualification. These assessment criteria generally support summative assessments at the end of the learning process but can also be used in formative assessments within the learning process.

Learning outcomes will generally be grouped into units of learning where these units represent the core knowledge, skills and competences required to perform an occupational role. Once these units and their associated learning outcomes are clearly defined a common assessment strategy can be developed which appropriately and effectively assesses each of the LOs contained within each unit. This common assessment strategy is a tool that can be used to facilitate a standardised approach to assessment. A Certifying Institution should implement a common assessment strategy for the qualification that is synergised with the requirements of the occupational standards. Quality Assurance can then evaluate the implementation of the common strategy to ensure standardisation and comparability between training providers across a range of nations.

Within the SIQAF project, when designing the Personal Training qualification (2018)<sup>23</sup>, the standards used were divided into 6 units. Initial stakeholder feedback demonstrated that the key outcome from this qualification was that the learner could demonstrate that they were competent against all the standards. Assessments could be holistic in nature and include criteria from a range of units as this complimented the typical delivery model for training providers in this sector. In addition, this holistic model complimented the overall grading requirements of the sector and Europe Active.

The Outdoor Animator standards developed in the ELESA project (2015)<sup>24</sup> were divided into 12 mandatory modules and in addition there were optional modules covering additional technical specialisations. Initially, development took the same holistic approach. This involved combining learning outcomes and key aspects of the curriculum from the standards into larger units of comparable learning outcomes and assessment criteria. This removed some of the overlap between outcomes in different modules and facilitated the development of a holistic assessment. On consultation it was found that this did not compliment any academic delivery model that required all learners to be graded on each module to allow the allocation of an overall grade. This resulted in the

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.ehfa-standards.eu/es-standards>

<sup>24</sup> [http://ec-oe.eu/?page\\_id=369](http://ec-oe.eu/?page_id=369)

development of an additional qualification mapped directly to the ELESAs standards and an alternative assessment model assessing each module in isolation.

Table 1 explains some common grading requirements and effects on assessment design. The Personal Trainer and Holistic Outdoor Animator qualification versions have been designed in line with the 'Holistic Pass or Refer' model. The Modular Outdoor Animator qualification version has been designed in line with the 'Isolated Grading' model. All qualification versions could be adapted to use the Holistic Grading model.

**Table 1. Grading requirements and their effect on assessment**

Overall grading requirement	Description	Effect on assessment
Holistic Pass or Refer	Learners must demonstrate that they have met each of the standards/learning outcomes/assessment criteria at least once	Assessments can include criteria from one or more units.  Achievements contribute to the final assessment decision of Pass or Refer.
Holistic Grading (Refer, Pass, Merit or Distinction)	Learners must demonstrate that they have met each of the standards/learning outcomes/assessment criteria at least once to achieve a Pass. Further differentiation occurs following holistic assessment of learner performance across all assessments and a grade applied	Assessments can include criteria from one or more units. Assessment achievements contribute to the final assessment decision of Refer, Pass, Merit or Distinction.
Isolated Grading (Refer, Pass, Merit or Distinction)	Learners must demonstrate that they have met each of the standards/learning outcomes/assessment criteria in an assessment that is directly linked to a module. Each module is graded and contributes to a final overall grade.	Assessments can include criteria from one module. Assessment achievements contribute to the module's grade (Refer, Pass, Merit or Distinction).  Modular achievements are weighted (if appropriate) and contribute to the final overall grade.

The Outdoor Animator alternatives demonstrate how variable qualifications can be used to service a range of delivery models and national professional requirements whilst maintaining comparability. Each qualification and assessment (holistic and isolated) covers the same professional standards and

outcomes and assessment levels are comparable. This pragmatic approach would suit a European model where nations have their own different requirements for professional recognition (e.g. licence to practice) whilst ensuring comparability. This pragmatic model should also increase the potential for recognition of learners who are looking to work in EU nations other than where they completed their initial training.

### 3.2.10 The levelling of a qualification (to the EQF)

Assigning a level to a qualification is possible if certain conditions are met (Fig. 3). First, a specific set of information about the qualification is required (e.g. related key professional tasks, work responsibility and autonomy). Second, the requirements of the qualification must be described in the language of learning outcomes. Then the learning outcomes should be compared to the 'SQF Active Leisure' descriptors, and can be done as follows:

1. Learning outcomes for knowledge, skills and responsibilities and autonomy are treated separately and each of them is compared to the SQF AL descriptors;
2. Some learning outcomes for knowledge, skills and responsibilities and autonomy are grouped into specific units of the qualification and these units are compared to the SQF AL descriptors.

The above methods of comparison may be used together.

**Figure 3. The process of assigning a level to a qualification**



In Table 2 (below) some examples of referring isolated learning outcomes for the Personal Trainer qualification to the SQF AL are presented. For leveling the learning outcomes and finally the whole qualification the 'best fit' principle is used. This principle means that the determination of the level of the qualification is not only limited to comparing learning outcomes to SQF AL descriptors, but also requires their in-depth interpretation. For the Active Leisure sector the question should be answered whether the qualification confirms the achievement of learning outcomes:

To perform only selected tasks or a complete process of AL service delivery;

What customer to work with – with what goals and needs;

Related to the use of which equipment (e.g. standard or highly specialized equipment, or innovative technologies);

What environment to work in (e.g. in typical Active Leisure facilities or natural environment associated with dangerous conditions);

Connected with performing tasks independently or in a team, and if the latter, then what is the role of the qualification holder in the team (e.g. team member, coordinator);

What is the scope of responsibility for the effects of the implementation of professional tasks (including responsibility for customer health and safety) and the work autonomy?

**Table 2. Referencing learning outcomes to the SQF AL on the example of Personal Trainer Qualification (4 SQF AL/EQF)**

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR PERSONAL TRAINER QUALIFICATION		REFERENCE TO THE DESCRIPTOR IN SQF AL	SQF AL Level
The learner will:			
1.	Understand the legal and professional standards and guidelines relevant to personal training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains and justifies the roles and responsibilities of people working in the AL sector.</li> <li>Discusses and defends the work ethics, professionalism and work efficiency in the AL sector.</li> </ul>	4
2.	Know how to use technology to engage and support personal training clients	Explains the rules of using and adaptation of the available resources and/or environment for the multistage delivery of AL service to achieve customer's goals (such as reduction of body mass, improvement of physical fitness and/or technical skills).	4
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the business and sales skills required to run a successful personal training business.</li> <li>Be able to build a personal training business.</li> </ul>	Operates within defined (operational and ethical) guidelines typical for AL services.	4
4.	Be able to evaluate customer care.	Implements feedback procedures related to the customers' satisfaction with the participation in AL activities, according to instructions.	3
5.	Be able to provide good customer care throughout the customer experience.	Delivers good customer service encouraging regular participation in AL activities.	2

		Positively interacts with AL customers, purposefully using communication and motivational tools (e.g. to promote adherence to AL activities).	3
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the functional anatomy and physiology of the cardio-respiratory, skeletal, muscular, nervous and endocrine systems.</li> <li>Understand the structure and function of energy systems within the energy continuum.</li> <li>Understand the principles of movement.</li> <li>Understand the importance of the core for efficient functional movement.</li> <li>Understand the physiological effects of exercise and how they relate to health and wellbeing.</li> </ul>	Lists benefits of particular AL activities (e.g. related to the prevention of non-communicable diseases, participation in social groups).	2 Key LO
		Defines the role of AL activities within today's lifestyles.	3 Key LO
		Explains the rules and procedures for planning, organising, conducting, monitoring, animating, controlling, evaluating and post processing of the multistage delivery of AL activities (e.g. in relation to the process of long-term exercise programs, or explains standard operation procedures for various outdoor activities).	4 Key LO
7.	Understand the risks of dysfunctional movement.	Recognizes and describes common hazards and risks in AL.	3 Key LO
8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the components of nutrition.</li> <li>Understand digestive function.</li> <li>Understand a healthy diet.</li> <li>Understand energy balance for weight management.</li> <li>Know the current healthy eating and lifestyle recommendations.</li> </ul>	Defines terms and phenomena in other, supporting fields of the professional activity, where required (e.g. physiotherapy, cardiology, dietetics).	5
9.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be able to evaluate popular diets to identify appropriate guidance and advice</li> <li>Be able to evaluate an individual's diet and lifestyle.</li> <li>Be able to make recommendations to improve an individual's diet and lifestyle.</li> </ul>	Uses specific knowledge, also from allied fields of professional work, to independently solve problems occurring during the AL service delivery in AL (e.g. related to the specific needs of the customer or demanding weather conditions).	5

10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how psychological theories can support behaviour change.</li> <li>• Understand factors that affect health and fitness behaviour change.</li> <li>• Understand goal setting and how it can support behaviour change.</li> <li>• Understand positive and negative stress.</li> <li>• Understand motivational interviewing and how it can support behaviour change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes customers' expectations, needs and motives and explains how to use them in the planning and multistage delivery of the AL activities and services.</li> <li>• Describes strategies to overcome various barriers to participation in AL activities.</li> <li>• Selects and adjusts the communication and motivational tools to the changing needs of the customers and to the various stages of the delivery of AL services.</li> </ul>	4 Key LO
11.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the components of health and fitness.</li> <li>• Know how to perform postural, health-, fitness- and skills-related assessments.</li> <li>• Be able to perform health and fitness assessments specific to the client's needs and goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains the rules and procedures for planning, organising, conducting, monitoring, animating, controlling, evaluating and post processing of the multistage delivery of AL activities (e.g. in relation to the process of long-term exercise programs, or explains standard operation procedures for various outdoor activities).</li> </ul>	4 Key LO
12.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know how to collect subjective information from clients.</li> <li>• Be able to collect relevant subjective information from clients.</li> <li>• Be able to communicate in a way that enables the client to feel comfortable when providing personal information.</li> </ul>	Positively interacts with AL customers, purposefully using communication and motivational tools (e.g. to promote adherence to AL activities).	3 Key LO
		Selects and adjusts the communication and motivational tools to the changing needs of the customers and to the various stages of the delivery of AL services.	4 Key LO

13.	Be able to evaluate a client's subjective information to develop appropriate findings and recommendations.	Conducts, summarises and evaluates customers' feedback related to the delivery of AL services	5 Key LO
14.	Be able to support clients making positive changes to health and fitness behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains the possibilities of increasing the involvement of today's society in the AL activities through the proper service delivery.</li> <li>Recognizes customers' expectations, needs and motives and explains how to use them in the planning and multistage delivery of the AL activities and services.</li> <li>Describes strategies to overcome various barriers to participation in AL activities.</li> </ul>	4
15.	Know the guidelines for physical activity and exercise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describes recommendations for physical activity and health.</li> <li>Lists benefits of particular AL activities (e.g. related to the prevention of non-communicable diseases, participation in social groups).</li> </ul>	2
16.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the principles of health and fitness training.</li> <li>Understand the principles of periodisation in developing the components of fitness.</li> <li>Know how to monitor and measure exercise intensity.</li> <li>Understand the importance of evaluation and adaptation when programming for personal training clients.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains the rules and procedures for planning, organising, conducting, monitoring, animating, controlling, evaluating and post processing of the multistage delivery of AL activities (e.g. in relation to the process of long-term exercise programs, or explains standard operation procedures for various outdoor activities).</li> <li>Recognizes customers' expectations, needs and motives and explains how</li> </ul>	4 Key LO

		to use them in the planning and multistage delivery of the AL activities and services.	
17.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be able to apply the principles of health and fitness training to exercise planning and programming</li> <li>• Be able to evaluate a session and performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs multistage professional activities to implement AL services, including planning, organising, conducting, monitoring, animating, controlling, evaluating and post processing (e.g. in the process of long-term exercise program, or in the conduction of outdoor activities within standard operating procedures), adjusting the process to the changing conditions (customer's capabilities and needs and/or environment).</li> <li>• Takes responsibility for the health and safety of customers during the multistage delivery of the AL activities and services, performed in usually predictable conditions, (e.g. implementing exercise programmes for general populations, or conduction or outdoor activities within standard parameters like water levels, weather etc.)</li> </ul>	4 Key LO
18.	Be able to use training strategies to enhance individual exercise performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selects and adjusts the communication and motivational tools to the changing needs of the customers and to the various stages of the delivery of AL services.</li> </ul>	4 Key LO

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fosters retention and ongoing engagement with the customer.</li> </ul>	
Key LO – Key Learning Outcome			

The last stage is justification for assigning a level to the qualification. Individual learning outcomes specific to a qualification may be at different SQF levels. The level for the key learning outcomes (related to the most important professional tasks) should determine the level of qualification (Table 3).

**Table 3. Assigning the SQF AL level to the Personal Trainer Qualification (4 SQF AL/EQF)**

SQF AL levels:	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Number of learning outcomes referred to the SQF AL	2	5	9	2
Number of <u>key</u> learning outcomes referred to the SQF AL	1	3	7	1
SQF AL level of the qualification	4			

### 3.2.11 Providing quality assurance

To establish a credible scheme quality assurance of the CO is paramount and it will need to implement a coherent, comprehensive quality assurance process to ensure that a student is:

Given the opportunity to learn the required content in a manner which suits their individual learning needs;

Prepared for assessment in a fair and equitable manner (meaning their learning has included all the relevant content, delivered in a manner that suits their individual learning needs, without being given an unfair advantage);

Assessed against the criteria in a comparable, standardised manner (each assessment centre interprets the criteria in the same way and makes similar judgements).

Quality student outcomes will be achieved by working with a range of training providers/assessment centres who will be responsible for delivering learning and performing assessments. The CO will quality assure each centre's internal policies, procedures and practices as well as learner output (assessments) to ensure that appropriate standards are met and maintained at all times. Effective and sufficient sampling and quality assurance activities will be used to facilitate standardisation and comparability across a range of centres, in a range of countries.

To facilitate the necessary standardisation and validity across a range of centres and nations, the CO must develop and oversee robust processes that manage and maintain impartiality throughout the appropriate bodies and organisations such as being compliant to ISO17024: 2012.

### 3.2.12 Providing certification of individual achievement

The CO must have a formal procedure by which it, as the accredited or authorised agency certifies (attests in writing by issuing a certificate) that the learner has attained the necessary qualification standards and learning outcomes, that is, they have successfully completed all relevant assessments. This third-party certification can be described as professional certification, trade certification or professional designation and is earned by a person to assure qualification to perform a job or task, that is to show competence to practice.

Some certifications are time-limited, while others can be renewed as long as certain stipulations are met. Such renewal generally involves some form of continued education or commitment to a programme of lifelong learning in order to ensure currency of knowledge, skills and competences.

Certifications provided by a CO are portable, since they do not depend on one company's definition of a particular job and thereby provide potential employers with an impartial, third-party endorsement of an individual's professional capabilities.

While certification programs are often affiliated with, or endorsed by, professional associations or trade organisations focussed on raising industry standards, it is important that they remain independent of them.

### 3.2.13 Governance

A key aspect of setting up a CO is to establish a workable and appropriate legal and governance structure. This legal structure, and the governance arrangements will provide solid foundations and keep the organisation, its staff and its service users safe and secure. These arrangements will also provide visibility and transparency so that the wider sectoral community can see the basis on which it operates.

Governance processes will provide strategic leadership, accountability, organisational structures and processes and, oversight of educational and financial performance.

- Strategic leadership to include:
- Establishing a clear and explicit vision for the future set by a Board of formally appointed representatives. This vision along with clear values should be communicated across the organisation;
- Setting of medium to long-term strategic goals;
- Setting up processes to monitor and review progress against strategic goals and to update company vision periodically;
- Implementing risk management processes at every level of governance;

Exercising due diligence in reviewing the effectiveness of governance structures and processes in line with the changing needs of the organisation and its customers.

Accountability to include:

- A transparent system for performance management of organisational leaders linked strategic priorities;
- Performance management of all other employees and structures for their pay and conditions of service;
- Regular meetings and suitable processes to support business and financial planning;
- Effective systems for managing within available resources and ensuring value for money.

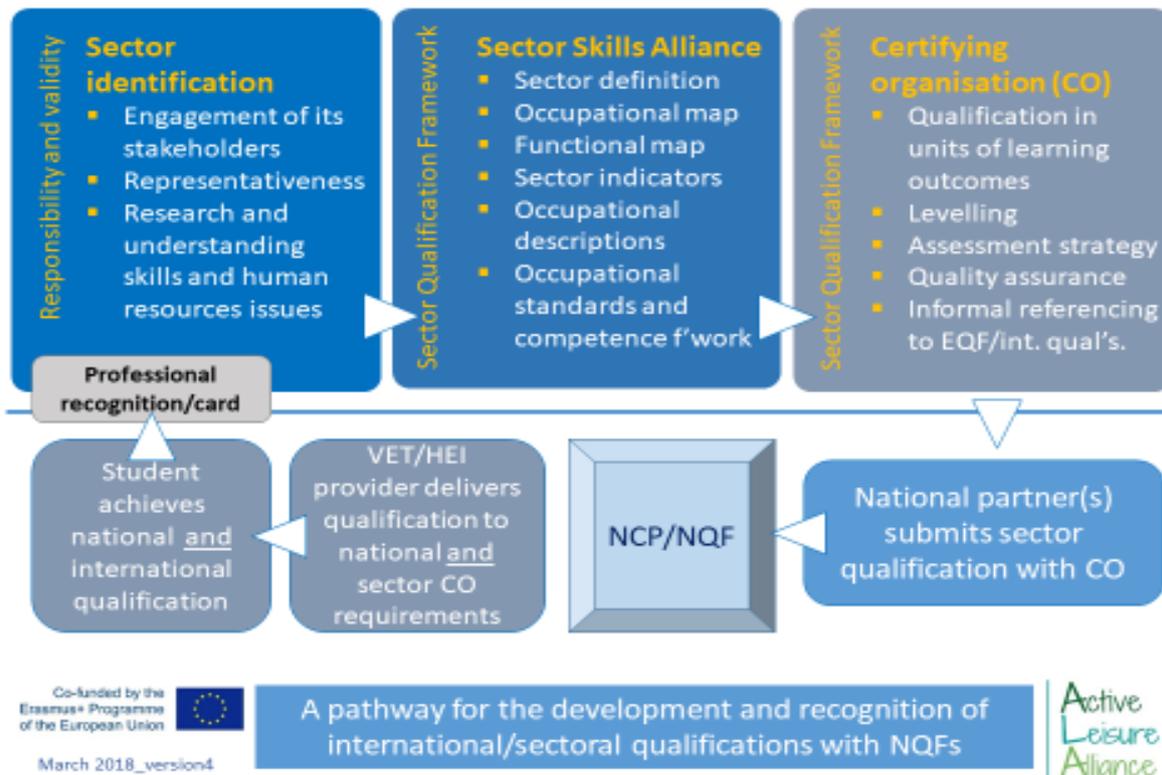
Structures and processes that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities to include:

- Appropriate Board and committee structures to ensure robust oversight of key priorities;
  - An effective Board Chair and Vice-chair with the ability to provide visionary strategic leadership;
  - Processes for regular review of individuals' Board contribution as well of the board's overall effectiveness;
  - Active succession planning for the Board, and the whole organisation;
  - The appointment of a Company Secretary to ensure the efficient operation of the Board;
  - Published details of governance arrangements including the structure and remit of the Board and any operational groups;
  - Documentation of the Board's discussions and decisions;
  - Robust recruitment processes against clear role specifications;
  - Regular skills audits to identify organisational skills and knowledge gaps;
  - Adherence to responsibilities under educational and employment legislation;
  - Adherence to safeguarding, inclusion, special education needs and disability legislation;
  - Adherence to responsibilities under the Equalities Act, promoting equality and diversity throughout the organisation.

### 3.3 Organising the structures – a pathway for the recognition of sector and international qualifications at the European level

In consideration of the foregoing, and in terms of establishing the credibility and responsibility of a sector or international organisation in developing and delivering a qualification at the European level, the SIQAF project task force developed a model pathway. This pathway broadly divides into 2 parts. The top three boxes above the line concern the development of the sectoral organisation and the method to be followed in the construction of its qualification/framework.

Below the line is the implementation process envisaged to be in coordination with national partners. The presentation in this case is of a European sector-based qualification being progressed through a national coordination point/NQF.



**Figure 4. The proposed pathway for the development and recognition of international/sectoral qualifications with NQFs**

A further important consideration is the position of the learner who should, of course be central to the whole process. In some respects the pathway is a representation of Article 49 from Directive 2005/36 EC as amended by Directive 2013/55 EU by embodying the concept of a common training framework, a common training test, and the recognition of individual learner achievement through a professional card system. The gaining of a national qualification that is also 'recognised' as an international/European qualification will greatly increase its visibility and help to promote understanding (by employers and governments) and overall levels and potential mobility.

The pathway shows strict separation of responsibilities between the standards-setting body, the overall quality assurance through the CO and the delivery by training companies and higher education institutes. It also fully respects the national positions of the NQFs and, for example, any applied or required national schemes of quality assurance or licensing of VET bodies. In the case of Active Leisure which is a relatively new sector, there is a realisation that giving direction centrally to how qualifications should be delivered is inappropriate and the chances of consistency and cohesiveness can really only be established in cooperation with national partners. They would need to have the respect and understanding of their national coordination points/NQFs when an approach is made to introduce the qualification onto an NQF.

The exception could be with higher education institutes who are effectively autonomous awarding organisations in their own right, and would not necessarily have to deliver a qualification from an NQF

to gain international or European recognition. However, there would still need to be CO involvement to ensure consistency and the delivery according all aspects of the qualifications and assessment process.

It is probably the case that an international or sector qualification which is developed and delivered through the process described above in the pathway construction would be better positioned to meet skills and employer needs than if it was developed in isolation at a national level. Understanding trends and forecasting skills needs requires a broad approach and a vision and capacity to connect with good practices from around the world. It is not impossible to do this nationally, but if the sector or international organisation meets the representativeness tests and criteria laid down in the pathway, then it will inevitably be better placed to lead in standards and qualification development. The role of the proposed sector skills alliance is critical in this regard.

It is already recognised that at the European level there are 250+ organisations informally using the EQF (levels) to articulate the position of the qualifications and in some sectors they have operated successful qualifications for some years outside of the EQF and NQFs<sup>25</sup>. In responding to the challenge set-down by the Council Recommendation 11 of the EQF review of May 2017 the pathway process provides a possible combination of factors and considerations than can help to bring together a system to improve cooperation between NQFs.

The challenge for all who are engaged in this concept is that the number and diversity of international and sectoral organisations using the EQF and looking for ‘recognition’ or acceptance of the qualifications is likely to increase, which will add pressure on resources to existing national systems and processes. The alternative, which is much less desirable, is that they exist outside of any formal recognition system(s).

During the SIQAF project the visits to eight European countries established that there is a willingness to engage with international and sector qualifications, but the resources and practical solutions are currently limited. It not feasible to expect that all NQFs will have the capacity to review and consider possibly hundreds of different international/sector qualifications and neither will many of the sponsoring organisations have the resources to make the applications in numerous settings.

The proposed pathway establishes some key characteristics or at least a series of pre-requisites of what national coordination points/NQFs should or could consider essential for establishing the responsibilities and credibility of the sectoral organisation making an approach with their qualification.

NQFs have to go through 10 steps when applying for their referencing to the EQF<sup>26</sup> and in some respects the pathway mirrors this process. There is no evidence or suspicion that there is a subversive attempt to circumvent national sovereignty in the area of education and training – quite the opposite is being proposed. By formalising a route described in the pathway it should be obvious and understandable that the willingness (of the Active Leisure sector in this instance) is willing to cooperate in the voluntary process of establishing the EQF as the dominant instrument for European qualification harmonisation.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 1

For the individual learners they can achieve national and European/international recognition which can be realised through a professional card system (such as operates through self-regulation with EREPS in the fitness sector<sup>27</sup>).

The broad concept of the pathway was explained at the EQF Advisory Group meeting in October 2017 and then subsequently at a number of events including the SIQAF project conference in Brussels in May and the NQF conference organised in Warsaw by IBE in June 2018. It was also explained in some detail to the Expert Group on Skills and Human Resources Development (DG EAC Sport Unit) in February 2018. At each of these events there was detailed examination and discussion on the proposal which has met with general acclaim.

## 4. Developing a Qualification in the European Context

As has been discussed in the previous chapters, developing international qualifications should be structured along an agreed pathway but which could be paved with many indispensable variables. Apart from the content the key issue for overall acceptance, recognition, validation and ultimately referencing of a given international or sectoral qualification against EQF, is the **representativeness** of the international body awarding the qualification who has developed the qualification.

As is often the case, ‘it takes two to tango’ – or in this case it probably takes many actors to turn the concept into a reality. Whilst developing international or sectoral qualifications is one issue, getting them onto NQFs and EQF-levelled is clearly something challenging.

As illustrated by the ‘fact sheets’ (appendix 5), there is no single EU methodology available for this referencing process and consequently one has to cope with often unexpected hazards and procedural peculiarities.

The first objective of this chapter is to examine why international qualifications are so important and why international organisations want (or do not want) to get their qualifications referenced against the EQF and with potential recognition or relevance to the NQFs. Furthermore, and based on the experiences encountered within the Active Leisure sector, key issues such as assessment and validation of qualifications will be scrutinised.

### 4.1 The importance of international qualifications

Striving for open transferability of education and employability between the EU Member States is a big goal, and the so-called international qualifications are gaining in importance as consequence. International qualifications are defined as “awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, sector or company) or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body that is represented in more than one Member State. Moreover, the International

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<sup>27</sup> [www.ereps.eu](http://www.ereps.eu)

qualification must include learning outcomes that are assessed with reference to the standards established by the international body.<sup>28</sup>

In the ICF Study<sup>29</sup> on International Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks and Systems the authors identified 254 organisations awarding international qualifications in 21 different economic areas, amounting to the combined award of close to 4.5 million qualifications.

Examples of such qualifications are presented in Table 3 and Table 4

There is a need to create and implement tools that enable on the one hand the development and functioning of international qualifications in specific sectors and, on the other hand, the easy adaptation and use of these tools by individual member states. According to the updated Council Recommendation (2017), the setting up of voluntary procedures on the levelling of international qualifications through the NQFs or systems should be supported. Commission experts already have noticed, that this leads to at least 39 different procedures for the same qualification, including the 39 different requirements for quality assurance arrangements. Considering the diversity of the qualification systems in individual member states, there is a risk that the same international qualification could be referenced to different EQF levels in different countries. This will certainly undermine the credibility of the EQF. The same experts also suggested that this problem could be overcome by referencing international (sectoral) qualifications and frameworks directly to the EQF. In this approach the assignment of the EQF level is of particular significance.

Type or organisation	International qualification
International sectoral associations	The European Welding Federation
Sector initiatives	Banking Sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The European Foundation certificate in Banking</li> <li>– 17 accredited institutes issued 7 500 certificates issued</li> </ul>
International education centres	The American Hotel and Lodging Institute
International corporations and companies	Microsoft
International Institutions	The UN and its International Maritime Organisation

Table 4. Examples of various forms of international qualifications awarded by different types of organisations (ICF, p. 14)<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 2

Sector	The most visible international qualifications (or their groups)
<b>“Academic” qualifications:</b>	International Baccalaureate TOEFL IELTS Cambridge English
<b>Cosmetics and beauty:</b>	CIDESCO ITEC
<b>Tourism:</b>	AHLEI TedQual
<b>Welding:</b>	DVS PersZert European welding qualification ISO 9606
<b>Project management:</b>	PMP PRINCE2
<b>Finance, accountancy and audit:</b>	ACCA CIA Study module “Finance management” certified by the SQA
<b>Transport:</b>	STCW – COC
<b>Languages:</b>	TOEFL IELTS Cambridge English
<b>Information and communication technologies:</b>	Adobe qualifications Cisco qualifications IBM <sup>29</sup> qualifications ITIL <sup>30</sup> qualifications Microsoft qualifications LINUX qualifications Oracle qualifications CompTIA <sup>31</sup> qualifications ECDL <sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> IBM – International Business Machines Corporation.

<sup>30</sup> ITIL – Information Technology Infrastructure Library.

<sup>31</sup> CompTIA – Computing Technology Industry Association.

<sup>32</sup> ECDL – European Computer Driving Licence.

**Table 5. Most visible international qualifications awarded in the explored sectors based on the study in Latvia.** <sup>31</sup>

To ensure more consistent levelling decisions it is particularly important for international organisations to develop a Sectoral Qualification Framework (SQF). Similarly to the EQF, a SQF serves as a ‘translation’ device between different qualifications systems and their levels in order to improve the transparency, comparability and portability of people’s qualifications. However, in contrast to the

<sup>31</sup> Blese R, Daija Z, Kinta G, Ramiņa B. International Qualifications in Latvia. Study Report. Riga: Academic Information Centre – EQF National coordination point; 2014.

very universal level descriptors presented in the EQF, SQF reflects the specificity of the sector, making it more readable and easier to use in practice by sector stakeholders.

## 4.2 International Qualifications versus National Qualification Frameworks

International sectoral initiatives in the field of qualifications are a reality that cannot be neglected as in some cases high numbers of people all across Europe are already involved and rely upon them.

These initiatives often exist at international level because of the need for recognition of qualifications for mobile individuals (mobile across countries or across companies). They also exist because of the efforts from within the sector to professionalise a certain profession or activity. In such cases, the international qualifications are a way to address and / or to compliment the absence of national qualifications and related trainings.

Many international organisations pay great attention to issues of renewal and quality assurance for their qualifications. In fact, in most cases these organisations receive no or very little public funding, and as such the pressure raises to ensure that their qualifications are relevant and of high quality. The latter is not only a precondition for attracting learners but is equally essential for getting the qualification accepted and recognised by the sector.

In order to align with the EQF, learning outcomes (see section 3.2.9) are commonly used in the full range of the development process of international qualifications: defining training programs, setting the level of learners' achievement, assessment and certification.

Though there is a genuine awareness and willingness among most international organisations to establish a link with EQF, there seems to be no simple methodology available for referencing international and sectoral qualifications to the EQF.

In the absence of a common EU process for referencing international and sectoral qualifications to the EQF, it is likely that organisations will continue using a self-declared link with the EQF. In the long run this could create concerns about consistency and credibility of the EQF if there is no evidence on how organisations came up with a certain levelling.

On the other hand, no action at all at an overarching EU level, will most likely increase frustration and dissatisfaction. This could mean that the EQF would be perceived as very much a state-led initiative rather than an initiative promoting recognition of international and sectoral qualifications.

### 4.2.1 Openness of NQFs to including international sectoral qualifications <sup>32</sup>

In 2015, the European Commission commissioned a survey (online questionnaire) in order to gather information about national procedures (existing or under development) for aligning International Sectoral Qualifications (ISQ) to National Qualifications Frameworks.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 2

The results of this survey were complemented and updated, through an e-mail survey among NCPs (2016), requesting them to provide feedback on the openness of their NQFs towards ISQs and ISQFs, and whether they have been approached by any bodies governing these initiatives for linking them to their NQF.

The response rate by the NCPs to this e-mail survey was very high, with a total number of 30 NCPs (out of 37 contacted) providing a reply by e-mail (Austria, Belgium-nl, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK.)

The responses from the e-mail survey broadly confirmed the results of the 2015 survey, with only minor variations.

Results confirm that there is generally a very low level of activity concerning the linking of ISQs to NQFs, with a relatively small number of countries reporting on any specific activity. Sector demand for linking to NQFs seems to be limited, with most countries declaring that they have not been approached to reference international or sectoral qualifications to their national frameworks.

Only Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands and Lithuania were able to name specific organization, which have approached them for a possible referencing of their qualifications to their NQF. According to the ICF study<sup>33</sup> there was no evidence of any international sectoral qualifications framework being linked to a National Qualifications Framework.

Only Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia specifically reported that they consider it technically / theoretically possible to link ISQF to their NQF, but that this has not been carried out yet. Available data suggests that nine countries currently have a national procedure in place (or under development) for including international sectoral *qualifications* in their National Qualifications Frameworks: BG, BIH, FR, LT, NL, PT, SI, SK, UK-EWNI, UK-SC.

Compared to the 2015 survey, there have been two significant changes. In Ireland, the inclusion of ISQs into the NQF had to be put on hold for legal reasons. In Slovenia, the recent adoption of the NQF law has made it technically possible to include ISQs into the NQF (the law specifies procedures for the inclusion of 'supplementary qualifications' into the NQF, without however explicitly referring to ISQs).

There is confirmation from 21 countries (AT, BE-fr & BE-nl, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HR, HU, IT, LI, LU, LV, ME, MT, NO, PL, RO, SE, TR) that there is no national procedure in place or under development for the inclusion of ISQs. Responses from the 2015 survey suggest that the main reason for the fact that no national procedure for including ISQs is in place, relates to the level of NQF implementation or the scope of the framework.

The following factors were mentioned as potential contributors to making the inclusion of ISQ an issue at national level:

- Discussion on the inclusion of non-formal qualifications into the NQF;
- Increased pressure/interest on the part of providers;
- Respective developments at EU;

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 2

- Experience from other countries;
- A more cohesive approach at European level to the assessment of ISQs.

#### 4.2.2 Reasons for linking (or wanting to link) an International Qualification to an NQF<sup>34</sup>

The expected improvement of the recognition of qualifications or specific professions in a national context is one of the main reasons for seeking inclusion into NQFs.

The benefits associated with this include:

- The inclusion in the NQF can provide clarity on equivalency of ISQs with other qualifications in a country and thus enhance their standing in the national context;
- It is considered as a means for improving opportunities for holders of ISQs in terms of progression in the education and training system or positions at the labour market;
- Improved recognition is expected to increase demand for the ISQ and to encourage providers including programs for achieving ISQ in their training offers;
- Enhanced recognition through inclusion in an NQF would also provide access to public funding for learners aiming at achieving the respective ISQ.

Some organisations explicitly state that they see an added value in displaying the NQF level on their qualifications for signalling the quality of the ISQ whereas other organizations display the inclusion in NQFs because they are interested in having EQF levels assigned and thus highlighting the 'European' dimension of their qualifications.

Organisations that are also operating outside Europe consider the inclusion in a European NQF as an opportunity to improve the value of a qualification at the international level.

#### 4.2.3 Reasons for not linking (or not wanting to link) to an NQF

During the survey, organisations were asked about reasons for not linking to an NQF. Of the 48 organisations whose qualifications are not referenced to any NQF, about half of the organisations (N=25) have never attempted to do so. However, 23 organisations reported difficulties, such as not being able to include all their qualifications or being told that it was not possible to link their initiative. During the interviews the following reasons for not linking or not wanting to link the initiatives to an NQF were discussed:

- Some organisations state that their ISQ are not recognized or accredited by national authorities although they are recognized by the industry. The reasoning behind is that the qualifications offered are delivered outside the formal education system or do not fit the education sector; thus, consequently the conclusion seems to be that they do not fit into the NQF.
- Other organisations do not see any added value or benefit for referencing their qualifications to NQFs. This is the case, for example, because:

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 2

- The ISQ is already widely recognized in the occupational context;
- Public funding streams have dried up in the recent years and thus there are no perceived benefits anymore. For instance, having a qualification recognized could be beneficial to a training centre, as recognised qualifications would allow them to have access to funding.

International bodies responsible for ISQs or ISQFs often do not see any chance for including their frameworks into an NQF because in most countries this is simply not possible as only national qualifications can officially be referenced to the NQF.

The Swiss case as described in appendix 3 is exemplary for this situation. The thoroughly structured and well-documented Swiss NQF (NQF VPET) is in use only for vocational and professional education and training (VPET). As such it could be a very useful tool to integrate international and sectoral qualifications into the Swiss NQF. Nevertheless, Switzerland decided that referencing vocational qualifications falling outside the scope of formal education is not a priority. The latter implies that at this stage, there is no opportunity to reference international and/or sectoral qualifications to the Swiss NQF VPET.

A few organisations even mentioned **disadvantages** in linking their ISQ to an NQF:

- In most cases inclusion in an NQF means i.e. that the syllabi are made publicly available and consequently the international organization responsible for the ISQ would lose control over its qualification;
- Moreover, inclusion in an NQF might require changes in the ISQ and the adapted standard for training and assessment might deteriorate in quality. Furthermore, changing the content or profile of a qualification in order to meet specific NQF inclusion criteria is not feasible for an ISQ that is expected to be the same regardless in which Member State it is offered.

Other reasons mentioned for not approaching National Contact Points (NCP's) are:

- The international organisation is too young;
- The qualification is not mature;
- The procedures are perceived as time consuming and burdensome, and the process of negotiation with national authorities on the inclusion of ISQs into NQFs is also considered as rather slow.
- NQF authorities in different countries (EU Member States as well as third countries) have different regulations and criteria for including qualifications into their NQF.
- These requirements would need to be studied and applied and it could be quite complicated to meet them all. Furthermore, language barriers might be faced if all documentation was required in national languages.

#### 4.2.4 Country fact sheets

In order to obtain a more profound view on the possibilities of integrating international and sectoral qualifications into national qualification frameworks, the SIQAF task group organised interviews with stakeholders of 8 national coordination points/NQFs.

The relevant authorities from Poland, Belgium (Flemish authority), Netherlands, Slovenia, Greece, Portugal, UK (England) and Switzerland were visited by members of the project and a detailed questionnaire was discussed (see appendix 5).

### 4.3 Assessment and validation of Active Leisure qualifications

Learning throughout life is a key route to personal development and acknowledging such learning can give greater value to an individual's achievements and their potential contributions to the Active Leisure sector. The validation of a learner's achievement requires a systematic approach that will help to increase the visibility, acceptance and understanding of diplomas and certifications that are being awarded based on the occupational standards and learning outcomes of the proposed Active Leisure sector qualifications.

The SIQAF project pathway (fig. 4) presents a logical and progressive method to reach the common objective of a national and European qualification that will support their intended role of employment in the Active Leisure sector. The validation process described earlier (and especially the role of the certifying organisation) will make it easier for the individuals to have their achievements identified and documented through a common assessment and ending with a certificate.

Assessment arrangements for existing workers however, can be more problematic and also need to be transparent. This process is sometimes referred to as the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) that recognises and values applicants' previous work experience or study. APL is an umbrella term for two types of learning;

- 1) Learning gained through previous academic study, which can lead to Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL), and
- 2) APEL, which is the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, which is usually learning gained outside of the classroom and through practical experience.

#### 4.3.1 Assessment of Active Leisure qualifications

In fitness the APL process is used to determine the knowledge skills and competence of a fitness trainer being measured against the European (and national) standards. A variety of approaches can be taken for this, but it can be time demanding and a costly process. At the European level this process is also described as validating non-formal and informal learning. Typically an application for recognition of achievement (against the agreed standards) should be accompanied by:

- Copies of relevant certificates (VET and higher education);
- An employers' reference(s) is helpful to validate practical competencies;

- Any appropriate professional body qualifications;
- Written testimonials;
- Details of career professional development (CPD) training and commitment as a fitness trainer/outdoor animator.

When assessing the application the process must generate trust, notably by demonstrating that requirements of reliability, validity and quality assurance have been met. These elements of visibility and value will always have to be taken into account when applying the assessment arrangements to provide an application with a certificate or diploma of achievement which would in all respects, be comparable to the one given by the awarding body or certification body and/or national awarding organisation. Assessment necessarily starts with the identification of the applicants' knowledge, skills and competences acquired, which is why it is important the application is as comprehensive as possible.

Identifying the non-standardised character of non-formal and informal learning is a considerable methodological challenge. Methods and approaches must be 'open to the unexpected' and not to be applied in ways which narrow down the range of knowledge, skills and competences that may be considered. At the end of the process the sector organisation overseeing the assessment process should be satisfied that the applicant is suitable to enter a Register of professionals and to be awarded the appropriate status. If the information is insufficient or not adequately substantiated the applicant should be refused recognition of achievement.

This evidence submitted therefore, must provide sufficient insight into the practical competency to perform as a fitness trainer/outdoor animator to offer safe and effective exercise and activities to their clients. Simply listing job-titles or positions will not be enough. Because documentation formats and the plethora of certificates and diplomas is so immense it inevitably makes it difficult for an applicant to present and get acceptance for his or her acquired skills and competences without the sector organisation overseeing the application having an extensive knowledge and understanding of the Active Leisure sector and its history.

As mentioned above, the fitness sector applies a process of APEL. The outdoor sector on the other hand, uses a process that is called 'Professional Technical Capacity' and is described in detail in the ELESA project syllabus <sup>35</sup>.

While the core focus of the ELESA syllabus is on the development of generic competencies; the 'soft skills' involved in outdoor animation, 'hard skills' are equally important for Outdoor Animators. These hard skill requirements (per selected outdoor activity) are outlined in the 'Professional Technical Capacities' (PTCs) documents which identify the minimum technical ability / competence required for an Outdoor Animator to operate in a given commercial setting.

PTCs do not replace national awards or training but the PTC process will be used to **assess** an Outdoor Animator's technical competence to operate effectively in the commercial outdoor environment. The PTCs therefore were developed by stakeholders of the outdoor sector so as to assess the required

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<sup>35</sup> EC-OE (2015). ELESA – "European LEarning Syllabus for outdoor Animators". Retrieved from [http://ec-oe.eu/?page\\_id=369](http://ec-oe.eu/?page_id=369)

technical competence needed to animate a 'normal', 'day-to-day' outdoor activity offered by a typical outdoor service provider. PTC's describe both the technical skills needed and how these technical skills will be assessed.

The assessment can be of benefit to all citizens and help combat unemployment by improving skills matching and social cohesion. Assessment can offer crucial support to the unemployed or those at risk of losing their jobs by enabling citizens communicate the value of their skills and experiences either to potential employers or when returning to formal education to earn a new qualification. For individuals that need to redirect their careers, assessment can open a door to new occupations being offered in Active Leisure

#### 4.3.2 Validation of Active Leisure qualifications

The guidelines on validation, as discussed in the SIQAF project address the wide range of policy-makers and practitioners and sector organisations who need to be involved in developing and implementing validation arrangements that can be confidently understood and accepted by member states and their national coordination points (NCPs). They also have to be understood and accepted by employers, individual workers and their customers and clients. The recognition of individual achievement whether through the formal education route of certification by an awarding organisation or through a process of APEL / Professional Technical Capacity also has to fit with other agencies such as employment/labour market services, EURES<sup>36</sup>, the ESCO outcomes, etc. The systems and processes to achieve this might be complex and technical, but the outcome has to be clear, consistent, reliable and understandable.

The European fitness sector has operated the European Register of Exercise Professionals<sup>37</sup> (EREPS) since 2008. EREPS is an independent register of instructors, trainers and teachers working in the European health, fitness and physical activity sector.

EREPS validates the qualifications and skills of exercise professionals and is an important assurance for the public and employers that their instructor or employee holds the appropriate qualifications to perform their role safely and effectively.

The EREPS Programme:

- Provides an independent registration process (sometimes called a 'license to practice') for exercise professionals across Europe which is clearly understandable for operators and consumers;
- Provides a public register with members published on a website directory;
- Requires member adherence to an EREPS Code of Ethical Practice defining the rights, responsibilities and principles of being an exercise professional;

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<sup>36</sup> EURES is the European Employment Services. More information at <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/language-selection>

<sup>37</sup> More information at [www.ereps.eu](http://www.ereps.eu)

- Supports the professional needs of its members in the interests of professionalising the European fitness sector.

There are now EREPS registered fitness professionals working in 32 different European countries. Through its application of common European standards EREPS facilitates mobility of employment with 10% of members changing country each year, mainly for employment reasons. The EREPS Programme is a process of self-regulation but has proven to be an effective instrument in improving the understanding of the main occupations in the fitness sector – and the transferability of certificates and diplomas.

The SIQAF project pathway proposed that at the end of the cycle the individual workers should have their achievements validated /recognised by the sector organisations through some form of registration or professional card which is endorsed by the certifying organisation together with relevant national authorities. There is parallel thinking and opportunity created through Directive 2005/36 EC as amended by Directive 2013/55 EU<sup>38</sup> Article 49 which envisages:

- A common training framework
- Common training test
- Professional card

In the 2005/36 Directive certain tests and conditions apply which include the profession to which the common training framework applies is regulated, or the education and training leading to the profession is regulated in at least one third of the EU Member States. Meaning that the common set of knowledge, skills and competences combines the knowledge, skills and competences required in the systems of education and training applicable in at least one third of the Member States. The Directive also clarifies that it is irrelevant whether the knowledge, skills and competences have been acquired as part of a general training course at a university or higher education institution or as part of a vocational training course.

The common training framework shall be based on levels of the EQF, as defined in Annex II of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning – as proposed through the Active Leisure sector qualification framework.

The proposed ‘common training test’ means a standardised aptitude test available across participating Member States, and reserved to holders of a particular professional qualification. Passing such a test in a EU Member State shall entitle the holder of a particular professional qualification to pursue the profession in any host Member State concerned under the same conditions as the holders of professional qualifications acquired in that EU Member State. Other terms and conditions apply to Article 49, but the intention is clear to enable a profession or sector to organise itself behind a harmonised process of qualification for its workers.

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<sup>38</sup> Directive 2013/55/EU of 20 November 2013 amending Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 on administrative cooperation through the Internal Market Information System (‘the IMI Regulation’).

The purpose of the European Professional Card is to simplify the recognition process and to introduce cost and operational efficiencies that will benefit professionals and competent authorities. The introduction of a European Professional Card should take into account the views of the profession concerned and should be preceded by an assessment of its suitability for the profession concerned and its impact on Member States.

The project partners do not consider the route of the Directive to be the best way forward whilst considering the implications and responsibilities of the Council Recommendation of the EQF<sup>39</sup> which looks to “Support the setting up of voluntary procedures on the levelling of international qualifications through national qualification frameworks or systems and information exchange and consultation between Member States on those procedures to ensure consistency”.

Unquestionably the position of the Active Leisure sector meets the criteria of an international organisation delivering an international qualification in meeting the definition of:

*“An international qualification means a qualification awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, sector or company) or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body that is used in more than one country and that includes learning outcomes assessed with reference to standards established by an international body.”*

A small modification could be proposed to add the word ‘competent’ to the first line so it reads “...a qualification awarded by a legally established and competent international body...”

The consultations with member states during SIQAF (appendix 5) realised an understanding and acceptance of a unified and cohesive sector approach to the development and delivery of Active Leisure qualifications together with the principle of recognising individual accomplishment against the standards and qualifications that they have achieved.

The natural outcome of this would be a European (professional) card scheme or professional register for Active Leisure sector workers who hold a qualification that is validated through the sector-based awarding organisation. Whilst the proposal is that this is delivered within the complete jurisdiction of national training/education frameworks the scheme is also validated by the European certifying organisation so that the individual achieves both a national qualification and European validation.

Such an approach is for the benefit of the target audience including European, national, sector and local Institutions, from different contexts (public, private and voluntary sectors; from education and training, and labour market services). The SIQAF pathway guidelines seek to clarify the conditions for implementing validation, whilst pointing to the critical choices to be made by stakeholders when implementing validation arrangements.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 1

## 4.4 Recognition of international qualifications by Member States

The EU definition of a regulated profession is given by EU legislation itself. Directive 2005/36/EC, Article 3 Par. 1 (a): **Regulated profession** is defined as “a professional activity or group of professional activities, access to which, the pursuit of which, or one of the modes of pursuit of which is subject, directly or indirectly, by virtue of legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions to the possession of **specific professional qualifications**; in particular, the use of a professional title limited by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions to holders of a given professional qualification shall constitute a mode of pursuit.”

### 4.4.1 Why are certain professions ‘regulated’?

The identification of a trade, otherwise called ‘a profession’, either at a national level or at the EU level is absolutely essential: the topics involved, as those analysed above (Chapter 3), must indeed be addressed in order to be able to deal with workers’ qualifications, workers employment, mobility and more broadly with the general economic growth of the professional ‘sector’ and other similar issues that are of prime concern to the profession’s key stakeholders.

Indeed, being able to employ the right person with the right qualification(s), skills and competences, at the right time and in the right place is one of ‘the’ keys for any given sector and for the regular and permanent adaptation of the profession to its consumer’s market needs.

This issue is particularly true for companies who deal with the service industry on the one hand, and with customers of various cultures, languages and expectations on the other hand. The pertinence of properly trained staff in an industry where employees ‘make’ the products is essential, but such pertinence is even more obvious in a service industry where employees ‘are’ the product.

The Active Leisure sector is one of these trades that are very sensitive to human relationships between staff and clients whilst delivering the service and where language, cultural issues and communication are paramount. Of-course, other sectors are also impacted by these aspects of human interaction and relationships.

Whatever the sector may be, the standards which are necessary to create in order to pilot a particular trade, can only be done by a formal organisation of the professionals within groups, unions, syndicates, not-for-profit organisations, working commissions, or whatever the name that may be given to the representative structure in charge of organising the trade.

Apart from mobility, employability, staff training, other issues including public safety may of course motivate the organisation/coordination of a profession. Safety and public health may also be strong drivers for professions to organise themselves, either due to professional self-consciousness of the situation or due to pressure from local / national / EU authorities.

For instance, it is perfectly sensible that architects should get organised to determine safe standards to build houses and to avoid them collapsing, and it is also commonly accepted that dentists should determine professional standards in terms of proceeding with EU citizen’s dental care.

Common sense and trade specificities are indeed key drivers to the creation of trade organisations, as well as to the creation of corresponding ‘Regulated Professions’ that relate to the same standards.

When a profession has finally created standards, the next step is to impose these standards **on the whole of the Profession**, including those companies, individuals and/or organisations who may not have taken part in the initial standards' determination process.

The latter may also be combined with a shift in the organisation of the profession with the aim of moving from a solely voluntary participation of the key stakeholders in the definition of minimum standards to a regulatory issue linked to local / national / EU authorities.

If the first step can be considered as a voluntary adhesion to common sense issues and the definition of quality / health / public safety minimum standards, once established, the temptation to impose them more broadly through compulsory regulation can also be better understood.

#### 4.4.2 When do regulated professions start 'missing the point'?

The economic model of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been based on what can be described as a fortress model, where companies have been built as structures designed to resist all possible attacks from challengers into the market.

One of the resistance systems of these fortresses is, of course, the highest possible quality of the products sold for the best value for money ensuring a difficult ratio to match by new companies; another one is the advertisement capacity and access to the buying market through commercial deals with media and other channels' tools; a third important issue is the level of the standards imposed on potential competitors. Indeed, the higher the standards challengers have to face, the more expensive and the more difficult it is to challenge existing fortresses and their leading market positions.

From the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the broad opening of borders, the development of international trade via communication, internet and the massive decrease in transport costs, have led to the temptation of using standards, norms and other regulations for the purpose of protecting the profession in place rather than protecting the consumers.

Consequently, a clear shift from common sense and voluntary driven norms and standards has been operated in order, at best to complete voluntary driven norms by regulatory raised standards and at worst to **replace them by regulatory standards and lobby-based protectionism**. Regulated professions have entered into a new era where the purpose of standardisation and regulation can seriously be questioned.

This is even truer in an open market such as the European market that comprises some 4.800 regulated professions requiring 'traditional' qualifications'.

Within such a context, the weight of history and culture takes all it's meaning as in fact, claiming the right to work in another EU Member State can be perceived and in real terms is often perceived as 'challenging' the tradition of the host Member State; it is seen as questioning its culture, its history and the pride of its workers who have developed crafts and knowledge over the years.

As often, the strength of legislation may not be enough to challenge that of history, especially if the penalty for not enforcing the law is minimal.

If for a host Member State, the sentence for not enforcing an EU directive that creates political frictions and social difficulties is insignificant, there is a good chance that very few EU workers-will end

up travelling to that EU Member State. The whole issue of constructing the EU and allowing professional mobility sits in the capacity of each Member State to recognise the qualifications of EU migrants.

#### 4.4.3 The principle of mutual recognition

The DG GROW statement on the principle of free movement of professionals is presented as such: 'Professionals in the EU can move across borders and practice their occupation or provide services in another Member State (MS).'

This principle is guaranteed by Directive 2005/36/CE modified by Directive 2013/55/UE, referred to below as 'the directive'.

In fact, this principle is however immediately completed by a chapter referring to 'Recognition of professional qualifications in practice', since the principle of 'Free Movement' of professionals is directly conditioned by 'Mutual Recognition' by the host Member States, in particular of course in the case of a profession being listed as a 'Regulated Profession'.

#### 4.4.4 How does MS recognition work?

The introduction to the 'User Guide' to Directive 2005/36/EC is written as follows:

« The rights of citizens to practise economic activities in another Member State is a fundamental right enshrined in the Treaty. **However**, within the limits of the Internal Market rules, each Member State is free to make access to a particular profession legally conditional upon the possession of a specific professional qualification which is **traditionally** the professional qualification issued on its national territory. This is an obstacle to the free movement of professionals in the European Union in so far as those qualified to practise the same profession in another Member State hold a different professional qualification, i.e. the qualification acquired in their own Member State. »

Everything is in the '**However**' ...

However, the fundamental right for EU citizens to freely move from one MS to another is, in case of 'Regulated professions' conditioned to the 'Recognition' of the migrant's qualification by the host MS: in case of a MS regulating a certain profession, and having implemented a '**declaration system**' for incoming EU citizens, informants wishing to come and work in this MS must, prior to doing so, declare themselves with the competent authority and obtain the recognition of their qualification.

'Education' has **not** been transferred by the Member States to the EU Commission and it is therefore a competence that fully remains in the hands of each MS (principle of subsidiary). Consequently, it is still for each MS to recognise – or not – the qualification of incoming EU citizens.

On the issue why education has not been transferred, it is obvious that education remains a central and essential political tool to control the level of knowledge of the population, as well as access to the work market; elective issues and election winning potential are often very much linked to the national level of (un)-employment.

The principle established by Directive 2005/36/CE transposed within the various EU MS since the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2007 and modified by Directive 2013/55/EU transposed since the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2016 is that **recognition is the rule (the principle) but**, member States may **not** proceed to such recognition, providing they follow a very binding procedure within a binding timing and under binding conditions.

Regardless of how difficult it may be for the host MS **not** to recognise other EU citizens' qualifications, certain MS do not recognise qualifications either in exceptional cases or in worst but numerous cases as a 'policy' in order to protect their internal markets, the active local lobbies and their traditional qualifications and craftsmen pride.

This situation can also lead in certain cases to blatant abuse of power by certain competent authorities and result in conflicts as well as in Court Cases to try to solve the problems. Cases where national administration clearly goes beyond 'abuse of power' into 'denial of fundamental rights' is unfortunately not unusual.

The EU Commission **not** being 'competent' in education has no particular power to intervene in private (individual) cases. In fact, as soon as Directives have been either positively transposed by a given MS or transposed due to the fact that the deadlines have been exceeded, the Commission has no real power to interfere with the application of the Directive by the concerned MS. This, in the light of 'the law' may be surprising but in reality this is how it works.

Indeed, should an MS decide to establish as a policy **not** to recognize other EU citizens' qualifications, or to create an administrative situation in order to slow down the process of recognition and hence control its internal work market and satisfy its workers' lobby (lobbies), there is not much the Commission can do, and it is for the migrant to sort out the problem with the host MS.

EU organisations such as SOLVIT <sup>40</sup> have indeed been put in place to help sort out problems between citizens and the concerned host MS, but their ability to **solve it** is very limited – not to say non-existent – when the MS has made a policy not to recognize other EU citizens' qualifications.

This of course is due to the fact that SOLVIT only negotiates with the concerned host MS and has no power to challenge a MS administrative position: in fact, the administration of a MS, in case of a difficulty dealt with by SOLVIT, is indeed judge and party which does not leave much room to really solve problems.

This of course means that EU citizens have to go through the process of running Administrative Court cases against the reluctant host MS decisions, and use all the ways and means in the given MS, prior to reaching the EU Court of Justice; this being done in a foreign MS, in an unknown judicial system, in a foreign language in most cases and of course at the expenses of the sole migrant who has access to little funds as he/she is trying to access a job and a salary: a real Catch 22 situation.

Needless to say, that when a MS has decided to close the doors or should it be said to not open the doors to other EU citizens from a certain profession, the migrants are in fact completely alone against the power of the host MS administration which is operating in its own right, own language, own network, own legislative system.

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<sup>40</sup> More information about SOLVIT at [http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/index_en.htm)

Imagining the power of a non-Italian speaking Slovak citizen earning 600 euro's a month against Italian Administration (in Italy, in Italian with Italian laws) or that of an average French speaking Irish citizen earning 1.500 euro's per month against the power of financially unlimited French Administration (in France, in French and with French laws) is not difficult: the David vs Goliath situation can easily be imagined especially when local lawyers who can easily handle that aspect of EU law are charging an average 350 euro's an hour; the first 3 hour meeting to organize the fight of one's case, is almost one month salary for the average migrant.

Again, in the event of a MS deciding to abuse of its power and block or slow down the recognition of EU citizen's qualifications, it is only if there has been so many cases reported to the EU Commission that the EU may envisage that the system is as blocked as if the MS had not transposed the Directive. In this case the Commission might consider that there is evidence of infringement of the directive by the concerned MS.

For, say 1.000 EU citizens willing to migrate, 100 only may proceed to their declaration, and 10 may decide to challenge a negative decision before the local Administrative Court. They will take 3 to 5 years (minimum) to obtain an answer; considering that the EU will need 50 or 100 official complaints to start considering that the concerned EU MS is clearly in an infringement situation, it will probably take another 10 to 15 years and in fact some 10.000 EU citizens willing to migrate, before the MS policy is questioned by the EU Commission.

In other words, if a MS decides **not** to recognise other MS qualifications, the situation can take decades before it evolves, if it ever does.

#### 4.4.5 Professional trades representatives' awareness of the situation

Trade's organisations that represent a 'profession', however, are not necessarily familiar with international issues as most EU citizens still work in their MS of origin. Many trade organisations do believe that professional recognition either within a given home MS or even between MS's is sufficient to be allowed to work in another EU MS that regulates a profession.

It should be stated that the power of professional recognition is of absolutely **no** effect on the power of recognition – or of non-recognition – by the Member States. The exception to this situation is of course the organisation by a given trade of 'common platforms' under Article 49 of the Directive 2005/36/EC or of any similar procedures with or without Delegated Acts or similar legal dealings. But, one should not be mistaken as professional mutual recognition only operates when blessed by the legal proceedings of the Directive, which in the end means the recognition of the concerned qualification by the concerned EU Member State.

In all other cases, which is the situation for the majority of trades, mutual professional recognition is of no use, no effect and no influence on the MS policies to recognize – or not – other MS citizens' qualifications.

#### 4.4.6 Consequences for trades and professions

Professional bodies should first of all be fully aware of the EU context and the limits of the Directives, in order to analyse what is in the best interest of their members considering the MS they are dealing with and the mobility interest of the trade both for incoming and outgoing issues.<sup>41</sup>

Professions that determine a clear interest and need for mobility should strongly work on the ways offered by Article 49 of the Directive.

Other very modern and innovative issues may be investigated such as international educative standards and **co-certification** (by a competent authority) that would solve once and for all the MS control upon qualification recognition, mobility and mutual recognition.

Indeed, awareness of the described situation by the concerned representatives of professional organisations and by their members is key to any improvement on mobility of workers within the EU.

As so often is the case, it is only through education that social progress may be achieved.

#### 4.5 Conclusions

The SIQAF Project has been a very good opportunity for the Active Leisure Alliance to pursue a comprehensive analysis of the situation of International Sectoral qualifications (ISQ) and their structural environment. The project's research, surveys, meetings and experts' consultations lead to some significant conclusions about ISQs (and the development of individual qualifications).

There is an important number of existing ISQs in various numerous sectors; this is a response to the need of these sectors to dispose of well and adequately trained staff whose competence, skills and aptitudes match the everyday need of the trade and the perception of these sectors that such training cannot be found elsewhere.

The extensive study conducted about the links between ISQs and existing National Qualification Frameworks (NQF) (and consequently the European Qualification Framework (EQF), brought the Alliance to the conclusion that the level of activity of this issue is somewhat limited although of interest to the sectors. Various explanations are given by the sectors such as: the little added value perceived, a potential loss of control of the standards behind the ISQs, a lack of interest from the Member States, the perceived complexity of the procedures involved or simply the fact that sectors do not feel ready for the establishment of such a link.

A clear **pathway** leading to an ISQ, was developed during the SIQAF project as a method which can be implemented in any given sector willing to develop their own ISQs; this pathway gave the Alliance the opportunity to address the issue of prior learning needs and validation of Active Leisure Qualifications and to raise the question of Common Training Tests and European Professional Card.

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<sup>41</sup> Ec-OE (2017). Guideline 'to help understand' the European legislation on the 'recognition of professional qualifications'. Retrieved from <http://ec-oe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Guideline-on-the-European-legislation-on-the-recognition-of-professional-qualifications.pdf>

The construction of ISQs and their structural sectoral environment clearly leads to mutual professional harmonisation and recognition within the sector addressing the issue in the EU – or indeed in third countries. However, the project also lead to show that no matter mutual professional recognition or even possible link of the ISQ with the NQF and EQF, mobility of workers finally remains in the hands of the host member States in charge of the recognition of any given qualification.

In the end, and even if the ISQ corresponds precisely to the needs of a given trade, that of the public (consumers) and that of the involved stakeholders as well as guarantees the delivery of safe and quality products or services, the competent authority of the member State in which the product and/or the service is being sold or delivered, remains the sole decider of the training required from any EU citizen willing to work within it's given work market.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

The SIQAF project changed direction when the EQF Council Recommendations made it clear that there would not be any direct relationship between international qualifications and the EQF, and it will be EQF advisory Group will ultimately have to determine its response to the specific EQF Council Recommendation (11) that that the SIQAF project addressed:

*(11) Support the setting up of voluntary procedures on the levelling of international qualifications through national qualification frameworks or systems and information exchange and consultation between Member States on those procedures to ensure consistency.<sup>42</sup>*

In the meantime, the sectors and international organisations which have already found their relevance to the EQF and informally reference to it will, undoubtedly, continue – and most likely to be joined by others. The original thinking of the EQF implementation and even some recent expectations (such as the ICF Study) saw the prospects for the EQF to be used in a more expansive way. If the recommendation for a direct relationship had emerged then the outcome of the SIQAF project and its recommendations would have been very different.

The EQF is voluntary process and it is a credit to the thinking and tenacity of so many people that all the EU Member States and many other nations have referenced their NQFs successfully to the EQF – it is already an expansive club of cooperation and trust. The “10 steps” process has ensured that the NQFs have been through a thorough technical process to meet the entry requirements but no comparable system was developed or currently exists for the other stakeholders who have an interest in the EQF success story. Now the EU Member States have made their position clear in the area of the sovereignty in education matters and so it is for the “others” who have strong needs to see improved quality assurance, and relevance of their training systems, to make their case and to find ways of developing “procedures on the levelling of international qualifications through national qualification frameworks or systems and ... procedures to ensure consistency”.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 1

The SIQAF project has proposed its pathway as a transparent and logical method which could be used as a wider model. It is not necessarily to be considered proscriptive or the only solution, but it certainly proposes some key elements in a scheme or system which could be viable. The underlying problem remains that most sectors and international organisations do not have the resources or capacity to make multiple applications for the qualifications to be considered for inclusion onto many NQFs. And the truth is also apparent – that neither do the NQFs have the resources and capacity to deal with hundreds of potential applications.

Even where the systems exist for the sectoral/international qualifications to be considered for inclusion on NQFs they are bureaucratic, costly and time-consuming (appendix 5). As the EQF process has started to look inwards it risks the possible alienation of the very people and organisations who can deliver the new skills and empower mobility of workers for learning and employment that Europe needs. In the past 10 years the EQF has become a success, and it is here to stay.

As a proposal the SIQAF project pathway contains a number of criteria which could form the model for improving the transparency and efficacy of recognition of other sectoral and international qualifications.

## Recommendations

### Sector identification

The start point is for the international or sector organisation to establish its credibility and validity. A fully operating sector skills alliance is currently the model to follow and was the agreed position of the SIQAF task force. Therefore, a sector should organise itself along the lines currently described by DG EMPL<sup>43</sup> to act and deliver the objectives of a SSA.

There should only be one “rightful” Sector Skills Alliance who can propose a qualification that purports to provide its workers with the skills they need and to meet employer needs and expectations as the representative of the sector or international organisation. The ESCO experience forced thinking around the uniqueness of the qualification supporting the occupation which means that the provenance of the organisation should be without question. This leads to the expectation of sector representativeness, inclusiveness of its stakeholders and overall objectives.

### Understanding the sector and its people

To claim to be the representative organisation requires some thought and action to determine the characteristics of what it represents – how many people, what are the key occupations, the essential

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<sup>43</sup> Sector Skills Alliances aim at tackling skills gaps with regard to one or more occupational profiles in a specific sector. They do so by identifying existing or emerging sector-specific labour market needs (demand side), and by enhancing the responsiveness of initial and continuing vocational education and training (VET) systems, at all levels, to the labour market needs (supply side) ([https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/sector-skills-alliances\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/sector-skills-alliances_en))

skills, what are the gaps, shortages and foresight to ensure that there are enough workers in the right place with the right skills at the right time.

This also requires an implicit understanding of the capacity of training provision and their involvement with sector strategic planning. It moves beyond traditional collective bargaining and into the realms of a more inclusive way of working.

When a full functional analysis is completed it is then possible to move into the areas of developing the knowledge skills and autonomy that employers will be expecting. The occupational standards are conceivably the most powerful and valuable outcome from the interrogation and acerbic analysis of the sectors direction and employer expectation.

### **Qualifications in units of learning outcome**

Experience shows that an important stage of the process is to separate the governance and overview of the sector from the delivery of training and quality assurance. The same people can't be defining the policy and then delivering it as it begins to set up conflicts of interest and confusion on rights and responsibilities.

The Sector body can derive what it needs for the skills of its workers and in support of its employers and entrepreneurs, but then specially designed organisations should use them to develop the qualifications (in units of learning outcome). These can be supported by a further range of other products and services that training companies, colleges and universities can use but which are quite independent from the standards-setting body.

The objectives of this process demands a separation of responsibilities as proposed in the pathway.

### **Independent quality assurance of qualification delivery**

In any process of harmonisation and reliance upon third-body organisations or processes there needs to be trust between the parties. In the case of delivering qualifications under a "European" or "International" heading there will need to be some rigorous quality assurance processes in place. This will provide the confidence that the scheme is being delivered in a transparent but with high quality control. The robustness of the quality assurance process should, in itself, be tested through a third-party, trusted process. ISO 17074:2012 accreditation would a recognised international way of demonstrating that the organisation and scheme it delivers is fit for purpose.

### **Cooperation at a national level with recognised national partners**

In the sector development process to establish its "provenance" it should have included the interventions of its main stakeholders, including the voices and views of national partners. Having identified that there are not many clear routes for international or sectoral qualifications to be recognised by NQFs, and in respect of the autonomy of national education and training systems the sector or international organisations should welcome the opportunity to work with national partners.

The concept of the SIQAF pathway is for national qualification delivery alongside international or European recognition. It is a reasonable expectation that a national organisation backed by the evidence, work and weight of the sectoral or international organisation should make a compelling proposition for the qualification to be favourably considered for inclusion on its NQF.

### **Accepting national requirements for VET providers**

Whilst the certifying organisation retains the overall control and monitoring of the learner as they progress towards their qualification there are also any different levels and approaches applied by national education systems which will take precedence.

The CO operation should not interfere with national conditions but to provide an additional and consistent level of quality assurance, ultimately the awarding of a certificate to the learner should be firstly a national qualification and secondly the European or International qualification.

### **Being fair to the learner**

The centre of the learning process should be the individual learner themselves. They need to have a belief and reliance that the learning process will deliver for them what they need to know, and to be able to do in their chosen occupation. Descriptions of the qualification should be clear and honest so that the individual learner should be able to understand precisely what they can – and perhaps what they cannot do with it.

The quality assurance process being applied (by both national and sector/international schemes) should ensure that the core and essential skills being delivered are consistent and reliable, wherever the scheme is being applied.

### **The Pathway**

Following the SIQAF final conference in May 2018 the pathway diagram graphics were updated and this is the proposal which is now used for the project executive summary. It is published available for download in three languages:

English [http://www.ehfa-membership.com/sites/europeactive-euaffairs.eu/files/projects/SIQAF/SIQAF\\_Flyer\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ehfa-membership.com/sites/europeactive-euaffairs.eu/files/projects/SIQAF/SIQAF_Flyer_EN.pdf)

French [http://www.ehfa-membership.com/sites/europeactive-euaffairs.eu/files/projects/SIQAF/SIQAF\\_Flyer\\_FR.pdf](http://www.ehfa-membership.com/sites/europeactive-euaffairs.eu/files/projects/SIQAF/SIQAF_Flyer_FR.pdf)

German [http://www.ehfa-membership.com/sites/europeactive-euaffairs.eu/files/projects/SIQAF/SIQAF\\_Flyer\\_DE.pdf](http://www.ehfa-membership.com/sites/europeactive-euaffairs.eu/files/projects/SIQAF/SIQAF_Flyer_DE.pdf)



## Sector Identification

Understanding the sector, its stakeholders and size is the key to effectively supporting the employers and skills development.

# REFERENCING INTERNATIONAL & SECTOR QUALIFICATIONS WITH NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN FRAMEWORKS

## Sector Skills Alliance

A Sector Skills Alliance is designed to tackle the skills agenda by aligning Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems with labour market needs. This can be done by:

- modernising VET by adapting to skills needs and integrating work-based learning
- strengthening the exchange of knowledge and best practices
- improving labour market mobility
- increasing the recognition of qualifications

## Certifying organisation (CO)

- The CO is independent from the SSA
- It drives quality-assurance of qualification delivery
- Provides rigor and quality assurance of the outcomes for individual learners
- Improves trust and confidence at the European level

## Sector Qualification Framework

An SQF has the purpose to provide improved clarity for sectoral/ international qualifications where they are structured into units of learning outcomes to facilitate understanding and referencing.

## Sector Qualification Framework

SQFs have to be designed in a transparent way to identify the unique occupations of the sector described by their knowledge, skills, competencies and autonomy.

## National Partner Cooperation (CO)

Competent and recognised national sector organisations need to lead the process in their country.

## NCP/NQF

The national sector organisation with CO support apply for qualification inclusion to an NQF.

## Professional Recognition Card



Individual learner recognised through sector or international registration process to support increased awareness and mobility



1

**RESPONSIBILITY AND VALIDITY**  
**SECTOR IDENTIFICATION**  
Research and understanding skills and human resources issues  
Engagement of its stakeholders  
Representativeness

**SECTOR QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK**  
**SECTOR SKILLS ALLIANCE**  
Occupational standards and competence framework  
Occupational descriptions  
Sector definition  
Occupational map  
Functional map  
Sector indicators

**SECTOR QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK**  
**CERTIFYING ORGANISATION (CO)**  
Qualification in units of learning outcomes  
Assessment strategy  
Quality assurance  
Leveling  
Internal referencing to EQF/other qualifications

**Active Leisure Card**

Name	John Smith
Qualification	Personal Trainer Fitness Instructor
Country	Belgium
expiry	30/12/2019
Authorised	

**National partner(s) submits sector qualification with CO**

**Student achieves national and international qualification**

**VET/HEI provider delivers qualification to national and sector CO requirements**

**NCP/EQF**

7

## Learner Achieves

The qualification is delivered to meet national and European requirements with the CO adding its validation.

6

## VET / HEI Providers

Working within any prevailing national conditions and requirements the VET and higher education providers deliver the qualification in combination with the CO.

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## APPENDIX 1 Sector Qualification Frameworks in Active Leisure (SQF AL)

**Table A1. Sector Qualification Frameworks in Active Leisure (SQF AL)**

	SECTOR INDICATORS (KEY PROFESSIONAL AREAS)	LEVEL 2 SQF AL	LEVEL 3 SQF AL	LEVEL 4 SQF AL	LEVEL 5 SQF AL	LEVEL 6 SQF AL
Knowledge	Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes different AL activities.</li> <li>• Lists benefits of particular AL activities (e.g. related to the prevention of non-communicable diseases, participation in social groups).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes the rules and procedures for selected tasks within planning, organising, conducting, monitoring, animating and post processing of the delivery of AL activities and services.</li> <li>• Defines the role of AL activities within today's lifestyles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains the rules and procedures for planning, organising, conducting, monitoring, animating, controlling, evaluating and post processing of the multistage delivery of AL activities (e.g. in relation to the process of long-term exercise program, outdoor example).</li> <li>• Explains the possibilities of increasing the involvement of today's society in the AL activities through the proper service delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes and justifies the procedures for planning, organising, conducting, monitoring, animating, controlling, evaluating and post processing the delivery of AL activities and services; taking into account customer's needs (also with special needs like e.g. with chronic health conditions, pregnant women, weight management, outdoor example, etc.).</li> <li>• Defines terms and phenomena in other, supporting fields of the professional activity, where required (e.g.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies and explains regulatory, non-regulatory and, where appropriate, medical and scientific conditions and translates those into requirements for the delivery of AL activities.</li> <li>• Explains the rules of the analysis and evaluation of all aspects of the AL service delivery, including planning, organising, conducting, animating, post-processing, as well as the rules of their analysis and evaluation.</li> </ul>

					physiotherapy, cardiology, dietetics).	
Meeting health and safety requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lists hazard and risks related to the implementation of particular AL activities.</li> <li>• Describes the principles underpinning the protection of the Active Leisure professional's own as well as the customers' health and the legal regulations associated with the performance of his/her professional tasks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes and describes common hazards and risks in AL.</li> <li>• Describes rescue scenarios in selected AL activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes strategies to avoid common hazards and risks in AL.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains emergency management in AL activities and services (including customer's special needs and environmental hazards).</li> <li>• Explains regulatory and non-regulatory requirements for the given activities and facility management in AL.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies and explains potential factors which may influence risk and emergency management in AL activities.</li> </ul>	
Communication, motivation and customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defines terms specific for particular AL activities.</li> <li>• Describes requirements for the professional communication in AL services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes customers' common expectations, needs, motives and barriers related to the participation in particular AL activities.</li> <li>• Characterizes rules of managing individual or group AL customers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes customers' expectations, needs and motives and explains how to use them in the planning and multistage delivery of the AL activities and services.</li> <li>• Describes strategies to overcome various barriers to participation in AL activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discusses customers' expectations, needs and motives and communicates with other professionals (also from other fields) using proper terminology.</li> <li>• Explains how the needs of the customers (e.g. related with special conditions) influence their participation in AL activities and services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains selected terms and theories, also from related fields of work or science (e.g. pedagogy, psychology, sport medicine, physiotherapy) which can be useful to improve communication, customer service and retention in AL activities.</li> </ul>	

Equipment and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes standard equipment and environment used in particular AL activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes the rules for the selection of equipment (including modern technologies) for the individual capabilities and needs of the AL customers.</li> <li>• Describes environmental features (geographical, cultural, natural, historical etc.) as important determinants of the AL service delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains the rules of using and adaptation of the available resources and/or environment for the multistage delivery of AL service to achieve customer's goals (such as reduction of body mass, improvement of physical fitness and/or technical skills).</li> <li>• Explains the (potential) impact of AL activities on the environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justifies guidelines of using and adaptation of equipment and environment during the delivery of AL activities in the context of changing conditions (e.g. customers' special health condition, demanding environmental conditions).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains and justifies the use of innovative technologies and solutions in the AL sector, based on practical experience and/or scientific achievements.</li> </ul>
Professional Technical Capacity					
Professional Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes the roles &amp; responsibilities of AL professionals.</li> <li>• Describes the ethical code of practice for particular AL activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes the qualification system and possibilities of professional development in the particular AL activities (from I2).</li> <li>• Describes the structure and tasks of the national and international organisations within the AL sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains and justifies the roles and responsibilities of people working in the AL sector.</li> <li>• Discusses and defends the work ethics, professionalism and work efficiency in the AL sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explains potential factors which can influence work ethics, professionalism and work efficiency in the AL sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discusses the work ethics, professionalism and work efficiency in the AL sector in the context of technological or scientific achievements, also from allied fields.</li> </ul>

Skills	Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assists in the delivery of AL activities and services.</li> <li>• Carries out selected and limited tasks within the service delivery in AL sector (e.g. helps the customers in using technical equipment in the fitness facilities, outdoor examples).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans, organizes, conducts, monitors and animates selected tasks in common AL services, demonstrating good practice (e.g. instructs common exercises and activities, outdoor) and while taking into account the needs, capabilities and interests of the customers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs multistage professional activities to implement AL services, including planning, organising, conducting, monitoring, animating, controlling, evaluating and post processing (e.g. in the process of long-term exercise program, outdoor example), adjusting the process to the changing conditions (customer's capabilities and needs and/or environment).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans and implements AL activities and services, and autonomously animates and modifies them, where appropriate with consideration of specific requirements (e.g. connected with health, non-communicable disease specific, focused on a specific training goals).</li> <li>• Develops creative solutions for the implementation of AL activities, also based on the analyses of available resources used in AL sector and the achievement of other professional/scientific field (e.g. cardiology, psychology).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans and implements the evaluation of AL activities and services and analyses its outcomes.</li> <li>• Develops and implements operational guidelines for the coordination, planning, conduction and evaluation of complex AL activities.</li> <li>• Introduces and promotes innovative solutions for the delivery of AL services.</li> <li>• Instructs/trains and assesses lower level AL personnel.</li> </ul>
	Meeting health and safety requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates basic first aid skills.</li> <li>• Follows health and safety rules and legal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides the customers with directions related to the safety of the particular tasks in AL activities (e.g. in relation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides the customers with directions related to the safety of the multistage delivery of AL activities (e.g. in relation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates advanced rescue skills and implements complex emergency/rescue scenario, (including first</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops and promotes innovative solutions to increase safety and effectiveness in AL activities.</li> </ul>

		regulations specific for particular AL activities.	to the participation in an exercise session).	to the process of long-term exercise program, outdoor example). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administers first aid (e.g. stabilizes a broken leg and delivers CPR).</li> </ul>	aid), also responding to specific customer's needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devises and implements safety plans as well as safety staff training.</li> <li>Develops rescue techniques and oversees and manages complex rescue scenarios.</li> <li>Communicates risks and hazards to other professionals.</li> </ul>
Communication, motivation and customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides the customers with information necessary for the participation in particular AL activities (e.g. on necessary equipment, health rules).</li> <li>Delivers good customer service encouraging regular participation in AL activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positively interacts with AL customers, purposefully using communication and motivational tools (e.g. to promote adherence to AL activities).</li> <li>Adjusts the style of conducting/animating AL activities to the customer's needs.</li> <li>Implements feedback procedures related to the customers' satisfaction with the participation in AL activities, according to instructions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides customers with specific information related to the various stages of participation in AL activities.</li> <li>Select and adjusts the communication and motivational tools to the changing needs of the customers and to the various stages of the delivery of AL services.</li> <li>Foster retention and ongoing engagement with the customer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modifies and applies communication and motivational tools and animation guidelines, also in the context of specific needs of the AL customers.</li> <li>Conducts, summarizes and evaluates customers' feedback on the delivery of AL services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyses AL customers' satisfaction as well as behavioural patterns by devising, implementing and evaluating feedback procedures, taking into account scientific achievements.</li> <li>Develops and promotes guidelines on how to interact with AL customers and foster their adherence and retention.</li> <li>Initiates and implements strategies to promote AL activities as well as their benefits.</li> </ul>	

	Equipment environment and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepares equipment for the delivery of AL activities, with some supervision where required.</li> <li>• Promotes a healthy and clean environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses and maintains equipment (also personal equipment) and settings /environment for AL service delivery, ensuring its efficiency, safety and attractiveness.</li> <li>• Demonstrates, instructs and monitors the safe use, storage and maintenance of equipment (including modern technologies) by the customers according to standard procedures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervises and controls the customers' and other AL professionals' compliance with the procedures for safe use, storage and maintenance of the equipment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapts resources necessary for implementation of AL activities (e.g. equipment, settings), taking into account needs of the customers (also related to their special health condition), and the impact as well as the protection of the environment.</li> <li>• Evaluates equipment for the use in particular AL activities (also in the context of customer's special needs).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops rules and procedures for the selection and adaptation of activities, methods, places and equipment, taking into consideration the customers' and environmental requirements.</li> <li>• Researches and analyses the background (e.g. medical, behavioural, geographical, cultural and historical) and other aspects of AL activities, including the interrelationship between the AL customer and the environment.</li> <li>• Innovatively modifies AL activities and equipment used.</li> </ul>
	Professional Technical Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs and demonstrates skills essential to assist in the delivery of selected AL activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs and demonstrates technical skills essential for conducting selected tasks in common AL activities (e.g. for conducting an exercise session, outdoor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs and demonstrates technical skills required for various stages of the AL service delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs and demonstrates technical skills required in the complex AL activities (e.g. exercises that comply with health restrictions,</li> </ul>	

			example) of varying difficulty and intensity, and with different equipment and settings/environment.		activities in demanding environments).	
Professional Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solves typical problems occurring during the selected tasks of the AL service delivery under supervision and help of other AL professional with higher qualifications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solves problems occurring during the selected tasks of the AL service delivery (e.g. varied level of fitness and skills, different goals and needs in the group of customers, different weather conditions).</li> <li>Follows the ethical code of practice specific for AL activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizes and solves independently usually predictable problems occurring during the multistage service delivery in AL (e.g. drop of motivation and/or organisational problems).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses specialised knowledge, also from allied fields of professional work to independently solve problems occurring during the AL service delivery in AL (e.g. related to the specific needs of the customer or demanding whether conditions).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognizes and solves independently unpredictable or complex problems occurring during the AL service delivery in AL (e.g. unpredictable change in whether conditions).</li> <li>Develops work ethics, professionalism and work efficiency in the AL sector, also using achievements from other fields.</li> <li>Develops guidelines on how to solve problems occurring during the service delivery in AL.</li> <li>Supervises and enforces compliance with the work ethics, professionalism and work efficiency.</li> </ul>	

Responsibility and Autonomy	Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performs selected tasks semi- independently and/or under supervision of higher level AL professionals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes responsibility for selected tasks within the delivery of AL activities and its (ongoing and deferred) outcomes .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes responsibility for the implementation of the multistage tasks within the AL activities and services (e.g. the implementation of long-term exercise programme or animation of outdoor activities).</li> <li>• Operates within defined (operational and ethical) guidelines typical for AL services.</li> <li>• Effectively collaborates with specialists and/or other AL professionals (e.g. fitness instructors, dieticians, outdoor animators).</li> <li>• Supervises and evaluates the routine work of AL professionals with lower qualifications (e.g. fitness instructor, outdoor assistant).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinates and evaluates the implementation of AL activities and services, also directed for the customers with special needs and requirements, within the framework of operational guidelines.</li> <li>• Develops performance of AL professionals with lower qualifications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manages complex multistage activities in AL sector, performed in various sites and conditions and including supervision of other professionals, also from various fields.</li> <li>• Take responsibility for managing professional development of AL professionals with lower qualifications.</li> <li>• Takes responsibility for the analysis and critical evaluation of AL programmes.</li> </ul>
	Meeting health and safety requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes responsibility for his/her own health and safety during the delivery of AL activities .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes responsibility for the customers' health and safety during selected tasks within the delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes responsibility for the health and safety of customers during the multistage delivery of the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes responsibility for the health and safety of customers during the delivery of the AL activity,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes responsibility for the managing the implementation of the safety plans during the</li> </ul>

			of AL activities (e.g. during an exercise session).	AL activities and services, performed in usually predictable conditions, (e.g. implementing exercise programmes for general populations)	also where there is unpredictable change of delivery conditions (e.g. related to the customer's special needs).	delivery of AL activities and services.
	Communication, motivation and customer service					
	Equipment and environment					
	Professional Technical Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes care of his/her own physical fitness and skills necessary to assist in the delivery of selected AL activities (e.g. to demonstrate selected technical elements correctly).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes care of his/her own physical fitness and skills necessary to deliver AL activities.</li> </ul>			
	Professional Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitors the quality of his/her work, inter alia accepting and following supervisor's feedback and instructions.</li> <li>• Promotes the AL sector through his/her own attitude and example.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ready to systematically complement the knowledge and skills related to AL activities and their outcomes.</li> <li>• Ready to take part in the implementation of AL service under the supervision of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-evaluates the quality of his/her work, inter alia by assessing its outcomes (e.g. customers' satisfaction).</li> <li>• Promotes AL activities by encouraging and supervising the customers to explore the impact of AL on the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shares the knowledge and skills with other AL professionals.</li> <li>• Respects their own professional limitations.</li> <li>• Recognizes situations and condition which require referring customers to other professionals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shares the knowledge and skills typical for AL sector with representatives from other allied professions.</li> </ul>

			professionals with higher qualifications. • Promotes AL activities by sharing his/her professional knowledge with customers.	improvement of their personal well-being.		
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### ECVET

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) aims to facilitate understanding and recognition of Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications in the EU and partner countries. Within the scope of the SIQAF project the consortium envisaged the use and implementation of ECVET to be applied to the European qualifications (Personal Trainer and Outdoor animator) developed during this project. Whereas the added value for the use of ECVET is well known within the European VET landscape, its benefits for European qualifications remains unclear as it claims transparency and understanding by its nature. This subchapter is intended to reflect the added value of the ECVET application in the specific context of sectoral and international qualifications with special focus on the European qualification for Personal Trainer (E/QF L4) and Outdoor Animator (E/SQF L5).

The European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) belongs together with the European quality reference framework in VET (EQAVET), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning to a range of European Transparency Instruments. ECVET has been developed by the EU Member States in cooperation with the European Commission and adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2009. Its purpose is the support of lifelong learning, the mobility of learners and the flexibility of learning pathways to achieve qualifications.

- Using ECVET's concept and principles – learning outcomes, units, ECVET points, credit and Memoranda of Understanding and Learning Agreements – enables Member States and their schools to establish a common and user-friendly language for transparency, transfer, accumulation and recognition of learning outcomes in a systematic way. At the same time these elements serve as the base for ECVET, it clearly demonstrates its added value. One of the strongest assets is its use within the context of student geographical mobility. The introduction of one or more ECVET elements can improve and enhance the quality of the mobility experience for all beneficiaries and stakeholders.
- ECVET was designed as one of a series of European instruments (others include Europass and the European Qualifications Framework) each targeting improvement in learning recognition and transparency.
- ECVET provides a framework for the assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes, alongside a series of common tools and instruments able to support quality in mobility.
- ECVET promotes the integration of mobility into existing learning pathways.
- ECVET supports the valorisation of key competences (such as foreign language skills or intercultural competence) alongside those that are more technically - or vocationally - oriented.

- ECVET contributes to the development of a common language for use by different VET stakeholders and promotes mutual trust within the wider VET community.<sup>44</sup>

The above described features of ECVET concern and benefit largely national qualifications in European contexts. However, SIQAF project and qualifications already recognise the added value of some ECVET's elements such as the structure of a qualification in units of learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are described as the 'driving force' behind contemporary (higher) education reform and haven identified as the core philosophy of the ECVET framework.<sup>45</sup>

Alongside the added value for student geographical mobility, ECVET enhances Lifelong Learning which is relevant for the SIQAF project:

ECVET is a tool that can assist lifelong learning by improving the transfer, recognition and accumulation of that which has been learned in the past, irrespective of the learning environment. It can facilitate the development of individualised and flexible lifelong learning paths enabling individual learners to gain knowledge, skills and competence, and ultimately an ECVET qualification supports a range of learners and learning scenarios including:

- Learners wishing to upgrade or extend their qualifications through part-time study.
- Learners wishing to study for additional qualifications that complement or build on those already held.
- Learners seeking qualifications for career progression.
- Learners returning to education or training.

The SIQAF Task Force fully supports the Lifelong Learning principles and recognises the need for the implementation of EU transparency instruments. Within the specific context, the added value of ECVET and all its elements can be added to the list above:

- The use of ECVET, particularly the concept of learning outcomes and units as well as the use of ECVET points and credits may facilitate the understanding and recognition of the European qualifications at member state level. Especially ECVET points may enhance the accreditation of the qualifications at National Coordination Points.
- In case not the entire qualification is recognised at member state level, however, some parts (entire units or learning outcomes) may be acknowledged at European level. The possibility to enhance acceptance of parts of the qualifications strongly supports the concept of lifelong learnings & supports its recognition abroad.
- "There is a need to secure commitment to ECVET principles and practices from a broad spectrum of education and training stakeholders, and potential beneficiaries, targeting shared responsibility among all such actors" (ECVET toolkit). As the industry stakeholder, the SIQAF task force is committed to take on this responsibility.

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<sup>44</sup> More information on ECVET at <http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en>

<sup>45</sup> UNICA (2010). ECvet-ECTS: Building Bridges and Overcoming Differences. A Methodological Guide Produced in the Framework Of The Be-Twin Project. ISBN: 9789081437110

In addition to the last bullet point, the ECVET secretariat is emphasising the need for government commitment in all European countries, to support the incorporation of ECVET principles into existing education, training and qualifications systems and frameworks. The SIQAF task force understands its efforts as a support for the cooperation, to support the transparency instrument to become embedded within existing education, training and qualifications systems, making it a regular feature of European VET, at all levels.

Concluding the review of added value of ECVET principles, the European qualifications have already established the precondition for ECVET through the structure in units of learning outcomes. Thus, the qualifications can already contribute and benefit from the use of ECVET without the allocation of ECVET points and credits. The qualifications are ready to enhance the lifelong learning principles, the mobility of learners and fully support the flexibility of learning pathways to achieve qualifications.

## **EQAVET**

With the adoption of the EQAVET Recommendation in 2009 the quality assurance national reference points have been seen as essential players in the effective implementation of the European quality assurance framework in their national contexts. However, the reality across the member states has varied widely. In some cases, national reference points have received clear mandates from their national authorities and have been appropriately resourced. In other cases, EQAVET responsibilities were added to already crowded work programmes of agencies and/or ministries. However, the possibility of EU-level support through ERASMUS+ has, for the first time, provided an opportunity to put in place work programmes which enable national reference points to support and strengthen the development of a culture of quality assurance in their national contexts.

Effective policy implementation is dependent on a clear legislative basis, well developed partnerships with key stakeholders and the availability of resources to develop work programmes that target those responsible for providing high quality, “fit for purpose” training opportunities for learners. The key themes which emerge in the national examples include the importance of effective partnerships in developing a context for policy development and implementation, the centrality of teachers and trainers in ensuring high quality learning and the importance of the networking role of the national reference points nationally and at European level.

The current EQAVET Network reflects on how to ensure that the quality assurance of VET continues to contribute to the attainment of the EQAVET-related objectives of the Riga Communiqué and the ambitious objectives for VET established in the New Skills Agenda, it is obvious that a strong network of national reference points which brings together the key priorities at national and European level will be an important means of delivering high quality VET over the coming years.

Since the introduction of the EQAVET Recommendation there has been an increasing emphasis on the importance of work-based learning; learning outcomes; pedagogy which focuses on meeting the needs of individual learners; and the opportunity for learners to demonstrate their achievement through a wider range of learning contexts including the recognition of achievement through non-formal and informal learning.

## APPENDIX 3 Recognition of international qualifications by Member States – the example of Switzerland

### Recognition of international qualifications by Member States – the example of Switzerland

This short description of the process of referencing qualifications to the Swiss NQF is largely based on the Swiss EQF-Referencing Report (SERI 2015) as well as interviews conducted with Sandra Müller, State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI, and Martin Raaflaub, Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training SFIVET

#### Background

Similar to European countries, Switzerland adopted a national qualification framework in order to allow comparison of their qualifications with those of other European countries. The Swiss NQF, called NQF VPET, is in use only for vocational and professional education and training (VPET), including tertiary level professional education and training. The latter is virtually unique in Europe, making the establishment of the NQF and its relationship to the EQF even more valuable for the holders of higher level Swiss qualifications. Academic qualifications from the Swiss Higher Education Area are structured within separate framework, the nqf.ch-HS. As they are governed by different regulatory authorities, these two frameworks were independently developed and not mapped directly against each other. However, since they are both referenced to the relevant European meta-frameworks they are in a clearly defined relation to each other.

Vocational and professional education and training in Switzerland is the joint responsibility of three partners:

- The federal government: At the federal level, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) is responsible for the strategic management and development of the VPET system, including the NQF VPET.
- The cantons: The Swiss cantons are responsible for enforcing the relevant regulation, namely the Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training.
- Professional organisations: These awarding bodies “may be social partners, professional associations, industry organisations or other organisations or vocational education providers. Their members are companies (corporate bodies) and professional people (private individuals).” (SERI 2015, p. 14) These professional organisations also define and develop education and training content, national qualification procedures and educational courses.

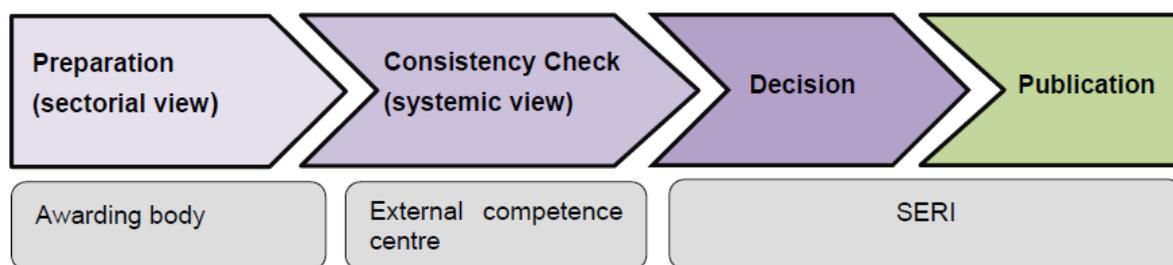
#### The Swiss NQF VPET

“At the end of August 2014 the Swiss Federal Council passed the Ordinance on the National Qualifications Framework for VPET qualifications (NQF VPET). The ordinance is based on Arts 34 and 65 of the Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training and came into force on 1 October 2014.” (SERI 2015, p. 36). The responsibility for the NQF VPET lies with the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI.

The NQF VPET is based on professional competences and consists of a grid comprising eight levels, which correspond to the eight levels of the EQF. The assignment or referencing of all formal Swiss VPET qualifications is done on the basis of competence-orientated descriptors for each of the eight levels. On each level, there are three groups of descriptors referring to ‘knowledge’, ‘skills’ and ‘competencies’. These descriptors are also aligned with those used in the EQF, however, they were adapted to suit the special characteristics of the Swiss VPET system. It is not envisioned that any VPET qualifications will be assigned to level 1. Levels 2 to 5 are open to the larger part of the numerous VPET qualifications, while levels 5 to 8 are open to VPET qualifications at the tertiary level, which are so unique to Switzerland.

### NQF referencing process

The process for assigning formal qualifications to the NQF was designed to be consensual and in accordance with proven VPET partnership procedures. Therefore, the qualification awarding bodies (which may be professional organisations, Colleges of Higher Education etc.) perform the assignment and subsequently submit a proposal to SERI, “while an external competence centre (Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training, SFIVET) verifies consistency and SERI takes the decision” (SERI 2015, p. 49). This process was designed in order to a) utilise the knowledge of the awarding bodies about their specific qualifications and b) ensure coherence across the Swiss VPET system and the NQF VPET levels.



**Figure A1.** Process for assignment of qualifications to the NQF VPET

Source: SERI 2015, p. 49

In order to be individually assigned to the NQF VPET, all VET and PET qualifications are differentiated based on their competencies. These competencies need to be spelt out in the basic reference documents of the VPET qualifications, a requirement which served as a catalyst for revising both the content, the structure as well as the documents of numerous VET and PET qualifications. The specificities of the process depicted above, from the submission of a proposal by the awarding body all the way to the publication, are described by guidelines published by SERI.

Once a qualification is referenced to the NQF VPET, the NQF level is documented on certificate supplements for VET qualifications or on diploma supplements for PET qualifications.

Originally, it was thought that there may be differences in respect to competencies between VPET qualifications of the same type but different sectors, so not all qualifications of one type would necessarily need to be assigned to the same level of the NQF VPET. For example, a Federal VET Diploma of one industry might be assigned to level 4, while a Federal VET Diploma of another industry might be considered level 5. However, after referencing a larger part of qualifications it became clear that most qualifications of one type do tend to be of the same NQF level:

NQF VPET level	Qualification Type
8	
7	
6	
5	
4	
3	Fed. VET Certificate
2	
1	

**Figure A2. Broad trends in levels of qualifications assigned to the NQF VPET**  
Source: SERI 2015, p. 53

So now, newly developed formal qualifications will automatically be assigned the according NQF level. However, the more work-intensive process of individual assignment can be applied for if a professional organisation considers their specific new qualification to be on a different level.

### Formal vs informal qualifications

In Switzerland, there are approx. 750 formal qualifications for vocational and professional education and training. Most of these are by now assigned to the NQF VET. With this extensive formal education system, Switzerland has decided that referencing vocational qualifications falling outside the scope of formal education is not a priority. An additional reason for this is the observation that most of the informal courses and qualifications lack the “quality-assured basic reference documents (educational ordinance, examination regulations, etc.) that are required for assignment purposes” (SERI 2015, p. 34). As such, at this stage, there is no opportunity to reference international and/or sectoral qualifications to the NQF VPET.

Source: State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI (2015): Swiss EQF-Referencing Report. Bern.

## Personal Trainer Qualification Overview



# Personal Trainer Qualification Overview (referenced to the European Qualification Framework L4)

### Qualification objective

The objective of this qualification is to provide the knowledge, skills, competencies and autonomy required to perform the role of a Personal Trainer working with apparently healthy individuals, including:

- Understanding the roles and responsibilities of a Personal Trainer (including the relevant legislations, regulations and guidelines for their locale).
- Understanding and being able to use technological and traditional media to plan, build, manage their business and engage and support clients
- Understanding and being able to engage and support clients, providing good customer care throughout the Personal Training experience
- Understanding and being able to apply functional anatomy and physiology to personal training clients and exercise selections and programming
- Understanding nutrition and being able to discuss healthy eating with clients, evaluating their current status and offering appropriate recommendations to improve diet and lifestyle
- Understanding motivation and behaviour change and being able to implement evidence-based strategies to support the client and their behaviour change
- Understanding and being able to carry out health and fitness assessments
- Understanding and being able to design and deliver exercise plans and programmes to elicit training adaptations

The qualification is aimed at individuals who wish to work in the occupational role of a Personal Trainer. This qualification has been referenced to the EuropeActive standards which are informally referenced to the European Qualification Framework at Level 4.

## Qualification structure

Learners must complete all the Mandatory Qualification Units.

Qualification – Mandatory Units	
Role of the Personal Trainer	Functional Anatomy and Physiology for Personal Trainers
Nutrition and Healthy Eating for Personal Trainers	Understanding the Principles of Health and Fitness Behaviour Change
Collecting and Analysing Health and Fitness Assessment Information	Training Adaptation, Exercise Planning and Programming

Recommended minimum total qualification details are shown in the table below (expressed in hours):

Total Qualification Time	Guided Learning	Self-Directed Learning	ECVET Credits
225	45	180	9

### Pre-requisite before a student starts training towards the Personal Trainer qualification

Before starting the Personal Trainer qualification training the student should equal or exceed the knowledge, skills, competencies and autonomy of an EQF Level 3 Fitness Instructor. These requirements are described in the EuropeActive standards which can be found [here](#).

## Unit Summaries

### Role of the Personal Trainer

This module provides the learner with the knowledge, skills, competencies and autonomy to:

- Understand the legal and professional standards and guidelines for Personal Trainers
- Know how to utilise technology to engage and support clients
- Understand the business and sales skills required to run a successful personal training business
- Be able to build a personal training business
- Be able to evaluate customer care
- Be able to provide good customer care

### Functional Anatomy and Physiology for Personal Trainers

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand the functional anatomy and physiology of the key systems of the human body
- Understand the principles of movement
- Understand the importance of the core for functional movement
- Understand the physiological effects of exercise
- Understand the risks of dysfunctional movement

### Nutrition and healthy eating for Personal Trainers

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand the components of nutrition
- Understand digestive function
- Understand a healthy diet
- Understand energy balance for weight management
- Know the current healthy eating recommendations
- Be able to evaluate diets and offer appropriate guidance, advice and recommendations

### Understanding the principles of health and fitness behaviour change

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand how psychological theories can support behaviour change
- Understand factors that affect health and fitness behaviour change
- Understand goal setting and motivational interviewing
- Understand positive and negative stress

## Collecting and analysing health and fitness assessment information

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand the components of health and fitness
  - Know how to and be able to collect subjective information from clients and perform objective assessments of health, fitness and posture
  - Be able to communicate with clients in a way that helps them feel comfortable providing personal information
  - Be able to evaluate a client's information to develop appropriate findings and recommendations
- Be able to support clients making positive changes to health and fitness behaviour

## Training adaptation, exercise planning and programming

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand the guidelines for physical activity and exercise
- Understand the principles of health and fitness training
- Understand the principles of periodisation
- Know how to monitor and measure exercise intensity
- Understand the importance of evaluation and adaptation
- Be able to apply knowledge to exercise planning and programming
- Be able to use training strategies to enhance individual exercise performance
- Be able to evaluate a session and performance

## Common assessment strategy

Learners must complete the following holistic assessments which cover the relevant aspects of each unit:

- A multiple-choice examination
- An assignment – developing a personal training business
- A case study – for one personal training client
- A skills observation – client consultation
- A skills observation – health and fitness assessments
- A skills observation – personal training delivery
- A reflective evaluation
- A viva

- END -

## Level 5 Outdoor Animator Qualification Overview



# **Level 5 Outdoor Animator Qualification Overview**

**(referenced to the European Qualification Framework L5)**

### Qualification Objective

The objective of this qualification is to provide the knowledge and skills required to perform the varied roles of an Outdoor Animator, including:

- Understanding the local environment (e.g. geography, history, meteorology, conservation areas) and being able to communicate key features, issues, safety concerns to participants in an appropriate manner
- Understanding and being able to act as a professional when leading groups undertaking outdoor activities
- Being able to work safely and deal with emergencies
- Understanding and being able to manage outdoor activities, ensuring that legislations, regulations, guidelines and best practice are followed at all times
- Being able to work with groups and individuals within groups to ensure a safe, enjoyable and valuable experience for all

The qualification is aimed at individuals who wish to work in the outdoors delivering recreational activities to a range of participants. This qualification has been mapped to the ELESAs standards which are mapped to the EQF at Level 5.

## Qualification Structure

Learners must complete all the Mandatory Qualification Modules and a minimum of two Professional Technical Capacity modules to achieve the qualification.

Qualification – Mandatory Modules	
Outdoor Environment	Animation Skills
Outdoor Animator as a Profession	Use of Specific Technical Resources
Basic Safety Programme	Applied Psychology
Managing General Technical Resources	Pedagogy and Communication Strategies
Applied Physiology	Safety Management
Workplace Organisation - Management	Workplace Organisation – Service Delivery
Professional Technical Capacity Modules	
Kayaking/Canoeing on lakes (non-inflatable kayak, inflatable kayak/fun-yak, inflatable canoe, open canoe, sit-on-top canoe)	Kayaking/Canoeing on streams (non-inflatable kayak, inflatable kayak/fun-yak, inflatable canoe, open canoe, sit-on-top canoe)
Sea Kayaking	Caving
Alpine Skiing	High Ropes Parks
Snowboarding	Top rope climbing
Hiking and Walking	Via Ferrata
Orienteering	Archery
Mountain Biking	Rafting
Canyoning	White Water Swimming

Recommended minimum total qualification details are shown in the table below (expressed in hours):

Total Qualification Time (in hours)	Directed Learning	Self-Directed Learning	Workplace Learning	ECVET Credits
3200	1200	390	1610	120

## Module Summaries:

### 1. Outdoor Environment

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand the culture, history and local environment
- Understand the natural and geographical environment
- Understand and interpret international designations and areas of conservation
- Be able to apply local knowledge when acting as an outdoor animator

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A Project – Developing Local Knowledge
- A Performance, or Practical Observation

### 2. Outdoor Animator as a Profession

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand the role of outdoor animators
- Be able to act as a professional outdoor animator

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A Portfolio of workplace/experiential evidence and a written report/reflective log to explain the theories applied and rationales for professional practice
- A Performance, or Practical Observation

### 3. Basic Safety Programme

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand the relevant regulations and legislations
- Understand risk management
- Be able to plan and deliver safe and effective outdoor programmes
- Be able to deal with emergencies in the outdoors

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A Portfolio of workplace/experiential evidence and a written report/reflective log to explain the theories applied and rationales for professional practice
- A Performance, or Practical Observation

#### 4. Manage General Technical Resources

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand how to use equipment appropriately
- Be able to manage general technical equipment

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A Portfolio of workplace/experiential evidence and a written report/reflective log to explain the theories applied and rationales for professional practice
- A Performance, or Practical Observation

#### 5. Applied Physiology

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand anatomy and physiology relevant to outdoor animation
- Understand the principles of movement
- Be able to apply anatomy and physiological understanding to outdoor animation

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A Multiple-Choice Examination
- A Performance, or Practical Observation

#### 6. Workplace Organisation – Management

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Understand relevant legislation and regulations
- Understand outdoor tourism products
- Be able to act as a professional Outdoor Animator

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A Portfolio of workplace/experiential evidence and a written report/reflective log to explain the theories applied and rationales for professional practice
- A Performance, or Practical Observation

#### 7. Animation Skills

This module provides the learner with the skills to be able to animate groups in the outdoors.

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A Performance, or Practical Observation

## 8. Use of Specific Technical Resources

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Know how to use resources
- Know how to transport resources, equipment and people safely
- Be able to transport, prepare and use resources safely

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A portfolio of workplace/experiential evidence and a written report/reflective log to explain the theories applied and rationales for professional practice
- A performance, or practical observation

## 9. Applied Psychology

This module provides the learner with the knowledge to understand the human mind and its application in the outdoor context.

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A portfolio of workplace/experiential evidence and a written report/reflective log to explain the theories applied and rationales for professional practice

## 10. Pedagogy and Communication Strategies

This module provides the learner with the skills to be able to communicate efficiently with a range of participants.

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A performance, or practical observation

## 11. Safety Management

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Prepare for a safe and effective session
- Apply legislation and regulation appropriately
- Manage emergencies and rescues
- Report on emergencies and activities

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A portfolio of workplace/experiential evidence and a written report/reflective log to explain the theories applied and rationales for professional practice
- A performance, or practical observation

### 12. Workplace Organisation – Service Delivery

This module provides the learner with the knowledge and skills to:

- Be able to deliver a professional Outdoor Animation service

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete the following assessments to achieve this module:

- A performance, or practical observation

### 13. Professional Technical Capacity (PTC) Modules

In addition to the Mandatory Modules, learners must complete a minimum of two PTC Modules to achieve the qualification. The PTC Modules demonstrate that the learner has the required technical competence in the selected outdoor activities to apply this knowledge and skill to leading outdoor animation activities.

Common Assessment Strategy

The learner must complete a performance observation for each of their selected PTC modules.

## APPENDIX 5 Country Fact Sheets

After the publication of the Council Recommendations on the EQF clearly stopped any notion of a direct relationship between international/sector qualifications and the EQF the SIQAF Task Force decided to conduct a series of interviews with 8 different national coordination points/NQFs. The results can be read here.

The countries selected included some which have already included some international qualifications that were identified in the ICF Study<sup>46</sup> (NL, PT, SI and UK) and some where there was already a relationship between the Active Leisure Sector and activities of the NQFs (BE (FL), EL, PL). Switzerland was also selected as it has developed a comprehensive national process and some of their NCP experts had assisted the SIQAF project work.

The interviews were held against a proscriptive template of questions:

1. Meeting date/ place/ organisations & representatives involved
2. Description of the national organisation (NCP)
3. Description on procedures for an international qualification to be considered for inclusion on NQF & requirement of documents/criteria (if applicable)
4. Criteria or process that are used when determining a level for a qualification on the NQF
5. Liaison with any other NQF about the type, range and levels of qualifications being accepted onto the NQF (if applicable)
6. Licensing/ accreditation/ national quality assurance process (e.g. EQAVET) for VET providers operating: how does it work, and how might it affect an international qualification?
7. Expected timeframe and costs taken in the process from application to acceptance on the NQF when the application is fully compliant with national requirements
8. Views on the inclusion or non-acceptance of international qualifications on your framework
9. Comments

Direct comparisons between the results of the interviews proved difficult but in all cases there was a recognition that international/sectoral initiatives in the field of qualifications are a reality that cannot be neglected. There was also a willingness to discuss concepts and possible procedures which could be put into place to facilitate the possible inclusion of international/sectoral qualifications onto their NQFs and the common themes that emerged were:

- Processes for individual qualification or framework inclusion do not currently exist but would be seriously considered in recognition that international/sector qualifications and frameworks exist and are here to stay

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 2

- “Recognised” national partners for the sector / international organisation will inevitably have to be involved
- The proposing European/international organisation would have to prove their position and justification for expecting their qualification/framework to be accepted
- Concern that one NCP/NQF might have “lower” or “different” standards to another if it was used in supporting evidence
- Recognition that it was unlikely that a sectoral/international organisation would be willing, or to have the resources to make multiple applications to different NCPs/NQFs who may all have different expectations, processes, charges in place (over time)
- Acceptance that most NCPs/NQFs would not have the resources themselves to manage a large number of potential sectoral/international qualification applications

The country fact sheets summarising the interviews and some accompanying documentation follow.



## Possible relationship and relevance of international qualifications to your National Qualification Framework

1. Meeting date/ place/ organisations & representatives involved

31-08-2017 / Brussels / Sport Vlaanderen / Mr. Hans Ponnet and his team

2. Description of the national organisation (NCP):

AHOVOKS (Agentschap Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs, Kwalificaties en Studietoelagen) is the Flemish NCP.

On the other hand, and by Decree, Sport Vlaanderen (ex BLOSO) the Flemish 'sport' administration has an important role regarding the implementation and referencing of 'sport' qualifications to the EQF.

One of the principle assignments of Sport Vlaanderen is the establishment of the 'VTS', the Flemish Coaches School. The VTS relies basically on the Flemish Decree on the recognition and subsidisation of the organized sport sector (June 10, 2016).

The 2016 decree lists some 53 'sports' eligible for subsidisation and an important condition for subsidisation for every sport federation is the provision of a training programme for their training and coaching staff. All sport training programmes are structured and coordinated by VTS (decree 2016) along basically 3 main degrees: Trainer A, Trainer B and Initiator. These 'professional' degrees correspond with EQF 6, EQF 5 and EQF 4.

In fact, based on decree 2016 VTS holds a monopoly on regulated sport qualifications in Flanders.

VTS aligns its referencing to EQF with the Flemish NCP: AHOVOKS. However, the VTS referencing to EQF (approved by AHOVOKS) is limited to the sports practiced in the recognised Flemish sport federations only.

VTS qualifications are not transferable to Flemish 'education' providers without prior admission by the VTS. In other words, official public (sport)-schools cannot provide for sport technical VTS qualifications without recognition.

Up-till 01-01-2017 FITNESS was listed as a recognised sport and had to comply with the decree previous to the decree of June 2016. OUTDOORS has never been listed in the 2016 decree (or its predecessors).

Both Fitness (since 01-01-2017) and the Outdoors can approach AVOHOKS directly in order to reference e.g. the 'Personal Trainer' or the 'Outdoor Animator' qualifications to EQF.

3. *Description on procedures for an international qualification to be considered for inclusion on NQF & requirement of documents/criteria (if applicable):*

*Apart from other assignments (hence the long acronym) AHOVOKS serves as the Flemish NCP. There are no formal procedures for an international qualification to be considered for inclusion on the Flemish QF. The only formal criterion is that the application must be introduced by an employers organization. The European Confederation of Outdoor Employers in conjunction with it's Flemish partner the BFNO, have recently introduced a request to include the ELESa Outdoor Animator qualification onto the FQF. The formal approval is expected by March 2018.*

*The situation for the 'Personal Trainer' is slightly different because the Flemish Fitness federation had already requested referencing to EQF prior to 01-01-2016 (cfr. box 2). By means of a specific procedure the 'Fitness Instructor' has recently (end 2017) been updated.*

4. *Criteria or process that are used when determining a level for a qualification on the NQF:*

*These criteria seem to be a well-kept secret. However, the so-called assessment commission uses a kind of digital tool to evaluate five different parameters related to skills, knowledge, context, autonomy and responsibility.*

5. *Liaison with any other NQF about the type, range and levels of qualifications being accepted onto the NQF (if applicable):*

*Trough the NVAO accreditation body (= Dutch/Flemish Accreditation Organisation) a close collaboration exists between the Dutch and Flemish education authorities. Regarding international qualifications 'informal consultation' is the rule of thumb.*

6. *Licensing/ accreditation/ national quality assurance process (e.g. EQAVET) for VET providers operating: how does it work, and how might it affect an international qualification?*

*There seem to be no formal procedures for VET providers in place as yet. However, if a qualification is offered by an official public (sport)-school, it is the responsibility of the overarching school structure (inspection) to monitor the quality of the training programme.*

7. *Expected timeframe and costs taken in the process from application to acceptance on the NQF when the application is fully compliant with national requirements:*

*a) The expected timeframe is +/- 6 months but all depends on priorities by AHOVOKS and staff available.  
b) costs: nihil*

8. *Views on the inclusion or non-acceptance of international qualifications on your framework:*

*The only formal position by AHOVOKS on the inclusion of (international) qualifications is that the application must be introduced by 'representatives from the labour market'.*

9. *Comments:*

*It is important to note that the Flemish CP (AHOVOKS) distinguishes two (2) clearly separated sets of qualifications and these qualifications are not automatically linked (as is e.g. the case with the qualifications delivered by the Flemish Trainers School (VTS):*

*1) Professional qualification:*

*“Complete and classified set of competences with which a profession can be executed”.*

*2) Educational qualification:*

*“Complete and classified set of competences which are necessary to function and participate in society, with which further studies in secondary or higher education can be undertaken or professional activities can be performed”.*

*The pathways towards recognition of these qualifications are also different.*

<http://vlaamsekwalficatiestructuur.be/en/>



## Possible relationship and relevance of international qualifications to your National Qualification Framework

### 1. Meeting date/ place/ organisations & representatives involved

28 September – EOPPEP Offices

Dimitra Dede

[d.dede@eoppep.gr](mailto:d.dede@eoppep.gr)

Head of National Qualifications Framework Dpmt

Coordinator of Hellenic EQF-NCP

EOPPEP

National Organization for the Certification  
of Qualifications & Vocational Guidance

also from EOPPEP:

Konstantinos Papaefstathiou –Head of Educational Framework DPT

Athanasouli Angeliki – Head of Dept National Quality Assurance System

### 2. Description of the national organisation (NCP):

The NQF equivalent in Greece is the Hellenic Qualifications Framework (HQF). This is a comprehensive system of classification of all qualifications obtained from formal, non-formal education and informal learning in Greece. There are 8 levels to the HQF which match the 8 levels of the EQF.

The authority in charge of National Qualifications and their relationship with the European related authorities i.e the NCP ( National Coordination Point ) is the EOPPEP (The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance). EOPPEP is responsible for developing the HQF and for referencing it to the European Qualifications Framework, under the supervision and coordination of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs.

### 3. Description on procedures for an international qualification to be considered for inclusion on NQF & requirement of documents/criteria (if applicable):

EQF level 4 is considered suitable for high school formal education only – and any qualification would have to be proposed to the Ministry of Education. It is not possible for employer-led qualifications (i.e. EuropeActive/VET schools in Greece) to propose at L4 qualification for inclusion onto the Greek NQF. The options are to use C-VET which is not operating yet or to go to an I-VET proposal which would place it at L5. In other words, there is no way for our current qualification to be formally included onto the Greek NQF – but there might be a new route created sometime in the future.

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4. *Criteria or process that are used when determining a level for a qualification on the NQF:*

<p>Levelling a qualification is based on Type Specifications.</p> <p>This is the Type Specification for Level 4 which clearly identifies L4 as an Upper Secondary School Certificate.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. TITLE VOCATIONAL UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE</li><li>2. LEVEL 4</li><li>3. AWARDING BODY Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs</li><li>4. SUMMARY DESCRIPTOR Holders have a satisfactory level of general education and the necessary knowledge, skills and competence to continue their studies in higher education.</li><li>5. VOLUME 3 years</li><li>6. PURPOSE Basic</li><li>7. EDUCATION SECTOR Secondary Vocational Education</li><li>8. LEARNING OUTCOMES</li></ol> <p>KNOWLEDGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To possess the basic principles and concepts, the content and scientific vocabulary of each subject area.</li><li>• To acquire basic knowledge for conducting a research.</li><li>• To have basic knowledge of linking different subject areas (interdisciplinary knowledge).</li><li>• To possess the basic principles of the new technologies, at a sufficient level.</li><li>• To write texts, depending on the current requirements (CV, projects, research results, applications, reports, etc).</li></ul> <p>SKILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To express their views with clarity on various issues opposing the appropriate arguments.</li><li>• To use applications of new technologies, in an advanced degree.</li><li>• To conduct experiments and record their results.</li><li>• To be engaged in group work.</li><li>• To take part in programmes concerning the environment, health education, sports and theatrical education.</li></ul> <p>COMPETENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To act with moderate autonomy at school or at work.</li><li>• To supervise others in duties of their responsibilities in the work field.</li><li>• To possess the necessary competence to meet the requirements of study in schools of higher education.</li></ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>9. EMPLOYMENT RELEVANCE</li></ol> <p>EPAL Graduates are awarded: A HQF level 4 certificate giving access to a professional license</p>
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5. *Liaison with any other NQF about the type, range and levels of qualifications being accepted onto the NQF (if applicable):*

N/A
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6. *Licensing/ accreditation/ national quality assurance process (e.g. EQAVET) for VET providers operating: how does it work, and how might it affect an international qualification?*

While in Greece there is not yet a distinct higher institution specialised in quality assurance issues in the area of initial vocational training and, generally, in the field of non-formal
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education, E.O.P.P.E.P. is the National Point of Reference to safeguard quality and represents Greece at the European Quality Assurance reference framework for VET (EQAVET).

I believe in higher education the process of external evaluation is conducted by the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Authority (HQA) - ADIP.

Any internal qualification as a minimum must as a minimum meet EQAVET requirements.

7. *Expected timeframe and costs taken in the process from application to acceptance on the NQF when the application is fully compliant with national requirements:*

???

8. *Views on the inclusion or non-acceptance of international qualifications on your framework:*

EOPPEP confirm that there is no way for a SQF to be automatically recognized or accepted and the only way is to register professional qualifications on national frameworks one by one, with the risk of ending up with different levels in the various member states. It is also interesting to note that the application for a new qualification has to be supported by at least a national employer's federation (not association) and the national employee Federation, (even better if they are recognized as social partners).

EOPPEP generally very interested and impressed with the SIQAF work thus far.

In Greece every fitness centre should have a graduate fitness trainer and this legal requirement is unlikely to change in the near future even though the Minister seemed to recognise that fitness (and outdoors) is now not really within the sport sector. It is also true that universities have a powerful position and political influence. They can also potentially be in competition to VET providers if they start to offer PT training for example, but at present university degree programmes do not really cover the skills required by clubs for them to work effectively as fitness trainers. Universities can also access what is called I-VET training that could potentially cover fitness training – but under the Greek qualification system this is at EQF/NQF level 5. Our “main” PT qualification is currently at EQF level 4.

From our meeting at EOPPEP it was clear that EQF level 4 is considered suitable for high school formal education only – and any qualification would have to be proposed to the Ministry of Education. It is not possible for employer-led qualifications (i.e. EuropeActive/VET schools in Greece) to propose at L4 qualification for inclusion onto the Greek NQF. The options are to use C-VET which is not operating yet or to go to an I-VET proposal which would place it at L5. In other words there is no way for our current qualification to be formally included onto the Greek NQF – but there might be a new route created sometime in the future.

9. *Comments:*

We met with the Minister of Sports Giorgos Vassiliadis and it was suggested that we might follow-up the meeting with with an information meeting for universities. The purpose of this meeting would be for EuropeActive and A.U.G.O. to explain what is happening at a European level in the fitness sector and how clubs are developing in Greece. It was proposed not to talk

specifically about new VET-based qualifications, but just to emphasise that universities have a role to play in the sector and to encourage them to be involved at a European level. It was thought best to avoid encouraging them to think about possibilities for I-VET, C—VET or any other way that they could run PT training (for example) in competition to the accredited VET schools in Greece.



## Country Fact Sheet: THE NETHERLANDS

### Possible relationship and relevance of international qualifications to your National Qualification Framework

1. Meeting date/ place/ organisations & representatives involved

04-10-2017 / Brussels / NCP NLQF / Mr. Tijs Pijls (program director)

2. Description of the national organisation (NCP):

The NLQF is a quasi-autonomous agency operating as the NCP for the Netherlands.  
The NLQF generates extra income by charging applicants for both the validity check and a fixed cost per qualification.

3. Description on procedures for an international qualification to be considered for inclusion on NQF & requirement of documents/criteria (if applicable):

#### Validity check

The validity check ensures that the organisation is eligible for a classification application. This ensures that only trustworthy organisations can indicate an NLQF/ EQF level on certificates and diplomas. This check evaluates the legal personality, the ownership of the qualification, the continuity of the organisation and the organisation's examination and quality assurance process.

If the owner has an externally validated quality assurance system (e.g. accreditation by the Dutch/Flemish Accreditation Organisation or NVAO, or is supervised by the Education Inspectorate, or ISO 9001:2008/2015), it is eligible for a limited validity check. This means that an organisational audit will not take place. This validity lasts for five years.

During these five years, the owner can submit the qualification for classification.

([http://www.nlqf.nl/images/downloads/Annex\\_7.1.1a\\_English\\_leaflet.pdf](http://www.nlqf.nl/images/downloads/Annex_7.1.1a_English_leaflet.pdf))

4. Criteria or process that are used when determining a level for a qualification on the NQF:

The NLQF is an elaboration of the EQF in line with the levels of the Dutch education and labour market.

If the validity of an organisation is assessed positively, the applicant can have their qualifications classified in the NLQF. The applicant justifies the level of the qualification via self-evaluation on the basis of learning results.

A team of independent experts assesses the application and the supporting documents; the Classification Commission then issues a recommendation to the Programme Council. In the event of a positive recommendation from the Programme Council and the allocation of a level, the classified qualification is added to the NCP NLQF register.

5. Liaison with any other NQF about the type, range and levels of qualifications being accepted onto the NQF (if applicable):

Trough the NVAO accreditation body (= Dutch/Flemish Accreditation Organisation) a close collaboration exists between the Dutch and Flemish education authorities.  
Regarding international qualifications 'informal consultation' is the rule of thumb.

6. *Licensing/ accreditation/ national quality assurance process (e.g. EQAVET) for VET providers operating: how does it work, and how might it affect an international qualification?*

*Non-formal qualifications that are not regulated by the government are offered by private training providers, companies, sectors or examination bodies and often focus on additional education for adults.*

*The owners of non-governmental regulated qualifications can submit an application to the NCP NLQF to have their qualification classified in the NLQF. This classification covers two stages:*

*1) Validity check (cfr. nr. 3)*

*2) Classification application (cfr. nr.4)*

*The owner of a qualification maintains the qualification and/or issues the certificates.*

7. *Expected timeframe and costs taken in the process from application to acceptance on the NQF when the application is fully compliant with national requirements:*

*Time: ?*

*Costs: Validity check from € 1.000 to € 7.500 + € 2.500 per qualification*

8. *Views on the inclusion or non-acceptance of international qualifications on your framework:*

*The NCP is open to the idea of including international qualifications onto the Dutch qualification framework. It would also imply that the owner of the qualification maintains the qualification and issues the certificate of achievement to the candidates who meet the qualification requirements. The latter implies that the owner should also validate and quality-control the training providers delivering the qualification.*

9. *Comments:*

*The Dutch NCP is probably the only NCP that charges the owner of a qualification to get the qualification registered in the national qualifications register.*



## Possible relationship and relevance of international qualifications to your National Qualification Framework

### 10. Meeting date/ place/ organisations & representatives involved

10-09-2017/Poland, Warsaw/Urszula Martynowicz, The Director of The Strategy and International Cooperation Department, Ministry of National Education and Anna Szumilewicz, Vice-Dean for Education, Faculty of Tourism and Recreation, Gdansk University of Physical Education and Sport.

### 11. Description of the national organisation (NCP):

The National Co-ordination Point for the Polish and European Qualifications Framework at the Ministry of National Education

### 12. Description on procedures for an international qualification to be considered for inclusion on NQF & requirement of documents/criteria (if applicable):

In Poland there is an Integrated Qualification System (ZSK). This system includes the following types of qualifications:

1. **full** - awarded exclusively in the system of education and higher education, linked to the level of education;
2. **partial** - given in the system of education, crafts, after the completion of postgraduate studies, market and regulated qualifications;
3. **market** - qualifications not regulated by law, awarded on the basis of freedom of market activities;
4. **regulated** - qualifications established by separate regulations, the award of which is done in accordance with the rules laid down in these regulations, excluding the qualifications given in the education system and the higher education system.

There is no separate procedure for incorporating international qualification into the ZSK, therefore a general market qualification procedure would be used.

If an international qualification (known and recognized in many countries) was registered in the Integrated Qualification System, it would be both a partial and a market qualification. No such qualifications have been proposed for the ZSK so far, although questions have been raised by institutions issuing language and computer certificates regarding the possibility of incorporating these qualifications into the ZSK.

The application is submitted electronically via the web portal to the minister responsible for the qualification. It should contain:

1. Data of the entity applying for the inclusion of the qualification;
2. Description of the market qualification
3. Learning outcomes required for this qualification;
4. Proposals for assigning the Polish Qualification Framework level to the qualification and reference to the Sector Qualifications Framework if the Sectoral Qualification Framework is established in the sector or industry concerned;
5. Information about the approximate cost of obtaining a document confirming the receipt of a given qualification;
6. Training code in accordance with standard classifications and nomenclature;
7. Code of the Polish Classification of Activities (PKD).

The application also includes documents confirming the fulfillment of the condition of carrying out organized activity in the area of economy, labor market, education or training, statement of the truthfulness of the submitted data and confirmation of payment of the application fee.

**5. Criteria or process that are used when determining a level for a qualification on the NQF:**

The Polish NQF level is assigned after comparing the learning outcomes identified for a given qualification in the application, with the characteristics of the learning outcomes in the Polish Qualifications Framework published in:

- a. Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 13 April 2016 on the characteristics of the second degree of the Polish Qualifications Framework typical for general qualifications - **levels 1-4**;
- b. Regulation of the Minister of National Education and the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 17 June 2016 on the characterization of the second degree of the Polish Qualifications Framework typical for qualification obtained after full level 4 qualifications - **level 5**;
- c. Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 26 September 2016 on the characteristics of the second degree of the Polish Qualifications Framework typical for qualifications obtained in the framework of higher education after obtaining full qualifications at level 4 - **levels 6-8**;
- d. Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 13 April 2016 on the characteristics of the second degree of the Polish Qualifications Framework typical for professional qualifications - **levels 1-8**

Comparisons of learning outcomes to the PQF characteristics are made by an expert panel appointed by the minister competent for the qualification examining the application for inclusion in the ZSK.

**6. Liaison with any other NQF about the type, range and levels of qualifications being accepted onto the NQF (if applicable):**

The National Co-ordination Point for the Polish and European Qualifications Framework is in contact with other Points on the qualification of people who already are in the labor market and possess qualifications, seeking joint answers to their needs. The staff of the National Point in Poland also participate in joint meetings of the Euroadvice network, Europass and NCP EQF, as well as in the meetings of the EQF Advisory Group (EQF AG). These meetings also cover issues related to leveling qualifications, mutual trust in leveling, and the type and scope of qualifications given the level of national qualification frameworks.

**7. Licensing/ accreditation/ national quality assurance process (e.g. EQAVET) for VET providers operating: how does it work, and how might it affect an international qualification?**

In Poland there is an accreditation procedure granted by educational superintendents in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 20 December 2003 on the accreditation of institutions and centers providing continuing education in extracurricular forms. This accreditation does not apply to qualification in the ZSK and does not affect them. However, they may use a facility providing training or courses, including preparation for international qualifications.

In response to the recommendation on EQAVET, Poland has developed "Quality Standards for Vocational Training" as a voluntary tool that can be used by school principals and teachers in vocational education and training to take action to improve the quality of work, increase the effectiveness of education and improve the image of school or institution. Standards should facilitate the evaluation of the various areas of the vocational school not only of the management and pedagogical staff but also of pupils and their parents, representatives of the local community (including employers) and, in part, also the pedagogical supervisory authorities. Standards are available in Polish, German, English and French.

<https://wyszukiwarka.efs.men.gov.pl/product/standardy-jakosci-ksztalcenia-zawodowego/attachment/2072>

An international qualification institution may use the developed "Quality Standards for Vocational Training" but this is not an obligation and does not directly affect the possible inclusion of qualifications in the ZSK.

**8. Expected timeframe and costs taken in the process from application to acceptance on the NQF when the application is fully compliant with national requirements:**

The competent minister shall consider the application for inclusion of the qualification in the ZSK within four months of the date of receipt of the formally correct application. The deadline may be extended once by four months. The fee is 2.000 PLN.

**9. Views on the inclusion or non-acceptance of international qualifications on your framework:**

The decision on the inclusion in the ZSK of each market qualification (including international) is made by the minister competent for the qualification after consultation with the interested parties and then after the socio-economic opinion has been gathered on the need to include the qualification in the ZSK. Qualifications must be of adequate quality and respond to the needs of the labor market. In the opinion of the National Coordination Point for the Polish and European Qualification Framework, the more market qualifications will be incorporated into the ZSK, the more opportunities citizens will have for their acquisition and thus their competitiveness in the labor market. The development of ZSK has also a potential for increasing the proportion of adults participating in learning.

**10. Comments:**

The Act on the Integrated Qualification System (ZSK) also provides for the possibility of creating Sectoral Qualification Frameworks. Sectoral Qualification Framework is a description of the qualification levels of a particular sector or industry. The Qualification Framework levels correspond to the relevant levels of the Polish Qualifications Framework. By the end of September 2017, two Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks were developed and published in the form of the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 21 June 2017 on the Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Sport sector and the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 18 May 2017 on the Sectoral Qualification Framework in the Tourism sector.



**Possible relationship and relevance of international qualifications to your National Qualification Framework**

*13. Meeting date/ place/ organisations & representatives involved*

Thursday 9th November at Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude, Lisbon, Portugal  
Vitor Pataco – IPDJ - Vice President  
Mário Moreira – IPDJ - Qualification and Training Department Director  
Cristina Almeida – IPDJ - Senior Program Manager - Qualification and Training  
Helena Leal – IPDJ - Senior Program Manager - Qualification and Training  
  
Cliff Collins - EuropeActive

*14. Description of the national organisation (NCP):*

Agência Nacional para a Qualificação, I.P. (National Agency for Qualification - ANQEP )  
The education and training system has recently undergone a number of major reforms which have basically led to the setting up of the National Qualifications System. The setting up of the National Qualifications System in Portugal was designed to achieve a number of objectives. By and large, these objectives are in tune with the objectives to be expected of any national qualifications system.

The setting up of the National Qualifications System led to the adoption of a new institutional solution for the general coordination of the system. This took the form of the National Agency for Qualifications, under the aegis of the Ministries of Labour and Social Solidarity and Education. Its mission is to coordinate the implementation of education and professional training policies for both young people and adults and to develop and manage the system for the recognition, validation and certification of competences. This agency, an institutional innovation, was charged with the objective of integrating the education and training subsystems and developing an oversight framework and monitoring mechanisms and improving the system's quality of response.

Mention should also be made here of the reform of the accreditation system for training bodies, the further development work on mechanisms for overseeing the offer to young people and adults and the creation of the Quality Charter for the New Opportunities Centres, under the guidance of the National Agency for Qualifications.

The National Qualifications System is supported by a new institutional model. Key elements include the National Council for Professional Training, the National Agency for Qualifications, I.P. (NAQ, I.P.) and the Sector Qualifications Councils. The fitness sector currently falls under the remit of "sport" and the outdoor sector under the remit of tourism.

More specifically for fitness, its qualifications are controlled under Law 39/2012 which approves the regime of technical responsibility for the direction and orientation of sports activities carried out in sports facilities. More particularly fitness professionals need to have a licence to practice (issued by IDPJ) and to be based on:

- A. Degree in the field of sports or physical education, as identified by the Directorate-General for Higher Education;
- B. Professional qualifications recognized under the terms of Law nr. 9/2009, of March 4<sup>th</sup>  
→ EU Directive 2006/100/CE

There are also technical qualifications for fitness and outdoor animators:

813325 – Técnico/a Especialista em Exercício Físico (QNQ L5)

812307 – Técnico/a Especialista em Turismo de Ar Livre (QNQ L5)

15. *Description on procedures for an international qualification to be considered for inclusion on NQF & requirement of documents/criteria (if applicable):*

N/A

16. *Criteria or process that are used when determining a level for a qualification on the NQF:*

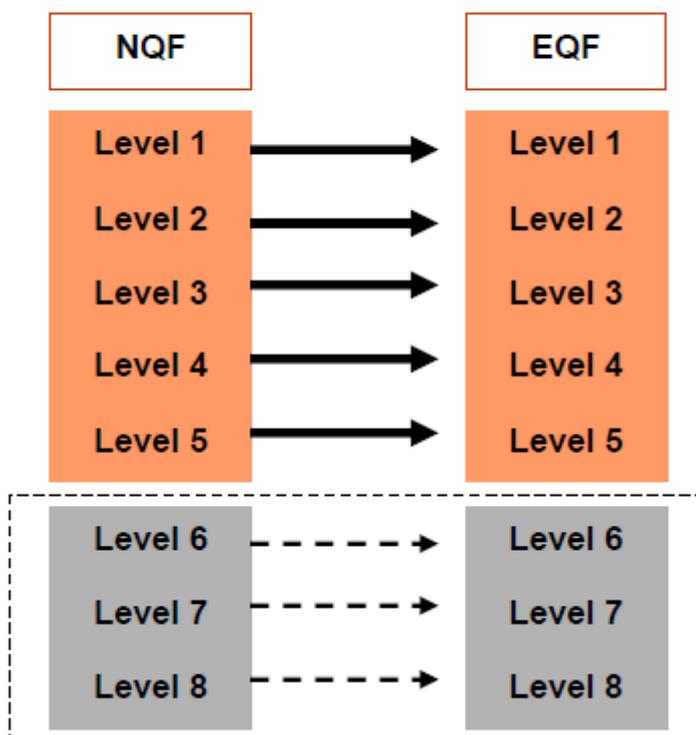
There are basically two qualification typologies in the national education and training system; the qualifications which are developed through the general education path and those that are developed through double certification pathways - VET path, including recognition of informal and non-formal learning (RVCC). The principles for including qualifications in each of these typologies into the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) are the same, but the procedures are different.

With the NQF in force since October 2010, the principle for the integration of these qualifications into the NQF involves ensuring that the expected learning outcomes are in line with the levels descriptors in the NQF, in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The integration of qualifications awarded through the general education paths is decided by the Ministry of Education, taking into account the national curricula stipulated for basic and secondary education and relates to the competences to be acquired in each educational level and in each subject area.

Any proposal to develop new qualifications and associated curricular plans is the responsibility of the General Directorate for Curricular Development and Innovation (GDCCI), from Ministry of Education which will put such plans forward for approval by the ministry.

In the case of VET qualifications (double certification qualifications), all the qualifications integrated in the National Qualifications Catalogue (NQC), are included in the NQF. The National Qualifications Catalogue (NQC) is an instrument for the regulation of the national qualifications system. It includes double certification, qualifications organised by qualifications level (NQF levels 2, 4 and 5) and the national classification included in the NQC can be accessed, progressively, through the different VET modalities defined in article 9 of Decree-Law no. 396/2007, of the 31st of December including recognition of non-formal and informal learning (RVCC).

**Figure 2: The referencing of Portuguese NQF to the EQF**



The principle for including qualifications in the NQF, either through the general education path or VET is the matching of the expected learning outcomes with NQF levels descriptors.

17. *Liaison with any other NQF about the type, range and levels of qualifications being accepted onto the NQF (if applicable):*

N/A

18. *Licensing/ accreditation/ national quality assurance process (e.g. EQAVET) for VET providers operating: how does it work, and how might it affect an international qualification?*

The national quality assurance system incorporates a wide range of organisational models and various players across the different education and training subsystems. Within this diversity, it is possible to identify two regulatory areas: one relating to schools run by the Ministry of Education and another relating to the training providers under the control of the Ministry of Labour.

A first principle is the licensing of an education and training provider within the education and training system. This means that to become an education and training provider it requires the demonstration and verification of certain technical and materials capabilities, with minimum standards for these being set as a function of the type of course they offer. The adoption of planning, monitoring, assessment and improvement mechanisms is common to the various quality devices operating within the internal management systems of all education and training institutions.

A second principle which is evident in the national quality assurance system is the ongoing monitoring and assessment of the work being done and the results achieved by the various operators in the system. One part of the assessment mechanism involves comparing performances with established quality references and, to this end, monitoring and evaluation locally.

The Certification System for Training Providers:

The certification system for training providers acts, like the other systems, as a quality assurance mechanism for the National Qualifications System in Portugal. The certification of training providers is a necessary requirement for the training developed by these entities to be certificated, in terms of the National Qualifications System, and for accessing public funds to finance training.

The certification process, which was formerly associated with areas of the training cycle (such as the diagnosis of training needs, the planning of training or the development/implementation of training courses and activities), now involves the global recognition of the training entity, for the education and training areas in which this organisation works. Certification by area implies that the training provider carries out specialised work in specific thematic areas. This requires specific technical evaluation of dimensions such as the suitability of the training programmes and contents, the technical competences of the trainers and the minimum technical requirements for facilities and equipment.

To obtain certification, training providers must show that they comply with a set of conditions which determine the quality of their training provision service. In addition to meeting these prerequisites, which are understood as being the necessary legal conditions for then requesting certification, the structure and the technical and pedagogical practices of the organisation are also assessed to see if they comply with the minimum requirements set out in the Quality Assurance Reference for Certification.

19. *Expected timeframe and costs taken in the process from application to acceptance on the NQF when the application is fully compliant with national requirements:*

Not available.

20. *Views on the inclusion or non-acceptance of international qualifications on your framework:*

The National Qualifications Catalogue and the Sector Qualifications Councils:  
In the area of designing, revising and updating qualifications, and in the belief that the curricular aspect is key to the credibility of the qualification system, the National Qualifications Catalogue is one of the core quality assurance mechanisms for the VET subsystem and the qualifications it produces. As the instrument for the referencing of processes for the recognition, validation and certification of competences, the NQC also has a role to play as facilitator of the transparency between learning achieved in formal, non-formal and informal contexts.

With a view to ensuring that the NQC is updated and in constant development through the active participation of social and economic agents, 16 Sector Qualifications Councils were set up and these are now a structural part of the National Qualifications System. The Open Consultation Model for the updating of the National Qualifications Catalogue is another important mechanism in the process for revising and updating qualifications. This model allows interested parties to submit proposals for updating the National Qualifications Catalogue.

The NAQ offers a set of forms and guidelines, aimed at all those operating in the education and training system, which are to be used in the development of the qualifications. They ensure compliance with the principles and methodological approaches inherent in developing/updating the catalogue. The NQC plays a crucially important role in the operation of the NQF by making certain that the learning outcomes associated with the qualifications match the level descriptors in the NQF, thus ensuring that national qualifications are correctly referenced to the NQF.

*21. Comments:*

Technically it is possible to introduce an international qualification onto the Portuguese NQF but any approach would not be accepted unless it was fully supported by the relevant Ministry and in this case fitness or outdoor stakeholders who are recognised as competent bodies by the Government. There are some early thoughts about how the current fitness and outdoor qualifications could be reviewed, and that they would like to think that any changes could be developed in the broader perspective of European cooperation.



### Possible relationship and relevance of international qualifications to your National Qualification Framework

1. Meeting date/ place/ organisations & representatives involved

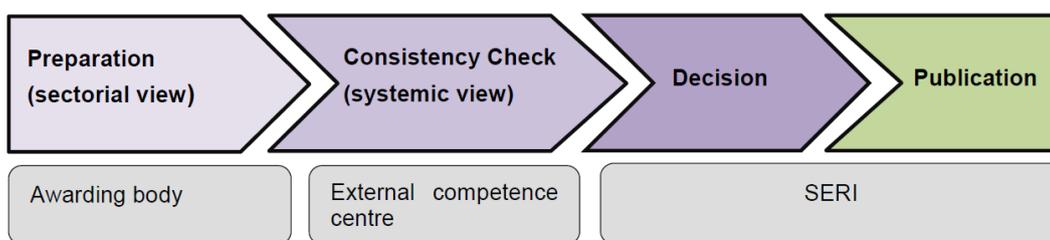
Discussion by phone and email during August & September 2017 with Sandra Müller, from SERI ([www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home.html](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home.html))

2. Description of the national organisation (NCP):

In Switzerland, SERI is responsible for the national coordination of NQF and EQF matters.

3. Description on procedures for an international qualification to be considered for inclusion on NQF & requirement of documents/criteria (if applicable):

In Switzerland, only formal Swiss qualifications can be included into the NQF. They describe the process as follows:



First the qualification awarding bodies prepare a NQF level proposal on the basis of the competences described for the qualification. As the external competence centre mandated by SERI, SFIVET then verifies the consistency of the assignment and compliance with the scheme logic. SERI then takes the final decision on assignment.

4. Criteria or process that are used when determining a level for a qualification on the NQF:

By now, there is two pathways for determining a level for a qualification. After several referencing cases, Switzerland found that in most cases a particular qualification type (e.g. *Berufsattest* or *Berufsprüfung*) corresponds to an NQF level. So the “standardized referencing” means that any (new) qualification will automatically be referenced to an NQF level according the type of qualification. This process does not cost anything and is automated. If the organizing institution / awarding body of the qualification DOES not agree with this automated referencing they can apply for re-consideration. This process currently does not cost anything yet either, beyond the preparatory work to be fulfilled by the organizing institution. The results of any new referencing processes get published twice a year (1<sup>st</sup> Jan and July) and the procedures can take around half a year, sometimes longer. (If the current description of a qualification is not based on learning outcomes the process will take longer as the organizing institution will need to re-write the qualification on the base of competences and learning outcomes.

*The procedure used to develop and implement the Swiss NQF conforms to the 10 referencing criteria drawn up by the EQF Advisory Group. The Swiss referencing report spells out these criteria and “translates” them for the Swiss situation.*

*For the referencing process itself the organizing institutions / awarding bodies, in their NQF level proposal, need to draw up the learning outcomes of the qualification in question and reference each one to a NQF level. The individual levels of all outcomes then need to be merged, e.g. via a weighted arithmetic mean or other mean values.*

*The NQF level proposal needs to include all relevant (quasi-)legal documents, an overview of the professional competencies of the qualification in question, the grid of professional competencies based on the NQF (including a final level suggestion) as well as empirical evidence where appropriate.*

5. *Liaison with any other NQF about the type, range and levels of qualifications being accepted onto the NQF (if applicable):*

*Switzerland is part of a DACH NQF coordination group (Switzerland, Austria & Germany), in which the (main) German speaking countries liaise about the issues surrounding NQF and NQF referencing.*

6. *Licensing/ accreditation/ national quality assurance process (e.g. EQAVET) for VET providers operating: how does it work, and how might it affect an international qualification?*

*Switzerland does not accept international qualifications for consideration of their NQF.*

7. *Expected timeframe and costs taken in the process from application to acceptance on the NQF when the application is fully compliant with national requirements:*

*See answer to point 4.*

8. *Views on the inclusion or non-acceptance of international qualifications on your framework:*

*Switzerland does not accept international (and/or information) qualifications onto their NQF as the referencing process is based on the quasi-legal descriptions of formal Swiss VET qualifications.*

9. *Comments:*



## Country Fact Sheet

### Possible relationship and relevance of international qualifications to your National Qualification Framework

#### 22. Meeting date/ place/ organisations & representatives involved

15<sup>th</sup> September 2017  
National Olympic Committee office, Ljubljana, Slovenia  
Dr. Boro Strumbelj / Director General, Sport Directorate, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport  
Mojca P. Ternovsek / Sport Directorate, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport  
Urska Karencic / CPI / Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training  
Peter Levic / Ministry of Education, Science and Sport  
Vida Mihelcic / Ministry of Education, Science and Sport  
Blaz Perko / OKS / Secretary General - Olympic Committee SI  
Prof. Dusan Gerlovic / President of the Fitness Federation SL  
Marina and Matjaz Sink / Reebok SL (employer)  
Gasper Simcic / Fitness Federation SL (employer)  
Jozi Sepohar Znidar / Fitness Federation SL (employer)  
  
Cliff Collins and Julian Berriman / EuropeActive

#### 23. Description of the national organisation (NCP):

The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI) was appointed the National Coordination Point (NCP) for the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in Slovenia. Its activities are meaningfully combined with the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (NAKVIS).

The task of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training is to provide access to relevant information, to elaborate materials and to coordinate the work of all the stakeholders with the view on how national qualifications relate to the European Qualifications Framework through the national qualification system. It is tasked to:

- Prepare the Strategy and referencing procedures of Slovenian qualification levels to the European Qualifications Framework in line with relevant criteria;
- Draft positions for the Consultation Group within the European Commission;
- Approve expert groundwork with the view to set up the Slovenian Qualifications Framework;
- Draft guidelines to implementation groups and preparing substantive groundwork for the commitment of earmarked funds from the ESS;

- Monitor the process of the establishment of the Slovenian Qualifications Framework and providing for referencing of individual qualification standards

24. *Description on procedures for an international qualification to be considered for inclusion on NQF & requirement of documents/criteria (if applicable):*

N/A

25. *Criteria or process that are used when determining a level for a qualification on the NQF:*

The Slovenian Qualifications Framework is a unified system of qualifications in the Republic of Slovenia for the classification of qualifications into levels with regard to learning outcomes. The SI SQF is a framework of communication that also contains a small element of reform. The starting points for the classification of qualifications in the SQF were the relevant sectoral legislation and the Classification System of Education and Training (KLASIUS).

The components of the Slovenian Qualifications Framework are:

- Level descriptors: covering 10 levels and three categories (knowledge, skills, competences);
- Qualifications framework: tabular presentation of categories and types of qualifications at 10 qualification levels;
- Methodology of the description and referencing of qualifications;
- The SI SQF Register.

The fundamental role of Slovenia's qualifications framework is to clarify the horizontal and vertical relations between different types of qualifications, certificates and diplomas/degrees. They consist of level descriptors, where each level descriptor is explained in terms of learning outcomes.

Qualifications are described with regard to the parameters below:

1. Qualification, expressed by the name of the document
2. Type of education
3. Duration of education and allocation of credits (where it exists)
4. Admission requirements
5. Providers
6. Learning outcomes (SQF levels)
7. Assessment and completion: assessment system, progression, condition for obtaining a public document
8. Transitions

QUALIFICATION	
Type of education	
Duration	
Admission requirements	
Providers	
Learning outcomes (SQF levels)	
Assessment and completion	Assessment system: Promotions Condition for obtaining a public document
Transitions	

26. *Liaison with any other NQF about the type, range and levels of qualifications being accepted onto the NQF (if applicable):*

N/A

27. *Licensing/ accreditation/ national quality assurance process (e.g. EQAVET) for VET providers operating: how does it work, and how might it affect an international qualification?*

In 2012, the process of deregulating regulated professions commenced and some progress has already been achieved. So far, regulated professions have fallen from 323 to 262. The adoption of the Slovenian Small Business Act in July 2013 reduced the number of regulated craft activities from 64 to 24 (Commission staff working document, Assessment of the 2014 national reform programme and stability programme for Slovenia, 2014).

Government regulated VET leading to formal vocational qualifications is based on occupational standards. The design of occupational standards, programmes and qualifications is funded by the ministries and prepared in cooperation with social partners.

There is a difference in quality assurance between CVET providers of certified and non-certified non-formal CVET programmes, regulated by legislation in ensuring quality provision. Institution or organisations running certified CVET programmes must meet certain quality requirements to be included in the register of providers at the appropriate ministry. In non-certified programmes, no systematic quality assurance exists.

The NVQ system contains clear elements of a quality assurance system, apparent from the following points:

- (a) occupational standards and catalogues of vocational knowledge and skills are planned at national level in conjunction with social partners;
- (b) providers of NVQ validation procedures are accredited by NEC. They also provide advice to participants in NVQ validation procedures;
- (c) counsellors advise candidates about NVQ validation procedures help preparing portfolios and advise on possibilities for additional training. Counsellors undergo compulsory training;

(d) assessors of NVQ validation procedures undergo compulsory training and obtain a licence from NEC. Provisions on the composition of the committee for validating NVQs are contained in the catalogue of standards of vocational knowledge and skills;

(e) candidates have the right to appeal against the result of NVQ validation procedure;

(f) CPI carries out evaluation of the NVQ system and NEC provides on-going monitoring of the work of the committees during assessment procedures. NEC and CPI also run workshops with committee members and counsellors, where detailed instructions for implementing individual NVQ are prepared.

28. *Expected timeframe and costs taken in the process from application to acceptance on the NQF when the application is fully compliant with national requirements:*

There are 3 pillars to the qualification structure in SI. The 3<sup>rd</sup> pillar is designed for the use of employer-led qualifications but does not yet exist.

29. *Views on the inclusion or non-acceptance of international qualifications on your framework:*

At the meeting in Ljubljana there was a general acceptance that outdoors and fitness can be considered to be outside of sport – the general term used for active leisure was “sport for all”. There is now a new law in Slovenia that anyone coaching/training in sport (using the widest definition), has to complete a “foundation” certificate which covers some basics such as how the human body works. Then, depending on the specific sport and whether it is for performance or participation (sport for all) a second more intensive and specific coaching qualification will be necessary.

The Slovenian Government have not yet decided on this second requirement, but fitness is already excluded from the requirement. The outdoor sector was not represented at the meeting, but it would be worthwhile for EC-OE/SI national contacts to make some representation in this area as well. Dr. Boro Strumbelj and Mojca P. Ternovsek from Sport Directorate of the Ministry of Education were receptive to proposals in this area. In answer to the question “can we introduce an international qualification onto the SI NQF?” it was a clear “no”.

However, it could be possible through a “recognised” employer organisation to put a qualification onto the framework. This would need the support of social partners and would use the so called 3<sup>rd</sup> pillar which is a new concept being designed to take employer-led qualifications straight onto the SI NQF.

30. *Comments:*

Everyone at the meeting was particularly interested and supportive of “raising the bar” at a European level to ensure fitness trainers and animators from all across the EU were qualified to the agreed standard. The Government officers were aware of the ski instructor situation, and that there is a need for mutual recognition of qualifications to support mobility. They accepted that fitness and outdoor animators go to SI for work and for the need of “good” qualifications to support them.



## Country Fact Sheet

### Possible relationship and relevance of international qualifications to your National Qualification Framework

#### 1. Meeting date/ place/ organisations & representatives involved

1<sup>st</sup> August 2017 – by telephone conference  
Simon Love IRM Cert. Senior Regulation Manager, Ofqual  
Kendrea Lewis Senior Officer - Compliance, Ofqual  
Cliff Collins - EuropeActive

#### 2. Description of the national organisation (NCP):

There are three qualification frameworks in the UK for England and Northern Ireland (some exceptions – see below), Scotland and Wales.

The national qualification frameworks in the UK are qualifications frameworks that define and link the levels and credit values of different qualifications. The current frameworks are: the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) for general and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual in England and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland; the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) for all qualifications in Wales; the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) for all qualifications in Scotland; and the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ) for qualifications awarded by bodies across the United Kingdom with degree-awarding power.

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is a non-ministerial government department that regulates qualifications, exams and tests in England and, until May 2016, vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. Ofqual no longer regulates vocational qualifications that are only provided in Northern Ireland. Where vocational qualifications are offered in both Northern Ireland and England, they are regulated by both Ofqual and CCEA (Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment). The Department for Education (DfE) is a department of the UK Government responsible for child protection, education (compulsory, further and higher education), apprenticeships and wider skills in England.

This fact sheet relates only to the RQF, but this is the comparison between the 3 UK frameworks and for the Republic of Ireland:

Regulated Qualifications Framework for England and Northern Ireland www.ofqual.gov.uk www.ccea.org.uk	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales www.cqfw.net	National Framework of Qualifications for Ireland www.nqf.ie	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework www.scof.org.uk
LEVEL	LEVEL	LEVEL	LEVEL
8 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 8	8 Doctoral Degrees, Industry Qualifications, for example, Chartered Accountant	10 Doctoral Degrees, Higher Doctorates	12 Doctoral Degrees, Professional Apprenticeships, Professional Development Awards (PDA) Award
7 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 7	7 Master's Degrees, Vocational Qualifications, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Apprenticeships	9 Master's Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas	11 Master's Degrees, Integrated Master's Degrees, Professional Apprenticeships, SVQ, PDA, Postgraduate Diplomas, Postgraduate Certificates, Award
6 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 6	6 Honours Degrees, Vocational Qualifications, Professional Certificates in Education, Apprenticeships	8 Honours Bachelor Degrees, Higher Diplomas	10 Bachelor's Degrees with Honours, Professional Apprenticeships, SVQ, PDA, Graduate Diplomas, Graduate Certificates, Award
5 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 5, Higher National Diplomas (HND)	5 Foundation Degrees, Vocational Qualifications, Higher National Diplomas (HND), Apprenticeships	7 Ordinary Bachelor Degrees	9 Bachelor's/Ordinary Degrees, Technical Apprenticeships, PDA, SVQ, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificates, Award
4 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 4, Higher National Certificates (HNC)	4 Higher National Certificates (HNC), Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE), Vocational Qualifications, Apprenticeships	6 Advanced Certificate, Higher Certificate	8 Higher National Diplomas (HND), Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE), Technical Apprenticeship, PDA, SVQ, Award
3 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 3, GCE AS and A Levels	3 Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced, Vocational Qualifications, AS and A Level, Access to HE, Apprenticeships	5 Level 5 Certificate, Leaving Certificate	7 Higher National Certificates (HNC), Modern Apprenticeships, PDA, SVQ, Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE), Scottish Baccalaureate, Advanced Higher, Award
2 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 2, GCSEs at grade A* - C and from 2017 grade 4-9 (England), Functional Skills Level 2 (England), Essential Skills Qualifications (NI)	2 Welsh Baccalaureate National, Vocational Qualifications, Essential Skills, GCSEs grades A* - C, Apprenticeships	4 Level 4 Certificate, Leaving Certificate	6 Higher, Modern Apprenticeships, SVQ, PDA, National Progression Award (NPA), National Certificate, Award
1 Technical/Vocational Qualifications Level 1, GCSEs at grade D-G and from 2017 grade 3-1 (England), Functional Skills Level 1 (England), Essential Skills Qualifications (NI)	1 Welsh Baccalaureate Foundation, Vocational Qualifications, Essential Skills, GCSEs at grade D-G	3 Level 3 Certificate, Junior Certificates	5 National 5, Modern Apprenticeships, SVQ, NPA, National Certificate, Award
Entry Level Entry Level Certificates (sub levels 1-3), functional skills Entry Level (England) (English, Mathematics & ICT), Essential Skills Qualifications (NI)	Entry Level Entry Level Qualifications	2 Level 2 Certificate	4 National 4, SVQ, NPA, National Certificate, Award
		1 Level 1 Certificate	3 National 3, NPA, National Certificate, Award
			2 National 2, NPA, National Certificate, Award
			1 National 1, Award

3. Description on procedures for an international qualification to be considered for inclusion on NQF & requirement of documents/criteria (if applicable):

Ofqual regulates English qualifications but would rely upon the DfE Policy Team to give any political direction for the inclusion of an international qualification onto the RQF. At present the only route for a qualification to be entered onto the RQF is via an awarding organisation. The role of an awarding organisation is that it designs, develops, delivers and awards the recognition of learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) of an individual following an assessment and quality assurance process that is valued by employers, learners or stakeholders. They can be registered charities, chartered institutes, and commercial businesses, employers who have established their own awarding body, small sector specific bodies or large cross-sectoral bodies. In England (and Northern Ireland) recognised awarding bodies must meet the Conditions of Recognition - [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/529394/general-conditions-of-recognition-june-2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/529394/general-conditions-of-recognition-june-2016.pdf)

Awarding organisations are experts in developing high quality qualifications that meet the needs of employers and learners. They approve centres and work with them to ensure high quality delivery of qualifications and they carry out activity designed to assure the quality of the qualifications awarded. They also develop innovative products and services to support their centres and learners.

Qualifications are often based on National Occupational Standards (NOS) which are statements of the standards of performance individuals must achieve when carrying out functions in the workplace, together with specifications of the underpinning knowledge and understanding. The NOS are approved by UK government regulators, and are available for almost every role in every sector in the UK. The NOS are developed in consultation with sector bodies, sometimes referred to as Sector Skills Councils.

NOS are produced as a suite of units for each occupational area. Each 'unit' describes an area of work with the activities normally separated out into 'elements' with associated performance statements. These statements are detailed descriptions of the activities which represent effective performance of the tasks within the unit, a range of situations or circumstances and 'knowledge', the underpinning knowledge and understanding needed to effectively carry out tasks and responsibilities within the particular job role or function.

#### 4. *Criteria or process that are used when determining a level for a qualification on the NQF:*

Credit frameworks use the UK credit pioneered by the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme, where 1 credit = 10 hours of nominal learning and which helps to determine the level. Qualifications on the RQF now have to include the "Total Qualification Time" (TQT) which comprises of the time it should take to complete a qualification, including contact time with a tutor or assessor and non-contact time for assignments and studies.

All qualifications on the RQF have a 'size' which is expressed within the TQT assigned and can be broken down into credits, i.e. one credit equals 10 hours of learning. Therefore if a qualification has a TQT of 10, it would take approximately 100 hours to achieve.

Qualifications can be added to the RQF provided they meet the following criteria:

- are outcome-based, ie the qualification and or learning programme must contain statements of knowledge, skills, values or competence that are capable of being measured at the end of a process of learning (based on learning outcomes)
- are capable of being assessed, i.e. there must be a robust, effective system of assessing that the outcomes have been achieved. (These outcomes must be recorded.)
- are subject to external quality assurance, i.e. the qualification and or learning programme must have a documented process of external quality assurance for the assessment of the learning outcomes
- consist of a minimum of 10 hours of notional learning time

The awarding organisation proposes the level of the qualification at the time making an application to the RQF. They look at the range of level descriptors and identify the descriptor (or where the qualification will have more than one level, the descriptors) which provides the

best match with the intended knowledge and skills outcomes for their qualification. Once the awarding organisation has designed the qualification, they could look at the descriptor for the level above and below the proposed level for the qualification and compare the knowledge and skills descriptors for each level with the knowledge, skills and understanding which the holder of the qualification is expected to demonstrate. The fit does not have to be perfect; qualifications might naturally have a more knowledge- or skills-based focus and so will be a better fit with the knowledge or skills descriptor as appropriate.

5. *Liaison with any other NQF about the type, range and levels of qualifications being accepted onto the NQF (if applicable):*

The 3 UK frameworks were some of the first to reference successfully to the EQF. Whilst they have separate levels (as shown above) they cooperate quite closely to ensure consistency. This can work to extent that one qualification being accepted onto, say they RQF can also be accepted onto the SCQF, for example without a full separate application having to be made.

6. *Licensing/ accreditation/ national quality assurance process (e.g. EQAVET) for VET providers operating: how does it work, and how might it affect an international qualification?*

Awarding organisations (which are responsible for the quality assurance of the qualification process) are licensed by Ofqual. All awarding organisations must continually meet Ofqual's regulatory requirements which are the rules set to make sure qualifications are valid and fit for purpose.

7. *Expected timeframe and costs taken in the process from application to acceptance on the NQF when the application is fully compliant with national requirements:*

Qualifications on the RQF must be underpinned by a validity strategy that will show how they provide value for learners and employers. There is no guidance available on the length of time it might take to have a qualification submitted and accepted onto the RQF.

8. *Views on the inclusion or non-acceptance of international qualifications on your framework:*

It is entirely possible for a UK awarding organisation to consider the use of an international qualification within its portfolio and to make an application to the RQF (in England). The awarding organisation would have to articulate and present the qualification in the format required by Ofqual/RQF and this may include some addition qualification-specific content.

9. *Comments:*

Because many awarding organisations are sector specific in the qualifications they award, it is appropriate to consider that relevant national sector organisations should be involved in any approach to introduce an international qualification onto the RQF.



# The SIQAF Task Force

who developed and delivered the project were experts from:

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