PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY ‘LEVELLING MASTER CRAFTSPERSON QUALIFICATIONS’

30 November – 1 December 2015, Berlin, Germany

Summary report

CONTENTS

1 Introduction......................................................................................................................2
2 PLA Structure and Process..........................................................................................4
3 Introduction to the PLA: The Master Craftsperson in Europe - a brief overview ..........8
4 Experiences from transnational projects: SME Master plus and zoom .........................9
5 Session 1: The role of tertiary vocational/professional education and training in different european countries .........................................................................................10
6 Session 2: The Position of Master craftsperson qualifications in different countries ..........12
7 Session 3: learning outcomes and levelling of master craftsperson qualifications ............15
8 Lessons Learned and conclusions..................................................................................17
Annex A – Agenda ........................................................................................................18
INTRODUCTION

On 30 November and 1 December 2015, a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) was held in Berlin, Germany, focusing on ‘levelling master craftsperson qualifications’. This PLA was hosted by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, in cooperation with the European Commission and Cedefop. The event was attended by approximately 60 participants from various European countries.

PLA objectives

The purpose of this PLA was to increase transparency of the referencing process and foster mutual trust regarding the various master craftsperson qualifications and their levelling in European countries. This can be achieved through a better understanding of the qualifications based on comprehensive information.

Although having the same name/title, master craftsperson qualification are allocated to different levels of the EQF in different countries. In order to better understand the levelling of these qualifications to NQFs, it is necessary to have detailed information on their learning outcomes but also on other aspects, such as their position in the different education systems and labour markets. Case examples from France, Germany and Slovenia were used to develop a sound understanding of these qualifications, to take a closer look at the levelling decisions, and the PLA aimed to provide indications for the future referencing process.

In particular, this PLA sought to explore the following aspects:

- the state of play of master craftsperson qualifications in Europe allocated to national qualifications frameworks and linked to the EQF;
- the role of tertiary vocational/professional education and training and its relationship to academic qualifications;
- the position of master craftsperson qualifications in national education systems and labour markets;
- the learning outcomes as well as criteria and procedures used for levelling.

Based on the results of the discussions, the PLA aimed to provide answers to the following important questions:

- What are the reasons for allocating master craftsperson qualifications to different levels?
- Do learning outcomes vary between countries?
- Which criteria were relevant for levelling the qualifications?
- Which role do national contexts (i.e. learning contexts, stakeholder concerns, etc.) play for levelling decisions?
- What kind of information and documentation is necessary to be included in national referencing reports on the levelling of master craftsperson qualifications?
- Which conclusions could be drawn for the future of referencing?
Purpose of this report

This report summarises the discussions that took place during the PLA. This report should be used to support the work of the Commission and participants in the PLA in disseminating the results of the activities of the PLA to countries’ stakeholders and other social partners.

The report is structured according to the main topics of the PLA and draws on a range of presentations and country cases that formed the PLA. The agenda for the PLA is included in Annex A.

Please note: The group agreed, at the beginning of the PLA, that it would be preferable to use the term ‘master craftsperson’ instead of ‘master craftsman’. Hence, this report uses the term ‘master craftsperson’ throughout.
PLA STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

All sessions during this PLA were held as plenary sessions, to ensure that the entire audience would benefit from information shared and exchanged during the PLA.

Day 1

Day 1 began with a welcoming address by Stefan Luther (Federal Ministry of Education and Research), who underlined the importance of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to establish transparency, ensure comparability and promote mobility in education and training.

He emphasised that vocational education and training plays an important role in Germany. The master craftsperson qualification in Germany has a very long-standing tradition and enjoys a high reputation. Together with the ‘engineer’, it is considered as a core qualification within the German education and training system.

Koen Nomden (European Commission) welcomed participants and pointed out that this PLA was special in the sense that it focused on one single qualification only. The idea for organising this PLA emanated from a wish, expressed by the EQF Advisory Group, to take a closer look at individual qualifications, in order to explore their similarities and differences, on the basis of learning outcomes and other factors, and to which extent they account for the allocation to different qualifications levels.

Slava Pevec-Grm and Jens Bjørnåvold (both Cedefop) provided an overview of master craftsperson qualifications in Europe, pointing out that approximately one third of the EU/EEA countries operate with master craftsperson qualifications formally integrated into their national qualifications systems and frameworks. In their presentation, they referred to the long historical tradition of the qualification in Europe, and to the multifaceted characteristics that the master craftsperson ‘brand’ signals. While the overall role of the qualification in Europe has been weakened, there are also recent signs of increased attention from researchers and the policy level, particular in relation to work-based learning.

Christian Sperle (German Confederation of Skilled Crafts) presented the experiences from two transnational projects – SME MASTER Plus and ZOOM – which both studied master craftsperson qualifications from different sectors and countries. SME MASTER Plus, an ECVET pilot project, studied master craftsperson qualifications in four areas (bakery, joinery, hairdressing, and floristry) across five European countries. ZOOM, an EQF pilot project, studied qualifications in motor vehicle technology and electrical engineering across six European countries. Experience from these projects highlights both the benefits and limitations of the learning outcomes principle.

These presentations set the scene for sessions 1 to 3, which then studied selected aspects of master craftsperson qualifications in more detail. Throughout all three sessions, the same three country examples were studied: Germany, France and Slovenia. The selection of these three country examples represented an interesting starting point to the discussion, as all three countries have linked their master craftsperson qualifications to different EQF levels, ranging from EQF level 4 (Slovenia) and EQF level 5 (France) to EQF level 6 (Germany).

The objective of this first session was to create a better understanding of the role of the master craftsperson qualification in the context of tertiary vocational/professional education and training, and its relationship to higher education. This overall context is considered fundamental for the discussion on levelling master craftsperson qualifications.

The second session focused on the position of master craftsperson qualifications in the countries’ national education systems and labour markets, and the differences that can be observed across countries.
Day 2

Day 2 began with the third and final session of case study presentations, which focused on the topic of learning outcomes and the levelling of master craftsperson qualifications. As for Day 1, three country cases were presented: Germany, France and Slovenia. Sabine Schüller (German Federal Ministry of Education and Research) and Susanne Lonscher-Räcke (European Commission) then concluded the event, by reflecting on the lessons learned and conclusions from this PLA.

The main key messages, observations and pending questions of the PLA can be summarised as follows:

The master craftsperson qualification in the context of tertiary vocational/professional education and training

- It is important to take the overall context into consideration: How to organise or position advanced/post-secondary VET within the education system?
- The role of the master craftsperson qualification is also shaped by (recent) developments in tertiary education: emergence of new types of qualifications (e.g. dual studies, polytechnics).
- Permeability of the master craftsperson qualification is a key aspect – this permeability shall work in both ways: master craftsperson qualification ↔ higher education.
- For some countries in particular, the achievement of an academic university degree seems to be ultimate goal of a large share of the population. How can the master craftsperson qualification compete with exploding enrolment rates in higher education?
- Should master craftsperson qualifications borrow higher education titles (‘Professional Bachelor’)?
- Does the aspect of cost influence the popularity of master craftsperson qualifications, in particular in relation to higher education (university) qualifications?

The function and role of the master craftsperson qualification in different countries

- Approximately one third of the EU/EEA countries operate with master craftsperson qualification formally integrated into their national qualifications systems and frameworks.
- The existence of master craftsperson qualifications in a country signals a close relationship to the relevant economic sectors and branches. In a number of countries, however, it can be observed that the title of master craftsperson is not linked to a formal qualification.
- The master craftsperson title enjoys a strong position in a number of European countries (such as Austria, Germany or Luxembourg), based on a long history and established traditions. At the same time, the overall role of the master craftsperson qualification in Europe has been weakened, and in many countries replaced with new and/or alternative qualifications. Yet, the increased attention now given to work-based learning, from research as well as policy makers, may point to a future revival of the qualification in Europe.
- Examples have shown many similarities between master craftsperson qualifications of different countries, also in terms of learning outcomes. There are few differences, which are often related to the legal basis / individual national context.
The master craftsperson ‘brand’ is strong in many countries, signalling (a) vocational excellence and expertise, (b) management capabilities, (c) ability to train apprentices, (d) entrepreneurship, and (e) trustworthiness. Related challenge: understanding of the master craftsperson qualification abroad, in particular in countries without a tradition of master craftsperson qualifications.

It is important to highlight the purpose of the master craftsperson qualification in the labour market; a qualification that is deeply rooted in the labour market and highly stakeholder driven (in particular when compared to other, more ‘education-related’ qualifications).

In several countries, master craftsperson qualifications play a role as a requirement to set up a business, or as an instrument to validate professional experience.

The quality of a master craftsperson qualification ultimately depends on the capacity to adapt to changed technology/developments. More focus on ‘review’ and ‘evaluation’ stages required (cf. EQAVET cycle)

**Levelling of the master craftsperson qualification**

Master craftsperson qualifications across countries are not identical, however they share many similarities. Learning outcomes are a useful tool to make similarities and differences between qualifications more visible.

Differences in the levelling of master craftsperson qualification seem to be much more related to national context factors and the levelling method and criteria used by a given country rather than to differences in the (level of) learning outcomes per se.

Despite widespread appreciation of the learning outcomes approach, learning outcomes alone ‘cannot do the job’, i.e. the use of learning outcomes alone is not sufficient for the allocation of a qualification to an NQF level.

The development of / agreement on common guidelines for the description of learning outcomes is important for the comparability of qualifications.

**Importance of contextualisation**: In order to reach a decision on the levelling of a qualification, contextualisation is required. Levelling has a lot to do with the context in which it takes place (national system, role of politics). ‘Levelling does not take place in a void.’

NQF classification requires the consideration of additional elements, which may differ across countries: e.g. relevance of the qualification for the labour market; information about quality assurance, assessment procedures; expert consultation.

How to measure the relevance of the qualification in the labour market? Expert consultation plays an important role, in particular because (statistical) data on labour market outcomes of master craftsperson qualifications is not easily accessible in all countries.

The principle of consensus plays an important role in certain levelling methods (cf. Germany).

‘Levelling as a matter of balance’, i.e. the balance between the master craftsperson qualification and other qualifications. In order to determine the level of the qualification, some countries compare the master craftsperson qualification to other qualifications of the same or a similar economic sector.

Other countries’ levelling decision may influence the position of the master craftsperson qualification in the NQFs.
For the EQF to work as a transparency instrument, it is necessary to interpret the EQF descriptors in the same way across countries. Many inconsistencies can probably be traced back to *diverging interpretations of the EQF level descriptors* at national level.

**Issues to be further discussed/explored**

- Is there a need for a more common approach towards describing the learning outcomes of qualifications?

- VET qualifications in particular are often little known outside their country. There is a need to make more transparent the knowledge, skills and competence associated with these qualifications. Do we need a European vision for the master craftsperson qualification, and/or for VET qualifications (beyond secondary level) in general?
INTRODUCTION TO THE PLA: THE MASTER CRAFTSPERSON IN EUROPE - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Slava Pevec-Grm and Jens Bjarnâvold (both Cedefop) provided an overview of master craftsperson qualifications in Europe. The master craftsperson enjoys long historical traditions in Europe, dating back to the medieval Guilds. Historically, holding the title of ‘Master’ signalled the highest level of expertise and craftsmanship and could only be achieved by the most accomplished journeymen. Furthermore, the title of Master also gave full access to the Guild and was a precondition for setting up one's own business.

In a number of countries, such as Austria, Germany or Luxembourg, the master craftsperson ‘brand’ has continued to remain strong signalling (a) vocational excellence and true expertise; (b) management capabilities; (c) the ability to train apprentices; (d) entrepreneurship; and (e) trustworthiness. As in previous times, the master craftsperson title still operates at the interface of the qualification and training system and the labour market.

Is it a tradition under threat? On the one hand, the overall role of the master craftsperson qualification in Europe has been weakened, being replaced with new and/or alternative qualifications. On the other hand, the increased attention now given to the concept of work-based learning, from research as well as policy makers, may point to an impending revival of the qualification in Europe.

Cedefop research shows that approximately one third of the EU/EEA countries operate with master craftsperson qualifications formally integrated into their national qualifications systems and frameworks. In these countries, the qualification is considered as post-secondary vocational education and training and linked to EQF levels 5-6. In a number of countries, the master craftsperson title exists as a part of working life but is not linked to any formal qualification, such as in Ireland and the UK. In such cases, the title is in particular used as a ‘quality label’, to signal the holder’s expertise and trustworthiness related to a given craft or trade.

Based on the information about master craftsperson qualifications in six countries, Cedefop drew up the following profile of the qualification:

There is a strong focus on the knowledge, skills and competence specific to the craft, trade or occupation in question. Several countries are emphasising the need to understand the wider branch and sector and are emphasising the importance of cross-branch/sector knowledge and skills. There is a strong focus on management, economic as well as human resource management. There is a clear acknowledgement of the entrepreneurial role played by master craftspeople. There is a general emphasis on the role of the master craftsperson in training, mentoring and motivating apprentices.

In terms of sectoral coverage, master craftsperson qualifications can predominantly be found in handicrafts and the construction industry, reflecting their historical roots. In a few countries, however, the qualification can also be found in manufacturing and in service sector occupations.

While the overall number of countries issuing the qualification is limited, it is possible to identify a number of qualifications across countries which share some of the characteristics with master craftsperson qualifications, in particular the strong integration of work-based learning and the close ties to the labour market. Several of these qualifications do not require obligatory training, but can be obtained through validation or examinations (competence tests).
EXPERIENCES FROM TRANSNATIONAL PROJECTS: SME MASTER PLUS AND ZOOM

Christian Sperle (German Confederation of Skilled Crafts) presented the experiences from two transnational projects – SME MASTER Plus and ZOOM – which both studied master craftsperson qualifications from different sectors and countries.

SME MASTER Plus\(^1\), an ECVET pilot project carried out between 2009 and 2012, studied master craftsperson qualifications in four areas (bakery, joinery, hairdressing, and floristry) across five European countries. The aim of the project was to promote transnational mobility for people in master craftsperson training by using ECVET principles. One of the key outcomes of the project was the development of a learning outcome-oriented description of the four master craftsperson qualifications in the form of a learning outcome matrix, which is broken down into (10 to 18) learning units and structured into (a maximum of 3 to 4) successive steps of learning outcomes. The description of learning outcomes was done based on the analysis of official documents (training regulations, curricula), of typical work and business processes, and the consultation of professional experts.

ZOOM\(^2\) (Building up mutual trust: Zooming in on EQF-level six with regard to the engineering sector), an EQF pilot project carried out between 2009 and 2011, studied qualifications in motor vehicle technology and electrical engineering across six European countries (AT, BG, DE, EL, FR, SI). The project aimed, amongst others, to establish a common language and covenant basis for learning outcome descriptions, and to develop learning outcome descriptions of selected qualifications from the sectors motor vehicle technology and electrical engineering in order to make them comparable across countries. The guiding questions of the ZOOM project were as follows: How do qualifications have to be described for them to be allocated to an NQF level? How can the process of allocation (of a qualification to an NQF level) be structured?

One of the central conclusions of the ZOOM projects was that the studied master craftsperson qualifications are not identical but displayed many similarities. In all countries studied, the profile of a master craftsperson qualification is characterised by (a) advanced professional expertise combined with (b) entrepreneurship (including human resources management). The use of learning outcomes proved to be useful to make similarities and differences between qualifications. However, the use of learning outcomes alone is not considered sufficient for the allocation of a qualification to an NQF level. Instead, additional elements are required to inform the levelling decision for a qualification, such as (a) relevance of the qualification for the labour market (b) information about quality assurance, assessment procedures etc.; (c) expert consultation. The process of allocation must be transparent, comprehensible and comparable. In addition, for the EQF to fulfil its role as a transparency instrument, it is important to interpret the EQF level descriptors in the same way.

The ZOOM project was described as the perfect example of a technical approach towards the levelling of qualifications. Since this work was carried out in a project environment, it was possible to ‘tune out the rest of the world’. In the ‘real world’, however, the application of a technical approach will not be sufficient; there are many context factors which have an influence and must be taken into account. This would require a more ‘social approach’ to the levelling of qualifications.

\(^1\) http://www.sme-master.eu/

\(^2\) http://www.zoom-eqf.eu/
SESSION 1: THE ROLE OF TERTIARY VOCATIONAL/PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN DIFFERENT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Each session started with three presentations of national case studies, from Germany, France and Slovenia. The same three countries were also featured in subsequent sessions 2 and 3.

The objective of this first session was to create a better understanding of the role of tertiary vocational/professional education and training and the relationship to higher education, as this overall context is considered fundamental for the discussion on levelling master craftsperson qualifications.

### Workshop 1: The role of tertiary vocational/professional education and training in different European countries

**Session chaired by Jos Noesen, Ministère de l’Education nationale, de l’Enfance et de la Jeunesse, Luxembourg**

| Germany | Vocational education and training plays an important role in Germany, based on strong historic roots, and has enjoyed an excellent reputation for many years. It is also characterised by the strong involvement of enterprises, delivering trainers, teachers and examiners. Some big companies, such as Ford, even have their own ‘Meister’ qualification.

The structure of further training provided by the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (CCI) follows a three-level approach. The second level is referred to as ‘Bachelor Professional CCI’; it includes the master craftsperson qualifications (‘Industriemeister’, ‘Fachmeister’). The third and highest level is referred to as ‘Master Professional CCI’ (examples in German: ‘Geprüfter Betriebswirt’, ‘Geprüfter Berufspädagoge’). With the 1996 ‘AFBG’ law, there is a separate public funding instrument to financially support individuals who wish to engage in further vocational training.

The three main training providers are chambers of trade and industry; skilled crafts and trades; and state schools for technicians. There is also the possibility to develop qualifications at a regional level, to satisfy a specific regional skills demand.

The emergence of ‘mixed forms’, such as universities of applied sciences/polytechnics or dual studies challenges the ‘two pillar’ system of vocational education and training and general education, which had traditionally been kept very separate.

A general erosion of the vocational training path can be observed.

| France | The presentation focused on the following three aspects: the position of the master craftsperson qualification within the French VET system; the registration of the qualification in the NQF; and the existing pathways in the skilled crafts sector.

As for the registration of a qualification, the French NQF distinguishes the registration ‘by law’ and ‘on demand’. The latter in particular applies to qualifications related to the skilled craft sector, including the master craftsperson qualification (‘brevet de maîtrise’). The master craftsperson qualification is understood as a ‘double qualification’, validating that its holder is a highly qualified professional in his/her craft and that he/she possesses the ability to manage and develop a craft business and to train apprentices.

Since 2007/08, APCMA have been implementing a new regional service, the so-called ‘Universités régionales des métiers et de l’artisanat (URMA)’ (universities of skilled crafts, http://www.e-urma.fr), which provide individualised career advice, and set up partnerships at regional level to offer training at various levels. One of the key aims is to attract more young people to the crafts sector.

| Slovenia | In Slovenia, after years of decline, VET enrolment figures have started to slightly take up again in recent years. To a certain extent, this can also be linked to the recovery from the economic crisis. |

[Knuth Diekmann, Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry](#) | [Sabine Weger, Assemblée permanente des chambres de métiers et de l’artisanat (APCMA)](#) | [Janja Meglic,](#)
The majority of secondary VET graduates (70%) continue with their studies. Slovenia has been confronted with rising unemployment figures for tertiary education graduates (both higher and professional education) in recent years (particularly strong for the period 2008-2013). For tertiary education graduates, jobs are missing across all areas. In Slovenia, EQF levels 6, 7 and 8 currently cannot be achieved outside higher education.

The master craftsperson qualification is at the same NOF level as the vocational matura. There are 52 different master craftsperson qualifications, with the most popular ones being in hairdressing and car mechanics. During the last decade, enrolment figures fell sharply; this can be linked to a change in the law for small businesses, which had eliminated the master craftsperson qualification of being a requirement to start one’s own business.

Key points:

- Many countries are facing reduced enrolment figures in VET pathways, often accompanied by (sharply) rising higher education enrolment figures. Is there a need to ‘open up’ vocational education and training?

- Should vocational education and training borrow higher education terms? Examples: ‘Professional Bachelor CCI’ in Germany; ‘University of skilled crafts’ in France. The use of familiar (higher education) terms, in particular in English translations, is often considered as an attempt to make the level or role of a qualification more transparent.

- VET qualifications in particular are often little known outside their country. There is a need to make more transparent the knowledge, skills and competence associated with these qualifications.

- Permeability between vocational education and training and higher education is an important aspect – and shall work in both ways: [VET > HE] and [HE > VET].

- The area of tertiary vocational/professional education and training is undergoing a process of change in many European countries – caused, among other things, by rising enrolment figures in higher education and the emergence of new ‘hybrid’ types of education of training. There is still a lot of work to do in this area, in particular concerning the interaction between vocational education and training and higher education.
The second session focused on the position of master craftsperson qualifications in the countries’ national education systems and labour markets, and the differences that can be observed across countries.

### Workshop 2: The position of master craftsperson qualifications in different countries

**Session chaired by Gro Beate Vige, Ministry of Education and Research, Norway**

| Germany | The master craftsperson qualification (EQF level 6) is the most prestigious formal qualification within the German skilled crafts sector. It provides entrepreneurial know-how in combination with technical skills on an advanced professional level. Holders of the qualification have open access to higher education studies. The qualification can be achieved in more than 90 different occupations, in 41 of which it is a requirement to start and run a business. There are approx. 23,000 successful master craftsperson examinations per year. The chambers of skilled crafts are the competent institutions for the master craftsperson qualifications. There is a separate master craftsperson examination regulation for each occupation. It includes information on access requirements, occupational profile, examination arrangements and assessment criteria. Successfully completed apprenticeship training represents the general access requirement to the master craftsperson exam.

Master craftsperson study programmes are developed on the basis of the examination regulations. However, attendance of the study programme is not compulsory, but it is the regular training pathway towards a master craftsperson qualification. Training is provided by specialised training centres of the chambers of skilled crafts, professional associations or vocational schools, with the duration of training depending on the specific occupation.

Examination boards are independent bodies. Assessment methods are aimed to be as close to real-life work and business processes, and include the following components: master craftsperson examination project; expert interview (related to the project); situation-based assignment; further written and oral examinations.

Master craftsperson examination regulations and curricula are regularly reviewed by the professional organisations, based on feedback from companies and examination boards and the outcomes of need analyses. |

| France | The master craftsperson (‘brevet de maîtrise’) is a national qualification of the skilled craft sector, with APCMA acting as the competent body. It ‘validates’ a highly qualified professional as well as his/her ability to manage and run a craft business, and train apprentices. There are currently 15 different qualifications registered. The French master craftsperson qualification is linked to EQF level 5.

For a qualification to be newly registered in the French RNCP, it must undergo an elaborate process, which starts with a needs analysis for the qualification and also includes a test phase over two to three years. When a qualification is filed for registration with RNCP, the following aspects have to be described in detail: activities, functions and tasks; skills, abilities and associated knowledge; monitoring system; procedure for recognition of prior experience; access procedures; examination boards. After five years in the RNCP, the qualification must undergo a re-registration procedure, in which the competent body must provide evidence that the qualification is needed in the labour market.

The qualification consists of different modules, which can be separated into professional modules and transversal modules. Taking roofer as an example, training volumes range from 574 hours (‘formation continue’) to 861 hours (‘formation initiale’). There are ample ways to access the qualification: |
### Slovenia
Janja Meglic, Chamber of craft and small business of Slovenia (OZS) & Elido Bandelj, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training

The master craftsperson exam is intended for candidates who have completed upper-secondary VET and have at least three years of relevant work experience. It attests the ability of the candidate to independently pursue a craft trade and provides practical instruction to learners. Successful candidates obtain the master craftsperson certificate and completed upper secondary technical education.

The master craftsperson qualification has been linked to EQF level 4. There are different pathways towards the qualification: secondary VET + 3 years of work experience; upper-secondary VET + 2 years; HE + 1 year. Holders of the qualification may continue their education at short-cycle higher vocational schools.

The exam consists of four components: practical, theoretical, business and pedagogical part. For the practical and theoretical part, short preparatory seminars are organised in collaboration with VET centres. OZS provides preparatory seminars for the business and pedagogical part, also in e-learning format. The qualification is awarded by the Chamber of craft and small business (OZS). In order to adapt the qualification to changing labour market conditions, there is a continuous revision process of occupational standards and examination catalogues.

The qualification enjoys acceptance in society and the labour market. It is considered as a synonym for a high-quality qualification, and had previously been a condition to start a business in a craft (not any more).

### Key points:

- **Master craftsperson qualification as a ‘double’ qualification:** expertise in a craft & ability to act as entrepreneur, manager, and trainer of apprentices.

- **Master craftsperson qualification as a ‘brand’** — trustworthiness
  - Related challenge: understanding of the master craftsperson qualification abroad (example: tender procedures where a university degree is required)
  - Should the master craftsperson qualification borrow higher education titles (‘Professional Bachelor’)?
  - Master craftsperson as a synonym for ‘quality’

- The three examples presented illustrate that the master craftsperson qualifications of the three countries share similarities in many aspects, such as their purpose/role, profile, qualifications development, assessment, labour market outcomes and stakeholder involvement.

- The examples presented show that the qualifications seem to have a common or at least very similar purpose in the labour market. It is a qualification that is deeply rooted in the labour market and highly stakeholder-driven. It operates at the interface of education and the labour market.

- The quality of master craftsperson qualifications very much depends on the capacity to quickly adapt to changing conditions and recent (technological) developments. More focus on ‘review’ and ‘evaluation’ stage required (cf. EQAVET cycle)

- While historical roots matter, the future relevance of this qualification depends on its ability to renew itself on a continuous basis.

- In some countries, master craftsperson study programmes and the examination are two separate things. This is the case in Germany, where the attendance of the study programme is not obligatory.
• It seems that in some countries, data on labour market outcomes of master craftsperson qualifications is not easily accessible (employment, income).

• Does the aspect of cost influence the popularity of master craftsperson qualifications, in particular in relation to higher education (university) qualifications? To what extent does the aspect of tuition fees influence decisions on educational pathways?
The third session aimed to provide a deeper insight into the learning outcomes related to master craftsperson qualifications in the three countries studied, and the methodology of levelling applied. This session furthermore aimed to address the question whether master craftsperson qualifications referenced to different EQF levels reflect differences in (levels of) learning outcomes, or whether there are other factors which influence the levelling process.

**Workshop 3: Learning outcomes and levelling of master craftsperson qualifications**

*Session chaired by Thomas Mayr, ibw Austria – Research & Development in VET / UEAPME*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>EQF level: 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Thomas Reglin, Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training | Two master craftsperson qualifications were studied in the DQR pilot phase (DQR = German NQF): a) master craftsperson in industry (electrical engineering) and b) master craftsperson in craft (motor vehicle technology). Working groups where set up, which consisted of representatives from all relevant stakeholders, including chambers, enterprises, ministries, social partners, universities, universities of applied sciences, non-state education providers and state institutes. The levelling of qualifications was done on the basis of: analysis of documents (legal texts, curricula, study plans); expert knowledge about requirements in the occupational field; and evaluation of the results by the DQR steering committees. 

- ‘You cannot find a decision to levelling unless you contextualize!’
- The principle of consensus is one of the most important element in this levelling method.
- The master craftsperson qualification is a complex qualification integrating technical knowledge, practical skills and managerial as well as pedagogical competence.
- Block allocation of the qualification type to the NQF considered possible for Germany. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>France</th>
<th>EQF level: 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Brigitte-Véronique Bouquet, CNCP | As pointed out before, the French ‘brevet de maîtrise’ (master craftsperson qualification) is a qualification that can be registered in the NQF ‘on demand’ (as opposed to the registration ‘by law’, which applies for different types of qualifications). There are four broad criteria for registration: opportunities provided by the qualification; quality of qualification development; validation of prior learning; labour market insertion. The ‘owner’ of the qualification suggests an NQF level. CNCP will then do an analysis to check whether the suggested level can be accepted. Levelling is considered as a matter of balance, i.e. the levelling decision on a particular qualification is influenced by the level of other qualifications. Information on comparable or related qualifications will feed into the discussion on the levelling of a qualification (horizontal and vertical checks). Furthermore, wages are taken into account.

For the ‘brevet de maîtrise’, professional competence is considered at a high level. Besides the mastery of the craft in the field of the respective ‘brevet de maîtrise’, holders of the qualification are able to assume an entrepreneurial role and the role of ‘master’ for apprenticeship (i.e. training of apprentices). |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slovenia</th>
<th>EQF level: 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janja Meglic, Chamber of craft and</td>
<td>Learning outcomes related to the master craftsperson qualification: Occupational standards represent a learning outcomes standard for each VET qualification. The occupational standard sets out the content of a vocational qualification at a specific</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
level of difficulty and defines the necessary knowledge, skills and vocational competences. The occupational standard forms the basis for the master craftsperson exam catalogue, which describes the learning outcomes in the form of competences. There are four competence areas: professional competence; theoretical professional knowledge; economic and managerial competences; training/pedagogical competences.

The methodology for the allocation of master craftsperson qualifications is the same as for all other qualifications. 1: All types of qualifications were placed in the NQF in accordance with sectoral legislation and KLASIUS\(^3\). 2: The suitability of the classification was also checked from the point of view of the conformity of qualifications with learning outcomes at individual qualifications levels.

As for stakeholder involvement in the process, the Slovenian government appointed an Interdepartmental Working Group (IWG), which is the highest decision making body for NQF-related issues; it involves all relevant stakeholders.

**Key points:**

- Master craftsperson qualifications across countries are not identical, however they share many similarities. Learning outcomes are a useful tool to make similarities and differences between qualifications more visible.

- Differences in the levelling of master craftsperson qualification seem to be much more related to national context factors and the levelling method and criteria used by a given country rather than to differences in the (level of) learning outcomes.

- Real-life levelling of qualifications is more than just a technical exercise: social approach! Levelling does not take place in an isolated ‘bubble’, which might have been the case in EQF projects conducted in the past.

- NQF classification requires the consideration of additional elements, which may differ across countries: e.g. relevance of the qualification for the labour market (even wages sometimes); information about quality assurance, assessment procedures; expert consultation. The principle of consensus plays an important role in certain levelling methods (cf. Germany).

- ‘Levelling as a matter of balance’, i.e. the balance between the master craftsperson qualification and other qualifications. In order to determine the level of the qualification, some countries compare the master craftsperson qualification to other qualifications of the same or a similar economic sector.

- The levelling decision in one country may be influenced by another country’s levelling decision of a similar/related qualification. There are however national differences. While some countries seem to actively take into consideration what happens outside their borders, other countries consider the levelling of qualifications a purely national matter which shall not be influenced by international factors.

- For the EQF to work as a transparency instrument, it is necessary to interpret the EQF descriptors in the same way across countries. Many inconsistencies can probably be traced back to diverging interpretations of the EQF level descriptors at national level.

\(^3\) Classification System of Education and Training.
LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

Sabine Schüller (German Federal Ministry of Education and Research) and Susanne Lonscher-Räcke (European Commission) then concluded the event, by reflecting on the lessons learned and conclusions from this PLA:

- The master craftsperson qualification exists in approximately one third of the countries. Although having the same name/title, the qualifications are allocated to different levels in national qualifications frameworks, resulting in different levels of the EQF.

- The information presented at this PLA illustrates that the learning outcomes do not differ significantly between the three master craftsperson qualifications studied, although there are certainly some variations to be observed.

- Differences in learning outcomes alone cannot account for the differences in EQF levels of these qualifications. The individual national context and the levelling method and criteria used by a given country play a very decisive part. In Germany, for instance, the ‘principle of consensus’ is a fundamental element in the levelling of qualifications. In France, wages are one of the criteria taken into account for the levelling of a qualification. In addition levelling decisions of one country may influence another country’s levelling decisions.

- Mutual exchange is of great importance, to create the transparency needed for the EQF to work as a successful instrument. PLAs are a very useful tool for such mutual exchange.

- From a European perspective PLAs of this type are useful to the trust-building between countries. In addition future horizontal comparisons of referenced qualifications will contribute to the further implementation of the EQF and the transparency of qualifications.
ANNEX A – AGENDA

PLA Levelling
Mastercraftsman qu