



Brussels, 17 April 2012

## **Peer learning activity on qualifications related to level 5 of the EQF**

The European Commission, in cooperation with Cedefop, and the Council of Europe will organise a peer learning activity (PLA) on qualifications related to level 5 of the EQF, via national qualifications systems on 19-20 April 2012 in Brussels.

The aim of the PLA is to better understand the variety of qualifications referred to level 5 of the EQF and the main functions fulfilled by these - notably their ability to promote lifelong learning and in serving the needs of the labour market. The PLA will also offer an opportunity to explore the role of qualifications frameworks in promoting transparency of qualifications and in facilitating progress of learners.

The PLA will build on existing research (EURASHE) and support new research (as now initiated by Cedefop). The PLA should mainly benefit from inputs from national representatives with an in-depth knowledge of qualifications at this level. Representatives of the different sub-systems of education and training - school education, vocational education and training and higher education will be invited to the PLA

### **1. Why address EQF level 5?**

EQF level 5 operate at the cross-roads of the main types of education and training and include a diverse and heterogeneous mix of qualifications, for example

- Advanced vocational education and training qualifications at secondary level;
- Post-secondary vocational education and training, for example ‘Brevet Technician’ in France;
- Master Craftsman qualifications;
- Partial academic courses constituting building blocks for first cycle higher education degrees<sup>(1)</sup> including the so-called short cycle higher education qualifications
  
- Diploma in technological specialisation awarded jointly by higher education institutions and industry partners;
- Professional qualifications awarded outside initial, public education and training.

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<sup>1</sup> For example: Kirsch, Magda; Beernaer Yves; EURASHE (2011). Short cycle higher education in Europe level 5: the missing link. Available from:

These few examples illustrate some of the key roles played by qualifications at EQF level 5 in European education and training systems. Qualifications at level 5 play an important role in facilitating further learning and continuing training. Not only can they function as a bridge to higher education - offering partial qualifications which can be used as building blocks for first cycle degrees in higher education - they may also facilitate horizontal learning paths allowing for vocational and professional specialisation. Candidates with a general background may use qualifications at this level to acquire and strengthen specific vocational or professional skills and competences. They also provide the labour market with advanced skills and competences, potentially responding quickly to the new demands on the labour market.<sup>2</sup> Cedefop forecasts<sup>3</sup> indicate that the demand for medium level qualifications will increase towards 2020. The PLA will provide an opportunity to look into these roles and functions and for a discussion on the challenges and opportunities for qualifications at this level – in the different countries and for Europe in general.

An important objective of the comprehensive national qualifications frameworks now being introduced<sup>4</sup> - covering all levels and types of qualifications - is to increase overall transparency and improve transferability of qualifications, both within an education and training system and between different education and training systems. Introducing a common, learning outcomes based reference-point makes it easier to identify the relations and potential linkages between qualifications awarded by different institutions and in different education sub-systems. The PLA will explore to which extent frameworks – in practise – are able to support the progression of learners and the recognition of learning outcomes independently of where they have been acquired)? Are level 5 qualifications designed to facilitate this vertical (between levels) and horizontal (within levels) progression and transfer? Or are they dead-ends, preventing learners to progress according to their individual needs and thus do not support lifelong learning?

Given the fact that not all countries have completed their NQFs and the referencing to the EQF, decisions on identifying which national qualifications, and indirectly qualifications, fit best EQF level 5 are still being considered and thus it is an ongoing process of interpretation and negotiation within each country. The PLA will therefore allow for a discussion on how the learning outcomes approach has been used for assigning qualifications to this level and whether this has been carried out in a consistent way in the different countries. Current debates on the placing of certain key qualifications at certain NQF levels that are related to EQF level 4 or 5 illustrate that the levelling of qualifications is something more than a technical question. It triggers discussions on values and raises the question whether certain learning outcomes are ‘more valuable’ than others. Qualifications are social and political constructs and reflect deeply rooted social relations, practises and political interests of different stakeholders. The

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<sup>2</sup> The EURASHE study (op. cit.) points to new programmes being developed in areas such as logistics, ecology, security, entrepreneurship, aircraft mechanics etc at this level. Secondly, the employability rates of students are good, therefore contributing to reducing youth unemployment is important.

<sup>3</sup> Cedefop. 2011. What next for skills on the European labour market. Briefing note. Available at: [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9059\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9059_en.pdf) and Cedefop. 2010 Skills supply and demand in Europe: Medium term forecast up to 2020. Available at: [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3052\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3052_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See Cedefop, 2012, Development of NQFs in Europe  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/19313.aspx>

implementation of NQFs and the use of learning outcomes-based levels thus provide us with an opportunity to compare how the 'best fit' principle is applied and the extent to which parity of esteem between general, vocational and academic qualifications has been achieved.

## DRAFT PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 19 APRIL 2012	
9:00 – 9:30	Welcome-Registration
9:30 – 9:50	Chair of morning session: Anita Kremo, DG EAC  Ana Carla Pereira, DG EAC, European Commission Jean-Philippe Restoueix, Council of Europe
9.50 – 10.30	Exploring qualifications at EQF level 5:  Presentation of the results of the study of short cycle qualifications – Magda Kirsch, EURASHE Observations on qualifications related to EQF level 5 based on the referencing reports of 13 countries and input to the survey on EQF level 5 carried out in preparation for the PLA – Jens Bjornavold, Cedefop and Mike Coles, external expert
10.30– 11.00	Discussion and introduction to the workshops
11.00. – 11.30.	Break-Refreshments
11.30 – 13:30	<b>Parallel sessions</b>
	<p><b>SESSION I:</b> <i>Sessions 1 – The main characteristics of qualifications related to EQF level 5</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which qualifications have been referenced to level 5 of the EQF; how much do countries differ in the variety of qualifications related to EQF level 5?</li> <li>• Which are the key purposes and functions of qualifications assigned to the EQF level 5?</li> </ul>

	What are the main opportunities and challenges related to qualifications referenced to EQF level 5?		
	<p>Workshop 1:</p> <p>Chair: Risto Raivio, DG EAC</p> <p>Country cases:</p> <p>Liesbeth Hens and Hannelore Baeyens, Flemish Community of Belgium Brigitte Bouquet, France</p> <p>Discussion</p>	<p>Workshop 2:</p> <p>Chair: Maria Gylfadottir, DG EAC</p> <p>Country cases:</p> <p>John Lewis, UK Mile Dzelalija, Croatia</p> <p>Discussion</p>	<p>Workshop 3:</p> <p>Chair: Rosita Van Meel, ETF</p> <p>Country cases:</p> <p>Valdas Vydmantas, Lithuania Anneke Tjalma and Jo Baeyens, the Netherlands</p> <p>Discussion</p>
13.30. – 14.30.	LUNCH		
14:30. – 16.30	<p><b>SESSION II:</b> <i>Session 2 – EQF Level 5, lifelong learning and the role of NQFs</i></p> <p>The PLA will discuss to which extent frameworks – in practise – are able to take on a bridging role, facilitating lifelong and lifewide learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are level 5 qualifications designed to facilitate vertical (between levels) and horizontal (within levels) progression and transfer? What about transfer between different education systems?</li> <li>• To what extent does the learning outcomes approach facilitate recognition of prior learning and how is this applied for level 5 qualifications?</li> <li>• To what extent can qualifications frameworks make a difference as regards transfer and progression; and what is required to achieve this?</li> </ul>		

	<b>Workshop 1</b> Chair: Jens Bjornavold, Cedefop  Country case: Bryan Maguire, Ireland Baiba Ramina, Latvia  Discussion	<b>Workshop 2</b> Chair: Slava Pevec Grm, Cedefop  Country case: Karin-Elin Berg, Norway  Discussion	<b>Workshop 3</b> Chair: Jean-Philippe Restoueix, Council of Europe  Country case: Elsa Caramujo, Portugal Borut Mikulec, Slovenia Discussion
16:30 – 17:00	<b>Quick reactions on workshop sessions 1 and 2</b>		

<b>FRIDAY 20 APRIL 2012</b>	
09.00. – 10.00	<b>PLENARY SESSION: Discussion on the main points arisen in Day 1 of the PLA</b> – Chair: Carlo Scatoli, DG EAC
10:00 – 10:20	Break-Refreshments
10.20. – 12.20.	<b>Parallel sessions</b>
	<b>SESSION III</b>  <b>Session 3 – EQF level 5 and learning outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have the learning outcomes’ and ‘best fit’ approaches been applied in assigning qualifications to the EQF level 5 across countries? Does the use of learning outcomes in defining qualifications differ between different types of institutions and sub-systems of education and training?</li> <li>• Qualifications at EQF level 5 can potentially be covered by both European credit transfer systems - ECTS and ECVET. What are</li> </ul>

	the implications of this? How can the two credit systems best interact to facilitate mobility, progression between different education sub-system and recognition?		
	<p><b>Workshop 1</b></p> <p>Chair: Mike Coles, expert</p> <p>Case study: Christian Sperle on meister qualifications in Europe</p> <p>Discussion</p>	<p><b>Workshop 2</b></p> <p>Chair: Maria Gylfadottir, DG EAC</p> <p>Country case: Sirikka-Liisa Kirka, Finland</p> <p>Discussion</p>	<p><b>Workshop 3</b></p> <p>Chair: Anita Kremo, DG EAC</p> <p>Country case: Rolf Aslaksrud Kristiansen, ECVET projects: PERMEVET AND SME Master PLUS</p> <p>Discussion</p>
12:20 – 12.45	<b>Quick reactions on workshop session 3</b>		
12.45. – 13.45.	LUNCH		
13.45. – 15:00	<p><b>PLENARY SESSION: European dimension and conclusions</b></p> <p>Chair: Carlo Scatoli, DG EAC</p> <p>The purpose of this session is two-fold. On the one hand, it aims to provide opportunities for discussions on the potential of the EQF and NQFs to contribute to lifelong learning for all and contribute to the labour market relevance of qualifications; on the other hand, it should address the European implications of national decisions on levels and referencing.</p>		

