

**Relating International qualifications to the EQF – the Welding
case**

RAINBOW February 2018

**European Conference on Sectoral Qualifications
VALIDATION REPORT**



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1. FOREWORD

This report summarises the presentations and discussions that took place during the International Qualifications Conference in November 2017, which aimed at validating a new methodology for aligning International Sectoral Qualifications with EU policies and tools, developed under the framework of the RAINBOW project (<http://project-rainbow.eu/>).

The report is written for a wider audience than those who attended the event, in order to share information with a range of organisations and bodies (e.g regulatory bodies, accreditation centers, training providers, industrial companies/employers, among others) that might be involved in the implementation of International Qualifications at national level, meaning involved in referencing International Qualifications with qualification levels of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The report aims at given support to the global awareness about International Qualifications (IQ) and associated Quality Assurance requirements. At the same time, the report aims to support the validation of the RAINBOW project outcomes with stakeholders from the manufacturing Industry, vocational education and training (VET) providers, Higher Education (HE) institutions and national qualification authorities (NQA).

The report can be used to support the work of the European Commission, EQF Advisory Group members and participants of the International Qualifications Conference in disseminating the results and activities in the Member States.

The report is structured according to the IQ Conference objectives and programme. It includes a summary of the event presentations and the main results achieved during the Conference and workshop. The document also includes a reflection on the outcomes and cooperation achieved since the starting of the RAINBOW project, which were not directly discussed at the conference but are relevant for a comprehensive understanding on the status of IQ and the referencing approaches used across Europe.



2. THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL SECTORAL QUALIFICATIONS

The European Federation for Welding, Joining and Cutting (EFW) organised in Porto Salvo (Oeiras), on the 15 and 16 November 2017, a European Conference on International Sectoral Qualifications (IQ – Conference).

The event was organised in the scope of the RAINBOW project, thus addressing the EWF international qualification system and its relation with the National and European Qualifications Frameworks.

RAINBOW intends to assure consistency, when relating international qualifications to the NQF, thus to the EQF, in the welding sector, by proposing an approach for implementing a single language in the training guidelines that is understood across Europe. However, despite the focus on the Welding sector, the idea is to develop an approach suitable to other sectors and international qualifications.

In this context, the IQ Conference focused on International Qualifications Transparency and Quality Assurance, bringing together EWF Members (welding institutes and societies from 30 European countries), ministerial representatives from eight Members States (namely from Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, Austria, Italy, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria) manufacturing industry, VET providers, and Higher Education Institutions; thereby including trainers, teachers, researchers and welding experts.

The overall objectives of the Conference were to:

- validate the EWF methodology for aligning International Sectoral Qualifications to the EQF with 8 national qualification authorities and representative's stakeholders from the industry;
- validate criteria and procedures for referencing EWF Qualifications at National Level, to serve as example for other International Qualifications;

The event included a **plenary session** followed by a **workshop** and face to face meetings.

As such, the IQ Conference programme plenary session on day 1 and the hands-on workshop on day 2, had specific intentions:

The **Plenary Session** aimed at establishing a common understanding of the role of International Qualifications in the European context, namely how they relate to industry needs for qualified personnel, assure harmonised knowledge, skills and competences, guarantee the mobility in Europe and outside Europe and how they are supported by a chain of stakeholders.

The **Workshop** aimed at discussing common solutions and procedures to approach International Qualifications in the national context, from policy regulation to the implementation in different Educational Systems, including VET and HE.

The topics addressed in both plenary session and workshop, were previously established and are illustrated in fig.1:

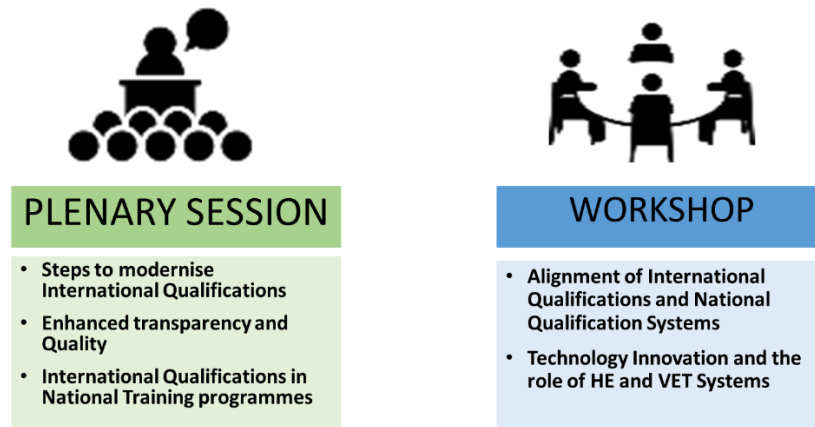


Figure 1 - Approach used in the IQ Conference

In the plenary session, **three main topics** were addressed during a round of presentations followed by a moderated debate, where participants had the opportunity to discuss and raise questions about the next issues:

Steps to Modernise International Qualifications addressed strategies for continuous improvement and adjustment of the training systems to innovative learning methods and approaches, to guarantee high quality in VET in a lifelong learning perspective.

International Qualifications Enhanced Transparency and Quality addressed solutions for Quality Assurance when linking qualifications to the EQF, namely the added value of setting a common language and agreed mechanisms, requirements and rules.

International Qualification in National Training programmes addressed different possibilities for International Qualifications to be uptaken by National VET and HE systems. The Portuguese showcase of good practices was highlighted.

The plenary session involved a panel of **17 speakers** from distinct areas who presented the challenges currently faced in terms of qualification systems, towards the European industry needs and educational policy reforms/recommendations.

The following organisations were invited to share their experience and best practice in terms of development of qualification and innovation:

- **EFMD**, international umbrella organisation, responsible for promoting and implementing international standards for the qualification and certification of personnel and certification of companies.
- **CEDEFOP**, European body, responsible for the development of vocational education and training;
- **European Commission**, namely DG Employment, responsible for employment, social affairs and inclusion;
- **ISQ**, Portuguese sectoral organisation in the welding field, acting at national level as an awarding and training body;
- **ANQEP**, Portuguese National Qualification Agency, responsible for the regulation and accreditation of qualifications.
- **PRODINTEC**, a private innovation and technology centre specialised in industrial design and production.

The **workshop activity**, which took place on day 2, was structured into 2 working groups (WG), targeting a specific audience, objectives and questions. A brainstorming session was used as a catalyst at the start of each WG activity.



- **WG1- Alignment of international qualifications and national Qualification Systems**, comprising EWF members and national qualification authorities
- Objectives - to understand how EWF qualifications are addressed in relation to the national qualification levels and to set common quality criteria for referencing International Qualifications to the EQF
- Questions: *What is the status of the EWF qualifications in your country?*
- *How to align International Qualifications with National Qualifications?*

- **WG2/3 Technology Innovation and the role of the VET Providers and Higher Education Institutions**, comprising Higher Education organisations, R&D Centres and VET Providers
- Objectives: to understand how fast technology innovation is tackled at all training levels
- Questions: *How do VET Providers and universities respond to the fast technology innovation?*
- *What is the added value of International Qualifications addressing fast innovative technologies?*

Discussion within the groups was guided by a moderator, who was also responsible for reporting the main conclusions coming from the previous brainstorming.

The IQ - Conference results, including the content of the presentation and the workshop conclusions are detailed in the next section.

3. IQ- CONFERENCE RESULTS

PLENARY SESSION IN NUMBERS

- 8 HOURS
- 14 PRESENTATIONS
- 3 MODERATORS
- 17 SPEAKERS
- 80 PARTICIPANTS



3.1 Plenary Session Presentations

Full presentations are available in the RAINBOW project website through the following link:
<http://project-rainbow.eu/documents.html>.

A short summary about the main subjects and conclusion is provided in the next pages.

Loukas Zahilas, CEDEFOP, Head of Unit

Loukas Zahilas provided an interesting presentation about “Technology Innovation, New Professional Qualifications – the Role of EU policies and tools”, where he addressed changes in the global landscape and the need for society, in particular learning communities to adapt to changes. The role of International Qualifications and EU tools supporting qualification transparency and mobility were highlighted.

Chris Eady, President of the European Welding Federation (EWF)

Chris Eady opened the IQ - Conference with the comprehensive approach about the welding process and the role of the European Welding Federation in the past 25th years. Looking ahead, he addressed some of the federation challenges for the future, thus related to need of matching of the industry requirements, personnel qualification, trends in manufacturing, enhancement of digital skills, attractiveness of the sector for young generations, among others.

[View of full presentation](#)

3.1.1 - Steps to modernise International Qualifications (IQ)

HIGHLIGHTS – About Learning Outcomes

Writing LOs for the European Welding qualifications is like a sailing journey, with up and downs, at the end the lighthouse and the way to harbour will be found.

Source: EWF, Elvira Silva presentation

HIGHLIGHTS – About Referencing IQ to NQF

The Alignment between international qualifications and NQF requires:

- Communication among stakeholders;
- Use of learning outcomes (LOs) for describing qualifications;
- Assessment of achieved LOs;
- Understanding about the relevance of qualifications to be included in NQFs;
- Quality Assurance procedures for qualifications

Source: ANQEP, Teresa Duarte presentation

Elvira Raquel Silva, European Welding Federation (EWF), Project Manager

Elvira Silva presented the EWF strategy to write learning outcomes (LOs), including the steps and approach used. As a conclusion, the EWF strategy includes:

- *the update of the current training guidelines, up taken by VET providers (EWF's ATB- Approved Training Bodies);*
- *the use of EQF recommendations for writing LOs;*
- *the involvement of key stakeholders in the reviewing and validation process, from EWF experts to independent bodies such as national authorities and the industry.*

[View of full presentation](#)

Lara Ramos & Joana Santos, Instituto de Soldadura e Qualidade (ISQ), Project Managers

Lara Ramos and Joana Santos, presented “New training tools based on a learner centred approach”, which address the shift of paradigm in the design and delivery of qualifications, from a traditional model of focussing on inputs to instead focussing on outputs. They provided an overview about useful innovative training methods (e.g. work-based learning, micro learning and ICT methods) and resources (e.g. case studies, videos, simulations, hands on activities), that can be applied to the welding sector.

[View of full presentation](#)

Rute Batista & Teresa Duarte, Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e Ensino Profissional (ANQEP), Senior Officers

ANQEP presentation focus on the “Arrangements for the validation of prior experience and learning” applied to the welding Sector. They started by explaining how International Qualification, such as the EWF qualifications, match to validation of non-formal and informal learning (VFNIL) and what is the added value of IQ integration of VFNIL procedures.

As a conclusion, they identified the main challenges in applying VFNIL in International Qualifications. Thus, the adoption of a model for the recognition of prior learning in the welding sector requires:

- Valuing VNIL- understand its importance
- Agreement on validation procedures
- Support of individuals
- Capacity building of the staff involved in VNIL process



- Stakeholders involvement
- Quality Assurance mechanisms to foster trust in the process
- Articulation and communication among IQ and National Qualification system
- Alignment between IQ and NQFs

[View of full presentation](#)

3.1.2 - Enhanced transparency and Quality in IQ

HIGHLIGHTS – About ESCO

ESCO sets a common language for describing qualifications, providing a digital support for the labour market transactions

Source: ESCO, Nuria Moyens presentation

HIGHLIGHTS – About Quality Assurance in IQ

The establishment of Quality criteria for referencing International Qualifications to the EQF is a complex activity, which demands a wider and continuous DISCUSSION with all relevant stakeholders and decision makers from the industry and education.

Source: EWF, Adelaide Almeida presentation

Nuria Moyes Prezello, DG Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion, ESCO Secretariat

Nuria Prezello provided a comprehensive approach about ESCO (Multilingual Classification of European Skills, Competences and Occupations) and its role in:

- fostering mobility of workers;
- matching skills;
- supporting transparency in the recruitment, validation and recognition of personnel;
- bridging communication the gap between education and employment.

Special attention was given to the qualifications pillar, since it will allow an indirect inclusion of International Sectoral Qualifications. It is worth mentioning the pilot collaboration between ESCO and EWF led to the publication of European Welding Practitioner Qualification in the ESCO pilot website: <http://qpilot.semic.eu/detail/0#lang=en&detailUri=http://data.europa.eu/esco/resource/4e1edb42-a603-47ff-b723-969468661039>

[View of full presentation](#)

Italo José Fernandes, EWF, Systems Manager

Italo Fernandes was responsible for presenting the EWF Quality Assurance system, which is the example of best practice for ensuring harmonised training in 30 EU countries.

He focused on the three Quality Assurance System pillars, namely:

- **Technical Committee** – which is responsible for the content of the training courses and for qualification rules and procedures, approved by all members;
- **National Nominated Bodies** – who are responsible for supervision and implementation of system;
- **Approved Training Bodies** – which are responsible for the implementation of the education and training parts qualification guidelines;

[View of full presentation](#)

Adelaide Almeida, EWF, Project Manager

Adelaide Almeida presented the RAINBOW project methodology, which has allowed to map and identify ACTIONS and Quality Assurance CRITERIA needed for referencing International Qualifications to the EQF via NQF, as well to verify and describe how the EWF Qualification System complies with the identified actions and criteria. More details about the project results are available in the project website <http://project-rainbow.eu/project.html>.

[View of full presentation](#)

3.1.3 - IQ in National Training Programmes

HIGHLIGHTS – Successful uptake of IQ in Portugal

Growing alliance between stakeholders and government lead to creation of MORE and BETTER JOBS:

- 1200 Diplomas
- 14 Public training centres are EWF ATBs
- 82 Qualified Trainers
- 900 International Qualified Welders and Welding Practitioners
- Employment rate 94%

Source: ISQ, Margarida Ségard presentation

Luísa Coutinho, EWF, Executive Director

Luísa Coutinho presented the uptake of EWF Qualifications by universities as post-graduation and MSC courses. An example is the case in the University of Lulea in Sweden and Laperanta University in Finland, who offer the EWF Welding Engineer qualification as a post-graduation course. Master's degrees in welding engineering are awarded by FCTUNL (Faculty of Technology and Science in the University of Lisbon). For this degree, the curriculum is a shared responsibility between the university and the EWF authorised nominated body (ISQ). As conclusion, the uptake of EWF qualification at higher level is possible through the implementation of permeability agreements between HE and VET systems.

[View of full presentation](#)



Margarida Segard, ISQ, Deputy Director

Margarida Ségard gave a presentation about the successful alliance between EWF, ISQ, and ANQEP in integrating International Qualifications into the Portuguese National System.

As main conclusion, the elements/principals for integration of IQ at national level are the following:

- Mutual trust
- Quality
- Market /business orientation
- Workers (end-users) orientation

In the Portuguese case, a strategic approach was used, which consisted of using the National Institute for Training and Employment, which is a Public training offer, as the Approved Training Body for delivering EWF training Courses.

She also highlighted the required steps, from a policy into practice level, leading to the uptake IQ at National level:

- Assessment of training infrastructures
- Coaching for EWF approval
- Training of trainers
- Integration of EWF qualifications in the NQF
- Trainees' qualifications and certification

[View of full presentation](#)

3.1.4 - Future of IQ

Koeno Nomden, DG Employment Social Affairs & Inclusion, Team Leader for “Transparency and Recognition of Skills and Qualifications”

Koeno Nomden's presentation addressed the “future of IQ and steps ahead” and reflected on the European Commission's priorities regarding the New Skills Agenda for Europe. Then he highlighted the study on International Sectoral Qualifications carried out by the EC (2015-16), the main findings which led to a better understanding about IQ state of art in Europe. To conclude, he provided an overview about the EQF in Europe, including the main challenges related to its implementation at national level.

[View of full presentation](#)

3.2 Workshop results

WORKSHOP IN NUMBERS

- 
- 4 HOURS
 - 4 MODERATORS
 - 30 PARTICIPANTS

3.2.1 Working Groups' discussions

The workshop gathered a smaller group of participants when compared to the plenary session, since its objective was to guarantee a face-to-face discussion among national qualification authorities and the EWF members. As previously mentioned, the workshop was conducted with two WGs, each one targeting a specific audience, and with objectives and questions.

WG1 Alignment of IQ and National Qualification Systems

ALIGNMENT OF INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM



G1

Group composition: 9 EWF Members and 8 National Qualification Agencies

Moderators: Koeno Nomden and Adelaide Almeida

Aims - understanding how EWF Qualifications are addressed at national level; foster communication and cooperation for the integration of EWF Qualifications by National Qualification Systems/Frameworks; and validate the Rainbow methodology for assigning a level to EWF Qualifications.

The activity started with a short “icebreaker”, to understand the participants’ expectations regarding the workshop. The answers were the following:

- How do NQF and EQF work? What are the procedures?
- How can it be embedded in the national systems?
- Seek solutions and understanding about the EQF – What is its added value for the EWF system?
- Understand the added value of EQF for the end users – what is the “benefit for people”
- Solutions on how to implement? Solutions on how to Classify qualifications (Netherlands case);
- Understand NQFs and its relation to access conditions (Austria)
- Share experience
- To have concrete solutions for alignment, including concrete ideas about LOs and Quality Assurance (European Commission)
- To foster dialogue between policy makers, EWF Members (industry) and VET;
- To learn more about NQF (Italy), since Italy has national catalogues per region, where some of them are linked
- EWF goal is to have the same EQF level for its qualifications in each country

Then, discussion took place, according to the following topics:

Overall question to be discussed: What is the status of the EWF qualifications in your country?
A1. Which EWF qualifications integrate the National Qualifications Framework? What is the NQF/EQF level of that qualification?
A2. Provide examples of the main barriers when integrating the EWF Qualifications in the national context?
A3. What are the advantages and opportunities resulting from the integration of International Qualifications (IQ) in the National Qualifications Framework/System?
Overall question to be discussed: How to align International Qualifications with National Qualifications?
A4. What quality criteria have to be complied with for an IQ to be referenced at national level?
A5. Does the EWF methodology for assigning the level suite the IQ referencing process with the NQF/EQF? Does it facilitate the mapping of the qualifications?
A6. What are next steps for the alignment of IQ with NQF/EQF?

The results and conclusion related to each question were the following:

Question A1. EWF Qualifications 2017

There are best practices of integration of EWF Qualifications in NQF. An example is the case of Portugal, for the European Welder Qualifications and European Welding Practitioner.

Questions A2. A3. A5 and A6

ALIGNMENT OF INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM		
1.What is the status of the EWF qualifications in your country? Identifying barriers, advantages and opportunities		?
Barriers /challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand added value of EQF Communication across Europe Need for compliance with different procedures in each country Consistency (procedures) across Europe Different levels of maturity of VET systems and NQF Adoption of EQF level in the voluntary bases; EWF Qualifications having the same EQF level in member countries Quite complicated, bureaucratic and time consuming Process 	R1
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency More customer/industry/market orientation 	
Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LOs completed and renewed EWF members to get in contact with NQA in their own countries NQAs agreeing in the same integration process procedures / to define procedures and get agreement about EWF Qualifications Ensuring commitment 	

Question A4.

ALIGNMENT OF INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM



2. How to align International Qualifications with National Qualifications?

Identifying which quality criteria to comply with for the alignment with NQF and EQF

?

1. Qualification described through LOs (following EU Recommendations/EQF) – focus on competence
2. Being an INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATION embedding modular approaches and alternative pathways
3. Involve all stakeholders in all stages (VET, NQAs, sector council)
4. Quality Assurance procedures from the design to the awarding
5. Procedures for continuous improvement /update of the Qualifications
6. Quality of the examinations
7. Quality of Training
8. Quality control of the organisation performing the examination
9. Relevance for the labour market
10. Ownership of the Qualification
11. Quality of the Organisation which provides examination

R2

The criteria 1 to 5 identified by the working group are common to criteria for Quality Assurance of qualifications referenced to the EQF, mentioned in the Annex IV of the new Council Recommendation for the EQF (2017) <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15686&langId=en>.

Criteria 6 to 11 were agreed as being important for the referencing process of IQ to the NQF;

Regarding Criteria 7' quality of training, it was considered as optional criteria depending on the national qualification authority. For instance, in Netherlands what matters is the examination path instead of the training context.

WG2/3 Technology Innovation and the role of HE and VET

TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION AND THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



G2/3

Group composition: 11 participants

Moderators: **Elvira Silva and Timothy Jessop**

Aims - understand how Universities and VET providers tackle fast technology innovation in their courses; understand how HE institutions and R&D / VET and sectoral organisations see the role and collaboration of each other;

Overall question to be discussed: **How do universities and VET providers respond to the fast technology innovation?**

A1. What is the added value of International Qualifications addressing fast innovative technologies?

A2. How do Higher Education/VET Institutions tackle technology innovation in their learning programmes?

A3. How do you see the integration of technologies modules at higher level/VET Systems, including the role of research centres and HE institutions/ VET providers and sectoral organisations?



A4. What are the challenges and opportunities resulting from the integration of innovative technologies at higher level/ national VET systems?

Conclusions are the following:

How do HE Institutions and VET Providers respond to the fast technology innovation?
Identifying the added value, challenges and opportunities

?

Added value	International Qualification has advantage of speed “core” and “options” concept works best (option modules) Recognition of prior learning can also enable higher speed
How do they respond	By collaborating with other organisations: Research centres; Manufacturer of equipment; Employers using the new technology Community centres and FABLABS Depends on: How integration is done
Challenges	Speed of technology change Co-operation with stakeholders (Broad) Training tools Blended learning and MOOCS

4. RELATED RESULTS

Communications with the French and Polish Qualification Agencies were established during the IQ Conference preparation. These contacts have allowed a greater understanding about the status of EWF qualifications in each country and have allowed the identification of concrete procedures for referencing International Qualifications to NQF and, consequently, to the EQF.

Although the mentioned agencies were not able to attend the event, interesting findings are worth stating.

4.1 The French case

1 - How does the French VET system deal with qualifications standing outside the system?

- The French qualification system is mature and open to qualifications outside the national educational system
- International Qualifications are treated equally as private qualifications, meaning private VET qualifications have to request accreditation “accreditation of qualifications to the national framework”
- Qualifications linked to NQF must have a direct connection with the “trade/ métier” covering all the aspects of an occupation or several occupations
- Sectors can build their own qualifications and have a level if the qualification follows two requirements /principles: **holistic approach and self-sufficiency**
- Qualifications with a level must be expressed in terms of in terms of competencies, taken as a combination of skills, autonomy, and related knowledge.
- The level cannot be directly linked to a technology, which can very quickly change.
- A qualification with a level must be self-sufficient, meaning is judged as a standalone qualification. It cannot be backed onto another qualification.

2- What is the solution for international Qualifications in France?

- A database, named “Inventaire” was created by law, in order to select the qualifications and to give them a national meaning, without a level.
- Quality Assurance which has to be determined and followed is the Quality Assurance of levelling, which are not the same as the QA used by an awarding body or the expression in learning outcomes.

3 - How are EWF qualifications addressed in France?

- During a short period, the welding qualification in the TIG welding process was registered in the NQF
- The whole diploma/certificate of engineer is recognised as a master degree, being welding a part of the whole qualification as a specialization
- Most of the welding qualifications of IWE were registered with the support of metallurgy branch and approved by all the members of the Commission (CNCP).

(Source: Georges Asseraf et Brigitte Bouquet, CNCP)



4.2 The Polish case

1-How does the Polish VET system deal with Qualifications standing outside the system?

Poland has published a law of 22nd December 2015 on the Integrated Qualifications System which determines that:

- An entity carrying out organised activities in the economy, labour market, education or training sector may submit to the competent minister a request to include a “market qualification” to the Integrated Qualifications System;
- Market qualification are qualifications who are not regulated by provisions of law, awarded according to the principle of freedom of business activity;

2- What is the solution for international Qualifications in Poland?

The procedure for requesting the integration on the “Integrated Qualification System” includes:

- data on the entity
- description of the market qualification
- learning outcomes required for obtaining the qualification
- proposed level of the Polish Qualifications Framework to be assigned to the qualification and reference to the level of a Sectoral Qualifications Framework if it has been established for the given sector or branch;
- information on estimated cost of obtaining the document certifying the acquisition of the qualification;
- code of the field of education;
- code of Polish Classification of Activities (PKD);

The request is submitted to the competent minister through the web portal of the Integrated Qualification Registry.

3– How are EWF qualifications addressed in Poland?

No EWF qualifications are addressed in the National VET System.

(Source: Maciej Lasota, Ministry of National Education)



5. COOPERATION AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

Two examples of best practices in linking IQ to the NQF are described, the Portuguese and the Romanian case. The first illustrates a sound alliance, while the second illustrates the first steps of a fruitful collaboration.

5.1 Best practice in Portugal

In Portugal two training standard from the EWF Training and Qualification System are referenced in the National Catalogue of Qualifications (CNQ) <http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/>, namely:

- 1-Training Standard of level 2 EQF/NQF for the **European Welder**
- 2-Training Standard of level 4 EQF/NQF for the **European Welding Practitioner**.

Qualifications are structured in such a way to combine national training requirements and technical requirements aligned with IIW/ EWF guidelines. Thus, the integration of the above mentioned EWF qualifications in the Portuguese VET System enables the issuing of three different diplomas: the National education level and occupation diploma, the European and International Welder or European/International Welding Practitioner diplomas.

In Portugal, the National Qualification Agency (ANQEP) has established Sectorial Councils for Qualification (CSQ - <http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/Home/CSQ>) which are working groups aiming at permanently identifying the needs of updating the National Qualifications Catalogue according to each sector trends.

Sectorial Councils for Qualifications are composed by Social Partners, Companies, Training institutions, Technology centres, Competent authorities (responsible for (1) regulating access to professions; (2) with responsibility for specific certifications; (3) with responsibility for the regulation of sectors of economic activity) and Independent experts.

In this context, a strategic cooperation between EWF, the Portuguese Welding Institute (ISQ), National VET Providers (IEFP) and the National Qualification Authority (ANQEP) has allowed the uptake of IQ at national level.

The process leading to the successful referencing to the NQF is detailed in the next steps:

1 – Establishment of trust between the involved stakeholders, meaning:

- share common goal (market/business and end-users orientation)
- awareness about IQ qualifications
- understand the role of each organisation

2 - Compliance with Quality Assurance procedures, meaning:

- common understanding about EWF Quality Assurance System
- the ATB (Approved Training Body) must follow specific requirements
- the ANB (Authorised Nominated Body) guarantees the compliance with EWF rules

3-Transforming public training centers into ATB's, meaning:

- Assessment of the training infrastructure, to make sure it complies with EWF rules
- Coaching for EWF authorisation (ANB), to create internal procedures and Quality manual for each training centres
- Trainers' capacity building, to develop greater knowledge to accomplish EWF Guidelines

3- **Integration of EWF qualifications in the NQF**, meaning:

- Create harmonised national qualification standards
- Comply with national requirements and criteria
- Design the European Welder (EW) and European Welding Practitioner (EWP) qualification according to the CNQ

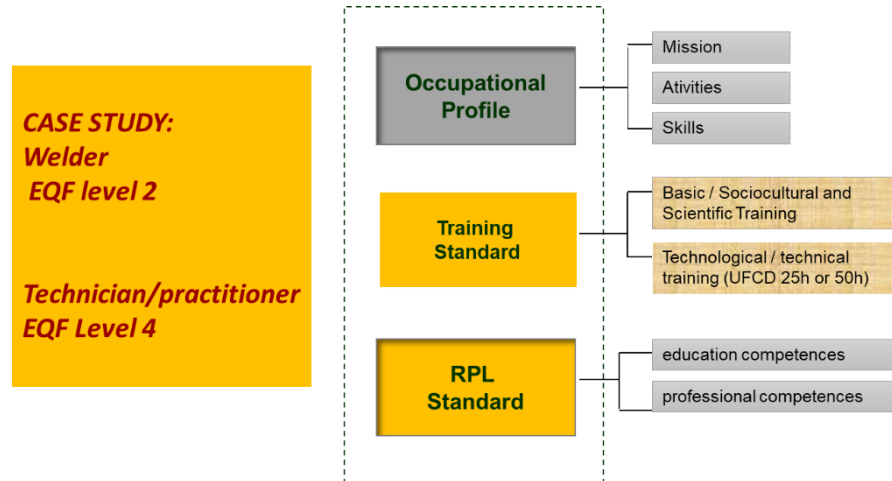


Figure 2 - EW and EWP in Portuguese National Qualifications Catalogue

4- **Trainees' qualification and certification**, meaning:

- Implement EWF qualification examinations and also examinations for certification

(Source: Margarida Ségard, presentation during the IQ Conference)



5.2 Best practice in Romania

In the Romanian national VET system, only the qualification of welders is included, which can be obtained through initial and continuous VET and has level 3 in NQF corresponding to level 3 in EQF.

The standard for the qualification of welders in initial VET was recently revised taking account of the requirements of the IW guideline but there is no formal reference to the EWF system.

A new standard for the qualification of “Welding Technician” with level 5 in NQF will be prepared in the next future. Efforts will be made to link it to the EWF system.

In the case of continuous VET the occupational standard for welder has no link to EWF.

There is also a welding engineer qualification included in the Register for Qualification in Higher Education but with no link to the EWF system. The qualification has level 6 in NQF and EQF. This qualification has a historical background for more than 60 years.

There is a need in the Romanian industry for the implementation of the EWF system, which is proved by the quite big number of the persons who already got such qualifications.

The process of integration of new qualifications in the National Qualifications System (NQS) is quite complicated, bureaucratic and time consuming. For an existing occupation there is the need to change the occupational standard.

For a new occupation the first action is to introduce this occupation in the National Register of Occupations and then to elaborate the occupational standard. For the time being, the National Authority for Qualification has not finalised the Register of Professional Qualifications. There exists only a Register for Qualifications in Higher Education.

ASR, the Romanian Welding Society, is intending to contribute in the process of implementation of the EWF system in the Romanian NQS. In order to do this, a cooperation with the National Authority is being developed. The procedure involves the following steps:

- ASR or a welding company must apply to the Ministry of Education to introduce the qualification
- Professional Standards (SPP) and curriculum have to be developed by working groups; (EWF experts can be part of these working groups and the standards can be done in accordance with the EWF standard)
- Approval of the SPP and curriculum;
- Development of assessment through practical and oral exams, where EWF experts can be part of the evaluation committee.

The Romanian National Authority has demonstrated openness to work on adapting the national certification exam to the IQ system exams, so that students obtain both certifications.

(Source: Dorin Dehelean, ASR & Carmen Musat, National Center for TVET Development)



5.3 - Comparison between countries

When comparing the range of countries targeted by RAINBOW, regarding the way they address to International Sectoral Qualifications, it is possible to recognise common and divergent characteristics:

Similarities

- heavy and time consuming bureaucratic procedures for referencing IQ to the NQF
- common understanding of the added value of IQ
- willingness to strengthen cooperation/dialogue between NQAs and EWF members

Differences

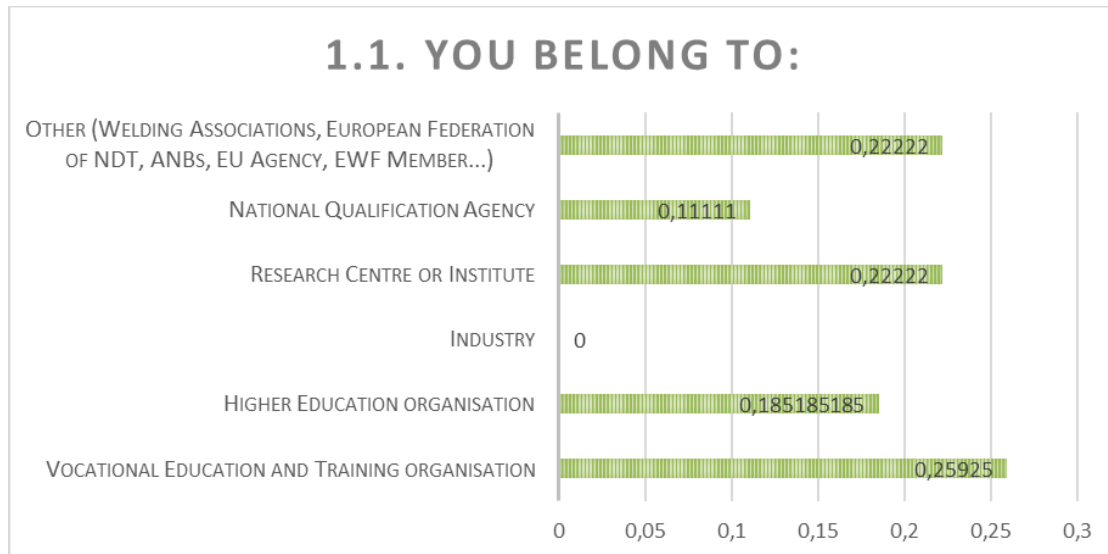
- level of maturity and priorities of the NQFs
- mature frameworks, such as the ones established in France, Netherlands and Austria, have in place a database and registration system for private qualifications identified as relevant for the country
- Young qualifications frameworks, like the ones recently established in Poland, are integrating private qualifications since the beginning, having already defined specific procedures for the referencing process.

6. EVALUATION AND FEEDBACKS

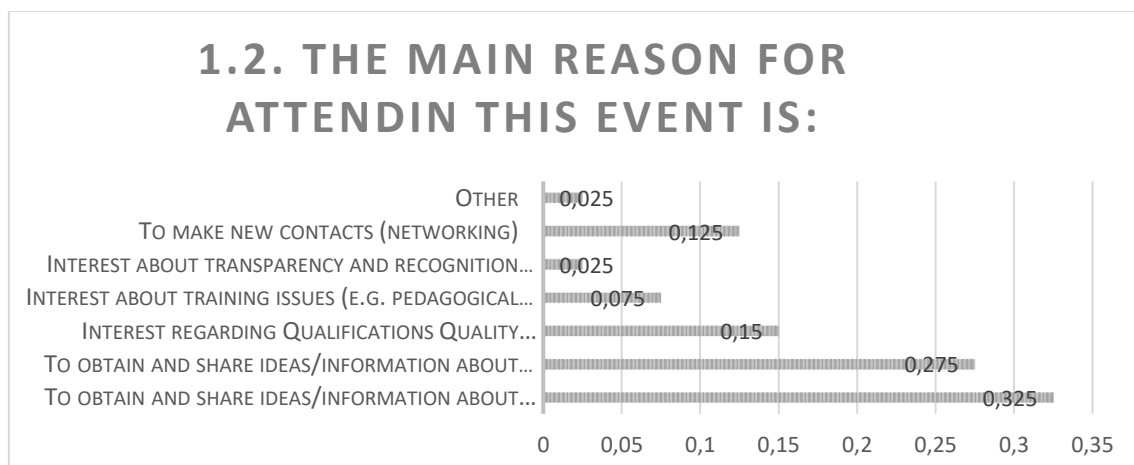
After the International Qualifications EQF workshop, participants replied to a satisfaction questionnaire (Annex G).

A total of 22 answers were gathered.

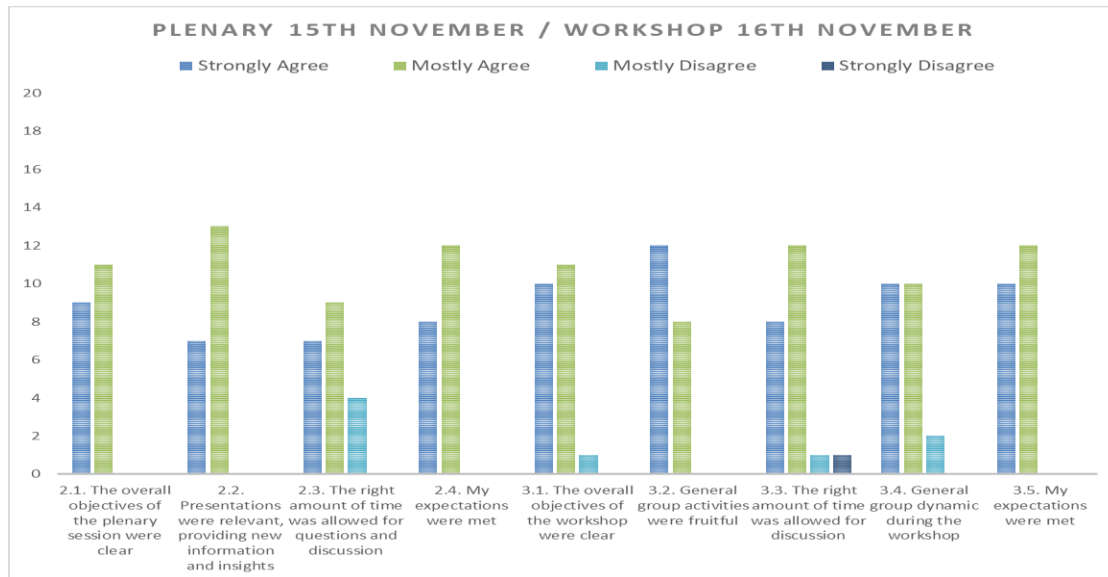
Details about the participants background demonstrated that the majority represented **Training organization (0,256)**, followed by EWF members and Research institutes (**0,22**).



The motivation for participating in the Conference is related with the interest to obtain and share information about IQ (0,33) and about the referencing process to the EQF (0,28).



Regarding the overall evaluation of the plenary session and workshop, participants strongly and mostly agree that the objectives were clear, providing relevant insights and meet their expectations. A few participants considered that further discussion was needed in both workshop and plenary session.



Some remarks and suggestions were also provided by the participants:

- "I enjoyed my visit and mixing with the welding community."
- "Thank you for this interesting experience"
- "Please share the presentations and conclusions in the web"
- "Transportation to Taguspark - very complex issue."
- "This was my first experience to EWF event and found it very useful."
- "Have a comprehensive report summarizing the results from the workshop...plus access to previous presentations!"

Regarding the added value of the IQ conference, participants referred:

- "The conference was a real success."
- "We have shared best practice, we have learned from the experience of others and about IQ, technology and innovation trends, about European policies updates on qualifications transparency and mobility."
- "We better understand how to revise the professional standards in line with the European recommendations."
- "Interesting presentations of the conference program and the concrete discussions during the workshop, in which participants presented their point of view and aspects of their expertise."
- "We also appreciated the structure of the participants who represented national public authorities, training institutions and professional associations."
- "Specifically, we appreciate the high added value of EWF's methodology for writing learning outcomes, the system to ensure IQ quality, as well as the Portuguese example of good practice on recognition IQ at national level."



Regarding the validation of the EWF methodology for writing Learning Outcomes, participants referred:

- “The EWF methodology for written Learning outcomes is consistent and very clear.” The methodology developed lead to a better use of qualifications for benefit of individuals, the labour market and the economy.
- “The steps are well-chosen.”
- “I think a small problem is the credit points. We have done the credit points according with the number of training hours. May be better is to accord the credit points with the importance of unit of learning outcomes in the qualification but the same unit of learning outcomes has different importance in different qualification. It's not so easy to evaluate the importance!”

7. CONCLUSION

The IQ conference allowed to present and validate the EWF approach for relating the International Sectoral Qualifications to the EQF with relevant stakeholders from the industry and education fields. Thus, enabling a validation of the learning outcomes and as well as the necessary steps and common procedures for linking the EWF system to the NQFs.

The plenary session was important for a better understanding about the role and challenges of International Qualifications at European and National levels. While the workshop allowed to clarify the role of EQF regarding International Qualifications, understanding how they can support mutually. In some cases, the workshop, established the first steps of dialogue between EWF Members and National Qualifications Authorities and, for others, reinforced existing alliance for integrating IQ in the national qualification systems.

The IQ Conference on Sectoral Qualifications was also the confirmation that more cooperation and dialogue are essential to guarantee the transparency and recognition of International Qualifications, at national and European level.

The referencing process of International Qualification to the NQF, thus to the EQF, is a complex process, which requires a continuous approach of openness and dialogue between a chain of stakeholders, going from the industry representatives, national and private education and training systems, national qualification authorities to European bodies.

Another important conclusion was that for well establish international qualifications, such as EWF Qualification System, with recognised training and Quality Assurance Systems in technical areas, a strategic approach is required when referencing their qualifications at national level.

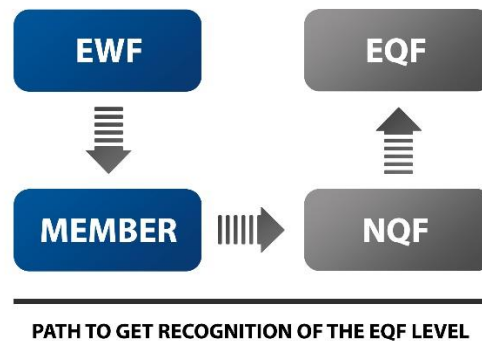


Figure 3 – Path to get Recognition of the EQF level

This strategic approach for EWF Qualifications involves the next steps:

- 1st LOs completed and renewed for the EWF Qualifications /Guidelines
- 2nd EWF members to get in contact with NQA in their own countries
- 3rd NQAs agreeing in the same integration process procedures / to define procedures and get agreement about EWF Qualifications
- 4th Ensuring commitment

Finally, the IQ conference allowed to: (1) identify Quality Assurance Criteria for referencing International Qualifications to the EQF, thus among different National Qualification Agencies; (2) as well as to identify best practices for the integration of IQ in National Qualifications Framework.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

A reflection is required on what will arise from the event and how can the results be used by the following target groups: European and National policy makers, Industry and other International Qualification Systems?

Some ideas on how the validation report can be used, is provided:

- **For recipients of the report**
 - Consolidate the knowledge about IQ and EU policy and tools
 - Trigger the interest of starting a refereeing process at national level
 - Raise awareness about the steps and possible solutions for referencing EWF qualifications
- **For the RAINBOW project results**
 - Review and improve the methodology for writing LOs for the EWF Qualification system
 - Review and improve criteria and procedures to reference EWF Qualifications to the NQFs
 - Present and validate a **combined “puzzle” model (fig.4)** for the integration of lower and higher levels of technical requirements, which are addressed in the EWF Qualifications, within national vocational education and training and higher education institutions qualifications, thus considering the different national requirements.

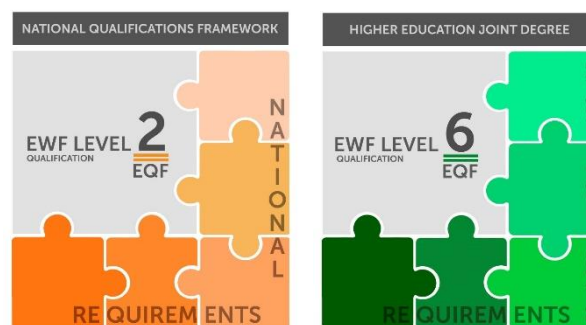


Figure 4 – Integration of Technical qualifications into National VET and HE Systems

- **For EWF**
 - Use the LOs as a tool to revise all EWF qualifications and to develop new qualifications;
 - Encourage and support members to contact their national agencies, to begin or consolidate the integration of IQ in the National VET system.
- **For EQF**
 - Support further activities and decisions of the EQF Advisory group and European Commission
- **For other stakeholders**
 - Use the best practices by other sectors and Training systems wishing to reference at national level.

EWF members, National Qualifications Agencies and European Commission, which have participated in the event, will receive a digital version in English by email.

EWF will disseminate the Rainbow project results, including this report among its network, allowing to spread best practices to more EWF member countries.

The IQ validation report will also be available for general public on the Rainbow project website project-rainbow.eu.



9. ANNEX

A – Invitations



Dear Ms. X

*The European Federation for Joining, Welding and Cutting (EWF) has the pleasure to invite you to the **European Conference on Sectoral International Qualifications**.*

*The event will take place between the **15th and 16th of November 2017** in the TAGUS PARK - **PARQUE DE CIÊNCIA E TECNOLOGIA**, in Oeiras / Lisbon, Portugal.*

*The aim of this European Conference is to discuss a new methodology for **aligning International Sectoral Qualifications with EU policies and tools** (EQF, Learning Outcomes and ECVET) and it is organised in the framework of the RAINBOW project (<http://project-rainbow.eu/>), co-financed by the EU, under the Erasmus + programme.*

Your contact was suggested by the EACEA and DG Employment as one of the European VET Quality Assurance Authorities to invite.

It would be an honour to have X at this conference, as well as having your country represented.

Further details about the Conference are available through the following link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/european-conference-on-sectoral-international-qualifications-tickets-34690071939>.

The registration in the event has to be done online, through the same link.

EWF will support part of your travel and accommodation expenses, including 2 nights for accommodation in a Hotel near the Conference location.

*We kindly request to fill in the travel and accommodation form in attachment, and return it by email (madealmeida@ewf.be) **until the 31st July 2017**.*

We look forward to seeing you in Portugal !

Sincerely,



B - International Qualifications Conference Guide



3. Programme Agenda of day one Wednesday, 15th November

Room: Main conference hall

8:00-9:30 • **Registration**
Reception Hall.
Please do your registration before attending the following schedule.
Registration is done at the main reception hall.

9:00 • **Welcome**
Speaker: EWF, Chris Eady, United Kingdom

9:20 • **EWf 25th Anniversary**
Speaker: EWF, Lúcia Coutinho, Portugal

9:30 • **Programme for the day**
Speakers: EWF, Eunice Assunção, Portugal

9:40 • **Technology Innovation, New Professional Qualifications**
The Role of EU tools and Policies.
Speakers: CEDEFOP, Loukas Zahris, Greece

9:40 • **AI and the need of a new workforce**
Speaker: European Commission, Garman Esteban, Belgium

9:50 • **AI in Motion strategic action**
The importance on non-technological aspects.
Speakers: PROINTEC, Paula Queipo, Spain
Moderator: Eunice Assunção

10:00-10:20 • **Coffee-break & Networking**

Speakers by session

Welcome
Chris Eady, President, European Welding Federation (EWF)

EWf Anniversary
Lúcia Coutinho, Executive Director, EWF
Eunice Assunção, Deputy Director, EWF
Garman Esteban, Research Programme Officer – Industrial Technologies, European Commission
Loukas Zahris, Head of Department for VET systems and Institutions, CEDEFOP
Paula Queipo, Externalisation Director, Prointec

Steps to modernise International Qualifications (IQ)
Elvira Raquel Silva, Project Manager, EWF
Joana Santos, Project Manager, Instituto de Soluções e Qualificação (ISQ)
Lara Santos, Project Manager, ISQ
Rita Batista, Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e Ensino Profissional (ANQEP)
Teresa Duarte, ANQEP

Enhance transparency and Quality in IQ
Adelaide Almeida, Project Manager, EWF
Paulo José Fernandes, Systems Manager, EWF
Nuria Moyas Prallera, EC20 Secretariat – Skills and Qualifications, EC Employment Social Affairs & Inclusion

IQ in National Training Programmes
Lúcia Coutinho, Executive Director, EWF
Maria Margarida Ságuas, Deputy Director, ISQ
Vanina Marcelino, Senior Officer, ANQEP

Future of IQ
Nozoro Nwanden, Team Leader “Transparency and Recognition of Skills and Qualifications” – Skills and Qualifications, EC Employment Social Affairs & Inclusion

Change room: Go to the Small hall.

10:30 • **International Qualifications**
Welding Sector – European Welding Federation – case study.
Speaker: EWF, Chris Eady, United Kingdom

10:50 • **Steps To Modernise International Qualifications (IQ):**
A methodology for describing Learning Outcomes.
Speaker: EWF, Elvira Raquel Silva, Portugal

11:10 • **New training tools based on a learner centred approach.**
Speaker: ISQ, Joana Santos, Lara Ramos, Portugal

EWf 25th Anniversary | 13 – 17 November 2017 | Taguspark, Oeiras, Portugal
www.ewf.be / www.project-rainbow.eu

[Link to the full Conference Guide](#)



C – Satisfaction Questionnaire

ERASMUS + KA3: 576125-EPP-1-2015-1-BE-EPPKA3-TRANS-SQ



European Conference on International Sectoral Qualifications Assessment Questionnaire

We would like your opinion on this event. Please, fill in the form and return it before the end of the workshop. Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

1. Background	
1.1 You are / belong to a :	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Education and Training organisation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education organisation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry
	<input type="checkbox"/> Research Centre or Institute
	<input type="checkbox"/> National Qualification Agency
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
1.2 The main reason for attending this event is	<input type="checkbox"/> To obtain and share ideas/information about International Qualifications (IQ)
	<input type="checkbox"/> To obtain and share ideas/information about the referencing process to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Interest regarding Qualifications Quality Assurance mechanisms and rules
	<input type="checkbox"/> Interest about training issues (e.g. pedagogical approaches and tools)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Interest about transparency and recognition issues (e.g. validation arrangements and tools)
	<input type="checkbox"/> To make new contacts (networking)
1.3 How did you first hear about the Conference	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> By invitation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Through Rainbow project website and/or newsletter
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

2. Plenary session - 15 th November 2017 (9:00 – 17:00)	
2.1 The overall objectives of the plenary session were clear	<div> <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly disagree </div> <div> <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree </div>




2.2 Presentations were relevant, providing new information and insights	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
2.3 The right amount of time was allowed for questions and discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
2.4 My expectation were met	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
2.5 Following the plenary session I am likely to (tick the boxes that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Share the information with colleagues	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Share the information more widely with outside contacts	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Use the information in professional context	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

3. Workshop – 16th November 2017 (9:00 – 13:00)		
3.1 The overall objectives of the workshop were clear	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
3.2 General group activities were fruitful	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
3.3 The right amount of time was allowed for discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
3.4 General group dynamic during the workshop (e.g. communication, cooperation, networking)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
3.5 My expectations were met	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly disagree
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
3.6 Following the workshop I am likely to (tick the boxes that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Share the information with colleagues	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Share the information more widely with outside contacts	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Use the information in professional context	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

4. Organisation and logistics	
4.1 The venue of the Conference and catering services were	<input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Poor
4.2 The general organisation provided before and during the Conference was	<input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Poor

5. Further remarks/suggestions (optional)

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT



HAS TAKEN PART IN THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON SECTORAL INTERNATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS HELD BY EWF ON 15-16 NOVEMBER 2017.



Ing. Luisa Coutinho
Executive Director

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union 

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