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Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK)
Confederation of German Retailers (HDE)
National Federation of German Skilled Crafts and Trades (ZDH)
Federation of German Industries (BDI)
Federation of German Wholesale and Foreign Trade (BGA)
National Association of Independent Professions (BFB)
German Farmers Association (DBV)



Vocational Training for Europe

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

- **Position of the German Central Business Associations**
- **Proposal for a EQF- and ECVET-Model**

March 2005

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)



Position of the German Central Business Associations

The EU Member States' closer cooperation in education and training – as stated in the Bologna process (higher education) and the Copenhagen process (vocational education and training) – evidences that national education and training policies are increasingly influenced by EU education policy initiatives started at European level. Although these initiatives are not legally binding and just give recommendations to the Member States, in the medium term they will have a considerable, even fundamental impact on national decisions and will also set the course for severe changes in national education and training systems.

That is why the German central business associations call for immediate action. They want to contribute to the process of creating a European area of lifelong learning and employment, according to the Lisbon Strategy. In this context, the "dual" – that is, practice-oriented – vocational education and training system should obtain its proper place in Europe. To achieve this aim, an efficient concerted action by all relevant stakeholders in Germany is required.

1. Assessment of Status Quo

The German central business associations appreciate that the EU-Ministerial Conference of Maastricht renewed its commitment to the Copenhagen process in December 2004 and set up a working group on a European Qualifications Framework. It is crucial that this process ties in with the Lisbon objectives. The German central business associations will constructively but also critically support the development of an EQF – their approval will largely depend on whether the EQF manages to meet the needs of business and industry and whether companies will benefit from it. A final approval will not be possible before the EQF actually takes shape.

Within the Copenhagen process, the German central business associations pursue above all the following aims:

- legibility of (vocational) competences acquired in different education and training systems
- permeability between different forms and systems of skills acquisition
- promotion of mobility: cross-border (horizontal) mobility as well as mobility within the national education and training system (vertical mobility)

The German central business associations request that all measures undertaken within the framework of the Copenhagen process should comply with the principle of voluntary participation and mutual trust. The idea of a common European training and labour market, can only be implemented by following a step-by-step approach.

2. Basic Requirements for ECVET and EQF

The German central business associations support the position of the Federal Ministry for Education and Research in the following central issues:

- setting a time-frame up to the year 2010 for the development, implementation, and testing of measures, including the underlying principle of "accuracy is more important than speed"
- clearly linking EQF to ECVET: they cannot be seen independently from one another.
- closely linking EQF and ECVET to the European vocational education and training programmes and other accompanying measures (e.g. Europass)
- leading a comprehensive and ongoing consultation process involving all stakeholders

The German social partners (employers' organizations and the trade unions) agree on essential points and will continue their consultations on all EQF-ECVET-related issues.

2.1 European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

The main purpose of the European Qualifications Framework is to facilitate the "legibility" of European academic as well as vocational training qualifications and certificates. When designing such a qualifications framework it is important to consider not only vocational qualifications and skills, but to also focus on competences and the ability to act in the workplace, and in doing so, be guided by the needs of the business sector and the world of work.

The German central business associations are in complete agreement that:

- an EQF must be easy to handle for companies and must also improve transparency – only then will it serve the purposes of business and industry, if they wish to recruit staff from other European countries
- although the introduction of a EQF requires a modular design of training courses, certified qualifications in state-recognized occupations must be maintained
- an EQF must build on the basic principles of equivalence of general education and vocational training, permeability between and within systems, connectability and employability
- responsibility for integrating individual achievements and recognizing qualifications must remain with Member States, VET stakeholders must be given a special role
- an EQF must be designed in an overarching way: and should provide the possibility of easily integrating the different national systems in their existing structures. At the same time, Member States should use the opportunity provided by the creation of an EQF to develop their own national qualifications frameworks covering all sectors of the education and training system.
- the EQF's implications must be systematically sounded out by Government and the social partners in good time to check whether and where the German system needs to be adapted
- emphasis must be placed on competences and learning/training outcomes (outcome-orientation) – the framework must permit the integration of formally and non-formally acquired competences and qualifications
- procedures for EQF updating, evaluation, and quality assurance must be established right from the beginning
- compatibility with the Bologna process (higher education area) must be ensured

2.2 European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

The purpose of an assessment of qualifications is to enhance the transparency of vocational competences and qualifications and to improve permeability within Europe, but also within national systems. The credit transfer system (ECVET) must be designed in such a way that it promotes the validation of partial qualifications obtained abroad and enables companies to clearly identify the applicant's competence profile.

The development of an ECVET system must therefore be guided by the following principles:

- promotion of both horizontal and vertical permeability
- ensuring compatibility with ECTS
- equivalence – not equality – of vocational training and general education must be taken as a basis, i.e. the same number of credits must be given for comparable performances at comparable levels
- modules as the central assessment units must be created by a bottom-up approach
- standardized procedures for ECVET updating, evaluation, and quality assurance must be established right from the beginning

3. Concerted Action

The German central business associations, the companies and the trade unions play a key role in the acceptance of EQF and ECVET and in their implementation. They therefore must be coherently integrated into the discussion and decision-making process and, for their part, must sound out possibilities for joint action on a common denominator.

They also appeal to the Federal Government to seriously get involved in the deliberations at European level and to adopt a sustainable national position without further delay. All relevant stakeholders must be integrated into the process. The German central business associations will actively support the Federal Government in playing an active and efficient role in working groups at European level and in organizing the national consultation process.

They guarantee their support for the implementation of the new tools EQF and ECVET (only) if:

- the social partners are formally and actively involved in the development of EQF and ECVET and the decision-making process
- an empirical analysis and an experimental phase precede the implementation stage
- credits for vocational training are given by the relevant VET stakeholders
- the business sector and the trade unions are not in charge of bearing any costs related to the development and implementation of EQF and ECVET, i.e. if no new institutional structures are set up
- the principle of voluntary participation is maintained (no legal provisions or legal force)
- proven (well-established) certification and marking systems are maintained
- credits are regarded as additional competence descriptors and competence assessment thus is a result of learning outcomes and workload (qualitative and quantitative measure)
- there is no legal obligation to recognize credits; it is a matter of transferability and validation, not of formal / legal recognition
- transparency of credits and of accreditation procedures is ensured
- certified qualifications in state-recognized occupations are maintained; credits are given for defined modules/units.

Proposal of the German Central Business Associations for a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and a European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) Model



Working Paper, March 2005

"A European Qualifications Framework does not describe where, when, how and how long someone has been trained, it describes what kind of vocational tasks somebody is able to accomplish."

I. Foreword

The Maastricht Communiqué of December 2004 has set the course for the promotion of more mobility, employment and transparency of qualifications and competences throughout the European Union. Vocational education and training (VET) policy within the European Union aims (1) to enhance the acquisition of competences for employability; (2) to increase the participation in lifelong learning, especially in continuing VET. In the field of VET policy, the aims of the "Lisbon Strategy" launched in 2000 are thus to be achieved, especially meeting the EU's need for more and sustainable economic growth and for more and better jobs.

The European Commission has therefore initiated the development of a single "European Qualifications Framework" (EQF) and of a "European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training" (ECVET). Respecting the principle of subsidiarity the Member states are in charge of developing their own national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and of restructuring their vocational training programs, as appropriate (e.g. in modules and smaller units). The central business associations in Germany are determined to contribute actively to the further development of the irreversible process of closer European cooperation in vocational training and have therefore developed principles for a National as well as a European Qualifications Framework that especially aims at enhancing vertical mobility by interlinking general education, VET, and higher education, as well as horizontal mobility by improving transparency of vocational qualifications and competences within a European area of education and employment.

A EQF (or NQF) is subject to the following principles:

1. The formal foundation (basis) of VET are full/complete vocational training programs that lead to state-recognised occupations.
2. Within Germany's Dual System of vocational training – modularization allows sequencing of VET periods within a full vocational training program; the full qualification has to be acquired or validated through a final exam. There is no certification of single units.
3. VET aims at developing "marketable" "action competence" ("Handlungskompetenz")
4. The training regulations in force in the respective Member States (e.g. in Germany: the Vocational Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz) and the Skilled Crafts Act (Handwerksordnung)) provide the legal basis for organizing and carrying out VET.
5. Every efficient and future-oriented vocational training system is defined by four indicators:
 - a. a clear profile
 - b. progression and career pathways
 - c. responsiveness to labor-market demands
 - d. quality assurance mechanisms

II. Basic assumptions

A EQF/ NQF serves as an instrument for measuring "action competences" a person / an individual has acquired formally and/or informally in vocational contexts. "Action" is thereby not universal - it is always connected with the respective requirements of a specific action situation and environment ("Handlungssituation") to be mastered by an individual. The individual's potential or better, "ability" of mastering a given (vocational) action situation defines his / her degree of expertise. In this respect, "expertise" means a person's ability of constantly and not just coincidentally delivering a certain performance within a given *domain* (vocational field). Experts are therefore generally capable of achieving above-average and a better performance in reasoning than non-experts (amateurs).

"Action competences" in vocational contexts are the basic requirement for solving complex problems and tasks within specific domains (= *vocational action competences, domain-specific competences*). Domains are societal fields, in which vocational "action competences" are a necessary prerequisite for an individual to earn an income, for instance occupations in industry, commerce, trade, skilled crafts, etc. and in science. Domains then again can be further differentiated in *sub-areas* (= *areas of vocational expertise, fields of competence*). "Action competences" are generally three-dimensional and comprise professional/occupational skills, methodological, and social competence. Domain-specific competence is primarily defined by professional/occupational skills (e.g. automobile technics, metal construction technics, law, medical science, etc.). Vocational "action competences" can never be validated without linking them to a specific domain. Example: a university graduate may have built up an excellent scientific competence profile but may not be able to run a business, and vice versa. Consequently, an expert in one domain is at the same time an amateur in another domain.

Experts have an above-average capability of organizing their competence (= knowledge/skills/competences, "*Wissensorganisation*"). This capability is built up through formal-learning and experience-based learning (work-experience) and, at the same time, is the precondition for building up individual expertise. Accordingly, formally and informally acquired competence (knowledge/skills/competences, "*Wissen*") are of equal value for the acquisition of vocational "action competences", The EQF/NQF therefore must account for the validation of both formally and informally acquired competences.

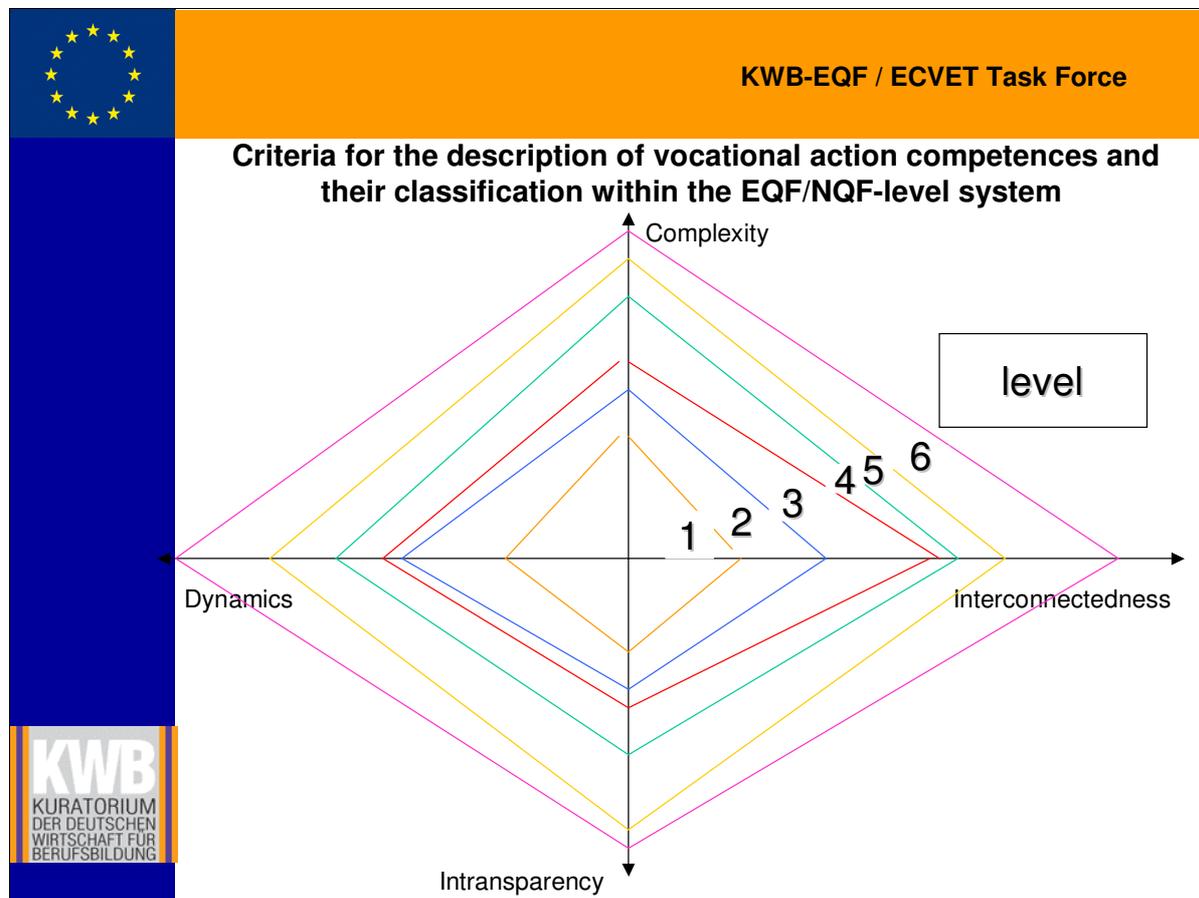
Domain-specific expertise can be acquired in both income-generating or occupational contexts and in academic scholastic and research contexts. Other domains, e.g. art or sports can also be taken into account as an expression of individual learning experience and know-how. "Study and research" as well as "initial and continuing training" are thereby taken as specific forms of "action" which leads to expertise or is already an expression of expertise. Consequently, the EQF/NQF is not bound to any specific education and training sector or institution. On the contrary, it comprises every education and training area as well as institution and form of learning.

The requirements for mastering a specific vocational action situation and environment can be described and measured by the following four criteria:

- C1. **Complexity:** is the number of potential changeable variables of an action situation
- C2. **Transparency / Intransparency:** is the degree to which the variables of an action situation are visible to the individual actor
- C3. **Interconnectedness (interlinking):** is connection between the different variables of an action situation. A high degree of interconnectedness requires the consideration of a large number of variables by the individual (doer).
- C4. **Dynamics:** is the speed at which an action situation changes. Target-oriented decisions in dynamic action situations require quick and well-considered action by the individual actor.

The following principle applies:

The more complex and intransparent, and the more interlinked and dynamic the situations of action and decision which can be managed by an individual, the better the respective person's "action competences" and accordingly and the higher the EQF/NQF-classification level.



In this model, the EQF/NQF is a distinct system of levels. It is developed by the classification of "action competences" according to defined requirements of vocational action situations/ environments. The respective levels are systematically differentiated by the criterion "action competences" in increasingly demanding and complex action situations" – as an ascending order of performance levels and a stringent taxonomic structure. The EQF/NQF measures the respective learning outcome and leads to a direct classification of competence profiles ("Kompetenzprofil") on each level, and not just of formal degrees or diplomas (degrees and diplomas can also be classified within the EQF/NQF levels as they correspond to the given competence profiles). This feature principally leads to an equivalence of vocational and academic education.

The higher the EQF/NQF-level, the higher the level of vocational expertise within the domain.

III. Architecture of the EQF/NQF-level system

The assumptions mentioned above justify the introduction of a six-level European Qualifications Framework for both vocational and academic education and training. The levels allow the classification of "domain-specific" competence profiles ("Kompetenzprofile").

On the one hand, the construction of six levels is derived from the above mentioned assumptions on the development of expertise. On the other hand, this model also takes into account the reflections of the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks as of December 4, 2004 ("A framework for qualifications of the European higher education area").

Entry level „general education“

In this model, competences acquired in general education are not classified within the EQF/NQF-level system. From our point of view, the completion of general education shall rather be considered as a necessary precondition for the acquisition of individual expertise (= professional /occupational competence), because general education usually does not refer to any kind of specific domain. Consequently, there are no ECVET-credit points to be obtained on this level.

Level 1

This level classifies competence profiles and competences that express the ability to execute limited vocational tasks and actions under supervision. Only partial (not integral) competences can be identified on this level. Methodological and social competences are not yet directly context-related or domain-specific, but are built up on a broad basis in order to enable the individual's entry into formal learning pathways within a domain still to be chosen. Accordingly, domain-specific competence (knowledge/skills/competences) has not yet been acquired. The longer the individual (actor) performs or works within a certain domain, the more vocational "action competences" are developed that facilitate limited, independent vocational action in highly complex occupational action situations.

"Action competences" are expressed as a "reflected adoption of given *ways of action*" in order to enable the individual (doer) to accomplish certain vocational tasks. The vocational action situations that can be mastered by an individual, are characterized by a **low value** of the four criteria complexity, interconnectedness, and dynamics as well as by a **high degree** of transparency and stability.

Level 1 comprises pre-vocational or pre-technical education and training, e.g. education and training that is mainly designed to introduce participants to the world of work and to prepare them for entry into vocational or technical education and training programs. Successful completion of such programs does not yet lead to a vocational or technical examination / degree recognised on the labor-market. Having in mind the vocational training programs in Germany, it usually takes up to one year of permanent training to acquire the "level-1-competence".

Level 2

This level classifies competence profiles that express the ability to accomplish more complex vocational tasks and actions under supervision and to carry out less complex vocational actions independently. Basic domain-specific professional/occupational competences can be demonstrated. Methodological and social competences are directly context-related and domain-specific and can be assessed.

The vocational action situations that, under supervision, can be mastered by an individual are characterized by an **average value** of complexity and interconnectedness and by a **low value** of intransparency and dynamics.

Level 2 comprises education and training which is mainly designed to facilitate the acquisition of vocational "action competences" (practical skills, know-how and understanding) that are needed for an employment in a particular occupation, trade or class of occupations or trades, e.g. after successfully passing the skilled worker's examination. Having in mind Germany's education and training system, this competence profile is acquired at the end of a formal 2 – 3,5-year training program (= initial vocational training). Competence profiles classified on this level express a **first degree of expertise**.

Level 3

This level classifies competence profiles that express the ability to accomplish complex vocational tasks and actions. High-level vocational "action competences", that is professional/occupational skills, methodological, and social competence which have already been partially reinforced in some sub-areas of a given domain by an individual learner can be evidenced on this level. Competence profiles classified on this level express an **advanced degree of expertise**.

The vocational action situations that can be mastered by an individual independently and without supervision are characterized by a **high value** of complexity, interconnectedness, intransparency and dynamics.

Level 3 comprises education and training which is mainly designed for the acquisition of vocational "action competences" (practical skills, know-how and understanding) acquired in a first further training period, succeeding successful initial VET, i.e., the completion of level 2.

Again having in mind the German education and training system, this level comprises the for example "Fachwirte HWK, KFZ-Service-Techniker, Fachberater (Handel)" degrees, but also university studies (short cycle qualification).

Level 4

This level classifies competence profiles that express the ability to accomplish complex and high-level vocational tasks and actions. High-level vocational "action competences" (professional/occupational) skills, methodological, and social competence) have already been reinforced in all sub-areas of a given domain by an individual learner and can be evidenced on this level. Competence profiles classified on this level express a comprehensive organization of competence (knowledge/skills/competences, "*Wissen*") comprising all sub-areas of a given domain and apply to non-scientific / non-academic occupations.

Vocational action situations that can be mastered by an individual independently and without supervision are characterized by a **high value** of complexity, interconnectedness, intransparency and dynamics. Competence profiles classified on this level express a **high degree of expertise**.

Level 4 comprises education and training which is mainly designed for the acquisition of vocational "action competences" (practical skills, know-how and understanding) acquired in extensive periods of further education and training, including several years of work-experience, for example the German master craftsman's examination or university graduates (bachelor degree/first cycle qualification).

Level 5

Level 5 classifies competence profiles that express the ability to accomplish complex and vocational tasks and actions at a **very high** level. **Very good** vocational "action competences", that is professional/occupational skills, methodological, and social competence, have already been reinforced in all sub-areas of a given (scientific / academic) domain by an individual learner and can be evidenced on this level. Competence profiles classified on this level express a comprehensive organization of knowledge comprising all sub-areas of a given scientific / academic domain and thus apply to scientific / academic occupations.

Vocational action situations that can be mastered by an individual independently are characterized by a **very high value** of complexity, interconnectedness, intransparency and dynamics. Competence profiles classified on this level express a **very high degree of expertise**.

Level 5 comprises education and training which is mainly designed for the acquisition of "action competences" (practical skills, know-how and understanding) acquired in extensive periods of further education and training and, where applicable, in various and compatible periods of further education and training, including several years of domain-specific work-experience, for example the German "Betriebswirt IHK/HWK" or university graduates (master's degree/second cycle qualification).

Level 6

Level 6 classifies competence profiles that express the ability to accomplish complex and vocational tasks and actions at **highest** level. **Excellent** vocational "action competences", that is professional/occupational skills, methodological, and social competence, which have been reinforced at highest level in all sub-areas of a given (scientific / academic) domain by an individual learner, can be evidenced on this level. Competence profiles classified on this level express a comprehensive organization of knowledge comprising all (sub-)areas of a given scientific / academic domain and thus apply to scientific / academic occupations in research, development

and teaching, e.g. at universities or other R&D institutions or in top-management positions with strategic decision-making responsibilities.

Vocational action situations that can be mastered by the individual independently are characterized by the **topmost value** of complexity, interconnectedness, intransparency and dynamics. Competence profiles classified on this level express a **topmost degree of expertise**.

Level 6 comprises education and training which is mainly designed for the acquisition of vocational "action competences" (practical skills, know-how and understanding) acquired in academic study programs and scientific research projects, including several years of domain-specific work-experience, e.g. university doctorates and post-doctoral degrees (third cycle qualification).

Level		description of vocational competence		Vocational Training Course	Framework EU Higher Education Area
		qualitative descr.	quantitative descr.		
6	Description of vocational action competences through four defined criteria (complexity, intransparency, dynamics, interconnectedness)		300+	Top-level further education and training	Third cycle qualification (Prof. u.a.)
5			300	High-level further education and training	Second cycle qualification (Master)
4			bis 240 180	medium-level further education and training	First cycle qualification (Bachelor)
3			120	First level further education and training	Short cycle qual. within the first cycle
2			bis 210 120	Initial education and training 2 to 3,5 years	Second cycle Basic VET Area
1			bis 60	Initial education and training up to 1 year (BAV/EQJ etc.)	First cycle Initial VET Area
General Education					SEC I
					Primary education

IV. ECVET- Credit Points: Benchmark Figures and Calculation Method

Creating a system of credit points for the field of VET (ECVET) requires at first the definition of a common European qualifications framework (EQF) that is at the same time also compatible with national qualification frameworks (NQFs). This step entails not only far-reaching consequences for all parts of the educational and vocational training systems, especially in regard to access, to regulations, examinations, certificates, certificate supplements, etc.

It also entails the necessary differentiation and segmentation of VET programs into modules, because of the following reasons:

1. reasonable and meaningful descriptions of competences can only be established on the basis of clearly delineated and distinguishable competence profiles and fields of action that are tuned to labor-market and business demands
2. it is unlikely that national VET programs are completely equivalent to each other and thus can be given full credit as a whole. It is rather likely that only smaller parts from national programs can be given credit.

The overarching aim of an EQF / ECVET-System is to put the individual learner in the position to consistently develop vocational expertise, independent from a specific learning or training institution, thereby avoiding any doubling of study time or content.

Modules or competences acquired in modules/units (=learning outcomes) can be described by four parameters:

- P1. verbal description of "action competences" according to the four set criteria complexity, interconnectedness, transparency, dynamics.
- P2. the domain, in which credit points can be gathered
- P3. defining the value of credit points by taking into account the average necessary learning or study time ("workloads")
- P4. classification within the EQF/NQF- level system.

Example: Module 'Accounting' from the vocational further training program "Betriebswirt HWK"

- P1. Verbal description of vocational "action competence" according to the four criteria as mentioned above (to be elaborated)
- P2. Domain /field of competence: Expertise in business administration
- P3. ECVET-Credit points to be obtained: 5
- P4. EQF/NQF-classification level: 5

For the calculation of ECVET-credit points, the same calculation method was used as for the ECTS-credit points from the higher education area as follows:

1 year of training/learning	= 45 weeks of training / learning (TW)	= 60 credit points
	= 1.800 training/learning hours (TH)	
30 training hours (TH)		= 1 credit point
1 training week (TW)	= 40 training hours	= 1 1/3 credit points
1 training/learning day	= 8 training hours	= 4/15 credit points

The following principles apply for the calculation of ECVET-credit points:

- All and any kind of learning and training time is to be taken into account: attendance/ classroom training, e-Learning, student research projects, self-study, examinations, etc.
- The average training or learning time is determined by special experts or monitoring techniques, taking into account the standard training conditions.
- A minimum learning/training time per module has to be set (e.g. 4 points = 3 training weeks) in order to avoid atomization of training programs and competences.
- Work processes that are designed and organized according to pre-set training goals (e.g. in-company training periods) are given full credit.
- Work processes that are not particularly designed or organized according to pre-set training goals (regular work experience, "learning by working") are given half the amount of credit for standard learning time, as far as work experience is required for the admission to formal further training programs (e.g. master craftsman's training course).
- ECVET-Credit points on levels 1 and 2 can transfer up to a maximum of 50% when accessing the "Higher Education Area" levels (levels 3 to 6).

V. Conclusion and Future Prospects

The new approach of constructing a competence-based classification scheme for formally and informally acquired "action competences" according to the determined criteria detaches competence profiles not only from their respective learning institutions, but also from their learning contexts. The EQF/NQF does not merely describe what, when, where and how long somebody has been trained, it simply evidences **what kind of vocational tasks somebody is able to accomplish!**

In order to ensure a smooth functioning of a National/European Qualifications Framework Credit System as presented in the model above, a whole line-up of questions still have to be answered. On the one hand, there are the questions concerning the implementation. On the other hand, we also have to identify instruments that objectively allow the measurement and validation of the competence required to master action situations. Important instruments are certainly examinations (particularly examinations under public law), accredited degrees and certificates, as well as certificate supplements. Yet, the problem of validating and assessing informal learning and informally acquired competence still remains to be solved.

When implementing a EQF/NQF, some of the most delicate questions are the following:

1. What exactly is the legal correlation between the existing formal degrees and certificates and categorized, domain-specific competences and their "rating" by credit points?
2. Which procedure is chosen to "rate" competences by credit points and to classify them within the EQF/NQF, and which bodies are authorized to do so?
3. Shall other procedures for the validation of qualifications and competences, next to formal examinations subject to public law, be officially established or recognised (e.g. company assessments, accredited institutions,...)?
4. Shall ECVET-marks be introduced (e.g. relative marks, scores), next to the already existing traditional examination marks?
5. How will the admission to education and training programs, examinations as well as the allocation of credit points be regulated?
6. How can domains, "action fields" and sub-areas be defined, since expertise can only be acquired and credit points can only be obtained within a given domain?
7. Are there any legal consequences in connection with the introduction of an EQF/ECVET-system and the classification of competences and certificates (e.g. collective bargaining agreements, any restrictions of access to examinations and education and training systems)?

For the functionality and broad acceptance of an EQF/NQF-ECVET-system, it is absolutely mandatory to set up not only practicable and transparent but also quality assurance procedures.

The European initiative of introducing an EQF has given a new impetus to the discussion about the equivalence of general and VET. Through structuring training programs in modules and their classification within a system of defined levels of vocational "action competences", the EU Member states now have the **unique opportunity** for substantial and sensible changes of their respective education and training systems. Setting up an EQF has the potential to allow the Member states to achieve real equivalence of general and VET and thus to create homogenous and open individual learning pathways and career opportunities.

And because a qualifications framework evidences what kind of vocational tasks somebody is able to accomplish, the qualifications framework and ECVET-model as outlined above meets the individual learner's as well as business needs: qualifications, skills and competences are to be transparent and transferable, and thus enhance employability and increase employment.

The German business associations therefore appeal to all decision-makers and stakeholders in Europe to lead an open-minded discussion beyond any kind of "structure- preserving" interests and ambitions, and call for fast action without delay – for the benefit of heightened quality and efficiency of VET in Europe.

Glossary

Action competences (in vocational contexts)

Action competences comprise analytical thinking, decision-making, responsibility and competence that is necessary to accomplish a given vocational task (deliver a certain performance)

= Handlungskompetenz

Action situation/environment (in vocational contexts)

An action situation describes the specific vocational situation or workplace environment that requires analytical thinking, decision-making, responsibility and competence in order to accomplish a given vocational task.

= berufliche Handlungssituation

Competence

Competence is considered as indivisible unit of skills, competences and knowledge.

In contrast to other EQF-/ECVET-models, the model as presented above does not divide competence into its components (knowledge/skills/competences). These components are indivisible and are always to be considered as a unit.

= Wissen

Vocational actions

Vocational actions Are actions that are carried out in order to accomplish vocational tasks (job-related actions).

= Handlung

Competence profile

A competence profile is a set of knowledge, skills and competences, acquired e.g. through training, work-experience, etc.

= Kompetenzprofil

Proposal for a EQF- and ECVET-Model (appendix)



KWB-EQF / ECVET Task Force

Steps for Developing EQF/NQF+ECVET

1. Constructing a EQF that is compatible with Member state's NQFs
2. Differentiation and segmentation of vocational education and training programs into modules and units
3. Description of the competences acquired in modules/units (units = learning outcomes) by the following parameters (p):
 - verbally describing action competences according to standard criteria (complexity, interconnectedness, transparency, dynamics)
 - defining of the domain / field of expertise (competence) in which credit points can be gathered
 - defining the value of credit points by taking into account the average necessary learning or study time ("workloads")
 - classifying the competences within the EQF/NQF- level system
4. Setting up quality assurance procedures

Example: Module 'Accounting' from the German Chambers of Skilled Crafts vocational further training program "Business Administration" ("Betriebswirt IHK/HWK")

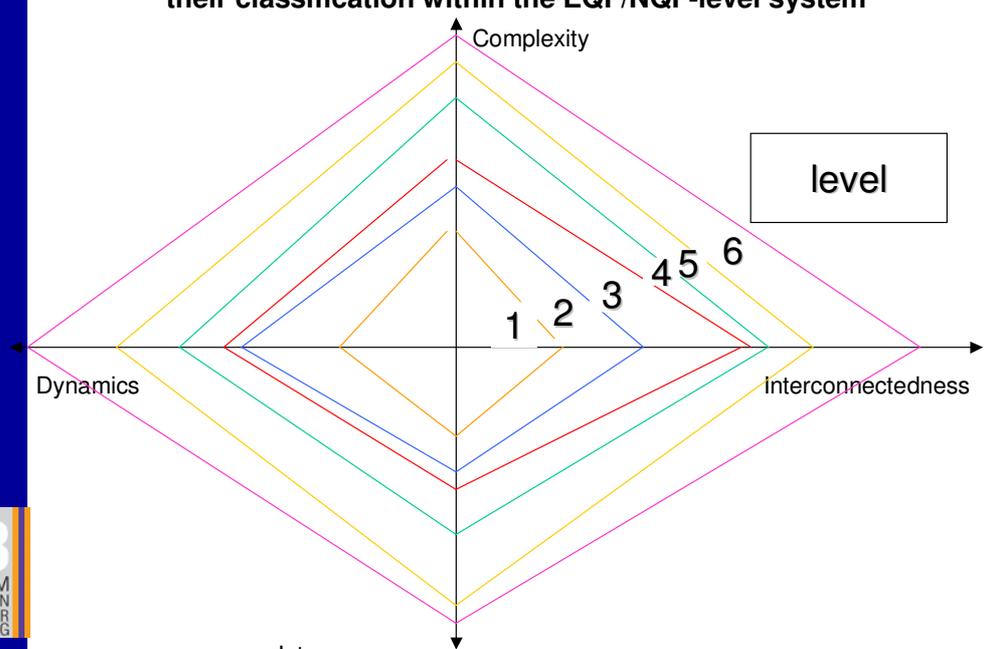
- p1. Verbal description of vocational action competence according to the four criteria as mentioned above (to be elaborated)
- p2. Domain /field of competence: Expertise in business administration
- p3. ECVET-Credit points to be obtained: 5
- p4. EQF/NQF-classification level: 5





KWB-EQF / ECVET Task Force

Criteria for the description of vocational „action competences“ and their classification within the EQF/NQF-level system







Description of vocational „action competences“ for EQF/NQF-level 1

1

This level classifies competence profiles and competences that

- express the ability to limited vocational tasks and actions under supervision
- identifies only partial (not integral) competences
- are not yet directly context-related or domain-specific, but are built up on a broad basis in order to prepare entry into formal learning pathways
- are characterized by a **low value** of the four criteria complexity, interconnectedness, intransparency and dynamics as well as by a high degree of stability
- do not yet evidence any kind of specific expertise

Level 1 comprises one-year pre-vocational or pre-technical education and training, e.g. education and training that is mainly designed to

- introduce participants to the world of work
- prepare participants for entry into vocational or technical education and training programs

Example Germany: level-1-competence profile does not yet lead to a vocational or technical examination / degree recognized on the labor-market.



Description of vocational „action competences“ for EQF/NQF-level 2

2

This level classifies competence profiles that

- express the ability to accomplish more complex vocational tasks and actions under supervision and to carry out less complex vocational actions independently
- evidence basic domain-specific professional/occupational competences
- are directly context-related and domain-specific and can be assessed
- are characterized by an **average value** of complexity and interconnectedness and by a **low value** of intransparency and dynamics
- evidence a **first degree of expertise**

Level 2 comprises education and training which is mainly designed to

- lead participants to acquire vocational action competences (practical skills, know-how and understanding) that are needed for an employment in a particular occupation, trade or class of occupations or trades, e.g. after successfully passing the skilled worker's examination

Example Germany: a level-2-competence profile is acquired at the end of a formal 2 – 3,5-year training program (= initial vocational training).





Description of vocational „action competences“ for EQF/NQF-level 3

3

This level classifies competence profiles that

- express the ability to accomplish complex vocational tasks and actions independently and without supervision
- evidence professional/occupational skills which have already been partially reinforced in some sub-areas of a given domain (**advanced**-level vocational action competences)
- are characterized by a **high value** of complexity, interconnectedness, intransparency and dynamics
- express an **advanced degree of expertise** (basic domain-specific professional/occupational competences)

Level 3 comprises education and training which is mainly designed for

- the acquisition of vocational action competences (practical skills, know-how and understanding) acquired in a first further training period, succeeding the successful completion of level 2 (initial E +T)

Example Germany: Degrees for further training programs of at least 200 h such as "Fachwirte HWK, KFZ-Servicetechniker, Fachberater (Handel)", but also university studies (short cycle qualification).



Description of vocational „action competences“ for EQF/NQF-level 4

4

This level classifies competence profiles that

- express the ability to accomplish complex and high-level vocational tasks and actions independently and without supervision
- have already been reinforced in all sub-areas of a given domain (**good** vocational action competences)
- express a comprehensive organization of competence (knowledge/skills/competences, "*Wissen*") comprising all sub-areas of a given domain and apply to non-scientific / non-academic occupations
- are characterized by a **high value** of complexity, interconnectedness, intransparency and dynamics
- express a **high degree of expertise**

Level 4 comprises education and training which is mainly designed for

- the acquisition of vocational action competences (practical skills, know-how and understanding) acquired in extensive periods of further education and training, including several years of work-experience

Example Germany: Master craftsman's examination or university graduates (bachelor degree/first cycle qualification).





Description of vocational „action competences“ for EQF/NQF-level 5

5

This level classifies competence profiles that

- express the ability to accomplish complex and vocational tasks and actions at a **very high** level
- have already been reinforced in all sub-areas of a given (scientific / academic) domain (**very good** vocational action competences)
- express a **comprehensive organization** of knowledge comprising all sub-areas of a given scientific / academic domain and thus apply to scientific / academic occupations
- are characterized by a **very high value** of complexity, interconnectedness, intransparency and dynamics
- express a **very high degree of expertise**

Level 5 comprises education and training which is mainly designed for

- the acquisition of action competences (practical skills, know-how and understanding) acquired in extensive periods of further education and training and, where applicable, in various and compatible periods of further education and training, including several years of domain-specific work-experience

Example Germany: "Betriebswirt IHK/HWK" or university graduates (master's degree/ second cycle qualification).



Description of vocational „action competences“ for EQF/NQF-level 6

6

This level classifies competence profiles that

- express the ability to accomplish complex and vocational tasks and actions at **highest** level
- have been reinforced at highest level in all sub-areas of a given (scientific / academic) domain (**excellent** vocational action competences)
- express a **comprehensive organization** of knowledge comprising all (sub-)areas of a given scientific / academic domain and thus apply to scientific / academic occupations in research, development and teaching, e.g. at universities or other R&D institutions
- are characterized by the **topmost value** of complexity, interconnectedness, intransparency and dynamics
- express a **topmost degree of expertise**

Level 6 comprises education and training which is mainly designed for

- the acquisition of vocational action competences (practical skills, know-how and understanding) acquired in academic study programs and scientific research projects, including several years of domain-specific work-experience, e.g. university doctorates and post-doctoral degrees (habilitation/third cycle qualification)





Qualifications Framework Model (EQF/NQF)

Level	description of vocational competence		Vocational Training Course	Framework EU Higher Education Area
	qualitative descr.	quantitative descr.		
6	Description of vocational action competences through four defined criteria (complexity, intransparency, dynamics, interconnectedness)	300+	Top-level further education and training	Third cycle qualification (Prof. u.a.)
5		300	High-level further education and training	Second cycle qualification (Master)
4		bis 240 180	medium-level further education and training	First cycle qualification (Bachelor)
3		120	First level further education and training	Short cycle qual. within the first cycle
2		bis 210 120	Initial education and training 2 to 3,5 years	Second cycle Basic VET Area
1		bis 60	Initial education and training up to 1 year (BAV/EQJ etc.)	First cycle Initial VET Area
General Education				SEC I
				Primary education

50 %



Calculation Method for ECVET Credit Points

- Calculation of „workload“ in VET (according to the ECTS-criteria of the Bologna Process):

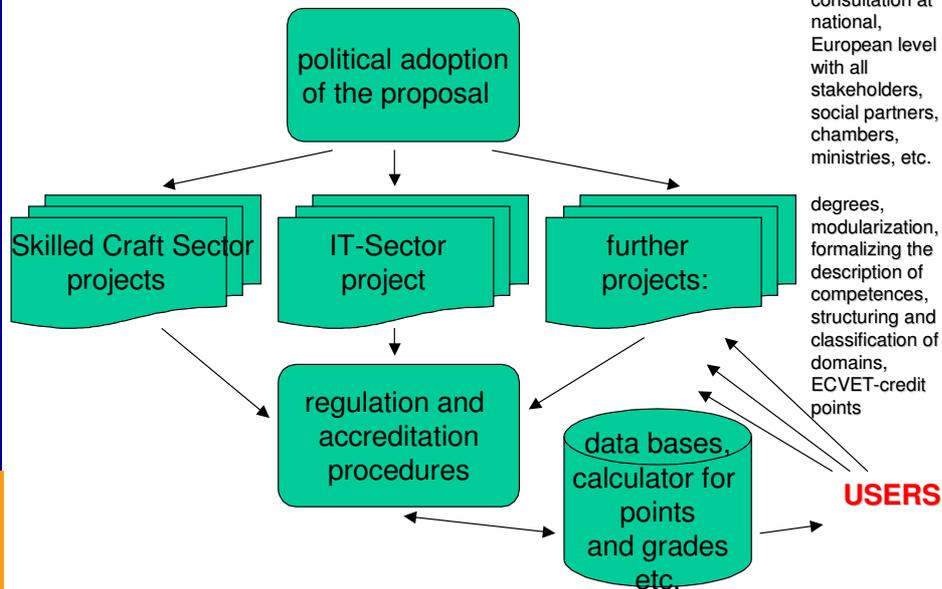
1 year of training/learning =	45 weeks of training / learning (TW)	= 1.800 training/learning hours (TH) = 60 credit points
30 training hours (TH)	= 1 credit point	
1 training week (TW)	= 40 training hours	= 1 1/3 credit points
1 training/learning day	= 8 training hours	= 4/15 credit points

- minimum training/learning time per module = 5 credit points
- all and any kind of learning and training time is to be taken into account: attendance/classroom training, e-Learning, student research projects, self-study, examinations, etc. taking into account an average training time at standard training conditions
- work processes that are designed and organized according to pre-set training goals (e.g. in-company training periods) are given full credit
- work processes that are not particularly designed or organized according to pre-set training goals (regular work experience, "learning by working") are given half the amount of credit for standard learning time
- ECVET-Credit points on levels 1 and 2 can transfer up to a maximum of 50% when accessing the "Higher Education Area" levels (levels 3 to 6)





Steps for the implementation in Germany



Questions to be answered...

- What exactly is the legal correlation between the existing formal degrees and certificates and categorized, domain-specific competences and their "rating" by credit points?
- Which procedure is chosen to "rate" competences by credit points and to classify them within the EQF/NQF, and which bodies are authorized to do so?
- Shall other procedures for the validation of qualifications and competences, next to formal examinations subject to public law, be officially established or recognized (e.g. company assessments, accredited institutions,...)?
- Shall ECVET-marks be introduced (e.g. relative marks, scores), next to the already existing traditional examination marks?
- How will the admission to education and training programs, examinations as well as the allocation of credit points be regulated?
- How can domains, "fields of action" and sub-areas be defined, since expertise can only be acquired and credit points can only be obtained within a given domain?
- Are there any legal consequences in connection with the introduction of an EQF/NQF/ECVET-system and the classification of competences and certificates (e.g. collective bargaining agreements, any restrictions of access to examinations and education and training systems)?