

## Referenceability Report on Sectoral Qualification Approaches

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For further information on the project please consult: [www.project-nqf-sqf.eu](http://www.project-nqf-sqf.eu)

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Short summary:

The objective of WP4 is to describe the way of referencing SQFs to the EQF.

SQFs are available in various aggregate states: sometimes there is only a draft available, sometimes “isolated” sectoral qualifications neither to be considered a part of a sectoral nor NQF, sometimes already elaborated systems exist which could work like full-fledged NQFs.

Although their relationship to the work process seems obvious according to their sector-orientation, it is not self-evident that this relationship is properly expressed in a way that the sectoral qualification becomes comparable with similar qualifications embedded in NQFs.

In order to decide how sectoral qualification approaches could best be referenced to the EQF – directly or over national qualification frameworks – it is also important to know what the relationship of sectoral systems to national systems is, if their existence mirrors a critical position of sectoral stakeholders against national qualifications systems, or if they can – in a wider sense – be considered supplements of the national systems.

It has therefore to be investigated which stakeholders are supporting a SQF and if they are able and willing to fulfill quality assurance issues comparable to those mentioned in the list of referencing criteria provided by the EQF Advisory Group.

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## (1) Summary

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As national qualifications frameworks, sectoral qualifications frameworks are available in various “aggregate states”. Sometimes there is only a draft available, sometimes “isolated” sectoral qualifications neither to be considered a part of a sectoral nor national qualifications framework, sometimes already elaborated systems exist which could work like full-fledged national qualifications frameworks. There is no reason for not analyzing them; although their relationship to the work process seems obvious according to their sector-orientation, it is not self-evident that this relationship is properly expressed in a way that the sectoral qualification becomes comparable with similar qualifications embedded in national qualification frameworks or systems.

In order to decide how sectoral qualification approaches could best be referenced to the EQF – directly or over national qualification frameworks - it is also important to know what the relationship of sectoral systems to national systems is, if their existence mirrors a critical position of sectoral stakeholders against national qualifications systems, or if they can – in a wider sense - be considered supplements of the national systems.

Apart from that, however, it has to be considered that there are some issues, which do not appear with regard to national qualifications frameworks, but have to be taken in account in order to ensure overall quality of EQF reference. Unlike national qualifications frameworks, sectoral qualifications frameworks have no “natural” representatives whose responsibility for making decisions on design and structure of the framework is (at least to a large extent) accepted a priori. It has therefore to be investigated which stakeholders are supporting a sectoral qualifications framework and if they are able and willing to fulfil quality assurance issues comparable to those mentioned in the list of referencing criteria provided by the EQF Advisory Group.

On the basis of these requirements, the following activities have been carried out:

- A collection of available descriptions of sectoral qualifications/competence frameworks and “isolated” sectoral qualifications, delivering a first overview, structured according to an ad-hoc model of distinction according to objectives and structure.
- A typology of sectoral qualifications/competences frameworks (and, if already available, of their references to the EQF).
- This will be supplemented by a typology which shall be structured according to the criterion “relationship to national qualifications systems and frameworks”.
- A SWOT analysis of sectoral qualification approaches.
- A “referenceability report on sectoral qualification approaches”, including recommendations on how sectoral qualification approaches could be enhanced and refined in order to achieve best direct referencing to the EQF or indirectly via national qualifications frameworks.

## (2) The reference scenario

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The transparency at European level created by the EQF has accompanied the development of EQF-aware National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) in member states. The main aim is to have effective strategies for fostering cross-border mobility in the European citizenship domain.

The EQF initiative raised the challenge of taking into account all the qualifications, including those anchored within National Qualification Systems and Frameworks and those awarded outside national systems (e.g. by sectors and multinational companies). In fact, the present scenario is characterized by a growing number of sectoral qualifications, which are developed by national and international bodies, stakeholders, and enterprises.

The EQF basically relies on a tiered structure based on eight levels from general and higher education to vocational education and training. The eight levels are described in terms of key concepts, referred as learning outcomes. According to the EQF, learning outcomes have to be intended as “statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process”, and they are “defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences”. Thus, in the EQF intention, either referencing or rethinking qualifications to/in terms of learning outcomes would lead to the creation of a common reference (meta-) framework in which it would become easier to link together transnational and/or trans-sectoral qualifications. So, the EQF is clearly work objectives oriented.

Learning outcome core concept is not broadly shared within actual qualification systems, so, the implementation of the overarching translation device devised in the EQF will have to be addressed through a dual supporting action, aimed at creating a shared understanding of the underlying concepts associated to the qualification systems structure, and on the identification of suitable levelling strategies between national and sectoral implementations and the EQF, focusing on the devised learning outcome-based architecture.

Experiences in many sectors explain that the deployment of multi-stakeholder partnerships including enterprises and social parts is the key to effectively address rapidly changing individual and labour market needs.

The discussion on sectoral qualifications awarded at sector and enterprise level is related to the second principle of the EQF, “mutual trust”, that encompasses other two issues, “quality assurance & credibility”. Two possible ways for dealing with mutual trust and credibility exists. One passes through national systems and frameworks. In this case, the issue would be on the creation of a shared understanding of the domains to be matched, thus ensuring the transparency and sustainability of the intermediate referencing procedure being adopted. The second one relies on a direct mapping with the EQF. In this case, suitable strategies for guaranteeing the adequacy and reliability of the referencing rules used in the linking process would be required. However, in both cases referencing could pass through an additional step carried out at the sectoral level and consisting in the definition of sectoral frameworks contributing at further structuring the domain under analysis in the national and/or transnational perspectives.

In Deliverable 5 of WP2, an approach to develop an holistic model of abilities (and related learning outcomes) required for working as a professional by mirroring the work process is presented. The key outcome of the above approach is represented by the *Employability grid*, a set of descriptors based on a limited number of categories that have been derived by focusing on the *implicit logic* that can be identified for levelling competence in the copious level descriptions of the EQF, specifically referring to those distinctions between levels which play a role in the real world of professionals. In fact, the approach pursued for building the grid moves from the assumption that, in the EQF descriptors, “competences” steer “skills”, and “skills” steer “knowledge”; thus, “competence” can be considered as the overarching category that should drive the referencing process. Therefore, the discriminating capabilities of the “competence” descriptors have been analyzed with respect to the concept of *core work objective*, which is regarded to as the reference point for relating vocational standards to work, i.e. for determining relationships between work processes and standardized abilities to carry them out.

Level	Competence in EQF terms	Action with regard to action of others	Action with regard to context	Context
1	<i>work or study under direct supervision in a structured context</i>	Steered by action of others	Determined by context	Not changing <i>Structured</i>
2	<i>work or study under supervision with some autonomy</i>	Steered by action of others	Determined by context	Not changing <i>Not structured</i>
3	<i>take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems</i>	neutral	Determined by context	Not changing <i>Including changing circumstances</i>
4	<i>exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities</i>	Steering action of others	Determined by context	Not changing/changing
5	<i>exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change review and develop performance of self and others</i>	Steering action of others	Determined by context	Changing
6	<i>manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision making in unpredictable work or study contexts take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups</i>	Steering action of others	Determined by context	Changing
7	<i>manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</i>	Steering action of others	Determining context <i>Transforming</i>	Changing
8	<i>demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research</i>	Steering action of others	Determining context <i>Transforming and replacing</i>	Changing

### Employability grid

Though relevant descriptors in the EQF analyze “competence” in terms of “autonomy” and “responsibility”, in the analysis work objectives should be considered from multiple perspectives, taking into account the specific character of the work subject, the scope of this subject in relation to others, the needs of those who use resulting products or services, the needs of the organization, the needs of individuals who work for the organization, the needs which arise from the environment as well as the way how work is organized. Hence, the grid proposes an investigation based on actions competence refer to and on the context actions take place into. A certain degree of abstraction is adopted in the descriptions for the grid to be generally applicable, by nonetheless strictly making reference to the structure of work organization and focusing on features related to “action with regard to action of others”, to “action with regard to context” as well as to “context variability”. By reducing the EQF descriptions of “competences” to statements enabling the identification of meaningful differences between levels, the grid shall help to analyze strategies for referencing national and sectoral qualifications and qualification frameworks as well as isolated qualifications to the EQF. Moreover, it shall act as a translation tool for restructuring qualifications and unveiling information required for referencing. In the specific context of WP4, the grid has been used as a reference tool for the purpose of categorizing qualifications considered in the NQF-SQF project according to their referenceability to the work process. In particular, following the inspiring methodology behind the grid and the deliverable on “Key Questions for NQF/SQF Analysis”, a questionnaire is proposed to gather relevant information on this subject for selected SQFs. The information have been exploited, in combination with details on sectoral frameworks objectives and structure as well as with their relations with national systems and frameworks to draft recommendations on how SQFs could be enhanced and refined in order to make work processes transparent to which described sectoral standards are related.

### (3) Research methodology

An approach based on an analysis of the sectoral dimensions was requested to give an overview on existing Sectoral Qualification Frameworks and isolated sectoral qualifications. This overview intends to describe the different SQFs primarily according to their objectives and structure. Since an extensive analysis of all the possible domains was not feasible, the study concentrated on a set of sectors that was expected to be capable of providing the information necessary for the mapping. More specifically, the strategy was to consider, for an analysis performed at a national level, three sectors (public services in Spain, logistics in France and construction in Romania), and for an analysis performed at a transnational level, three sectors (construction, retail and ICT). For all the above sectors, an analysis has been carried out in order to find similarities/differences among sectors and to identify their relevant characteristics. In order to derive quantitative indicators, specific properties were defined to take into account complementary features concurring to their representation. Hence the indicator was obtained using the associated constructors reported in the following table, which also specifies their definition domain.

SQF-NQF-EQF		
<b>Is SQF established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is NQF established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQF and NQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQF and the EQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>SQF is referenced to the EQF through NQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No

Then an approach based on the analysis of work processes was requested to develop a typology to suggest categories of Sectoral Qualification Frameworks within Europe regarding their referenceability to the work process. The draft key questions based on the employability grid developed in WP 2 are used as reference for investigation.

SQF Typology Matrix - referenceability to work processes		
<b>Work Objective Oriented</b>		
Real	Theory	No
<b>Orientation on EQF descriptors (SKC)</b>		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Core Work Objective</b>		
The specific character of the work subject is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The scope of the work subject in relationship to other ones is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of those who use products or services are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of the organization which arise from her specific character are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of individuals are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
Needs which arise from the environment are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The way how work within an organization is organized is considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Autonomy and Responsibility</b>		
Present in the qualifications		Not present in the qualifications

Also an approach based on the analysis of the National Qualification Frameworks was requested to develop a typology to suggest categories of Sectoral Qualification Framework within Europe regarding their relationship to National Qualification Systems and Frameworks. In order to derive quantitative indicators, specific properties were

defined to take into account complementary features concurring to their representation. Hence the indicator was obtained using the associated constructors reported in the following table, which also specifies their definition domain.

SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQFs		
<b>Presence of SQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Presence of NQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Relationship between SQF and NQF</b>		
SQF is integrated in NQF	SQF is a supplement of NQF	SQF is not integrated in NQF

For both typologies, since an extensive analysis of all the possible domains was not feasible, the study concentrated on a set of sectors that was expected to be capable of providing the information necessary for the mapping. More specifically, the strategy was to consider, for an analysis performed at a national level, four sectors (public services in Spain, logistics in France, retail in the Netherlands and construction in France and in Romania), and for an analysis performed at a transnational level, one sector (ICT).

Furthermore, all the analysis to be carried out implied extracting information related to strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Moving from the above aspects, suggestions about strategies could be deduced according the schema given in the following, which was applied individually to each considered sector and then to the overall results of the analysis.

	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Opportunities</b>	How do we use these strengths to take advantage of these opportunities?	How do we overcome the weaknesses that prevent me taking advantage of these opportunities?
<b>Threats</b>	How do we use our strengths to reduce the likelihood and impact of these threats?	How do we overcome the weaknesses that will make these threats a reality?

This overall SWOT analysis explains how the selected SQFs could be enhanced and refined in order to make work processes transparent.



## (4) Results

### (4.1) Public services sector

The results showed here, have been collected from an investigation carried out on the public services sector in Spain.

#### (4.1.A) Overview of the SQF

Only one public initiative trying to link a SQF to a NQF has been found in Spain, affecting the public services sector. The reason why this new opportunity was caught, in a first time, by the public sector, relies on the low resistance to change in this context put in place by government bodies. In contrast private organizations show more concerns on the linkage SQF-NQF-EQF, which could have huge political implications, having direct impact on reassessment of workers professional levels likely leading salaries growth).

This initiative, that will first impact on public workers of the Cantabria Region (i.e., 20.425 people, around the 60% of the total number of employees) and will be later adopted by the whole country, has been carried out by means of a collective agreement between public employees and Cantabria Government established in February 2010.

One of the motivations behind the creation of a SQF is the need of having professional categories homogeneously defined within the sector in order to guarantee homogeneous salaries.

It is worth remarking that Spain already has a NQF (at the present time only for VET), already linked to EQF; hence, once a SQF is linked to an official qualification described in the NQF, it becomes easier to structure the link of the SQF to EQF. However, as anticipated, there are many political implications restraining this process, associated with the raise of salaries and with the aversion of labor market which still does not see the need to have SQFs linked to EQF, being EQF considered a "government education thing" far from labor market reality.

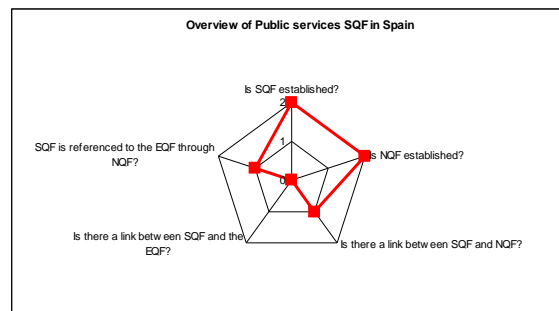
Additionally, when performing a linkage to NQF, special attention should be paid to the fact that SQFs are described in terms of "professional categories" mainly related to job positions, never in terms of qualifications related to competences.

SQF-NQF-EQF		
<b>Is SQF established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is NQF established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQF and NQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQF and the EQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>SQF is referenced to the EQF through NQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No

Note: Only for VET

Note: NQF is referenced to EQF

Table 1 – SQF/NQF/EQF



Radar diagram 1 – Overview of Public services SQF in Spain

Main benefits, chances, constraints and risks of the experience made in Spain are summarized in the following figures.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<p><b>Strenghts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Many sectors consider that NQF does not offer the complete and updated training that market requires. For this reason, part of SQF is integrated in the basic training and part is offered in parallel to NQF.</li> <li>_ Collective agreements are assumed by all public entities in their HR policies and managed according to EFQM/ISO quality standards. Since the domain is public, trust or commitment can be found.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ SQFs in general are described in terms of "Professional Categories" NOT in Qualifications. These Professional Categories are pretty much related to Job positions than related to "competences".</li> </ul>
External origin	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Part of SQF is already related to NQF. As a consequence, when a professional category of the SQF is linked to an official qualification described in NQF, it will be automatically linked to EQF.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Referencing SQF to NQF will be a sensitive issue that will be dealt at collective agreement and will take years at least at the private company realm.</li> <li>_ Political implications: change professional category of a current SQF is a big issue.</li> <li>_ Economic crisis</li> </ul>

SWOT analysis 1.1 - Link between SQF & NQF

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<p><b>Strenghts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ One of the motivations behind the creation of a SQF linked to the EQF is the need of having professional categories homogeneously defined within the sector in order to guarantee homogeneous salaries.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ There is no representation of this SQF at European level. This is a regional initiative following National directions.</li> </ul>
External origin	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ NQF is already related to EQF. As a consequence, when a professional category of the SQF is linked to an official qualification described in NQF, it will be automatically linked to EQF.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Link SQFs to EQF could imply to reassess workers professional level which could eventually lead to salaries rise at large.</li> <li>_ Political implications: change professional category of a current SQF is a big issue.</li> <li>_ Labour market still don't see the need of linking SQF to EQF (EQF is considered one of this multiple "government education thing" far from labour market reality).</li> <li>_ If we want to adapt the EQF in a institutionalized way via NQFs as we are formally doing (SQF-NQF-EQF), companies may have resistances in using it, since they may not rely on the NQF levels descriptions (depending on who decides which level assign to a qualification, a worker with technical abilities related to level 2, but with some managerial responsibilities could be level 2 or 3) and/or competences descriptions (competences contained in the National Qualification Catalogues may not be updated, in case of marked technological/structural changes).</li> <li>_ Economic crisis</li> </ul>

SWOT analysis 1.2 - Link between SQF & EQF

(4.1.B) Typology of the SQF based on its referenceability to work processes

The SQF analyzed in the "Overview" has been categorized according to its referenceability to work process by exploiting the Employability grid developed in WP2.

This SQF is clearly explicit in relation to what is the knowledge degree required to belong to certain professional groups,, while it is implicit in relation to what are the levels of competences, skills, responsibility, experience each group might have. The SQF is based on professional categories, each one embracing a certain number of levels, which are used to encompass specific Professional Profiles pretty much related to job positions. Differently from EQF, levels here are not related to higher degrees of knowledge but to specific kind of professional profiles. For each Professional Profile the knowledge a level is specified in terms of Title/Certificate required, the general competence is described, and some profiles have also detailed tasks to be undertaken and expected responsibilities described. Some kind of relations can be established with the logic of EQF, which also considers knowledge as one of the descriptors to determine the level. This could be a bridge to be used, even if levels in this sector implement a different concept with respect to EQF. However competences, knowledge and skills, not necessarily all of them, neither complete, may be found in all profiles.

In the description of considered qualifications the work objectives are clearly stated in a form of a series of tasks that each professional profile has to be able to do. Tasks assume the role of 'abilities' and are described as complementary information to explain the general competence required for this professional profile that in some way mirrors the work objective.

Explicit references to "autonomy"/ "responsibility" is found in the considered qualifications.

Explicit references to "knowledge" and implicit references to "skills" are also present in the considered qualifications. The relation among "competences", "skills" and "knowledge" is aligned with the logic of EQF, but not following the same logic structure. It is necessary to dive into the professional profiles description and reprocess the content.

The descriptors expressed in the employability grid are not adopted, since there is no referencing of SQF to EQF.

Relationship between SQF logic and the Employability grid logic are depicted in the following table 2.

SQF Typology Matrix - referenceability to work processes		
Work Objective Oriented		
Real	Theory	No
<b>Orientation on EQF descriptors (SKC)</b>		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Core Work Objective</b>		
The specific character of the work subject is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The scope of the work subject in relationship to other ones is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of those who use products or services are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of the organization which arise from her specific character are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of individuals are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
Needs which arise from the environment are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The way how work within an organisation is organized is considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Autonomy and Responsibility</b>		
Present in the qualifications	Not present in the qualifications	

Note:

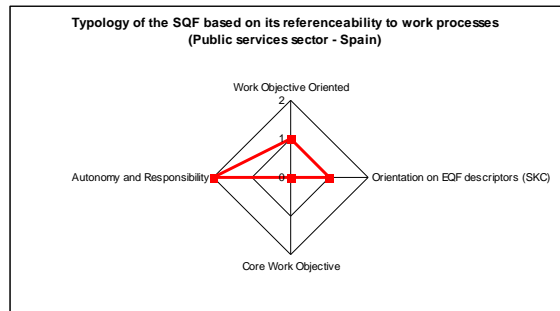
Real: SQF levels perfectly fit to the needs of the labour market

Theory: SQF levels fit to the needs of the labour market only in theory

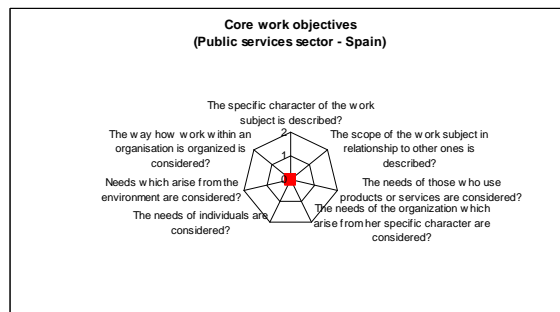
No: SQF levels do not fit to the needs of the labour market

SKC: Skills, Knowledge and Competences

Table 2 - SQF Typology Matrix - relationship between SQF logic and the Employability grid logic



Radar diagram 2.1 – Typology of the SQF based on its referenceability to work processes



Radar diagram 2.2 – Core work objectives

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats about this relationship are depicted in the following figure.

	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Harmful</b>
<b>Internal origin</b>	<b>Strenghts</b> _ The Employability grid descriptors match the autonomy and responsibility descriptors often used in the qualifications framework. This may allow for an eased referencing process.	<b>Weaknesses</b> _ SQF are defined through collective agreements which are a lengthy process so the pace companies enter into EQF realm, via this official way, would be as lengthy as the agreements evolution are. _ Other aspect is that SQF is trying to be linked to the NQF (reaching EQF as a consequence not as an end). In some way the EQF perspective in this process is lost by the actors involved.
<b>External origin</b>	<b>Opportunities</b> _ EU demands of homogenising education frameworks and improve mobility added by the lack of workforce in many sectors in Europe may help companies to get on board on the qualification subject ( SQF-NQF-EQF).	<b>Threats</b> _ Collective Agreements are old and legal structures and procedures adopted by the labour marked. To change the very fundamental pillars of these structures as are the way professional profiles and categories are describe requires a political decision and a consensus among Labour Unions, Companies and Government. This can be translated in: LOT of time ahead.

SWOT analysis 2 - SQF logic/Employability grid logic

(4.1.C) Typology of the SQF based on its relationship to the NQF

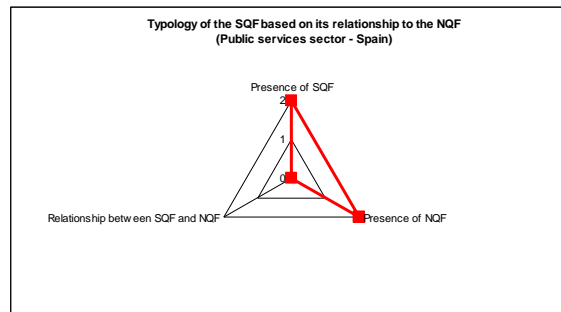
The SQF analyzed in the “Overview” will be categorized according to its relationship to the National Qualification System and Framework.

A NQF, as far as VET only, has been recently published and assumed in Spain, so that formal and labour education and training have been adapted to this framework coping with its qualification descriptions, but to date there is no SQF referred to NQF. This will be a sensitive issue that will be dealt at collective agreement and will likely take years at least to get it aligned with the private company realm. The reason lies in the fact that linking SQFs to NQF could imply reassessment of workers professional level, which could eventually lead to salaries growth at large. Furthermore SQFs in general are described in Spain according to a “Professional Categories” schema, without using qualifications. These Professional Categories are pretty much related to job positions than to “competences”. As NQF has been recently put in place, even though for VET context only, educational system and non-formal learning -VET ruled by Ministry of Labour- have been shaped to be linked to it, but few initiatives, if any, have been put in place to relate SQF to NQF. As expected, the process started at public service side where government bodies have put no resistance to the change, differently from the private sectors, where no” initiatives where started trying to link SQF to NQF. In fact the National Qualification Institute of Spain (INCUAL) has no acknowledge to date about existence of such initiatives on the territory.

Relationship between SQF and the NQF are depicted in the following figure.

SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQF		
<b>Presence of SQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Presence of NQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Relationship between SQF and NQF</b>		
SQF is integrated in NQF	SFQ is a supplement of NQF	SQF is not integrated in NQF

Table 3 - SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQF



Radar diagram 3 – Typology of the SQF based on its relationship to the NQF

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats about this relationship are depicted in the following figure.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<b>Strenghts</b> _ There are already initiatives, although simple, trying officially to link SQF to NQF.	<b>Weaknesses</b> _ The actors in this process foresee links between SQF and NQF however NQF receives criticism from some sectors seeing it is not updated in the same pace of marked changes, also there are controversies in relation to the levels adopted by the NQF and the shop floor reality. _ There are controversies among companies, government and labour unions in relation to NQF structure (specifically levels) and updating process.
External origin	<b>Opportunities</b> _ Currently there are other sectoral agreements being draft and all are considering to establish links between SQF and NQF.	<b>Threats</b> _ Crises paralysed many collective agreements processes and the resuming of activities will depend of economic recovery pace. In this way all ideas of putting in practice links between SQF-NQF will be pending.

SWOT analysis 3 - SQF/NQF

#### (4.1.D) More information

In Spain SQFs are born as a consequence of negotiations between Business Association and Labour Union of the sector in a form of collective agreements. They address the need of having professional categories homogeneously defined along the sector in order to guarantee homogeneous salaries. Part of SQFs are integrated into obligatory training and part are offered in parallel to NQF. In fact, many sectors consider NQF does not offer a complete, tailored and updated training usually required by the labour market.

Furthermore, in Spain there isn't a real need to link sectoral qualifications to EQF. In fact, if a SQF is linked to an official qualification described in NQF, it is automatically linked to EQF because NQF is already related to it. This linking process may be seen both as a strength and as a weakness, since Labour market does not perceive the need of linking SQF to EQF because in several cases EQF is out of its reality and is considered a "government education thing" far from labour market reality. Linking SQF to NQF at private market level appears to be a complex process, whose main implications involve sectoral collective agreements, which rely on NQF-VET to establish and share national standards and salaries: because of the unavoidable reshape due to the link, salaries should likely be increased in many current job positions since many workers are often polyvalent and placed in the company according to internal policies associated with production and organization. So, the greatest obstacle is the fact that if we want to apply EQF in an institutionalized way via NQFs, companies may express resistances since they might not rely anymore on NQF levels and competence descriptions.

An alternative to that exposed would be to link SQF directly to EQF, whose level descriptors can easily be adapted to most of job description outlines. Although possible, this approach shows procedural and responsibility risks related to overcoming the Official Educational System.

The main concern in summary is that EQF might remain a theoretical reference with no practical use and mobility in Europe constrained at low rates as it is right now for the majority of workers.

#### (4.2) Construction sector

The analysis carried out moves from the Romanian national perspective to a transnational picture for what concerns the overview of SQFs and stemming from the Romanian national perspective makes comparisons with the French scenario concerning the typology of SQFs based on their referenceability to work processes and on their relationship to NQFs.

##### (4.2.A) Overview of SQFs

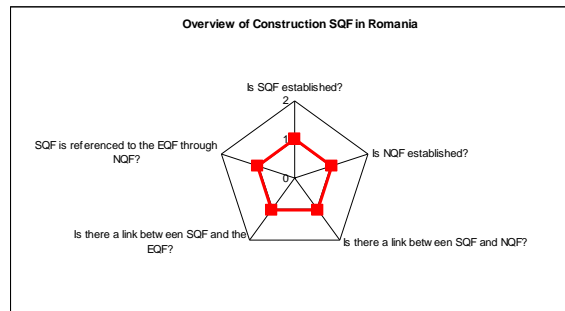
At the present time there are no sectoral qualification frameworks for the construction sector in Romania, and there are some concerns with respect to the development of this kind of tool, since Romania intends to create a national qualification framework which would encompass all sub-national qualifications obtained by formal, informal and non-formal learning.

Moreover, recently, Romania has been involved as a partner in the SQF-CON "Developing and Introducing Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks for the European Construction Industry" project, funded under the Lifelong Learning Programme - Leonardo da Vinci (01/02/2008 – 31/01/2010). The aim of this project was to develop a framework of qualifications in the construction sector according to the EQF guidelines, by also developing a matrix following the principles of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes at different levels of responsibility (from 1 to 5), for qualifications related to the phases of construction for a building with several apartments (planning, establishing site, landscape works, production of apartments and road works, measurements, reception work, invoicing). This project allows actors in national construction industries and training organizations to relate their national standards, qualifications, networks and certificates to a common framework, in order to improve transparency between national training systems, comparability of VET results by using learning outcome approach and better functioning of the labour market. Finally, the network created during the project, fosters the exchange of methodologies, instruments and good practices, thus achieving quality assurance, transparency and coordination between VET systems of participating countries.

However, the adoption of a common framework within this sector, could be threatened by the fragmentation of representative industries: in fact, since 1990, a privatization process took place which profoundly changed the industrial picture by transforming it from a scenario characterized by few large installations belonging to the State to a new context with more than 20.000 small private enterprises (that probably consider less important the internationalization aspect).

SQF-NQF-EQF		
<b>Is SQF established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is NQF established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQF and NQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQF and the EQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>SQF is referenced to the EQF through NQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No

Table 4 – SQF/NQF/EQF



Radar diagram 4 – Overview of Construction SQF in Romania

The main benefits, chances, constraints and risks of the Romanian experience are summarized in the following figures.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<b>Strenghts</b> _ One of the motivations behind the creation of a SQF linked to a NQF is the need of having professional categories homogeneously defined within the sector in order to guarantee homogeneous salaries.	<b>Weaknesses</b> _ In a scenario of more than 20.000 private enterprises, the small enterprises probably consider less important this aspect.
External origin	<b>Opportunities</b> _ Actors in national construction industries and training organizations will be able to relate their national standards, qualifications, networks and certificates to a common framework, in order to improve transparency between national training systems, comparability of VET results by using learning outcome approach and better functioning of the labour market.	<b>Threats</b> _ Discontinuity of political at national level.

SWOT analysis 4.1 - Link between SQF & NQF

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<b>Strenghts</b> _ SQF will better foster the achievement of quality assurance, transparency and coordination between VET systems of different countries. This will strengthen construction industry in coming years when qualified personal will be less and competition of industries and enterprises to gain the best people will increased in order to improve its competitiveness and power to contribute to the Lisbon goals.	<b>Weaknesses</b> _ In a scenario of more than 20.000 private enterprises, the small enterprises probably consider less important the internationalization aspect.
External origin	<b>Opportunities</b> _ Actors in national construction industries and training organizations will be able to relate their national standards, qualifications, networks and certificates to a common framework, in order to improve transparency of training systems, comparability of VET results by using learning outcome approach and better functioning of the labour market.	<b>Threats</b> _ Concerning the decision to adopt EQF, once created a SQF, the main threats are the indifference of employers and a fragmentary understanding of EQF principles.

SWOT analysis 4.2 - Link between SQF & EQF

Construction is the largest industrial sector in the EU. What is called “Construction Industry” consists of more than 100 trades and professions including: developers; designers (architects, engineers); suppliers of construction materials and equipment and contractors (tile fixers, plumbers).

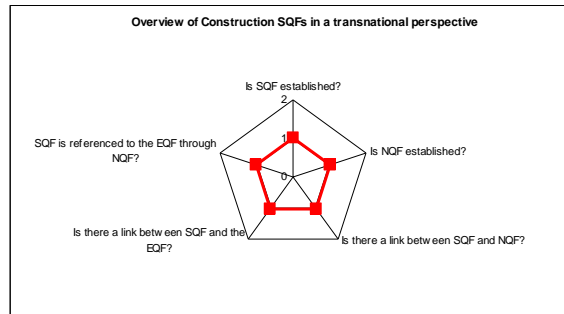
The great number of qualifications should first refer to NQF and then to EQF.

A relevant transnational initiative related to the referencing of sectoral qualifications in the construction sector to the EQF is represented by the Sectoral Qualification Framework developed in the frame of the project “Developing and Introducing a Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the European Construction Industry (SQF-Con)” funded under the Leonardo da Vinci programme. According to project guidelines, a sectoral qualification framework should be restricted from level 5 to level 1 and based on three steps: first, the structure of the Sectoral Qualification Framework was defined, by working out the phases of the construction process and the subdivision, by levels, of descriptors according to the sector-specific requirements of the construction industry. Phase-level schemes were then filled in with knowledge, skills and competences.

The methodology does not show an implementation of the sectoral qualification framework to national vocational qualification education and training systems in the construction sector. However, it is underlined that this step is essential in order to make most use of the framework itself. Two approaches are envisaged, either top-down or bottom-up. The top-down approach is based on the involvement of and acceptance by institutions and organizations responsible for education and training in the construction industry in the respective country (taking into account relevant stakeholders, e.g. public authorities, social partners, chambers, etc.). With respect to the bottom-up application, one of the possibilities relies on the development of equivalent grids enabling for comparison of certificates with respect to the sectoral framework (possibly exploiting learning outcomes description in diploma supplements). An additional possibility is related to the recognition of formal non-formal and informal learning, that could be achieved by defining rules and procedures for linking knowledge, skills and competences acquired at the workplace to descriptions in the framework and by defining assessment tests (to be jointly designed by training institutions and construction companies).

SQF-NQF-EQF		
<b>Are SQFs established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Are NQFs established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQFs and NQFs?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQFs and the EQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>SQFs are referenced to the EQF through NQFs?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No

Table 5 – SQF/NQF/EQF



Radar diagram 5 – Overview of Construction SQFs in a transnational perspective

The following figure depicts main benefits, chances, constraints and risks linked to the creation of a common framework within the construction sector.

	Helpful Strenghts	Harmful Weaknesses
Internal origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Enables and increases permeability, transparency and comparability of qualifications.</li> <li>_ Promotes access and progression of education and training.</li> <li>_ Enables mobility of people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Awareness of frameworks is limited, blockages of information flow pertaining to frameworks within stakeholder groups are perceived is difficult.</li> <li>_ Linking of individual learner wages to levels.</li> <li>_ Limited adoption of learning outcomes based approach; incomplete credit system.</li> <li>_ Stakeholders perceive there is a need to re-examine the definition of the levels of the European framework.</li> <li>_ Confusion about a number of frameworks at the European level.</li> </ul>
External origin	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Identify employability features and attract employers with a clear education framework.</li> <li>_ Harmonise sectoral qualifications across EU members.</li> <li>_ Limit duplications. Increase matching of qualifications.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ Bureaucracy is not useful.</li> <li>_ Language and semantic barrier.</li> </ul>

SWOT analysis 5 - Link between SQFs & EQF

#### (4.2.B) Typology of SQFs based on their referenceability to work processes

SQFs analyzed in the “Overview” will be categorized according to their referenceability to work process by exploiting the Employability grid developed in WP2.

In Romania there isn't a fully developed Sectoral Qualifications Framework in the Constructions sector. Moreover, Romania is currently building the National Qualifications Framework related to the EQF principles which would encompass all sub-national qualifications obtained by formal, informal and non formal learning. All the qualifications will be described in terms of learning outcomes, expressed by knowledge, skills and competences and aligned with the European initiatives in the field. Also a Sectoral Qualifications Framework will be developed, but initiatives are still isolated. However, the Sectoral Qualifications Framework will be related to the EQF principles.

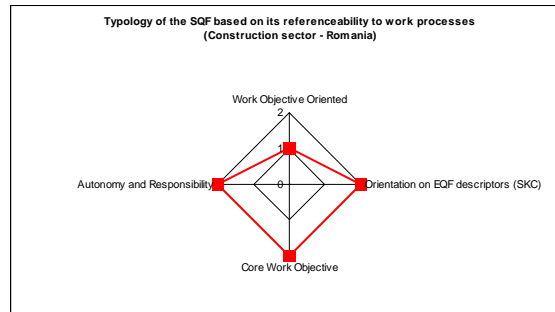
At national level professional qualifications are acquired (provided) based on occupational standards (adult training), training standards (IVET) or qualification description grids (higher education). All these instruments start from labour market needs surveys and occupational analyses. They also indicate the practical skills, theoretical knowledge, competences and attitudes needed for the successful achievement of work or learning related



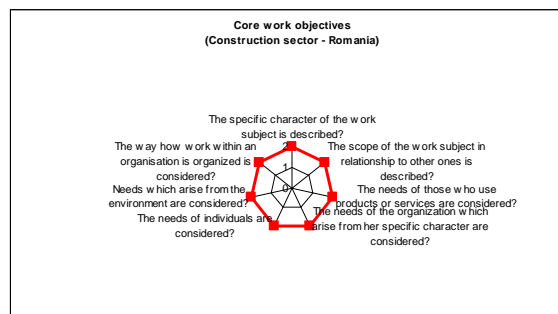
activities, with reference to the level of autonomy and responsibility involved and to the context (performance criteria and performance evidence). Therefore, while the work objectives were not taken into account explicitly, they are implicit in the qualifications descriptions. Obviously, abilities can be derived from work objectives. Relationship between SQF logic and the Employability grid logic are depicted in the following figure.

SQF Typology Matrix - referenceability to work processes		
<b>Work Objective Oriented</b>		
Real	Theory	No
<b>Orientation on EQF descriptors (SKC)</b>		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Core Work Objective</b>		
The specific character of the work subject is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The scope of the work subject in relationship to other ones is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of those who use products or services are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of the organization which arise from her specific character are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of individuals are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
Needs which arise from the environment are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The way how work within an organisation is organized is considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Autonomy and Responsibility</b>		
Present in the qualifications	Not present in the qualifications	

Table 6 - SQF Typology Matrix - relationship between SQF logic and the Employability grid logic



Radar diagram 6.1 – Typology of the SQF based on its referenceability to work processes



Radar diagram 6.2 – Core work objectives

In France the considered SQF is based on an explicit logic. The logic of the SQF is the same logic of the EQF. In fact, SQFs are included in the French NQF (called French National Directory for Vocational Certifications) and the French NQF is managed by the Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle, which is the coordination point for EQF in France. However, it is important to keep in mind that the French sectoral qualifications have no levels. So, they can't be taken into account on the EQF. Certificates deal with/assess professional abilities/skills/competencies, and are recognized only by one sector/one branch. Furthermore, the French sectoral qualifications don't ensure the transferability of skills/competences.

Work objectives are clearly visible in the description of the professional profile (tasks and activities) and in the description of skills and competences which contribute to the achievement of work objectives (indicators of

performance).

In a French “referential”, the skills/competences are described including the following set of performance indicators: - level of autonomy and responsibility; - use of available means and resources; - expected performances and results.

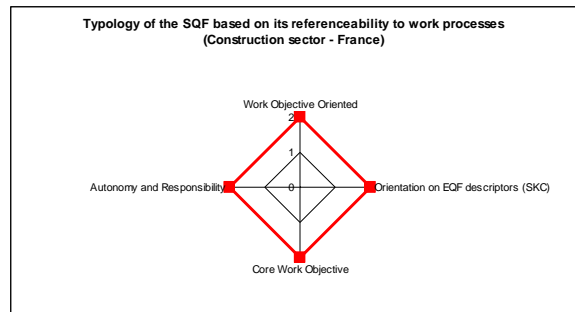
Explicit references to “knowledge” and “skills” can be observed in a French “referential” in the grids which link competencies/skills and associated knowledge. Furthermore, the relation among “competences”, “skills” and “knowledge” is aligned with the logic of the EQF.

At last, descriptors expressed in the Employability grid are clearly described in the qualifications.

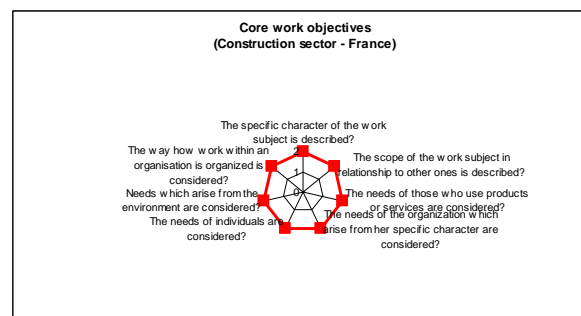
Relationship between SQF logic and the Employability grid logic are depicted in the following figure.

SQF Typology Matrix - referenceability to work processes		
<b>Work Objective Oriented</b>		
Real	Theory	No
<b>Orientation on EQF descriptors (SKC)</b>		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Core Work Objective</b>		
The specific character of the work subject is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The scope of the work subject in relationship to other ones is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of those who use products or services are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of the organization which arise from her specific character are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of individuals are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
Needs which arise from the environment are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The way how work within an organisation is organized is considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Autonomy and Responsibility</b>		
Present in the qualifications		Not present in the qualifications

Table 7 - SQF Typology Matrix - relationship between SQF logic and the Employability grid logic



Radar diagram 7.1 – Typology of the SQF based on its referenceability to work processes



Radar diagram 7.2 – Core work objectives

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats about this relationship are depicted in the following figure.

	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Harmful</b>
<b>Internal origin</b>	<b>Strengths</b> _ The logic adopted in the employability grid is work process oriented, and the logic of SQF is based on the logic of recognition of the required/needed core competences (based on the work process) to ensure that an individual is able to perform a job.	<b>Weaknesses</b> _ The French sectoral qualifications have no levels. They can't be taken into account on the EQF. This point is dealt with at the moment by experts and stakeholders in France.
<b>External origin</b>	<b>Opportunities</b> _ The logic of SQF derives from NQF. It's the same logic in France, in terms of descriptors.	<b>Threats</b> _ Sectoral Qualification certificates deal with/assess professional abilities/skills/competencies, and are only recognized by one sector/one branch. _ The French sectoral qualifications don't ensure the transferability of skills/competences.

SWOT analysis 6 - SQF logic/Employability grid logic

(4.2.C) Typology of SQFs based on their relationship to NQFs

The SQFs analyzed in the “Overview” are categorized according to their relationship to the National Qualification Systems and Frameworks.

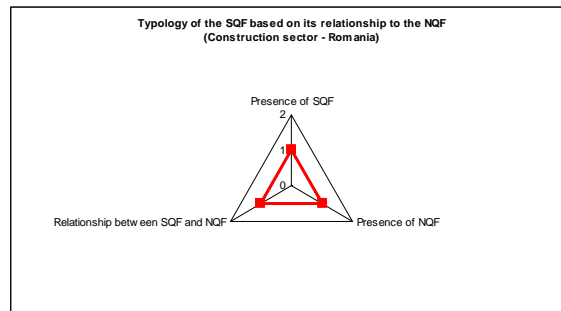
In Romania the construction Sectoral Qualifications Framework is not fully developed. At the same time, Romania is developing its National Qualifications Framework whose referencing to the EQF is anticipated for 2012. Because the structures of the sectoral framework and of the national framework are based on the same principles and philosophy, it would probably be easy to map the sectoral qualifications against the national framework. There is no reason for competition between the two instruments, since they both foster employability of workforce and comparability of qualifications at European level.

Furthermore, the Romanian National Qualifications Framework related to the EQF principles will encompass all sub-national qualifications obtained by formal, informal and non-formal learning. That's why it is possible to consider the SQF as a part of the NQF.

Relationship between SQF and the NQF are depicted in the following figure.

SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQF		
<b>Presence of SQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Presence of NQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Relationship between SQF and NQF</b>		
SQF is integrated in NQF	SQF is a supplement of NQF	SQF is not integrated in NQF

Table 8 - SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQF



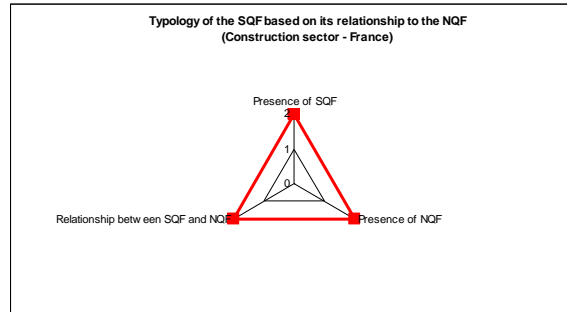
Radar diagram 8 – Typology of the SQF based on its relationship to the NQF

In France, SQF is included in the NQF (same descriptors and same regulation) and it doesn't compete with it. In terms of descriptors SQF doesn't differ from the NQF, but the sectoral qualifications have no level. Certificates only deal with/assess professional abilities/skills/competencies and are only recognized only by one sector/one branch. Furthermore, the French sectoral qualifications don't ensure the transferability of skills/competences. So, they can't be taken into account on the EQF. Experts and stakeholders in France are currently dealing with this point.

Relationship between SQF and the NQF are depicted in the following figure.

SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQFs		
<b>Presence of SQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Presence of NQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Relationship between SQF and NQF</b>		
SQF is integrated in NQF	SQF is a supplement of NQF	SQF is not integrated in NQF

Table 9 - SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQF



Radar diagram 9 – Typology of the SQF based on its relationship to the NQF

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats about this relationship are depicted in the following figure.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<b>Strengths</b> _ SQF is included in the NQF.	<b>Weaknesses</b> _ The French national qualifications have no levels. They can't be taken into account on the EQF. This point is dealt with at the moment by experts and stakeholders in France.
External origin	<b>Opportunities</b> _ The logic of SQF derives from NQF. It's the same logic in France, in terms of descriptors.	<b>Threats</b> _ The French national qualifications don't ensure the transferability of skills/competences.

SWOT analysis 7 - SQF/NQF

(4.2.D) More information

One of the largest industrial sector in Europe is construction which is contributing almost 10% to GDP. It is characterized by marked differences across European countries and Cross-border activities have become an important economic factor in certain regions and do not meet with much enthusiasm in countries with high requirements.

Applying EQF to the construction sector could certainly help to overcome a part of the problems recalled above. However, the task would be tremendous as the construction industry consists of more than 100 trades and professions. Thus, to make EQF work in practical terms, the support of national decision makers is required, together with the development of NQFs in a significant number of Member States promoting also their linking to SQFs.

Benefits coming from linking sectoral qualifications, even passing through NQFs, to EQF would be associated with the simplification of staff recruitment operations, uniformity in staff skills & competences and inter-changeability of human resources. Constraints would be related to the difficulty in connecting existing training offer with the envisaged standards of NQFs and EQF, adding to that the complexity associated with the description of professional profiles according to the learning outcome-based paradigm.

Obviously, with respect to the transnational dimension, the main benefit associated with linking qualifications of the sector to EQF is the promotion of workers mobility. VET has a contribution to make towards a European labour market, but is not the major driver for creating greater migration of people. Language skills confine many migrants

to low-skilled jobs and labour migration is essentially cost driven. Otherwise, differences in work organisation do not seem a big obstacle to employ workers, suggesting that the costs of labour are more important than the exact qualifications.

Finally, construction sector qualifications validation is important because this sector is large and diverse, transversal, in continuous change, with numerous problems about jobs and contracts and with a long tradition of apprenticeship with placements at work. So, it requires flexibility.

#### (4.3) Logistics sector

The analysis carried out results from an investigation performed on the logistics sector in France.

##### (4.3.A) Overview of the SQF

The French approach for building qualification frameworks is known as “competence” approach and the term “competence” covering skills, knowledge and competence as well. The building of these frameworks always starts by an economic context study of a particular job position, followed by an in-company analysis of jobs, thus ensuring ultimately a qualification framework that is consistent with work processes.

Logistics qualification frameworks in France are addressed by the Transport and Logistics Branch, which defines policy mainly through collective agreements. There are three main sub-systems in the French Logistics qualifications system. Qualifications are formalised through diplomas which are created at the initiative of the Ministry of Education, through “Professional Titles” emanating from the Labour Ministry and through Professional Qualification Certificates (CQPs), which are elaborated on the basis of collective agreements directly decided upon by social partners representing Logistics companies and workers. With the exception of CQPs, these qualifications are referenced to the National Registry of Professional Certifications (RNCP).

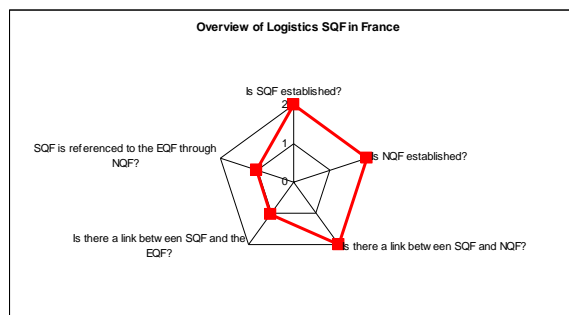
The original provider of qualification frameworks in the Logistics sector has traditionally been the Ministry of Education. However, logically, this institution’s perspective has always more oriented towards knowledge acquisition than towards concrete work considerations. This explains why the creation of a sectoral qualification system in the Transport & Logistics’ field first resulted from two parallel trends consisting in an increased specialisation in the definition of diplomas emanating from the National Education system and that deriving from the gained consciousness for the need of qualification frameworks driven by the Labour Ministry to better suite the needs of workers and companies.

It is assumed that the distinction between the National Qualifications System and the Sectoral Qualifications System lies not in the identity of their creators but in the job positions they relate to, so both qualifications system appear to be supplementary, if not complementary.

As regards the linking of SQFs to EQF, it seems French authorities have decided to implement different strategies ruled out direct linking to EQF and preferred indirect linking through NQF referencing system.

<b>SQF-NQF-EQF</b>		
<b>Is SQF established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is NQF established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQF and NQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQF and the EQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>SQF is referenced to the EQF through NQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No

Table 10 – SQF/NQF/EQF



Radar diagram 10 – Overview of Logistics SQF in France

The main benefits, chances, constraints and risks of the French experience are summarized in the following figures.

	Helpful Strenghts	Harmful Weaknesses
Internal origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The same actors are involved in the process of elaboration of qualification frameworks, from the analysis of job functions, work processes and derived abilities to the certification stage. This ensures the taking into account of sectoral needs.</li> <li>The creation of a sectoral qualification system in the Transport &amp; Logistics' field first resulted from two parallel trends that consisting in an increased specialisation in the definition of diplomas emanating from the National Education system and that deriving from the gained consciousness for the need of qualification frameworks driven by the Labour Ministry to better suite the needs of workers and companies.</li> <li>It is assumed that the distinction between the National Qualifications System and the Sectoral Qualifications System lies not in the identity of their creators but in the job positions they relate to, so both qualifications system appear to be supplementary, if not complementary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The sectoral aspect of qualification frameworks is not obviously apparent since public authorities which develop NQFs carry a formal role in the definition of most SQFs. Moreover, some SQFs are not related to a common referencing system.</li> </ul>
External origin	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The presence of social partners in instances deciding upon policy and action as regards SQFs ensures the sectoral particularities and necessary adaptation to the economic environment and change in work processes will be taken into consideration.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the risks lies in the fear of a progressive homogenization of qualification frameworks and the subsequent risk of losing the different "cultural" approaches to building such frameworks.</li> </ul>

SWOT analysis 8.1 - Link between SQF & NQF

	Helpful Strenghts	Harmful Weaknesses
Internal origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referencing the French Logistics Qualification Frameworks to the EQF would facilitate employment mobility whilst setting a common reference for all Europeans working in this Sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linking the French Logistics Qualification Frameworks to the EQF implies that French stakeholders would have to shift from a "competence" approach to one where skills, knowledge and abilities are clearly and formally separated and distinguished. Moreover, stakeholders and learners would have to shift their mindset from a system from five levels of referencing to one of eight levels.</li> </ul>
External origin	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The qualification's credibility could enhanced as work processes would be better mirrored and a greater comparability of qualifications would be possible.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the risk is that the Logistics Qualification Frameworks might not be directly linked to the EQF.</li> </ul>

SWOT analysis 8.2 - Link between SQF & EQF

(4.3.B) Typology of the SQF based on its referenceability to work processes

The SQF analyzed in the "Overview" will be classified according to its referenceability to work process by exploiting the Employability grid developed in WP2.

The French Transport & Logistics qualifications framework is based on an explicit logic and is contained in the RNCP (French National Register for Vocational Certifications). Each qualification is referenced according to the career prospects in entails, especially in terms of autonomy and responsibility within a work organisation. Moreover, by law since 2002, qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes.

The main difference between the logic of the EQF and that of the Logistics qualification framework in France is that the French framework contains 5 levels (against 8 levels for the EQF) and that the order is reversed since the

highest level of the French framework is Level I (against Level 8 for the EQF). However, no definitive official referencing to EQF exists to this date, except that made available on the official site of EC, which is declared to be still in progress. The French National Commission for Professional Certification delivered in October 2010 its report on referencing the French NQF (which includes the Transport and Logistics framework) to the EQF. This report provides for a “block-to-block” referencing scheme through which, where it is possible, each level of the French framework is to be separately referenced to a particular level of the EQF.

Work objectives is at the core of the process of building qualifications in the Transport & Logistics sector in France. The first step in this process is always to outline a “REAC” (Référentiel Emploi Activités Compétences) which basically breaks down each job position first into activities, and then into the competences entailed. The qualification standards designed thus always derive from work objectives. These work objectives are obviously reflected in the Autonomy and Responsibility descriptors used. So work objectives are clearly visible in the description of qualifications.

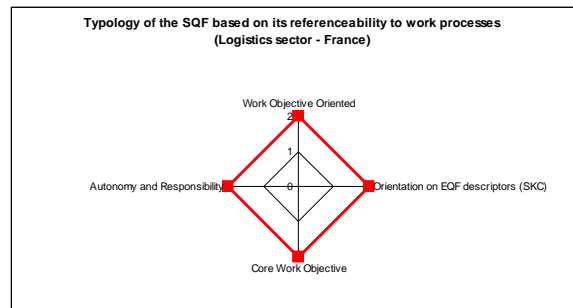
Furthermore, in the French Transport & Logistics qualifications framework, levels are linked to “competences” which, in France, encompass what the EQF regards as “knowledge”, “skills” and “competences” altogether. So, the French descriptors are not linked to the EQF descriptors through an individual pattern – each descriptor at a time - but rather are weighted-in according to which level the standard fits best.

As “autonomy” and “responsibility” are often used to describe the qualifications in French Logistics qualifications, the descriptors of the Employability Grid, especially those pertaining to “action with regard to action of others” and “action with regard to context” often converge with those of these qualifications.

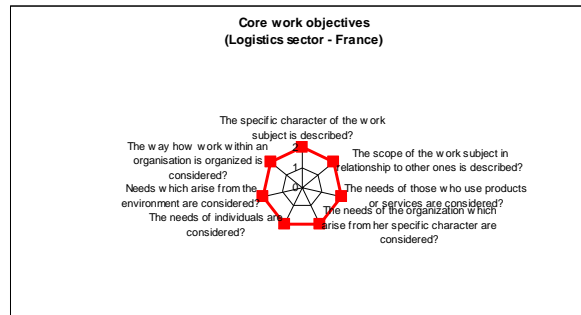
Relationship between SQF logic and the Employability grid semantics are depicted in the following figure.

SQF Typology Matrix - referenceability to work processes		
<b>Work Objective Oriented</b>		
Real	Theory	No
<b>Orientation on EQF descriptors (SKC)</b>		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Core Work Objective</b>		
The specific character of the work subject is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The scope of the work subject in relationship to other ones is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of those who use products or services are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of the organization which arise from her specific character are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of individuals are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
Needs which arise from the environment are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The way how work within an organisation is organized is considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Autonomy and Responsibility</b>		
Present in the qualifications	Not present in the qualifications	

Table 11 - SQF Typology Matrix – relationship between SQF logic and the Employability grid logic



Radar diagram 11.1 – Typology of the SQF based on its referenceability to work processes



Radar diagram 11.2 – Core work objectives

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats about this relationship are depicted in the following figure.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>_ The employability grid descriptors match the autonomy and responsibility descriptors often used in the French Transport &amp; Logistics qualifications. This may allow for an eased referencing process.</p> <p>_ Once the referencing of logistics SQF in France is completed, the same descriptors as the EQF will be used. This implies it will bear the same strengths as the EQF.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>_ Once the referencing of logistics SQF in France is completed, the same descriptors as the EQF will be used. This implies it will bear the same weaknesses as the EQF.</p>
External origin	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>_ It would be very positive to "refresh" the Transport and Logistics qualification framework so as to have it even more adapted to contemporary work processes.</p> <p>_ Once the referencing of logistics SQF in France is completed, the same descriptors as the EQF will be used. This implies it will bear the same opportunities as the EQF.</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>_ Once the referencing of logistics SQF in France is completed, the same descriptors as the EQF will be used. This implies it will bear the same threats as the EQF.</p>

SWOT analysis 9 - SQF logic/Employability grid logic

#### (4.3.C) Typology of the SQF based on its relationship to the NQF

The SQF analyzed in the "Overview" will be categorized according to its relationship to the National Qualification System and Framework.

Logistics qualifications in France are addressed by the Transport and Logistics Branch which defines policy mainly through collective agreements (e.g. Branch National Agreement of November 25th 2004, extended in 2005, on vocational training in Road Transport & auxiliary activities). Bearing in mind these facts, it seems surprising, albeit not incoherent, that there are three main sub-systems in the French Logistics qualifications system, each serving different purposes accordingly with their sources. Qualifications are formalised through Diplomas which are created at the initiative of the Ministry of Education, through "Professional Titles" emanating from the Labour Ministry and through Professional Qualification Certificates (CQPs) which are elaborated on the basis of collective agreements directly decided upon by social partners representing Logistics companies and workers. However, even though three distinct paths for qualification exist in the French system, it is to be noted that, in whichever path considered, social partners are at the core of the actual qualification framework building. They are the ones who ultimately fill in the qualification standards.

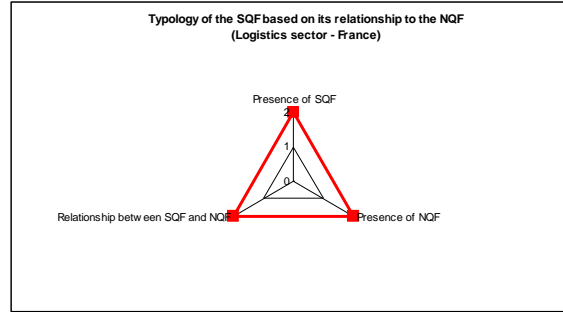
With the exception of CQPs, these qualifications are referenced to the National Registry of Professional Certifications (RNCP), which is composed of five levels, Level I being the highest and Level V being the lowest, and which is managed by the CNCP (National Commission for Professional Certification). Therefore, in France, the logistics qualification framework is integrated in the NQF and the descriptors used in both frameworks are the same, notably because, formally, the competent bodies for building the Logistics qualification framework are national public bodies.

Relationship between SQF and the NQF are depicted in the following figure.



SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQFs		
<b>Presence of SQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Presence of NQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Relationship between SQF and NQF</b>		
SQF is integrated in NQF	SQF is a supplement of NQF	SQF is not integrated in NQF

Table 12 - SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQF



Radar diagram 12 – Typology of SQF based on its relationship to the NQF

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats about this relationship are depicted in the following figure.

	Helpful Strengths	Harmful Weaknesses
Internal origin	<p>It is assumed that the distinction between the National Qualifications System and the Sectoral Qualifications System lies not in the identity of their creators but in the job positions they relate to, so both qualifications system appear to be supplementary, if not complementary.</p>	<p>The main concern is that, since it is integrated in the NQF, there is no specific, custom-tailored qualification framework for the Logistics sector in France.</p>
External origin	<p>The presence of social partners in instances deciding upon policy and action as regards SQFs ensures the sectoral particularities and necessary adaptation to the economic environment and change in work processes will be taken into consideration.</p>	<p>If should there be one custom-tailored qualification framework someday, it is foreseen that only the NQF be referenced to the EQF. Therefore, any SQF can only indirectly be linked to the EQF.</p>

SWOT analysis 10 - SQF/NQF

#### (4.3.D) More information

Because the logistics sector is global market based, competences required in this sector need to match the demand of transnational transportation processes and global supply chains. For this reason, a European Transport Logistics Competence Framework is required. This sector-specific implementation needs to be linked with NQFs. It has to be oriented towards competences and vocational profiling. It should rather be referred to as a sectoral competence framework and structured according to levels of work requirements and skill profiles. It should use the same terminology as provided by the EQF to ensure the most comprehensible link to the NQFs and also to the EQF. It needs to be linked to related competence frameworks for logistics in the wider meaning and might incorporate competence standards already at the market as well as should propose how those competences might be achieved, assessed and eventually updated.

As an example, a strategy for referencing national qualifications in the logistics sector corresponding to EQF level 5 is being designed in the ongoing EUROTRANSLOG project. In this study the analysis of models and practices for referencing to the EQF was developed by considering the findings of the TransEQFramem project. The focus of the project was on the analysis and development of methods for aligning national qualifications to the EQF.

With respect to the specific issue of quality assurance in the perspective of referencing to the EQF, mechanisms of interest for the considered sector are related to the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships and to the monitoring of quality of training supply.

#### (4.4) Retail sector

The analysis concerning the overview of SQFs moves from the transnational perspective down to the Dutch national scenario, which is more focused on SQF typology .

##### (4.4.A) Overview of the SQFs

European social partners within the retail sector are EuroCommerce and Uni Europa Commerce. EuroCommerce, established in 1993, represents the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors, while Uni Europa Commerce is the European trade union representing retail employees. At their sectoral social dialogue committee in April 2009, EuroCommerce and Uni Europa Commerce decided to develop a joint project to establish a European network for anticipating skill needs in the commerce sector. With this project, social partners intended to implement better cooperation among all relevant stakeholders such as companies, member organizations of the social partners at national and European level.

The role of social partners in the various countries differs widely, being rather weak in Poland and Romania, while in other countries like Scandinavian ones, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Germany and the Netherlands, social partners cooperate widely on VET and have a well-established social dialogue.

Retail qualifications are present in all of the European countries. However, there are still several barriers to the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, since countries show marked differences in design and regulation of VET systems. For this reason, a transnational SQF could help training authorities in better defining Europe-wide qualifications.

At present time, no international frameworks exist, mainly because European social partners still have to reach an agreement on the subject of skill needs. In this view, the TIPTOE "Testing and Implementing EQF and ECVET Principles in Trade Organizations and Education" project, funded under the Lifelong Learning Programme - Leonardo da Vinci (01/10/2008 – 30/09/2010) could be used as an input for the construction of a common industry-driven EQF profile. The main objective of this project was to overcome not only the gap between different European VET and qualification systems, but also reduce the differences in content and interpretation of occupations on the European labour market in the trade sector, by investigating labour market and educational field, by integrating these results in a map for the two areas, and by exploiting the map for defining guidelines for the interpretation and application of EQF.

However, one of the main threats affecting the definition of a common framework is still linked to the fact that retail sector has a poor image: in fact, since retail tasks are quite easy and learnable on the job, many employees enter the sector in a part-time temporary job; so that employers still do not see the need for special education. As a consequence, in the definition of a sectoral framework, special attention should be given to strengthen stakeholders involvement.

<b>SQF-NQF-EQF</b>		
<b>Are SQFs established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Are NQFs established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQFs and NQFs?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQFs and the EQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>SQFs are referenced to the EQF through NQFs?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No

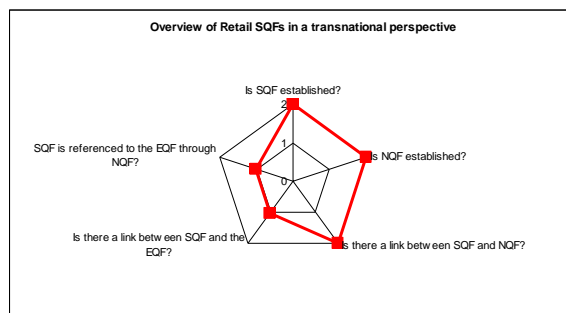
Note: Not completed

Note: Not completed

Note: through Formal WEB Qualification

Note: NQF is not yet referenced to EQF

Table 13 – SQF/NQF/EQF



Radar diagram 13 – Overview of Retail SQFs in a transnational perspective

The following figure depicts the main benefits, chances, constraints and risks linked to the creation of a common framework within the retail sector.

	Helpful Strengths	Harmful Weaknesses
Internal origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A transnational trade qualification framework could be able to profile retail functions, and to describe their essence and the most important subjects within them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The retail sector is characterized by, on one hand, large enterprises and, on the other hand, small enterprises. While large ones have a human resources management department and complex education programmes, small ones often have lack of time and money for vocational education, and, for them, the international perspective is not very important.</li> <li>At the present time, no international frameworks exist. This is due to the fact that, first, European social partners have to reach an agreement on the subject of skill needs.</li> <li>Retail qualifications are present in all of the European countries. However, there are still several barriers to the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, since countries show marked differences in the design and regulation of VET systems.</li> </ul>
External origin	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding of qualifications and mobility could be improved.</li> <li>The development of an international framework could be an opportunity to discuss the sector and the functions in it.</li> <li>Countries with a weak developed sectoral education system will profit from the discussion at European level. Moreover, an international SQF can strengthen their national sectoral education.</li> <li>For this reason, a SQF could help training authorities in better defining Europe-wide qualifications.</li> <li>The main opportunities is to overcome not only the gap between the different European VET and qualification systems, but also the differences in the content and interpretation of occupations on the European labor market in the trade sector.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the main threats affecting the definition of a common framework is linked to the fact that the retail sector has a poor image: in fact, since retail tasks are quite easy and learnable on the job, many employees enter the sector in a part-time temporary job; hence, employers still do not see the need for special education. As a consequence, in the definition of a sectoral framework, special attention should be given to the involvement of stakeholders.</li> <li>Lack of credibility with employers and/or learners, that could be avoided by involving, while designing international sectoral qualifications, social partners and employers from the participating countries.</li> </ul>

SWOT analysis 11 - Link between SQFs & EQF

#### (4.4.B) Typology of the SQF based on its referenceability to work processes

The SQF analyzed in the project has also been classified according to its referenceability to work process by exploiting the Employability grid developed in WP2.

The Dutch VET qualifications are based on an implicit logic: in particular SQFs are based on Occupational profiles. Because companies use competences to describe jobs, the educational system has changed introducing descriptions based on competences. Since 1996 efforts have been focused on the establishment of a single universal system gathering all SQFs in order to achieve unity among qualifications descriptions so that it became possible making comparisons between those placed at the same level. The Minister of Education is responsible for the implementation of the NQF and its link to EQF. In fact, NQF is expected to relate the secondary general education, Vocational education & higher education and the adult education to EQF. In some cases the SQF is linked to the formal WEB qualification which is part of the NQF, implementing an indirect linking of SQF to NQF. As a consequence of that indirection there's not really a clear relationship between SQF and EQF.

In the WEB based qualifications, work objectives, core tasks and accompanying work processes are described. The more general description of the function, carried out as a job in the company, refers to work objectives. The qualification contains a description of the general situation in which the employee has to operate, a scenario which

is also extensively described at the level of core tasks. At a more detailed level the qualification document contains also a description of each individual work process, reporting desired outcomes as well. Competences and behaviour components are described as well as associated performance indicators.

All descriptions in the VET qualification document describe which degree of autonomy and responsibility the worker has in the function he covers diving into the various work processes implied in that specific function.

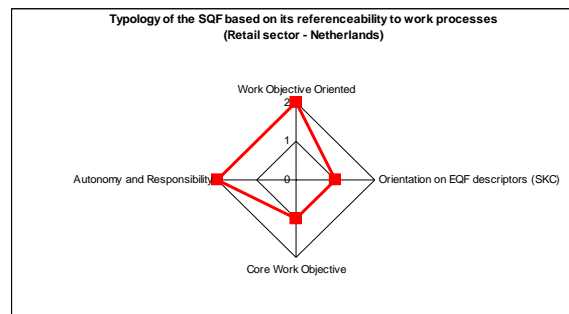
VET qualifications have some explicit references to knowledge and skills, but usually dealt with in a rather general way. The logic of VET qualifications differs from the well known EQF logic. as the essence of the profession is described reporting the core tasks also detailing work processes. In particular a process competence matrix is used to show which competences are essential for a successful fulfilment of those specific work processes. In this schema VET performance indicators are shaped to describe the intended outcome of behaviour. Hence, according to the perspective suggested by the EQF logic, knowledge, skills and competences appear in the Dutch description of a qualification in their implicit form, as implicit appears also to be the reference to the level of that qualification. Weak signs are also given on the reference, either implicit or explicit, to EQF

The descriptors expressed in the employability grid match only in part those applied for the considered qualifications. While “Steering or steered by others” is the most explicit descriptor, the qualifications have few references to actions with regard to the context. No reference is available in the dossiers to the context picture, which can be derived only implicitly from the description.

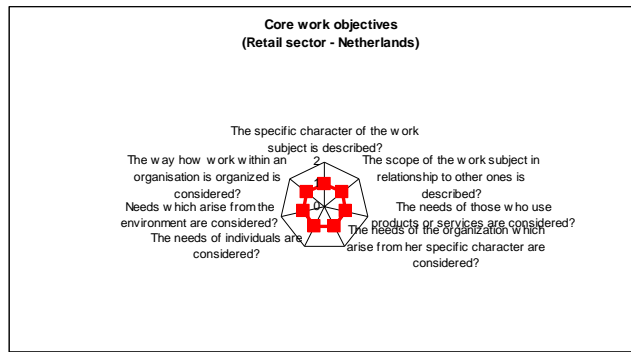
Relationship between SQF and the Employability grid logic are depicted in the following figure.

SQF Typology Matrix - referenceability to work processes		
<b>Work Objective Oriented</b>		
Real	Theory	No
<b>Orientation on EQF descriptors (SKC)</b>		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Core Work Objective</b>		
The specific character of the work subject is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The scope of the work subject in relationship to other ones is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of those who use products or services are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of the organization which arise from her specific character are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of individuals are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
Needs which arise from the environment are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The way how work within an organisation is organized is considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Autonomy and Responsibility</b>		
Present in the qualifications		Not present in the qualifications

Table 14 - SQF Typology Matrix – relationship between SQF logic and the Employability grid logic



Radar diagram 14.1 – Typology of the SQF based on its referenceability to work processes



Radar diagram 14.2 – Core work objectives

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats about this relationship are depicted in the following figure.

	Helpful	Harmful
	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal origin	_ There is a broad consensus that employability and lifelong learning in Europe need to be fostered by transparency, transfer and recognition of qualifications held by individual citizens.	_ In many cases the official documents describing national qualifications cannot supply the information that corresponds fully to EQF criteria. _ The definition of competence in Dutch VET and HE differs from the EQF definition.
External origin	_ The process of applying the EQF in its current form (and its further development) carries a genuine value itself and might contribute to develop a common understanding of qualifications and learning outcomes across Europe.	_ The EQF offers the possibility for Member States to compare their education systems; in this sense, it is nothing more or less than an instrument. EQF will not replace an NQF; it is sufficient that the EQF can be matched with NQFs. The role of EQF should be limited to compare education programmes of different countries; quality assurance, principles on identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, etc. should not be integrated in an EQF.

SWOT analysis 12 - SQF logic/Employability grid logic

#### (4.4.C) Typology of the SQF based on its relationship to the NQF

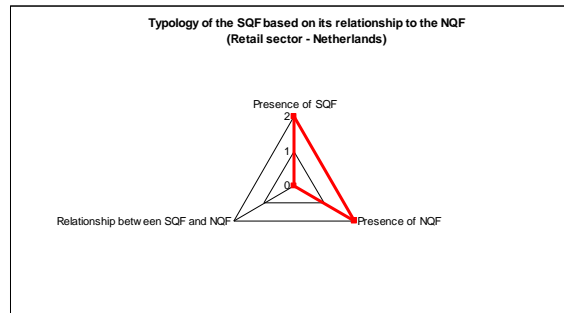
The SQF analyzed has been categorized according to its relationship to the National Qualification System and Framework.

In the Netherlands two kind of VET existed until 1996, fulltime school education and dual pathway. Then, a new act unified those two systems into one, called the WEB, which now regulates the VET qualifications. SQFs and the NQF, which is under the control of the Minister of Education, still exist and develop, but are not complete. In the Netherlands, NQF gathers the secondary education, vocational education & Higher education and the adult education relating them to EQF. However, only in some cases SQFs are linked to the NQF through the formal WEB qualification.

Relationship between SQF and the NQF are depicted in the following figure.

SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQFs		
<b>Presence of SQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Presence of NQF</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Relationship between SQF and NQF</b>		
SQF is integrated in NQF	SQF is a supplement of NQF	SQF is not integrated in NQF

Table 15 - SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQF



Radar diagram 15 – Typology of the SQF based on its relationship to the NQF

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats about this relationship are depicted in the following figure.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>_ A qualifications framework is a tool to facilitate citizens' mobility for work and study, nationally and transnationally.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>_ The national documents describing national qualifications are not easy to be interpreted in EQF terms. Assignment to EQF levels could be difficult because of the national concepts that go not necessarily along with the EQF descriptors.</p>
External origin	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>_ The process of applying the EQF in its current form carries a genuine value itself and might contribute to develop a common understanding of qualifications and learning outcomes across Europe.</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>_ The implementation of EQF should have a minimal effect on NQFs.</p>

SWOT analysis 13 - SQF/NQF

(4.4.D) More information

The attention of the retail trade sector to the creation of common reference points for qualifications is expressed in a lot of experiences like, for example, the TIPTOE project. Furthermore, specific indications concerning weaknesses and opportunities associated with the election of EQF as a common reference point for all the qualifications are provided by the TransEQFrame project, where it was found that often the official documents describing national qualifications cannot supply the information required to build the relationship with EQF criteria. Nonetheless, an outcome made available by the project is the concept of “core activity” area, which was useful to overcome those problems. In fact, even though levels of qualifications across the countries seem to be different at a first glance, when looking at them through a different perspective, they show to have similar core activities which become useful to build a common base for comparison.

The analysis of the retail trade sector in the Netherlands, pointed out that the definition of competences differs from that provided by EQF. It also highlighted that the country will take a minimal view on the implementation of EQF as, according to the Ministry of Education, this should have a minimal effect on NQF, its qualification levels and quality assurance procedures. So, the predominant opinion is that Netherlands does not need a new NQF as a response to EQF. It is largely preferred to combine existing structures/systems and parts of the educational system into the NQF, without changing any substructure.

(4.5) ICT sector

The analysis carried out in the following results from an investigation on the ICT sector processed according to a transnational perspective.

(4.5.A) Overview of SQFs

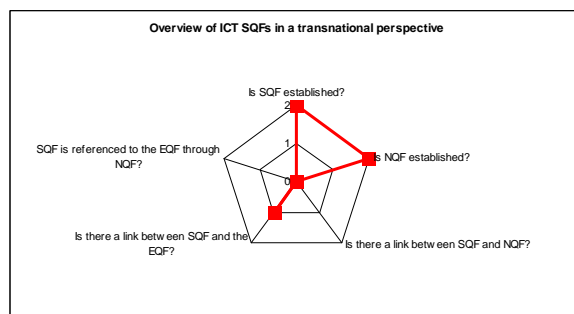
In the ICT sector exists a European wide reference framework competences, called European e-Competence Framework, that can be used and understood by ICT professionals and human resources managers, small and medium sized enterprises, public sector and educational and social partners across the European Union. It

focuses on competences needed to develop, operate and manage ICT projects and processes, to exploit and use ICT, to make decisions, develop strategies, and to foresee new scenarios. It is intended as a means to support the definition of jobs, training courses, qualifications, career paths, formal and non-formal learning paths, certifications etc. in the ICT sector. Its application is centred upon workplace competence articulation, profiling, assessment and measurement. Although it can be related to other qualification/certification/knowledge frameworks, its purpose is to provide a set of reference competences for the sector. It defines proficiency levels that can be used to provide detailed profiling and assessment. As the European e-Competence Framework becomes more universally applied further applications can be envisaged, as curriculum and ICT qualification and certification development. It refers to competences rather than to job profiles. The competence-based approach is considered to be more flexible as, between companies, it is common to find identical job titles that correspond to different job descriptions (and vice-versa); moreover, both job titles and job descriptions are often inadequate when expressing capabilities required in a complex and dynamic workplace like the ICT one. The European e-Competence Framework is structured into four dimensions. These dimensions reflect different levels of business and human resource planning requirements in addition to job/work proficiency guidelines.

In the ICT sector there are two initiatives which can be considered main organisational umbrellas of ICT skills promotion at European level: 1) The European e-Skills Forum and 2) The CEN Workshop on ICT Skills. It can be observed that every Europe-wide relevant activity in the field is linked to events/work taking place under the auspices of these initiatives.

SQF-NQF-EQF		
<b>Are SQFs established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Are NQFs established?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQFs and NQFs?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>Is there a link between SQFs and the EQF?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No
<b>SQFs are referenced to the EQF through NQFs?</b>		
Yes	Under construction	No

Table 16 – SQF/NQF/EQF



Radar diagram 16 – Overview of ICT SQFs in a transnational perspective

The following figure depicts the main benefits, chances, constraints and risks linked to the creation of a common framework within the ICT sector.

	Helpful Strengths	Harmful Weaknesses
Internal origin	The strength of the European e-Competence Framework is the extensive engagement of European stakeholders in development.	The weakness, as in most approaches, is the ability to create of a wide awareness of its existence across the nation states of the EU.
External origin	The opportunities provide by the European e-Competence Framework are currently be exploited by its application in a variety of European based project contexts such as the SME community and the creation of typical job profiles.	Threats include the competitive nature of some industry frameworks that seek to maximise the commercial potential of their proprietary structures at the expense of a potential unifying standard.

SWOT analysis 14 - Link between SQFs & EQF

#### (4.5.B) Typology of SQFs based on their referenceability to work processes

The SQFs analyzed in the “Overview” has been categorized according to their referenceability to work process by exploiting the Employability grid developed in WP2.

The ICT sector framework is based on the description of e-competence areas, which can be populated by crossing two main layers: ICT Processes and ICT Knowledge areas. The ICT Processes (delivering the actual structure of e-competence areas) are subdivided as follows: Plan, Build, Run, Enable and Manage. The ICT Knowledge Areas determine the subjects of ICT work. It means that all competences required for work in the ICT field shall be interpreted as abilities to plan – build – run – enable – manage ICT processes. This is not the way how traditionally designed occupational profiles are normally structured, but the attempt to relate all German ICT professions to the e-Competence Framework seems to prove that these categories indeed cover all relevant fields of ICT activities. It shows that the competence areas of the e-Competence Framework are comprehensive with regard to the range of work processes covered.

Differences to the EQF approach as well as links to the EQF are described in the guideline for the development of the e-Competence Framework in a clear way: “...it is intended that the European e-competence framework will provide a bridge between performance standards in WORK or STUDY situations. As the EQF and e-competence framework address different topics, namely qualification relationships within EQF and IT professional competence descriptors within the e-competence framework, it is not possible to use the same level definitions...”. Concerning EQF competence definition in terms of responsibility and autonomy, whilst responsibility is not a readily transferable definition to the e-competence framework, autonomy is a recognizable parameter of competence. By using autonomy as one characteristic, we facilitate connection between the two frameworks. Nonetheless, autonomy alone is not sufficient to describe competence when applied to the work place and therefore further definition is required. So, the main difference between EQF and e-Competence Framework is that within the EQF, the dimensions “Autonomy”, “Context Complexity” and “Behaviour” drown in the levels descriptions of competences, skills and knowledge. On the contrary, in the e-Competence framework these three dimensions are made explicit. Autonomy indicates competence height and ranges between ‘Responding to instructions’ and ‘Making personal choices’. Context Complexity provides an indication of competence breadth and ranges between ‘Structured – Predictable’ situations and ‘Unpredictable – Unstructured’ situations. Behaviour can be described in terms of “core action verbs” and range between ‘the ability to apply’ and ‘the ability to conceive’.

In the ICT sector framework there is a clear reference to work processes, that are understood as the fulfilment of tasks that are described with the help of the categories: plan – build – run – enable – manage ICT processes. This implies a relationship to work objectives, but does not formulate it. There is always a hierarchy of objectives, and if the relevant objective is placed too low, adaptation to technical changes cannot easily be achieved since the task-fulfilling individual is only oriented to the work objective immediately visible for her/him by planning, running, enabling, managing, and this could be to closely related to currently used tools of work.

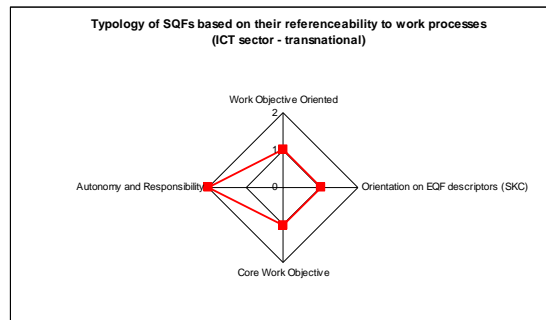
The descriptors expressed in the employability grid are described in the considered qualifications, but only in part. Basically there is a comparable approach in considering competence as the decisive category, and by considering different levels of behaviour (as a parameter of autonomy). In order to differentiate between e-Competence levels an approach is applied that uses work immanent categories for differentiation. However, at the same time a very traditional model of levelling is used. Concerning number of levels, based on experience of employers, five levels of competence are commonly applied to support career and workforce development.

Relationship between SQFs logic and the Employability grid logic are depicted in the following figure.

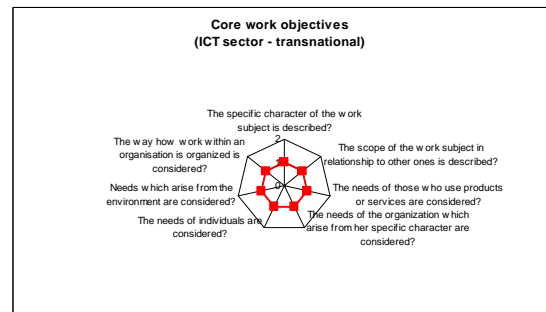


SQF Typology Matrix - referenceability to work processes		
<b>Work Objective Oriented</b>		
Real	Theory	No
<b>Orientation on EQF descriptors (SKC)</b>		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Core Work Objective</b>		
The specific character of the work subject is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The scope of the work subject in relationship to other ones is described?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of those who use products or services are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of the organization which arise from her specific character are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The needs of individuals are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
Needs which arise from the environment are considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
The way how work within an organisation is organized is considered?		
Yes	Only in part	No
<b>Autonomy and Responsibility</b>		
Present in the qualifications	Not present in the qualifications	<small>Note: only Autonomy</small>

Table 17 - SQF Typology Matrix - relationship between SQF logic and the Employability grid logic



Radar diagram 17.1 – Typology of SQFs based on their referenceability to work processes



Radar diagram 17.2 – Core work objectives

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats about this relationship are depicted in the following figure.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<b>Strengths</b> _ Work process orientation, formalised way of work process description, clear logic of description, clear assignment/limitation to EQF.	<b>Weaknesses</b> _ Levelling mainly referring to traditional generic job descriptions, hierarchy of these job descriptions is not related to a concept of behaviour (which was claimed to be decisive for identifying differences of level) using a common denominator for levelling.
External origin	<b>Opportunities</b> The eCompetence Framework delivers already a lot of very well developed possibilities to describe it according to the Employability Grid.	<b>Threats</b> _ Nothing to highlight.

SWOT analysis 15 - SQF logic/Employability grid logic

#### (4.5.C) Typology of SQFs based on their relationship to NQFs

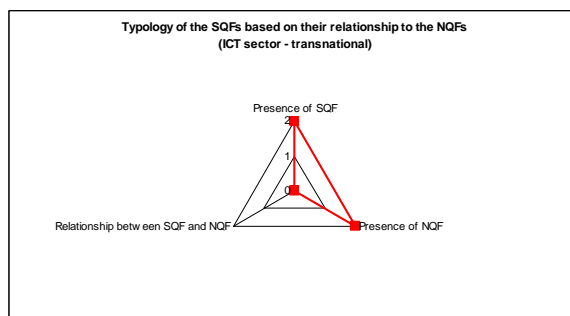
In the following the SQF analyzed in the “Overview” paragraph is classified according to its relationship to the National Qualification System and Framework and at the moment, it has been found out there is no relationship between the ICT sector framework and the NQFs. It may be useful to recall that the implementation of the

eCompetence Framework has already been started much before the EQF came up, independently from any NQFs.

Relationship between SQFs and the NQFs are depicted in the following figure.

SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQFs		
<b>Presence of SQFs</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Presence of NQFs</b>		
Yes	Under development	No
<b>Relationship between SQFs and NQFs</b>		
SQFs are integrated in NQFs	SQFs are a supplement of NQFs	SQFs are not integrated in NQFs

Table 18 - SQF Typology Matrix - relationship to NQFs



Radar diagram 18 – Typology of the SQFs based on their relationship to the NQFs

(4.5.D) More information

A description of standardization initiatives and of their relations to the EQF in the ICT sector can start focusing on the European dimension and can show how national initiatives have been related to it. In particular, there are two main initiatives at European level: the European e-Skills Forum and the CEN Workshop on ICT Skills.

The European e-Skills Forum, led by the European Commission, DG Enterprise, Cedefop and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), is based on the promotion of European society needs of ICT skills in various fields. Instead, the European e-Skills Forum released its report “e-Skills in Europe: Towards 2010 and Beyond” and established an e-Skills and e-Learning expert group useful to help designing a long-term e-skills agenda. The group represented an important milestone toward the preparation of a long-term strategy to ensure adequate e-skills for the future across both workforce and population. It also established an ICT Task Force to discuss issues related to the competitiveness of the ICT sector and ICT uptake in Europe. The Task Force released a report including recommendations on e-skills.

The most important approaches to standardise ICT skills by sectoral frameworks set up in national environments are described within the CWA 15515:2006 [European ICT Skills Meta-Framework - State-of-the-Art review, clarification of the realities, and recommendations for next Steps].

Furthermore, the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) have provided a common reference model for the identification of the skills needed to develop effective information systems making use of ICT. SFIA is well embedded in the national system of education and training and at the same time related to the EQF via the e-Competence Framework.

Nevertheless, there are important issues to be dealt with: public bodies responsible for national frameworks have to reference their systems to the EQF, which creates a competing approach of referencing ICT profiles to it.

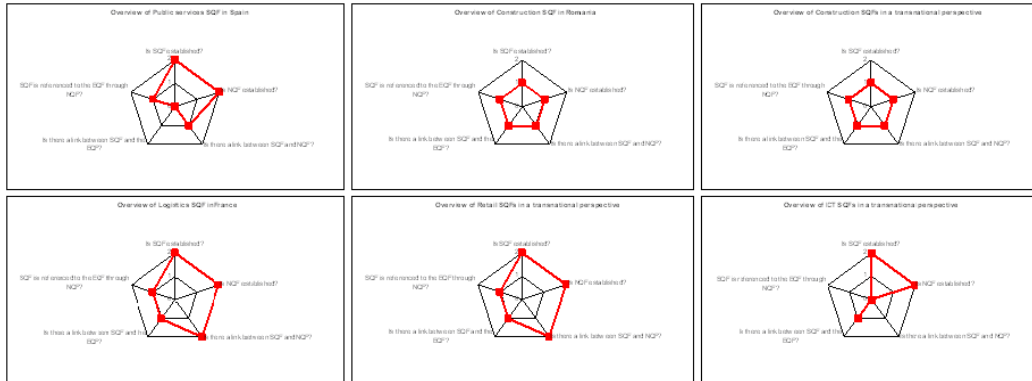
Finally, we can assume that standardisation initiatives in the field of ICT skills have been very successful as from the very beginning they have been strongly supported by the European Commission who can base activities on a broad understanding of Member States’ governments that development of ICT skills of every kind has high priority. It is clear that national approaches to standardise ICT skills do not contradict European standardisation activities, but can be related to it. Significant efforts carried out in a transversal sector - like the ICT - by stakeholders at all relevant levels could be hard to replicate in other domains.

**(5) General analysis**

In the following, the per-sector analysis together with the trans-sectoral perspective is considered to extract the state of the art and shape expected future trends on the basis of current

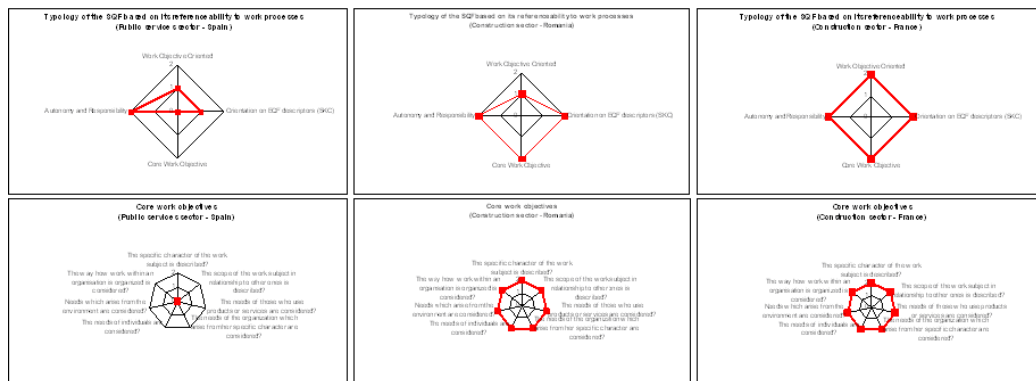
For the representation of results was used an approach based on the comparison of all the images produced by the radar diagrams. For sake of simplicity they are all reported referring to any specific section identified for carrying out the analysis schema.

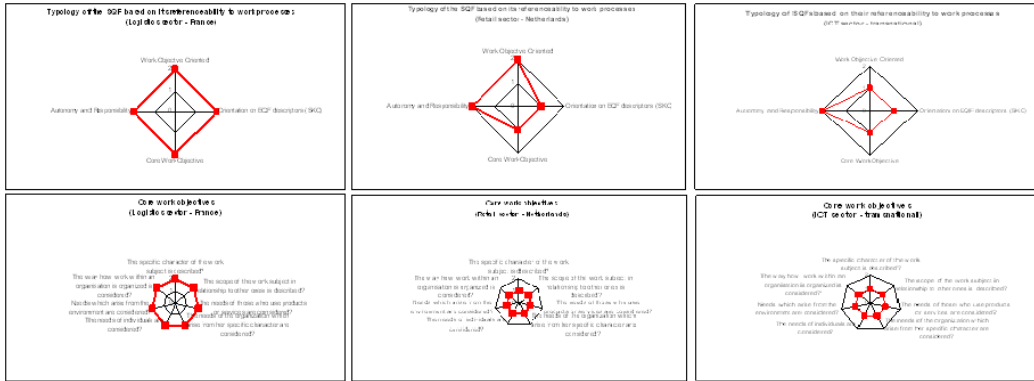
**(5.1) Overview of SQFs**



The radar diagrams make available a means to compare the various scenarios countries have put in place. Looking at the shapes of the images, France with the Logistics sector offers the widest covering due to the fact that a national SQF does exist, related to its own NQF recently established. A similar perception can also be found looking at Retail sector, which has been drawn taking into account the transnational perspective built upon the Dutch system structure. Lesser pace in development is shown by Spain and Romania, while ICT, as a relevant transnational example, witnesses problems on the link to NQFs.

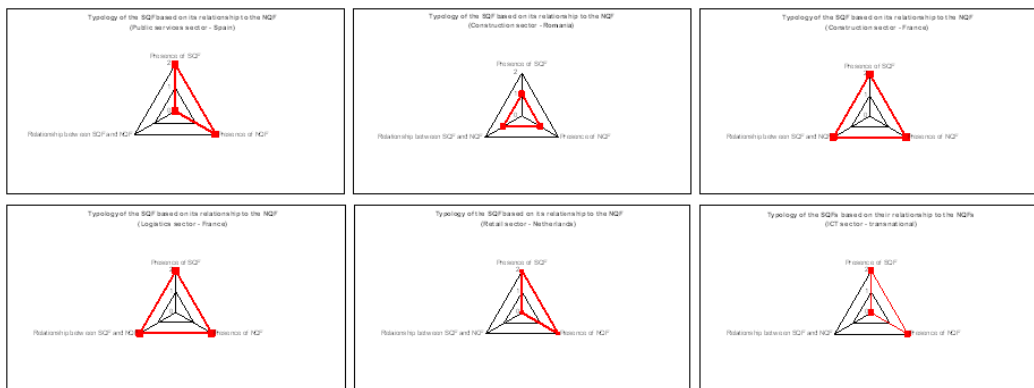
**(5.2) Typology of SQFs based on their referenceability to work process**





Even in this case France shows radars having the widest coverage for both Logistics and Constructions sectors, thus enforcing the perception emerging in terms of a strong orientation towards work objectives in both of their expressions: general and core. Wide enhancing space is still available for Spain, Romania - taking advantage of transnational projects - is still on the stocks, while transnational sectors (Retail and ICT) appear to suffer from relevant differences in terms of models used to address work orientation.

**(5.3) Typology of SQFs based on their relationship to NQFs**



Even in this last facet related to the link between SQF and NQF, France comes out with the widest covering ensured by the given links sustained by evidence shown for the construction and logistics sectors. Romania has work in progress, while Spain and Netherland do not declare the link between NQF and SQF, Spain because of the resistance shown by the private labour market, Netherland, because the link features the interposition of the WEB national framework. The transnational perspective given by Retail and ICT sectors provides the same picture, due to the fact that links should occur within the national context first between NQF and the local SQF.

## (6) Conclusions & Recommendations

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Based on the analysis outcomes, the emerging scenario identifies two sectors, Construction in Romania together with its transnational perspective, and Retail, even though bounded to its transnational instance, that are developing their own SQF, even if within the context of specific projects, where strategies adopted by partners exploit EQF guidelines directly for the definition of core elements of a qualification thus overcoming national borders. An interesting case study concerns the ICT sector, where the European e-Competence Framework establishes a transnational common language for ICT competences that can support the description of jobs, training courses, qualifications, career paths, formal and non-formal learning rules, certificates, etc. Since the definition process for e-Competence took place far before the emergence of the well-known institutional framework on qualifications, national ICT frameworks have been put in place, which could also be linked to the European e-Competence one, thus gaining an international dimension, independent of, even if compliant with, the EQF scenario.

On the other hand, a national SQF has already been developed in Spain for the Public Service sector and in France for Logistics. According to strategies adopted in both the countries by the government bodies, SQFs for the Public Service and Logistics should exploit NQFs first in order to be linked to EQF. In case of France linking the French Logistics Qualification Frameworks to EQF, requires French stakeholders implement a shift from a “competence” approach organized in 5 levels to one organized on 8 tiers, where skills, knowledge and abilities may be formally separated and distinguished. In any case, the scenario becomes more complex when private contexts take the floor. In fact, based on the results of the analysis carried out in Spain, but verified in other countries too, the link SQF-NQF could imply a general reassessment on a country base of professional levels of workers thus affecting heavily wages and salaries. For this reason, and for the fact that NQFs are too rigid to comply with fast changes featured by the labour market, enterprises are likely to sustain a direct link SQF-EQF. This is particularly true if another key point is considered when linking a given SQF to EQF, which is the difference between competences and performance needs, a main stone for enterprises, even if not related to the previous issue dealing with levels. Usually, qualifications are in fact described in terms of competences, while wages are linked to performance. In any case, both these issues seem to be overcome by the EQF Advisory Board which has finally recommended that SQFs should not be referenced directly to the EQF, but passing through the NQFs. This guarantees a direct link between National Agencies for the Qualification Frameworks and the European Commission also providing a uniform and shared reading schema of qualifications stated at National level and a simplified organization of relationships.

In conclusion, several aspects threaten the link SQF-EQF, whether implemented directly or built indirectly via NQF:

- political/economic implications (as shown by Spain): changing professional categories for a standing SQF may be a huge issue;
- poor knowledge of EQF principles (as shown by Romania);
- losing cultural differences as consequence of progressive homogenization of qualification frameworks (as highlighted by France);
- immediate need of having a sectoral qualification (as emphasized by Netherland): in the retail sector the only attribute often searched in the workforce by employers is motivation, since abilities are gained through learning on the job;
- language and semantics barrier (as shown by Construction);
- structure of the sector being considered: sectors characterized by small companies, mainly working on a local base, will likely have less interest in the internationalization process.

In order to deal with these constraints, the analysis suggests that the dialogue with stakeholders should be strengthened widening involvement and soliciting their interest on the issue.

Concerning SQFs referenceability to the work process by means of the Employability grid developed in WP2, it came out from the investigation that many sectors (Logistics and Construction sectors in France are good examples) have their SQFs fully work-objective oriented and also complying for the most with the work core-objectives represented in the employability grid. However, the work-orientation criterion is not as easy to consider in practice as expected. In fact, SQFs might be “real” work-objective oriented, if SQFs levels perfectly fit to the needs of the industry, by contrast “in theory” work-objective oriented, when SQFs levels fit only in part to those needs.

Regarding SQFs orientation to EQF descriptors (SKC), it was found out that this orientation can be identified in the majority of sectors but only in some cases (still referring to Logistics and Construction in France) the relation among “knowledge”, “skills” and “competences” is really abiding by the logic of EQF. Another example is offered by Spain where even though the relation among “competences”, “skills” and “knowledge” is aligned with EQF, nonetheless it does not comply with the same logic structure. For doing this, it is currently necessary to dive into professional profiles descriptions and get the most from the content.

Finally, autonomy and responsibility concepts have been made visible in all the sectoral qualifications frameworks, whether formalized or not, which have been taken into account for the analysis.

The following SWOT analysis shows the main strenghts, weaknesses, opportunities and threats emerged in relation to the SQFs referenceability to the work process (by exploiting the Employability grid developed in WP2).

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strenghts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The logic adopted in the employability grid is work process oriented, and the logic of SQF is based on the logic of recognition of the required/needed core competences (based on the work process) to ensure that an individual is able to perform a job.</li> <li>* There is a broad consensus that employability and lifelong learning in Europe need to be fostered by transparency, transfer and recognition of qualifications held by individual citizens.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The work-orientation criterion is not so easy to consider in practice. In fact, SQFs could be “real” work-objective oriented, if SQFs levels perfectly fit to the needs of the industry or “in theory” work-objective oriented, if SQFs levels fit only in part to the needs of the labour market.</li> <li>* Only in some cases the relation among “knowledge”, “skills” and “competences” of the SQFs is aligned with the logic of the EQF.</li> </ul>
External origin	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* EU demands of homogenising education frameworks and improve mobility added by the lack of workforce in many sectors in Europe may help companies to get on board on the qualification subject (SQF-NQF-EQF).</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Collective Agreements are old and legal structures and procedures adopted by the labour marked. To change the very fundamental pillars of these structures as are the way professional profiles and categories are describe requires a political decision and a consensus among Labour Unions, Companies and Government. This can be translated in LOT of time ahead.</li> <li>* The EQF offers the possibility for Member States to compare their education systems. In this sense, it is nothing more or less than an instrument. EQF will not replace a NQF; it is sufficient that the EQF can be matched with the NQFs. The role of the EQF should be limited to compare education programmes of different countries. Quality assurance, principles on identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should not be integrated in an EQF.</li> </ul>

SQFs referenceability to the work process

Dealing with the relationship between SQFs and the National Qualification Systems and Frameworks, the investigation shows that only some countries have declared their SQFs integrated in the NQF. This will be a sensitive issue to be debated at collective agreements and will likely take years to develop, at least at the private company realm. One reason for the concerns lies in the fact that linking SQFs to the NQF could imply reassessment of workers professional levels which could eventually lead to salaries rising at large. Furthermore SQFs in general are often described in terms of “Professional Categories”, not as “Qualifications” and these Professional Categories are pretty much related to “Job positions” than to “Competences”.

In addition the majority of cases declare to prefer an indirect link between SQFs and EQF passing through NQFs. Depending on the standpoint this can be perceived either as a strenght or a weakness. It is a strength when it is read as a means to decrease complexity of the overall system of referenceability, on the contrary it is perceived as a weakness when the system is evaluated in terms of opportunities for the valorisation of the sector international visibility and interaction.

The following SWOT analysis shows a picture sketching out SQFs' relationship with NQFs and to the need of an indirect link between SQFs and EQF through NQFs.

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal origin	<p><b>Strenghts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Referencing the SQFs directly to the NQFs is the political correct way, because it decreases the complexity of the overall system of referenceability.</li> <li>* Promote mobility in the European Countries.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Some NQFs are not oriented only on work processes, but also on values. These orientations lead to conflicts in daily life work practice, e.g. if the interests of clients and employers are not identical.</li> <li>* Referencing the SQFs directly to the NQFs is the political correct way, but for industries it is a big problem to apply their qualifications to the NQFs.</li> <li>* If companies make use of NQFs, it could come to some conflicts (power or policy), e.g. Labour Union says somebody has a Level 3 and companies decide it is a Level 2.</li> <li>* Promote mobility in the European Countries is not so easy, because a Level 4 in a Country must not mean Level 4 in another European Country.</li> </ul>
External origin	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* A VET-system should react to changing labour market conditions. Enterprises very often change their work requirement. However, curricula often change only every 5 years. This means that the learner needs learning-competence to keep up-to-date with work requirements. Therefore, it is important to consider in how far a successful implementation of SQFs/NQFs/EQF is based on the right environment, which delivers the right possibilities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Work orientation must be valid for NQFs, but not suitable for companies because companies fear that the levels could change and influence the salaries of their employees.</li> <li>* Levelling polyvalent jobs (which could embrace different levels if referenced to EQF levels) could be a problem.</li> <li>* The mutual recognition of European Qualifications is not working well and the major reason for this often is the protection of the own labour market.</li> </ul>

SQF's relationship with the NQFs

Although the relationship between SQFs and work processes seems obvious according to their sector-orientation, it is not self-evident that this relationship is properly expressed in a way that sectoral qualification becomes comparable with similar qualifications embedded in NQFs and in EQF.

In order to decide how sectoral qualification approaches could best be referenced to EQF – directly or over the NQFs – it is also important to know what the relationship of sectoral systems to national systems is, if their existence mirrors a critical position of sectoral stakeholders against NQFs, or if they can – in a wider sense – be considered supplements of the national systems.

For this purpose, a SWOT analysis was carried out in order to *draft recommendations on how the SQFs analyzed could be enhanced and refined to make work processes transparent*. In other words, the results of the SWOT analysis performed on individual sectors have been joined yielding to the following table, which can be considered the coherent synthesis of all collected data.

SWOT analysis	
<b>STRENGTHS</b>	Referencing SQFs to the EQF is useful to enable and increase permeability, transparency and comparability of Qualifications.
	Referencing SQFs to the EQF is useful to enable mobility of workers.

	<p>Furthermore, this guarantees a direct link between the National Agencies for the Qualification Frameworks and the European Commission.</p> <p>Referencing SQF to NQF and than to EQF is useful to make a Qualification aligned with local, national and transnational perspective.</p> <p>Referencing SQFs to the EQF is useful to implement a target-setting and quality-assurance tool for training providers.</p> <p>Referencing SQFs to the EQF through NQFs is useful to develop EU-regulated sectors Qualifications.</p> <p>SQFs are work oriented and work orientation is also implicitly formulated in the Employability grid.</p> <p>SQFs are work oriented and work orientation is also implicitly formulated in the EQF.</p>
<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	<p>Promote mobility in the European Countries is not so easy, because a Level 4 in a Country must not mean Level 4 in another European Country. Furthermore, the mutual recognition of European Qualifications is not working well and the reason for this often is the protection of the own labour market.</p> <p>The link SQF-NQF (and than EQF) could imply to reassess professional levels of workers and this could also affect wages. For this reason, and for the fact that NQFs are too rigid to comply with fast changes of the labour world, industries prefer a direct link SQF-EQF.</p> <p>A key point that should be considered when linking a given SQF to the EQF, is the difference between competences and performance needs. Usually, qualifications are described in terms of competences, while wages are linked to performance. These two points of view are not related to each other.</p> <p>In some cases Qualifications are as diverse as the cultures they represent. In fact, some NQFs are not oriented only on work processes, but also on values. These orientations lead to conflicts in daily life work practice, e.g. if the interests of clients and employers are not identical.</p> <p>It is preferable an indirect link between SQFs and the EQF through the NQFs. Depending on the point of view this could be a strength or a weakness. It is a strength if we think in terms of decrease the complexity of the overall system of referenceability and it is a weakness if we think in terms of opportunities of valorisation of the sectoral international visibilities and interaction.</p> <p>Referencing the SQFs directly to the NQFs is the political correct way, but for industries it is a big problem to apply their qualifications to the NQFs. In particular, companies fear that the levels could change and/or influence the salary of their employees. As an example, if companies make use of NQFs, it could come to some conflicts (power or policy), e.g. Labour Union says somebody has a Level 3 and companies decide it is a Level 2.</p> <p>The work-orientation criterion (explicit in the Employability grid) is not so easy to consider in practice. In fact, SQFs could be “real” work-objective oriented (like in the EQF), if SQFs levels perfectly fit to the needs of the industry or “in theory” work-objective oriented, if SQFs levels fit only in part to the needs of the labour market. Furthermore, only in some cases the relation among “knowledge”, “skills” and “competences” of the SQFs is aligned with the logic of the EQF.</p> <p>Enterprises very often change their work requirement. However, curricula often change only every 5 years. This means that the learner needs learning-competence to keep up-to-date with work requirements. Therefore, it is important to consider in how far a successful implementation of SQFs/NQFs/EQF is based on the right environment, which delivers the right possibilities.</p> <p>For some stakeholders if national systems are well structured and established, doesn't exist a purpose to move to EQF.</p> <p>Relevance of language barrier.</p>



<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	The main opportunity is to overcome not only the gap between the different European VET and qualification systems, but also the differences in the content and interpretation of occupations on the European labour market.
	One opportunity to correctly link SQFs to EQF is harmonise sectoral Qualifications across Europe.
	Another opportunity is identify employability features and attract employees with a clear education framework.
	EU demands of homogenising education frameworks and improve mobility added by the lack of workforce in many sectors in Europe may help companies to get on board on the qualification subject (SQF-NQF-EQF).
	If a SQF is related to the NQF, it will be automatically linked to the EQF.
<b>THREATS</b>	Political implications: change professional categories of a current SQF is a big issue.
	Poor knowledge of the EQF principles.
	Lose cultural differences as consequence of progressive homogenization of qualification frameworks.
	Need of having a sectoral qualification: in the sector most of the time the only element searched by employers is motivation, since abilities are gained through learning on the job.
	Language and semantic barrier.
	Structure of the sector being considered: sectors characterized by small companies, mainly working on the territory, will probably have less interest in the internationalization process.
	Work orientation must be valid for NQFs, but not suitable for companies because companies fear that the levels could change and influence the salaries of their employees.
	Levelling polyvalent jobs (which could embrace different levels if referenced to EQF levels) could be a problem.
	The mutual recognition of European Qualifications is not working well and the major reason for this often is the protection of the own labour market.
	Collective Agreements and legal structures and procedures adopted by the labour market are old. Change the very fundamental pillars of these structures and the way professional profiles and categories are describe, requires a political decision and a consensus among Labour Unions, Companies and Government. This can be translated in: LOT of time ahead.
The EQF offers the possibility for Member States to compare their education systems. In this sense, it is nothing more or less than an instrument. EQF will not replace a NQF; it is sufficient that the EQF is matched with the NQF. The role of the EQF should be limited to compare education programmes of different countries. Quality assurance, principles on identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should not be integrated in an EQF.	

Taking care of these results achieved, the synthesis scenario can be depicted using the following image which takes into account all the reference points involved in the investigation: the worker (W) at the lower layer L0, the Work Process (WP) at layer L1, SQF and NQF at the intermediate tiers (L3 and L2) and EQF at the Higher one (L4).

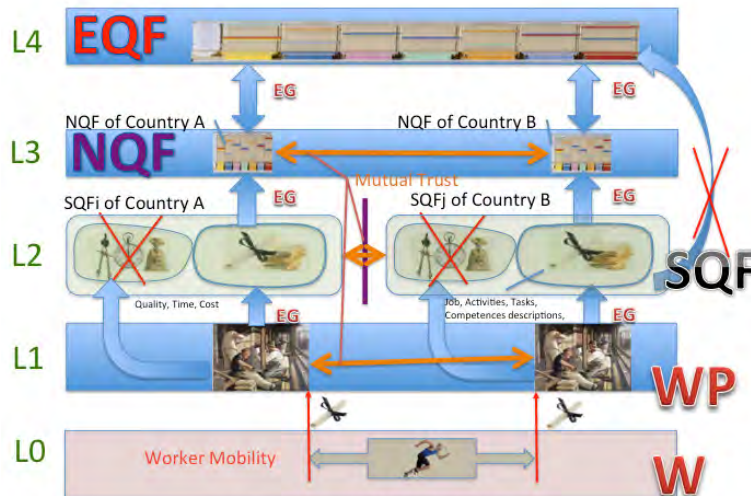


Fig. 3: W – WP – SQF – NQF – EQF links

As fully sustained by the SWOT analysis, referencing SQFs to EQF is commonly recognised like a useful tool to enable and increase permeability, transparency and comparability of qualifications. This also means enabling mobility of employees, caught in the image at level L0, as the main objective of the whole hierarchical system made available in Europe.

By the way, to this day promoting mobility in the European countries is not an easy task, because – for example – a qualification recognised being “level 4” in a country does not imply that level in another one. Because of this, mutual recognition of European qualifications is sometimes not working properly, also due to the wrong appliance of a “protectionist” view of the local labour market. These drawbacks could be overcome thanks to the development of a qualification recognition system based on transparency able to enforce mutual trust, as suggested in the figure.

Being largely recognized that both SQFs and EQF show work orientation, full awareness has also been assumed about work orientation shown by the Employability grid (EG), put in place in this study and applied, taking it as a tool to validate relationships among the layers depicted in Fig. 3.

The study has also shown as a common feeling that SQFs should not be referenced directly to the EQF, but through the NQFs, as it was also stated by institutional bodies of the Commission. It is not only a political correct way for building the link, since it contributes effectively to decrease the complexity of the overall system of referenceability providing a direct link between National Agencies for the Qualification Frameworks and the European Commission. Fig. 3 reports the direct link between L2, SQF, and L4, EQF, deleted in favour of the indirect link through NQF.

Referencing SQF (L2) to NQF (L3), assumed that once declared by a country it respects all the criteria indicated by the Commission, is also useful to make a qualification aligned with local, national and transnational perspectives and to implement a target setting and a quality-assurance tool for training providers. The latter plays a basic role making mutual trust sustainable at all levels, being the validation got at the higher layer the means to strengthen the mutual trust pursued at the lower one.

In other words, the system shown in Fig. 3 represents the main opportunity to overcome the gap between the different European qualification systems and the differences in the content and interpretation of jobs within the European labour market, harmonizing sectoral qualifications across Europe; identifying employability features and attracting employees with a clear education framework to help companies get on board of the qualification recognition scene.

The system image cannot show the perspectives caught in terms of weaknesses registered for the link SQFs - NQF – EQF. The SWOT diagram exhibits in fact that the link could imply reassessment of professional levels of

workers affecting also wages. Enterprises and Trade Unions perceive it as a problem which can appear as soon as they link their qualifications within the NQ Framework. In particular, enterprises fear that the levels applied to workers in that case may change and influence the salary of their employees. Furthermore they claim NQFs being too rigid to comply with fast changes of the labour market, considering that enterprises often change work requirements, while curricula may in some cases experience changes only after several years. This means that since learners need learning-competence to keep up-to-date with work requirements, it is important to evaluate how far a successful implementation of SQFs/NQFs/EQF is based on a right specific environment, which delivers the right possibilities, that is why enterprise sometimes declare to prefer a direct link SQFs-EQF.

,In some cases qualifications are also as diverse as the cultures they represent, because some NQFs are not only oriented on work processes but also on values, related to professional body corporate, as an example. In these case orientations lead to conflicts in daily life work practice, when interests of clients and workers are in contrast. Thus, the assumption "it is preferable an indirect link between SQFs and the EQF through the NQFs" could be seen both as a strength or a weakness at the same time. It is a strength when reasoning in terms of complexity decreasing of the overall referenceability system, it is a weakness when taking into account the degree of valorisation of the sectoral international visibility and interaction.

Nonetheless, linking SQF to EQF through NQF, does not seem to narrow so much the potential visibility of a national SQF which can for sure by its own prosecute its specific internationalization process, also coping with the interactions required by the National Agency to get the new release of the qualification aligned with its NQF.

A key point, also relieved in the diagram, that should be considered when linking a given SQF to the EQF, is the difference between competences and performance needs, which in the figure are represented in terms of Quality, Time and Cost (Q,T,C), being them parameters collected at layer L2, when observing the human resource at work in layer L1. Since qualifications are described in terms of competences, while performance are linked to wages, they are considered not related to each other and, even though graphically represented in the diagram, having them being dealt with by the experts, they have been explicitly marked as cancelled. Some of the experts, specially those more acquainted with SMEs environment perceive all this as a weakness of the whole system.

Another weakness declared in the study, but impossible to catch in the diagram, is the work-orientation criterion, which has been made explicit in both the Employability grid and EQF, but difficult to render in practice. To simplify SQF has been taken as "real" work-objective oriented if levels perfectly fit to the needs of the enterprise, but only "in theory" work-objective oriented if relationships among "knowledge", "skills" and "competences" does not cope with the logic of EQF.

In the following a summary is reported on some threats which contrast the referencing of SQF to EQF:

- some enterprises declare poor need of having sectoral qualifications related to EQF since the most relevant feature asked for to an employee is motivation, since, they sustain, abilities are usually gained through learning on the job;
- specific sectors, gathering for the most small companies, mainly working on local territories, declare a small interest in the internationalization process;
- polyvalent jobs, featuring qualifications which could embrace different levels when referenced to EQF, thus leading to unavoidable criticalities, are more than likely in the labour market;
- cultural differences losing, as a consequence of progressive homogenization of qualification frameworks, is often considered a drawback
- political implications, related to obsolete Collective Agreements, legal structures and procedures, adopted by the labour market and resisting against change of the very fundamental pillars of these structures and the way professional profiles and categories are described, can make the adoption process complex and slow;
- unaffordable response time of political decision and consensus making among Labour Unions, Companies and government bodies, can cause intolerable delay.

The comprehensive SWOT representation is reported in the following.

Internal Analysis	
SWOT Analysis	Weaknesses
	<p>Link SQFs to the NQF and than to the EQF could also be seen as a weakness. In fact it could imply to reassess professional levels of workers and this could also affect wages. For industries it is a big problem to apply their qualifications to the NQFs. In particular, industries fear that the levels could change and influence the salary of their employees. For these reasons, and for the fact that the NQFs are too rigid to comply with fast changes of the labour word, industries prefer a direct link SQFs-EQF.</p> <p>Furthermore, in some cases qualifications are as diverse as the cultures they represent, because some NQFs are not only oriented on work processes but also on values. These orientations lead to conflicts in daily life work practice, e.g. if the interest of clients and employers are not identical. So, the assumption "it is preferable a direct link between SQFs and NQFs" could be seen as a strength, if we think in terms of decrease the complexity of the overall referenceability system and as a weakness, if we think in terms of opportunities of valorisation of the sectoral international visibility and interaction.</p> <p>Promote mobility in the European countries is not so easy, because – for example – a qualification recognised like a "level 4" in a country must not mean "level 4" in another European country. Furthermore, the mutual recognition of European qualifications is not working well, and the reason for this is often the concept of "protection" of the own labour market.</p> <p>Furthermore, a key point that should be considered when linking a given SQF to the EQF, is the difference between competences and performance needs. Usually, qualifications are described in terms of competences, while wages are linked to performance. These two point of view are not related to each other.</p> <p>At last, another weakness is that the work-orientation criterion (explicit in the EQF and for this reason also in the Employability grid) is not so easy to consider in practice. SQFs could be "real" work-objective oriented if its levels perfectly fit to the needs of the industry, or only "in theory" work-objective oriented if the relation among "knowledge", "skills" and "competences" of the SQFs is not aligned to the logic of the EQF.</p>
	<p>Some threats related to referencing the SQFs to the EQF are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_ poor need of having sectoral qualifications related to the EQF (most of the time the only element searched by employers is motivation, since abilities are gained through learning on the job);</li> <li>_ structure of the sector (sectors characterized by small companies, mainly working on the territory, will probably have less interest in the internationalization process);</li> <li>_ polyvalent jobs (levelling polyvalent jobs, which could embrace different levels if referenced to EQF levels, could be a problem);</li> <li>_ lose cultural differences (lose cultural differences as consequence of progressive homogenization of qualification frameworks could be a problem for some countries);</li> <li>_ political implications (Collective Agreements and legal structures and procedures adopted by the labour market are old; change the very fundamental pillars of these structures and the way professional profiles and categories are described requires a political decision and a consensus among Labour Unions, Companies and Government; this can be translated in: big issue and lot of time ahead);</li> <li>_ EQF like a mere instrument (the EQF offers the possibility for Member States to compare their education systems, in this sense it is nothing more or less than an instrument; EQF will not replace a NQF, it is sufficient that the EQF is matched with the NQF; so the role of the EQF should be limited to compare education programmes of different countries).</li> </ul>
External Analysis	Strengths
	<p>Referencing SQFs to the EQF is commonly recognised like a useful tool to enable and increase permeability, transparency and comparability of qualifications. This also means enable mobility of employees.</p> <p>Furthermore, SQFs are obviously work oriented and the EQF is also implicitly work oriented. For this reason work orientation is one of the main objectives of the Employability grid.</p> <p>In the study it is emerged that SQFs should not be referenced directly to the EQF, but through the NQFs. It is the political correct way, in fact it decreases the complexity of the overall system of referenceability because this guarantees a direct link between the National Agencies for the Qualification Frameworks and the European Commission.</p> <p>Referencing SQFs to the NQF is also useful to make a qualification aligned with local, national and transnational perspectives and to implement a target setting and a quality-assurance tool for training providers.</p>
	<p>The main opportunity is to overcome the gap between the different European qualification systems and the differences in the content and interpretation of occupations on the European labour market. This means harmonise sectoral qualifications across Europe; identify employability features and attract employees with a clear education framework and help companies to get on board on the qualification subject.</p>
	<p><b>Threats</b></p>