

**Lifelong Learning Programme Leonardo da Vinci, Transfer of Innovation 2008  
Project: APL-Bud “Towards a Qualified Construction Workforce for Poland**

## **Standards of professional qualifications in Poland**

In many countries of the European Union standards of professional qualifications has been developed and applied. In Poland, the work on standards of professional qualification has been commenced from the beginning of the nineties<sup>1</sup>. In the states of the European Union work on standards began long earlier and in 1985, the definition of the standard of professional qualifications starting that „Standards contained the general description of professional exercises seized in the context of the considered occupation into once with the outline connected with him skills and the qualification”<sup>2</sup> was determined. The standards of professional qualifications in the whole Europe cover a lot of problems. On one hand, unquestionably there appear standards of skills and professional competences, generally recognized in all Europe such as e.g.: in economic competition the title MBA (Master of Business Administration), different professional titles in sector hotel management-tourist, in knowledge of language, e.g.: TOEIC (the Test of English the odds International Communication) or ZDaF (Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache) or else in computer science the European Certificate of Computer Skills ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence), etc. On the other hand, the following terms play the key role in the professional education in the European approach: the collaboration, the recognition, the comparability and the transparency. Also, the matter of the free displacement of the employees at the territory of the EU<sup>3</sup>, the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other proofs of the possession of formal qualifications is also a very significant problem.

In years 1998 - 2007 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy undertook development of standards of professional qualifications for several occupations. A legal basis for created

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<sup>1</sup> „Model of Polish Vocational Qualifications Standards”, by ed. Michał Butkiewicz, Education and Labour, Institute of Terotechnology. Warszawa, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Official Journal of the European Communities, No. 199/59, 31.05.85).

<sup>3</sup> On the strength of the Treaty the European Union of prepared in Maastricht in 1992 since the year 1993 the rule of the mobility of persons embraced all citizens of the European Union.

collection of domestic standards of professional qualifications is constituted by Law from the 20<sup>th</sup> day of April 2004 about the promotion of the employment and institutions of the labour market. Till the end 2007, 253 standards of the qualification, including 25 for building competition were developed.

The Standard of professional qualifications is “A norm of minimum qualification requirements – approved by representatives of employers, employees and other key social partners, participants of the economy and the labour market – presented in five levels of qualifications, broken down into qualifications tied to typical jobs or occupational tasks, extraprofessional qualifications, general, basic and specialist qualifications for the given profession, describing the sets of necessary skills, knowledge and psychophysical features corresponding to the occupational tasks and qualifications isolated for the given profession, and guaranteeing appropriate quality of performing this profession”<sup>4</sup>.

In compliance with the settlements of the European Communities, reflecting the degree of complexity and difficulty of the occupational tasks, and the related qualification requirements, level of the responsibility and the level in the career ladder, to which is prepared the future graduate, in the National Vocational Qualification Standards there are defined **five levels of the qualification**. **Level 1** – Qualifications necessary to execute simple, routine tasks performed under the direction of supervisor, which are the basis for further, more specialized activities. **Level 2** – Qualifications necessary to perform tasks in typical situations. Some tasks can be more complex and may require individual actions, characterized by individual responsibility. They can also require the ability to work in a team. **Level 3** – Qualifications necessary to perform complex tasks, both under typical and problematic conditions. The tasks are characterized by a variety of performed tasks, and require self-reliance and responsibility. They can also apply to the ability of managing the work of others. **Level 4** – Qualifications necessary to perform many varied, complicated tasks whose nature is technical, organizational or specific for the given area of professional activity. The tasks require a high level of personal responsibility and self-reliance, as well as the ability to lead a team of employees. **Level 5** – Qualifications necessary to perform complex tasks, often under problematic conditions, which require making decisions of strategic importance for the whole organization. Those tasks are tied to full responsibility for the work and development of other

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<sup>4</sup> „National Vocational Qualification Standards”, by ed Stefan M Kwiatkowski, Ireneusz Woźniak, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. PHARE 2000 Project. Warsaw 2006.

persons. They also require the ability to diagnose, analyse, forecast, plan and implement new ideas into the business practice.

Set of the skills, knowledge and psychophysical features became classified into four groups of the qualifications<sup>5</sup>: extra-vocational (overprofessional) qualifications, general vocational qualifications, basic occupational qualifications and specialist qualification, which differ in the range and the degree of the generality.

**Extra-vocational (overprofessional) qualifications** are the basic skills, knowledge and psychophysical features, necessary for effective performance of work and for undertaking actions in professional and extra-professional life. The extra-professional qualifications do not constitute a right to perform the profession, but are indispensable to achieve the quality of work, required in modern times. For the purpose of the professional qualifications standard, it was adopted that the extra-professional qualifications are common for the branch/ industry, to which the standardized profession belongs (e.g. building sector, computer science).

**General vocational qualifications** are requirements tied to skills, knowledge and psychophysical features, which predispose to perform work in specific professional area, usually covering a group of related professions and specialties. For the purpose of the professional qualifications standard, it was adopted that the general professional qualifications are common for all qualifications isolated in the standard for the given profession. In the standard one separated the components of qualification Q-i, which consist of the characteristic basic components: skills, knowledge and psychophysical features (but not all, only basic) constituent professional qualifications.

**Basic occupational qualifications** requirements tied to skills, knowledge and psychophysical features, which enable effective performance of typical occupational tasks, characteristic for a given profession.

**Specialist qualifications** there are specific, less frequent requirements relating to skills, knowledge and psychophysical features, which enable the performance of specialized tasks, and of non-typical professional functions.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. „National Vocational ...”. One ought to add that are formulated also different definitions of the extra-vocational qualification as necessary qualifications in every work of both professional as and in extraprofessional works and steering to no concrete occupation; and the general vocational qualification refer to the group of competition and not one concrete occupation; cf. T. Nowacki „Zawodoznawstwo” (well-seen the job); ITeE Radom 1999; the similar sentence is also the author of the present article.

With the aim to elaborate of the standard of professional qualifications the authors have prepared the questionnaire (according to scheme approved by Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) in which the following was defined: *technological tasks* concerning of methods of actions undertaken on the job and at the position; *organizational tasks* concerning the organization and the planning of the work on the own position and in the relation with positions cooperating; *tasks of management and cooperation* and *tasks of quality control and assessment*.

The procedure of the preparations of the standard consisted of following activities:

1. Preparing the research questionnaire – 3 persons team, preparing questionnaire (including the list of occupational tasks of profession; set of skills, knowledge and psychophysical features – in the categories: sensory and motor abilities, skills (talents) and personality traits; list of work position for the vocation). Usually, the questionnaire counted about 30 pages.
2. Pilot research – the questionnaire was directed to 2 enterprises (minimum 8 persons). The introduction of indispensable changes to questionnaire.
3. Obtaining consent for conducting research in enterprises.
4. Conducting the target research - the questionnaire was directed to 10 enterprises, minimum 40 persons, in this both performers as and the management.
5. Quantitative analysis of research results.
6. Developing the standard's description.
7. Evaluation of the standard's description - the standard is discussed during the common seminar of authors and 3 evaluators. After the regard of justified remark and to the introduction of corrections one directed the standard to two reviewers. The justified remarks are introduced to standard. The standard is directed to the Confirming Committee the standard. Finally, the standard is ready to be approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and after it they can be published and made available to the public in the electronic form.

At present standards of professional qualifications are not obligatory and function on the basis of the document recommended by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. They can be used by the interested persons and institutions to different aims, e.g. in the occupational guidance, the employment policy, the manpower management of enterprises and institutions and also in

the sphere of social insurance to assessment of professional risk, and in the judicial jurisdiction. The standards are important in the area of the education, including comparing and recognition of qualifications obtained in different states and to elaboration of instruction programs.

From the point of view of relationships of the education and work, the establishing of the **European Frames of the Qualification - EQF, and in consequence, of National Frames (Structures) of the Qualification**, has especially importuned meaning for the member states of European Union. Within EQF the common terminology will be created, describing qualifications which will make possible to member states, to employers and individuals comparing the proper qualifications specific of various training programmes and trainings, functioning in different EU countries. A fundamental element of the European Frames of the Qualification includes the system of eight reference levels, describing , what the learner on the given level knows, understands and can do - i.e. „results of the learning” - regardless of the system in which the learner gained a given type of the qualification. The levels EQF mean, therefore, other arrangement of accents in relation to the traditional approach which emphasizes the educational (the duration of teaching, the type of the institution etc.) contribution. The displacement of the pressure **on results of the learning**: it is aimed at the improvement of the transfer of gained qualifications between different countries and different systems of the education, the facilitation of the recognition of qualifications obtained not only in the formal education but also in the non-formal and informal education.