

## CONVERGENCE STRATEGY ISO 17024 / NQF / EQF

# ISOQUAM



### Lifelong Learning Programme

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## OVERVIEW OF CONVERGENCE EQF & ISO 17024 AUSTRIA AND EUROPE

Europe is on the way to build a common Qualification Frame – the EQF. The main reasons are to get transparent levels of qualifications in the European Union. The European Qualification frame will build the “roof” of other combined systems and stands itself as an Qualification frame for orientation. That means that each country will work on its National Qualification frame which is compatible with the European one.

In fact it will not be possible to fit national qualifications directly to the European Qualification frame – you will have to make the categorization on basic of the national qualification frame and afterward it will be “translated” to the European Qualification frame.

This roof of systems, the EQF, will have 8 different levels and will combine the results of formal and informal learning. The discussion about the levels 6, 7 and 8 – that they will be reserved for academic educations is finally closed with the result that there will also be space for non academic educations or results of working experience.

That fits to the meaning of the basic of all the systems – the learning outcomes. In best way it is not important where you have done the education – the reference should be the results of the life long learning process – the learning outcomes – Knowledge, Skills and Competences.

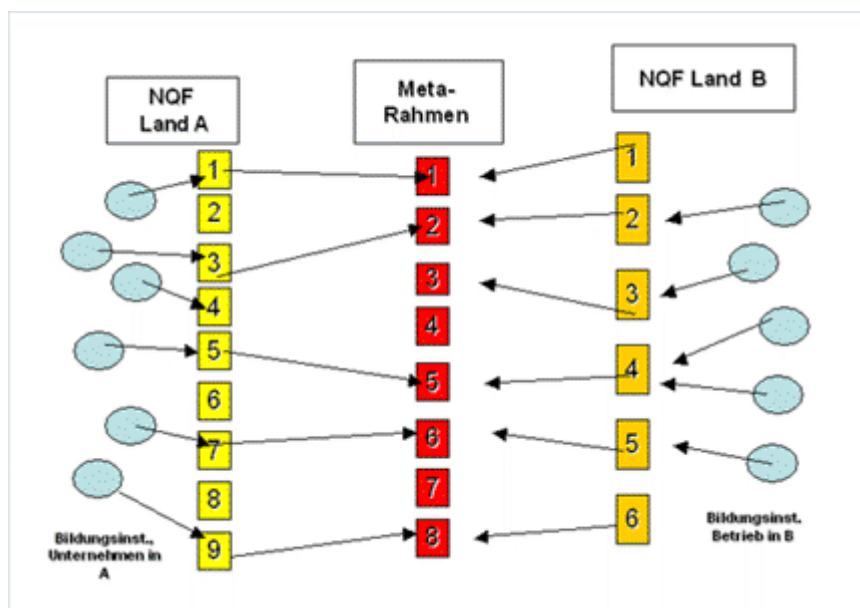


Abbildung 1: EQF and NQF

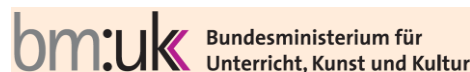
As mentioned the EQF is building or will build the roof of some other systems they are already existing or they will be developed too.

The most relevant systems are mentioned afterwards:



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## THE ECTS System:

The European credit transfer system is a system for European universities to make it possible to account results of studies in over 1.000 universities in Europe. Basic of this system are not the learning outcomes, primary is the duration the reference for the points of this system.

On basic of the ECTS rules you will get for one year 60 ECTS points.

Basic rules for the ECTS are:

- a) the mutual trust of the partner universities or institutes (in ECTS)
- b) the desire to be transparent (through creation of ECTS Course Catalogues) and
- c) the use of ECTS credit points (= ECTS credits).

The ECTS system combines with the EQF in this way that it will be possible to categorize the skills, knowledge and comooetences of the students into this frame. It will be not possible to account or translate the points of the ECTS system into a separate level of the EQF.

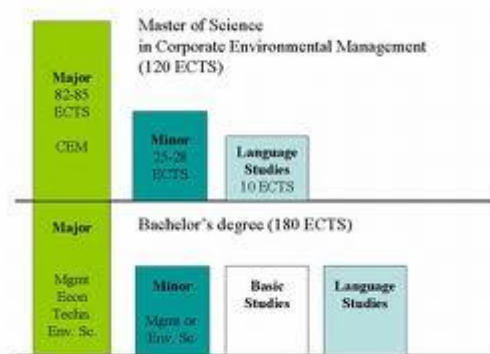


Abbildung 2: ECTS System

## THE ECVET System:

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training is additional to the universities ECTS system especially for the non formal education. The difference is here that the absolute basic are the learning results and on basic of the results (knowledge, skills and competences you will get ECVET points. It is dangerous to misunderstood the system – the points are not the results – basic and result of the System is again the transparent way to compare different learning outcomes.

The aim is to promote the mobility training to increase attractiveness of vocational education and to define a recognition of vocational training to high school education. The mobility of workers and trainees is of high importance when it comes to advancing the economic unity of Europe beyond further progress in creating a unified market for goods and services to promote cross-border exchange of experience and in the direction of the formation of a European identity to be working. The reality in the economy meets these objectives is not so far.

ECVET is a system for credit accumulation and credit transfer in vocational education and training. With its help learning outcomes that a person has achieved in the field of vocational education, through "system boundaries" be swept documented and certified. Qualifications are there - unlike in the ECTS universities - not to be described by the effort necessary to achieve them, but by the learning outcomes and competencies. Probably to reach an overlap with as many nationally established assessment procedures, can be used in the definition of ECVET comment very disparate levels of evaluation criteria as

- a) The length of training,
- b) The type of training,
- c) The objectives and / or results of the training,
- d) The necessary skills to be able to perform certain activities,
- e) The position of a qualification in the occupational hierarchy and
- f) The classification of existing levels due to equivalent qualifications.

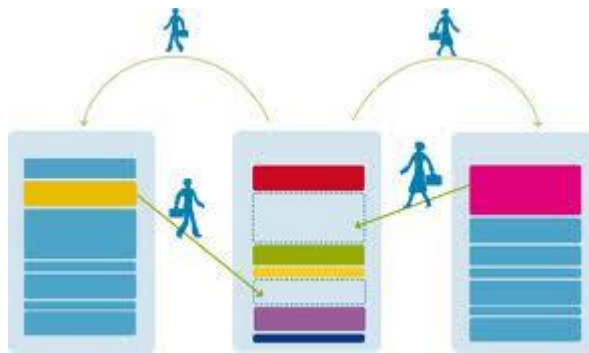


Abbildung 3: ECVET System - accumulation and transfer (national and international)

## **THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS OF ISO 17024**

The ISO 17024:2003 is an international standard for the certification of competences for employees or persons. Absolute basic are the competences which are mentioned in the ISO 17024 as a result of Knowledge and Skills. During the certification process a lot of things has to be build and observed.

- To create, define and document the curriculum of the training
- To build a committee for this specific competence
- To define the needed qualifications for examiners and trainers
- To define the examination to be sure to watch the competences of the participants
- To define the needed qualifications of the participants
- To make sure that somebody who is a trainer is not also the examiner
- The certification itself has to be done by an official accredited certification body.
- And many more...

Also this system is additional to the EQF and the NQF´s. It is a very important part in the area of non formal education to fulfill the requirements of the changing market.



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Abbildung 4: ISO 17024

As a summary it has to be mentioned that all these systems are going in one way. The common target of this way is to make sure that it is possible to compare different educations easily and that will be a profit for employers, employees and training institutes.

The common basic, the learning outcomes (Skills, Knowledge and Competences) are mentioned in all these systems and this is the "revolution" of our European building system.

It is not primary important where you made the education, how long it takes or if you learned it formal, non formal or by practical experience, the most important thing is that it is clear what people are able to do.

## ISO 17024 / NQF / EQF IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

### SPAIN

#### NQF: development and implementation trends in Europe

The union of the different conceptions of vocational qualification in one only reference tool is a question that has not reached its maturity in Europe yet. The system to transfer credits, the lifelong learning program, the European Space for Higher Education and the convergence with Bologna process are tools accompanying the educational and qualifications systems change in Europe. The main objective of the criteria and concept unification process is to increase transparency of all the educational systems, making them more understandable, describing them in terms of the same learning results, that is, the same expected results.

The process to establish National Qualification Frameworks (NQF) has been intensive during the last five years. All European countries have political interest in reaching the European objective to implement qualification frameworks and recognise that the establishment of a national framework referring to the European one encourages mobility within the educational systems and labour markets, favours cooperation between the different interested parties and, last, increases transparency in the qualification systems of the different states.



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## National Qualification Framework in Spain

The National Qualification Framework in Spain is configured by the Spanish Qualification Network for Higher Education (MECES) and by the National Qualification and Vocational Training System (SNCFP). The complete integration and reference to EQF will end in 2011.

## National Qualification and Vocational Training System

In 2002, the National Qualification and Vocational Training System<sup>1</sup> was created in Spain, which meant the organisation of an integral system for vocational training, qualifications and accreditation, giving an answer to all the social and economic demands through the diverse training modalities.

The SNCFP is a basic reference to develop the National Qualification Framework due to the importance of the National Qualification Catalogue as a reference for the VT certificates (educational system) and the professionalism certificates (Vocational Training System for Employment), as well as for the evaluation, accreditation and recognition of qualifications in the country.

CNCP is the main tool for the National Qualification System to achieve the objectives planned previously. This tool is useful to put order to the vocational qualifications that are susceptible to recognise and credit, identified in the productive system according to the suitable competences for the professional work.

It includes the most significant vocational qualifications in the Spanish productive system. CNCP constitutes the base to elaborate the training offer of the professionalism diplomas and certificates. It also includes the contents of the vocational training associated to each qualification, according to a structure of articulated training modules.

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<sup>1</sup> (Organic Law 5/2002, of 19 June, for Qualifications and Vocational Training – LOCFP)



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The National Qualifications Institute (INCUAL)<sup>2</sup> is the technical tool in charge of defining, elaborating and updating the CNCP and the corresponding Modular Catalogue for Vocational Training. CNCP is organised in 26 vocational families and 5 qualification levels, according to the degree of knowledge, initiative, autonomy and responsibility required to carry out this working activity.

- Level 1: Competence in a reduced group of simple activities within standardised processes. Limited knowledge and capacities.
- Level 2: Competence in certain activities that can be executed autonomously. Ability to handle own tools and techniques. Knowledge on technical and scientific bases of the process activity.
- Level 3: Competence in activities requiring mastery of some techniques, executed autonomously. Responsibility on the supervision of technical and specialised work. Understanding of the technical and scientific bases of the activities and process.
- Level 4: Competence in a wide group of complex activities. Diversity of contexts with technical, scientific, economic or organisational variables. Responsibility on the supervision of work and distribution of resources. Ability to innovate to plan performances, develop projects, processes, products or services.
- Level 5: Competence in a wide group of very complex activities, executed with great autonomy. Diversity of contexts, sometimes unpredictable. Planning performances and designing goods, processes or services. Responsibility on managing and direction.

The relation of the qualification levels in Spain with the European Qualification Framework can be seen in the following graph.

*Correlation between the eight EQF levels and the five levels in Spanish CNCP*

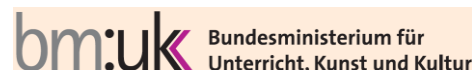
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<sup>2</sup> INCUAL. (INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE LAS CUALIFICACIONES) NATIONAL QUALIFICATION INSTITUTE  
[http://www.educacion.es/educa/incual/ice\\_incual.html](http://www.educacion.es/educa/incual/ice_incual.html)



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## Relation between the 8 European Qualification Framework (EQF) and the five CNCP levels

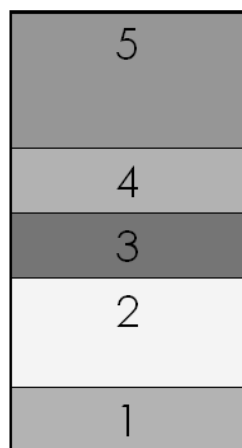
### Notas

*European levels 1 and 8 do not have connection*

*Spanish level 2 is related with 2 levels of European framework*

*The information in EQF as learning outcomes is not enough to establish the links and it has also been necessary to consider the starting levels.*

### Spanish levels - CNCP



### EQF Levels



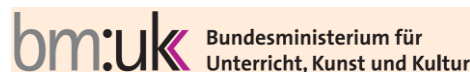
Source: INCUAL, 2007. INCUAL (2007): Vocational Qualifications in the Spanish educational area. [www.formedil.it](http://www.formedil.it)

In Spain NQF have only been introduced for the high-qualification-level workers' vocational qualifications (for higher education). This will allow the Spanish high qualification workers, first, understanding clearly their qualification level and, then, knowing how they can have their qualifications recognised in other European countries.



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*EQF-MEC Spain*

Level 1	-
Level 2	1
Level 3	2
Level 4	2
<b>Level 5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Level 6</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Level 7</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Level 8</b>	-

Nevertheless, Spanish SNCFP is not, so far, related with lower qualifications, neither is it classified by economic sectors. Therefore, the greatest effort to be done by all the parties is to combine, at national level, the existing frameworks in a device that might be compared with the European.

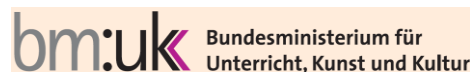
For this reason, Spain, and Europe in general, should focus on the vocational qualifications of the workers who are not so highly qualified. The abilities required to adapt and give shape to tomorrow's jobs are basic for the citizens and the companies to accelerate the process of economic recovery. Not only does Europe need to go forward on the investment in education and training, it should also encourage business organisations and companies to make a better use of the capacities and talent of their staffs.

In this regard, European ISO QUAM project meets this need, offering a framework to certify competences that is reliable and internationally recognised, addressed to low-qualified metal workers (1 and 2 EQF levels). This certification framework, based on ISO 17024:2003 standard, will improve significantly the possibilities of employment and working mobility for this group of workers.



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## FINLAND:

On 21 August 2008, the Ministry of Education appointed a committee to prepare a national qualifications framework describing qualifications and other learning. The task of the committee was to prepare a proposal on the national qualifications framework and to define its levels in terms of knowledge, skills and competences; to determine the criteria according to which the qualifications are placed on the different levels of the national and European qualifications frameworks; and to propose which levels Finnish qualifications should be placed on in the frameworks. The committee's task was also to propose how the national qualifications framework ought to be maintained, updated and developed, and to describe how the quality assurance will be arranged. The committee also had to make a proposal on whether the national framework could be extended to cover all learning in addition to formal qualifications. The committee was also to make a proposal on the necessary legislative reforms.

In its report, the committee describes the European qualifications framework (EQF) and how it relates to other qualification classifications. The committee also describes how qualifications and learning outcomes are described in national legislation. Furthermore, the committee describes the quality assurance procedures for Finnish degrees and education, the current state and practices of recognising learning, and the measures that have been taken in different administrative sectors to promote the recognition of learning. The committee's key proposals focusing to ISO QUAM project are as follows:

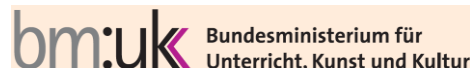
- The national qualifications framework will have eight levels based on the EQF. The framework describes the requirements of Finnish qualifications (learning outcomes) in terms of knowledge, skills and competence, which are the criteria agreed upon in European cooperation based on the EQF levels. The dimensions of learning are not, however, distinguished from one another and the EQF levels are specified based on a national perspective. 3
- The qualifications are placed in the national framework according to the learning outcomes required by the different qualifications. Although a qualification may contain elements from several levels, it is placed on the level it suits best as a whole. Qualifications that are placed on the same level might emphasise different dimensions of learning. The same types of qualifications are primarily placed on the same level.
- Prior learning will primarily be incorporated into the qualifications in the national qualifications system and framework.
- The qualifications framework should be extended to cover all knowledge skills and competences. The primary focus should be on the broad courses of various administrative sectors that are not included in the qualifications system, but are often completed and have learning outcomes defined by a competent authority. These courses include, for example, those related to professional eligibility and competence and those aiming at developing and improving professional expertise.



Education and Culture DG

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Bundesministerium für  
Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur

Finnish government presented to the Parliament law of the qualifications framework describing qualifications and other learning on September 2010. Ministry of Education and culture was established Finnish National Board of Education to national coordination points. During 2012 Ministry of Education and culture will start report how the qualifications framework should be extended to cover all knowledge skills and competences.

## ITALY

The Italian education and training system has lately been subjected to a significant re-organisation, with the purpose of both guaranteeing the administrative decentralization necessary to satisfy the local needs, and following European orientation towards lifelong learning. In this perspective, the qualifications achievable in the Italian education program have been connected to the EQF levels, as shown in figure and described below.

The Italian education program consists of a first and a second cycle; the first cycle is equal for all students, lasts 8 years and is composed of primary school and first level of secondary school. In the second cycle, students can choose between two parallel paths: classical education (official schooling) and vocational training. While the classical education offers some paths that are standardised at national level, the vocational training system presents wide differences among regions in order to encourage training oriented to local needs. The second level of the secondary school, high school or technical institute, leads to certification corresponding to level 4 of the EQF. After this school, it is possible to attend a university or a higher education or vocational training path (ITS and IFTS). The university offers bachelor and/or master degrees, corresponding to level 6 or 7 of the EQF, while the ITS and IFTS courses provide certification corresponding to level 5 of the EQF and are strongly oriented to the needs of the area where the courses are delivered.

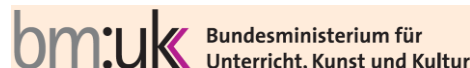
Each Region in Italy can define its vocational training courses independently in order to enhance the integration between the worlds of education and training, on the one hand, and work on the other. The Emilia Romagna region, in which Fondazione Aldini Valeriani operates, provides many paths and the certifications offered correspond to levels from 3 to 7 of the EQF. There is no qualification corresponding to levels 1, 2 and 8. Besides the vocational training opportunities, the Region also offers a system of recognition, validation and certification of competences, with the aim of recording and certifying competences acquired both within education and through professional and other experiences.

Even though considerable autonomy is left to the Regions, Italy has decided to follow the invitation of the European Union to re-align education and the job policy and to focus on the individual and the valorization of his/her resources and abilities. With this in view, the country is trying to establish a national system of competence description, defining in a complete and consistent manner skills, qualifications and jobs and developing a national system to certify competences acquired in formal, non formal or informal ways.



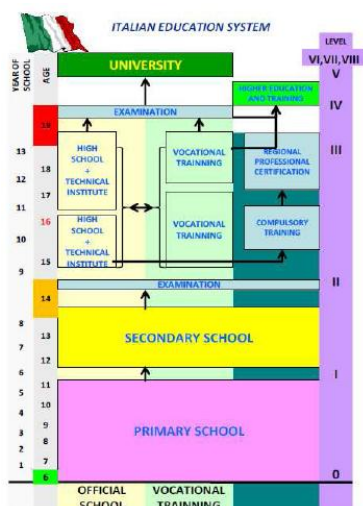
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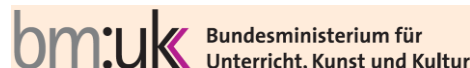
To this end, many discussion panels have taken place in the last years, involving the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces with the aim of constituting a National system of minimal professional levels of recognition and certification of educational and vocational standards. In particular, the inter-regional project “Verso la costruzione di un sistema nazionale di certificazione delle competenze (Towards the construction of a National competence certification system)” has the objective of developing an basic structure, shared at national level, to encourage dialogue between the education, the vocational training and the work systems, while respecting and enhancing the products already developed by each single Region and Autonomous Province. This project will last until 2013. To date, a document that gives the guidelines for the new national certification system has been produced. It also defines the minimal national standards, in terms of “what” can be certificated, “how” the certification has to be made and “who” does the certification. With respect to the “what”, according to the European guidelines, the certification regards the competences of the people, no matter how they have been acquired. The certification can be related to one or more competences, which can be part of or completely define a professional profile/figure. The certifiable competences have to be described in terms of expected result, ability and knowledge. For the “How”, the document indicates that the evaluation process has to respect the principles of traceability and provide guarantees for the candidate; it also indicates some criteria, such as the use of transparent and rigorous professional standards both to define competences and the evaluation process itself, as well as necessary requirements for assessors. Finally, with regards the “who”, the ownership and the responsibility of the certification rests with each single Region, which can delegate this responsibility to accredited bodies.

The certification scheme for metal workers based on ISO 17024:2003 developed in ISO QUAM project refers to an EQF level of competence lower than those used in the vocational training in the Emilia Romagna region and the national education system. This certification scheme can provide valuable support in the ongoing development of a national system of certification of competences into which it may be subsequently integrated



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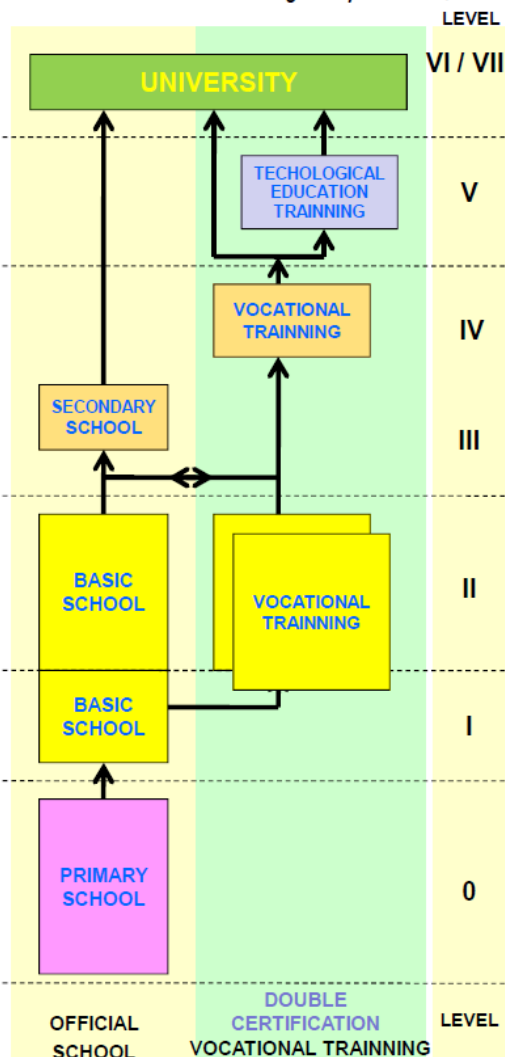


## PORTUGAL



### PORTUGUESE NQF

From 1st October 2010 Portugal adapted the EQF



In Portugal has adopted the Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council on 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the EQF (European Qualifications Framework) for lifelong learning Programme (LLP).

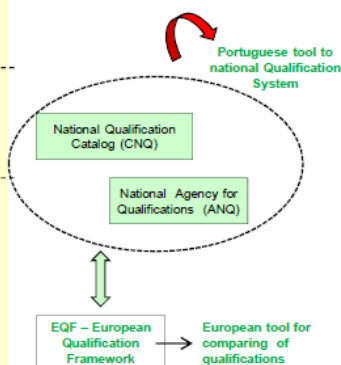
Came into force on 1 October 2011, using the results of learning as a common reference point (Knowledge, Skills, Competence).

In Portugal, the National Agency for Qualifications (ANQ) is the National Coordination Point to the EQF.

[www.anq.gov.pt](http://www.anq.gov.pt)

The National Qualifications Catalogue (CNQ) defines the national qualifications (dual certification) for professional output.

[www.catalogo.anq.gov.pt](http://www.catalogo.anq.gov.pt)



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