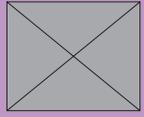


2016-08

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION CERTIFICATES



At a time of widespread economic, technological, ecological and organisational change, professional qualifications and skills as we know them are being profoundly affected in a way which that has major implications for individuals, companies and the community as a whole.

As evidence of a person's qualifications and the learning outcomes of a certifying course, professional qualifications are crucial points of reference for employers, work collectives and individuals alike.

Indeed, an efficient professional certifications system that meets employees' needs and employers' expectations plays a key role in addressing contemporary challenges: securing career paths and professional mobility, job appeal and quality, skills recognition, upskilling and updating skills, national competitiveness and full employment.

Under their generic name, professional qualifications encompass degrees, vocational certificates and professional qualification certificates (CQPs). First introduced in the early 1990s, the latter can be created in the industrial sectors, most closely reflecting the reality of lines of work and occupations. Social partners' remit and legitimacy thus acknowledged in a sphere which, until recently, had been the preserve of the State, calls for accountability on their part as to the quality and efficiency of this third qualifications branch.

They are all the more accountable given the fact that the new provisions of the 5 March 2014 Act, which follows on from the 14 December 2013 inter-professional national agreement (ANI), clearly gives the vocational training

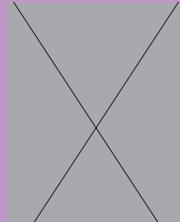
system a qualifying aim. The newly created resources (individual training account, careers guidance, periodic in-job review) and new arrangements for financing training have been designed to promote access to professional qualification. Industrial sector professional qualification certificates, which still concern a limited section of the workforce today, could, in this new context, be harnessed as a positive tool for acknowledging qualifications of both people who are entering the workplace and employees who are retraining or have a promotion in their sights.

To grasp the reality and diversity of sector-level equal-representation policies in terms of qualification, the ESEC has conducted a review of CQPs, and formulated its recommendations with a threefold concern in mind: guarantee not only freedom for sectors to be responsive and innovative in developing CQPs but also the quality of these qualifications awarded by the social partners; ensure that they can cater for the needs arising out of a vocational training policy geared firmly towards qualification and acknowledgement thereof.

In light of the general employment situation and the far-reaching changes affecting the workplace, the purpose of CQPs is to facilitate access to employment and qualifications, by clearly stating the skills being sought after, outlining an aim or motivating employees.

The principle of equal representation underpinning CQPs makes them a cornerstone of sector-level social dialogue, with a view to anticipating major professional developments, especially those associated with

the digital revolution and energy transition.



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IN LIGHT OF THESE CHALLENGES, THE ESEC HAS OUTLINED FIVE SETS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ To ensure the visibility and consistency of CQPs:

- list CQPs in a directory, within each industrial sector concerned, to enable an exhaustive record of them to be drawn up;
- improve the promotion of CQPs in companies and among employees and stakeholders providing careers guidance to adults, including the managers responsible for the periodic in-job review;
- include specific information on qualifications on websites devoted to qualifications ("emploi store", "certif info" or "orientation pour tous" for example);
- ask the industrial sectors to keep track of the effects of their CQP scheme in terms of integration in the workplace and the career paths of CQP holders;
- ask France-Stratégie to analyse the contribution CQPs make to anticipating developments in the occupations, based on the data produced and forwarded by the sectors;
- ask the National Council for Vocational Guidance, Training and Employment (CNEFOP) and regional vocational guidance, training and employment committees (CREFOPs) to incorporate the sector-level qualifications approach in their strategic planning of lines of work and occupations;
- ensure the effectiveness of the CQP assessment mission, entrusted to the National Commission for Professional Qualifications (CNCP);
- update the organisation and status of the CNCP.

➤ To open up links between the different types of qualification:

- encourage a module-based approach to CQPs according to skill set;
- ask the various certifying bodies to work together, within the CNCP, on defining occupation-specific frameworks and sets of common skills;
- turn the charter of the Joint national inter-professional committee for employment and training (COPANEF) into the general tool for Inter-Sector professional qualification certificates (CQPI);
- set up a point of contact between the National Council for Industry (CNI) and the COPANEF on CQPs and CQPIs;
- with the boundaries of the industrial sectors being redefined, support the State in implementing the sector qualifications policy (engineering assistance concerning CQPs through the skills and employment development actions (ADECs) of the Ministry of Labour).

➤ To contribute to equality in the workplace and the acknowledgement of qualifications:

- ask the industrial sectors to develop CQPs for female-dominant lines of work, draw up skills and jobs frameworks that are free from gender stereotypes and ensure equal access for men and women to CQPs;
- ask sector-level negotiators to position CQPs in classification tables according to an objective skills assessment principle;
- promote diversity in sector-level bodies in charge of setting up and implementing CQPs;
- plan to incorporate CQPs into the classification table as part of an extended sector-level agreement;
- on a trial basis, authorise the industrial sectors to define the terms and conditions for implementing the validation of prior professional experience (VAE) scheme for their CQPs.

➤ To guarantee high-quality equal representation when developing CQPs:

- systematically include the CQP scheme in an extended sector-level agreement;
- before any CQP is created, complete an opportunity report presenting an analysis of the needs in terms of skills and qualifications, the potential flows and volumes of the target groups and consistency with qualifications that already exist;
- in the sector-level agreement, formally document information and training regarding negotiators and members of joint bodies that create and implement CQPs;
- through the COPANEF, draw up a methodological guide to the technical development of CQP frameworks.

➤ To expedite European convergence in terms of sector-level qualifications:

- factor CQP approaches into sector-level trials conducted through the European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) system;
- ask the European social partners to examine the conditions for mutual recognition of sector-level professional qualifications within sector-level social dialogue committees.

A good number of these proposals are for the direct attention of social partners. However, the opinion calls for two legislative amendments to make any new CQP dependent on the existence of an agreement establishing the scheme in the sector and an opportunity report prior to the creation of each CQP.