

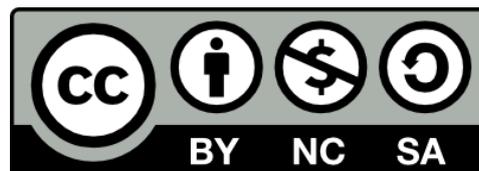


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# Erasmus+ project European Standards for Peer Support Workers in Mental Health

## Guide for the national implementation of the further training concept for peer support workers in Poland (EQF) levels 4 and 5



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# 1. Description of the VET system in Poland

A brief overview taken from:

This Spotlight is based on input from the Educational Research Institute (Cedefop ReferNet Poland 2017).

[https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/8125\\_en.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/8125_en.pdf)

## Vocational education and training (VET) in Poland

Vocational education and training (VET) has three governance levels: national (ministries), regional (school superintendents, mainly in pedagogical supervision) and county (governing schools). The Ministry of National Education is in charge of VET policy at secondary level, supported by other ministries responsible for particular occupations. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education is responsible for higher VET. Social partners advise policy-makers on necessary changes in VET.

Since September 2017 the Polish education system has been undergoing substantial restructuring, which will be finalised in the 2022/23 school year. The key elements of the reform include: restructuring the current six-year primary education into eight years, divided into two four-year programmes (basic and lower secondary level); phasing out of the lower secondary school (gimnazjum), and extending the general upper secondary school (four instead of three years) and the technical upper secondary school (five instead of four); and introducing a two-level 'sectoral vocational school'.

VET is provided at upper secondary and postsecondary levels that are mainly school-based. Upper secondary programmes combine general and vocational education. Learners can acquire vocational qualifications in the following:

- three-year sectoral programmes (szkoły branżowe I stopnia, ISCED 353). Graduates can enrol in general education programmes bridging VET and higher education. For graduates of these programmes, the reform foresees introduction of new two-year programmes that will give access to tertiary education from 2020/21;
- five-year upper secondary technical programmes (technika, ISCED 354). Graduates can also acquire an upper secondary school leaving certificate (matura) giving access to tertiary education;

- three-year special job-training programmes (szkoły specjalne przysposabiające do pracy, ISCED 243) for learners with special education needs (SEN), leading to a certificate of a jobtraining;
- work preparation classes, available for SEN learners already at lower secondary level in primary schools at age 15 and over (oddziały przysposabiające do pracy, ISCED 243).

At post-secondary non-tertiary level, vocational qualifications can be acquired in one- to two-and-a-half-year school-based programmes (szkoły policealne, ISCED 453). These programmes are strictly vocational and do not include general education. Basic or upper secondary education level is required to enrol.

The work-based learning (WBL) share is minimum 50%. WBL takes place in school workshops, at continuing education centres, practical training centres and as in-company training from four to 12 weeks, depending on the occupation. The latter is compulsory for upper secondary and post-secondary VET learners.

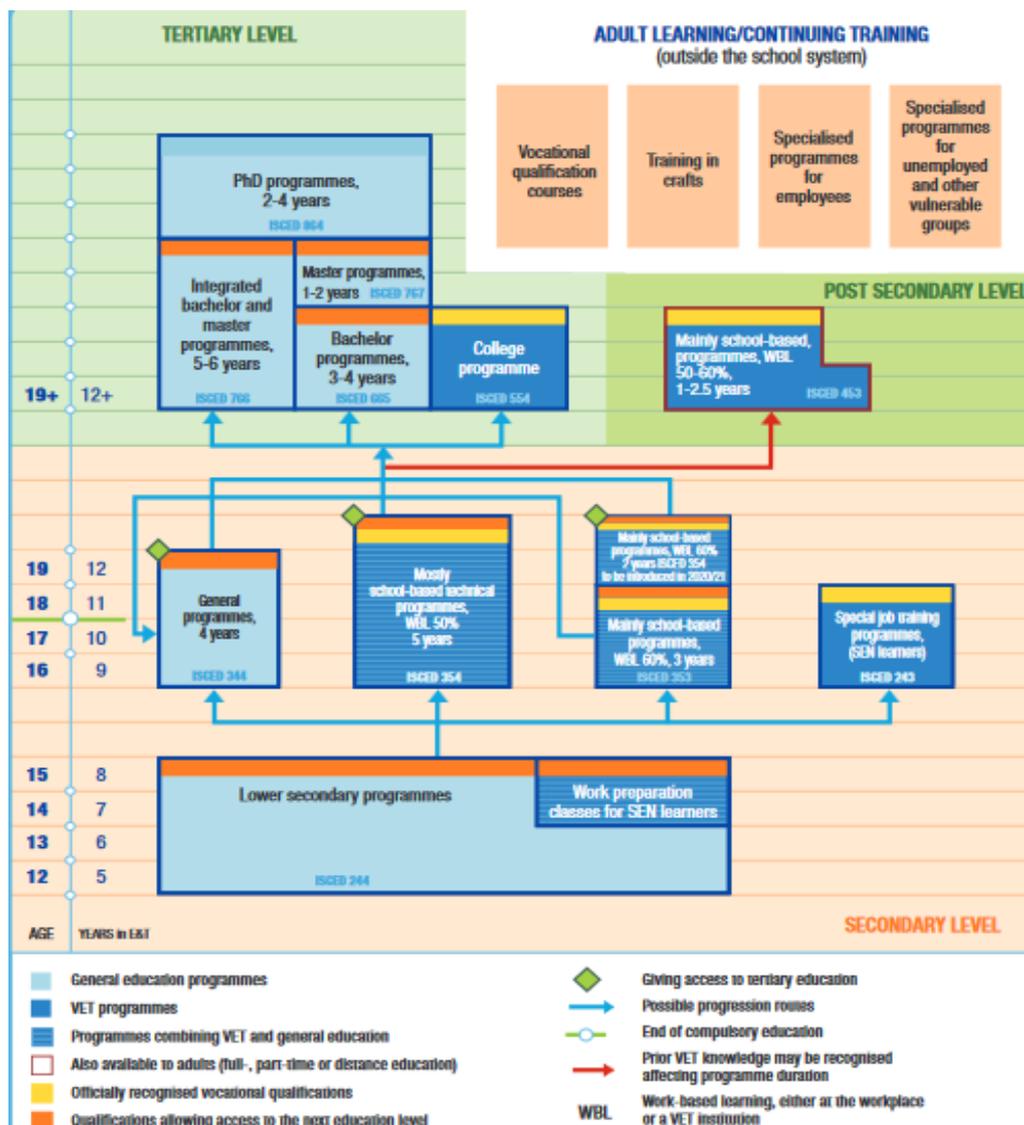
## 1.1 Adult learning and CVET

Adult learning and continuing VET is available in continuing education centres, practical training centres, further training and professional development centres, and initial VET schools. These offer:

- vocational qualification courses based on curricula for a qualification in a given occupation; these allow learners to take the State vocational examination and attain a vocational qualification certificate;
- vocational skills courses based on the core VET curriculum, including learning outcomes for a qualification or common learning outcomes for all occupations;
- minimum 30-hour general skills courses based on the general education curriculum;
- courses for juvenile employees in the crafts sector.

Adults, including the unemployed, may also undertake vocational training through courses provided by training companies and other non-formal education institutions. Since 2016, qualifications based on the curricula of such courses can be included in the national qualifications framework.

## 1.2 VET in Poland's education and training system



NB. ISCED-P 2011  
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Poland.

## 1.3 Distinctive features of VET

Over the past three decades, Poland's education system has undergone several profound changes in its structure, forms of organisation and management, as well as of the core curriculum. As a result of these changes, distinctive VET features were developed:

- a flexible VET system allows changing pathways at any point;

- a register classifying occupations (COVE), each comprising one to three qualifications that can be acquired in IVET and CVET. The register is consistent with the classification of occupations in the labour market. A VET qualification diploma can be issued only when all qualifications required for an occupation have been acquired (on passing State vocational examinations);
- VET schools are autonomous in choosing optional curricula for VET: either subjectcentred or modular curricula, which can be easily modified, depending on labour market needs;
- one VET core curriculum for all occupations. Separate VET qualifications within specific occupations are described in the core curriculum as a set of expected learning outcomes: knowledge, occupational skills, and personal and social competences allowing learners to handle their occupational tasks independently;
- vocational qualification courses allow adults to acquire qualifications faster than IVET learners;
- possibility to validate qualifications acquired in different learning contexts, including professional experience, by taking external examinations.

## 1.4 Challenges and policy responses

The main challenges for VET are:

- increasing employer engagement in organising practical training; identifying and forecasting skills and qualification needs in the labour market, and in reviewing VET curricula;
- encouraging cooperation between VET schools and higher education institutions;
- developing guidance and counselling for all age groups, especially in the early stages of schooling;
- VET teacher and trainer access to professional development opportunities by encouraging traineeships for teachers and trainers in enterprises.

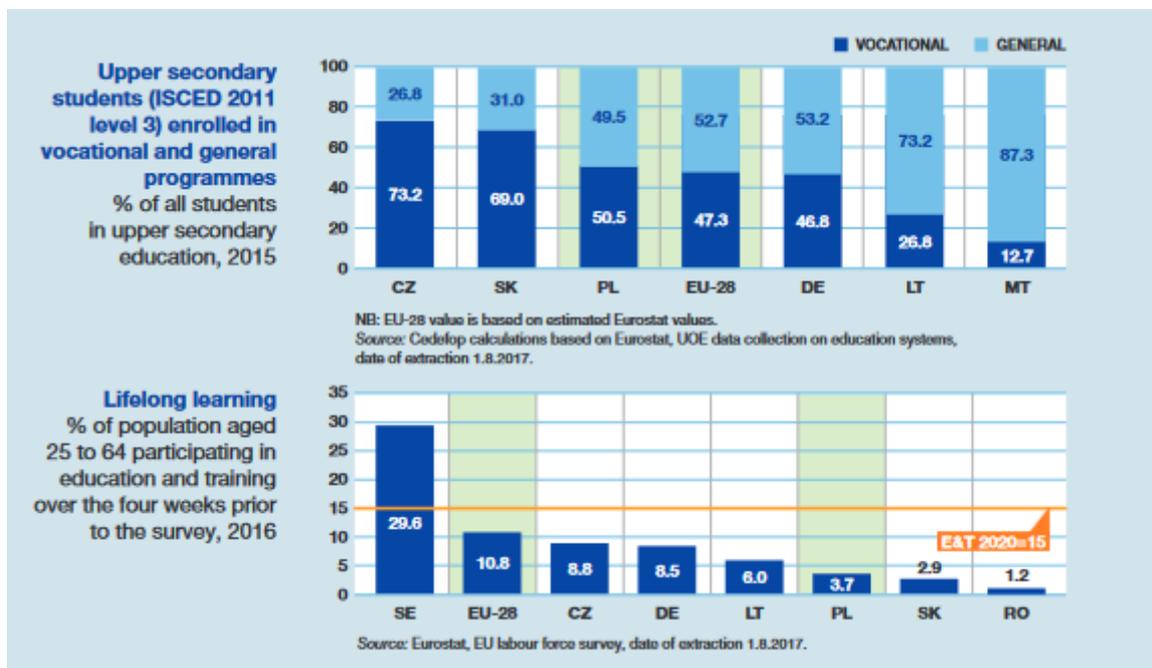
Several recent initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of National Education address these challenges:

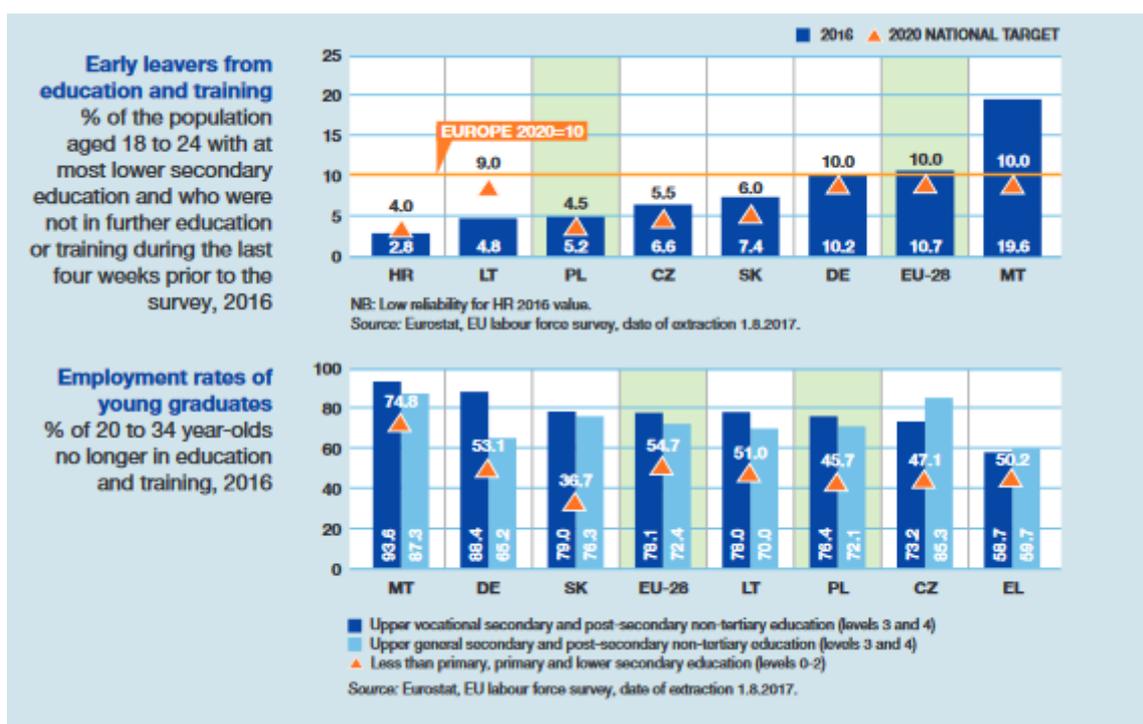
- the Act on the Integrated Qualifications System (2016) has brought together the qualifications framework, register of qualifications that can be attained, quality assurance and validation principles. General and higher education level qualifications are included in the

register. Nonstatutory qualifications linked to CVET have been registered based on the initiative of VET providers or other stakeholders;

- the government has revised the incentive system to increase VET participation, develop the vocational guidance system, and expand the implementation of work-based learning in VET by promoting cooperation between schools and employers;
- IVET funding will be reviewed to direct more funds to VET programmes in occupations in demand on the labour market;
- The Ministry of National Education, together with the Centre for Education Development (ORE), continue work on the development of new core curricula to be introduced in 2019;
- new sectoral skills councils are being established under the umbrella of the Polish Enterprise Development Agency, giving voice to sectoral stakeholders regarding the demand for competences at sectoral level to improve education and labour market matching.

## 1.5 Education and training in figures





## 1.6 Further information

- Cedefop ReferNet Poland (2016). VET in Europe: country report Poland.  
<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/poland-vet-europe-country-report-2016>
- Eurydice (2017). Education system in brief 2017/18.  
<http://eurydice.org.pl/system-edukacji-w-polsce/>
- Central Statistical Office (2017). Education in school year 2016/17. Warsaw: Central Statistical Office.  
<https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/edukacja/edukacja/oswiata-i-wychowanie-w-roku-szkolnym-20162017,1,12.htm>

<a href="http://www.men.gov.pl">www.men.gov.pl</a>	Ministry of National Education
<a href="http://www.nauka.gov.pl">www.nauka.gov.pl</a>	Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy
<a href="http://www.eng.nauka.gov.pl">www.eng.nauka.gov.pl</a>	Ministry of Science and Higher Education
<a href="http://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl">www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl</a>	ESF programmes in Poland
<a href="http://www.stat.gov.pl">www.stat.gov.pl</a>	Central Statistical Office
<a href="http://www.psz.praca.gov.pl">www.psz.praca.gov.pl</a>	public employment services

This Spotlight is based on input from the Educational Research Institute (Cedefop ReferNet Poland 2017).

## 2. Place of the qualification "peer support worker" in the Integrated Qualification System

The process of integrating peer support workers' qualification into the Integrated Qualifications System (IQS), as well as the creation of certified (recognized) training courses / programs, are currently ongoing. The most advanced processes accompany the application of the LEONARDO Foundation for the Support of Social Development (included in this study). Currently, the Ministry of Health conducts public consultations with 62 stakeholders on the inclusion of the market qualification named "Peer Support Worker" to the IQS.

The guidelines of the IQS are:

- integrating all qualifications obtained in formal and non-formal education,
- quality assurance of the awarded qualifications,
- enabling the confirmation of competences acquired outside the education system and higher education institutions,
- as well as facilitating access to information about qualifications that can be obtained in Poland.

### 2.1 What is the classification of occupations and specializations?

Classification of occupations and specializations is a systematic set of occupations and specializations existing on the labour market. It is an "inventory" of occupations identified on the labour market. The classification is based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations ISCO-08. Updating the classification, in order to adapt to changes occurring on the labour market (Polish and European), by introducing new occupations/specializations to it, takes place every **2-3 years** by amending the regulation on the classification of occupations and specializations to meet the needs of the labour market and the scope of their application.

For the purposes of the classification of occupations and specializations, an **occupation** has been defined as a set of tasks (professional activities) distinguished as a result of the social division of labour, performed continuously or with slight changes by individual people and requiring appropriate competences (knowledge and skills), acquired as a result of education or practice). While a **specialization** has been defined as the result of the division of labour within an occupation, it includes some activities of a similar nature (related to the performed

<sup>9</sup> This Erasmus<sup>+</sup> project was supported by European Commission funds

function or subject of work), requiring in-depth or additional knowledge and skills acquired as a result of additional training or practice.

**Notice:** The occupation and specialization should not be confused with the job position.

## **2.2 Process initiated by the Leonardo Foundation**

In addition to qualifications awarded in the general education and higher education systems (full qualifications), it is possible to grant them at the request of associations, industry organizations, training institutions and companies after completing courses and training (market qualifications – this is what the Leonardo Foundation applied for). These qualifications may be included in the IQS if they meet the quality standards requirements set out in the Act, e.g. learning outcomes and manners of validation.

It seems that the process of incorporating the “Peer Support Worker” market qualification into the IQS will end with the completion of the pilot program in Mental Health Centres (specially selected mental health facilities where, among others, the functioning of people with the experience of mental illness or crisis is tested). Under this program, peer support workers may be hired for a probationary period. The gathered opinions of the interested parties and the completion of the program will contribute to the final shape of the regulations regarding the recognition of a new occupation

It is worth emphasizing that despite the obvious needs in this area, there is some resistance among psychiatrists and psychologists. The proposal of the Leonardo Foundation was negatively assessed, among others, by associations of psychologists, e.g. Polish Association of Psychologists (“Polskie Stowarzyszenie Psychologów”). The appeals process, challenging those criticisms, is ongoing and the application has changed. In order to supplement the information in the application, the training program used in the preparation of peer support workers is presented below, it is very often the program of the “Otwarty Dialog” Foundation.

### **How to register a new occupation?**

Applicants requesting new occupations/specializations to be introduced to the classification may be ministries or central authorities, associations, trade unions, employers' organizations and other institutions substantively competent for a given occupation/specialization.

The application should include a justification for the purpose of introducing the occupation to the classification, a description containing a short synthesis of the occupation and occupational tasks, as well as information on the required education and legal regulations of a given occupation, if applicable.

Similarly, a request may be submitted for an occupation to be deleted from the Classification or to change the name of an occupation, together with the justification for its purpose.

### **3. Implementation of training for peer support workers in Mental Health Care at EQF levels 4 and 5 in Poland**

Doctor Piotr Karniej in his article writes: “Currently, in Polish hospitals, the system of hiring employees performing basic activities in hospital departments is quite routine and assumes the existence of medical, nursing (or obstetrical in the case of gynaecology and obstetrics), rescue (in surgical, intensive care or emergency departments), care and nursing as well as auxiliary qualifications and/or training [Bugdol, Bugaj, Stańczyk 2012]. Additionally, some people are usually employed across departments, e.g. physiotherapists or nutritionists. Psychologists, occupational therapists, psychotherapists and others are employed in psychiatric wards. From this perspective, PSWs could be employed directly in hospital departments, hired to carry out therapeutic work not only in psychiatric departments, but also in oncology, internal medicine and paediatric departments (as support for both parents of children and elderly patients), as well as wherever there is a need for this type of service.

Currently, in the Polish healthcare system, the following barriers to the employment of PSWs in the public health system can be identified (the catalogue of barriers is much longer):

- failure to include the PSW in the package of guaranteed services in the field of hospital care as an employee required in the process of contracting medical services in a specific area,
- lack of separate financing for the PSW as a person providing health services or participating in the provision of such services,
- failure to define the PSW as a member of the therapeutic team, which prevents access to medical records, insurance under the healthcare organisation’s policy,

- failure to define the competences and criteria for PSW employment, in terms of professional qualifications (completed level of education), type of illness experience, method of documenting this experience, the PSW's right to keep issues related to their disease secret,

From the point of view of the healthcare system manager, however, the most important are financial barriers, primarily the lack of funds for employing PSW by healthcare organisations [Wysocka, Walkowiak 2013].

However, if the abovementioned barriers could be overcome or neutralised as a result of the political and organisational will of decision-makers, changes in the system of secondary and higher education should still be expected in order to:

- define the level of education at which a PSW could obtain professional qualifications under EQF level 5. In this sense, an interesting view seems to be that it could be a common model for institutions from the level of both vocational and higher education, without creating additional levels in the educational system, but using the existing institutions (professional competence management based on the model of functional, procedural, not institutional),
- determine a PSW's professional qualifications, on the basis of either EQF level 5 diplomas (certificates) or other forms of gaining competences, including those resulting from external observation (e.g. supervision in psychotherapy) and employee evaluation,
- include PSWs in the catalogue of jobs in public healthcare entities, specifying their minimum qualifications (e.g. having at least secondary education) and allowing the employer to assess the competences and suitability for employment,
- include PSWs in the therapeutic team model while educating medical professionals and psychologists in order to prepare them for cooperation with PSWs and define competence boundaries.

From the point of view of the education system in Poland and Europe, such solutions could be based on EQF level 5. Unfortunately, due to a very different approach to recognising EQF level 5 qualifications in most European countries, and despite the formal possibility of non-existence of a system of cross-border transfer of these competences, it may turn out to be very difficult. The lack of limitations imposed by the system in those countries where it is very poorly developed (e.g. Germany), or does not exist at all (e.g. Poland) can be an advantage enabling mutual relations between the members of the therapeutic team and the organisation to be arranged in such a way that it can function properly. It would be somewhat more difficult to use this model in France, because it would require the modification and

adaptation of existing solutions to the needs of PSWs. However, it would be beneficial from the point of view of European recognition of PSWs as full members of therapeutic teams in many medical specialties, not only in psychiatry.

Bugdol, M., Bugaj, J. and Stańczyk, I. (2012) *Procesy zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi w służbie zdrowia*. Wyd. Continuo.

Wysocka, M. and Walkowiak, R. (2013) *Elastyczne formy pracy w organizacjach ochrony zdrowia*, in Lewandowski, R., Kautsch, M., and Sułkowski, Ł. (eds) *Współczesne problemy zarządzania w ochronie zdrowia z perspektywy systemu i organizacji*. Łódź: Społeczna Akademia Nauk, pp. 305–314.

Karniej P. (2021), *Using European Qualifications Framework level 5 to build a European competence model for peer support workers*, Warszawa: CEdu, 2021.

### **3.1 Procedure for introducing a new occupation to the classification of occupations in vocational education 4EQF (Level 4 in PQF)**

Level 4 is related to occupational qualifications and awarding a diploma after:

- graduating from a technical secondary school or post-secondary school or after meeting the conditions referred to in Article 10(3)(2)(d) of the Act of 7 September 1991 on the education system, and after passing the examinations confirming qualifications in a given vocation, PQF level 4;
- upon graduating from a **second-cycle vocational school** or after meeting the conditions referred to in Article 10(3)(2)(c) of the Act of 7 September 1991 on the education system, and after passing the examinations confirming qualifications in a given vocation, PQF level 4\*
- upon graduating from a technical secondary school or after meeting the conditions referred to in Article 10(3)(2)(d) of the Act of 7 September 1991 on the education system, and after passing vocational exams in a given occupation, PQF level 4\*
- upon obtaining vocation diploma when graduating from a second-cycle vocational school or after meeting the conditions referred to in Article 10(3)(2)(c) of the Act of 7 September 1991 on the education system, and after passing vocational exams in a given occupation, PQF level 4
- secondary school-leaving examination certificate, level 4 PQF.

\* Pursuant to the IQS Act (Article 8), the Minister of National Education may define a different level for qualifications from this group in a regulation (vocational schools).

When pursuing introduction of occupations, other than those listed in the regulation of the Minister of National Education, to a vocational school (second cycle), **occupational associations, economic self-governments, employers' organizations and other economic**

**organizations may apply to the competent departmental ministers with proposals to introduce new occupations in the vocational education.** For example, in occupations in the agriculture and food industry, the competent minister is the minister of agriculture, in medical occupations - the minister of health, in occupations in the hotel and tourism industry - the minister of sport and tourism, in occupations in the transport industry - the minister of infrastructure, in the so-called “service” occupations - minister of economy.

The above-mentioned entities, when applying for introduction to the classification of a new occupation, should present the economic demand for school graduates in this vocation and information on potential places of employment, supported by the results of labour market research. In addition, the proposals should include a general description of the occupation (graduate with vocational skills), the type of school in which the training in the new occupation is to be provided (basic vocational school, technical secondary school or post-secondary school). When applying for the establishment of a new occupation, it is necessary to propose the number, names and framework descriptions of qualifications distinguished in the concerned occupation, in accordance with the names of qualifications distinguished in the occupation listed in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 23 December 2011 on the classification of occupations in vocational education. Proposals prepared in this way by employers' organizations will constitute the basis for the competent minister, who then submits an application for entering a new occupation into the classification of vocational education professions to the minister of national education.

**The occupations introduced to the classification of vocational education professions should be the occupations already entered in the classification of occupations and specializations for the needs of the labour market.**

The application referred to in par. 1 should include:

- 1) description of the occupation and the qualifications identified within this occupation, together with the set of vocational skills for each qualification;
- 2) justification of the need for training in this occupation;
- 3) name and place of the occupation within a specific group of classification of occupations and specializations for the needs of the labour market;
- 4) information about the needs of the labour market in the area of a given occupation.

The occupation may be included in the classification of vocational education occupations only if none of the occupations included in the classification covers all the qualifications distinguished in this occupation.

To the application for introducing an occupation to the classification, the minister competent for the occupation attaches the opinion of representative employers' organizations within the meaning of the Tripartite Commission for Socio-Economic Affairs Act of 6 July 2001 and provincial committees for social dialogue, i.e. e.g. Pracodawcy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, Związek Rzemiosła Polski, Polish Confederation of Private Employers "Lewiatan", Polish Chamber of Commerce, Business Center Club. In this opinion, the employers' organization should confirm the legitimacy of establishing a new vocational education occupation and conducting education in this occupation in the education system given the needs of the economy.

### **Opinions of provincial labour market councils**

In order to streamline the process of giving opinions and reflect the regional demand for occupations in the process of introducing education in a new occupation in a given school, the following rules have been introduced:

- the school head teacher is obliged to consult only the provincial labour market council. In the case of issuing an opinion, the chief executive of a province should invite to participate in the meetings of the provincial labour market council a representative of employers, employers' organizations, economic self-government, other economic organization, association or professional self-government or sectoral council for competences relevant to the occupation under review, the school head teacher submitting the request, a representative of the education superintendent and a representative of the competent district labour market council (Article 22(5d) of the Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions Act);
- in accordance with the amendment to the Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions Act in consultation with the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy (Article 22(5b) of the Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions Act), the provincial labour market council issues an opinion after reading forecast of the demand for employees in the vocational education professions on the national and provincial labour market, which is

determined by the minister competent for education and upbringing by way of an announcement;

- the opinion issued by the provincial labour market council is valid for a period of 5 years (Article 22(5c) of the Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions Act). After that, it is necessary to obtain a new opinion on the legitimacy of further education in the occupation in a given school. After this period, a new opinion is not required only for the occupation which is considered to be in demand;
- the opinion is not required when introducing education programs in auxiliary professions, if the school has an opinion on the advisability of education in the occupation for which is classified in the vocational education professions classification as an auxiliary profession;
- a private school, before introducing education program in a new occupation in a given school, is also obliged to consult the provincial labour market council;
- the provincial labour market council issues an opinion on the planned pedagogical experiment concerning an occupation not included in the vocational education professions classification.

### **Obligation of schools to cooperate with employers**

Vocational education (first-cycle vocational schools, **second-cycle vocational schools, technical secondary schools and post-secondary schools**) is to be based primarily on cooperation with employers.

The education system in the field of vocational training is also supported by employers, employers' organizations, economic self-governments or other economic organizations, professional associations or self-governments, sectoral councils for competences and the Program Council for competences.

At the same time, **the school head teacher** was obliged (Article 68 (7) (2) of the Education Law Act) to establish cooperation with the employer competent for the occupation or industry to which the given occupation is assigned, or with the person running an agricultural establishment, before introducing a new occupation to school education. This cooperation will be carried out under a contract or agreement covering at least one training cycle and may include in particular:

- creating patronage classes,
- implementation of vocational education, including practical vocational training, in cooperation with the employer,
- equipping workshops or school studios,
- organization of vocational exams,
- training teachers for vocational education, including organizing industry-specific training,
- implementation of vocational counselling and promotion of vocational education.

## **Forecast of the demand for employees in the vocational education professions**

In line with a number of changes proposed by the Ministry of National Education regarding the reconstruction of the prestige of vocational education in Poland, each year the ministry will publish a forecast of the demand for employees in vocational education professions on the national and provincial labour market.

The forecast takes into account the data of the Educational Research Institute, compiled in particular on the basis of public statistics, data from the Social Insurance Institution and the Educational Information System. An important role was also played by the opinions of industry councils for competences and the Program Council for competences, as well as of ministers competent for the vocational education professions.

The forecast is a synthetic presentation of various sources describing trends on the labour market in the context of the development strategy of the state and regions. The aim of the forecast is to provide premises for shaping the offer of vocational education adequately to the needs of the country-wide and provincial labour market.

The forecast is an alphabetically ordered list of vocational education professions for which, due to their importance for the development of the state, a particular demand for employees is forecasted on the country's labour market. The forecast also includes occupations for which a significant and moderate demand for employees is forecasted in labour markets of individual provinces.

Thanks to the already published forecast, schools and authorities can already plan the professions that will be launched in the new school year. Importantly, decisions made in this area will take into account the different ways of financing these professions.

It is worth recalling that the priority of the changes introduced by the Ministry of National Education is the presence of employers at every stage of the vocational education process. Starting with identifying the needs in terms of new professions and skills, through designing education in these professions and skills, as well as the implementation of practical training with the close participation of employers, verification of the learning outcomes at the vocational exam, to the employment of school graduates. Hence, in addition to obtaining the opinion of the provincial labour market council, before starting education in a given profession, the school head will be obliged to establish cooperation with the employer competent for the profession or industry.

Source: own study based on [www.gov.pl/web/edukacja](http://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja)

Act of 14/12/2016 Education Law, *Dziennik Ustaw* [Polish Official Journal] of 2021 item 1082.

### **3.2 Procedure for introducing a new field of study and preparing and modifying education programs for first and second cycle studies with a practical profile (PQF Level 5)**

At the outset, it should be emphasized that there are no clear legal regulations and information campaigns, which means that universities are not interested in opening specialist education making use of the provisions of the Act concerning the PQF level 5.

<https://frp.org.pl/pl/projekty-aktualne/387-piaty-poziom-krajowych-ram-kwalifikacji.html>

The higher education system qualifications are at levels six, seven and eight.

However, level five remains untapped by higher education.

“Qualified specialist” is level 5 education that allows one to get a higher education, but not yet at bachelor of arts/bachelor of engineering level, with less resources and earlier entry into the labour market.

It is an offer for people who continue their education after secondary school, but also for working people who want to obtain education while improving their skills during employment and at courses and training. Such people are often good specialists in a narrow field and this fact can be additionally supported by education on level 5.

In Poland, vocational universities are authorized to provide specialist education.

#### **RECRUITMENT**

A graduate of a general education secondary school or a technical secondary school or, in the future, a second-cycle vocational school, may start specialist education at a selected

university, the aim of which is to obtain the title of a qualified specialist at level 5 of PQF. Secondary school-leaving exam is not required.

## **DURATION**

Education lasts 3 semesters (1.5 years).

## **EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE**

- obtaining the possibility of a satisfactory job in a shorter period than 3- or 4-year first-cycle studies,
- an additional profession confirming your previous training, experience or even hobbies,
- in most cases, further education possible at first-cycle studies or long-cycle studies (some subjects may be carried over from the certificate of a qualified specialist, reducing the duration of studies)

## **AFTER GRADUATION**

### option 1.

If a student has a secondary school-leaving exam certificate or a vocational technician diploma, then after completing the education they receive a certificate of qualified specialist at level 5 of the Polish Qualifications Framework.

### option 2.

If a student does not have a secondary school-leaving exam certificate or a vocational diploma, they may also undergo specialist education, but after completing it, they receive a certificate of completion of specialist education.

However, if they pass the secondary school-leaving examination or receive a vocational technician diploma while attending specialist education program, they also receive a certificate of a qualified specialist at level 5 of the Polish Qualifications Framework.

## **Further Education at FIRST-CYCLE STUDIES or LONG-CYCLE STUDIES - shortening of studies**

The law on higher education and science also gives universities the option of shortening first-cycle or long-cycle studies for graduates holding a qualified specialist certificate.

The learning outcomes may be confirmed for a person with a full qualification at the PQF level 5 or a qualification awarded under the foreign higher education system corresponding to level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework referred to in Annex II to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of a

European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (OJ EU C 111 of 06.05.2008, p. 1) - in the case of applying for admission to first-cycle studies or long-cycle studies;

As a result of confirming the learning outcomes, no more than 50% of the ECTS assigned to the classes included in the study program can be credited.

## **Conclusions**

Thanks to this, graduates of specialist education with the title of a qualified specialist may be admitted to first-cycle or long-cycle studies as a result of the confirmation of learning outcomes. A graduate can be credited with a maximum of 50% of ECTS credits.

This solution allows people with a qualified specialist certificate at the PQF level 5 to shorten the period of study, which is in line with the practices used in other countries around the world.

**In Poland, in practice, there is no level of education that would correspond to the 5th level of the EQF.**

## **A qualified specialist in the law on higher education and science**

1. Specialist education lasts no less than 3 semesters and enables obtaining a full qualification at the level 5 of PQF.
2. The specialist education program defines the learning outcomes taking into account the universal characteristics of the first-cycle specified in the Integrated Qualifications System Act of 22 December 2015 and the characteristics of the second-cycle specified in the regulations issued on the basis of Article 7(2) of this act. The program includes classes that develop practical skills.
3. The condition for completing specialist education is achieving the learning outcomes specified in the specialist education program.
4. A person who completed specialist education receives a certificate of a certified specialist or a certificate of a qualified specialist technologist. Templates of the certificates are defined by the university.
5. The provisions of paragraphs 1-4 do not apply to education in the professions referred to in the regulations issued on the basis of Article 46(1) of the Educational Law Act of 14 December 2016, for which the competent minister is the minister competent for health affairs.

## **A qualified specialist in the Polish Qualifications Framework**

Full qualifications at level 4 of the Polish Qualifications Framework are confirmed by:

- a diploma of graduating from a technical secondary school or post-secondary school or a **second-cycle vocational school** - and of passing the exams confirming qualifications in a given vocation, a secondary school-leaving examination certificate;

<sup>20</sup> This Erasmus<sup>+</sup> project was supported by European Commission funds

at level 5 of the Polish Qualifications Framework, it is confirmed by:

- teacher training college graduation diploma,
- foreign language teacher training college graduation diploma,
- social workers training college graduation diploma;
- qualified specialist certificate;
- qualified specialist technologist certificate;
- graduation from an art school confirming obtaining a vocational degree,
- vocational diploma of graduating from post-secondary school.

### **Level 5 and reducing the competency gap**

The general goal of sustainable development activities is to release the economic potential for *sustainable* development of Poland and to improve the quality of life of Poles. One of the essential conditions for the success of this plan is the clear reduction of competency gaps, which are a barrier to the development of many sectors of our economy. Therefore, an urgent task for all educational and training institutions in Poland is to enrich the high-quality educational offer.

PQF level 5 qualifications are the “bridge” between the qualifications obtained after graduation from secondary school and the qualifications obtained after graduation from the first-cycle studies. Therefore, education at the PQF level 5 can be implemented both within the general education system and through higher education. It should be emphasized that in most EU states where EQF level 5 studies are conducted, they are most often focused on vocational specialization. An opportunity to increase the number of people with PQF level 5 qualifications is also the organization of appropriately advanced training within the framework of non-formal education.

“In the context of the development challenges we are facing, I consider the initiatives of academic circles to launch PQF level 5 education in Polish universities as very valuable. Positive opinions of representatives of many universities regarding the possibility and need to introduce PQF level 5 qualifications to the Polish higher education system give hope that this issue will find its rightful place in the debate on the planned reform of higher education and

that solutions developed with joint efforts will be created, corresponding to the possibilities and needs of various types of universities.”

Prepared on the basis of:

Anna Zalewska/Minister of National Education/Coordinator of the Integrated Qualifications System: <https://dydkowany-specjalista.dlamaturzysty.info/>

## **FOUNDATION OF POLISH RECTORS on “Level 5 as the missing link”:**

The structuring role of the vocational qualifications framework indicated the urgent need to address level 5 (falling between secondary school and undergraduate studies). The research and reflections contained in the subsequent volumes of the Foundation of Polish Rectors together with Pearson Central Europe were directed to the academic community in the form of regular trainings and conferences. There is no dispute in them as to the advisability of introducing level 5 programs, justified by concern for the quality of academic education, demographics, or the educational fate of secondary school graduates. The quality of secondary school education (with or without secondary school-leaving exam) often limits the possibility of further education in the form of a jump from level 4 to level 6. The qualifications framework enables the creation of a bridge – using this space that creates the possibility of equalizing educational opportunities for people who have no chances for education at level 6, or who find this level mentally (intellectually?) too challenging.

For private higher vocational education, the creation of educational opportunities at level 5 may become a measurable value, both in terms of quality and economy. However, it should be clearly emphasized that the success of education must be closely related to the internally accepted graduate profile. Who is to claim level 5 graduates: Ministry of Education or Ministry of Science and Higher Education? What about the Ministry of Labour (qualifications related to specific posts)? The discussion on the quality of programs and the name of qualifications of level 5 graduates and the formalization of the scope of vocational qualifications is not an easy matter, although it is known that it is a level richer in knowledge, skills and social competences than level 4 and poorer than level 6. It should also be remembered that in the semantic tradition there are commonly accepted expectations and a lot of caution is needed

in naming new qualifications and diplomas of level 5 graduates (e.g. the proposed “specialist” already has its place in the structure of job positions).

The changing reality will increasingly demand for the fates of the proposed levels of education, the quality of diplomas and related job positions. The Conference of Rectors of Vocational Schools in Poland, being keenly interested in finalizing the decisions of ministerial authorities and supreme collective bodies (Main Council of Science and Higher Education (RGNiSW), Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA)), upholds the declaration of active participation of representatives of vocational private universities in works that are already mature in terms of time and are extremely socially relevant.

Prof. dr hab. Waldemar Tłokiński Chairman of the Conference of Rectors of Vocational Schools in Poland <https://dyplomowany-specjalista.dlamaturzysty.info/>

#### **4. An example of a training program already implemented by the “Polski Instytut Otwartego Dialogu” Foundation**

*Developmental and educational workshops on therapeutic values.*

*Peer Support Worker*

##### ***Workshop plan***

The program includes 12 modules – 20 hours each

**Total: 240 hours**

##### **Module 1: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Objective: discovering and understanding what health is, learning what a healthy lifestyle is, formulating personal strategies to improve mental health and improve relationships with family and social network.

##### **Module 2: EMPOWERMENT**

Objective: getting to know and empowering the inner sense of strength, finding oneself in everyday life situations, acquiring and practising the ability to make decisions, as well as agreeing and keeping contracts in relationships with other people.

##### **Module 3: EXPERIENCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Objective: supporting the process of becoming aware of thoughts and behaviours related to experiences during a mental illness, acquiring the skills of reflecting and obtaining the so-called “insight” by talking about oneself in a group and listening to other people's experiences.

#### **Module 4: RECOVERY**

Objective: broadening awareness and reflecting on one's own history of illness and recovery, learning about the processes supporting recovery and about people who have recovered, making decisions and actively entering the process of planning one's own recovery.

#### **Module 5: TRIALOG**

Objective: understanding the value of TRIALOG, i.e. cooperation of a. A person with the experience of a mental illness, b. Their family and social network, and c. Professionals (medical doctor, therapist); this cooperation gives the opportunity to learn about different perspectives and views on the same events, and as a result, the possibility of more effective cooperation for recovery.

#### **Module 6: SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

Therapists typically do not talk directly to the client about their psychotic symptoms as it is believed that this may bring back psychotic content. Most people who have experienced some kind of psychological shock feel that traditional psychiatry has not noticed and understood their experiences. Traditional psychiatric treatments focus on the limitations posed by the illness, rather than supporting the patient so that they can have the greatest impact on their recovery process. The objective of the module is to better understand oneself and one's own experiences as well as get to know and understand the various experiences of other people.

#### **Module 7: REPRESENTATIVE OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY ILLNESS**

Objective: Practising the ability to listen to others, recognize one's own needs and the needs of others, and gradually take responsibility for own recovery process and strengthen own sense of agency. Providing people with experience with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences needed to act as representatives of people affected by illness (e.g. by establishing associations, conducting educational activities, etc.), so that they can have a real impact on introducing and shaping changes in the health care system, and the voice of the beneficiaries could be heard when decisions are made – so that therapeutic activities are best adapted to the needs of patients.

#### **Module 8: EVALUATION OF RECOVERY PROCESS**

Objective: The module enables course participants to develop the knowledge and skills needed to be able to evaluate their own healing process and plan for the future. The objective of the module is also to develop the necessary skills so that the participants ARE ABLE TO ACCOMPANY OTHER PERSONS IN CRISIS, better understand their situations and are able to support them in creating plans for the future and in assessing the recovery process. The module is also intended to help people experiencing a mental health crisis to organize their

own thoughts, feelings and to give meaning to the experiences resulting from the illness. In addition, the objective is to strengthen and develop relationships with other people.

### **Module 9: ACCOMPANYING AND SUPPORTING**

In the West, people with mental illness (in remission) have been active in mental health institutions and counselling for a long time, and they have been influencing the quality of psychiatric services. These people are independent and act as experts. A person with past mental crisis explains and shares knowledge about methods and behaviours that were helpful in the recovery process. At the end of the module, participants will know the principles of supporting mentally ill people, will have a diverse knowledge of themselves and others, and the importance of its application in the process of support through communication and work contributing to building relationships. They will be ready to reflect on own style of supporting others. They will realize their competences, strengths and limitations in the context of helping others.

### **Module 10: DEALING IN CRISIS, SUMMARY OF THE WORKSHOPS**

The objective of the module is to provide participants with the ability to safely deal with crisis situations, developing empathy towards oneself and others, understanding what a crisis is, providing a strategy for overcoming crises and going through difficult life situations. In addition, the objective is to learn to support other people experiencing various types of crises.

### **Module 11: Crisis intervention**

Objective: Providing participants with basic strategies and tools for safely coping with a crisis and accompanying other people experiencing a mental crisis.

### **Module 12: Closing and summary of the workshop**

The module summarizing the workshop, the participants reflect on the acquired knowledge and the process of internal work during the workshop. The module also aims to summarize the series of workshops.

<https://otwartydialog.pl/dzialalnosc-fundacji/kursy/asystent-zdrowienia/8.12.2021>