

## **The structure of the High Vocational-Professional Education (HVPE) Area** **Ideas for international common names and terms**

### *Levels within the HVPE Area*

#### **Part 3a**

#### **Preamble**

This document concerns proposals relating to the international Tertiary Education Area, based on all types of formal and non-formal qualifications at levels 5 to 8 of the EQF. This TEA is divided into a number of sectors. These can be clearly defined on the basis of a number of criteria and with the use of instruments that explicitly determine such a sector.

This is an approach that applies to the international classification of the TEA and the sectors indicated therein. In addition, English names are given that are proposed to be used in the international context. These can be used in international cooperation and agreements based on this between countries, institutions and organizations, as the associated sectors have their own defined characteristics.

Every country that wants to participate in this process in one way or another has complete freedom to design its own 'National Tertiary Education Area', with a self-chosen subdivision and appropriate criteria. Choices are made regarding having names for all kinds of concepts, often in the national language. If the government then uses English translations within one's own official communication about the national system, it can also choose one's own approach. There is no international body that can prescribe and enforce this.

We hope that in the coming years more and more countries will base themselves on our proposal and work with it. This can be compared to the Bologna Process that led to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Voluntary agreements have been established that people can adhere to in all kinds of partnerships. It is true that there are still countries that design certain deviating constructions, for all kinds of reasons. Countries can address each other within the EHEA about these matters, but never force each other to make the right adjustments. This can lead to misunderstandings and less transparent constructions and that is why we hope that our initiative will also lead to a form of harmonization for every National HEA.

In short, we work with international proposals and every country may and may participate in the process that we intend to initiate.

#### **1 Introduction**

This document looks separately at the levels within the intended HVPE Area. It is about making clear how within that structure an approach is possible at an international level and, derived from this, the national approach.

#### **2 Use of levels... and how many**

It could well be that the HVPE Area opts for strong detail when it comes to the number of levels. This in itself is not surprising because there are countries such as Ireland that have an NQF with more than 8 levels. Several levels can also be distinguished within a VET sector. The main reason for this is the demand from the world of work and the availability of a structure of functions and associated activities, i.e. competences, within the labour market.

Nevertheless, our proposal is to make a choice that is in line with the EQF and the classification that can be made possible. That means the following:

- There are four levels for the HVPE Area;
- This concerns levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the EQF;
- Nationally, the NQF can be linked to these levels for one's own HVPE qualifications;
- These are formal qualifications, i.e. there is some form of government involvement in a certain way;
- The descriptors for the levels are those of the EQF and national of the NQF, based on the agreements made internationally on the mutual recognition of the level of a qualification.

In document 3b we further discuss the learning paths that can be designed on this basis. Subsequently, in document 4, a proposal is made for further flexibilization of the HVPE Area with the use of certificates based on this classification and the learning paths.

### **3 Names for the levels**

The EHEA uses the concept of 'cycle'. Anyone who successfully completes a cycle is entitled to use a 'degree'. It is up to a country itself to give it a name, with a further addition if necessary. As is known, the most famous international names are: Associate, Bachelor and Master, and PhD. A title may be associated with the latter.

There is a clear need to adopt the same approach for the HVPE Area, also internationally. But certainly nationally, thinking of Germany where the name 'Meister' is put forward. That is an extremely recognizable 'title' there, but translated into English it is 'Master'. In Flanders, the name for level 5 is 'Graduate' and therefore it seems to be a reference to 'Graduate', which is level 7 in many countries. However, the English name for EQF level 5 is Associate degree.

The name is actually also an indirect reference to the level. This could be done with HVPE-5, HVPE-6, etc. But the link to the EQF is very direct and requires further explanation in many countries. Another option is to talk about: HVPE-A, HVPE-B, HVPE-C for levels 5, 6 and 7, and later look at level 8 separately. This sounds quite nice, as such, and also in line with what the EHEA has for the cycles: short, first and second, but a lot more neutral.

It is of course not a major issue at this stage when it comes to agreeing on 'international common names' for the HVPE Area. All of this will undoubtedly come up during the coming process. In the meantime, we propose to use neutral designations;

- HVPE-A – level 5
- HVPE-B – level 6
- HVPE-C – level 7.

As said, it will therefore be examined later how to deal with 'HVPE-D', as level 8.

### **4 Diploma**

For the sake of clarity, we would like to indicate that these are programs that are based on a number of semesters and especially years, for a full-time student. This means that those who successfully complete the course will receive a diploma, with a diploma supplement. So, it is not a certificate.

It is indicated above that we will search for names for the levels involved. The concept of 'degree' does not seem to us to be eligible for the HVPE Area, given the exclusive agreements within the EHEA on that point.

### **5 Involvement government in HVPE-qualifications**

If we look at the involvement of the government in a country in the design of an NHEA, it can be seen that it is quite strong. This is partly due to the Bologna Process, in which the ministers involved periodically consult with each other about what can be done together. This cohesion has diminished somewhat in recent years, but it is still the case that a lot of policy is being implemented nationally for the formal and especially publicly funded institutions.

It is therefore obvious to consider in the coming process for the HVPE Area what involvement the national governments intend. It could be a copy of the EHEA, but this ignores the uniqueness of this educational area and its link to all kinds of characteristics of the VET sector. This therefore

requires a careful approach and, where possible, making combinations in the involvement of all kinds of (national) organizations in both educational systems and areas.

It is already clear in advance that joining the EHEA makes sense on all kinds of points. But we are also dealing with the experiences gained within the VET sector with, for example, ECVET and also EQAVET, as a quality assurance system for the VET sector. This means that the design of the High VPE Area will lead to a limitation of the accumulated strength of the VET sector. The experiences in countries that have been fighting the Higher VET ax for some time can make a very clear contribution to this. Naturally, these must be fitted into an international context.

---

The topics within this series are:

1. Classification of tertiary education, the positioning of the HVPEA and the use of international common names
2. A closer look at the division of tertiary education
3.
  - a Levels within the HVPEA
  - b Learning paths within the HVPEA
  - c Progression from 5 (HVPE - SCHE) to 6 (First Cycle)
  - d Top-up programmes at level 5
4. Subdivision within the HVPEA and certificates
5. The positioning of the L5A
6. Use of credits in tertiary education, linked to sectors
7. Harmonization of instruments for the EHEA and the HVPEA – for example looking at the European Standards and Guidelines, the Dublin Descriptors and the ECTS for the EHEA, EQAVET, EQF-LLL descriptors and ECVET respectively.
8. Use of micro-credentials in the EL5A
9. Why having the EHEA and the HVPEA next to each other...