LITHUANIAN NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK (NQF): DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES TO EUROPEAN QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK (EQF)

Doc. dr. B. Jatkauskienė
A. Mockute

1. State of the art of National Qualification Framework (NQF)

The policy of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) is based on Lifelong learning concept. This concept was used in creating the NQF. EQF provides only general methodological and conceptual models of QF, therefore creating NQF the general principles, experiences of different countries, our own country’s economical, political, social and cultural peculiarities were taken into account. Differences, arisen between NQF and EQF reflects particular Lithuanian world activities and education system specifics, yet guarantee compatibility with EQF.

National Qualifications system consist of:
- Lithuanian Qualifications Framework (unified and transparent system of qualifications embracing all the qualifications levels, ensuring transferability between levels, guaranteeing diversity of the ways of acquiring qualifications, and enabling flexibility in the rapidly changing environment). It is based on the levels of qualifications, that are determined describing professional competences (knowledge, practical skills, creativeness), general competences (communication, mathematical literacy, be able to use IT and etc.), social-cultural skills (independence, responsibility, etc.);
- Professional standards enable to recognise not only formal or non-formal learning, but also practically acquired skills. In order to legalize and expand this opportunity, competences should be formulated in a way each of them separately would be possible to evaluate in a real or simulated environment.
- Qualifications evaluating and providing institutions;
- Qualifications system managing institutions.

Levels of NQF is the most important element of the system. The number doesn’t depend on EQF or sectoral structure, but evaluate, foreseen the possible compatibilities and methods with EQF levels. The NQF is composed of the 8 levels of qualifications. The number of levels of qualifications has been defined primarily referring to the needs of the system of activities of Lithuania and only then taking into consideration the compatibility with EQF.
- I-IV qualification levels cover qualifications obtained at the initial secondary and continuing professional education institutions;
- V lygmuo – transitional level between professional and higher education qualifications;
- VI-VIII levels cover qualifications obtained at higher education institutions.

NQF is being created by the following scheme.
Current situation of the NQF:
- development of qualification registration system;
- the qualification formation, description methodology is established;
- NQF concept and methodology was developed;
- the Lithuanian Qualifications Office by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania was established. It operates as qualification systems' coordination institution in order to ensure the qualification system, its transparency, comparability, persons mobility.

But the reality is that current educational, social, economic and institutional processes in Lithuania, related with qualification planning, provision, assessment and recognition by its scope and content doesn’t correspond to theoretical approach, and processes in Lithuania are different of those in western European countries that have their national systems. Therefore the development of qualification demand analysis and professional activities research is needed. There are no some processes that are needed for modern and flexible qualification systems existence in Lithuania. For example there are no effective non-formal and self-learning evaluation system and the accumulation process of the system.

2. Vocabulary of qualifications, competences

The explanatory dictionary of qualification system terms in three languages (lithuanian, english, french) was released in 2008. This dictionary helps in development of the NQF as a communicating tool. The dictionary seeks to make the usage of different definitions clearer and facilitate the work of developers of the whole system. This dictionary helps specialists of the system of qualifications as well as researchers of vocational education and other spheres and everybody interested in the development of qualifications and their tendencies.
3. Regulation and management of qualifications in Lithuania

In order to reach uniform and coordinated qualification system, its management should be focused into one governmental institution – Lithuanian Qualifications Office (later in the text Office). Such office was established in Lithuania in 2007.

The mission of the Office – to coordinate qualifications system aiming to ensure the accordance of qualifications to national economy needs, their transparency, comparability, learning continuity, persons' professional and territorial movement.

The Office follow the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, international treaties, law of professional education of the Republic of Lithuania and other laws of the Republic of Lithuania.

The main tasks of the Office

- To coordinate the qualifications system;
- To ensure the quality of qualifications system’s activities;
- To organize the qualification system’s formation issues;
- To collect and store the information about qualification system’s changes, implement the research of the state of the qualification system;
- To analyze, assess and improve the operation of the qualifications system;
- To organize and sponsor the preparation of professional standards;
- To coordinate and implement national and international projects related with qualification system;
- To cooperate with other Lithuanian, international, European Union and other countries institutions and organizations about qualification system’s formation, development, implementation and recognition issues;
- To create information system of the qualifications system;
- To consult and provide methodological recommendations and information to competences assessing institutions, social partners, other institutions and private persons;

And other tasks.

4. Information on the diploma supplement

Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions give Diplomas with Diploma Supplement (since 2006) that follows the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international ‘transparency’ and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It is free from any value judgments, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition.

5. Labor market vs. provided qualifications

In recent years employers complain that most qualified specialists don’t correspond to the labor market needs. Every sixth specialist needs re-qualification, that requires financial and time inputs.

Representatives of professional education system institutions state, that they follow subjective imagination of the labor market needs and its tendencies.

The problem could be solved by implementing approved professional standards by the economy world and professional education institutions. It is important to make a detailed professional activity research and their confirmation process before formulating the professional standards. And it should be made
together with economy world represents and professional education experts. The clear structurized and multi-stage planning, approval and validation process of professional standards would be a basis for close cooperation between economy world and professional specialist. At the moment there are 168 prepared and approved professional standarts, 157 out of them – based on a new structure. The is also a Computer engineering V level profession standart prepared.

Professional standarts, prepared in national level are uniform in whole country, harmonized with all national employers and professional unions, and are applied in all qualifications providing, assessing and accrediting institutions.

Lithuanian NQF in order to ensure the connectivity between processes of the system, different social groups (government, employers and working organizations), also qualification planning, acquisition, assessment and accreditation institutions, must realize one aim – to ensure the quantitative and qualitative planning and real qualifications accordance for economy world activities and public needs.

6. Qualifications application to different sectors

Qualifications are provided by different formal and non-formal education institutions in Lithuania. Therefore only employers can choose desirable specialist by different sectors and professional levels (higher non-university education, higher university education, labor market professional education, primary professional education). In the AIKOS (Open information, consultation and orientation system) data system one may find 8 different qualifications in informatics section. For example:

**Informatics engineering Bachelor qualification degree** is required to work at informatics engineering position. A person, who obtained this qualification, has to:
- be able to design, create, install, operate and improve computer systems;
- apply best available technologies;
- assess qualitative parameters of computer systems;
- be experienced in operating of computer systems’ technical equipment, software and effectively design, configure and administrate computer nets, evaluating basic factors of business environment;
- practically solve computer engineering problems;
- know computer elements, programming technologies, computer architecture, operating systems, databases, basic building principles of computer systems and computer nets;
- know how to responsibly and independently organize the work, fluently express thoughts, have logic, critical and constructive thinking, identify problems and foresee their solving, be polite and tolerant.

Informatics engineering Bachelor qualification degree may be obtained at universities that carry studies by informatics engineering study programmes. To get a Bachelor degree a person must have secondary education. Installation, operation and improving of computer systems and computer net skills, obtained by non-formal or self-learning are not recognized. After obtaining a degree, a person can work at informatics engineering companies, desining, installing, operating and improving of computer systems and networks.

**Vocational bachelor (non-university studies)**
**Information systems engineer qualification** is required to work as an engineer of information systems. A person, obtained qualification of information systems engineer, has to:

- be able to collect, renew and prepare computers for use, do computer diagnosis, eliminate computer and external devices disorders, to set internal computer net and eliminate its operation disorders, analyze computers and softwares technical characteristics; install, operate, modify information systems at any office;
be aware of legal documents in the field of chosen activity area, databases and information systems, microprocessors, computer architecture and organization, computer nets, wbgl technologies, digital management systems, program engineering, business plan development process;
- know how to responsibly and independently organize the work, fluently express thoughts, have logic, critical and constructive thinking, identify problems and foresee their solving, be polite, tolerant and be self-controlled.

Information systems engineer qualification may be obtained at colleges, that carry studies by information systems study programme. To get a information systems engineer qualification a person must have secondary education. Skills obtained non-formally or by self-learning are not recognized. After obtaining a degree, a person can work as system engineers at different service providing, telecommunication, automatic systems and other computing companies, in private or public sector, banks, transport, health and other companies.

7. Influence to qualifications system of academic, business world and social partners

One of the most significant vocational training features – to strengthen the vocational training and labor, economic world connection. Employers and other actors of activity system are being more and more involved into the initial vocational training as well as into continuing education system. The participation of employers in assessment and recognition of competences is one of the qualification supply and demand regulation factors. Now employers are only involved into final evaluation stage of initial vocational training.

In order to get non-formal learning assessment and recognition, it is important to consider three issues: if provided qualification is recognized by labor market; if diploma/sertificate shows not only theoretical knowledge, but also professional experience, if recognized skills enable to freely move within labour market. The non-formal learning assessment and recognition face with the following problems:
- institutional (what institutions should assess);
- methodologic (which methodology would be secure and valid);
- evaluation (does assessment is objective);

Employers and education institutions in Lithuania survey shows, that even though the non-formal learning recognition demand is increasing, vocational training institutions are not enough aware and ready to carry the assessment and recognition of non-formally acquired competences, and also don’t know how to involve social partners to this process.

Solving non-formal education and self-learning assessment and recognition issues, it is very important not only the function of social partners, but also practical application of responsibilities to the vocational training system. But for now in Lithuania there is a lack of cooperation between academic, activity world and other social partners in the qualification system.

8. Types of qualifications: secotial, public qualifications recognized by labour market

List of Professions and their assessment and recognition providing institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competent institution</th>
<th>Profession</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Environment</td>
<td>Architect</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Territory planning specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Culture</td>
<td>Immovable culture values protection specialist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Renovator</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Social Security and</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Transport and Communications</td>
<td>The trainer, training drivers to convey hazardous cargos</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drivers’ trainer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Driving instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Medical doctor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Odontologist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Obstetrician</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kinesy-therapist</td>
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<td>Ergo-therapist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Masseur</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Diet specialist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dental mechanic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ocular hygienist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant odontologist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nurse</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pharmacist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pharma-technician</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bio-medicine technologist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medical cosmetologist</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Science and Education</td>
<td>Special educator</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social educator</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
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<td>Vocational trainer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>School psychologist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Justice</td>
<td>Attorney-at-law</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assistant attorney-at-law</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patent attorney</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ministry of Interior</td>
<td>Police officer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Firefighter rescuer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State border guard officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Securities Commission of the Republic of Lithuania</td>
<td>Stock broker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Nutrition and Veterinary Service</td>
<td>Veterinarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Tourism Department under the Ministry of Economy</td>
<td>Guide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Person who non-formally obtain knowledge, skills, and has work experience between 1 and 18 years, may take an equivalency exam at social security and labor ministries appointed vocational training institutions and obtain recognized professional qualification and certificate.

According to recognition aim there are two types of qualifications recognition and related procedures:

1 table. Systems of qualifications recognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic recognition (for continuing studies)</th>
<th>Vocational recognition (for career purposes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of qualifications obtained abroad, when a person seek continuing studies. Assessing it is important to determine if person can continue desired studies.</td>
<td>Recognition of qualifications obtained abroad, when a person seek for career opportunities. In vocational recognition it is important if person had enough qualification, skills to involve in vocational activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though the aim of both qualification recognition is different, the result also might be different. But also there recognitions have similarities: they aim to stimulate students and work mobility, also the transparency of qualifications recognition.

### 2 table. Topology of academic and vocational recognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic recognition (for continuing studies)</th>
<th>Vocational recognition (for career purposes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cumulative</strong> academic recognition – when applicant finished all studies, obtained qualification and certification in one country and seeks to study in another.</td>
<td><strong>De jure</strong> vocational recognition – when education or activity, that is wanted, is regulated by legal documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substitution</strong> academic recognition – recognition of applicants studies abroad (i.e. student exchange), when part of studies at hosting institution is covered by studies abroad.</td>
<td><strong>De facto</strong> vocational recognition – recognition of qualification obtained abroad, when užsiennyje įgytos kvalifikacijos pripažinimas, when education or activity, that is wanted, is not regulated by legal documents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When corresponding vocational activity is not regulated by national or EU legal documents, the final resolution for recognition is done by employer. Recently employers are interested in those who has international experience – they seek to make their business more international. However employers don’t have experience in assessing international diplomas and qualifications, because there lack of information about foreign education systems, and so they are not able to assess and compare qualifications. In this case the European academic mobility information centres could help – knowing foreign education systems and qualifications they can provide recommendations for de facto vocational recognition. This aspect becomes very important in the context of Bologna declaration (European factor) and market (also education providers) globalization.

So, the equivalence principle can be implemented by qualification recognition idea: diploma, qualification, part studies are recognized for a particular purpose. Recognition means that qualification, even not totally equivalent, is recognized appropriate for a particular purpose (i.e. to enter PhD).

Qualifications of higher education are classified into 6 main spheres: humanitarian sciences, art studies, social sciences, physics sciences, biomedical sciences and technology sciences. Every study sphere contains of different fields, and four number code is given to every of them. Also every study sphere is given qualification degree and qualification, after finishing higher education institution. But in this classification the study programmes are better distinguished than qualification itself. For example, after finishing either the fist or second study level, art critic (programme code 05H1) acquires teachers qualification.
In the vocational qualifications database the qualifications are ranked by study level or study programmes, therefore, the same qualification might be obtained after finishing higher university (first or second level) studies, non-university studies or higher education studies. An obvious disadvantage of such qualification – it is not clear, if the studies of different levels provides the same level qualification. It is also not clear how to ensure the transferability between programmes when the same qualification is being obtained.

Therefore developing the qualifications registry it is very important to develop a legal basis and national qualifications frameworks regulations. The regulations would name responsible parties in preparation and support of qualification registry and terms of their cooperation.

Qualifications Registry would follow the qualifications classification, existing databases. It should also describe professional standards and programmes variety. If standards were designed from competences elements (modules), and every of it would have the main standards parameters: competences, knowledge and skills that would be acquired after taking the module, described learning outcomes, learning spheres, they also should be registered in the Registry.

Levels of qualifications give information to interested parties and organizations about qualifications, their structure, ways of obtaining it and qualification development possibilities. Therefore depending on the qualifications description quality, scope, particularity, clarity and other characteristics, the implementation of qualification framework might be successful and effective.

9. Enter conditions to level V in Lithuania

The basis of VI-VIII qualifications levels are cognitive competences. Function and general competences only supplement and support cognitive competences in qualification development and qualification improving spheres.

**Characteristics for obtaining the qualification**

**V level.** This qualification may be acquired at the initial vocational training or adult vocational education or training institution, or through non-formal and informal learning. By the routes of acquisition of qualifications, there are 2 sub-levels of the level V qualifications: 5a and 5b. Sub-level 5a qualifications may be acquired upon completing at least a half of the Bachelor’s studies at a university without achieving the Bachelor’s degree. Sub-level 5b qualifications may be acquired upon completing a short 2-year studies programme at a college. Both sub-level qualifications also may be achieved through non-formal and informal learning. The specifying point of acquisition this qualification is that cognitive and general competences are obtained and that allows solving tasks that are more complex than manual tasks at level I to level IV. Combinations of functional competences acquired at vocational training institutions or through practice and cognitive competences of higher level acquired mostly at higher education institutions enable to deal with complex problems of activities and perform activities related to other spheres of learning. Learning at this level demands from the learner a well developed independence, coaching, and control functions that are realized only through learning outcomes assessment. At this level teacher’s as a consultant’s or mentor’s activities are very important. The achievement of qualifications at level V provides access to higher education programmes at universities or colleges.

**VI level.** Learning situations at IV level usually are not stable and require solving of complex problems during the learning process. Learning is often highly specialized. Learning for level VI qualifications usually takes place in higher education institutions (universities and colleges). There is wide range of programmes offered at the universities. The programmes cover particular fields of science and are aimed at acquisition of fundamental knowledge and development of skills. Studies are based on scientific research and presentation of findings to students. Qualifications acquired at colleges are based on studies of narrower orientation then at universities. Function and general competences are dominated at the colleges. Studies are based on applied scientific research. Qualifications are recognized by colleges itself. Combined theoretical and practical learning is applied to studies at this level. Students are encouraged to work
independently and to perform research-related tasks. Qualifications at VI level are associated with the first cycle qualifications in higher education in the framework developed under the Bologna process. VI level qualification allow carrying professional job and often it is a background qualification seeking a career in professional or managing positions. This qualification also provides access for further learning opportunities in the same field of studies or moving to related field of studies.

**Acquisition of qualifications.** According to institutional acquisition of qualifications, the V level qualification may be acquired in vocational education institutions (sectoral level) or after finishing two years short-time studies at colleges (national level). The qualification of this level might be acquired also non-formally of self-learning. Qualifications obtained formally, non-formally or in self-learning are recognized by state authorized institutions. V levels qualification enable to continue studies at VI level, studying at higher education institutions.

10. **Qualifications and their accreditation**

**Accreditation** is a third party resolution, that Organization correspond to determined requirements and is competent to carry evaluation activities. It is a procedure when an authoritative body officially declare, that organization or person is competent to carry concrete tasks.

Accreditation is a confirmed licence; accreditation bodies are authorized by government bodies. If authoritative body officially declare that body (or a person) is competent to carry certification, verification and testing tasks, then this body is being accredited for those tasks.

**Accreditation bodies** – the third parties that carry the accreditation; they operate in authorization of other persons.

Qualifications accreditation in Lithuania is not identical to institutional accreditation. But those both accreditation forms are related.

11. **Public certification vs. private certification**

It is a procedure, when the third parties provides written confirmation, that product, process or service correspond to determined requirements. Certification process is to prove (according to certificate, marking or label) the accordance to the indicated products, services, organizations and persons system. Certification may be defined as a prove of accordance. Product or service may comply the standards or necessar European directive requirements. Certification may be imposed (control certification) or chosen by producer itself, mostly for commercial reasons (volunteer certification).

The **system of certification** is a system with its methodological and management rules, intended for the implementation of certification conformity (covers testing and assessment rules). Certification bodies – bodies that confirm the conformity. It might be implemented regionally, nationally or internationally.

The **certification scheme** is a certification system, associated with concrete products, processes and services that applies the same standards and procedures.

The **conformity certificate** – it’s a document, indicating that product, process or service complies particular standart or other standard document. Conformity is assessed according to several connected types of systems: standards, specifications or technical rules, terms, levels of competences and etc. there are two main types of conformity assessment:

- conformity assessment of products, services or persons;
- conformity assessment of organizations.

**Qualification certificate** – a document, issued according to certification rules and certifies that person is competent to perform particular tasks according to international and European standards requirements.
National accreditation office. National accreditation office may be established and their provisions certified by the Government or its authorized institution. The main functions of the National accreditation office:
1) assess the certification and controlling agencies and testing laboratories that are offered by the authorized institutions;
2) accredit certification and controlling agencies, testing and calibration laboratories by their request, issue accreditation certificates and provide information about certification;
3) monitor the activities of accredited and certified agencies, testing and calibrating laboratories;
4) cancel or suspend accreditation certificates;
5) disseminate the results of accreditation and list of accredited agencies and their activities at international level etc.

Certification offices and types:
1) public bodies, and agencies without legal status;
2) certification agencies may be: products certification agencies, quality systems certification agencies, persons certification agencies.

Persons certification agencies:
1) certificate natural persons, recognize qualifications to perform proper tasks;
2) cancel or suspend qualification certificates.

12. Traditional qualifications vs. practical (useful) qualifications

Traditional qualifications mostly are acquired formally and is certified by state recognized certificate or diploma. Other qualifications are acquired non-formally. Non-formal education is being carried by vocational training institutions, companies that incorporate such activity to their provisions or has teaching licenses issued by the Ministry of Education and Science. Non-formal education is carried by non-formal education programmes that are registered in the Labour market non-formal vocational training study programmes list.

The non-formal education programmes have been prepared and can be applied to non-formal vocational training. Those programmes are registered in territorial Labour market training office and they inform Lithuanian Labour market training office.

After completion the non-formal vocational training course, the certificates of Labour market training office are issued. There are two kinds of certificates: module completion certificate and qualification improvement certificate. Individuals that during non-formal vocational training obtained knowledge, skills and have more that one year work experience may take an exam at vocational training institutions (authorized by Social security and Labour ministries) or companies and may obtain state recognized professional qualification and qualification certificate.

Non-formal education by itself is not a panacea against all problems, but must be combined with formal education, that every learner would have a possibility to acquire the qualification that is in demand and needed in the labour market and for the person itself.

Labour market’s non-formal vocational training is a integrated part of non-formal adult education, intended for people to improve their qualification or to acquire desired competences. The non-formal labour market vocational training rules were adopted in 2002. The training programmes are regularized together with partners, in the first place with employers (the vocational training and education comitee of Association of Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, Lithuanian auto-enterprisers association, national hotels and restaurants association and etc.), and Lithuanian Labour Market training office. After completion of such programme, the certificate may be issued.

Non-formal training demand:
- in the Labour market vocational training until the year of 2000, the formal training programmes covered 70-80% of total training volume;
- formal taining covered only 57% in 2001;
there were 900 non-formal training programmes registered in the first half-year of 2007.

The most popular study area at higher education institutes is business and administration. There were 46% of college students and 20% of university students studying in those area programmes. Every fifth (23.4%) student was studying natural, technical and applied sciences. To become engineers seeks 9.7% of colleges’ and 10.6% of universities’ students, law – accordingly 6.1% and 10.3%. Less popular was pedagogy: 6.4% colleges and 12.9% universities’ students. The number of students in this area decreased by 12% and 7%.

In 2004-2005, engineering and business and administration accounted for 48.7% of all vocational school pupils. Less than 0.5% of vocational school pupils studied computing and health.

13. Number of students in higher education in Lithuania

There were more than 200,000 young people seeking for higher education in 2007. 42% of 20-24 years old young people were studying at the state universities (1 diagram).

1 diagram. 20–24 yrs old students, studying at the higher education institutions
percent, comparing with all 20-24 years old residents

50 institutions of higher education provide students with qualifications – 22 universities and 28 colleges (amongst them 7 universities and 12 colleges – private). The number of institutions didn’t change during 2007, but there were 5,000 students more than previous year. The number of students has increased by 1,000 in universities and by 4,000 in colleges, and reached the number of accordingly 144,300 and 60,100.

At the beginning of 2007-2008 there were 113,000 students at the Bachelor level studies, and 28,000 at higher – Masters – level. As in previous years, 6 from 10 students were at Masters after finishing the Bachelor studies.

More and more students choose night or part-time studies (42% of university’s students and 56% of college’s students). 21,600 (15%) university students and 2,600 (4%) college’s students are distant learning students. Almost ¾ college’s and university’s students are younger then 25 years old. There are 17% older that 30 years old. The average age in Bachelor studies is 24 and in master studies – 26 (6 diagram).

6 diagram. Evening and part-time students at higher education institutions
Percent
The number of students is very disproportionate between vocational education institutions, colleges and universities: according to LT statistics department, there were 143,000 students at universities, 56,300 at colleges and 45,400 at vocational education institutions in 2006 and in 2007-2008 there were already 144,300 at universities, 60,100 at colleges. In the progressive western countries allocation of the post-secondary sector students is completely opposite: there are more students at the vocational education institutions and least at the universities. Therefore Lithuanian education system is like an upside-down pyramid that we need to reform.

## 14. Differences between levels V and VI, continuity of skills acquired

The comparison of the level V and level six in European and National qualification systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQF levels</th>
<th>Offering NQF levels</th>
<th>Present Lithuanian vocational training levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>V LEVEL</strong></td>
<td>Extensive theoretical knowledge and practical skills are needed for obtaining the level. It is required to be able to apply the knowledge and skills for either abstract or concrete problem solving. Learning skills is a background for independent learning, and qualification is based on work or studies, including human resources and project management.</td>
<td>Activities consist of complex actions and operations, which are held in one or a few activity fields. Qualification consists of comparable multipurpose competences that overpass one work-place and allow understanding and effectively organizing and managing activities, performed in a few different work-places. Qualification at this level can be obtained at secondary vocational training and adult vocational training institutions. It can be also obtained in short 2 years study cycle in colleges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VI LEVEL</strong></td>
<td>Particular theoretical knowledge and practical skills and abilities, related with study or work area, is needed to obtain the level and part of the knowledge should be up to date. Such qualifications require applying the knowledge</td>
<td>Qualification consists of special professional practice knowledge, activity process management and working in team ability, creativeness and ability to manage methods and tools in constantly changing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for generating and maintaining arguments, solving problems and in decision-making.

special vocational environment. Qualification is acquired in higher education institutions (basic studies – first level consistent university and non-university studies) or through non-formal learning and appropriate qualifications are recognized in a working place. VI qualification is accepted when a person is granted with a Bachelor diploma. Sectoral and vocational institutions may offer to recognize self-learning in a working place.

and maintenance functions is obtain. Minimal general background: higher non-university education. 

V level. Competence to independently perform creative, responsible activity in a specific work area. Comprehensive knowledge based abilities allow to plan and evaluate tasks, to perform management functions. Minimal general background: higher university education.

Lithuanian higher education system.
15. Competitiveness of initial and continuing education

Qualification system reduce the differences between formal and non-formal learning. The qualification acquisition in vocational training, higher education institutions, non-formally and by self-learning integration to the uniform national qualifications system would open bridges to all learners to obtain desired qualification that will ensure competitive job positions in the labour market.

Now companies need employees that are flexible and can quickly adapt to changing labour market. They are asked to be aware of new technologies, develop new work techniques, actively participate in a team, manage conflict situations, work independently and try to get leaders position. Most often the successful employee is the one that is motivated, ambitious, loyal and open for new challenges.

There are 8 key competence spheres:
- communication in the mother-tongue language;
- communication in the foreign language;
- mathematic literacy and basic knowledge of science and technologies;
- digital competence;
- learning to learn;
- interpersonal, intercultural and citizen competences;
- entrepreneurship;
- cultural self-expression.

Competitive labour force characteristics

**Literacy skills**: to read, write, able to perform mathematical and arithmetic operations, listen and speak.

**Thinking skills**: creative thinking, take decisions, solve problems, imagine, know how to learn, think.

**Personal and ethic characteristics**: take responsibility, have self-esteem, is social, self manager, work scheduled, honest and open.

Five competences.
Resources: identify, structure, plan and allocate resources.
Interpersonal relations: work with others.
Information: find and use information.
Systems: understand complex connections, systems.
Technologies: work, use different technologies.

Most of those competitive labour force characteristics are obtained during work practice or non-formaly, therefore it is important to properly understand the significance of non-formal and self-learning and assess it. Competition ensure the quality and therefore it is a great thing to students. But universities need more freedom for actions and proper financial system in order to ensure honest competition. The variety of programmes stimulate competition. But competition is not a barrier for cooperation. Competition firstly mean academic quality, not only commercial benefit.

Lithuanian higher education institutions is ready to take responsibility in creating competitive education, but there is a need of wider managerial autonomy (not only classic academic freedom), flexible managing infrastructure and right financing system.

Competitiveness ensures study quality, therefore it is useful for students, institutions and to other interested in higher education parties. Being more competitive in the world, we have to be more open, transparent and competitive at home. Therefore the reform of provided services and marketing culture is needed in the way that it correspond to European higher education reality and values, such as cultural diversity, scientific research priority and social responsibility.

Europe must have such position that would enable to attract talents from all around the world. But in order to reach that, the change of non adequate immigration and labour market legal documents is needed. European competition rises many problems. The first problem is intellectual emigration. In solving this problem the following actions should be taken:
- implementation of study programmes in main world languages in institutions;
- information about institution programmes and dissemination not only in Europe, but also in other countries: therefore it is very important to pay attention to study programmes marketing (ensure the demand);
- establish a network of services for international students and lecturers, that would stimulate their mobility;

The implementation of strategig networking of services with different countries would enable Europen higher education institutions to compete with other continents higher education institutions.

References

11. Lietuvos Respublikos neformaliojo suaugusiųjų švietimo įstatymas (1998),