On April 23rd 2008, the European Parliament and the Council enacted the Recommendation on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF), a common European reference framework which enables linking the qualifications of the Member States and calls upon the Member States to set their own national qualification frameworks.

In 2009, the Spanish Government entrusted the Ministry of Education with the drawing up of the Spanish Qualifications Framework. In 2011, the Sustainable Economy Act demanded the creation of this framework in order to encourage and increase the mobility of students and workers.

The Spanish Qualifications Framework is a national qualifications framework (degrees, diplomas and certificates) that includes lifelong learning. It is a structure that organises qualifications according to levels and comprises from the most basic to the most complex learning. It therefore covers general and adult education, vocational education and training, and higher education.

It includes:

- qualifications obtained outside the education system through in-service training, work activity, collaboration with NGOs, etc.
- qualifications obtained in the education system.

The proposed framework has eight levels and the level descriptors, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, and are inspired by the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, but adapted to the national context.

The Spanish Qualifications Framework aims to correlate and coordinate the different subsystems of education and training and include the qualifications obtained in compulsory, post-secondary and higher education, as well as integrate the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

**Main objectives of the Spanish Qualifications Framework**

- make qualifications more understandable by describing them in terms of learning outcomes
- improve citizens’ information on national qualifications, as well as facilitate and promote mobility
- support lifelong learning and correlate initial vocational training and vocational training for employment, as well as improve access and participation in this type of training, especially of people with some kind of disability
- facilitate the identification, validation and recognition of all types of learning outcomes, including those related to non-formal and informal learning
- facilitate transition and progression between the different training subsystems
- develop procedures for the recognition of non-formal learning
- reduce early school leaving.

**Key actors**
The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, through the Directorate General for Vocational Training, coordinates the development and implementation of the Spanish Qualifications Framework in cooperation with the Ministries of Employment and Social Security, of Industry, Energy and Tourism, and of Economy and Competitiveness.

Other social actors are also involved in the development of the Spanish Qualifications Framework:

- companies, through the Spanish Confederation of Business Organisations or the Spanish Confederation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
- institutional bodies, such as the Sectoral Committee for Education or the General Committee for University Policy
- consultative bodies, such as the State Council for Education, the Council for Vocational Training, the Council for Artistic Education and the University Council
- educational evaluation agencies and other professional associations and corporations
- Departments for Education of the Autonomous Communities.

Although the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training is in charge of the drafting and coordination of the actions and the necessary regulations for its implementation, as well as the body responsible for guiding its successful implementation through the National Coordination Point, its actual implementation is the responsibility of public authorities and the different social actors.

**Structure of the Spanish Qualifications Framework: levels and learning outcomes**

The eight levels of the framework cover all types of qualifications in Spain. Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences.

The four upper levels are compatible with the levels of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, based on the Dublin descriptors. For more information, see Higher Education [2].

The establishment of learning outcomes constitutes an essential part of the development and implementation of the Spanish Qualifications Framework and the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. The term ‘learning outcome’ represents a considerable change in the education and training system in Spain. The level of implementation of learning outcomes varies depending on the training subsystem, vocational training being the one where they are currently most developed.

**Development and implementation of the Spanish Qualifications Framework**

A Royal Decree that will establish the foundations for its implementation is currently under preparation.

In such project, the establishment of a committee including social actors, ministries, trade unions and the most representative employers’ associations, as well as experts in vocational qualifications of different sectors, is recommended. This committee would be in charge of deciding on the assignment of qualifications to the levels of the Spanish Qualifications Framework, which should be based on three criteria:

- comparability between the descriptors of the qualifications, defined as learning outcomes, and the level descriptors of the Spanish Qualifications Framework
- implementation of a common quality assurance system in higher education and vocational training
- public consultation with the bodies and organisations involved in the design of qualifications in their respective sectors.

The intention is to assign formal education qualifications to the levels of the Spanish Qualifications Framework in the first place. The assignment of qualifications related to the validation of non-formal
and informal learning is expected to be more complicated.

For more information, see the Spanish Qualifications Framework web portal [3].