Enhancing Coaches' Learning, Mobility and Employability in the European Union

Report #1
Qualification Frameworks and Employment and Mobility Tools in the European Union
Implications for Sport Coaching
and the European Sport Coaching Framework

March 2016

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary

This report is part of **Project CoachLearn**, an Erasmus+ co-funded initiative led by Leeds Beckett University seeking to enhance sport coaches' learning, mobility and employability in the European Union. The principal output sought by CoachLearn is the development of a European Sport Coaching Framework to act as a non-regulatory reference point for the development of coaching and coach education across Europe. This report aims to document and analyse the impact that general and sport specific education frameworks and mobility tools have had in the European coach education landscape since they first appeared. As a result of this analysis, a set of recommendations are made for the development of the European Sport Coaching Framework.

> *The principal output sought by CoachLearn is the development of a European Sport Coaching Framework to act as a non-regulatory reference point for the development of coaching and coach education across Europe.*

The General Picture

The education landscape in the European Union has continually evolved over the last thirty years. The speed of change has, however, accelerated dramatically in the last decade. Lifelong learning, a reduction of the gap between the worlds of education and work, and increasing the overall competitiveness, employability and mobility of European workers have been the ultimate objectives. Watershed initiatives such as the Bologna process, the European Credit Accumulation and Transfer System, the European Qualifications Framework, and the Education strand of the Europe 2020 Strategy have provided the required political momentum and structural changes to foster this transformation.

> *Qualifications in Europe have shifted towards an output-based approach built around the notion of learning outcomes and credits.*

Such schemes have promoted and facilitated a shift towards an output-based approach to qualification design and delivery built around the notion of learning outcomes, workloads measured in units of learning and credits. The development of competence in the learners has become the ultimate currency. Improvement to national structures and a convergent approach to education within a diverse national picture have been the desirable by-products.

Despite the progress to date, a number of challenges for the implementation of these frameworks and tools have been identified. There is a need for:

- Enhanced clarity about how the existing frameworks and tools function and interact, and their benefits to end-users
- Implementation tools and end-user support mechanisms.
- National quality assurance processes to be strengthened in order to raise the level of trust between countries and amongst different sectors of education.
- Greater engagement with the labour market to continue to close the gap between education and the workplace

- Robust monitoring and evaluation systems to facilitate the review and adjustment of the various initiatives

The Coach Education Landscape

The development of a suitably educated coaching workforce has been recognised as a priority area at the highest levels of European policy. The 2007 White Paper on Sport, the 2011 Communication on Enhancing the European Dimension of Sport, and the Work Plans for Sport 2011-2014 and 2014-2017 all highlight the need to review and improve the way coaches are trained. Over the last ten years, the European Coaching Council (the European branch of the International Council for Coaching Excellence) has led a number of initiatives to develop coach education within the Union. These initiatives have reflected the wider changes in the overall education landscape. The European Framework for the Recognition of Coaching Competences and Qualifications (EFRCCQ; ECC, 2007) and the International Sport Coaching Framework (ISCF; ICCE, ASOIF & LBU, 2013) have kick-started the process of modernising coach education in Europe and laid the foundation for its alignment with wider European structures.

> *The figure of the coach is central in 21st century society. The development of a suitably educated coaching workforce has been recognised as a priority area at the highest levels of European policy.*

Implications for the European Sport Coaching Framework

The EFRCCQ and ISCF have helped governments and institutions in Europe and beyond realise the importance of coaching and coach education. Countries as diverse as the USA, South Africa, India, Portugal, Poland, Italy, Japan and the Philippines have used them to guide their efforts in coach education and development. Despite these advances, the analysis conducted in this report has identified a number of areas that need to be reflected upon and addressed in any future developments. Therefore, the proposed European Sport Coaching Framework should strive to:

- Be seen and promoted as a non-mandatory, enabling, thinking tool designed to support the development of coaching systems in a flexible way which respects the right to autonomy and sovereignty of EU Member States
- Develop support mechanisms and implementation tools to aid those institutions tasked with enhancing coach education and coaching systems
- Create explicit links to relevant EU structures such as EQF, ECVET and EQAVET
- Use an output based approach based on learning outcomes and competence
- Review conceptions of competence in the EU and adopt a broader view than ISCF and EFRCCQ
- Establish the parameters for the recognition of coaching as a profession in the EU (i.e. guidance in relation to certification and licensing; minimum standards of deployment; coaches' charter).
- Facilitate collaboration and mutual recognition between VET, HE and federations
- Facilitate trust and mutual recognition across national boundaries through standardised quality assurance mechanisms

- Outline coach education curricula which respect the principles of long-term coach development and which provide developing coaches with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to fulfil their functions and roles
- Emphasise the need for mandatory practicum periods of learning to enhance learning and competence development, and provide guidance regarding different implementation models
- Enhance the recognition of prior learning and the development of multi-modal education and more flexible learning pathways
- Recognise the figure of the coach developer and the importance of long-term coach developer pathways

The emerging educational landscape presents unique challenges and opportunities for coaching. Organisations educating and developing coaches have a responsibility to create systems which offer coaches clear and effective pathways to develop their trade. The ESCF aims to provide a shared yet flexible roadmap to guide and support them.

The project CoachLearn partners would like to thank you for your commitment to the development of coaching and coaches and wish you all the best in your endeavours. Please do not hesitate to contact us on info@coachlearn.eu

2. Project CoachLearn – Background & Introduction

CoachLearn is led by Leeds Beckett University (UK) in conjunction with the International Council for Coaching Excellence (UK), Trainerakademie Köln (Germany), the Hungarian Coaching Association (Hungary), Haaga-Helia University (Finland) and NOC*NSF (Netherlands). The project is co-funded through an Erasmus+ bid (2014 call) under the Strategic Partnerships Action within Key Action 2 – Cooperation and Innovation for Good Practices. It started in October 2014 and will be completed in August 2017.

CoachLearn Rationale

Sport coaches are at the front-line of sport development and delivery. Based on previous studies, it is estimated that there could be as many as 5 to 9 million coaches operating across Europe, with a likely reach of somewhere between 50 and 100 million sport participants (Duffy et al., 2011; European Commission, in preparation). In June 2014 the European Commission (Directorate-General for Education and Culture: Youth and Sport) produced an Implementation Report for the period 2007-2014. A key element of this implementation report was the further work required on the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) within the sport sector. This had already been acknowledged in the Council's Work Plan for sport 2011-2014 (European Council, 2011), and re-emphasised in the 2014-2017 edition (European Council, 2014).

Notwithstanding considerable work in recent years, a number of key issues remain to be addressed:

a) Despite significant progress on the development of the European Framework for the Recognition of Sport Coaching Competence and Qualifications (EFRCCQ; ECC, 2007), there remains a need to *further evolve this work so that it aligns with EQF and with the recently developed International Sport Coaching Framework* (ISCF; ICCE, ASOIF and LBU, 2013). Achieving clarity around the necessary competencies per role and domain will support this.

b) Sport coaching is, by its nature, lifelong and employment/deployment orientated. Yet, there is a need to *develop consistent and appropriate approaches to the recognition of prior learning* that are more closely related to the work and life experiences of volunteer; part-time and full-time coaches.

c) Within this context, there is also need to develop *a more effective system for the recognition of experience, education and qualifications that occur in a work based context*.

d) The nature and contribution of the *sport coaching workforce* has not been quantified, with consequent implications for planning; education and training; work-integrated learning; employment and mobility.

CoachLearn Objectives

In order to address the above issues CoachLearn will:

a) Develop a *European Sport Coaching Framework* (ESCF) that is responsive to the needs of coaches and the idiosyncrasies of international, national and sport specific contexts. This Framework will be aligned to EQF and the International Sport Coaching Framework, and referenced against other relevant European qualification systems and tools.

b) Provide, through a careful process of ***data collection and analysis***, a clear picture of the needs of sport coaches, coach developers (trainers of coaches) and a variety of organisations with a stake in their education, employment and mobility.

c) Identify ***examples of good practice at a global and European level*** in relation to systems and frameworks of education, employment and mobility of sports coaches.

d) Offer an accurate representation of the ***nature of the sport coaching workforce*** in the five participant countries in relation to its status (volunteer; part-time paid; full-time paid), domain (children; participation; emerging athletes; high performance athletes) and its role (coaching assistant; coach; senior coach; master coach).

e) Develop suitable ***guidance and practical tools*** to facilitate the adoption and implementation of recognised protocols and systems ***for Recognised Prior Learning*** within European Union coach education stakeholders

f) Produce ***tools to support member states and coaching stakeholders evaluate their current coach education systems against clear reference points*** (European Sport Coaching Framework) and plan for the development of future, enhanced systems. This tool will also serve as a quality assurance instrument for relevant bodies and agencies

Overall thus, CoachLearn seeks to ***enhance sport coaches' learning, mobility and employment through the development of a European Sport Coaching Framework*** and associated research data and implementation and dissemination tools. This framework will act as recognised reference point across the Union for the development and benchmarking of coach education programmes and coaching systems. The ESCF will also enhance national systems of vocational education and training in sport coaching by being referenced against relevant EU education and employment frameworks. The outcomes of CoachLearn will create a step change in the learning, mobility and employment of sport coaches in the European Union.

CoachLearn Impact

As a result of the above developments, CoachLearn will:

a) Enhance the lives of sport coaches and their participants and athletes across the European Union.

b) Increase the synergies and effectiveness of the existing European network of organisations involved in the betterment of sport coaching. This will provide the basis for future research, development, innovation, dissemination, implementation and evaluation of new solutions in the education, employment and mobility of coaches that will be applied to the wider industry.

c) Support the creation of a common language and methodology used by member states.

d) Foster the development of an enhanced model for long term coach development (LTCD) and long term coach developer development (LTCDD) within Europe. These will provide a reference point for the development of suitable coach and coach developer learning and employment pathways across the Union.

e) Clearly define primary functions of the coach and work related competencies and associated modes of work-based integrated learning per coaching domain (children, participation, emerging athlete and high performance athlete), role (coaching assistant, coach, senior coach and master coach) and status (volunteer, part-time and full-time). These will provide the basis

for the development of effective and efficient learning opportunities for sport coaches throughout the member states.

f) Enhance the contribution of sport coaching to the social and economic life of the EU.

g) Retain and further enhance the position of Europe as a leader in sport coaching and in the development of solutions that are relevant to the labour market and the social economy of the Union.

3. Aims of the Report

The ESCF will not operate in isolation. A plethora of qualification frameworks and employment and mobility tools operate within the European Union. The ESCF must respect and build on the principles of these frameworks and systems. Likewise, the ESCF has to take into account recent developments within the realm of sport coaching such as the EFRCCQ and ISCF and ensure it is aligned with them. This report aims to facilitate such alignment and synergy by:

o Auditing and describing current qualification frameworks and employment and mobility tools in operation in the EU

o Assessing the overall impact these have had in education, employment and mobility in the EU

o Offering an overview of the current picture in sport coaching in relation to education, employment and mobility

o Highlighting key challenges and opportunities Project CoachLearn will have to address in order to produce a relevant, current and most of all, useful and usable ESCF

4. Qualification and Employment Frameworks and Mobility Tools in the European Union

Qualification, employment and mobility frameworks and tools have been present in one way or another in the European Union for the last thirty years. The main objective of such instruments has been to increase the competitiveness of the European workforce both within and outside the boundaries of the European Union. Section five of the report will provide a summary and in-depth analysis of the overall objectives of the various frameworks and tools. For the time being, the current section will provide a chronologically ordered account of how these instruments came about and the specific features of each of them.

National Academic Recognition Information Centres Network (1984)

The National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) Network is an initiative of the European Commission and was created in 1984.

> *'The network aims at improving academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study in the Member States of the European Union (EU) countries, the European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Turkey. The network is part of the Community's Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), which stimulates the mobility of students and staff between higher education institutions in these countries. All member countries have*

designated national centres, the purpose of which is to assist in promoting the mobility of students, teachers and researchers by providing authoritative advice and information concerning the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study undertaken in other States. The main users of this service are higher education institutions, students and their advisers, parents, teachers and prospective employers.'
(http://www.enic-naric.net/welcome-to-the-enic-naric-website.aspx)

The NARICs are designated by the Ministries of Education in each country, but their status and the scope of their work is different from country to country. In the main, institutions of higher education are autonomous, and therefore the NARICs play much more of an advisory and information providing role and thus are not a decision-making body.

The NARIC Network works very closely with the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) which provides students and organisations with information related to recognition of qualifications, mobility of students and opportunities to study abroad. The ENIC Network was set up by the Council of Europe and UNESCO to support the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention of 1997. The Convention is the key legal instrument for recognition of qualifications across UNESCO's Europe and North America Region. In 2014, 55 countries signed the Convention and 53 ratified it. It aims to ensure that holders of a qualification from a signatory country can have that qualification recognised in another (http://www.enic-naric.net/the-lisbon-recognition-convention.aspx).

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (1988)

The original ECTS system was developed in 1988 to support students in the Erasmus mobility programme. The main issue it was trying to solve was the recognition by the sending institution of the courses completed by students in the host institution on their return (Markevičienė and Račkauskas, 2010). A pilot project involving a few institutions and 5 degree areas was conducted between 1988 and 1995. Given the relative success of the pilot, the European Commission proposed to expand the system and to make ECTS compulsory for those institutions requesting Erasmus mobility funds. Despite the high uptake by institutions, the system proved problematic and by 1999, the European Commission conducted a feasibility study which concluded that for the system to support mobility and lifelong learning the focus should move beyond total workload of students towards learning outcomes and competences (European Commission, 2000). It is important to highlight that by this time, the Bologna Process was starting to materialise and thus ECTS was considered vital for its success. As a result, the Tuning Project led by Deusto University (Spain) and Gronningen University (Netherlands) was conducted to agree and improve the key features of the ECTS in the Bologna Process era.

In its current incarnation, the European Council describes the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) as

> *'a tool that helps to design, describe, and deliver study programmes and award higher education qualifications. The use of ECTS, in conjunction with outcomes-based qualifications frameworks, makes study programmes and qualifications more transparent and facilitates the recognition of qualifications. By making higher education comparable across Europe, ECTS makes teaching and learning in higher*

education more transparent and facilitates the recognition of all studies. It aids curriculum design and quality assurance and allows for the transfer of learning experiences between different institutions, greater student mobility and more flexible routes to gain degrees. ECTS is closely related to the modernisation of higher education in Europe. In particular, it is a central tool in the Bologna Process which aims to make national systems more compatible.' (European Council; http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/ects_en.htm)

ECTS is a learner-centred system for credit accumulation and transfer based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes (European Communities, 2009). It can be applied to full qualifications or to specific learning units. ECTS credits are based on the workload students need to complete in order to achieve expected learning outcomes. Learning outcomes state what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after completing the learning process. Learning outcomes are important because, as will be described later, they are also linked to level descriptors in national and European qualifications frameworks. The ECTS 2009 Guide (European Communities, 2009) establishes that 60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a fulltime year of formal learning and the associated learning outcomes. On average, student workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours for an academic year. Therefore one credit typically corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of work. ECTS can be applied to all types of programmes, whatever their mode of delivery (school-based, work-based), the learners' status (full-time, part-time) and to all kinds of learning (formal, non-formal and informal).

> **'Learning outcomes** are verifiable statements of what learners who have obtained a particular qualification, or completed a programme or its components, are expected to know, understand and be able to do. As such they emphasise the link between teaching, learning and assessment. Learning outcomes statements are typically characterised by the use of active verbs expressing knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.' ECTS Guidance 2009

ECTS facilitates the transfer of credits awarded in one programme into a different programme at the same or another institution via the comparison and recognition of learning outcomes. This emphasis on credits and learning outcomes is meant to facilitate a shift from content-driven and teacher-centred approaches to a much more learner-centred paradigm where the focus is on meeting learners' needs and expectations and providing a more flexible learning pathway (European Communities, 2009). A mix of internal and quality assurance processes ensure that the qualifications and learning units are fit for purpose according to agreed standards.

ECTS is meant to create a stronger link between the education system and the labour market, promote lifelong learning, flexible learning pathways and mobility between institutions, education sectors, types of learning (formal, non-formal and informal) and countries.

Europass Framework (Origins in 1998; current form 2005)

Although the current format was launched in 2005, a number of tools with the same objectives existed since the late 1990s. In 1998, the European Commission and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) set up the European forum on transparency of vocational qualifications to bring together social partners with representatives of national training

authorities around the issue of transparency. The forum' objectives revolved around the removal of obstacles to mobility due to a lack of transparency of vocational qualifications and the stimulation of dialogue on existing and potential initiatives and solutions. The forum resulted in the development of two documents (the European CV and the Certificate Supplement), and the development of a network of National Reference Points for Vocational Qualifications (NRPs) which give access nationally to information related to vocational qualifications.

In addition to these two documents, another three documents had been created at European level around this time, namely the Diploma Supplement (European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO), the European Language Portfolio (Council of Europe) and Europass Training (European Council). The European forum on the transparency of vocational qualifications was replaced by a technical working group in 2002 whose mandate based on the Copenhagen Declaration was to "increase transparency in vocational education and training through the implementation and rationalisation of information tools and networks, including the integration of existing instruments such as the European CV, Certificate and Diploma Supplements, the Common European Framework of reference for languages and the Europass into one single framework." The working group thus developed a model for this single framework and a prototype website which eventually became the current Europass in 2005 which underwent a revamp in 2011.

The Europass comprises of five documents to make skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe. Table 1 below offers a description of the Europass documents and tools.

Document/Tool Name	Function
Two documents freely accessible, completed by European citizens	
European C.V.	The Curriculum Vitae helps citizens present their skills and qualifications effectively and clearly. They can create CVs online using tutorials or download the template, examples and instructions.
Europass Language Passport	The Language Passport is a self-assessment tool for language skills and qualifications. Citizens can create their own Language Passport online using tutorials or download the template, examples and instructions.
Three documents issued by education and training authorities	
Europass Mobility	The Europass Mobility (formerly Europass Training) records the knowledge and skills acquired in another European country
Certificate Supplement	The Certificate Supplement describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of vocational education and training certificates
Diploma Supplement	The Diploma Supplement describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees.

Table 1 – Europass Tools

Additionally, the European Skills Passport (ESP) was launched in 2012. The ESP is an electronic folder to help students, workers or job-seekers build up a personal, modular inventory of personal skills and qualifications acquired throughout life. It can contain a range of documents (Language Passport,

copies of degrees, attestations of employment, etc.). When attached to a Europass CV, the ESP will reinforce the CV by bringing evidence of skills and qualifications listed.

All in all, the Europass' objectives are:

- to help citizens communicate their skills and qualifications effectively when looking for a job or training;
- to help employers understand the skills and qualifications of the workforce;
- to help education and training authorities define and communicate the content of curricula

Professional Qualifications Directive (2005 – Directive 2005-36EC)

The practice of certain professions can be contingent on having particular qualifications. Training requirements to practice a specific profession may differ from country to country making the process of having a qualification recognised in another Member State, and thus the right to exercise the profession quite difficult. Rules to facilitate mutual recognition of professional qualifications were developed in the past to ease this process and increase transparency and mobility. These rules were amalgamated into the Professional Qualifications Directive which came into force in 2005.

This European Council Directive establishes a set of rules according to which a Member State has to recognise professional qualifications which allow access to specific regulated professions from another member state and allow the qualification holder to pursue such professions in its territory. The directive contains a number of operational definitions, articles and conditions for recognition which allow Member States to regulate this process. In the main, a holder of a professional qualification may have it recognised automatically by the host Member State if there is a previous agreement between states in relation to that profession or go through a 'case by case' process of examination of the held qualification and personal circumstances. This process of deliberation may lead to being granted access to the profession or being required to carry out further training in the host nation (also known as adaptation period) in order to gain access and the right to practice.

Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (The Bologna Process - 2005)

The Bologna Process is a 'collective effort of public authorities, universities, teachers, and students, together with stakeholder associations, employers, quality assurance agencies, international organisations, and institutions, including the European Commission' (European Commission; http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en.htm). Its main objective is the creation of a European Higher Education Area based on the establishment of a common framework for higher education qualifications. This will strengthen quality assurance and promote the easier recognition of qualifications and periods of study across Member States. The process was initiated with the Bologna Declaration in 1999 (European Commission, 1999). The Declaration signalled 6 actions lines:

- A system of academic degrees which are easy to recognise and compare.
- A system based essentially on two cycles: a first cycle geared to the labour market and lasting at least three years, and a second cycle conditional on the completion of the first cycle;
- A system of accumulation and transfer of credits of the ECTS type used in the Erasmus exchange scheme;

- Mobility of students, teachers and researchers: elimination of all obstacles to freedom of movement;
- Cooperation with regard to quality assurance;
- The European dimension in higher education: increase the number of modules and teaching and study areas where the content, guidance or organisation has a European dimension.

Over a period of 6 years, the ministers of the Members States evolved the concept culminating in the Bergen Meeting in May 2005 wherein the European ministers responsible for higher education gathered there adopted the overarching framework for qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This framework comprises three cycles, generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles (Table 2 below).

	Outcomes	ECTS Credits
First Cycle Qualifications (Bachelor's Degrees)	Qualifications that signify completion of **the first cycle** are awarded to students who: • have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study; • can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study; • have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues; • can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences; • have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.	Typically include 180-240 ECTS Credits
Second Cycle Qualifications (Master's Degrees)	Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who: • have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context; • can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar	Typically include 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle

	environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study; • have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments; • can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously; • have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.	
Third Cycle Qualifications (Doctoral Degrees)	Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who: • have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field; • have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity; • have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication; • are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas; • can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise; • can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.	Number of ECTS Credits not specified

Table 2 – Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQHEHA Guidance, 2009)

At the 2005 Bergen Meeting, ministers committed themselves and their countries to developing national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010.

Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005, reviewed in 2015)

The Ministers of the Bologna Process signatory states (Berlin communiqué of 19 September 2003) invited the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) to, in cooperation

with the European Universities Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), and the European Students Union (ESU, formerly ESIB) to develop 'an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance' in higher education. The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were approved in 2005 (ENQA, 2005). Given the level and pace of change within the EHEA, in 2012 the ministers invited the ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE to, in cooperation with Education International (EI), BUSINESSEUROPE and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) to prepare an initial proposal for a revised ESG to enhance their clarity, applicability and usefulness (ENQA, 2015).

The 2015 edition of the ESG places the focus on quality assurance related to learning and teaching in higher education, including the learning environment and relevant links to research and innovation. In addition, institutions may have policies and processes to ensure and improve the quality of their other activities, such as research and governance. It is important to note that the ESG cover all higher education offered in the EHEA regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery. The main objective is to create a 'culture of quality' based on accountability and enhancement of provision.

The ESG however, take into account the diversity within the EHEA:

> *'The ESG may be used and implemented in different ways by different institutions, agencies and countries. The EHEA is characterised by its diversity of political systems, higher education systems, socio-cultural and educational traditions, languages, aspirations and expectations. This makes a single monolithic approach to quality and quality assurance in higher education inappropriate. Broad acceptance of all standards is a precondition for creating common understanding of quality assurance in Europe. For these reasons, the ESG need to be at a reasonably generic level in order to ensure that they are applicable to all forms of provision.' (ENQA, 2015, p6)*

The standards for quality assurance are separated into three parts:
- o   Internal quality assurance
- o   External quality assurance
- o   Quality assurance agencies

ESG Part	ESG Title
Part 1 **Internal Quality Assurance**	1.1. Policy for Quality Assurance 1.2. Design and approval of programmes 1.3. Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment 1.4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification 1.5. Teaching staff 1.6. Learning resources and student support 1.7. Information management 1.8. Public information 1.9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes 1.10. Cyclical external quality assurance
Part 2 **External Quality Assurance**	2.1. Consideration of internal quality assurance 2.2. Designing methodologies fit for purpose 2.3. Implementing processes 2.4. Peer-review experts 2.5. Criteria for outcomes 2.6. Reporting 2.7. Complaints and appeals
Part 3 **Quality Assurance Agencies**	3.1. Activities, policy and processes for quality assurance 3.2. Official status 3.3. Independence 3.4. Thematic analysis 3.5. Resources 3.6. Internal quality assurance and professional conduct 3.7. Cyclical external review of agencies

Table 3 – Summary of ESG (adapted from ENQA, 12015)

ENQA and its partners are keen to emphasise that the three parts are intrinsically interlinked and together form the basis for a European quality assurance framework: *'The three parts work on a complementary basis in higher education institutions as well as in agencies and also work on the understanding that other stakeholders contribute to the framework. As a consequence, the three parts should be read as a whole.'* (ENQA, 2015, p7)

European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2008)

The development of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) started in 2004 as a response to a request from Member States, social partners and other stakeholders for a common reference point which would make qualifications more transparent and portable (European

Communities, 2008). With the help of an expert group, the Commission prepared a proposal in 2005 which was published for consultation by all stakeholders. As a result, the Commission amended the proposal. The revised document was then adopted by the Commission as a proposal in 2006. Subsequently, the European Parliament and Council negotiated the proposal during 2007, leading to the EQF's formal adoption in February 2008.

The EQF is thus a common European reference system which provides the link between different countries' national qualifications systems and frameworks. It can be used as a translation device which makes qualifications easier to understand and compare. It is meant to facilitate recognition of qualifications between institutions and countries and thus enhance the mobility of learners and workers. Therefore, it is mostly aimed at bodies in charge of national and/or sectoral qualification systems and frameworks looking to map their own systems to a common reference point for the purposes described above.

Given its objective of promoting lifelong learning, the EQF covers general and adult education, vocational education and training as well as higher education. Structured in eight levels (see table 3), the EQF expands from qualifications achieved at the end of compulsory education to those awarded at the highest level of academic and professional or vocational education and training.

The EQF recognises that Europe's education systems are so diverse that traditional comparative systems based on inputs (e.g. length of study), are misguided. To avoid this pitfall, the EQF builds its 8 levels on the concept of learning outcomes already developed in the ECTS. Learning outcomes are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The EQF promotes a paradigm shift from using length of study or type of institution as the key parameters to evaluate a qualification, to actually what the person who has gained the qualification knows and is able to do. This shift is thought to carry three main benefits (European Communities, 2008):

- o support a better match between the needs of the labour market (for knowledge, skills and competences) and education and training provision
- o facilitate the validation of non-formal and informal learning
- o facilitate the transfer and use of qualifications across different countries and education and training systems.

It is important to highlight that the EQF is not a legislative framework. Its adoption by member states and awarding bodies is voluntary. The Commission recommended that countries mapped their qualifications systems to the EQF by 2010 and that by 2012 individual qualification certificates bore a reference to the appropriate EQF level.

Each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications.

		KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	COMPETENCE
		In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual.	In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).	In the context of EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.
LEVEL 1	The learning outcomes relevant to **Level 1** are	→ basic general knowledge	→ basic skills required to carry out simple tasks	→ work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
LEVEL 2	The learning outcomes relevant to **Level 2** are	→ basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study	→ basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools	→ work or study under supervision with some autonomy
LEVEL 3	The learning outcomes relevant to **Level 3** are	→ knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study	→ a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information	→ take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study → adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems
LEVEL 4	The learning outcomes relevant to **Level 4** are	→ factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	→ a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study	→ exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change → supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities
LEVEL 5*	The learning outcomes relevant to **Level 5** are	→ comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge	→ a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems	→ exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change → review and develop performance of self and others
LEVEL 6**	The learning outcomes relevant to **Level 6** are	→ advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles	→ advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study	→ manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts → take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups
LEVEL 7***	The learning outcomes relevant to **Level 7** are	→ highly specialised knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking and/or research → critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields	→ specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields	→ manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches → take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams
LEVEL 8****	The learning outcomes relevant to **Level 8** are	→ knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields	→ the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice	→ demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research

Table 4 – EQF Level Descriptors – Reproduced from European Communities (2008)

European Credit System for Vocational Education & Training (2009)

The need for a European credit transfer system for vocational education and training (VET) was first highlighted in 2002 in the council resolution on promoting better European cooperation on VET (Council of the European Union, 2002) and the Copenhagen Declaration (2002). It wasn't until 2009 however, that the European Parliament and Council put forth a recommendation for the creation of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET; European Parliament and Council, 2009). This system was intended to facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of credits of individuals who are aiming to achieve a vocational qualification. In turn, this would improve general understanding of learning outcomes as well as their transparency, mobility and portability. The final aim is to create 'a borderless lifelong learning area' across Europe and within Member States. The 2009 Recommendation also provided a roadmap for implementation which envisioned that by 2012 most countries would be in a position to apply the ECVET system to VET qualifications at all levels of the EQF (Cedefop, 2013).

Similarly to ECTS, the ECVET system is based on learning outcomes, that is, recording what an individual has actually learned and is qualified for instead of workloads or time. However, by contrast to ECTS, ECVET's learning outcomes are described in terms of units of learning. Units of learning are coherent sets of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated with a number of associated ECVET points. A qualification comprises in principle several units and is made up of the whole set of units. Thus learners can achieve a qualification by accumulating the required units, achieved in different contexts or countries providing they comply with the respective national legislation. Likewise, units can be specific to a single qualification or common to several qualifications (European Commission, 2009)

The points allocated to a unit provide an indication of the relative weight of the unit for the qualification, its complexity or the effort needed to acquire it. The convention is that a full time year of VET corresponds to 60 points (European Commission, 2014). As learners successfully complete learning outcomes they gain credits which can be transferred to other contexts and accumulated to achieve a qualification. Units and qualifications should be referenced according to EQF levels and where appropriate to national qualification frameworks to facilitate comparison across institutions and countries.

It is worth noting that ECVET recognises that all learning can lead to a qualification and makes no distinction as to how the learning outcomes were acquired (i.e. formal, non-formal and informal learning). This feature is meant to promote the creation of flexible learning pathways for lifelong learning as well as supporting recognition of prior learning. In addition, ECVET recognises the trend in many Member States to bring initial (pre-entering the labour market) and continuing (post-) and higher education closer together in a continuum and expand post-secondary and tertiary VET (Cedefop, 2009).

In order to facilitate credit recognition and mobility of learners, ECVET includes a number of documents such as a Memorandum of Understanding between organisations, a learning agreement and a personal transcript of records. ECVET thus initially works at local level with the creation of partnership agreements between a 'home' and a 'host' institution.

European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (2009)

The culmination of a process that started in 2000 with the Lisbon Treaty (Lisbon European Council, 2000), the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) framework and collaborative network aims to provide common principles and reference points for the evaluation and improvement of VET qualifications across Member States. EQAVET was put forward in the European Parliament and Recommendation of the 18th June 2009 and takes into account the 'Common Principles for Quality Assurance in Education and Training' that are included in Annex III to the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF).

It operates as a community of practices between Member States to aid in the development of effective approaches to support the implementation of the Reference Framework (European Parliament and Council, 2009). Ultimately, EQAVET strives to develop a culture of quality at European and national level supported by Quality Assurance National Reference Points and other network members; EQAVET is firmly rooted within the context of the Education and Training 2020 Strategy and thus targets the quality assurance dimension of work in EQF and ECVET.

EQAVET proposes common quality criteria and indicative descriptors to support Member States when implementing the Framework. The criteria and descriptors are formulated at two levels. First at VET-system level (e.g. national policy and frameworks), and secondly at VET-provider level (e.g. those institutions creating and delivering VET qualifications). They revolve around four main areas as described in table 5.

Planning	Planning reflects a strategic vision shared by the relevant stakeholders and includes explicit goals/objectives, actions and indicators. Examples include stakeholder consultations, mid- and long-term goals and clear targets and milestones.
Implementation	Implementation plans are devised in consultation with stakeholders and include explicit principles. Examples include role and responsibility allocation, resource identification and alignment and provision of specific training needs for staff implementing the framework.
Evaluation	Evaluation of outcomes and processes is regularly carried out and supported by measurement Examples include the development of a clear methodology for self-assessment, internal and external evaluation, regular data collection and the devising of appropriate performance indicators.
Review	A process for the review and adjustment and /or change of the system is in place. Examples include feedback and review procedures, change action plans, review outcome dissemination and discussion.

Table 5 – EQAVET quality criteria and indicative descriptors (adapted from European Parliament and Council, Annex I, 2009)

The Recommendation makes it clear that:

> *'the Framework should be regarded rather as a 'toolbox', from which the various users may choose those descriptors and indicators that they consider most relevant to the requirements of their particular quality assurance system. The proposed descriptors (Annex I) and indicators (Annex II) are provided as guidance only and may be selected and applied by users of the Framework in accordance with all or part of their requirements and existing settings' (European Parliament and Council, 2009, p 155/5).*

The above highlights the purely voluntary basis of their adoption as potential added value to existing national legislation and practice. The indicators and descriptors are not intended as benchmarks, reporting or comparative tools. The responsibility for monitoring the quality of VET remains entirely with the Member States.

European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (2012)

Together with stakeholders the European Commission is developing a classification of European Skills/Competences, qualifications and Occupations (ESCO). The classification will be multilingual, and focus on skills. It will use an open format to be used by third parties' software, thus making it a valuable building block for online job portals, career guidance tools and databases of learning opportunities. In this way, it is expected to lead to very tangible benefits for jobseekers, people seeking career changes, learners and employers (European Commission, 2012).

ESCO revolves around the categorising of individual skills and competences. The main purpose is to understand the individual skill sets of each person and the skills required in each job. In this way, online job portals can help jobseekers find the jobs that best match their individual skill set or make them aware of the gaps and thus encourage them to pursue further education and training opportunities. ESCO also takes into account that the education has shifted paradigms to a skills-centred approach based on learning outcomes as reflected in the EQF. By using ESCO, education and training institutions will have the possibility to describe the output of their qualifications with the skills terminology provided by ESCO. Qualifications should therefore become more transparent and the relationship between the labour market and the education sector enhanced.

The ESCO classification will consist of three interrelated pillars covering i) occupations; ii) skills/competences; and iii) qualifications.

Comparative Summary

Table 6 offers a comparative summary of all the above frameworks and tools.

Framework/Tools Title (Start Year)	Lead Organisation	Main Function/Objectives/ Consequences	Key Features	Target Audience	Associated Resources	Additional Comments/Connections
National Academic Recognition Information Centres Network (1984) NARIC	European Commission	Provide advice regarding recognition of foreign qualifications and periods of study abroad Stimulates the mobility of students and staff between higher education institutions Lifelong learning	Advice centres in every country. Designated by national governments Their role and scope varies between countries Normally advisory not decision-making	Higher education institutions, students and their advisers, parents, teachers and prospective employers		Linked to ENIC Network and Lisbon Recognition Convention of 1997
European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (1988) ECTS	European Commission	Facilitates the transfer of credits via the comparison and recognition of learning outcomes Greater student mobility and more flexible routes to gain degrees – Lifelong Learning Help design, describe, and deliver study programmes and award higher education qualifications. It aids quality assurance. Applicable to all kinds of learning. Create a stronger link between the education system and the labour market	ECTS credits based on the workload students need to complete in order to achieve expected learning outcomes. Learning outcomes state what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after completing the learning process. One year of FT education=60 Credits. One credit = 25-30 hrs	Higher education institutions	ECTS Guide	Fundamental to the Bologna Process
Europass Framework (Origins in 1998; current form 2005)	European Commission & CEDEFOP/Council	Increase transparency of vocational qualifications to support mobility of workers	Europass Documents	European Citizens, Employers and VET Providers	• European CV • Certificate Supplement	

	of Europe & UNESCO	To help citizens communicate their skills and qualifications effectively when looking for a job or training; To help employers understand the skills and qualifications of the workforce; To help education and training authorities define and communicate the content of curricula			• Diploma Supplement • Europass Language Passport • Europass Mobility European Skills Passport (e-folder) National Reference Points for Vocational Qualifications (NRPs)	
Professional Qualifications Directive (2005 – Directive 2005-36EC)	European Council	Mobility of workers	A set of rules according to which a Member State has to recognise professional qualifications which allow access to specific regulated professions from another member state and allow the qualification holder to pursue such professions in its territory Automatic Recognition vs Case by case models Adaptation periods	European citizens		Respect for national legal frameworks
Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (The Bologna Process - 2005)	European Commission	Creation of a European Higher Education Area based on the establishment of a common framework for higher education qualifications	Three cycles Generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences Credit Ranges	Higher Education Institutions		

		A system of academic degrees which are easy to recognise and compare. Mobility of students, teachers and researchers Cooperation with regard to quality assurance	- First Cycle = 180-240 Cdt - Second Cycle = 90-120 Cdt - Third Cycle = not specified Accumulation and transfer of credits via ECTS A European Dimension to modules			
Standards & Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2005, reviewed in 2015)	European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and partners Commissioned by European Parliament	Increase quality in higher education through a system of quality assurance Develop a quality culture	An agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance: • Internal quality assurance • External quality assurance • Quality assurance agencies Focus on teaching, learning and the learning environment Links to research and innovation	Higher education institutions and quality assurance organisations	Published standards	Flexibility and proportionality (adaptation to different national contexts) Broad acceptance of all standards is a precondition for creating common understanding of quality assurance in Europe. The ESG need to be at a reasonably generic level in order to ensure that they are applicable to all forms of provision
European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (2008)	European Commission	A common European reference system for all qualifications from the end of compulsory education. A translation device which makes qualifications easier to understand and compare. Support a better match between the needs of the labour market (for knowledge, skills and competences) and	8 Levels Based on learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences) as per ECTS Levels differ in the degree of complexity, responsibility and autonomy Knowledge can be theoretical and/or factual	Aimed at bodies in charge of national and/or sectoral qualification systems and frameworks	EQF guides	The EQF promotes a paradigm shift from using length of study or type of institution as the key parameters to evaluate a qualification, to actually what the person who has gained the qualification knows and is able to do. EQF is not a legislative framework. Its adoption by member states and

		education and training provision

Facilitate the validation of non-formal and informal learning

Promote recognition of qualifications between institutions and countries and thus enhance the mobility of learners and workers.

Promote Lifelong Learning | Skills can be cognitive or practical

Competences can be described in terms of responsibility and autonomy | | | awarding bodies is voluntary. |
| **European Credit System for Vocational Education & Training (2009)** | European Parliament and Council | Facilitate the transfer, recognition and accumulation of credits of individuals who are aiming to achieve a vocational qualification.

Improve general understanding of learning outcomes as well as their transparency, mobility and portability.

Create 'a borderless lifelong learning area' across Europe and within Member States.

Recognise all types of learning | Based on learning outcomes

By contrast to ECTS, ECVET's learning outcomes are described in terms of units of learning.

Units of learning are coherent sets of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated with a number of associated ECVET points.

Learners can achieve a qualification by accumulating the required units, achieved in different contexts or countries providing they comply with the respective national legislation.

Units can be specific to a single qualification or common to several qualifications | VET institutions and employers | Memorandum of Understanding between organisations

Learning agreement

Personal transcript of records

Multiple websites

User Guide | |

			The points allocated to a unit provide an indication of the relative weight of the unit for the qualification, its complexity or the effort needed to acquire it. The convention is that a full time year of VET corresponds to 60 points (European Commission, 2014). Units and qualifications should be referenced according to EQF levels and where appropriate to national qualification frameworks			
European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (2009)	European Parliament	Provide common principles and reference points for the evaluation and improvement of VET qualifications across Member States EQAVET strives to develop a culture of quality at European and national level	A framework and a collaborative network Takes into account the 'Common Principles for Quality Assurance in Education and Training' that are included in the EQF Common quality criteria and indicative descriptors to support Member States when implementing the Framework. Formulated both at VET-system level and VET-provider level Four main areas: • Planning • Implementation • Evaluation • Review	National agencies for VET and VET providers		Should be regarded rather as a 'toolbox', from which the various users may choose those descriptors and indicators that they consider most relevant to the requirements of their particular quality assurance system Voluntary adoption The responsibility for monitoring the quality of VET remains entirely with the Member States.

European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (2012)	European Commission	Support individuals match their skills with jobs or identify gaps leading to further education and training Help education and training institutions describe the output of their qualifications with the skills terminology provided by the professions strengthening the relationship between the labour market and the education sector,	Multilingual database Focused on skills specific to a job Open platform than can be tapped into by any search engine Three interrelated pillars covering i) occupations; ii) skills/competences; and iii) qualifications.	European citizens and VET and HE institutions	Website

5. Impact of and Challenges for Qualification, Employment and Mobility Frameworks and Tools in the European Union

Review of Objectives and Key Features

As the previous section highlights, qualification, employment and mobility frameworks and tools have been present in one way or another in the European Union for the last thirty years. Before assessing and evaluating their impact and the challenges to their implementation, the report will review the overall rationale for the development of such instruments.

The main driver for the development and implementation of these tools has been to increase the competitiveness of the European workforce both within and outside the boundaries of the European Union. Across the literature, three key elements are identified as fundamental to this outcome:

- Promotion of lifelong learning
- Increased employability of the workforce
- Enhanced mobility of the workforce

Lifelong learning (LLL) is defined as *'the provision or use of both formal [and non-formal] and informal learning opportunities throughout people's lives in order to foster the continuous development and improvement of the knowledge and skills needed for employment and personal fulfilment'* (Collins English Dictionary, 2015). One of the key principles behind LLL is that an adequately trained, regularly updated and flexibly developed workforce is more employable. At an individual level, LLL is meant to allow workers to develop the required profile to ensure their employability remains current and effective. The final piece of the puzzle relates to the need to remove any potential barriers for workers to be able to find work in any of the EU member states. In other words, increasing their mobility capability and prospects.

These key three elements are meant to be realised and operationalised through a systems approach. From this viewpoint, the various frameworks and tools aim to provide a system or set of linked up systems which create common ground between the large number of stakeholders involved in LLL (i.e. learners, education providers, nations and governments, education bodies, employment organisations and employers). This common ground tries to bring about pan-European uniformity and unity within a diverse national picture. Central to this is the role of proportionality, whereby, stakeholders apply the principles of the system in accordance with their existing mechanisms, their means and their culture and history.

One of the main drivers of these initiatives resides on the idea that despite national idiosyncrasies, the frameworks and tools can act as translational devices which support transparency and comparability. As a result, an increase in mutual trust between stakeholders and the development of robust quality assurance mechanisms is expected. All of these elements thus contribute to increasing mobility and employability of the European workforce.

Fundamental to the various tools is their contribution to some of the key mechanisms which enable LLL, employability and mobility:

- Recognition/validation of Qualifications: this could take place between countries or between different providers in the education sectors, also known as permeability (i.e. between vocational training and higher education).
- Recognition of prior learning (RPL): RPL is the process of evaluation of skills and knowledge (learning) acquired in a different context, domain or type of education for the purpose of recognizing competence against a given set of standards, competencies, or learning outcomes. Therefore, a RPL process may enable a learner to achieve a part or a full qualification without having to take it. Central to the process of RPL is the acknowledgement that learning can happen in various ways.
    - Formal learning: typically taking place within the boundaries of institutionalised, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured systems (i.e. vocational training and university degrees)
    - Non-formal learning: this type of learning is also systematic but it falls outside of the formal framework and is typically aimed at fulfilling the needs of specific groups (i.e. professional development workshops or themed conferences)
    - Informal learning: characterised by being initiated by the learner both in terms of what is to be learned, how and when (i.e. self-reflection, peer mentoring, reading a book, etc.)
- Development of flexible learning pathways: whereby learners have a number of options in terms of both, how they wish to complete their qualifications and, to an extent, their content.

At the basic component level, certain key features enable the functionality of the various systems and tools:

- Learning outcomes: learning outcomes state what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after completing the learning process.
- Credits: credits are used to define the estimated workload necessary to achieve the learning outcomes
- Competence-based assessment: assessment which is centred around the evaluation of the ability of the learner to fulfil the tasks for which he or she is being trained

Learning outcomes, credits and competence-based assessment signify a shift away from an input driven approach to the design and delivery of qualifications which focuses on content, knowledge and time spent doing the qualification. Instead, the various frameworks and tools attempt to move education in the European Union towards an output-based policy built around what learners know and can do. As stated at the beginning of this section, the major motivation for these change is to increase the competitiveness of the member states workforce. The intention is that by focusing on learning outcomes and competences, the world of education and the labour market can be brought closer together. A focus on what graduates know and can do allows employers to both better understand what competences students have, and to indeed influence the development of curricula to ensure that educational institutions are keeping abreast with the development and needs of the workplace.

Figure 1 below captures these various elements and their interactions.

Figure 1 – Objectives and Interaction of the different features of the various qualification, employment and mobility frameworks and tools

Evaluation of Impact

Benefits

There is little doubt that the transition towards a systems approach to the development and delivery of qualifications based on learning outcomes, credit workloads and competence-based assessments has positively impacted the educational landscape in the European Union (Cedefop, 2012). Specifically, the development of the ECTS and the advent of the EQF are seen as a game-changers. The subsequent commitment of member states to develop their National Qualification Frameworks (NFQ) in accordance with the principles of EQF and referencing national levels to the relevant benchmarks proves the vast impact of these initiatives.

In their 2012 review of the implementation of the EQF, Cedefop identified the following benefits of a systems approach[1]:

- **Promotion of national development**: the commitment of national governments to the development of NQFs by reference to EQF has spurred a transformation at national level. Such transformation includes changes to national structures in the education system (i.e. shift to learning outcomes or a drive to start recognising prior learning), increased communication, transparency and cooperation within and between different sectors of the education system (i.e. creation of national coordination points and cross-sector working groups), and a progressive challenging of the implicitly established hierarchies between vocational training and education, further education and higher education.

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[1] Although Cedefop's 2012 analysis revolves mainly around the implementation of the EQF, it also provides a good benchmark for the impact of other initiatives.

- **European convergence in the presence of national diversity**: whilst the EQF provides the comparative and translational parameters, EU member states have retained their autonomy and independence in relation to how they design their NQFs and related structures. This has given rise to a number of various models of NQF with different levelling and different interpretations of the fundamental principles such as learning outcomes, credits and competence. As we will see, this diversity can also lead to a number of challenges.

Challenges and Concerns

Notwithstanding the benefits stated in the previous section, the literature identifies a number of challenges to the implementation of the various frameworks and tools and some areas of concern:

- **Lack of synergy of existing tools:** the progressive accumulation of different tools and frameworks stemming from different education sectors over the last thirty years carries with it an inherent danger of fragmentation. While typically occupying the same policy space, the various initiatives have differentiated objectives which may lead to clashes and misalignments between them (Cedefop, 2013). Some of the key issues identified in this area are:
    o A lack of a common and clear terminology to unify the various tools
    o Different interpretations of the terms used by each of the initiatives[2]
    o Usage by certain initiatives of terminology or tools that where initially designed for a different purpose or domain (i.e. the use of ECTS which arose from HE in VET)
- **Cultural matches and clashes:** the adoption and implementation of some of the tools and frameworks is highly dependent on the existing structures in the adopting countries. Certain countries with structures and frameworks which, in their eyes, work well, may receive tools like EQF or ECVET with some reluctance and be concerned about 'trying to fix something that is not broken' and diverting valuable resources to try and shoehorn these new elements into their existing landscape. Some others, may see these tools as opportunities to put education reform back on the table and welcome these initiatives as they provide the ammunition needed to lobby at the highest levels of government. For those countries with no existing structures, the process becomes much more about the development of the momentum, rationale and buy-in as to why qualifications should be formalised within a framework and a system. In some cases, countries and institutions have perceived these initiatives as 'hoops to go through' rather than opportunities for modernisation and development of their systems (Cedefop, 2012).
- **Lack of Support and Implementation Tools:** a central area of improvement is the concern expressed by many countries and institutions with regards to the lack of support and tools to facilitate the adoption and implementation of the different tools. This lack of support leads to the following issues:

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[2] An example of this divergence is the different interpretation of the concept of 'competence' as outlined in Brockmann et al (2008). Mainly two different perspectives exist: a) a continental view of competence built around inputs, knowledge, the development of a broad range of skills, and the holistic development of the learner; and b) an Anglo-Saxon perspective which views competence in a narrower, functionalist and behaviourist way focusing on outputs and the development of very specific skills. Brockmann and colleagues argue that the European Commission has adopted the Anglo-Saxon view in the development of the EQF and raise concerns about the validity of such approach in the modern labour market.

- o Slowing up of adoption and implementation due to confusion and apprehension on the part of the organisations with the mandate to drive the changes in the system
  - o Generation of different interpretations of what the various initiatives aim to achieve and their fundamental principles and components which works against the overall goal of enhancing transparency, comparability and trust.
  - o Lack of visibility and understanding of what the frameworks and tools do at end-user level. For the purposes of qualification, employment and mobility tools, end-user refers to both learners and potential employers.

- **Low Levels of Quality Assurance:** as a direct consequence of the above issues, Cedefop (2013) identifies the difficulty of establishing appropriate quality assurance protocols which guarantee transparency and enhance mobility and employment. This is specially so particularly between countries, where there seems to be a lack of trust between them due to the lack of uniformity in the quality assurance methods used within each of the countries. Interestingly, and in particular with reference to ECVET, Cedefop (2013) identifies a different trend wherein trust between countries has grown, yet no impact has been felt in the permeability between different sectors of education within the same country (i.e. between VET and HE).

- **Inherent dynamism (need for review and adjustment):** from their inception, the frameworks and tools have been built to support countries, organisations and institutions better adapt to the much more dynamic nature of the workplace and the needs of employers in Europe's XXI century. This has created a new education landscape which requires education providers to be much more flexible, reactive and, where possible, proactive to the changing needs of the environment. This built-in sense of dynamism can act as a deterrent for organisations and institutions used to performing in a much more stable setting in years past.

Figure 2 – Challenges and concerns in the implementation of education and mobility tools

Ways forward and recommendations

In sum, the various frameworks and tools have changed the overall approach to education and qualification in the European Union, yet the extent to which these changes will impact on the long-term goals of LLL, and enhanced employability and mobility remains to be seen (European Commission, 2014). The following recommendations have been put forth in the relevant literature to inform the development and further adoption and implementation of the various initiatives:

- The various frameworks and tools, and specially the EQF, are increasingly becoming national structuring and planning instruments. This calls for the production of clear and comprehensive guidance materials which reflect NQFs' structures and which support the complex implementation process (Cedefop, 2012).
- Specific emphasis should be made on the adoption of learning outcomes, credits and assessment based on the attainment of the learning outcomes when developing qualifications (European Commission, 2014).
- 'Learning outcomes-based levels need to become visible to people' (Cedefop, 2012, p4). This involves the inclusion of EQF and NQF levels in qualifications promotional materials and completion certificates as a key step.
- Countries and institutions should dedicate resources to building appropriate quality assurance mechanisms which support transparency, trust and thus enhance mobility and employability (European Commission, 2014a).
- Governments and educational institutes must increasingly engage with and become more visible in the labour market. This will involve direct support in the development of suitable career pathways and matching learning opportunities, recognition of learning acquired at work as well as guidance and links to sectoral frameworks which are not normally recognised by the traditional educational pathways (Cedefop, 2012).
- Development of clear links between the various tools so end-users can see exactly how they intersect for their own benefit (Cedefop, 2014).
- Creation of a robust and systematic monitoring and evaluation system to inform current implementation and future development. This system will require both quantitative and qualitative measures (Cedefop, 2012).
- Finally, NQFs must become part of the fabric of education in each of the European Union member states. 'If seen as an isolated initiative, NQFs will fail. The biggest danger is that countries forget their own NQFs once they are referenced to the EQF, seriously undermining the EQF as a trusted European reference framework (Cedefop, 2012).

6. Education, Employment and Mobility in Sport Coaching in the European Union

Defining the Parameters for Sport Coaching: European Policy in Sport

Europe has been at the forefront of coach education and development for decades. It is estimated that between five and nine million coaches work within the European Union (European Commission, in preparation a). These coaches are directly responsible for the provision of high quality, ethical,

relevant, appropriate and positive sport experiences to millions of European citizens of all ages, gender, nationality, race, creed, and sexual orientation.

Following inclusion of sport in the Lisbon Treaty (2000) and in line with article 165 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (2007), the European Union (EU) and the Member States strengthened their cooperation in an effort to further develop the European dimension in sport. This cooperation translated into the creation of a number of expert groups which have been operating under different banners since 2005.

The relevance of sport in the EU was most significantly given further impetus with the publication of the European White Paper on Sport in 2007. The European White Paper on Sport stated that sport is a *'growing social and economic phenomenon which makes an important contribution to the European Union's objectives of solidarity and prosperity'* (p.2). Notwithstanding the above, the paper also highlighted that sport also faces a number of threats such as doping, racism, match-fixing and money laundering that need to be paid attention to.

All in all, the White Paper represents the first attempt by the European Commission to address sport-related issues in a comprehensive way. It aimed to *'provide strategic direction on the role of sport in Europe, encourage debate on specific problems to enhance the visibility of sport in EU policy making, and to raise public awareness of the needs and specificities of the sector'* (p.2). The paper focuses on three key areas: the societal role of sport; the economic dimension of sport; and the organisation of sport. Although not referred to specifically, the role of coaching is emphasised in relation to areas such as volunteerism, education and mobility.

Building on the 2007 White Paper, the European Commission recently published the Communication on Sport: Developing the European Dimension of Sport (2011). The Communication follows the same structure elaborating on the three key issues of the societal role of sport, the economic dimension of sport and the organisation of sport. By contrast to the White Paper, coaching and coach education are now highlighted specifically as a key area for development:

> *'Member States and the sport movement recognise the need for better-qualified staff in the sport sector. The high level of professionalism and diversity of professions in sport, combined with increasing mobility within the EU, underline the relevance of including sport-related qualifications in national qualification systems so that they can take advantage of referencing to the European Qualification Framework (EQF). More transparency is needed regarding the validation and recognition of qualifications gained by volunteers, as well as regarding qualifications required for regulated sport-related professions'* (p.5).

In addition to the issue of sport qualifications, from a sport coaching perspective, the focus is also placed upon mobility of sportspeople (including coaches) and enhancing volunteerism as key drivers to realise the economic dimension of sport.

In response to the publication of the Communication on Developing the European Dimension of Sport, the Council of the European Union developed the European Union Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014 with the following aims:

- to promote a cooperative and concerted approach among Member States and the Commission to delivering added value in the field of sport at EU level over the longer term;
- to align the existing informal structures with the priorities defined in this Work Plan;
- to give impetus and prominence as appropriate to Commission actions in the field;
- to address transnational challenges using a coordinated EU approach;
- to promote the specific nature and contribution of sport in other EU policy domains;
- to work towards evidence-based sport policy.

The Work Plan established three key priorities for the period 2011-2014 (p.2):

➢ Integrity of sport, in particular the fight against doping, match-fixing and the promotion of good governance;
➢ Social values of sport, in particular health, social inclusion, education and volunteering;
➢ Economic aspects of sport, in particular sustainable financing of grassroots sports and evidence-based policy making.

In addition, the Council proposed the creation of expert groups in six priority areas to build on the work conducted by the expert groups founded in 2005. For the Work Plan 2011-2014, these areas were:

- Anti-doping;
- Good governance in sport;
- Education and training in sport;
- Sport, health and participation;
- Sport statistics;
- Sustainable financing of sport.

As the creation of a dedicated expert group indicates, the role of sport qualifications in realising the European dimension of sport is highly valued by the Council. Likewise, as in the Communication, the importance of supporting mobility and volunteerism are also again highlighted in the Work Plan as fundamental to the vision for sport in Europe.

At the beginning of 2014, the European Commission produced a report to evaluate the impact of the 2011-2014 Work Plan (European Commission, 2014b), and to serve as the basis of a second Work Plan for the period 2014-2017. Overall, the report states that the activities carried out under the Work Plan have in the main led to very good results in the defined priority areas. Consultation with Member States and sport stakeholders confirms these findings. Member States valued less positively the influence of the Work Plan on sport policy processes outside the EU.

With regards to sport qualifications, the 2011-2014 assessed progress made on the inclusion of sport qualifications within NQFs and how they relate to EQF. Based on the report provided by the Expert Group on Education & Training in Sport, it is concluded that:

'the process of including sport qualifications in the NQF in the field of formal education is in progress and that the inclusion of sport qualifications obtained in the education system of national sport organisations in NQFs has raised important challenges at national level. It illustrates the need for support to sport federations to

develop expertise on the transformation of existing education programmes and the development of new programmes. Action at national and European level will be necessary, including the matching of national qualifications with the international qualification standards of international sport federations. In the Group's view, the Council should take action in this field and support further the inclusion of all sport qualifications in NQF's. This could be considered in the context of creating a European area for skills and qualifications.' (p.5)

The report also proposed three priorities for the subsequent period 2014-2017:

1. Sport and society, including health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA)
2. Economic dimension of sport
3. Integrity of sport

Significantly for sport coaching, under priority number 1, especial emphasis is maintained on the importance of continue to progress the education and training of sport professionals:

'Work should continue, e.g. in the form of peer meetings, on implementation of the Dual Career Guidelines and the inclusion of sport qualifications in NQFs. The issue of international sport federations' qualifications and the relation to NQFs and EQF should also be addressed at EU level. An increased focus should be put on the recognition of non-formal learning provided by sport and the employability of young people through sport, including young talented athletes' educational part of their dual careers'. (pp.9-10)

The 2011-2014 report has subsequently been considered by the European Commission as the basis for the development of a second three-year European Union Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017) which aims to further develop a framework for European Cooperation in the field of sport following the same principles established in the previous plan. The 2014-2017 plan establishes three priority areas:

1. Integrity of sport, in particular anti-doping, the fight against match-fixing, protection of minors, good governance and gender equality;
2. The economic dimension of sport, in particular sustainable financing of sport, the legacy of major sport events, economic benefits of sport and innovation;
3. Sport and society, in particular HEPA, volunteering, employment in sport as well as education and training in sport

In support for these priorities and in order to complete the Work Plan's actions, five Expert Groups have been set up, with experts appointed by the Member States, covering the following topics:

- Match-fixing
- Good governance
- Economic dimension
- HEPA
- Human resources development in sport

In the first half of 2017, the implementation of the present Work Plan will be evaluated by the Council on the basis of a report prepared by the Commission by November 2016.

Sport coaching in Europe has a responsibility to deliver on the priorities and actions of the Work Plan 2014-2017, specially in relation to the education and training of sport coaches. The following section outlines the progress made in the last ten years.

Education and Training of Sport Coaches in Europe: 2004-2015

Sport coaching has a longstanding tradition in the European Union. National, European and International Federations and universities have delivered coaching qualifications to Member State coaches for over fifty years. Some countries have run national coaching institutes since the 1930s. It is fair to say that Europe has led the way in terms of coach education and development since the advent of the Olympic games of the modern era. However, after an impasse of a few decades where not much evolution or change occurred in the way coaches were educated and developed, the last few years have seen unparalleled interest and investment in the figure of the coach across the world, and significantly in the EU. This interest and investment has led to a number of pivotal developments and paved the way for future ones.

The European Coaching Council (ECC; http://www.icce.ws/ecc/european-coaching-council.html) is the European arm of the International Council for Coaching Excellence (ICCE; www.icce.ws), the global cooperative body leading and supporting the development of coaches word-wide. Over the last fifteen years, the ECC has led on a number of initiatives to develop coach education to new heights within the Union in light of wider developments in education such as the Lisbon, Copenhagen and Bologna processes, and the proposal for the development of the EQF and ECVET initiatives. All the above had begun to chart new directions for vocational education and higher education in response to the emerging social and economic challenges facing the EU. What follows is a chronological account of the different projects led by ECC and ICCE which have impacted on the coach education landscape in Europe and beyond.

Report on sports occupations in the European Union: European structures for the 5-levels of coach training (second edition) (1999)

Through the 1990s, the European coaching community started to consider key emerging areas of interest which impacted or were related to the education of coaches in the EU. The rise in the number of coaches operating in the EU on a full-time, part-time or voluntary basis, and the need to account for the growing need to be able to recognise coaching qualifications across the Member States to facilitate the mobility and employability of coaches were two central themes. For these reasons, coaching in Europe initiated work in the area of recognition and validation of qualifications with the final objective of developing a common reference point for their development and validation. It was in this context that the European Network of Sports Science Education and Employment (ENSSEE) Coaching Committee comprised of key European agencies in coach education, supported the development of the 5-level structure for coach training in 1999.

The core objectives of the 5-level framework were as follows:

- Provide a scheme for the analysis of the coach education systems in each of the EU countries

- Facilitate the harmonisation of the various training systems
- Facilitate the free movement of coaches within the EU

The training structure for coaches outlined the following:

- Clearly defined levels of coaching for levels 3, 4 and 5. The framework did not define the nature of levels 1 and 2, recognising they were subject to great variability within and between countries, and between national governing bodies and international federations
- Minimum guidelines in relation to the education of coaches at each level
- Domains of competence
- Fields of knowledge

	LEVEL III	LEVEL IV	LEVEL V
KEYWORDS			
Execution	x	x	x
Co-ordination	(x)	x	x
Teaching		x	x
Research		(x)	x
Management		(x)	x
Supervision			x
Strategic planning			x
TASKS	To coach one or several sportsmen and to co-ordinate a team of several assistant coaches (level I and II). At this level, the coach is mainly concerned with the execution of basic activities	To coach is responsible for all aspects of the sports practice, of the sport activity organisation. At this level, the coach has reached a higher level in training. The management and research fields are not a priority at this level.	The coach is now responsible for all aspects of the sports practice, as an "ideas man", promoter and organiser, whilst drawing on multi-disciplinary scientific training, both general and specific. At this level, the coach is competent to intervene to all the areas of performance training structure.
ACTIVITIES			
Training sportsmen	plans, implements and assesses training	Idem	devises, plans, executes and assesses the training process
Competition	assists the sportsmen during competition	advises the sportsmen during competition	idem
Talent detection	participates in identifying talents	Idem	develops strategy to detect talent
Coaches' training		supervises coaches internship	analysis the demands of coaches' training, devises programmes, produces subject matter
Safety	takes the necessary steps to ensure the athletes' safety	Idem	Idem
Research	keeps abreast of progress in knowledge	keeps abreast of progress in knowledge	Formulates the needs in research and implements research action
Co-ordination of staff			Co-ordinates a team of contributors
Promotion sports activity		Organises, manages and promotes the sport activity	Devises, organises and manages the promotion of the sports activity
ADMISSION CONDITIONS	Practical experience in the specific sport Level I and II certificates (if they are included in the national training system)	Level III certificate	Secondary education diploma/certificate, which gives access to higher education. Practical experience in the specific sport. (Level III or IV certificate can be taken into account)
MINIMUM DURATION	300 hours 2 years practical coaching experience (validated by the competent authorities)	600 hours idem	2400 hours (4 years of university studies): - 1200 hours of basic education in sport sciences - 1200 hours of specific education in the chosen sport idem

Table 7 – European 5-level structure of coach training (1999)

This framework yielded a set of clear benefits, yet had also some limitations (ECC, 2009).

With regard to its benefits, the framework:

- was able to recognise the uniqueness of the coach education systems of each of the EU member states;
- acknowledged the sport specificity of coaching practice;

- acted as a guide to various EU Member States, most notably Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. In addition, some international federations made use of the structure, for example, the European Handball Federation[3] and Federation Equestre Internationale.

In relation to its limitations, the 5-level framework:

- was slow to develop in a truly European context. The greatest energy was dedicated to the development of national systems, while referring to the emerging EU framework
- had been developed without reference to the role of European and international federations in the development of coach education structures
- had yet to resolve the relationship between vocationally based coach education and the education of coaches as part of higher level qualifications
- had not fully addressed the coaching capacities needed at each coaching level, nor was a clear conceptual framework provided for the analysis of coaching competence, recognising that coaching expertise is developed by on-the-job experience, and not simply by completing a federation-based course or higher education degree course
- lacked a monitoring mechanism to identify the extent to which the framework was used by the EU member states, or to review the extent to which the framework facilitated the mutual recognition of qualifications and the free movement of labour

All in all, there remained certain challenges in further developing a framework in a complex environment where there were different sports systems, each with many sports disciplines, language barriers, differing views on the meaning of European integration, different concepts on the role of the coach and changing legislative and qualifications frameworks.

Shortly after the publication of the 5-level framework, in 2000, the ICCE convened coaching stakeholders at the Swiss Federal Office of Sport in Magglingen to evaluate the current state of affairs in coach education globally. Representatives from 29 nations gathered to identify the ten main challenges facing coach education in the near future. The below were put forward as a thread for future development and constituted the Magglingen Declaration adhered to by all present (ICCE, 2000):

- ➢ **Challenge 1** - Establishing and educating sports organisations and individual coaches about standards of ethical behaviour and developing mechanisms for monitoring compliance.
- ➢ **Challenge 2** - Identifying, developing and evaluating coaching competencies at all levels of coaching.
- ➢ **Challenge 3** - Delivering coach education in a manner that will enable coaches to apply underpinning theory to their coaching practice and to meet the needs of their athletes.
- ➢ **Challenge 4** - Ensuring that governments, sport and the wider community recognise, understand and acknowledge the vital role of the coach in the development of sport at all levels.

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[3] The European Handball Federation adopted the Rinck Convention, which sought to align the coach education programmes of its member countries with an overarching structure that used the European Structure for the 5-levels of coaches' training as a reference point

➢ **Challenge 5** - Adopting a philosophy that promotes and supports athlete-centred coaching and coach-centred education and professional development.

➢ **Challenge 6** - Enabling coaches to access and communicate with the evolving body of coaching knowledge and best practice in a manner that will foster and support continuous learning and development.

➢ **Challenge 7** - Widening access to coach education and professional development opportunities, whilst still maintaining the quality of provision, delivery and outcome.

➢ **Challenge 8** - Developing systems that will encourage and support the continuous learning and professional development of coaches based on identifying and responding to the needs of the individual.

➢ **Challenge 9** - Working to develop and gain recognition for coaching as a profession.

➢ **Challenge 10** - Developing coach education systems that support open learning and allow coaches to study at a time, place and frequency of their own choosing.

An opportunity to progress the issues identified after the publication of the 5-level structure and the Magglingen Declaration developed in 2004.

The European Framework for the Recognition of Coaching Competences and Qualifications (2007)

The need for the Review of the 5-level structure for the recognition of coaching qualifications had been identified by the ECC to bring coaching in line with the emerging broader education panorama (ECC, 2007). Despite the positive welcome and adoption rate, in the five years the 5-level structure had been in operation, it had become evident that there were elements of the structure that had not been implemented or gained full acceptance within the EU coaching community. For example, the nature and positioning of level 5 qualifications was the subject of considerable debate. This debate had focused on the realisation that expert levels of coaching are derived from many years of on-the-job experience and cannot simply be attained through the completion of a degree course. There was also a need to more strongly recognise the role of national and International Federations in the education of coaches. While the initial document recognised this principle, International Federations were not centrally involved in its development. In addition, the trend towards competence-based learning suggested that the input-based 5-level structure needed to be updated.

As well as the structural changes that were taking place across the EU in the organization and recognition of qualifications in all sectors of education, the expansion of the EU in 2007 to 27 countries had also brought an important new perspective on the education of coaches. In many of the expansion countries, coach education had been strongly embedded within the higher education sector, and this new context needed to be addressed in the context of the review. In a wider, global context, the ICCE had also indicated the need for a more effective framework to guide the recognition of coaching qualifications between different countries.

As part of the broader Aligning a European Higher Education Structure in Sport Science project (AEHESIS) which ran between 2004 and 2007, ECC conducted a review of the 1999 5-level structure in coach education. This review led to the publication of the European Framework for the Recognition of Coaching Competences and Qualifications (EFRCCQ). This process concluded with the signing of the Rio Major Convention whereby all ECC members committed to using the EFRCCQ as their reference point for the period 2008-2011.

In sum, the objectives of the Review were to:

a) Promote a greater consistency of approach to the development of coaching qualifications across sports and the different EU countries
b) Encourage the development of more relevant education and training provision to meet the needs of national and international federations, athletes and coaches
c) Provide a transparent framework for the recognition of coaching qualifications within the EU, taking into account the wider EU developments in vocational and educational training and the need to more clearly define the relationship with the higher education sector
d) Develop a framework that recognises the role of the non-university and university sectors in the education of coaches, in the context of emerging structures for the recognition of educational and vocational qualifications within the EU
e) Raise standards and improve the quality of coaching
f) Work towards a greater public recognition of coaching as a qualified, competent and regulated profession, which is integral to successful player development at all levels.

Therefore, the Review and subsequent adoption of the EFRCCQ kick-started the process of modernising coach education in Europe and laid the foundation for its alignment with wider European structures. The Review started by defining coaching as:

'The guided improvement, led by a coach, of sports participants and teams in single sport and at identifiable stages of the athlete/sportsperson pathway.' (p.5)

It also stated that:

o Coach education should be competence-based and that coaches should be trained to do the job and to fulfil specific coaching roles.
o The format of coach education programmes should include a range of learning modes and be able to recognise prior learning
o Coaching expertise is built up through a combination of practical experience, knowledge and life-long experiences, formal training programmes and self-reflection
o Coach education should take into account the context and domain in which the coach will work and provide related content and experiences.
o Coach education levels should be underpinned by systems of quality assurance and linked to national and European vocational qualification structures
o There is a large number of institutions and sectors involved in coach education and greater cooperation is needed to support recognition and portability of coaching qualifications within and between educational institutes, federations and countries
o Coaches should be supported on a journey of Long-Term Coach Development

As a result of the above statements, the Review proposed the following changes to the 5-level structure:

➢ *The definition of coaching roles and the recognition of coaching competence are central to the proposed new framework*. The Framework should now refer to the recognition of coaching competence and qualifications: Four main coaching roles were identified, based on

an analysis of the job market and the stages in the development of coaching expertise: Apprentice Coach; Coach; Senior Coach; Master Coach. The key competences associated with these roles were identified to facilitate comparability between qualifications and evaluation of individual competence.

Role title	Role description
Apprentice Coach	Assist more qualified coaches delivering aspects of coaching sessions, normally under supervision. Deliver coaching sessions under direction/support. Acquire and practice basic coaching competences.
Coach	Prepare for, deliver and review coaching sessions. Demonstrate basic coaching competence.
Senior Coach	Plan, implement and review annual coaching sessions. Demonstrate advanced coaching competence.
Master Coach	Plan, implement, analyse and revise multi-annual coaching programmes. Demonstrate advanced coaching competence, innovation and leadership.
Coach of participation-oriented sportspeople	
Coach of performance-oriented athletes	

Table 8 – Coaching roles definitions in the EFRCCQ

➢ *Two standard occupations were identified rather than one:* The revised framework recognised that within the professional area of coaching there is a diversity of standard occupations. Two standard occupations were identified: Coach of participation-oriented sportspeople and Coach of performance-oriented athletes. These two standard occupations may be further sub-divided into sub-components as follows: Coach of beginner (child, junior, adult); Coach of participation-oriented sportspeople (child, junior, adult); Coach of talent identified/performance athletes (child, junior, adult); Coach of full-time/high performance athletes. It was recognised that these roles may vary between sports and between countries.

➢ *The direct equation of educational levels with coaching roles is to be replaced with a recognition of the federation, vocational and University coach education streams*. These educational streams were recommended to demonstrate a clear link with the four coaching roles, the standard occupations and the associated coaching competence. As a result, the previous Five Level Structure for the Recognition of Coaching Qualifications was replaced by a the EFRCCQ. Within this context, vocational education agencies, national and international federations were asked to determine the number of levels of education appropriate for their country/sport and demonstrate the relationship between these educational levels and the coaching roles/standard occupations. The review also proposed that university qualifications in coaching would be recognised in line with the Bologna process and demonstrate the relationship between these qualifications and the coaching roles/standard occupations.

➢ *A system for the recognition of coaching qualifications between vocational and higher education sectors within each country was proposed*. It was recommended that all national competent authorities in coach education would oversee, recognise and, if needed, conduct the sports coaching qualification programmes.

➢ *Recognition of prior learning and current competence*: Coaches carrying out their role should have either completed a formal and recognised course of learning and/or had their prior learning and current competence formally assessed.

➢ *The introduction of a coach licensing system was recommended*: As part of the process of moving coaching towards the status of a regulated profession it was recommended that all coaches should hold a sport-specific coaching licence. The coaching licence should act as a registration and recognition system overseen and validated by the sports federations and, if needed, by the national competent authority. The coaching licence should be the primary criterion for the recognition of the coaches' mastery of the practical demands and competencies of sports coaching.

➢ *The revised European Structure for the Recognition of Coaching Competence and Qualifications should be directly mapped to the European Qualification Framework (EQF):* A preliminary comparison between the revised European Structure for the Recognition of Coaching Qualifications (four levels) and the emerging EQF (7 levels) was made and suggested that the four main coaching roles lie between levels 3 and 7 of the EQF.

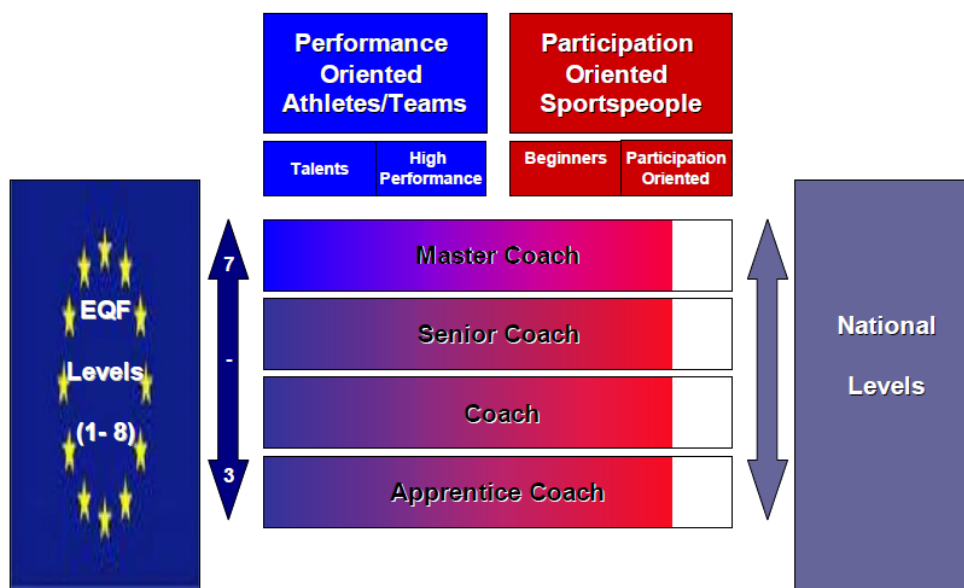Figure 3 summarises the key features of the EFRCCQ structure and their relationship to EQF and NQFs.

Figure 3 – Main features of the EFRCCQ and relationship to EQF and NQF

The EFRCCQ was formally adopted in Rio Major, Portugal on September 22nd 2007 through the signing of the Rio Major Convention for the Recognition of Coaching Competence and Qualifications which stated that:

1. Coaches play a central role in providing sport experiences for sportspeople of all ages and skill levels
2. To fulfil their role, coaches must have appropriate competence and training, taking into account the target group(s) with whom they are working
3. Coaches are expected to be as concerned with the well-being of the sportspeople as they are with optimising performance.

4. Coaches should respect the rights, dignity and worth of every sports participant, and treat everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or political conviction.

5. Coaches are expected to work in an open and co-operative manner with all individuals responsible for the welfare and performance development of the sportspeople.

6. Coaches should develop and maintain a high standard of training; their action, whilst conducting training sessions, should reflect scientific knowledge and current expertise.

7. Scientific principles should be applied in every level of coaches' training.

8. Responsibilities and professional competence should gradually build up from the initial levels of coaches' qualification to the final ones.

9. All coaches should hold a coaching qualification that is recognised by the national competent authority and the relevant federation.

10. The framework for the recognition of coaching competence and qualifications as proposed by the European Coaching Council in the Review of the 5-Level Structure is the European recognised reference point for the period 2008-11. During this period, a revised framework for the Recognition of Coaching Competence and Qualifications will be developed.

11. As part of the development of the Revised Framework the establishment of a formal review mechanism will be investigated to provide a basis on which prior learning and current competence can be recognised and where coaching qualifications can be reviewed against the ECC framework.

12. As part of the development of the Revised Framework consideration should be given to the establishment of a licensing system that will have international recognition and currency.

13. Each participating agency in the convention will undertake to use the review of the Framework as a reference point for their work and to contribute to the further improvement of the Framework between 2008 and 2011. The convention is not legally binding and is without prejudice to the positions taken by each sport and national authority on the final Revised Framework.

The EFRCCQ led to an overhaul of coach education and development in countries such as the UK, Ireland, Portugal and Germany. However, uncertainty over broader developments in educational frameworks in the EU meant that the EFRCCQ met a certain level of resistance in others. The clarification and progressive implementation of the broader developments in Europe's system for the recognition of qualifications in the years following the publication of the Review and the EFRCCQ allowed nations and sports to further understand the new landscape. The Rio Major Convention stipulated that the EFRCCQ would be the main reference point between 2007 and 2011 at which time, a new review should take place.

Against this backdrop, at a global level, the ICCE had also identified the need to develop a universal framework for the recognition of coaching competences and qualifications to drive the advance of coaching world-wide. It was thus agreed with ECC that the resulting International Sport Coaching Framework would also serve as the planned review of the EFRCCQ to continue to guide the development of coaching the EU for the period 2011-2016.

The International Sport Coaching Framework (2013)

In 2011, the ICCE brought together a multi-agency working group in conjunction with the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF) and Leeds Beckett University to, using the EFRCCQ as a starting point, develop the International Sport Coaching Framework (ISCF). The ISCF was conceived as an 'an internationally recognised reference point for the development of coaches globally' (ICCE, ASOIF & LBU, 2013, p.10). The decision to partner with ASOIF recognised the significant role International Federations play in the education and development of coaches, especially in countries with non-existent or emerging coaching systems. The third partner of choice, Leeds Beckett University, had in 2011 become the host of the Global/European Office of the ICCE and brought invaluable resource and expertise to the organisation and the project itself.

The working group was co-chaired by the late Professor Pat Duffy (Leeds Beckett, UK) and Ms Marisol Casado (ASOIF, International Triathlon Union and IOC Member for Spain). It contained over 30 representatives from a broad spectrum of coaching stakeholders which included the IOC (represented by the Athlete's Entourage Commission), Olympic Solidarity, the World Anti-Doping Agency, the Association of Winter Olympic International Federations, the European Commission, lead national agencies, higher education institutions, national and international federations, coaches' associations, and coaches.

Over a two-year period, which included meetings in Köln, Paris, Madrid, Beijing, Sofia, Leeds and Lausanne, the ISCF working group conducted a collaborative exercise in order to arrive at the finished framework. A consultation draft (ISCF v1.1) was launched in London in July 2012 coinciding with the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This first iteration was very positively received by the international coaching community and led to further refinements and additions to the framework, which resulted in the publication of the ISCF v1.2[4] (hereon the Framework) at the Global Coach Conference in Durban (South Africa) in September 2013.

The Framework defined coaching as *'a process of guided improvement and development in a single sport and at identifiable stages of development'* (p14) and positioned coaches as key actors in the ever growing and demanding sporting landscape. It built on the principles introduced by the EFRCCQ and added further guidance and detail for countries, sports and educational institutions involved in coach education and development.

Most significantly, the ISCF:

- Further developed the segmentation of sport participation and thus of coaching occupations (Participation Coaching and Performance Coaching) into six domains (Coaches of Children; Coaches of Adolescent Participants; Coaches of Adult Participants; Coaches of Emerging Athletes; Coaches of Performance Athletes; and Coaches of Elite Athletes.

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[4] The ISCF is published by Human Kinetics. A free e-version can be downloaded from http://www.icce.ws/_assets/files/iscf-1.2-10-7-15.pdf . The printed version can be ordered from Human Kinetics at http://www.humankinetics.com/products/all-products/international-sport-coaching-framework-brochure-version-12-9255641
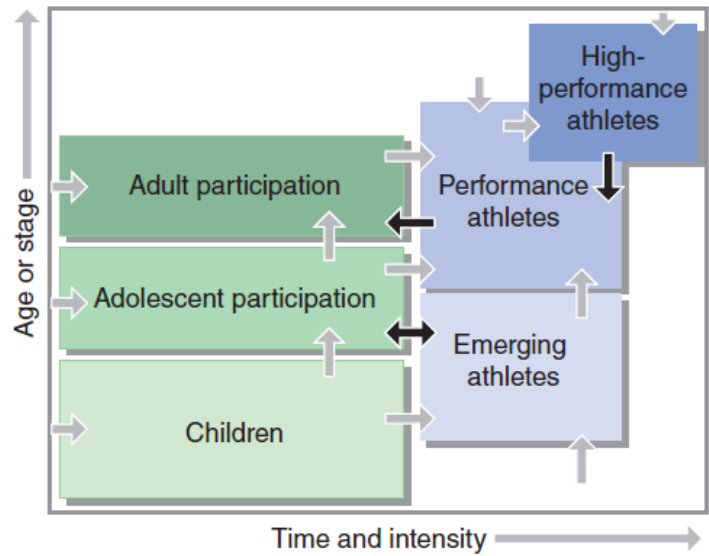
Figure 4 – Sport Participation Spectrum (reproduced from ISCF v1.2)

- Evolve the denomination of the four coaching roles proposed in the EFRCCQ to Coaching Assistant, Coach, Senior/Advanced Coach and Master/Head Coach

Role descriptor	Knowledge and competence[1]
Coaching Assistant (*Note:* the term *Assistant Coach*, as opposed to the role of Coaching Assistant, may be applied at a number of levels. For example, an Assistant Coach in high performance might be operating at the level of the Advanced/Senior Coach).	Assists in the delivery of sessions[2] Plans, delivers and reviews basic coaching sessions, sometimes under supervision. Basic level of knowledge, competence and decision making to deliver the primary functions with guidance. Supports the engagement of pre-coaches.
Coach	Plans, delivers and reviews coaching sessions over a season, and sometimes part of a wider programme. Extended level of knowledge, competence and decision making to independently deliver the primary functions. Supports the engagement and development of pre-coaches and Coaching Assistants.
Advanced/Senior Coach	Plans, delivers, leads and evaluates coaching sessions and seasons. Extended and integrated knowledge, competence and decision making to deliver the primary functions and to mentor others. Works independently and plays a leading role in the structure of the programme. Manages the development of Coaches, Coaching Assistants and pre-coaches.
Master/Head Coach	Oversees and contributes to the delivery, review and evaluation of programmes over seasons in medium- to large-scale contexts, underpinned by innovation and research. Specialist and integrated level of knowledge and competence, recognized as an expert with highly developed decision-making skills. Often involved in designing and overseeing management structures and development programmes for other coaches.

Table 9 – Coaching Roles (reproduced from ISCF v1.2)

- Defined the six primary functions which coaches have to fulfil independent of role, context or domain
- Proposed a set of underlying competences for each of the primary functions
- Described the knowledge basis which underpin the competences of the coach
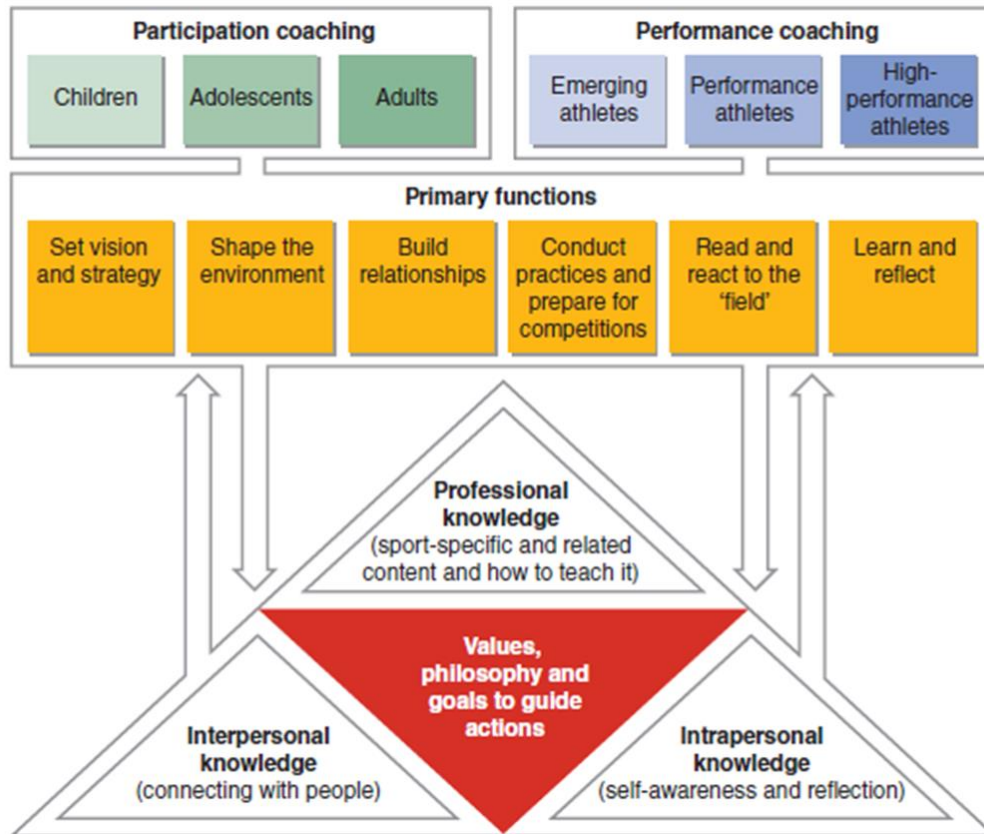
Figure 5 – Functional coaching competence and coaching knowledge (reproduced from ISCF v1.2)

- Placed greater emphasis on the different ways in which coaches learn and the creation of flexible and individualised learning pathways.
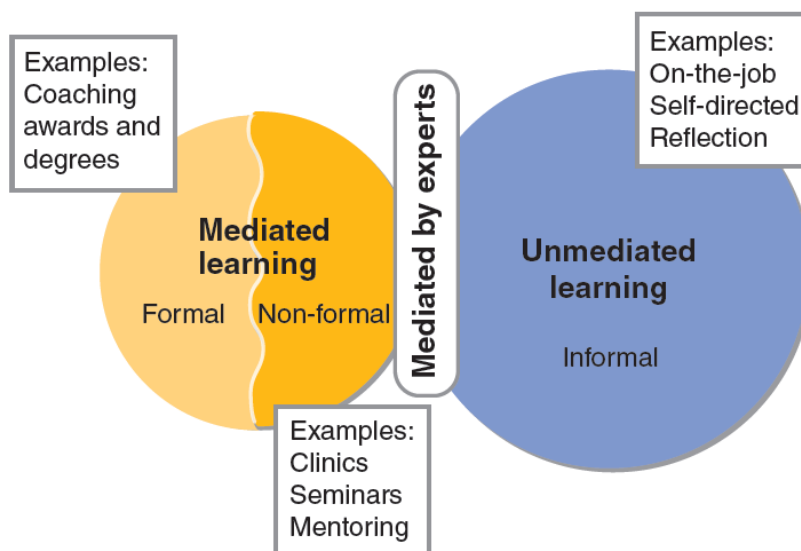

Figure 6 – Types of learning situations for coaches (reproduce from ISCF v1.2)

- Set clear guidelines with regards to the alignment of achievement standards with coaching roles

Coaching roles	Achievement standards		
	National and international federation levels	University/ higher education awards	Other coach education institution and agency awards
Master/Head Coach	Level 4	University degree or postgraduate degree	
Advanced/ Senior Coach	Level 3	University diploma or degree	
Coach	Level 2		Coaching certificate
Coaching Assistant	Level 1		Coach introductory course award

Figure 7 – Alignment of achievement standards with coaching roles (reproduced from ISCF v1.2)

- Further developed the concept of Long-Term Coach Development signalling the need for opportunities to grow as a coach horizontally (within the current role) and vertically (towards higher roles, levels of expertise and responsibility)
- Provided a broad mechanism for the recognition of coaching qualifications and prior learning amongst countries and between different sectors of education.
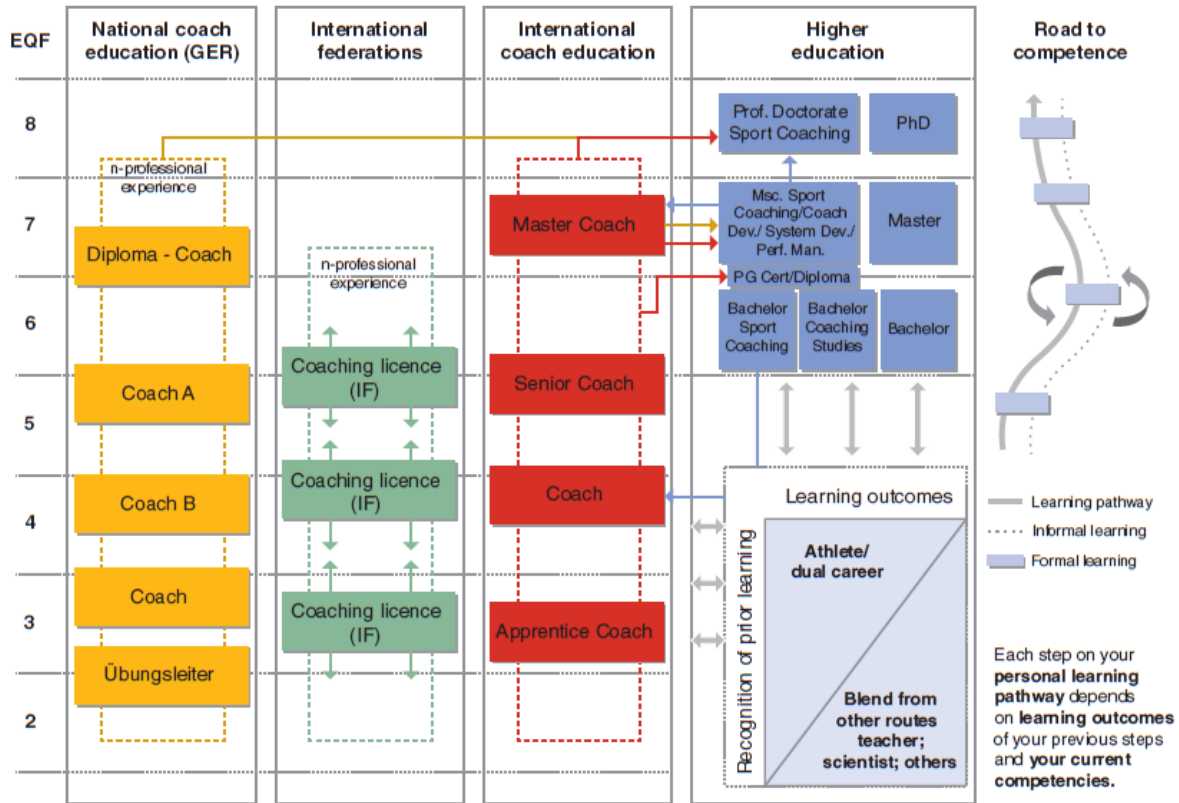
Figure 8 – Long-term learning pathway for coaches and recognition and validation map (reproduced from ISCF v1.2)

- Significantly promoted the role and importance of coach developers as central to the education and development of coaches world-wide and introduced a pathway for the Long-term development of coach developers
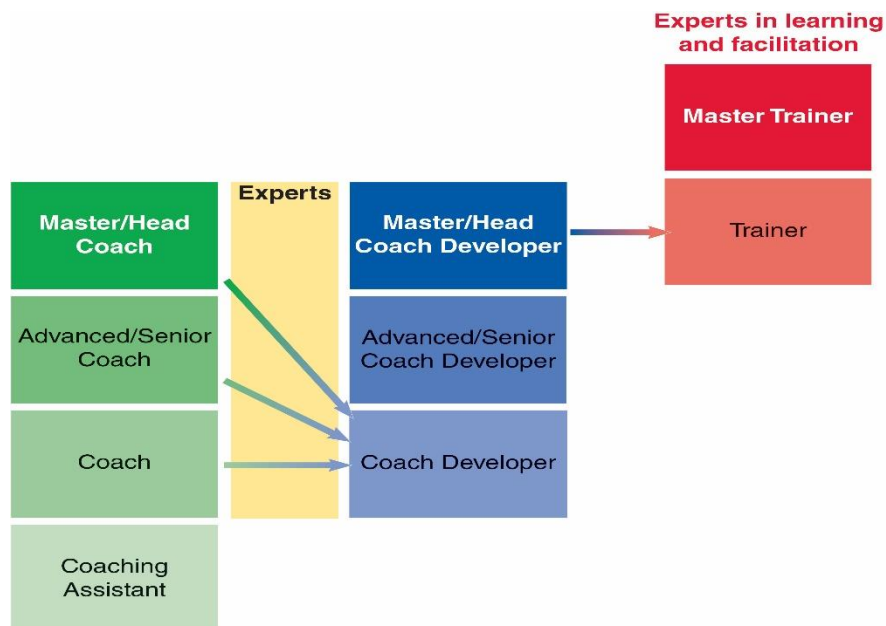

Figure 9 – Long-term career pathway of coach developers (reproduced from ISCF v1.2)

In sum, the ISCF has provided all those involved in coach education and development with a clear reference point for the creation of suitable coach education and development systems. Since its publication, the Framework has helped governments and institutions realise the importance of coaching and coach education and to create new and ambitious plans for its development. It has also built vast support across the world from leading organisations such as the International Olympic Committee, the European Commission and the World Anti-Doping Agency. Countries as diverse as the USA, South Africa, Poland, Italy, Japan and the Philippines have used it to guide their efforts in coach education and development. Despite these advances, a number of challenges still remain globally as identified by ICCE President Mr John Bales in the opening address of the Global Coach Conference 2015 in Vierumaki, Finland (Bales, 2015):

1. **Educating the Workforce:** global adoption of a framework approach to coach education and development is still far from complete. In some cases, countries or federations, given their current structures and resources, are in no position to make such a transition. In other cases, frameworks such as the ISCF have been interpreted as regulatory and compulsory leading to apprehension and ultimately rejection. In countries with long-standing traditions of coach education and development, substantial progress has been made in reviewing and re-shaping their structures. In less developed systems, such as the USA, the Africa region, India and Japan, considerable thought and resource has been dedicated to the development of initiatives to kick-start change at a systemic level. Further engagement from Central and South American countries, and the Middle East will be sought in the near future.

2. **Developing the Coach Developers:** whilst the importance of coaching and coach education has been globally established, the need to support the creation of a fit-for-purpose Coach Developer workforce has been less so. ICCE, through its Innovation Group of Lead Agencies, conducted ground-breaking work in this area that led to the publication of the International Coach Developer Framework v1.1 (ICDF). The ICDF offers guidance as to the fundamental building blocks of Long-Term Coach Developer Development. It also provides evidence-based recommendations on teaching and learning approaches suitable to coaching. As an example of how this work has supported Coach Developer progress, ICCE partnered up with Nippon Sport Science University, as part of the Japan-wide "Sport for Tomorrow" programme, to develop the National Coach Developer Academy (NCDA). NCDA, brings together 20 coach developers from across the globe every year for a 12-month development programme. Despite initiatives like NCDA, adoption of ICDF principles is slow and many coach education and development programmes still operate an expert/master class approach. This, for the most part, is based on the delivery of knowledge by a more experienced coach in the case of the sport specific content, or an academic subject matter expert in the case of the sciences. Modern learning theory and learning design are not fully considered. Blended learning approaches that mix theoretical knowledge with experiential learning and personal reflection using various forms of teaching and communication media are yet to become the norm in coach education.

3. **Enhancing the voice of the coach:** Project CoachNet (ECC, 2013) found that the level to which coaches are represented at the decision-making level in sporting organisations is still very low. In addition, CoachNet also found that coaches' associations which represent

the figure of the coach politically and legally are underdeveloped in many countries and sports. Linked to the above, the coaching profession still lacks a Coaches' Charter stating the rights and obligations of coaches throughout the world. Finally, the formation of a global coaching community, one of ICCE's strategic objectives, is also far from complete.

4. **The road to professionalisation:** the development of coaching as a profession where volunteer and paid coaches coexists and are trained and recognised in a professional manner is progressing apace, yet still lacks traction and credibility in certain arenas. Key areas for development include the recognition of prior learning and facilitation of mutual recognition of coaching qualifications between different sectors of the education pathway (i.e. between FE and HE; and between the education provided by universities and the one provided by colleges and universities); the development of minimum standards for the deployment of coaches; the development of international standards for bachelor's degrees in sport coaching; quality assurance in coach education and development, including the potential role of ICCE as an endorsing body; and the creation of a platform of higher education institutions involved in coach education.

5. **Women into coaching:** notwithstanding advances made in the last decade, women are still underrepresented in coaching both at participation and elite level. At the 2012 London Olympic Games, only 11% of accredited coaches were female. Groups like the International Working Group on Women in Sport, the IOC's Women in Sport Commission and the ICCE's Wining Women Working Group are working tirelessly to improve access and pathways for female coaches, yet there remains a large gap between the number of men and women going into and staying in coaching.

6. **Quality of decision-making in sporting and coaching organisations:** the use of existing intelligence around the needs of athletes and coaches to develop targeted programmes of recruitment and development is not being maximised. Likewise, where the evidence does not exist, relevant institutions and organisations must make a concerted effort to identify and close knowledge gaps in relation to coach education and development as well as coaching practice. A clear example of this is gaining a better understanding of the coaching workforce. Countries and federations must strive to better understand the makeup of their coaching populations. For instance, the number of people doing coaching, how often, their qualifications, employment status and which domain of the participation spectrum they coach in. All important information for those educating and developing coaches to ensure coaches are appropriately qualified and supported, and to demonstrate the importance and value of coaching in the XXI century to sport administrators, government and potential funders and investors.

Evolution and Current State of Affairs of Coaching and Coach Education Policy at ECC and ICCE Level

Table 10 provides a summary of the main elements and priorities stated by the various ECC and ICCE policy documents since the publication of the 5-level structure.

Policy Document	5-Level Structure Review (1999)	EFRCCQ (2007)	ISCF (2013)
Main Objectives	• Provide a scheme for the analysis of the coach education systems in each of the EU countries • Facilitate the harmonisation of the various training systems • Facilitate the free movement of coaches within the EU	• Promote a greater consistency of approach to the development of coaching qualifications • Encourage the development of more relevant education and training provision • Provide a transparent framework for the recognition of coaching qualifications between countries and across sectors • Develop a framework that recognises the role of the non-university and university sectors in the education of coaches • Raise standards and improve the quality of coaching • Work towards a greater public recognition of coaching	• Provide an internationally recognised reference point for the development of coaches • Create common language and criteria • Offer benchmarks for the recognition and certification of coaches • Support alignment between all different institutions that provide coach education • Enhance coach recognition • Enhance coach mobility
Key Features	• Clearly defined levels of coaching for levels 3, 4 and 5. The framework did not define the nature of levels 1 and 2, recognising they were subject to great variability within and between countries, and between national governing bodies and international federations • Minimum guidelines in relation to the education of coaches at each level • Domains of competence • Fields of knowledge	• A definition of coaching • The definition of coaching roles and the recognition of coaching competence • Two standard occupations: participation and performance • Positions coaching as athlete-centred • No direct link between educational levels and coaching roles. Federation, vocational and university education are all recognised equally • Recognition of prior learning and current competence • Coach licensing was recommended • Roughly mapped to the European Qualification Framework	• Modified definition of coaching • Positioning of coaching as a blended professional area • Further definition of four coaching roles based on knowledge, skills, responsibility, complexity and autonomy • Definition of 6 core functional areas and associated competences • Proposition of knowledge basis (Professional, Interpersonal and Intrapersonal) • Definition of coaching effectiveness (Côté & Gilbert, 2009) • Central role of coach philosophy and values • Emphasis on long-term approach to athlete-development

			• Promotion of life-long learning and multi-modal/blended approach to coach education and development (including RPL) • Linked to wider educational frameworks (EQF, etc) • Certification and licensing still recommended • Introduction of Long-term Coach Developer pathway
Perceived Benefits	• Able to recognise the uniqueness of the coach education systems of each of the EU member states; • Acknowledged the sport specificity of coaching practice; • Acted as a guide to various EU Member States and International Federations	• Introduced the concept of competence-based coach education • Provided a framework for the recognition of qualifications and competence amongst countries and institutions • Stated that coaches should be trained to fulfil specific coaching roles in specific domains. • Encouraged coach education programmes to include a range of learning modes and be able to recognise prior learning • Recognised that coaching expertise is built up through a combination of practical experience, knowledge and life-long experiences, formal training programmes and self-reflection • Pointed towards the developing European vocational qualification structures and the EQF • Introduced the idea of Long-Term Coach Development and stressed the need for different sectors of education to work together • Proposed the development of a pan-European coach licensing system	• Be flexible and responsive to the needs of countries and federations • Move away from input-based to output-based qualifications (learning outcomes and competence) • Certification should relate to functional competence • Guidance related to mutual recognition of qualifications • Positioning of coaching as a holistic development activity • Linked to research and evidence

Limitations	• Lack of full acknowledgement of the emerging EU qualification structures • Developed without reference to the role of federations • Yet to resolve the relationship between VET & HE • Not fully addressed the issue of coaching competence • Lacked monitoring mechanism to evaluate implementation and impact	• Heavily input orientated and prescriptive in its curricula • Does not take fully into account the new landscape in the EU (i.e. ECVET, ECTS, EQF) • Yet to resolve the relationship between VET & HE • Does not define competence fully and offers a very functional view of it • Does not provide guidance regarding practicum period • Does not provide guidance regarding RPL • Does not provide guidance regarding licensing	• Lack of guidance regarding adequate assessment and quality assurance • Limited guidance in relation to certification, licensing, mutual recognition and RPL • Due to need to be flexible and work globally, does not fully link to EU structures • Yet to fully resolve the relationship between VET & HE • Diverse picture in the EU in terms of the recognition of coaching as a profession • Uses a very functional, reductionist view of competence • Low emphasis and guidance on the need for practicum periods • Lack of tools to facilitate adoption and implementation
Identified Principles & Future Priorities	**Magglingen Declaration (2000)** ➢ **Challenge 1** - Establishing and educating sports organisations and individual coaches about standards of ethical behaviour and developing mechanisms for monitoring compliance. ➢ **Challenge 2** - Identifying, developing and evaluating coaching competencies at all levels of coaching. ➢ **Challenge 3** - Delivering coach education in a manner that will enable coaches to apply underpinning theory to their coaching practice and to meet the needs of their athletes. ➢ **Challenge 4** - Ensuring that governments, sport and the wider community recognise, understand and acknowledge the vital role of the coach in the development of sport at all levels.	**Rio Major Convention (2007)** **1.** Coaches play a central role in providing sport experiences for sportspeople of all ages and skill levels **2.** To fulfil their role, coaches must have appropriate competence and training, taking into account the target group(s) with whom they are working **3.** Coaches are expected to be as concerned with the well-being of the sportspeople as they are with optimising performance. **4.** Coaches should respect the rights, dignity and worth of every sports participant, and treat everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or political conviction. **5.** Coaches are expected to work in an open and co-operative manner with all individuals	**Presidential Address – ICCE Global Coach Conference Vierumaki Finland (2015)** **6 Challenges** 1. Educating the workforce 2. Developing coach developers 3. Enhancing the voice of the coach 4. The road to professionalization 5. Women into coaching 6. The quality of organisational decision-making

	➢ **Challenge 5** - Adopting a philosophy that promotes and supports athlete-centred coaching and coach-centred education and professional development. ➢ **Challenge 6** - Enabling coaches to access and communicate with the evolving body of coaching knowledge and best practice in a manner that will foster and support continuous learning and development. ➢ **Challenge 7** - Widening access to coach education and professional development opportunities, whilst still maintaining the quality of provision, delivery and outcome. ➢ **Challenge 8** - Developing systems that will encourage and support the continuous learning and professional development of coaches based on identifying and responding to the needs of the individual. ➢ **Challenge 9** - Working to develop and gain recognition for coaching as a profession. ➢ **Challenge 10** - Developing coach education systems that support open learning and allow coaches to study at a time, place and frequency of their own choosing.	responsible for the welfare and performance development of the sportspeople. **6.** Coaches should develop and maintain a high standard of training; their action, whilst conducting training sessions, should reflect scientific knowledge and current expertise. **7.** Scientific principles should be applied in every level of coaches' training. **8.** Responsibilities and professional competence should gradually build up from the initial levels of coaches' qualification to the final ones. **9.** All coaches should hold a coaching qualification that is recognised by the national competent authority and the relevant federation. **10.** The framework for the recognition of coaching competence and qualifications as proposed by the European Coaching Council in the Review of the 5-Level Structure is the European recognised reference point for the period 2008-11. **11.** As part of the development of the Revised Framework the establishment of a formal review mechanism will be investigated to provide a basis on which prior learning and current competence can be recognised and where coaching qualifications can be reviewed against the ECC framework. **12.** As part of the development of the Revised Framework consideration should be given to the establishment of a licensing system that will have international recognition and currency. **13.** Each participating agency in the convention will undertake to use the review	

		of the Framework as a reference point for their work and to contribute to the further improvement of the Framework between 2008 and 2011. The convention is not legally binding and is without prejudice to the positions taken by each sport and national authority on the final Revised Framework.	

Table 10 – Summary of coach education policy development in the EU since 1999

From the joint analysis of these key coach education policy documents the following principles emerge:

- Athlete-centeredness and holistic coaching approach are the philosophical foundations
- Coach education must be domain-specific
- Coaching qualifications are moving towards an output-based system focused on learning outcomes and the development of competence
- Greater emphasis has to be placed on experiential learning and adequate practicum periods
- Lifelong learning, flexible learning pathways and RPL are paramount to successful coach education systems
- Enhanced alignment between different sectors of education is a priority
- The inclusion of coaching qualifications in NQFs is a central objective
- Coach certification and licensing are seen as foundational to the professionalization of coaching
- A highly trained coach developer workforce is vital to coach education and development

European Commission Expert Groups

As a result of the development of the EU Work Plans for Sport 2011-2014 and 2014-2017, a number of Expert Groups (XG) were set up to accelerate developments in key areas. Some of these XG have played a significant role in the promotion and development of coaching and coach education. Table 11 shows the various groups.

Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014 Expert Groups	Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014 Expert Groups
- Anti-Doping - Good governance in sport - Education and training in sport - Sport, health and participation - Sport statistics - Sustainable financing of sport	- Match-fixing - Good governance - Health Enhancing Physical Activity - Human Resources Development - Economic Dimension of Sport

Table 11 – Sport Expert Groups set up by European Commission through Work Plans for Sport 2011-2014 and 2014-2017

Expert Group on Education and Training in Sport (part of Work Plan for Sport 2011-2014)

The XG-ETS was tasked with, amongst other elements, exploring the current state of play with regards to the inclusion of sport-related qualifications into NQFs and their relation to EQF. The June 2013 mid-term report (European Commission, 2013) arrived at the following conclusions:

- The pace of inclusion of sport qualifications in NQF depends strongly on the current state of the education system of the sport sector in each of the Member States and the government position on the role and relevance of sport qualifications
- Investment is needed to transform non-formal education into a modern, learning outcome-based system which includes updated professional and occupational profiles and clear

indicators regarding the levels of qualifications, depending on the complexity of knowledge and skills and levels of competence and responsibility required.

- Organisations delivering non-formal sport qualifications should be incentivized to align with NQF
- The non-formal and formal education sector should formalise their relationship and cooperation
- Where inclusion of sport qualifications in NQF is not possible, an effective RPL system should be developed
- Sports are encouraged to use guidance provided by international federations or existing international sport qualification frameworks (such as ISCF for coaching or the guidance provided by Europe Active in the fitness sector). Respect for national variation is however required.

As a result of the above findings, the XG-ETS recommends the Working Party for Sport of the Council to (p17-18):

- Invite Ministers responsible for Sport to bring their sport legislation and regulations in line with national education regulations regarding qualification frameworks and the learning outcome approach
- Invite Ministers responsible for Education, in particular in Member States where non-formal sport education systems qualify people for functions in sport, to support the inclusion of these sport qualifications in the National Qualification Framework in close cooperation with the Ministers responsible for Sport.
- Call upon (regional) governments and the sport movement to promote a learning outcomes approach based on NQF/EQF principles in the non-governmental regulated sport education system for all sport qualifications.
- Recommend the European Commission to monitor the process of the further inclusion of sport qualifications in National qualification frameworks and to deliver a follow up report in 2017 in close cooperation with the Member States as part of the new EU Work Plan for Sport from 2014 onwards.
- Request the Commission to develop a support mechanism including a communication plan making the concrete added value of the transformations more visible, to implement the inclusion of sport qualifications in national qualification frameworks and the learning outcomes approach in the education and training systems.
- Recommend the Commission to launch a study updating facts and figures about education systems for functions in the sport sector.
- Intensify and coordinate contacts with the international federations and other international sport organisations and stakeholders involved on the inclusion of international sport qualifications in National Qualification Frameworks

Expert Group on Human Resources Development in Sport (part of Work Plan for Sport 2014-2017)

The XG-HR has four strands:

- ➢ Volunteering
- ➢ Employability of young people

> ➢ Qualifications
> ➢ EU Guidelines on dual careers

The main objective of the qualifications strand is the preparation of practical guidance on compliance of national qualifications with international qualification standards of international sport federation. This work is seen as a follow-up to the mid-term report of the XG-ETS (European Commission, 2013). The draft recommendations (European Commission, in preparation b) state that:

> *'It seems appropriate that the educational providers, including federations and/or international bodies, use a **reference tool** for the description of the skill and level of qualifications provided. This tool should be based on a standardized language and common terminology. It is essential to harmonize the terms used and their definitions, by enrolling in the common definitions, or at least identify similarities between different operators beyond the vocabulary used. The terms must be transparent and strictly defined. To meet this requirement, the HR XG recommends referring to the work of the Cedefop.'* (p.1)

The XG-HR also recommends that such reference tool contains the following elements (adapted from pp.1-3):

- Each level of qualification should be identified and linked to a ***job/role profile***

- The job/role profile should also describe the level of responsibility and autonomy, the target audience, places and spaces in which the role operates, and the human and physical resources that the role can manage.

- In addition to the job/role profile, a ***skills profile*** is required for each job/role. This is a "detailed" list of skills required to fulfil the job/role. The skills profile does not address the tasks, but the skills needed to achieve them. Skill profiles are considered as reference points when it comes to develop competence profiles and relevant training programmes.

- ***Training courses*** should be broken down into ***units of learning***. This approach provides a methodological framework that will support the development of the entire system of education. Units of learning can therefore be credited ECVET points and thus be recognizable and transferable between different operators and/or certifiers of training.

- Each ***unit of learning*** should clearly state:

  o The ***pre-requisites*** or prior competence level required to be able to enter this new phase of training

  o The expected ***learning outcomes***.

  o The ***estimated workload*** which indicates the time, amount of work and the learning activities that each unit requires for candidates to achieve the expected learning outcomes. These may include guide, non-guided, face-to-face and remote learning opportunities.

  o ***The methodology and educational tools used*** to provide the training

- o ***The course materials*** and the way in which they are provided to applicants (i.e. paper, syllabi, books, portfolio, website, electronic platform software)

- o The nature of ***the evaluation and assessment process***. Appropriate evaluation involves a qualitative and/or quantitative description of behaviours, actions or results expected at the end of the training. Clear criteria and benchmarks are central.

- o The qualification should also identify the human and physical resources required to effectively deliver the course. This could be broken down into:

  - ▪ ***The relevant skills and experience of trainers;***
  - ▪ ***The coaching and equipment standards;***

General and Coaching Specific Education Frameworks in the EU – Knowledge, Impact and Future Needs Survey 2015[5]

In addition to the analysis of existing policy documents, Project CoachLearn conducted a preliminary survey amongst stakeholders to gain insight into the current picture and their future needs. The participants included national lead coaching organisations, national Olympic committees, national and international governing bodies of sport and vocational and higher education institutions. The first half of the consultation revolved around the identification of common challenges faced by stakeholders, the various tools they have used to overcome them and the role played by existing generic and coaching specific qualification frameworks and mobility tools. The second half investigated the views of the participants in relation to the development of the future European Sport Coaching Framework.

Key Challenges

Coaching stakeholders identified four key challenges they have to overcome on a daily basis:

- A lack of a framework or system culture in coach education which renders the landscape disjointed and convoluted, and overall hard to understand and navigate.
- The absence of appropriate curricula which take into account the wide range of functions coaches fulfil and the ways coaches learn
- A distinct difficulty to instil a lifelong learning mindset into coaches and their employers
- The recognition of coaching as a legitimate professional area that requires adequate training

The Solutions So Far

In building their coaching qualifications and systems, those working in coach education have relied heavily in the support and guidance from generic National Qualifications Frameworks. Where these do not exist, the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning has played a leading role. Very few countries have developed national frameworks specific to sport coaching qualifications. Against this unsettled background, some national organisations have taken it upon themselves to

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[5] The full survey report can be downloaded from the CoachLearn website at www.coachlearn.eu

produce guidance materials and bespoke training to support coach educators and system builders in their nations. Cooperation with all other stakeholders and marketing strategies to raise the profile of coaching are deemed vital.

Existing Frameworks and Mobility Tools

The EQF and the European Transfer and Credit System (ECTS) are the best well-known tools within European coach education professionals. According to survey participants, although influential, these frameworks lack sufficient support and implementation tools to achieve full impact on the ground, and remain fairly theoretical with low 'real-world' applicability. Sport coaching specific frameworks such as the International Sport Coaching Framework have provided impetus and guidance as either a benchmark for newly developed systems, or a self-assessment and fine-tuning tool for existing ones.

Required Support

National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport expressed a concern about their lack of operational capacity to be able to understand, digest and implement the directives and guidance arising from the various education frameworks and mobility tools. A call for the creation of national coaching lead organisations to support the systematisation of coach education in each country was made. At a cross-national level, stakeholders requested qualification-mapping tools to support translation and comparability, and a database of case-studies and best-practice examples. Finally, additional support regarding the creation of a suitable Coach Developer workforce and guidance about the development of multi-modal education was identified as a priority.

The Need for and Benefits of a European Sport Coaching Framework

In this context, 95% of surveyed stakeholders saw the development of the European Sport Coaching Framework (ESCF) as highly beneficial. *Comparability of qualifications, quality assurance, enhanced learning and increased mobility* are key outcomes sought by European coaching stakeholders. In order to achieve these outcomes, the respondents felt that the ESCF must deal with three themes:

- **The figure of the coach:** participants clearly expressed the need for the ESCF to present a clear, yet adaptable, definition of the role and functions of the coach. This includes the relevant competencies to fulfil the needs of the coaching job.

- **Translation:** respondents unequivocally signalled the role the ESCF needs to play in the translation process between and within countries and federations. Quality assurance, trust, comparability, recognition of prior learning and mobility are central outcomes sought in this process.

- **Coach learning:** less emphasised than the previous two themes, enhancing coach learning was, however, still viewed as fundamental. Specifically, the development of a suitable coach developer workforce, appropriate curricula and the fostering of a lifelong learning mindset amongst coaches are identified as central to success.

Implementation of the ESCF

Participants stressed that the ESCF must not be presented as a regulatory or compulsory document, but much more as a facilitator of change and development. They also felt that ESCF should fully align with EQF and be compatible with NQFs where they exist. Practical support in the shape of best practice examples and carefully designed step-by-step guides are favoured by the majority of stakeholders. In addition, the development of opportunities for peer support and stakeholder group interactions are deemed very relevant.

The implications for CoachLearn of the historic context described in sections 5 and 6 are presented in the following section.

7. Implications for Project CoachLearn and the development of the European Sport Coaching Framework

Project CoachLearn aims to provide the intelligence and tools to enhance coach learning, employability and mobility within a European context. From the analysis conducted in previous sections of this report a complex picture has emerged. However, a number of priority areas and operating principles have been clearly identified. Based on these, it is proposed that the forthcoming European Sport Coaching Framework should strive to:

- Be seen and promoted as a non-mandatory, enabling, thinking tool designed to support the development of coaching systems in a flexible way which respects the right to autonomy and sovereignty of EU Member States
- Develop support mechanisms and implementation tools to aid those institutions tasked with enhancing coach education and coaching systems
- Create explicit links to relevant EU structures such as EQF, ECVET and EQAVET
- Use an output based approach based on learning outcomes and competence
- Review conceptions of competence in the EU and adopt a broader view than ISCF and EFRCCQ
- Establish the parameters for the recognition of coaching as a profession in the EU (i.e. guidance in relation to certification and licensing; minimum standards of deployment; coaches' charter).
- Facilitate collaboration and mutual recognition between VET, HE and federations
- Facilitate trust and mutual recognition across national boundaries through standardised quality assurance mechanisms
- Outline coach education curricula which respect the principles of long-term coach development and which provide developing coaches with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to fulfil their functions and roles
- Emphasise the need for mandatory practicum periods of learning to enhance learning and competence development, and provide guidance regarding different implementation models
- Enhance the recognition of prior learning and the development of multi-modal education and more flexible learning pathways

- Recognise the figure of the coach developer and the importance of long-term coach developer pathways

8. Concluding Remarks

Sport coaching plays a significant role not only in the development of elite athletes, but perhaps more importantly, in the promotion of a lifelong love of physical activity for all. Coaches also make an important contribution in areas such as social inclusion, disability provision, gender equality, immigrant integration and community cohesion. Millions of volunteer, part-time and full-time paid coaches make this possible on daily basis. The figure of the coach is central in 21st century society. Coach education and development must raise to the challenges and opportunities provided by an emerging educational landscape. Organisations educating and developing coaches have a responsibility to create systems which offer coaches clear and effective pathways to develop their trade. The ESCF aims to provide a shared yet flexible roadmap to guide and support this process.

Project CoachLearn partners would like to thank you for your commitment to the development of coaching and coaches and wish you all the best in your endeavours. Please do not hesitate to contact us on info@coachlearn.eu

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Leeds – March 2016