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## List of abbreviations

EQF:	European Qualifications Framework
ISCED:	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO:	International Standard Classification of Occupations
KZIS:	The Polish Classification of Occupations and Specializations for Labour Market Needs (Klasyfikacja zawodów i specjalności dla potrzeb rynku pracy)
MPiPS:	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Społecznej)
NGO:	Nongovernmental organisation
NQF:	National Qualifications Framework
NQS:	Integrated National Qualifications System
PES:	Public Employment Service
PQF:	Polish Qualifications Framework

# Review of the development of national competence standards and their use in Poland

## Introduction

### *Background, definitions, responsibilities*

In Poland, works on the standardisation of professional qualifications/competences have been in progress for almost 20 years. The methodology of their development, despite the subsequent stages of evolution, has been based on the employers' expectations and needs – on results of the studies of real jobs.

The first standards developed in Poland were named the “qualifications standards”. Then the terminology has been modified i.a. in accordance with the recommendations of the European Parliament<sup>1</sup>. Currently the professional competences defined as ***everything that the employee knows, understands and is capable of doing, which is relevant to the situation in the workplace*** is being standardised (Bednarczyk et al., 2014).

In Poland, the professional competence standard is defined as ***a standard describing professional competences necessary to perform the professional tasks included in the occupation, accepted by the representatives of professional associations and industry organisations, employers, employees and other key social partners*** (Bednarczyk et al., 2014).

The national professional qualifications/competence standards are designed in Poland for the occupations and specialisations defined in *The Polish Classification of Occupations and Specializations for Labour Market Needs (KZiS)*. KZiS is a systematised set of occupations and professional specialties present on the labour market. It constitutes a “physical inventory” of occupations identified on the labour market. The classification has been developed on the basis of the International Standard Classification of Occupations ISCO-08. Every two or three years the classification is updated in order to adjust it to changes on the (Polish and European) labour market through the introduction of new occupations/specialisations and/or removal of occupations no longer justified on the labour market. Currently (status as of 2014) the KZiS includes 2,443 catalogued professions<sup>2</sup>.

Pursuant to the Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions, tasks for the benefit of the labour market shall be performed in Poland by the minister of labour i.a. through “(...) coordination of the development of the professional qualification standards for occupations present in the classification of occupations and specialisations and through the provision of databases on the qualification standards”. The Department of Labour Market of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MPiPS) has been entrusted with the supervision and coordination of the development of standards. A set of successively developed national professional qualification standards is provided in the Internet database established on the server of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

In the current legal status, the professional qualification standards do not constitute an obligatory document. They function as a document recommended by MPiPS to be used by interested entities, in particular by the units of public employment service, ministries and central offices, institutions

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC)

<sup>2</sup> It should be emphasised that in Poland there operates an independent Classification of Vocational Education Occupations, i.e. occupations taught in the educational system. Now it includes 203 occupations, under which over 250 qualifications awarded in the formal education system have been distinguished

responsible for so-called regulated professions and exams confirming qualifications, professional associations and organisations of employers and unions, schools and public centres for vocational education and training, private training institutions, private employment agencies.

Works on the professional competence standards correspond with the broader strategic measures conducted in Poland for the benefit of the development of an integrated system of qualifications (National Qualifications System – NQS). According to its basic assumption, qualifications awarded in the system of formal, non-formal and informal education shall be equivalent. If the system of qualifications awarded in the formal education system (including higher education) complies with the assumptions of the designed NQS system, qualifications awarded beyond this system must be described according to the NQS requirements to be integrated with it. Here comes the mission for the professional competence standards, the latest generation of which (2012) includes appropriate elements and provisions allowing for the process of the mentioned NQS integration (*broader explanation can be found in the further part of the report*).

### **History and achievements up to date**

The works on the professional qualification standardisation in Poland have been begun in the 1990s and executed at several stages. They were initiated in the PHARE project (1998-2000) *“Designing and Testing the Professional Qualification Standard Development Methodology in Poland”*. The project’s outcome was the first methodology of designing the professional qualification standards, together with the set of research tools and the first qualification standards for eight occupations defined by the Ministry of Labour.

Works were continued under the project also co-financed from the PHARE funds (2001-2005) *“National Vocational Education System”*. 45 professional qualification standards were developed based on the analysis of job requirements.

Under the 2001 Phare project – *Public Employment Service (PES) – “Improvement of the PES Qualifications to Implement the European Employment Strategy and Participation in the EURES System”*, the professional qualification standards were developed for seven occupations and PES job descriptions.

Then, in 2006-2007 under the Industry Operational Programme Human Resources Development, one completed the project *“Development and Dissemination of the National Professional Qualification Standard”* that resulted in the set of 200 professional qualification standards. They supplied the resources of the IT database<sup>3</sup> developed from 2008 to 2010.

A new generation of the professional competence standards (not qualifications) was developed under the 2012-2013 project on the initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy *Development of the Set of National Professional Competence Standards Required by the Employers*. The project assumed the improvement of the methodology of defining the professional competence standards (with consideration of the requirements of the European and National Qualifications Framework and the users’ needs), as well as the development of 300 competence standards and their dissemination<sup>4</sup>.

A difference between the professional qualification standards and professional competence standards results from “different structures of describing these documents and a new method of defining the notion ‘qualification’ understood as the *“specific set of learning outcomes corresponding*

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kwalifikacje.praca.gov.pl>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.standardykompetencji.pl>

*with the established standards, the achievement of which has been formally recognised by an authorised institution*". Professional competences have been defined as *"everything that the employee knows, understands and can do, relatively to the situation in the workplace"*<sup>5</sup>. A significantly simplified structure of the standard has been proposed, so that it is user-friendly for various groups (mainly employers). One has resigned from the division into supra-professional, all-professional, basic and specialist qualifications, and for the first time the reference of professional competences to a level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has been considered. Under the project 300 descriptions of professional competence standards have been prepared and described with three sets: of knowledge, skills and social competence. Under the project the competences acquired mainly in the course of non-formal and informal education have been chosen for standardisation.

As the above review shows, so far in Poland the professional qualification/competence standards have been developed for 553 occupations (KZiS includes the catalogue of 2,443 occupations), including only 300 standards prepared according to a new, revised methodology adjusted to the EQF requirements. So it seems that we are at the very beginning of our journey.

### **Conceptual model and development methodology**

- The Polish model of the professional competence standard assumes the key role of employers, industry organisations, professional associations as the sources of information on the required professional competences.
- The standard's model is based on the analysis of professional tasks. Three types of professional tasks have been distinguished: A) technological and executive, B) organisational, managerial and control, C) cooperation and communication.
- Professional competences distinguished on the basis of professional tasks are described in the following categories: skills, knowledge, personal and social competence (thanks to this the sets of employers' requirements may be transposed into the learning outcomes).
- The survey questionnaire prepared by the Expert Team has been used for the research of work content during the field study.
- The standard includes reference of the described professional competences to the European and Polish Qualifications Framework.

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<sup>5</sup> Glossary of key notions related to the national qualifications system. IBE, Warsaw 2011

## The methodology of developing the professional competence standards includes several stages:

1. Recruitment, training and appointment of the Expert Team, evaluators, reviewers and industry commissions appropriate for a given occupation (according to the defined recruitment requirements<sup>6</sup>).
2. Own work of the Expert Team designing the standard that on the basis of its own knowledge and professional experience:
  - develops the plan to collect source data concerning employers' requirements (in what enterprises/institutions, on what worksites the field study will be conducted),
  - prepares a proposal of the profession's description, including the list of professional tasks and competence and the description of competence in terms of knowledge, skills, social and core competences in the form of a survey questionnaire, verifies it in two enterprises (pilotage),
  - conducts the field study in minimum five institutions/enterprises (in total min. 15 surveys),
  - **develops the draft description of the professional competence standard based on results of the assessment of competence required by employers.**
3. Execution of the process of evaluation, review and verification of an initial version of the standard's description.
4. Final approval of the professional competence standard's description by the industry commission competent for a given profession.
5. Introduction of the professional competence standard's description approved by the industry commission and adopted by MPiPS to the database [www.kwalifikacje.praca.gov.pl](http://www.kwalifikacje.praca.gov.pl).

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<sup>6</sup> *Members of the Expert Team*: higher education (everybody), team leader: at least five-year education, while other experts: at least two-year experience in an occupation involved in the standardisation or in a related occupation.

*Subject-related evaluator*: secondary or higher education, over two-year experience in an occupation involved in the standardisation and recommendations from industry organisations/organisations competent for an occupation being subject to standardisation; *methodological evaluator*: higher education and experience in designing the documentation concerning knowledge of professions (e.g. standards).

*Subject-related reviewer*: required higher education, two-year experience in an occupation involved in the standardisation or a related occupation and recommendations of industry organisations or academic institutions working in the area of science or schools conducting vocational or higher education in an occupation being the subject of standardisation.

*Subject-related reviewer*: higher education, experience in scientific research concerning labour market and vocational education, and in designing the documentation concerning knowledge of professions.

*Members of the industry commission*: people recommended by employers' organisations, unions associating employees or non-governmental organisations operating in the sector appropriate for the profession involved in the standardisation



## Structure of the professional competence standard

### OCCUPATIONAL/PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE STANDARD

#### FOR THE OCCUPATION/PROFESSION .....

#### 1. Identification details for the occupation/profession

1.1. Code, occupation/profession name and classification position: KZiS, ISCO, ISCED, PKD

1.2. Methodological note and authors (data sources, field of research, Expert Team, Evaluators, Reviewers, Industry Commission, institutions from which experts origin, date of confirmation)

#### 2. Description of the occupation/profession

2.1. Occupation/profession synthesis

2.2. Description of the occupation/profession and performance of duties, the areas where the occupation/profession occurs

2.3. Work environment (work conditions, devices and tools, occupational hazards, work organization)

2.4. Psychophysical and health requirements including contraindications to work in the profession

2.5. Education and qualifications necessary for employment

2.6. Professional/ occupational development prospects, competence validation

2.7. Professional/ occupational tasks: Z1, Z2, ... Zi

2.8. Professional / occupational competences list Kz1, Kz2, ...Kzn, KzS

2.9. The relationship between occupational/ professional competences and qualification levels according to EQF/PQF

#### 3. Professional competences' description

3.1. Professional competence Kz1 (description in terms of knowledge and skills)

3.2. Professional competence Kz2

(...) Professional competence Kzn

3.n. Social competence KzS (description in terms of responsibility and autonomy)

#### 4. Key competences profile (the assessment of key competences significance for the profession practice)

## **Relations of the professional competence standards with the Polish Qualifications Framework and the Integrated System of Qualifications**

Poland has been working on preparing and implementing its National Qualifications Framework since 2006 and it still an ongoing process. Those works were conducted at the Educational Research Institute within the system project entitled *Development of the Terms of Reference for the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Register for Lifelong Learning*<sup>7</sup>. One of the main results of the project is the development of the general principles for the integrated **National Qualifications System (NQS)** and the national qualifications register.

The PQF in Poland, similar to the EQF, distinguishes eight levels of qualifications. Each level within the framework is described by generic descriptors, which characterise the required learning outcomes for each level. The aim of the PQF's descriptors is to capture the full spectrum of learning outcomes, from the lowest to the highest level. Descriptors take into consideration both learning that takes place in the workplace and in an educational setting. Therefore, we will be able to acquire "professional competences", and after their validation – "professional qualifications" through the whole life.

Since qualifications will be awarded by a wide range of entities operating in different spheres of public life: schools, regional examination boards, crafts chambers, higher education institutions, employers, industry associations, training institutions, NGOs, etc., it is necessary to ensure an appropriate level of transparency and credibility in the qualifications awarded, together with unified management of the system. For this reason, a national qualifications register is being developed. It shall include:

- Qualifications awarded in the system of education and higher education (their description, rules of validation and certification correspond with standards already foreseen in the NQS; these qualifications shall be then considered in the register by virtue of law – automatically);
- Qualifications awarded beyond the formal education system or not regulated, operating on the basis of the free market (to be considered in the register, they must comply with the requirements of the qualification standard's description; assignment of a level of a given qualification to a level of the Polish Qualifications Framework shall constitute one of basic requirements).

The national register will constitute a publicly accessible, electronic collection of all qualifications issued and registered in Poland. This register will be managed by an institution for the national qualifications system (probably it will be the minister responsible for education). **Each qualification entered into the register will be assigned the appropriate level within the PQF and thus be referenced to the EQF.** After the act on the national qualifications system has entered into force, diplomas and certificates issued by various entities which are not entered into the register will not be recognised as qualifications.

This means that within the NQS, a qualification can only be recognised if it is listed in the qualifications register as a set of learning outcomes (competences), and after its assessment and comparison with the requirements (of the particular qualification), it will be formally validated (certified) by an institution authorised for this purpose.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.kwalifikacje.edu.pl/en/>

The professional competence defined in the standards cannot be directly included in the qualifications register – they are not “a formal result of the process of assessment and validation”<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless the professional competence standards can be used for the description of qualifications that may create a national qualifications register. Available assumptions of the register working show that the descriptions placed there shall include<sup>9</sup>:

- basic substantial information on the qualification – official name, level in the PQF assigned to the qualification and learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and social competence) that must be achieved to be awarded with it (required competences);
- supplementary information on the qualification – education (or qualifications) constituting the basis of a given qualification, additional conditions, possibilities of acquiring further qualifications, entitlements related to the qualification, qualification’s term of validity, type of document authenticating the qualification;
- information related to the qualification use – types of activity (including the professional one), in which the acquisition of a given qualification is required, desired predispositions, medical contraindications, special conditions of performing typical professional tasks for the qualification, etc.;
- information on the ways of acquiring the qualification, including institutions awarding the qualification.

Professional competence standards constitute the information material for a description of qualifications and the source of other data for the national qualifications register, because they:

- describe the competence requested from the employee in a given profession in terms of knowledge, skills and social competence;
- use the language of description facilitating the definition of a level of the qualification constructed on the basis of the standard, in accordance with the EQF/PQF descriptors;
- describe the profession’s place among other professions and types of activity (e.g. it indicates a place in classifications of professions and classifications of activity);
- describe desired predispositions and contraindications in the profession practice, as well as the conditions of performing typical professional tasks;
- provide with additional information on education, qualifications, required entitlements that are preferred by employers and condition the profession practice on a level approved by employers.

### **Uses by VET and by industry**

Previous undertakings to develop the professional competence standards in Poland have been performed on the initiative and under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, although employers, industry organisations, public employment services have been involved in their preparation at almost every stage. However, there are no “bottom up” initiatives, originating strictly from the world of labour.

Although the professional competence standards are not an obligatory document, yet recommended by MPiPS, it seems that they slowly become a joint platform of exchange of expectations of

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<sup>8</sup> Glossary accompanying 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

<sup>9</sup>Reference of the Polish Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning to the European Qualifications Framework. Draft report – version to be consulted. Educational Research Institute, Warsaw, November 2012

employers, employees and labour market institutions. Key areas of use of the professional competence standards in the policy of labour market, vocational education and training services and employment include for example:

- employment agency,
- growth of the career counselling system (school and market),
- development and update of the core curriculum of vocational education,
- development of educational standards, curricula and exam requirement standards,
- development of the system of professional qualification validation and of VET quality assurance,
- comparison of qualifications, including the assessment of “values” of awarded certificates and diplomas,
- development of the Polish Qualifications Framework and the qualifications register,
- employment policy of enterprises and other.

However, so far there has been no research concerning the use of the professional competence standards and the efficiency of their use in Poland. The below exemplary areas of their use are rather declarative and wishful.

#### A. The areas of use in the formal vocational education:

- Development and update of the core curriculum of vocational education (core curriculum of school vocational education constitutes the mandatory sets of learning objectives and teaching content described in a form of expected learning outcomes: knowledge, professional skills, personal and social competence. The mentioned components of the core curriculum of vocational education are also an element of the professional competence standard’s description. School professions have not been subject to the standardisation according to a new methodology, so in the process of development and update of the core curriculum of vocational education it is important to analyse these descriptions of the professional competence standards regarded as non-school, “related” to the vocational education professions that encompass multiple disciplines and skill sets);
- Development of the core curricula in modular education (name and description of professional tasks specified in the standard may constitute an inspiration to distinguish the qualifications of “units of learning outcomes” that may be confirmed in the form of external exam in a school profession);
- The work environment description (including work conditions, machinery and tools of work), professional tasks and competences distinguished in the standard correspond with real tasks performed by the employee on worksites. This information may be a point of reference to define in the core curriculum the provisions appropriate for the “Conditions of vocational education”, where didactic equipment necessary for education is defined. These provisions constitute also the guidelines to define the equipment standards for school labs and workshops, which is important from the point of view of the vocational education quality and a harmonised standard of equipment of exam places (especially within the scope of a practical part of exam confirming the professional qualifications);
- Recently the vocational schools in Poland have had the possibility to develop their own curricula (so far these have been only curricula prepared by the Ministry of National Education). Descriptions of the professional competence standards may support headmasters of vocational education schools and centres in the development of their own educational offer adjusted to the employers’ requirements.

## B. Training for the labour market

- Basing the vocational training programs (non-formal education) on the analysis of the professional competence standard ensures that the graduate acquires knowledge and practical skills really needed for the performance of tasks of a given profession.
- The professional competence standard is useful for the public employment service in the area of training contracting and – on the other hand – for training institutions – in the development of a training offer really adjusted to the employers' requirements and expectations.

## C. Areas of use in the employment policy of enterprises

- Basic elements of the employment policy include for example planning the employment needs, development of the HR database, external and internal recruitment, qualification improvement system, employee's performance appraisal, incentive scheme. In the context of the above considerations the professional competence standard is a valuable information resource for the development of employment policy.
- Job applicants will find in the professional competence standards the useful information on the education level and necessary entitlements of job applicants, psychophysical, health requirements, including contraindications to practise a profession, which is crucial during the recruitment procedure.
- For employers and HR managers the professional competence standards are a credible and valid starting material to create and update job descriptions and competence profiles, as well as to assess employees.
- For institutions recruiting and selecting employees, the standards will be useful as they include information on the education level and necessary entitlements of job applicants, psychophysical, health requirements, including contraindications to practise a profession concerned by the recruitment procedure.

## D. Employment agency

- Standards, as the set of employers' requirements concerning professional competences can be applied by the employment agent to analyse the professional structure of the registered unemployed and job seekers. On the other hand, descriptions of the professional competence standard may be an inspiration to support the employers who find it difficult to formulate requirements to be met by the job candidates. It is mainly about the way of describing professional tasks to be performed by the employee, as well as about knowledge, skills and social competence required at their performance.

## **Key actors**

In Poland, pursuant to the valid legislation, coordination of the development of the professional qualification standards for occupations present in the classification of occupations and specialisations and through the provision of databases on the qualification standards shall be the responsibility of the minister of labour.

In the assumptions to the Act on the Integrated System of Professional Qualifications, the minister of education shall be entrusted with coordination of this system.

An authority deciding on registering the market qualification shall be constituted by a minister competent for the specificity of a given qualification, who will assess the (economic and social) need for registration of a given qualification. It may do this on its own initiative or on the initiative of an interested public/private entity.

## Coverage

*Approximate coverage in terms of breadth of the labour market and level of occupations included*

The professional competence standardisation process in Poland is not too advanced. So far the professional qualification/competence standards have been developed for 553 occupations, which constitutes only approx. 20% of all occupations (2,443) present on the Polish labour market and catalogued in KZiS. Merely 300 standards have been prepared according to a new, revised methodology adjusted to the EQF requirements. They can supply an integrated qualifications register if they are introduced to it by duly authorised entities.

## Feedback that is available from users

So far no feedback has been available from the professional competence standards' users in Poland, because no studies concerning its use and efficiency of its use have been conducted.

Conclusions of the consortium completing the latest project of development of the professional competence standards show that in the future works on standard designing should be initiated (apart from economic departments) by associations and trade unions, organisations of employers and other entities interested in the development of professional qualifications.

## Specific position relating to the profession: manager of innovations

In Poland, just like in entire Europe and even world, effective "bridges" between the world of science and economy are still searched for. It is about the provision of the flow of knowledge from research centres to enterprises and the efficient implementation of innovative solutions (product, process, organisational, marketing innovations<sup>10</sup>). One of the most important obstacles in this process is constituted by competency gaps both, among the researchers/constructors/inventors who do not know how to sell their "products" and employees/employers, who do not know where to find and how to finance innovations (organisational, product or technological) for their companies.

There are some initiatives in Poland dedicated to researchers (I mean specific courses focused mainly on the property rights issues etc.). Our idea is to shift the interest on the middle/ higher technical staff of companies to make them better prepared for identification and implementation of different kind of innovations.

The basis of our works under the ComProCom project is the assumption (arising from our previous experience) that generation, processing and application of innovative knowledge in enterprises require the collection of knowledge and interdisciplinary skills in hands of a leader of innovative solution. Such a role can be performed by a so-called manager of innovations. In the Polish classification of occupations and specialisations such a profession is absent (so there is no description of the competence standard). While writing about the manager of innovations, we think rather about the job role that requires a broad interdisciplinary knowledge.

The manager of innovations is a person hired in an enterprise, having knowledge and skills within the scope of innovative enterprise capacity building, management of implemented innovations and development of the strategy of commercialisation of innovative solutions. The basic scope of tasks of the manager of innovations includes: planning and management of enterprise's pro-innovative policy

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<sup>10</sup> Oslo Manual. *Guidelines for Collecting and Interpreting Technological Innovation Data*, 3rd Edition, OECD/Eurostat, Paris 2005

(including HR); identification and implementation of innovative solutions; acquisition and control of use of the enterprise's financial and material resources in processes of innovation implementation and commercialisation of innovative solutions; making assumptions of the innovation marketing strategy and planning, organisation and coordination of cooperation with institutions and external experts in the area of transfer of innovations; implementation of principles of the intellectual property protection at particular stages of the processes of transfer and commercialisation of innovative solutions according to the valid provisions of national and international law.

The manager of innovations should be prepared to fill an independent, separate position. In addition, mainly due to the size of Polish companies (96% of Polish companies are microenterprises hiring up to ten people<sup>11</sup>), an option of combining the acquired skills with tasks is possible, e.g. strategic planning manager [occupation code: 1213], research and development manager [occupation code: 1223], small enterprise manager [occupation code: 132].

Relevant competences of persons performing tasks of the manager of innovations is a key condition of efficiency of the processes of implementing innovative solutions and improving enterprises' competitiveness.

We want to analyse and try to describe the competence standard for the managers of innovations in a more flexible and sophisticated style offered in the new methodology developed within the ComProCom project.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.parp.gov.pl](http://www.parp.gov.pl)

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- Website of the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development <http://www.parp.gov.pl>

## **Annexes**

- 1. Competence dimension according to the Polish occupational/  
professional competences standards**
- 2. Example of Polish National Competence Standard**

Competence dimension according to the Polish occupational/professional competences standards

<u><b>Educational</b></u>	<u><b>Occupational/ professional</b></u>  <b>PL competence standards</b> form of benchmarks for measuring occupational performance in a work context; broad profession-based vision of the competence + ethical and social competences (in terms of independence and responsibility) + description of professional tasks	<u><b>Organisational</b></u>
<u><b>Internal models</b></u>	<b>PL competence standards</b> Define what the person is able to do in practice; task-based + ethical and social competences (in terms of independence and responsibility) <b>but</b> competences are described in the following categories: skills, knowledge, personal and social competence	<u><b>External models</b></u>
<u><b>Bounded-occupation</b></u>	<b>PL competence standards</b> Describe capability to act effectively as a "member of the profession"; Single set of standard for profession/occupation, no subsets for different levels	<u><b>Centre-outwards models</b></u>
<u><b>Core and specialism</b></u>	<b>PL competence standards</b> Universal – apply across context and specialism; No subsets for different levels; up to 15 pages	<u><b>Universal</b></u>