



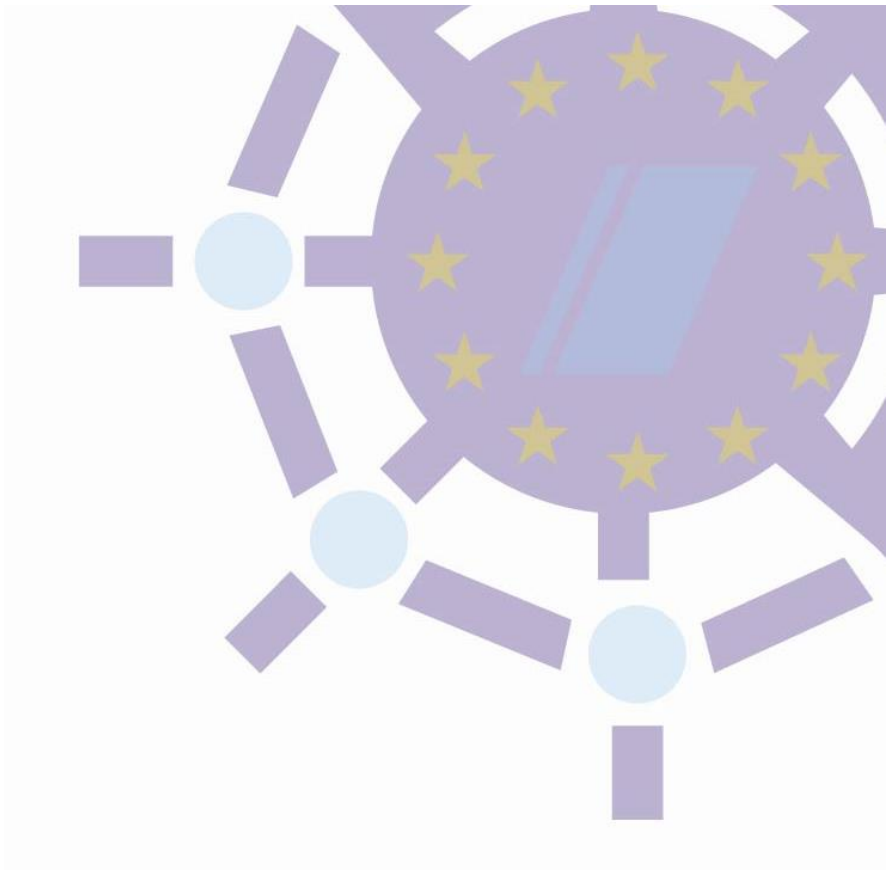
EUROPEAN
COAST GUARD FUNCTIONS
TRAINING NETWORK

Report on the external assessment and validation of the Sectoral Qualification Framework for Coast Guard Functions

**European Coast Guard Functions Academies Network Project
ECGFA NET - PHASE III
Work Package 4
2018-2019**



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Table of Contents

LIST OF ACRONYMS	4
Executive Summary and aims of the external assessment	5
Introduction on the EGFA NET project	7
Chapter 1 – State of the Art in the adoption of Qualification Framework and reference models in developing qualifications meta-framework	9
1.1 Introduction	9
1.1.1 Referencing the Key Bologna, Copenhagen and Bergen Principles	9
1.1.2. The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)	10
1.1.3 National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)	10
1.1.4 Relationships between Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks, NQF and EQF.	11
Chapter 2 – The process of development of the SQFCGF in the framework of the ECGFA NET: actors, phases and outputs	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 The development of SQF for Border Guarding	14
Legal reference	14
The rationale of the SQF for Border Guarding	14
The principles of the SQF for Border Guarding	15
The development and validation process of the SQF for Border Management	16
2.3 The development of SQFCGF.....	18
Legal reference	18
The contractual phases of EGFA NET	19
The rationale of the SQFCGF	20
The principles of the SQF for Coast Guard Functions	20
The development and validation process of the SQF for Coast Guard Functions	21
Working method.....	26
2.4 Comparison between SQF Frontex and SQFCGF	27
2.5 Conclusions on the development process	29
Chapter 3 – Approaches to SQFCGF under review	30
3.1 Rationale/Imperative for construction of SQFCGF – Enablers/Barriers observed.....	30
3.2 Review of Framework Architecture.....	32
3.3. Competency vs training approaches in the design of the SQFCGF	33
3.4 Training, Qualifications, Life Long Learning and Mobility within the SQFCGF.....	33
3.5. Future Work – Overcoming resistance and proving collaborative advantage.....	34
Chapter 4 – The Content of the SQFCGF	36
4.1 Rationale/ Definition and Alignment of Learning Outcomes to EQF levels	36
4.2 Structure and Alignment across Coast Guard Function Tables.....	36
4.3 Recommendations for next steps	37
Conclusions and Recommendations	38

LIST OF ACRONYMS

List of abbreviations and acronyms commonly used within the document:

CEDEFOP: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

CG: Coast Guard

CGF: Coast Guard Functions

SQFCGF: Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Coast Guard Functions

DG MARE: Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

ECGFA NET: European Coast Guard Functions Academy Network for European Sectoral Qualification's Framework for Coast Guarding

ECGFF: European Coast Guard Functions Forum

ECVET: European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training

ECTS: European Credit Transfer System

EHEA: European Higher Education Area

ENIC: European Network for National Information Centres

EQF: European Qualification Framework

EU: European Union

ISQ/ISQF – International Sectoral Qualification / International Sectoral Qualification Framework

MS: Member States

NARIC: National Academic Recognition Information Centres

NCP: National Contact Point

NQF: National Qualifications Framework

QF: Qualifications Framework

SQF: Sectoral Qualifications Framework

VET: Vocational Education and Training

WP4: Work Package four

Executive Summary and aims of the external assessment

The ECGFA NET received an EU grant in 2015 in order to strengthen cooperation between Coast Guard Function (CGF) authorities, with a specific focus on supporting educational collaboration and expert mobility. Within this overall objective, a specific work package (WP4) has been designed to develop a Coast Guard Functions Sectorial Qualifications Framework (SQFCGF) to function as a set of common standards for CGF education to assure quality of training and teaching and to be applied on a voluntary basis.

Before the end of the EGFA NET project and the approval of the SQFCGF an external expert review has been required in order to:

- review the process of the drafting of the SQFCGF, with a focus on the steps followed, the methodology adopted, the stakeholders involved and the results achieved, and hence assess the consistency of the process;
- identify lessons learned which can be useful for the drafting of other ISQF at European and international level, as well as to improve the SQFCGF itself;
- look at the progress of the development of the SQFCGF in a broader context of EU legislations, research, education and training;
- identify the barriers and enablers encountered by the project team in building the SQFCGF;
- examine specific aspects of the SQFCGF, particularly the learning outcomes;
- make recommendations on next steps.

The present report includes the results of the assessment made by three independent and external experts, focusing respectively on the combined aspects of EU/theoretical framework (chapter 1 and 3), development process (chapter 2) and content of the SQFCGF (chapter 4).

The assessment was also performed having in mind the overall objectives pursued by the European Union when financing the EGFA NET, *inter alia* the contribution to EU policies, mobility and enhancement in human capital, as well as the achievement of the EGFA NET project objectives as stated in the contract.

In summary, the experts noticed that:

- there is general EU enthusiasm for Sectorial Qualifications Frameworks, but a lack of clear EU guidance available of how to effectively build a ISQF.
- getting individuals, organizations within a sector to collaborate is really difficult – there is a distrust of change, fear that it will result in loss of the familiar, and that sectoral organisations will lose autonomy and power if they agree to change practices to facilitate collaboration.
- achieving the ‘paradigm shift’ from job-related performance training to trainee-focused learning needed to build a ISQF is a challenging and hard to conceptualize.

These changes have to happen to create a workable ISQF; a number of EU reports recommend the establishment of an ISQF in the coast guard sector. However, the EU have yet to establish a cross-agency agreement to underpin the SQF or to fund the establishment of an effective non-partisan cross-sectoral training network to support it.

The efforts by EGFA NET project - WP4 in developing the ISQF have been exemplary, considering the many barriers they have had to face, including the discontinuity of the contractual framework (EU Grant), uncertain funding, and a lack of a true cross-sectoral governance structure, incorporating all agency stakeholders.

The first main result achieved is the organisation of the structure into agreed 'learning areas' which assist with comparison/commonality across the 10 functions and serve well for the comparison of qualifications and for the design of training.

Another important result is to have contributed to a wider and greater awareness on the importance of the ISQF in the CGF sector: despite the initial and inner resistance, the project team and the WG have succeeded to highlight the proven benefits of greater sectoral collaboration through an ISQF – interoperability, shared training, worker/learner mobility. The decision to maintain 10 functional tables and stress fundamental sectoral differences, while identifying common learning areas contributed significantly in achieving the results.

Also, a robust stakeholders' engagement/consultation combined with strong communication and dissemination efforts have been fundamental to support project implementation.

The development of the SQF has challenged different parts of the sector to accept the concept of learning outcomes, and has successfully achieved a substantial shift from an originally preferred "ranking approach" to a "learner-focused approach".

The SQFCGF learning outcomes in its current form can be used for training provision and comparability, as each learning outcome represents a distinct, teachable and assessable activity. However, for the SQFCGF to become a viable framework, an inter-EU agency agreement needs to be in place, underpinned by longer-term, secure funding for the establishment of a new training network framework to effectively support the SQFCGF and serve the delivery effective quality assurance of training standards.

In addition, the lessons learned in developing the ISQF in the framework of the EGFA NET project contribute positively to mass of knowledge on qualification framework, and specifically on the ISQF which is still poor at European and international level.

Introduction on the EGFA NET project

In 2009, a European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF), co-funded by the EU, was launched in order to promoting maritime issues of importance and of common interest across borders and sectors, both civil and military. ECGFF is a non-binding, voluntary, independent and non-political forum. Members include Coast Guards Authorities of 25 EU member states and Schengen Associated Countries as well the European Commission and its Institutions and Agencies with related competencies in Coast Guard Functions.

Following the recommendations set forth in the European Maritime Security Strategy adopted by the Council of Ministers in June 2014¹, ECGFF promoted deeper cooperation between the European Coast Guard Functions in many areas, including education and training. The current Coast Guard education systems are custom made for national professional organizational purposes, and they do not include Bologna Process post-graduates and post- doctoral levels of education, thus leaving a loop hole in the system.

The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) has recommended that organisations working at EU level should use the reference levels and principles of the EQF in order to design coordinated training and qualification standards, including through the development of sectoral qualification frameworks (SQFs) is encouraged.

To this end, a European Coast Guard Functions Academy Network for European Sectorial Qualifications Framework for Coast Guarding - ECGFA NET has been established and the ECGFA NET project has been launched in January 2015 in order to:

- support the establishment of a Coast Guard Functions Academies Network that would strengthen cooperation between CGF authorities.
- increase student and expert exchange between CG authorities and academies.
- design and construct a Training Portal under ECGFF websites.
- plan and design the basis for a voluntary Sectorial Qualification Framework for Coast Guard Functions (SQFCGF).
- follow the specifications of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) for harmonising and improving educational collaboration and student/expert mobility.

A specific work package (WP4) has been designed to develop a Coast Guard Functions Sectorial Qualifications Framework (SQFCGF) to function as a set of common standards for CGF education to assure quality of training and teaching and to be applied on a voluntary basis.

Initially launched for a 14 months duration (phase I), the EGFA NET project has been re-financed twice (phase II and phase III) and will terminate on August 2019.

The implementing partners of the EGFA NET are the Finnish Border Guard (Coordinator) with the following affiliated entities: Italian Coast Guard; Armed Forces of Malta; DGDDI French Customs, Romanian Naval Academy of Constanta; Guardia Civil (Spain); Guarda Nacional Republicana (Portugal); German Federal Police; UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency; Hellenic Coast Guard (Greece); Spanish Customs and Excises; SASEMAR (Spain); Cyprus Police Academy;

¹ TERMS OF REFERENCE – MARE/2014/36 - ECGFA NET, European Coast Guard Functions Academy Network for European Sectorial Qualification's Framework for Coast Guarding, available on line http://www.ecgff.eu/images/ECGFANET_docs/ToR.pdf

Spanish Navy. In addition, the following organisations are involved as observers: European Space Agency; Guardia di Finanza (Italy); European Fisheries Control Agency; Frontex; European Union Satellite Centre; Swedish Coast Guard; European Police College (CEPOL).

The Italian Coast Guard is the coordinator of WP4.

According to the Terms of Reference drafted by the Commission, the SQFCGF should:

- encompass all qualification levels acquired in general, vocational and academic education and training in the field of Coast Guard activities;
- be developed on the basis of an extensive job mapping (identification of the competence profiles/job profiles) for all Coast Guard tasks at all levels, with the ultimate aim to close the gap between theory and practice and ensure that all training courses developed are operationally relevant;
- include all national requirements and is, therefore, inclusive and not prescriptive - the intention of the SQFCGF is not to dictate national training requirements;
- support the review and accreditation of programmes.

During the Phase I of EGFA NET, a document containing “Basic elements and minimum requirements for a Sectorial Qualifications Framework for Coast Guard Functions (SQFCGF) identified; Recommendations for next steps in defining the SQFCGF developed.” has been produced.

Following the steps included in the above-mentioned report, during the following phases, activities have been implemented under WP4 to advance in the development of the SQFCGF by drafting the final structure of the SQFCGF (phase II) as well as its content and recommendations on the implementation and management of the SQFCGF (phase III).

Chapter 1 – State of the Art in the adoption of Qualification Framework and reference models in developing qualifications meta-framework

1.1 Introduction

A full and detailed analysis of the wider background of relevant EU educational structures and their influence on an organization attempting to build an international sectoral qualifications framework has already been developed and published as part of this project². The breadth and accuracy of this aspect of the project is considered to be of a high standard, and it is not felt necessary to replicate such background detail as part of this review.

This section will outline some of the more recent EU processes that have impacted on the development of an international sectoral qualification framework (ISQF), also looking specifically at recent publications that chart changing EU educational and vocational training policies. This will include the often-contested roles of the NQF and the EQF with a ISQF and the tensions as to how best to meet the needs of learners in both educational and vocational sectors, nationally and internationally. Finally, it will look at a particularly relevant recent EU-funded “*Study on International Sectoral Qualifications, Frameworks and Systems*” (2016)³, drawing on its work which has a direct bearing on the educational policy landscape in which the Coast Guard SQF has been developed and in which it will be implemented.

1.1.1 Referencing the Key Bologna, Copenhagen and Bergen Principles

One of the best-known EU initiatives in the last twenty years has been the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), a key objective of the Bologna Process. The less well-known Copenhagen-Process, sometimes described as an analogue to the Bologna-Process with respect to vocational education and training resulted in development of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF).

The Bergen Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education 19-20 May 2005 adopted the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. These are set out in the Framework for Qualifications of The European Higher Education Area (FQHEA).

² CIMEA (2016) Coast Guard Functions Sectorial Qualifications Frameworks: Basic Elements, Key Recommendations and Methodology. European Coast Guard Function Academy Network Project. Work Package 4.

³ ICE (2014) A report submitted by ICF International in association with REGS4SHIPS Feasibility of improved co-operation between bodies carrying out European Coast Guard functions. Last accessed 16/07/2019
<https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/modes/maritime/studies/doc/2014-06-icf-coastguard.pdf>

1.1.2. The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a meta-qualifications framework against which qualifications across different European education and training systems can be transparently compared and which has been designed to strengthen co-operation and mutual trust between relevant stakeholders⁴. A key principle of the EQF is that it is based on learning outcomes which set out a combination of knowledge, skills and competences. In turn these provide a quantifiable mechanism against which to judge the value of a given award within a European context. Since the establishment of the EQF, one of the key expectations about the framework is that it should become a neutral reference point for the creation of a cross-border ISQF. Of particular relevance to the development of any ISQF, the EQF specified the importance of allowing those who understand the needs of a particular sector to build their specific level descriptors, based on the common EQF terminology⁵.

The most recent EU Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the EQF for Lifelong Learning (2016), recommends continuity of the EQF Recommendation (2008)⁶. The proposal seeks further development to, and enhancement of, the EQF, leading to a better use of qualifications for the benefit of individuals, the labour market and the economy. Of interest to this review is that the specific recommendation (Annex VI) in the proposal that advises review and revision of principles for quality assurance. This is in order that it can be applied to qualifications wishing to link to the EQF, particularly vocational education and training, higher education, non-formal and informal learning in the private sector or international qualifications. The proposed criteria are compatible with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area and with European Quality Assurance in VET (EQAVET)⁷.

1.1.3 National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)

A National Qualifications Framework is defined as the instrument for the classification of qualifications into levels by knowledge, skills, and competence with the aims of:

- Integrating and co-ordinating national sub-systems of qualifications; and
- Improving transparency, accessibility, developments, and quality in relation to the labour market and civic society.

⁴ European Commission Education and Culture DG, (2008). Explaining the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Luxembourg: European Commission

⁵ Recommendation of The European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Luxembourg: European Commission.

⁶ European Union (2017) Lifelong learning – European qualifications. Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing 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. Luxembourg: European Commission. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/LSU/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0615%2801%29>. Last accessed 16 July 2019

⁷ Rainbow 2017 Criteria to Relate International Sectoral Qualifications to the EQF <http://project-rainbow.eu/documents/Guideline%20with%20criteria%20to%20relate%20International%20Qualifications%20to%20the%20EQF.pdf> (last accessed 13/06/2019)

The EU member states have all committed to developing NQFs, but progress in this regard differs greatly between them⁸. In countries with developed NQFs, these have been used to create usable frameworks with which to link national systems to European and regional frameworks like the EQF and the QF-EHEA, and to link different countries' qualifications systems together and facilitate learner mobility both nationally and internationally. The EQF covers qualifications at all levels and in all sub-systems of education and training (general and adult education, vocational education and training as well as higher education). This overarching framework makes qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems. In this way, via the NQF structures, the EQF is enabled to support individual mobility and lifelong learning.

1.1.4 Relationships between Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks, NQF and EQF.

The concept of a ISQF has been implicit in the development of EU national and cross-national educational policy, defined as a framework of qualifications established by a sector (e.g. a profession, industry, discipline, field etc.), relating to formal academic qualifications as well as shorter-term work-place vocational training. Such frameworks show what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on the basis of a given qualification in a particular sector, couched in terms of expected learning outcomes. Effective, well-designed sectoral qualifications frameworks (national and international) have the capacity to enhance, harmonise, and offer better recognition of training standards within a profession, industry etc., allowing for greater worker mobility and encouraging lifelong learning.

A key objective of the EQF is to integrate international sectoral qualifications, frameworks and systems. The 2008 Recommendation on the establishment of the EQF states that “the European Qualifications Framework should, moreover, enable international sectoral organisations to relate their qualifications systems to a common European reference point and thus show the relationship between international sectoral qualifications and national qualifications systems”⁹.

It has been noted however, that there has been little concrete action taken so far to clarify the role of EQF in supporting ISQFs¹⁰. A survey carried out for the EQF Advisory Group¹¹ in 2015 shows that only 8 countries have introduced criteria and procedures, including for quality assurance, for the inclusion of qualifications resulting from non-formal education and training. In the majority of cases these processes do not distinguish between private vendor qualifications and international (sectoral) qualifications¹².

⁸⁸ See https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/albania/national-qualifications-framework_en to compare the current progress of the development of NQFs in the different member states.

⁹ European Commission (2008), Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning

¹⁰ European Commission, (2016), *Study on International Sectoral Qualifications and Frameworks and Systems*, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7937&furtherPubs=yes> last accessed 31-05-2019

¹¹ Monika Auzinger & Karin Luomi-Messerer, *Survey on International Sectoral Qualifications – Final Results*, 28 February 2015

¹² EU Commission Staff Working Document: *Analytical Underpinning For A New Skills Agenda For Europe*, EU Brussels, 10.6.2016 SWD(2016) 195 Final

Some policy-makers, particularly in the vocational training domain, have focused on the use and value placed on NQFs, particularly the relationship that could be developed between sectoral frameworks and NQFs in their own right. However, there is far from a general agreement in how a ISQF will best be aligned within a wider EU educational and training framework and the EQF Advisory Group, or indeed how a sector can best approach the construction of a ISQF. This lack of a clear set of agreed, European guidelines on how best to negotiate, build and govern an ISQF are identified as being a particular barrier to the development of the project under review.

A pertinent, recent study from the European Commission is the *Study on International Sectoral Qualifications, Frameworks and Systems* (2016)¹³ which has been designed to explore the nature of international sectoral qualifications and for understanding the existing possibilities for establishing a direct and indirect linkage with the EQF. In this context, two possible actions are suggested, namely:

- To set pre-conditions for qualifications to be eligible as international qualifications
- To set international criteria and procedures for referencing and levelling to the EQF

The study stresses the importance of placing international sectoral initiatives in the context of qualifications, not least due to the high number of people involved in ISQFs and notes that the majority of the international sectoral initiatives reviewed in the study were aware of, and willing to establish linkages with EQF levels. The study notes that it “identified several options through which the status quo could be moved forward. None of them is ideal when looking at the combination of benefits versus costs and feasibility, particularly in terms of likely political resistance. However, they do outline actions which are likely to improve recognition of initiatives at a European and national level” (Executive Summary)¹⁴.

The comment above highlights the challenging policy landscape in which ISQFs exist. These sentiments are echoed in the 2017 Rainbow¹⁵ report which notes “the EQF should not be considered as merely a ‘package’ of levels to which qualifications can compare to, instead other core aspects must be taken into account, namely the learning outcomes and the quality assurance despite the long road ahead, the direct linkage of international sectoral qualifications to the EQF is something worth trying for the benefits that it may entail for the recognition of professions in Europe and outside Europe, for the mobility of workers, for the greater transparency regarding the use of international qualifications and also for enhancing the credibility of EQF.” (pg. 16)

¹³ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7937&furtherPubs=yes>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Rainbow 2017 Criteria to Relate International Sectoral Qualifications to the EQF <http://project-rainbow.eu/documents/Guideline%20with%20criteria%20to%20relate%20International%20Qualifications%20to%20the%20EQF.pdf> (last accessed 13/06/2019)

Chapter 2 – The process of development of the SQFCGF in the framework of the ECGFA NET: actors, phases and outputs

2.1 Introduction

When the partners of the ECGFA NET project started to work on the SQFCGF, back in January 2015, there were a number of examples on the development of Qualification Framework, meta-frameworks and SQF, including International Sectoral Qualifications frameworks¹⁶¹⁷, but very limited specific experience on ISQF concerning law enforcement and other security functions. Indeed, according to Auzinger et al. (2016)¹⁸, the sole exception at that time was represented (and is still represented) by the SQF on border guarding developed by Frontex in 2013.

As pointed out in the previous chapter (§ 1), the EU Council initiative to develop the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)¹⁹ represents a successful reference framework for all learning at all levels and in all areas applicable to all European states.

The “sector” comprising the coast guard functions is larger and more complex than any other sector as it includes a number of different functions swinging from maritime safety, to SAR and fisheries, including activities which are regulated by international standards (e.g. the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) standards concerning ship safety and vessel-source pollution prevention and control, and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) concerning aviation).

¹⁶ The Study commissioned by EC and published on 2016 on International Sectoral qualification standards (Auzinger et al., 2016) reviewed the SQF initiatives world-wide. While a number of initiatives were identified and commented, it is clear from the report that most of these initiatives related to professional bodies and qualifications. According to Auzinger et al. (2016) “*International sectoral initiatives exist in a large number of economic sectors. The study found initiatives that related to 17 sectors. The most common activities were related to human health and social services, followed by arts, entertainment and recreation, business administration, ICT and finance, insurance and real estate. [...]. The majority (42 out of 74) of the initiatives examined in the qualitative interviews operate worldwide and do not focus specifically on the European market. [...]. Many initiatives analysed are led by organisations representing either national professional bodies or directly representing the professionals themselves. [...] The vast majority of initiatives are managed by organisations that are membership based.*” Cedefop, International qualifications, Publications Office of the European Union, 2012

¹⁷ A further clarification on the limited applicability of experiences related to International Sectoral Qualification (ISQ) is needed. In May 2015, the EQF Advisory Group - sub-group on ISQ agreed a definition of ISQ as follows “*International Sectoral Qualification [...] certificate, diploma, degree or title awarded by an international body (or a national body accredited by an international body) and used in more than one country, which includes learning outcomes (based on standards developed by an international sectoral organisation or an international company) relevant to a sector of economic activity.*” Hence, the SQFCGF cannot be strictly considered as an ISQ considering that the qualifications released by National Authorities for CGF are not always and necessarily accredited by an international body.

¹⁸ Auzinger M., Fellinger J., Luomi-Messerer K., Mobilio L., Ulicna D., Zaidi A. on behalf of European Commission, DG EMPL, “Study on International Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks and Systems”. Publications Office of the European Union, 2016

¹⁹ Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of a European qualifications framework for lifelong learning, Official Journal of the European Union C 111, 6.5.2008.

While there is a tremendous interest to manage coast guard functions consistently and in coordinated manner at European level, there is no a unique agency or authority which is entrusted with all these functions. At the same time, there are agencies such as Frontex, EMSA and EFCA, which are in charge of some of the CG functions, respectively border management, maritime safety and fisheries control. In addition, each coast guard function is assigned at national level to different authorities and organisations, with different status (e.g. military vs civilian), scope and degree of responsibility.

As a consequence, the definition of an SQFCFG was an ambitious and complex objective which required to overcome a number of difficulties which impacted on the process, as well as on its outputs.

The aim of this chapter is to review the process which brought to the drafting of the SQFCGF in its current version, with a focus on the steps followed, the methodology adopted, the stakeholders involved and the results achieved. The aim of such a review is twofold: on one hand, to assess the consistency of the process; on the other hand, to identify lessons learned which can be useful for the drafting of other SQF at European and international level, as well as to improve the SQFCGF itself.

2.2 The development of SQF for Border Guarding

Literature and guidelines on qualification framework focuses on learning outcomes, quality assurance and management of the qualification framework or system. There are no standards or benchmarks regarding the drafting of the framework or the system.

At the same time, the process followed by Frontex for developing the SQF for Border Guarding represents a successful example, as it leads to an SQF which has been using since 2013, thus contributing to better training and mobility in the sector.

Legal reference

The development of the SQF for Border Guarding is based on Article 5 of the Frontex amended regulation which stipulates that ‘Member States shall integrate the common core curricula in the training of their national border guards’.

The development of the SQF is reflected in the Frontex strategy and multiannual plan for 2013–16 (Goal 1, Development) and it is one of the priority objectives of the Frontex training strategy.

The rationale of the SQF for Border Guarding

Frontex developed the sectoral framework²⁰:

- to ensure the implementation of the mandate in the field of training in line with the Frontex Regulation, the Stockholm Programme and the Internal Security Strategy of the European Union;

²⁰ Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Border Guarding. Setting standards for training excellence, Vol. I, Frontex, 2013.

- to design mobility and exchange programmes for border guards that increase interoperability at the EU borders;
- to achieve the harmonisation and benchmarking of border guard learning across the EU;
- to allow for the comparability of border guard qualifications and training programmes across the EU, and to increase the mobility of learning;
- to facilitate the description of learning in every organisation regardless of organisational structures, training and education systems;
- to support a common understanding of border guard learning and training standards;
- to ensure that all courses and training standards are operationally relevant and specifically address the needs of the job;
- to assist the integration at the national level of the European common core curricula and learning standards;
- to support course accreditation and validation processes at EU and national levels;
- to ensure and facilitate the integration of fundamental rights into training and education for border guards;
- to ensure an integrated platform for a coherent training strategy which connects all Frontex training products and provides a robust quality assurance mechanism;
- to streamline developments in the field of border guard training and to support stakeholders in prioritisation and training needs assessments (sound resource management);
- to create synergies for interagency cooperation and coordination in the field of training and education, in accordance with Frontex's mandate, within the framework of the European Law Enforcement Training Scheme.

The principles of the SQF for Border Guarding

The overall principles for SQF in Border Guarding are rooted in the Bologna and Copenhagen principles of education and learning.

As regard the specific Border Management Function, the Stockholm Programme and the Internal Security Strategy for the European Union, which emphasise the importance of exchange/ mobility programmes for law enforcement officers, the development of a common culture within the law enforcement field, and the adoption of a strategic approach to professional training in order to strengthen national capacity, reinforcing the European dimension of training.

The principles for developing the SQF are the following²¹:

- Operational relevance
- Reflective and specific to border guarding
- Representativeness
- Cooperative
- Inclusive, not prescriptive
- Selectively Integrative (depending on the specific organisational responsibilities)
- Protection of fundamental rights

²¹ Ibidem, Frontex 2013.

- Recognition of Prior Learning

The development and validation process of the SQF for Border Management

The process of development and validation of the SQF for Border Guarding was organized in three main phases and many steps, as represented in figure 1 below.

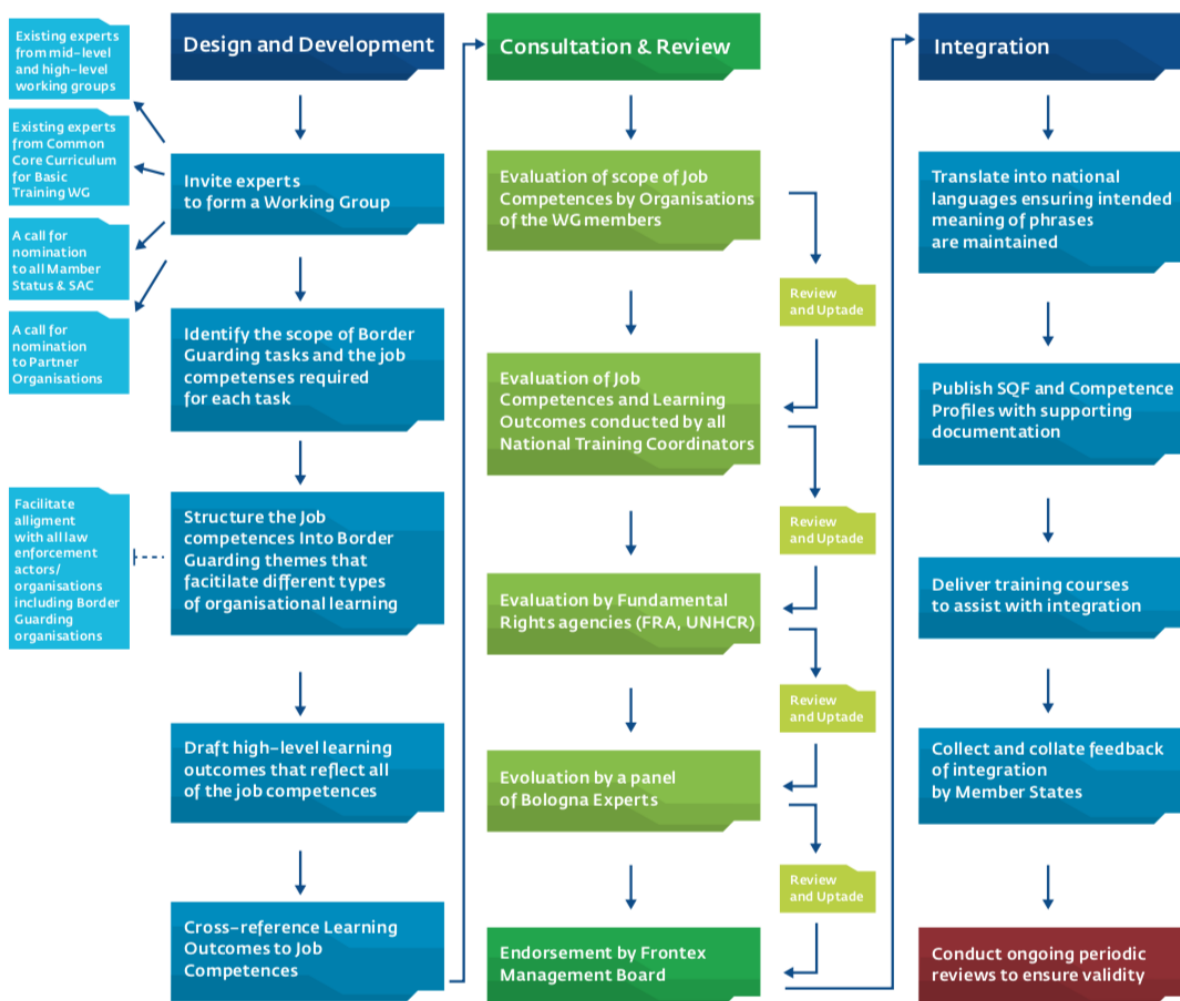


Figure 1 - SQF process map, source Frontex, 2013, Vol. I, pag. 40

The remit of the WP4 - EGFA Net project does not include the integration of the SQF into national system, hence details are provided only with regard to the development of the SQFCGF and the stakeholder consultation.

The SQF for Border Guarding was developed by a working group (WG) of 40 operational and training experts from 20 border guard organisations, 19 Member States/Schengen associated countries and the partner organisation, DCAF (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces). Experts of the WG were selected also on the basis of their previous experience in other ‘common curricula’ projects developed by Frontex, as well as the project on the elaboration of the

‘Competence Profiles’ in Higher education (level 6 and 7 of the EQF).

The intention of developing the sectoral framework was introduced to the National Training Coordinators’ network, and it was also shared with a larger forum of border guard training experts. This helped in gathering interest and consensus since the very initial phases.

The concrete development of the SQF included the following steps:

1. Development of Competence Profiles, through job mapping by the working group and national consultations on results. This was an extensive exercise starting with the mapping the border guard job and tasks at all levels and the description of knowledge, skills and competences required to perform those tasks. Hence, the initial work focused on job competences. The Competence Profiles (job profiles) of the SQF were the basis for the definition of the training standards (learning requirements). They were further revised and adjusted followed an intense consultation with National authorities.
2. Development of learning outcomes, through (a) designing the learning outcomes; (b) cross-referencing the learning outcomes on the job competences and review/consistency check. The learning outcomes were carefully defined and referenced to the EQF descriptors of learning, for each of the levels, since the beginning. As reported in Frontex (2013, Vol. I), this was not an easy process²². The cross-referencing was an iterative step performed after every revision in order to check internal consistency.
3. Validation of SQF with MS/ SAC and partner organisations, review and fine-tuning integrating their feedbacks. The SQF included the quality assurance mechanism and a proposal to integrating fundamental rights into border guard training
4. External Independent assessment with Bologna Expert Panel
5. Adoption of the SQF and Endorsement by the Management Board of Frontex
6. SQF official launch, establishment of the SQF Expert Board, training and further promotion
7. Start-up of national integration process
8. Frontex training review and alignment with the SQF

The report of Frontex (2013), explicitly refers that prior to the development of the SQF for Border Guarding, a review was performed on already existing SQFs for other subjects/ professional learning. Such a research identified the following common points as regard the process: i) reference to the ‘tuning’ methodology²³; ii) approach starting with (job) competences; iii) assembly of a working group representing most Member States. At the same time, they recognized that: i) there were no standardised structure for a sectoral framework; ii) there were no good practice guidelines agreed on as part of the Bologna/Copenhagen processes, although reference is made to the usefulness of sectoral frameworks.

²² Vol. I of Frontex (2013), at pag. 46 reports the following “... it must be said that when it came to the definition of the learning outcomes, it was a very difficult process. [...] one of the main challenges in defining the learning outcomes was the assimilation of the concept of ‘hierarchy of learning outcomes’ and its application. Most of the experts in the group were experienced in curriculum development and in writing curriculum/ session learning outcomes (very specific, concrete and detailed), but very few people had experience of defining programme-level learning outcomes or especially sectoral level learning outcomes.”

²³ <http://www.unideusto.org/tuningeu/tuning-methodology.html>

2.3 The development of SQFCGF

The development of the SQFCGF was the aim of the Work Package 4 of the EGFA NET project since its launch in January 2015. In order to pursue such objective a working group has been established.

Legal reference

The roots of the ECGFA Training Network (EGFA NET) activities stem from two important policy documents on EU's maritime policy and development of coast guard functions cooperation: *EU's Maritime Security Strategy and its Action Plan*²⁴ and the *Feasibility Study on CG Functions Cooperation*²⁵. Both call for the improvement of training cooperation, harmonization of training and networking of relevant actors. The need for improved coordination originates from a situation identified on the *Feasibility Study*, where the responsibility for carrying out coast guard functions is distributed across 316 public authorities in the maritime Member States of the European Union, and arrangements vary widely among the Member States, with a mix of civil and military authorities often involved.²⁶

The ECGFA Net has been established as a voluntary association of educational institutions providing education in the field of coast guard functions in the member states of the European Coast Guard Functions Forum (ECGFF), i.e. 25 EU member states and Schengen Associated Countries as well the European Commission and its Institutions and Agencies with related competencies in Coast Guard Functions.

At the end of year 2014, the Network received the Grant "European Coast Guard Functions Academy Network for European Sectorial Qualification's Framework for Coast Guarding" (EASME/EMFF/2014/1.2.1.1/ SI2.702063) by the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) on behalf of the EC.

The grant was aimed at strengthening international collaboration on training, building a network of academies and training institutions for Coast Guard functions on ECGFF level and ultimately facilitating the interoperability and cooperation amongst different bodies carrying out coast guard functions in order to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of CGF activities. To this end, a Training Portal under ECGFF had to be established (<http://ecgff-trainingportal.eu>) and support to educational collaboration and student/expert mobility provided. In addition, the ECGFA NET envisages to put the basis for a voluntary Sectorial Qualification Framework for Coast Guard Functions (SQFCGF).

The beneficiary of the Grant, and coordinator of the action, is the Finnish Border Guard and includes a number of other administrations from other EU Member States²⁷. The development of

²⁴ European Union Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) - Action Plan, 17002/14, Brussels, 16 December 2014

²⁵ Final Report - Study on the feasibility of improved cooperation between bodies carrying out European Coast Guard functions; A report submitted by ICF International in association with REGS4SHIPS, June 2014 30259685

²⁶ Final Report - Study on the feasibility of improved cooperation between bodies carrying out European Coast Guard functions; A report submitted by ICF International in association with REGS4SHIPS, June 2014 30259685

²⁷ Italian Coast Guard, Armed Force of Malta, French Customs, Romanian Naval Academy of Costanta, Spanish Guardia Civil, Spanish Customs and Excises, Spanish SASEMAR, Portuguese Guarda Nacional Republicana, German Federal Police, UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Hellenic Coast Guard, Cyprus Police.

the SQFCGF is the objective of Work Package 4 (WP4), under the leadership of the Italian Coast Guard.

According to the TOR for the Grant *“The development of a Coast Guard Functions Academy Network can be carried out in five phases:*

- 1) *Identification of existing coast guard training in ECGFF member states and study modules available for other European CG authorities.*
- 2) *Recognition of the sectorial qualifications at European level.*
- 3) *Identification of common knowledge needs that would form the core of the future SQFCGF.*
- 4) *Construction of a portal of available Coast Guard training under the ECGFF.*
- 5) *Validation and revision of the results and recommendations for next steps.”*

In assigning such objectives, the EC “recommended” to refer to the methodology used by Frontex, Cepol²⁸ and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism in developing the SQF for border control and “advised” to take into account the deliverables of the Study on the feasibility of improved co-operation between bodies carrying out European Coast Guard functions, Final Report, June 2014²⁹.

In addition, the ultimate legal reference is the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and its plea to organisations working at EU level to use the reference levels and principles of the EQF in order to design coordinated training and qualification standards. In particular, the EQF recommended that SQFs should be developed by *‘facilitating cooperation, exchanging good practice and testing – inter alia through voluntary peer review and pilot projects under Community programmes, by launching information and consultation exercises with social dialogue committees - and developing support and guidance material’*³⁰.

The contractual phases of EGFA NET

The first Grant (ECGFA NET) started in January 2015, for a duration of 14 months (till February 2016).

The second Grant (ECGFA NET II) had a duration of 15 months, starting from October 2016 (till January 2018).

The third Grant (ECGFA NET II) has a duration of 14 months, from June 2018 to August 2019.

Hence, if we consider the EGFA NET as a whole process, it lasted from January 2015 to August 2019, but was characterized by two relatively long interruptions.

<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>

²⁸ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/police_customs_cooperation/l14006a_en.htm

²⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/studies/doc/2014-06-icf-coastguard.pdf>

³⁰ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2008/C 111/01)

The rationale of the SQFCGF

According to the Terms of Reference drafted by the Commission, the SQFCGF should:

- encompass all qualification levels acquired in general, vocational and academic education and training in the field of Coast Guard activities;
- be developed on the basis of an extensive job mapping (identification of the competence profiles/job profiles) for all Coast Guard tasks at all levels, with the ultimate aim to close the gap between theory and practice and ensure that all training courses developed are operationally relevant;
- include all national requirements and is, therefore, inclusive and not prescriptive - the intention of the SQFCGF is not to dictate national training requirements;
- support the review and accreditation of programmes.
- facilitate the formal recognition of other types of learning, such as ‘on the job’ learning;
- assist in the development or updating of national occupational standards for Coast Guards;
- support the dissemination within Member States (MS) of best training practices and/or provide key recommendations.

The principles of the SQF for Coast Guard Functions

The principles of the SQF were defined at the end of Phase I, after a duly revision of international and European standards and guidelines, with specific regard to the EQF, the Lisbon Strategy, the Bologna Process and the EU Directive on professional recognition³¹, as well as the analysis of the specific characteristics of the transnational SQF for coast guard functions.

According to the document “Basic Elements, key recommendations and methodology” (January 2016), the main principles for the SQFCGF are the following:

- be general (but not generic): it must be as general as possible, with a view to allowing the national systems to link up for the creation of their specific sectoral NQF;
- be inclusive: it must consider certain peculiarities of the national systems of reference with a view to not excluding the possibility of self-reference on the part of certain countries;
- have less regulatory and more communicative purposes: it must be a tool useful for communication between different systems of education and training which have specific national characteristics;
- be based on a voluntary process (not a legally binding instrument): have limited, often voluntary, institutional arrangements for governance and management, above all to allow all the national systems to adhere to the constitution of such a tool;
- be based on real international needs: have a range of national and regional policies, accords, conventions and protocols supporting them, but not underpinned by enforceable legislation;
- be a flexible tool: both as far as structure is concerned, but above all as far as national fulfilment is concerned, taking into account that these countries already have their own national legislation in place as regards education and training.

³¹ Directive 36/2005/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications.

The development and validation process of the SQF for Coast Guard Functions

A dedicated SQF working group was appointed in the initial phases of the project to develop the framework under the leadership of the Italian Coast Guard. The SQF working group comprised experts from the Italian Coast Guard, Spanish Maritime Safety and Rescue Agency, Finnish Border Guard, Hellenic Coast Guard, Spanish Customs, Portuguese National Republican Guard and the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency. The French Customs participated in the work during the 2nd project phase.

The work was also supported by Frontex, EMSA and EFCA as project observers. Additionally, the Italian Coast Guard entrusted a technical support contract to CIMEA, Information Centre on Academic Mobility and Equivalence, in order to provide support in the development work.

During phase 1 a development process in 7 steps, to be articulated in 3 different phases, have been agreed, as represented in the table below.

Figure 2. Development process of the SQFCGF

STEP	ACTIVITY	
1 Define basic elements and key recommendations	1.1 Identify different functions, tasks, job competencies and profiles	Phase 1
	1.2 Define the goals and the nature of the SQF (basic elements and key recommendations)	
	1.3 Sectorial analysis of needs and study visits	
2. Official bodies involved and work plan	2.1 Identify a Steering Committee / WG to define levels and learning outcomes	Phase 2
	2.2 Define a clear working plan and different responsibility	
	c. Identify different stakeholders at national and international level	
3. Development of the SQFCGF structure	3.1 Define the architecture of the SQF	Phase 2
	3.2 Map different Education and Training systems and qualifications	
	3.3 Identify the number of levels	
	3.4 Draft learning outcomes	
	3.5 Draft the SQFCGF final structure	
4. Consultation Process	4.1 Consult different stakeholders on the drafted SQFCGF	Phase 2
	4.2 Receive comments and suggestions by stakeholders	
	4.3 Review the SQFCGF after consultation procedure	
	4.4 Validate the final version of the SQFCGF by WG or External assessment	
5. Quality assurance Elements	5.1 Identify Advisory group (AG) to oversee quality assurance guidelines and minimum quality standards	Phase 3

	5.2 Map different national quality assurance systems	
	5.3 Draft quality assurance guidelines	
6. Adoption of the SQFCGF	6.1 Identify the international body / place for the formal discussion on the SQF	
	6.2 Draft a formal document among countries (MoU/Protocol) to define management aspects	
	6.3 Adopt the SQFCGF by country representatives	
7. NQFs structures and recommendations	7.1 Define the dissemination strategy at national and international level	
	7.2 Draft a document with basic elements and key recommendations to develop a sectoral NQF	
	7.3 Organise info days and training sessions for national authorities on SQFCGF in the view of NQF development	

The actual development of the SCQCGF followed such agreed process, with the sole exclusion of the identification of the Apex body, as part of the SQF architecture (step 3.1) which has been postponed to phase 3, and is currently still under discussion, in consideration of the institutional and political implications of such a choice.

Project Phase	period	Activities / outputs	Documents delivered
EGFA NET I	01-03/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Building up national experts group (with the support of Guardia di Finanza) aimed to gather expertise in each Coast Guard Functional Activity as stated in the ECGFF Terms of Reference; ✓ Elaboration (with the support of the national experts group) of the WP4 Questionnaire no. I.1, that is aimed to collect description and main tasks related to Coast Guard Functional Activities; ✓ Participation in the Kick-Off meeting (Helsinki 24/25 March 2015) and presentation of the WP4 Work Plan and WP4 Questionnaire; ✓ Delivering of Questionnaire no. I.1 to Project Partners and other ECGFF Members. 	
	06/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Report on Questionnaire no. I.1 (descriptions and main tasks related to Coast 	Report on Questionnaire no. I.1 (annex 1 to doc.



		Guard Functional Activities) discussed during 2 nd working meeting ✓ Launch of Questionnaire no. I.2 on job position and job competences	A – Basic elements...)
	09/2015	Study Visit in Finland;	
	10/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of the WG and definition of « WG experts' method » - Report on Questionnaire no. I.2 - discussed and approved with WG - Study Visits in Spain (Spanish Customs and Sasemar), Italy (Italian Coast Guard) and Germany (German Federal Police); 	Report on Questionnaire no. I.2 (annex 2 to doc. A – Basic elements...)
	11/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organization of 3rd working meeting - Draft « Basic Elements and Key Recommendations for SQFCGF » 	
	01/2016	- Approval of « Basic Elements and Key Recommendations for SQFCGF »	Doc. A - Basic Elements and Key Recommendations for SQFCGF
EGFA NET II	10-12/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft of a working paper identifying an international body entrusted with the management of the SQF - <u>Identification of the SQF Working Group (WG) for defining levels and Learning Outcomes</u> - <u>Definition of a work plan and different responsibilities of the SQF WG</u> 	<i>Nota Bene: draft version never adopted</i>
	01-03/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WG meeting (April 2017) - Draft “Guidelines on writing L.O.”; - Questionnaire II.1 on identification of stakeholders 	
	04-06/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2nd project working meeting - 1st WG meeting 	
	07/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proposal to postpone selection of apex body - list of stakeholders based on questionnaire II.1 finalised - draft 1 learning outcomes - 2nd WG meeting - 3rd project working meeting 	
	08-10/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3rd SQF Working Group Meeting - Draft 2 on Learning Outcomes (based on revision made by the SQF Coordinator and the comments by experts and EU Agencies) to be included in the SQFCGF Structure. - Draft 3 of SQFCGF Final Structure revised and presented at the 3rd SQF WGM 	

	11-12/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document “SQFCGF final structure (v.1)” completed and presented at the Closing Seminar; - Visual graphic/wheel containing the SQFCGF completed and uploaded on the training portal 	Document B “SQFCGF final structure (v.1)”
NOT COVERED BY GRANT	01-05/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>EFCA 13th Working/12th Steering Group meeting on Training and Exchange of Experience</i> held in Paris on 6th February 2018 in order to present WP4 work to EFCA Training Community. ○ <i>1st Annual Coast Guard Event</i> of the three Agencies (EFCA, EMSA, Frontex) - Vigo on 11th – 13th April 2018 ○ <i>SQF Coast Guard Cross Reference Workshop</i> held in Gdynia on 23th – 24th April 2018, following Frontex initiative. During this meeting WP4 team and the experts of SQF Working Group had the possibility to reflect and discuss on the 10 tables and on an overarching table (developed by Frontex external consultant) containing learning outcomes organised in learning areas in common to the different 10 tables. After this meeting, WP4 team agreed to carry out a preliminary revision of 10 tables developed during phase II in order to align them to EQF wording and to provide more consistency and coherence to L.O. among the different functions. 	
EGFA NET III	06-10/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review of WG composition and functions ✓ Presentation of the SQFCGF and related benefits for developing the concept of multinational and cross functional crews, at the <i>4th Workshop of the ECGFF</i>, under the German Chairmanship - Vigo on 19th June 2018; ✓ Presentation of the SQFCGF at the <i>Plenary Conference of the Mediterranean Coast Guard Function Forum</i>, under the French Chairmanship, in order to present the work to the Organisations with Coast Guard Functions of the Mediterranean Countries, including Third Countries - Marseille on 27th – 28th June 2018; 	



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presentation of the SQFCGF at the ECGFF <i>Plenary Conference</i>, under the German Chairmanship, in order to present the state of the project to the ECGFF Community - Hamburg on 12th – 14th September 2018; ✓ <i>1st SQF Working Group Meeting, 1st Executive Group Meeting, 1st Governing Board Meeting</i> - Helsinki on 18th – 19th September 2018; ✓ Participation to <i>EMSA 13th Consultative Network on Technical Assistance</i> and presentation of SQFCGF to EMSA's Training Community - Lisbon on 2nd October 2018; ✓ Participation to <i>Frontex Annual Training Conference</i> and presentation of SQFCGF to Frontex's Training Community – Warsaw, 10th October 2018; ✓ Revision of tables and to the wording of the learning outcomes by WP4 coordinator, WP4 team/SQF WG, also in cooperation with 3 EU agencies on the tables ✓ Revised draft tables have been presented at the 1st SQF Working Group Meeting (Helsinki, 18 September 2018). During October, the SQF experts were asked to go through their respective draft tables and to present feedbacks and suggestions to SQF Unit. 	
	11-12/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Launch of Questionnaire III.1 for understanding the level of awareness currently existing in the EU on the SQF issue. 	
	01-02/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Launch of Questionnaire III.2 for stakeholders' consultation on SQFCGF structure and tables (v.2); ✓ Participation in the 2nd SQF Working Group, 2nd Governing Board, 2nd Executive Group Meeting (22-24 January 2019) ✓ Participation in the 1st ECGFF Workshop and 1st ECGFF Secretariat (Lisbon, 27-28 February 2019) in order to encourage further stakeholders' consultation and dissemination ✓ Drafting the final list of Learning Area of the SQFCGF (v.1) 	<p>Doc. D - SQFCGF structure and tables (v.2);</p> <p>Doc. E - Learning Area of the SQFCGF (v.1)</p>
	03-06/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of Questionnaire III.3 on quality assurance • Identification of the Advisory Group 	Doc. F - SQFCGF structure and tables (v.3);

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working paper on the management of SQFCGF • Report on Questionnaire III.1 on stakeholders' consultation • Report on Questionnaire III.2 on SQFCGF structure and tables • Revision of SQFCGF tables on learning area and learning objectives (v.3) • External assessment 	
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Working method

The working method for the development of the SQFCGF under the WP4 followed a process methodology consisting in gathering and discussing inputs at four levels:

- I. national experts' working group
- II. WP4 (SQF) working group
- III. EGFA NET group and EU Agencies
- IV. other stakeholders

The national experts' working group was involved by the WP4 coordinator, mainly during the first phase in order to prepare drafts documents and proposal. To this end, the Italian Coast guard identified a list of Italian experts from different national organisations covering all the 10 CGF. This group of experts prepared the list of tasks and learning outcomes from sketches, as well as their revisions all along project implementation. Indeed, the national working group was composed of experts of the specific functions, not necessarily on ISQF and/or training. Also for this reason, the first approach to the identification of tasks and competences mirrored a rank-based approach, rather than a learning area approach. Without the immense work done by the Italian coast guard and the Italian experts' group, the EGFA NET project would probably never progressed so much, considered that the WP4 working group could provide inputs and revisions but would never have been able to draft documents from sketches.

The WP4 working group (WP4 –SQF- WG) was composed of experts from affiliated entities who volunteered to join the WP. It included 10 experts: one per each CG function. The WP4 WG participated in meetings each 4 to 6 months (e.g. 2 or 3 times during the duration of each phase). The frontal meetings were the occasion to discuss all together on the overall architecture and content of the SQF, while during the rest of the time, they were informed, involved and consulted by the WP4 coordinator in order to provide inputs and feedback from their home administration.

The EGFA NET group of experts was informed during the project steering committees, where the main outputs were presented in order to get feedback and review. Also EFCA, EMSA and Frontex played an important role during the project implementation. Indeed, even if not formally included in the working group, they were invited during meetings and their contributions solicited in many ways. The 3 EU agencies also greatly supported the dissemination of information and the stakeholders' involvement, by forwarding relevant information to their stakeholders. Indeed, it was thanks to the support of Frontex between phase II and phase III that there was a shift in the SQFCGF tables from a ranked-based to a learning outcomes / learning areas approach.

Finally, a larger list of stakeholders was drafted based on the questionnaire II.1 sent on March 2017, the inputs by the affiliated entities and EGFA net partners, as well as the list of stakeholders included in the study “*Study on the feasibility of improved cooperation between bodies carrying out European Coast Guard Functions*”³² (June 2014). Those stakeholders were involved mainly for information and visibility, as well as to gather information on the degree of awareness on SQF in general and SQFCGF specifically.

Before the final approval of the SQFCGF, an assessment by three external experts has been requested and it is the subject of the present report.

2.4 Comparison between SQF for Border Guarding and SQF for Coast Guard Functions

The table below summarises the main elements of the process for developing the SQF by Frontex and by ECGFA NET.

	SQF for Border Management by Frontex	SQFCGF by ECGFA NET
Legal reference	Internal regulation	Grant Contract by EC – DG MARE
Referent Authority for development process	Frontex – Training Department	ECGFA NET consortium (not an authority but a temporary affiliation of MS entities)
Stakeholders involved in drafting the SQF	A WG of 40 operational and training experts from 20 border guard organisations, 19 Member States/Schengen associated countries and the partner organisation, DCAF (Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces).	A WG of 10 experts on CGF, under the coordination and leadership of the Italian Coast Guard, reporting to the consortium WP4 WG and in cooperation with Frontex, EMSA, EFCA.
Stakeholders involved in consultation during drafting / approval	Consultation with all MS/SAC during drafting. European Validation of the SQF consisted of another extended national consultation process that involved over 30 organizations with border guard competences and also international organizations that have interests in the area of border security and migration (i.e. UNHCR, OSCE, FRA, DCAF, EASO)	Consultation with ECGFA NET members (25 EU MS / SAC) and about 150 organisations resulting from the “Study on the feasibility of improved cooperation between bodies carrying out European Coast Guard functions, June 2014”

³² <https://docplayer.net/1151769-Study-on-the-feasibility-of-improved-cooperation-between-bodies-carrying-out-european-coast-guard-functions-final-report.html>

Duration of the process	Approx. 16 months	4 years – with discontinuity. The process is still on-going.
Main steps in developing the process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of Competence Profiles 2. Development of learning outcomes 3. Validation of SQF with MS/ SAC and partner organisations 4. External Independent assessment with Bologna Expert Panel 5. Adoption of the SQF and Endorsement by the Management Board of Frontex 6. SQF official launch, establishment of the SQF Expert Board, training and further promotion 7. Start-up of national integration process 8. Frontex training review and alignment with the SQF 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define basic elements and key recommendations 2. Identify official bodies involved and work plan 3. Development of the SQFCGF structure (architecture, levels, competences and learning outcomes) 4. Consultation with stakeholders 5. Definition of quality assurance elements – external assessment 6. Adoption of the SQFCGF* 7. NQFs structures and recommendations* <p>*not yet completed at the date of drafting this report</p>
Technical assistance	n.a.	CIMEA foundation – Italy
External Assessment	3 external assessors	3 external assessors
Apex Body	Frontex	N.a. (not identified, yet)
Management structure	SQF is managed by Frontex	N.a. (not identified, yet)

While many differences can be highlighted, these mainly refer to the inner differences between the two SQFs:

- ✓ Frontex SQF refer to one CGF while SQFCGF refers to 10 out of 11 CGFs
- ✓ Frontex SQF has been developed under the responsibility of one Authority, consistently with its mandate, while SQFCGF has been developed in the framework of a European Grant and a temporary affiliation.

When we look at the specific process for defining the SQF tables, and namely competences, profile, levels, learning outcomes, there can be found many similarities, including in the difficulties encountered and the “mistakes” made in the first tables.

They have been both “artisanal” processes, as there was not enough similar experience to look at. They both experienced an interesting learning process of the experts and stakeholders’ involved as the development process progressed.

Compared to 2012, when Frontex started its process, in 2019 when ECGFA NET III its finalizing its process, the general awareness on the functioning and existence of SQFs has increased a lot. In

this sense, EGFA NET has benefited from the previous experience, in addition to the specific and concrete inputs provided by Frontex experts.

2.5 Conclusions on the development process

The efforts by WP4 in the process of developing the SQFCGF has been extraordinary, considered the many limits they had to face, including – just to mention some of them – the discontinuity of the contractual framework (EU Grant) and the lack of one Authority / Agency.

As regard the process, the following lessons can be learned:

- ✓ The development process is long and require people involved to familiarize with the concept of learning outcomes: not an easy task as it requires a substantial shift from a “ranking approach” (deeply rooted in the public sector in general and in the military sector in particular) to a competence-based approach
- ✓ The stakeholders’ engagement is fundamental during all the process, as it permits to gather consensus during the path;
- ✓ While a wider WG and stakeholders’ engagement is helpful to gather inputs and include remarks, the final tables of the SQF should be under the responsibility of a smaller group as there will be some aspects of the table which will never encounter the unanimous consensus (i.e. with regard to the language, the skills, the levels...)
- ✓ The ISQF is an iterative process: it should be continuously tested and updated following training activities.
- ✓ Without a strong and clear engagement under the responsibility of one (European?) authority, the current application of the SQFCGF risks to remain a theoretical (though still important) exercise.

Chapter 3 – Approaches to SQFCGF under review

3.1 Rationale/Imperative for construction of SQFCGF – Enablers/Barriers observed

The proposal to construct a Sectoral Qualifications Framework for Coast Guard Functions (SQFCGF) within the European Coast Guard Function Forum (ECGFF) is stated as one of five projects in the 2017 documentation on Work Package 4³³.

1. Support the establishment of a European Coast Guard Functions Academies Network that would strengthen cooperation between CGF authorities;
2. Increase student and expert exchange between CG authorities and academics
3. Design and construct a Training Portal website;
4. Plan, design and develop the structure for a voluntary SQFCGF;
5. Follow the specifications of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) for harmonising and improving educational collaboration and student/expert mobility (pg. 9).

The five proposed areas for development above, taken individually, are all ambitious projects in their own right. Taken collectively, they represent a very major and transformative change for the sector. While it is not in the remit of this review to comment in depth on the progress of the first three areas, they are acknowledged as they impact on the development of the SQFCGF. It is noted that the European Coast Guard Functions Academy and the Training Portal website are now in existence.

Any organisation attempting to build an ISQF will be both helped and hindered by a combination of the national, international and sectoral environments in which they operate. A growing number of sectoral organisations are seeking to find a framework within which to either manage an international EU initiative or to issue qualifications. However, a number of these organizations have been working without a clear European blueprint to advise them on the most effective way to approach the task, and this has created examples of different approaches to the task, resulting in quite varied outcomes. The 2016 EU *Study in International Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks and Systems*³⁴ identified that there were at least 254 organisations in charge of one or more relevant sectorial initiatives. Cedefop noted in its 2012 report on International Qualifications³⁵ in the vocational training area that there were increasing numbers of recognised certificates and diplomas being awarded internationally and sectorally, rather than via the more traditional national educational levels: “These non-State qualifications are awarded by a range of bodies, organisations and companies representing a wide variety of stakeholders and interests. This trend goes against the ‘traditional’ concept of qualifications, as something awarded and guaranteed by

³³ European Coast Guard Functions Training network, Work Package 4, Co-ordinator CIMEA – Italian ENIC NARIC centre (November 2017)

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ International qualifications / European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) ; Christian F. Lettmayr (2012)

national authorities, most frequently in the education and training sector"³⁶ (Executive Summary). Cedefop go on to note that such sectoral qualifications are also important from national and European foci as they promote common trust and cooperation at operational level.

The European Coast Guard Sector has been identified as one that will be significantly enhanced by improved collaboration, including the creation of an ISQF. The 2014 Final Report of the *Study on the feasibility of improved co-operation between bodies carrying out European coast guard functions*³⁷ found existing and extensive collaboration among coast guard services, and identified further opportunities to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the services. The report highlights the potential for further collaboration in the sector, including the improved effectiveness of joint actions taken by the coast guard authorities and the capacity to facilitate efficiency gains and improved outcomes. Of particular interest to this review, the report identified the need for improved collaboration on training and [the building] of a network of training institutions. This recommendation specified:

1. To place online information about the coast guard training institutions in the EU in a manner accessible to national coast guard authorities;
2. The development of a European Framework for Qualifications (EFQ) for selected coast guard functions; and
3. Potentially, the co-financing of joint training sessions focusing on operational procedures and on cross-border and cross-sector cooperation. These actions to be undertaken sequentially (pg. 33).³⁸

The same 2014 report on improved co-operation between bodies carrying out coast guard functions also identified a number of the key and interconnected barriers that also appear to have been encountered by the SQFCGF project team in their work. These are the barriers caused by the complexity and diversity of institutional arrangements for delivery of coast guard services. Other reports³⁹ have identified administrative and legal obstacles that hamper collaboration in the sector.

The third barrier to be acknowledged in this review is the expected and often powerful human resistance to change in any sectoral organisations, which is well documented in the literature⁴⁰. Specifically change in teaching/training situations is known to be a difficult process to persuade individuals to accept, as it involves disruption in familiar organisational structures, communications, resource allocation, practice, beliefs and attitudes⁴¹. Furthermore, what is often described as the 'paradigm shift' from content-based teaching/training to a focus on future-focused student learning outcomes (an essential and fundamental building block of any ISQF), is also acknowledged as a difficult transition for teachers and trainers to accept.

³⁶ International qualifications / European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop); Christian F. Lettmayr (2012)

³⁷ Study on the feasibility of improved co-operation between bodies carrying out European coast guard functions ICF International in association with REGS4SHIPS (2014)

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ Marsuno Project Final Report (2011) SAR pps 38 - 53

⁴⁰ Kuipers, B.S., Higgs, M.J., Kickert, W.J.M., Tummers, L.G., Grandia, J., Van der Voet, J. The management of change in public organisations: A literature review. *Public Administration*

⁴¹ Avenstrup, R. (2007). "The challenge of curriculum reform and implementation: Some implications of a constructivist approach," <http://tedp.meb.gov.tr>

3.2 Review of Framework Architecture

An important factor in reviewing the work on the construction of the SQFCGF is the acknowledged size and complexity of the coast guard services in the EU. The *Study on the feasibility of improved co-operation between bodies carrying out European coast guard functions*⁴² estimated that 316 member state authorities were involved in the delivery of ten defined coast guard functions. The report went on to comment that the presence of different actors and the perception of a ‘compartmentalised’ policy approach at EU level reflects the division of competence that occurs at Member State level and adds complexity to an already complicated policy landscape. The competences granted by the Treaty of the European Union define powers in distinctive policy areas. The various Directorate Generals of the Commission use these powers within their policy areas whilst ensuring complementarity of their actions; complementarity which can be complex to manage and/or achieve across the ten coast guard functions⁴³ (pgs. 19-20). This review notes that the complexity and diversity of the coast guard sector, the presence of three major distinct sectoral authorities and the lack of a central, overall inter-EU agency sectoral agreement upon which to build areas of commonality have represented very major obstacles to this project.

The ten defined and separated coast guard functions were part of the original structure of the project from its inception and still remain. While understanding the organisational rationale for marking and retraining these ten separate areas, their presence does cause a fundamental fragmentation of the ISQF architecture. This review has concerns that the continuing presence of these divisions will impact on the further implementation and successful development of a coherent ISQF.

In light of the previous discussion in section 3.1 above on barriers to sectoral change, it is acknowledged that the project team correctly undertook wide-ranging comprehensive stakeholder discussion and engagement. However, due to complex factors, these discussions may in part have served to continue to emphasize difference, rather than to produce new areas of commonality and operability in many cases. This is particularly evident in the decision earlier in the project, following stakeholder consultations, to create a framework based primarily on levels of coast guard capabilities and tasks, in order to identify and compare existing professional positions and job competencies, divided between the ten coast guard functions. This resulted initially in a complex framework, with limited usefulness for delivering some of the key objectives of a SQF – mobility, shared training opportunities and interoperability.

The decision, taken in 2018, to considerably adapt the framework and move more fully to a learning outcomes approach is a very welcome one. The project team also decided at the time to create a set of existing shared, overarching learning outcomes that could then be cross referenced against the knowledge, skills and competencies identified in the ten areas of coast guard functions. This decision has marked a very positive turning point in the framework’s architecture with potential for further framework design enhancement.

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ *ibid*

3.3. Competency vs training approaches in the design of the SQFCGF

A well designed ISQF can add a considerable benefit to a sector, allowing it to find and compare the work undertaken by individuals in different jurisdictions, to create complementary training opportunities, improve learner mobility across the sector and support Life Long Learning.

*The Study on International Sectoral Qualification Frameworks and Systems*⁴⁴ suggests a differentiation between International Sectoral Qualifications Framework (ISQF) and an International Sectoral Competency Framework (ISCF). They define an ISQF as “an instrument for the classification of qualifications from a specific economic sector according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved (i.e. clearly structured by levels); at least two countries are involved. ISQFs can be developed for a broader sector but often focus on a specific professional or occupational area” (pg.10). The study defines an ISCF as “a framework clearly structured by levels that sets out different levels of knowledge, skills and competences required by individuals to act in a specific field of activity or to perform specific job roles. These frameworks are not populated with qualifications and they are rather developed as competence frameworks which can be used, for example, as reference for the development of qualifications in this sector (i.e. they can be used similarly to standards).” (pgs. 10 -11)

Mindful of the above definitions, in Phase II of this project, it is arguable that the previous structure of the ESQFCG had more similarities to an ISCF than an ISQF, using levels of Operator, Supervisor, Coordinator /Expert and Manager as their mapping base. A key meeting of the project group in 2018 replaced these ‘operator to manager’ tasks structure, with a more neutral concept of ‘sector’, and made very significant steps in aligning practitioners’ achievements in terms of knowledge skills and competencies. A new set of knowledge, skills and competency-based learning outcomes have now been drawn up for the ten coast guard functions and, with the more recently produced set of overarching learning outcomes emerging across the ten functions, form (Part 4) this report.

3.4 Training, Qualifications, Life Long Learning and Mobility within the SQFCGF

Under the Terms of Reference drafted by the Commission⁴⁵, the SQFCGF should:

1. Encompass all qualification levels acquired in general, vocational and academic education and training in the field of Coast Guard activities;
2. Be developed on the basis of an extensive job mapping (identification of the competence profiles/job profiles/qualifications) for all Coast Guard tasks at all levels, with the ultimate aim to close the gap between theory and practice and ensure that all training courses developed are operationally relevant;

⁴⁴ ICE (2014) A report submitted by ICF International in association with REGS4SHIPS Feasibility of improved co-operation between bodies carrying out European Coast Guard functions. Last accessed 16/07/2019 <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/modes/maritime/studies/doc/2014-06-icf-coastguard.pdf>

⁴⁵ Terms of Reference – MARE/2014/36 – ECGFA-Net, European Coast Guard Functions Academy Network for European Sectoral Qualification's Framework for Coast Guarding, available on line: http://www.ecgff.eu/images/ECGFANET_docs/ToR.pdf

3. Include all national requirements and is, therefore, inclusive and not prescriptive - the intention of the SQFCGF is not to dictate national training requirements;
4. Support the review and accreditation of programmes;
5. Facilitate the formal recognition of other types of learning, such as ‘on the job’ learning;
6. Assist in the development or updating of national occupational standards for Coast Guards;
7. Support the dissemination within Member States of best training practices and/or provide key recommendations.

It is very likely that points 4 and 5 above will be more effectively achieved in the presence of two factors:

1. An overall inter-EU agency sectoral agreement upon which to build areas of commonality, shared understanding and trust.
2. A strong, central cross-sectoral training and quality assurance oversight body, one which is not primarily aligned to any individual authority in the sector. Such a genuinely core, non-partisan training/quality assurance framework will be able to support future-facing training provision and standards and routes whereby individual professionals can benefit from training and mobility opportunities. It should also provide the capacity on which to build the effective quality assurance structures, required to underpin such sectoral developments. As already stated, such a training and mobility framework will need to be genuinely sector-wide and beyond immediate coast guard functions, and beyond the remit of any one individual authority in the sector.

As discussed earlier in the report, the project has been able to successfully move from a set of sectoral responses that tended towards retention of current diverse sectoral differences (e.g. mapping existing achievements, where individuals in the sectors were currently working). The project has now stated to enter an important new stage of development, using emerging learning outcomes as a basis for expected, future levels of achievement. By doing so, this creates new possibilities for better collaborative and shared educational and training opportunities across the entire sector, not just within the ten separate coast guard functions, nor the existing parameters of the three distinct authorities. The first Coast Guard Functions Course that crosses the ten separate coast guard functions is now in place, ‘*Improving Efficiency through VHF Communications*’. This is a very important initiative and one that should be replicated in other training areas as it achieves a genuine cross-sectoral training opportunity, along with the use of overarching sectorial learning outcomes.

3.5. Future Work – Overcoming resistance and proving collaborative advantage

In studying the trajectory of this project and its accompanying working documents, it is clear that this project was built on a very robust series of sectoral consultations. However good these consultations have been, from an external perspective it appears that high-level and prevailing resistance to change and fear of loss of autonomy in the sector may still continue. This may indicate the continuing existence of a ‘win-lose’ fear of change embedded in sectoral thinking – that

agreeing to structural change must, by its nature, be accompanied by a perceived loss of autonomy and control.

Googins and Rochlin (2000)⁴⁶ highlight that for meaningful sectoral change to occur, it is necessary to find out what will motivate different parts of that sector to ‘come to the table’; what drives them to remain there; and what mechanisms must be in place to help ensure that partners achieve their side of the “win-win” equation (pg. 131). The *Study on the feasibility of improved co-operation between bodies carrying out European coast guard functions (2014)*⁴⁷ highlights the need to identify where collaboration can improve overall service effectiveness and/or efficiency in the coast guard sector, and by doing so, enable cross-sector initiatives that respect subsidiarity and proportionality principles. Huxham (1993)⁴⁸ describes this as ‘collaborative advantage’ - alliances and joint ventures that individual and organisations are willing to join when the added value of working collectively is identified clearly for them.

The project team is to be strongly commended on the work that they have achieved so far. From an external perspective, this review has some concerns that they may still be operating within a sectoral environment, sections of which remain unconvinced of the need for a SQFCGF. One of the main recommendations of the *Study on the feasibility of improved co-operation between bodies carrying out European coast guard functions (2014)*⁴⁹ is improved collaboration on training and the creation of a network of training institutions across the sector. To achieve these goals, the project needs to be supported by sectoral leadership, in ways that allow the team to complete a project that meets the key objectives of an ISQF – mobility, shared training opportunities and interoperability. An overall inter-EU agency sectoral agreement upon which to build areas of commonality, shared understanding and trust needs to be in place along with a cross-sectoral body to oversee the implementation of the SQFCGF, and to oversee future training and quality assurance standards.

It should be recognized that the development of the project thus far and the definition of the ten functions to this point are excellent steps towards identifying and building an overarching ISQF. As the work moves into the next phase of this project and beyond, it needs genuine cross-sectoral leadership that will be willing to convince the sector of the viable collaborative advantage that can be realised by developing a final version of the SQFCGF. It is only by doing so that the project will have the best chance to go on and develop a framework that will transform the training needs of the professionals working in the sector and enhance the coherence and standards of their services.

⁴⁶ Googins, B. and Rochlin, S., “Creating the partnership society: Understanding the rhetoric and reality of cross-sectoral partnerships [J],” *Business and Society Review*, Vol. 105, No. 1, pp. 127–144, 2000.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Huxham, C., ed. *Creating Collaborative Advantage*. London: Sage, 1996.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

Chapter 4 – The Content of the SQFCGF

The final version of the SQFCGF is presented in ten tables, each reflecting a single coast guard function. The earlier versions of the tables document the transformation from a competency framework, with detailed job tasks organised in a hierarchy determined by role and rank of a coast guard function official, to a qualification framework, with learning outcomes organised hierarchically by complexity of learning.

Each table comprises learning outcomes defined as knowledge, skill or competence (reflecting responsibility or autonomy) pitched at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 as described in the EQF. The learning outcomes are further organised into themed learning areas on the horizontal axis.

4.1 Rationale/ Definition and Alignment of Learning Outcomes to EQF levels

The learning outcomes in each learning area are well defined and reflect a body of learning that matches the level of complexity as defined in the EQF. The verb selections well represent the occupation or operational job tasks, as detailed in earlier stages in the project. The combinations of verb, scope and context for each learning outcome serve to easily facilitate the determination of the complexity of learning and inform the development of learning programmes and all forms of assessment, including recognition of prior learning.

The distribution of the outcomes over the four levels, achieve the intention of enabling progression of learning within each of the thematic learning domains, supporting the concept of life-long learning and learning for career development.

4.2 Structure and Alignment across Coast Guard Function Tables

The definition of learning areas greatly enhances the alignment of learning outcomes and consequently the comparison of the learning standards for sector qualifications between the ten coast guard functions. There are a number of learning areas common to each function table and these are written to ensure alignment across functions. As such the table structures facilitate alignment and comparison.

There is a slightly different approach adopted for Table 1 (Maritime Safety), where the learning areas are repeated within 'sectors' of the function. This further sub-categorisation within the table reduces the coherency of the table without adding to clarity as the learning outcomes themselves are sufficiently specific to the context of the learning. A further problem is the use of the term 'sector' as sub section of a function as this term applies to all ten, interrelated functions.

Notwithstanding the first table, and given that the SQFCGF comprises of ten, complex tables, the project team have adopted an excellent approach for maintaining consistency of learning standards across the sector functions.

4.3 Recommendations for next steps

It is acknowledged that the decision to maintain ten specific tables is justified in terms of the number and types of organisations with responsibility for different combinations of functions within the sector. However, the level of homogeneity across tables demonstrates that it is indeed a single sector and exposes the opportunity for a more cohesive overarching framework that reflects the shared and distinct learning areas, facilitating more direct comparison between qualifications within and across the different functions. It is considered that the utility of this approach would serve to enable a single qualifications framework for the sector, that would not detract from identifying the breadth and specific learning required for each of the functions. It is recommended that this approach be considered in the next steps of managing the SQFCGF and maintaining its quality.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The efforts by EGFA NET project - WP4 in developing the SQFCGF have been exemplary, considering the many barriers they have had to face, including the discontinuity of the contractual framework (EU Grant), uncertain funding, and a lack of a true cross-sectoral governance structure, incorporating all agency stakeholders.

A fundamental, robust stakeholders' engagement/consultation has been very well implemented during all of the process and has respected and incorporated divergent and, in some cases, quite polarized views across the sector on the goal of the project.

The development process has necessarily been long, as it needed to start from a low base of agreement on collaboration and a poor understanding of what an ISQF can offer the sector. In addition, given the peculiarity of the sector – e.g. the strong presence of a military dimension – the project experienced a resistance to change related to a sentiment of fear that great collaboration will lead to loss of autonomy, freedom and loss of the familiar- a 'win-lose' situation.

The project team and the WG have consistently attempted to highlight the proven benefits of greater sectoral collaboration through an ISQF – interoperability, shared training, worker/learner mobility – despite continuing and fundamental sectoral differences. In addition to the “technical meetings” a wide number of meetings and events have been organised to disseminate information and reinforce engagement, not only in the frame of the EGFA NET, but also on all other sectoral international events. A consistent reporting coupled these informative efforts.

In addition, the project team has had to face these issues without:

- a clear EU blueprint on the development of an ISQF, its benefits and its applicability in vocational training as well as further education.
- an overall inter-EU agency sectoral agreement upon which to build areas of commonality, shared understanding and trust.
- the imprimatur of a non-partisan, broad cross-sectoral governance/training network.
- the certainty of funding to support the development of a necessarily lengthy process, bringing together a fragmented sector, nervous of, and resistant to change.

The development of the SQFCGF has challenged different parts of the sector to accept the concept of learning outcomes, and has successfully achieved a substantial shift from an originally preferred “ranking approach” by the sector, deeply rooted in the public sector in general and in the military sector in particular.

In the last year the project team has successfully achieved the acceptance of a “learner-focused approach”, fundamental to a learning outcomes framework. While there may be still room to fine tuning the learning outcomes, the drafting of a complete SQFCGF including the recent development in the sector of the Qualification Framework, represents a corner achievement.

More specifically, the SQFCGF learning outcomes in its current form can be used for training provision and comparability, as each learning outcome represents a distinct, teachable and assessable activity.

For the SQFCGF to become a viable framework, an inter-EU agency agreement needs to be in place, underpinned by longer-term, secure funding for the establishment of a new training network framework to effectively support the SQFCGF.

Such a network should be capable of encompassing the views of the existing sectoral authorities, but should not be primarily associated with any one authority in isolation, to avoid perpetuating sectoral divisions/differences. The network should have the requisite knowledge and skills to support sectoral training/education and a full understanding of how to develop and deliver effective quality assurance of training standards.