



GOVERNMENT
OF SPAIN

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND
SPORTS

**GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR
VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

SPANISH REPORT ON THE REFERENCING OF THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (MECU) TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (EQF)

FIRST BASELINE REPORT - KINGDOM OF SPAIN

REFERENCING REPORT TO THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS
FRAMEWORK

November 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Spain is a parliamentary monarchy and the Head of State is the King. Executive power is exercised by the Government of Spain, headed by a President. Legislative power is vested in the *Cortes Generales*, divided into the Congress of Deputies (the lower or representative chamber) and the Senate (the upper or territorial chamber). Judicial power is administered by judges and magistrates.

The State is divided territorially into seventeen Autonomous Communities, plus the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla. In addition, Spain is largely decentralised, meaning that powers are divided between the Central State and the Autonomous Communities. Depending on the area of competence, the State and the Autonomous Communities will have regulatory and executive powers.

However, according to Section 149 of the Spanish Constitution, the State has exclusive competence over the regulation of the requirements for obtention, issue and standardization, in terms of validation and recognition, of academic degrees and professional qualifications

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY'S EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

This section describes the education and training system in Spain. It is currently regulated and defined by two laws: Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education (LOE). The regulatory framework also includes Organic Act 3/2022, of 31st March, on the Organisation and Integration of Vocational Education and Training.

Education and training in Spain are shared competences between the State and the Autonomous Communities. The State determines the general structure of the education system and the general organisation of the Vocational Education and Training System, such as typologies, levels, courses, competences, the regulation of the requirements for obtention, issue and the validation and recognition of academic diplomas and professional qualifications. The educational content is determined jointly by the State and the Autonomous Communities. The autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla are governed by the provisions of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports of the Spanish Government.

1.1. General situation in Spain

Education systems in Europe emerged in the early 19th century in the wake of the French Revolution, with a process of increasing secularisation in the following centuries, but their degree of independence from religious bodies varies greatly.

The Constitution of 1812 incorporates, for the first time, the idea of education through the concept of "public instruction", a framework in whose organisation, financing and control the State must intervene, laying the foundations for the creation of an autonomous Spanish education system. However, the current origin of the Spanish

education system is associated with the so-called "Moyano Act" of 1857. This law remained in force for a century and underwent numerous partial reforms through decrees and laws, but was not fully reformed until the approval of the General Education Act of 1970.

Since the establishment of democracy and the approval of the Constitution in 1978, the Spanish education system has undergone a major transformation process. Specifically, since the approval, in 1980, of the Organic Act regulating the Statute of Schools (LOECE), and in 1985 with Organic Act 8/1985, of 3rd July, regulating the Right to Education, successive reforms have been carried out in 1983, 1985, 1990, 2002, 2006, 2013, 2020 and 2022. These changes have involved a gradual transfer of functions, services and resources from the General State Administration to the Autonomous Communities. This process has been shaping a model in which the exercise of competences in education is distributed across all administrative levels, both at university and non-university level (see Chart 1).

Chart 1. Distribution of educational competences

Distribution of competences	Powers in decision-making bodies	Competences in curriculum design
<p>General State Administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports. - Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The general organisation of the education system. - The organisation of the Vocational Education and Training system. - The regulation of the university system, as well as the mechanisms for coordination, cooperation and collaboration between the Public Administrations with powers in university matters. - The general learning programme. - The setting of minimum education standards. - The regulation of the conditions for obtaining, issuing and homologation of academic and professional qualifications and the basic rules for the development of the right to education. - Senior education inspectors and systems of evaluation and innovation in education. - The regulation, as a minimum, of the modalities and amounts of the general system of grants and study aids. - The promotion of equality, non-discrimination and universal accessibility policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of objectives, competences, contents and assessment criteria, the basic aspects of the curriculum, which constitute the minimum teaching. - Establishment of mixed curricula for teaching in the Spanish education system and in other education systems. - Determination of the percentage of the school timetables of educational centres in its area of management to guarantee the integrated development of all competences of the stage and the incorporation of contents of a transversal nature in all areas, subjects and spheres. - Homologation of qualifications corresponding to regulated education and training.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The creation or suppression of teaching specialities, and their basic regulation. - The basic aspects of educational agreements with private schools. 	
Autonomous Communities (regional departments of education)¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The legislative development of state regulations in their territorial scope. - The management of the education system; - The specification of the curriculum in its territorial scope. - The regulation of the structure and functioning of the bodies in charge of educational inspection. - The establishment of the necessary rules for educational agreements with private schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of the curricula that form part of the minimum teaching determined by the MEFPD. - Determination of the percentage of timetables of the educational centres in their area of management. - Periodic review of the curricula. - Issuing of diplomas for regulated education and training.
Local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The conservation, maintenance and surveillance of some educational centres. - Cooperation with other administrations to obtain the land necessary for the construction of new public schools. - The management of certain services, provided that they are delegated by the corresponding education department(s). - The management and delivery of courses corresponding to Aulas Mentor. 	
Educational establishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drawing up, approving and implementing their educational project, their management project, and their organisational and operational rules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development and completion of the curriculum in the different stages and cycles, using their autonomy.

¹ In the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, competences are assumed by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training itself.

Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education (LOE) establishes the current organisation of the Spanish education and training system, without prejudice to what is established for Vocational Education in Organic Act 3/2022, of 31st March, as follows:

- a) Early childhood education.
- b) Primary education.
- c) Compulsory secondary education.
- d) Bachillerato.
- e) Vocational education and training (VET).
- f) Language teaching.
- g) Arts education.
- h) Sports education
- i) Adult education.
- j) University education.

Primary education, compulsory secondary education and basic VET constitute basic education.

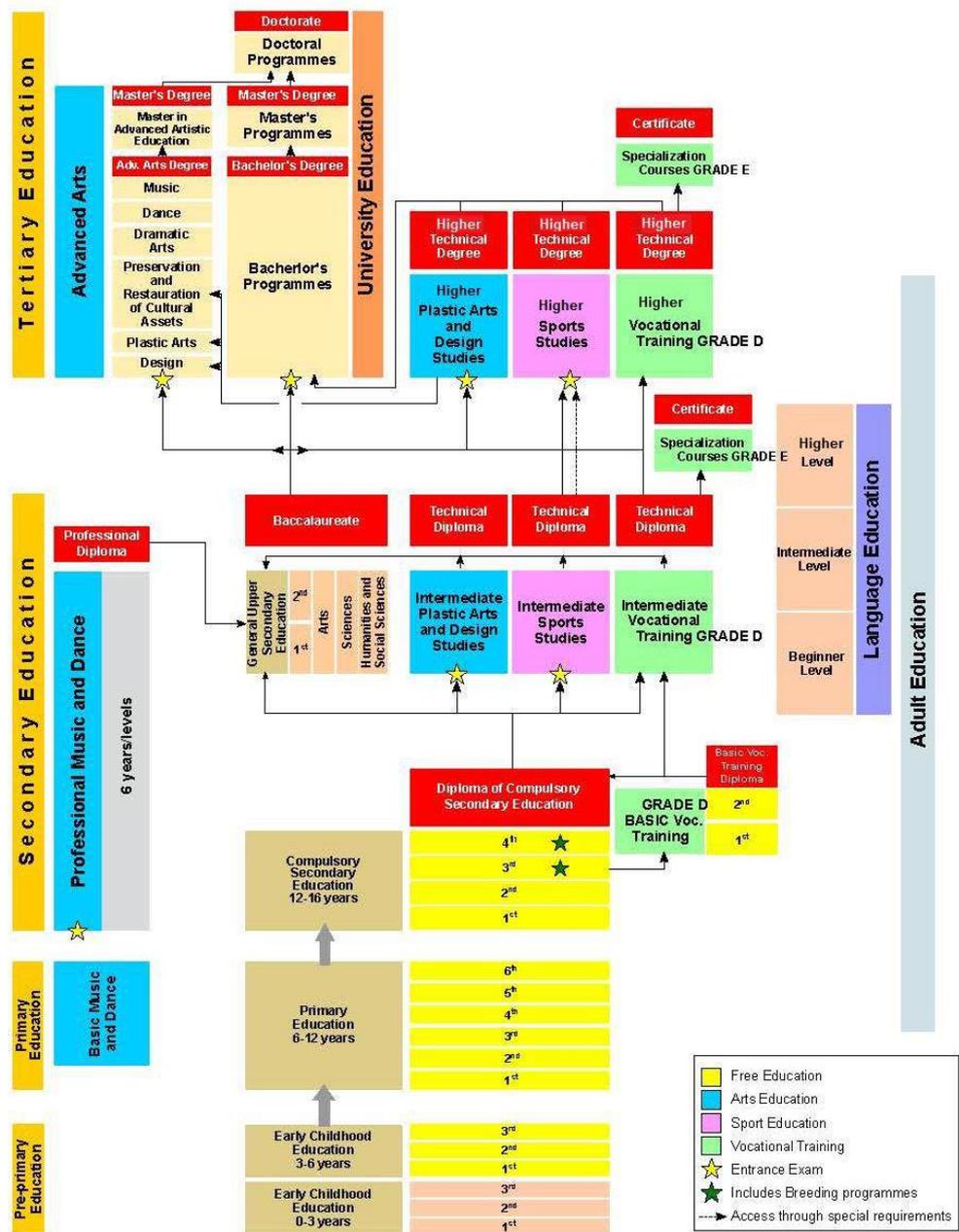
Secondary education is divided into compulsory secondary education and post-compulsory secondary education.

Post-compulsory secondary education consists of baccalaureate, intermediate VET (Grade D), professional artistic education in music and dance and intermediate plastic arts and design, and intermediate sports education.

University education, higher artistic education, higher VET (Grade D), higher vocational training in the plastic arts and design and higher sports education constitute higher education.

Language teaching, artistic education and sports education are considered special education.

Figure 1. Structure of the Spanish education and training system



Source: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.



Source: [Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports](#).

1.2. Education and training policy framework

The historical background of the Spanish education system is to be found in the General Education Act of 1970, which was in force until 1985, when it was partially repealed, its repeal being completed in the fourth final provision of Organic Act 1/1990, of 3rd October, on the General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE). Since then, different non-university education laws have been enacted:

- Organic Act 5/1980 regulating the Statute of Educational Establishments (LOECE), repealed;
- Organic Act 8/1985 regulating the Right to Education (LODE), in force since 1985;
- Organic Act 1/1990 on the General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE), repealed;
- Organic Act 9/1995, on the participation, evaluation and governance of educational establishments (LOPEG), repealed;
- Organic Act 5/2002 on Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training (LOCFP), repealed;
- Organic Act 10/2002 on the Quality of Education (LOCE), repealed without application;
- Organic Act 2/2006 on Education (LOE);
- Organic Act 8/2013 for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE), which amended the LOE, repealed;
- Organic Act 3/2020, which amends the LOE (LOMCE), in force;
- Organic Act 3/2022 on the organisation and integration of Vocational Education and Training (LOOIFP), in force.

At the university level, legislative changes have also taken place:

- Organic Act 11/1983 on University Reform (LRU);
- Organic Act 6/2001 on Universities (LOU), repealed;
- Organic Act 4/2007, which amends the Organic Act on Universities (LOMLOU), repealed, except for its second and fourth final provisions.
- Organic Act 2/2023 of 22nd March on the University System.

1.3. Educational and training levels

In 1992, the different cycles existing until then were reorganised and consolidated. These cycles are structured into the following educational levels: Early Childhood Education, Basic Education, Post-compulsory Secondary Education and Higher Education. By education, the Spanish education system distinguishes Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccaalaureate, Vocational Education and Training, University Education, Language Education, Artistic Education, Sports Education and Adult Education. Each of the above-mentioned cycles is described below.

1.3.1. Primary Education

Primary Education is regulated by Organic Act 2/2006 on Education (LOE) and Royal Decree 157/2022, of 1st March, which establishes the organisation and minimum teaching requirements for Primary Education. This stage, together with Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) and the Basic Level training cycles, make up the basic education of the Spanish education system, which is compulsory and free of charge.

The aim of Primary Education is to provide pupils with the necessary tools to promote the learning of oral expression and comprehension, reading, writing, arithmetic, the acquisition of basic notions of culture, and the habit of living together, as well as study and work, artistic sense, creativity and affectivity, in order to guarantee a comprehensive education that contributes to the full development of their personality, and to prepare them to successfully complete Compulsory Secondary Education.

The basic aspects of the Primary Education curriculum are set by the Government, through the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports, after consultation with the Autonomous Communities, in order to ensure a common education for all pupils. These minimum teaching requirements account for 50% of the teaching load in the Autonomous Communities that have a co-official language and 60% in those that do not. The organisation and minimum teachings of Primary Education are established by Royal Decree 126/2014, of 28th February. The key competences established are: language, mathematics, basic science and digital technology, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expressions. In this way, a series of areas are created that are present in each of the three two-year cycles that make up Primary Education: initial cycle (from six to eight

years of age), middle cycle (from eight to ten years of age), and upper cycle (from ten to twelve years of age). These areas are:

- a) Knowledge of the Natural, Social and Cultural Environment, which may be divided into Natural Sciences and Social Sciences;
- b) Artistic Education, which may be divided into Plastic and Visual Education, on the one hand, and Music and Dance, on the other;
- c) Physical Education;
- d) Spanish Language and Literature and, if any, Co-official Language and Literature;
- e) Foreign Language;
- f) Mathematics.

To these areas must be added (in some of the courses of the third cycle) Education in Civic and Ethical Values (Article 8. Royal Decree 157/2022). In addition, educational administrations may add a second foreign language, another co-official language and/or a cross-curricular area.

Chart 2. Characteristics of Primary Education

Legal framework	Royal Decree 157/2022, of 1st February, which establishes the organisation and minimum teachings of Primary Education. Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education. Organic Act 3/2020, of 29th December, which amends Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education.
Admission	First year: 6-7 years. Second year: 7-8 years. Third year: 8-9 years. Fourth year: 9-10 years. Fifth year: 10-11 years. Year 6: 11-12 years.
Education and training	Primary Education is compulsory and free. The aim of this educational stage is to provide pupils with the necessary tools to facilitate learning oral expression and comprehension, reading, writing, arithmetic, the acquisition of basic cultural notions and the habit of coexistence, as well as study and work, artistic sense, creativity and affectivity, in order to guarantee a comprehensive education that contributes to the full development of their personality, and to prepare them to successfully complete Compulsory Secondary Education.
Funding	It is free of charge in public and private-subsidised schools, but not in private non-subsidised schools.
Teacher qualifications	Degree in Primary Education.

Expected learning outcomes	The expected learning outcomes are the following: (a) Know and appreciate the values and rules of coexistence; (b) Develop habits of individual and team work, effort and responsibility in study, as well as attitudes of self-confidence, critical sense, personal initiative, curiosity, interest and creativity in learning, and entrepreneurial spirit; (c) Acquire skills for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the prevention of violence; d) Know, understand and respect different cultures and differences between people, equal rights and opportunities for men and women and non-discrimination of people on grounds of ethnicity, sexual orientation or identity, religion or beliefs, disability or other conditions; e) Know and use appropriately the Spanish language and, if any, the coofficial language of the autonomous community and develop reading habits; f) Acquire basic communicative competence in at least one foreign language; g) Develop basic mathematical competences, etc.
Future progression	Secondary Education
Quality assurance	The bodies responsible for the quality of this education are: High State Inspectorate, the National Institute for Educational Evaluation, which reports to the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports(MEFPD), educational inspection bodies of the Autonomous Communities (CC.AA.), and bodies that evaluate the education system in the CC.AA.

Primary education is provided in various types of schools: public, private-subsidised and private non-subsidised. Public schools that provide both pre-school and primary education are called 'Colegios de Educación Infantil y Primaria' (CEIP), while those that provide only primary education are called 'Colegios de Educación Primaria' (Primary Education Schools, CEP). Private-subsidised and private non-subsidised schools, on the other hand, usually provide basic education and, in general, post-compulsory education. These schools may adopt any name other than that established for public schools in order to avoid any possible confusion.

In any case, the educational administrations have the obligation to guarantee a free school place in their own municipality or established schooling area. In this sense, rural and island schools must be provided with the means and organisational systems necessary to meet their needs and circumstances. Furthermore, Organic Act 2/2006 on Education (LOE) establishes that educational authorities must guarantee the right to education of those who cannot attend schools regularly to attend this stage of Primary Education. For this reason, it offers other options in addition to those mentioned above, among which the following should be highlighted:

- Primary Education in Rural Schools. Rural cluster schools provide educational services in geographic areas with low population densities.
- Itinerancy and non-regular schooling. There are three modalities: a) itinerant classrooms programme in circuses (providing education to circus workers' children); b) hospital classrooms (guaranteeing education to children who are

hospitalised); c) home-based education programmes (providing education to children who have to stay at home due to medical prescription).

- Bilingual Education. It enables primary school pupils to learn a language.
- Distance Education. It offers educational services to those who cannot attend classes in person.
- Elementary Music and Dance Education. It provides students with quality artistic training.

The regulation of the admission of students to public and private- subsidised schools is the responsibility of the educational administrations. This regulation must avoid the segregation of students for socio-economic or other reasons and must seek a balance between schools for students with specific educational support needs. In the event that there are not enough places to cover the demand, a series of priority admission criteria must be applied which are common to the whole State, such as: the existence of siblings enrolled in the centre or parents or legal guardians working in the centre; the proximity of the home or workplace of one of the parents or legal guardians; the per capita income of the family unit; the legal status of large family, of pupils born of multiple births, of single-parent families; the situation of foster care of the person to be educated, the concurrence of disability in the person to be educated or in one of their parents, in the person exercising legal guardianship or in their brothers or sisters; and the condition of victim of gender violence or terrorism. In the case of pupils from abroad who are of compulsory school age, the incorporation into any of the courses that make up primary education is carried out in accordance with their circumstances, knowledge, age and academic record, so that they can continue their education to the best of their ability. None of these criteria is of an exclusive nature and cannot exceed 30% of the total maximum score, with the exception of proximity to the home, which may exceed this limit. In contrast to the above, private non-subsidised schools have the autonomy to determine their own admission procedures and criteria.

Finally, it should be noted that in order to ensure the quality of the Primary Education stage, two types of assessment are carried out:

- A diagnostic assessment at the end of the fourth year.
- An evaluation at the end of the stage.

In this regard, Article 21 of Organic Act 2/2006 on Education (LOE) establishes that all schools must carry out a diagnostic assessment of the competences that pupils have acquired in the fourth year of Primary Education. This assessment is used by schools to identify areas for improvement and to draw up proposals for action to ensure that their pupils achieve the objectives and competences established by current regulations.

On the other hand, Article 143.2 of the LOE states that, in the last year of Primary Education, a sample-based, multi-annual assessment must be carried out in order to measure the competences that students have acquired during this educational stage. As in the previous case, this assessment is informative and can be used as guidance for the whole educational community.

The promotion of students in each year or stage is governed by these criteria:

- In the first, third and fifth grades it happens automatically.
- In the second, fourth and sixth years, it is carried out when it is considered that they have acquired the competences set for each year, taking into consideration the information and criteria of the students' tutor, although the decision rests with the teaching team in a collegiate manner.
- The repetition of a year is exceptional. This decision is adopted provided that sufficient, appropriate and personalised ordinary measures have been taken to remedy the curricular deficiency. However, this decision can only be adopted by the teaching team once during this stage, under a specific and personalised plan for the reinforcement of the pupil.

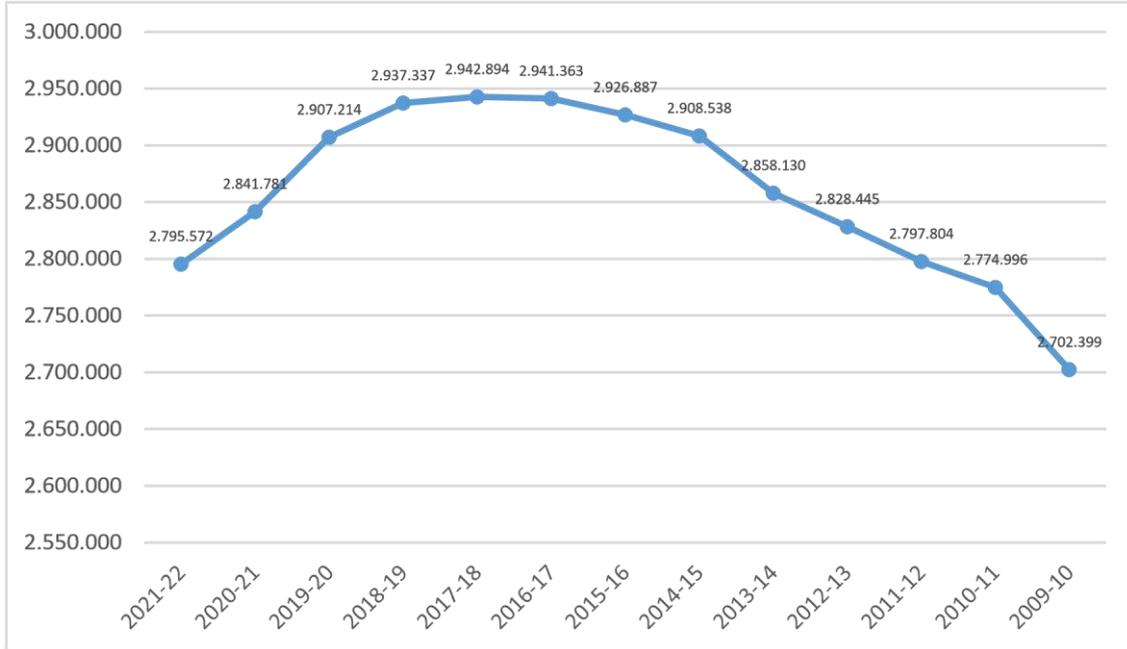
At the end of this stage of education, pupils are not awarded any certificate, because this is issued at the end of Compulsory Basic Education, which includes Primary and Secondary Education. Therefore, the only document with accreditation value of the studies carried out by the pupils is the Primary Education academic record. This document is kept by the educational centre where the student has studied and its content highlights the results of the evaluation and the academic progress of the student during this stage of their education.

In the academic year 2021/22, there were 13,864 schools providing Primary Education in Spain, of which 10,318 were public schools, 3,021 were private- subsidised schools and 552 were private schools.² These data are practically the same in the last decade.

The number of children enrolled in Primary Education has been growing gradually since the 2009/2010 school year until the 2017/18 school year, when it started to decrease. Today, the number of children enrolled in Primary Education stands at 2,795,572, far from the almost three million recorded in the 2017/18 school year. Since then, the number of children in this type of education has only decreased. Moreover, it must be taken into consideration that not all pupils are enrolled in the year that corresponds to their age, as they may repeat one or more years. Thus, if we look at the suitability data for the 2020/21 academic year, we can say that this rate is always lower the older the age. For example, at age 8 it is 95%, at age 10 it is 91%, at age 12 it is 87%.³ The following Figure portrays the above data.

³ Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Figure 2. Evolution of students in Primary Education



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

1.3.2. Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO)

Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) is regulated by Organic Act 2/2006 on Education (LOE) and Royal Decree 217/2022, of 29th March, which establishes the Organisation and Minimum Teaching of ESO.

Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO) is obligatory and free of charge (with the exception of private non-subsidised schools), and runs from the ages of twelve to sixteen. The aim of ESO is to ensure that pupils acquire the basic elements of culture and develop study and work habits, as well as healthy lifestyles. In order to achieve this, students must have acquired and developed the competences set out in Royal Decree 217/2022, specifically: linguistic communication (multilingual); mathematics and science; technology and engineering; digital communication; personal and social communication and learning to learn; citizenship; entrepreneurship; cultural awareness and expression.

Chart 3. Characteristics of Compulsory Secondary Education

Legal framework	Royal Decree 217/2022, of 29th March, which establishes the Organisation and Minimum Teaching of ESO. Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education. Organic Act 3/2020, of 29th December, which amends Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education.
Admission	First year: 12-13 years (ISCED 2). Second year: 13-14 years (ISCED 2). Third year: 14-15 years (ISCED 2). Fourth year: 15-16 years (ISCED 3).

Education and training	Secondary Education is compulsory and free. The purpose of ESO is to ensure that pupils acquire the basic elements of culture, especially in its humanistic, artistic, scientific-technological and motor aspects; to develop and consolidate study and work habits, as well as healthy lifestyle habits, preparing them for their incorporation into further studies and for their integration into the labour market; and to train them to exercise their rights and obligations in life as citizens (Article 4, Royal Decree 217/2022).
Funding	It is free of charge in public and private-subsidised schools, but not in private non-subsidised schools.
Teacher qualifications	Doctorate, Bachelor's, Engineering or Architecture degree, or the corresponding Bachelor's degree or other equivalent qualifications for teaching purposes. Postgraduate-level pedagogical and didactic training (<i>Master's Degree in Teacher Training for Secondary, Baccalaureate, Vocational Training and Language Teaching</i>). For specialisations that cannot undertake the Master's degree, equivalent official certification will be required as of 1st September 2015.
Expected learning outcomes	The educational objectives are: (a) assume their duties responsibly, to know their rights and show respect for other people, to practice tolerance, cooperation and solidarity among people and groups; (b) develop habits of discipline, study and individual and team work; (c) value and respect the difference of sexes and the equality of rights and opportunities between them; (d) strengthen their affective skills; (e) develop basic skills in the use of information sources to acquire new knowledge; (f) develop basic technological competences and to advance in an ethical reflection on their functioning and use; g) develop an entrepreneurial spirit and selfconfidence, participation, critical sense, personal initiative and the ability to learn to learn, plan, take decisions and assume responsibilities; h) understand and express themselves correctly, orally and in writing, in the Spanish language and, where appropriate, in the co-official language of the Autonomous Community; i) understand and express themselves in one or more foreign languages in an appropriate manner; j) know, value and respect the basic aspects of their own and other people's culture and history; and k) know and accept the functioning of their own and other people's bodies, respect differences, strengthen body care and health habits and incorporate physical education and the practice of sport to favour personal and social development.
Future progression	Baccalaureate, or Vocational Education and Training.
Quality assurance	The bodies responsible for the quality of this education are: the High State Inspectorate, the National Institute for Educational Evaluation, which depends on the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports (MEFPD), educational inspection bodies in the Autonomous Communities, and bodies that evaluate the education system in the Autonomous Communities.

The ESO curricula are the responsibility of the Government, through the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports (MEFPD), after consultation with the Autonomous Communities, in order to ensure a common education for all students. These minimum teachings make up 50 percent of the school schedules in the

Autonomous Communities that have a co-official language and 60 percent in those that do not. Therefore, it is the regional education administrations that set the curriculum in their respective territories. On the basis of this curriculum, ESO comprises four years which are organised into subjects and areas. The subjects in the first three years are as follows: a) Biology and Geology; b) Physical Education; c) Plastic, Visual and Audio-visual Education; d) Physics and Chemistry; e) Geography and History; f) Spanish Language and Literature and, if available, Co-official Language and Literature; g) Foreign Language; h) Mathematics; i) Music; and j) Technology and Digitalisation. Schools are responsible for grouping all these subjects into areas in three years. In the fourth year, the subjects are: a) Physical Education; b) Geography and History; c) Spanish Language and Literature and, if available, Co-official Language and Literature; d) Foreign Language; and e) Mathematics A or Mathematics B, depending on the choice of each student. In addition, students must take three of the following subjects: a) Biology and Geology; b) Digitalisation; c) Economics and Entrepreneurship; d) Artistic Expression; e) Physics and Chemistry; f) Personal and Vocational Education and Training and Guidance; g) Latin; h) Music; i) Second Foreign Language; and j) Technology. Likewise, at some point during this stage, pupils will have to take the subject "Education in Civic and Ethical Values". Therefore, in this educational period, pupils must choose between the academic education pathway, with orientation towards the Baccalaureate, and the applied education pathway, with orientation towards Intermediate Vocational Education and Training.

Centres providing ESO may be public (known as Institutos de Educación Secundaria, which may also provide Baccalaureate and Vocational Education and Training) or private (subsidised or not), which may be called by any name. All of them have to meet a series of minimum requirements in terms of the academic qualifications of the teaching staff, student-teacher ratio (maximum of 30 students), teaching and sports facilities, and number of school places, as set out in Articles 87.2 and 157.1 of the LOE. Furthermore, Organic Act 2/2006 on Education (LOE) establishes alternative organisational options in Secondary Education with different objectives:

- Bilingual education: guaranteeing the learning of a language to students.
- Distance Education: to offer educational services to those who cannot attend these courses in person.
- Professional Music and Dance Education: to provide students with quality artistic training.
- Professional Teaching of Plastic Arts and Design: to prepare students for their chosen artistic speciality.
- Sports Education: to prepare students for the professional activity of their chosen sport.

The educational administrations, through commissions created for this purpose, regulate the admission of pupils to public and private-subsidised ESO schools. In the event that there are not enough places to cover the demand, a series of criteria are

applied, which are the same as for primary education. As is customary in the Spanish education system, private non-subsidised schools have the autonomy to determine their own admission criteria.

Finally, the evaluation of the quality of Compulsory Education is carried out by means of two mechanisms: a diagnostic evaluation, which is carried out by all schools at the end of the second year and is informative, formative and serves as guidance for the whole teaching community; and a final evaluation, carried out by the National Institute for Educational Evaluation to verify the competences acquired by the students.

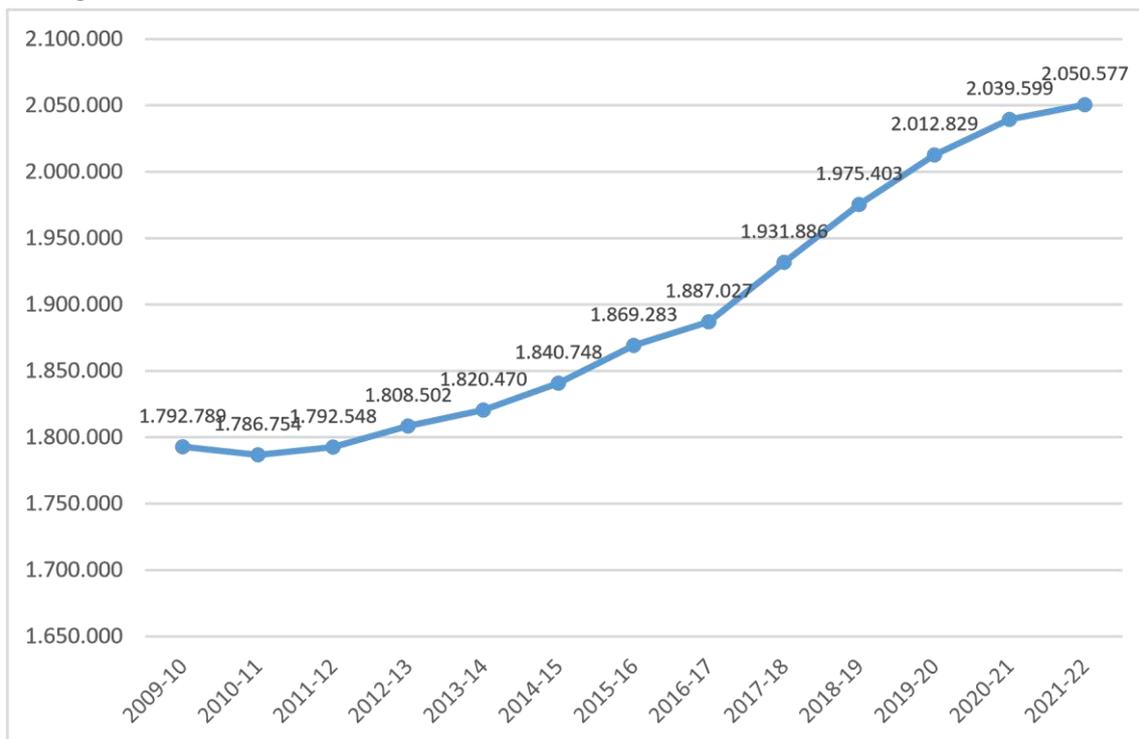
The Government, through the MEFPD, establishes the criteria for student promotion, but it is the educational administrations of the respective Autonomous Communities who specify them in their territorial scope. However, the decision on student promotion is taken collegially by the group of teachers who teach each student. Students who are promoted are those who have passed all the subjects they have studied. If they have a negative assessment in one or two subjects, it is the teaching team who assesses them if they consider it appropriate. Promotion with pending subjects implies that students must register for the subjects they have not passed, and follow the plan established by the teaching team. Non-promotion is considered an exceptional measure, and is taken after having exhausted the ordinary reinforcement measures. It can only be repeated once in the same year, and can only be repeated twice during this educational stage, with the exception of the fourth year.

At the end of the ESO, all pupils, regardless of whether they pass or fail, receive an official certificate stating the number of years studied and the level of competences acquired. Only those pupils who, at the end of this cycle, have acquired, in the teacher's opinion, the competences established in the current regulations, are awarded the Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate Diploma. This diploma is unique and is issued without qualification.

In the academic year 2020/21, there were 7,489 centres providing ESO Education in Spain as a whole, of which 4,247 were public, 2,779 private-subsidised centres and 458 private centres.⁴ The number of students enrolled in ESO has increased progressively over the last decade, from 1,792,789 in the 2009-10 academic year to 2,050,577 in the 2021-22 academic year. The following graph shows the evolution of these data.

⁴ Statistics of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

Figure 3. Evolution of students in ESO



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training, and Sports.

1.3.3. *Baccalaureate*

Organic Act 2/2006 on Education (LOE) and Royal Decree 243/2022, of 5th April, regulate the teaching of the Baccalaureate. This educational stage is not compulsory, and lasts two years, with the exception of a student who chooses to do it in three years. There are four types of Baccalaureate: "General", "Science and Technology", "Humanities and Social Sciences", and "Arts". It is normally taken between the ages of sixteen and seventeen and, after passing it, students can go on to various forms of Higher University Education.

Chart 4. Characteristics of the Baccalaureate

Legal framework	Royal Decree 243/2022, of 5th April, which establishes the Organisation and Minimum Teaching of the Baccalaureate. Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education. Organic Act 3/2020, of 29th December, which amends Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education.
Admission	First year: 16-17 years (ISCED 3). Second year: 17-18 years (ISCED 3).
Education and training	Secondary Education is not compulsory. The aims of the Baccalaureate are to provide training, intellectual and human maturity, knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable students to develop social functions and to enter active life with responsibility and aptitude. Likewise, this stage must allow the acquisition and achievement of the competences that are indispensable for the future training and professional life, and enable access to higher education (Article 5. Royal Decree 243/2022).
Funding	It is free of charge in public and private-subsidised schools, but not in private non-subsidised schools.

Teacher qualifications	<p>Doctorate, Bachelor's, Engineering or Architecture degree, or the corresponding Bachelor's degree or other equivalent qualifications for teaching purposes.</p> <p>Postgraduate-level pedagogical and didactic training (<i>Master's Degree in Teacher Training for Secondary, Baccalaureate, Vocational Training and Language Teaching</i>). For specialisations that cannot undertake the Master's degree, equivalent official certification will be required as of 1st September 2015.</p>
Expected learning outcomes	<p>The objectives of this educational stage are: a) Exercise democratic citizenship, from a global perspective, and to acquire a responsible civic conscience, inspired by the values of the Spanish Constitution; b) Consolidate a personal, affective-sexual and social maturity that allows them to act respectfully, responsibly and autonomously and to develop their critical spirit; c) Promote effective equality of rights and opportunities for women and men, to analyse and critically assess existing inequalities, as well as the recognition and teaching of the role of women in history and to promote real equality and non-discrimination on grounds of birth, sex, racial or ethnic origin, disability, age, illness, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation or gender identity or any other personal or social condition or circumstance; d) Consolidate the habits of reading, study and discipline, as necessary conditions for effective learning, and as a means of personal development; e) Master, both orally and in writing, the Spanish language and, where appropriate, the coofficial language of their autonomous community; f) Express themselves fluently and correctly in one or more foreign languages; g) Use information and communication technologies with competence and responsibility; h) Know and critically assess the realities of the contemporary world, its historical background and the main factors of its evolution; i) Have access to fundamental scientific and technological knowledge and master the basic skills of the chosen modality; j) Understand the fundamental elements and procedures of research and scientific methods; k) Strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit with attitudes of creativity, flexibility, initiative, teamwork, self-confidence and critical sense; l) Develop artistic and literary sensitivity, as well as aesthetic criteria, as sources of training and cultural enrichment; m) Use physical education and sport to favour personal and social development. Consolidate habits of physical and sporting activities to favour physical and mental well-being, as well as a means of personal and social development; n) Consolidate attitudes of respect and prevention in the field of safe and healthy mobility; and o) Foster a responsible and committed attitude in the fight against climate change and in the defence of sustainable development.</p>
Future progression	University Higher Education.
Quality assurance	<p>The bodies responsible for the quality of this education are: the High State Inspectorate, the National Institute for Educational Evaluation, which depends on the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports (MEFPD), educational inspection bodies in the Autonomous Communities, and bodies that evaluate the education system in the Autonomous Communities.</p>

The Baccalaureate is post-compulsory and free of charge in public schools, but it is not covered in private- subsidised and fully private schools. This level of education aims

at the acquisition of key competences such as linguistic and multilingual communication, mathematical and scientific competences, digital, social, citizenship, entrepreneurship and cultural expression. Its aim is to provide training in order to achieve intellectual and human maturity, as well as knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable pupils to develop social functions and enter active life with responsibility and aptitude.

In order to achieve these aims and objectives, the Government (through the MEFPD), after consulting the Autonomous Communities, establishes the basic curriculum. These minimum teachings make up 50 per cent of school schedules in the Autonomous Communities with a co-official language and 60 per cent in those that do not have one, as in other educational levels. The autonomous education administrations establish the curriculum in their respective territories.

The structure of the first year of the Baccalaureate is common to all the modalities of this type of education and is made up of the following subjects: Physical Education, Philosophy, Spanish Language and Literature I, and if there is one, Co-official Language and Literature I. The common subjects of the second year are: History of Spain; History of Philosophy; Spanish Language and Literature II and, if there is one, Co-official Language and Literature II; and Foreign Language II. Then, a series of specific subjects are established for each modality of the Baccalaureate.

The Baccalaureate is taught in public schools (known as secondary education institutes, which may also teach ESO and Vocational Education and Training), private subsidised schools and private non-subsidised schools. These centres must meet certain minimum criteria in order to be able to offer these courses, such as the academic qualifications of the teaching staff, the student-teacher ratio, teaching and sports facilities, and the number of school places.

Access to Baccalaureate studies takes place when students are in possession of one of the following qualifications: Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate, Intermediate or Higher Vocational Training Technician, or Plastic Arts and Design Technician, or Sports Technician or Higher Sports Technician. However, the regional education administrations are responsible for regulating their admission to public and private nonsubsidised centres. If there are not enough places to cover the demand, the same criteria are applied as for Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education.

Promotion criteria are set by the Government (through the MEFPD) and are regulated in Article 36 of the LOE and in Article 21 of Royal Decree 243/2022. The Baccalaureate diploma is obtained when the student passes the subjects of the two courses. Furthermore, in accordance with Article 23 of Royal Decree 243/2022, students can also obtain the Baccalaureate diploma by passing the common subjects when they have one of the following diplomas: Technician in Vocational Training (General Baccalaureate modality), Technician in Plastic Arts and Design (Arts modality), and Technician in Music or Dance (Arts modality).

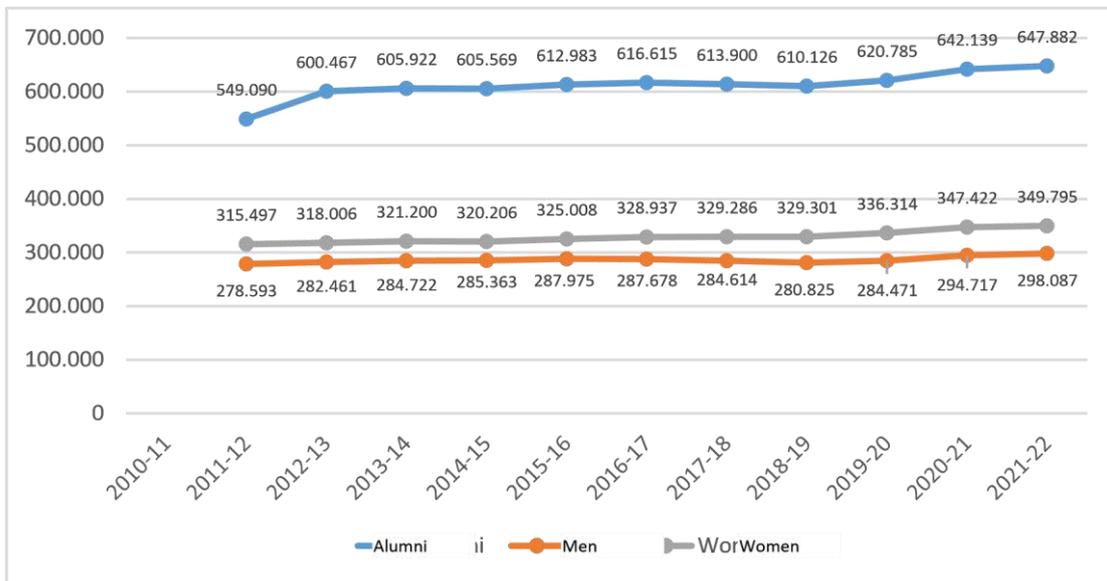
The Baccalaureate degree gives access to Higher Education (University Education, Higher Artistic Education; Higher-Level Vocational Education and Training; Higher-Level Vocational Education in Plastic Arts and Design; and Higher-Level Sports Education) or

Military Education, although some of them need to pass a specific entrance exam and other requirements.

In the academic year 2020/21, there were 4,673 centres teaching the Baccalaureate on site, in Spain as a whole, of which 3,117 are publicly owned, 485 are private subsidised centres and 1,071 are private centres. As for the distance mode, there are 187 centres, 186 of which are public and only one is private.⁵

With regard to the evolution of Baccalaureate enrolment, it is worth noting an upward trend over the last decade to reach 647,882 students in the 2021-22 academic year (see Figure 4). The gross enrolment rate reached its peak in the 2013-14 academic year (75.1%) and, since then, it has been gradually decreasing until the 2019-20 academic year, when it increased again.

Figure 4. Evolution of students in the Baccalaureate (on-site modality) by gender

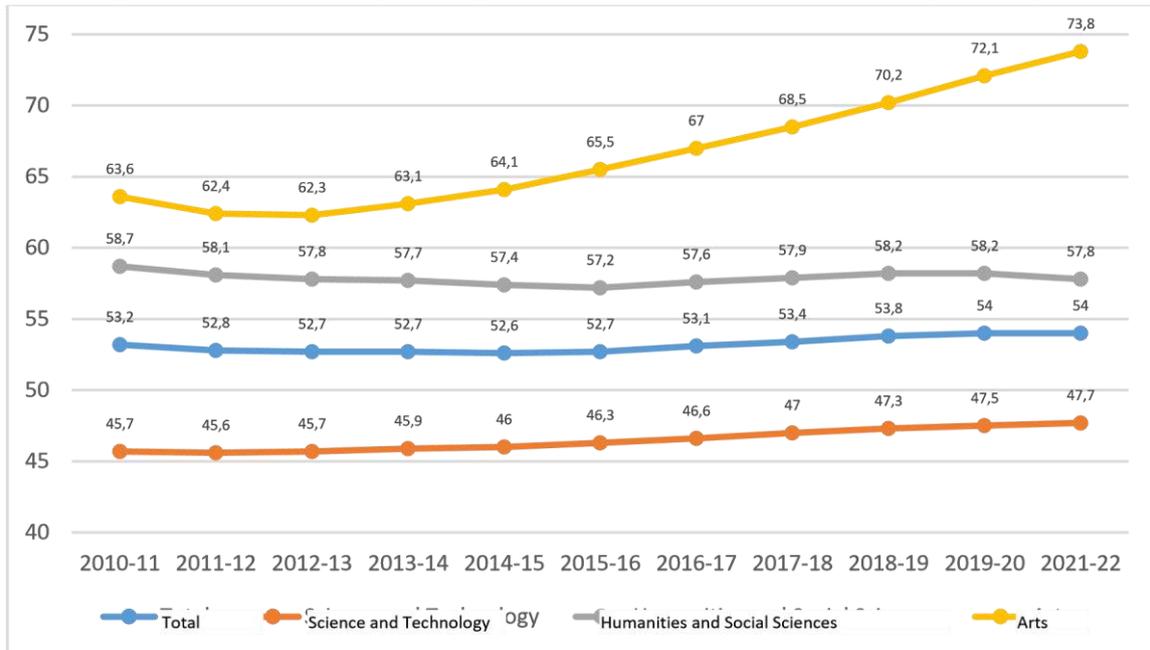


Source: Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

The number of female students in the Baccalaureate is higher than the number of male students in all academic years. The evolution of the percentage of women enrolled in each type of Baccalaureate differs greatly. Figure 5 shows how women have studied Arts in order of priority, with Humanities and Social Sciences in second place, although this trend has begun to decline since the 2019-20 academic year. In Science, the presence of women is below 50%, although since the 2010-11 academic year it has gradually increased to 47.7% in the 2021-22 academic year.

⁵ Statistics of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

Figure 5. Evolution of the percentage of women enrolled in Bacalaureate, by modality.



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

1.3.4. Vocational Education and Training

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is regulated by Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education (LOE), Organic Act 3/2022, of 31st March, on the Organisation and Integration of Vocational Education and Training, Royal Decree 278/2023, of 11th April, establishing the Calendar for the Implementation of the Vocational Education and Training System and Royal Decree 659/2023, of 18th July, developing the organisation of the Vocational Education and Training System, although the regulatory development of Organic Act 3/2022 has not yet been completed.

The Spanish Vocational Training model responds to the needs of citizens, throughout their working lives, as well as to those of the productive reality. It establishes a system of 5 grades of vocational training (A, B, C, D and E) based on training progression and on obtaining an accreditation, certification and qualification. This system allows citizens to plan their own training itinerary, in a continuum from microcredentials (grade A) to diplomas and specialisation courses (grades D and E).

Level A, Partial accreditation of skills or microcredentials, is the elementary offer of the VET System, preferably aimed at working people who need to update their skills. Its duration is variable and directly determined by the estimated number of hours devoted to the learning outcomes included in it. The qualification obtained is 'partial accreditation of competence'.

Grade B, Certificate of competence, is a partial training offer, coinciding with a vocational module included in the modular vocational training catalogue, preferably aimed at workers who need to update their skills. Its duration coincides with the duration of the professional module that constitutes it in the offers of grades C and D. The qualification is 'certificate of competence'.

Grade C, Professional Certificate, is a partial accumulable offer composed of several professional modules with high significance in the labour market. It can be obtained by passing the training or accumulating Grade B Certificates of Competence that complete all the professional modules included in Grade C. The vocational certificates include a period of in-company training, with variable duration. Exemptions of the in-company training period can be considered if a minimum work experience of 6 months can be accredited. Its duration is variable, from 250 to 990 hours. The qualification obtained is 'Professional certificate'.

In order to access a professional certificate, the following requirements must be fulfilled, depending on whether they are level 1, 2 or 3:

a) For a level 1 professional certificate, no academic or professional requirements are demanded, although sufficient communication skills must be possessed to enable learning to take place. In the case of requiring previous basic competences, the corresponding offer may incorporate training complements for this purpose, always linked to adult education centres to guarantee their direct recognition or through the process of accreditation of basic competences that is regulated.

b) For a level 2 professional certificate, a graduate in Compulsory Secondary Education or equivalent for access purposes, a level 2 professional certificate, a related certificate of competence, or a level 1 professional certificate from the same vocational family is required.

c) A level 3 Professional Certificate requires a technical or higher technical diploma, a baccalaureate or equivalent for access purposes, a level 3 professional certificate, a related certificate of competence, or a level 2 professional certificate from the same vocational family.

When the academic requirements for access to level 2 or 3 training are not met, the competent administration must verify that the trainees have the prior knowledge to successfully complete the corresponding training. Verification may be carried out prior to each training offer, by means of specific checks or tests. The tests are governed by the principles of accessibility, equal treatment and non-discrimination and equal opportunities.

The entrance test must accredit that the person possesses sufficient knowledge and skills to successfully complete the corresponding training. It may take place in the centres determined by the competent administrations. It may be held in adult education centres or in centres of the Vocational Training System. Likewise, the competent administrations may seek the collaboration of the public employment service and the participation of its mechanisms in each territorial area.

Grade D are VET courses leading to the award of Basic Technician (Grado Básico), Technician (Grado Medio), or Higher Technician (Grado Superior) diplomas. Its duration is between 2 and 3 academic years and the duration of the in-company training phase varies: between 25 and 35 % of the total duration of the cycle or between 35 and 50 % of the total duration of the cycle in intensive regime. The qualifications obtained are: for

Basic Level Cycle, ‘Basic VET Technician’ and ‘ESO Graduate’; for Intermediate Level VET, ‘Technician Diploma,’ and for Higher level VET “Higher Technician Degree”.

Degree E, Specialisation courses, are offers that complement the competences of people who already have a VET qualification or who meet the conditions for access to the courses. Its duration is between 300 and 900 hours. The qualification is ‘Specialist’ if you pass an intermediate vocational training specialisation course, and a ‘Master's diploma in VET’ if you pass a specialisation course in Higher VET.

Chart 5. Characteristics of the Vocational Training system

Legal framework	<p>Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education (LOE) Organic Act 3/2020, of 29th December, on Education. Organic Act 3/2022, of 31st March, on the organisation and integration of Vocational Education and Training, and Royal Decree 278/2023, of 11th April, establishing the timetable for the implementation of the Vocational Education and Training System. Royal Decree 659/2023, of 18 July, which develops the organisation of the Vocational Training System.</p>
Admission	<p>Grade A: there are no academic or professional requirements but sufficient linguistic communication skills for learning and the basic competences necessary to successfully complete the training. Grade B: as in grade A, there are no academic or professional requirements but to have sufficient linguistic communication skills for learning and the basic competences necessary to successfully complete the training. Grade C: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Professional Certificates. Level 1. ○ Professional Certificates. Level 2. ○ Professional Certificates. Level 3. Grade D: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Basic Level VET Cycles: to be fifteen years old, or to be fifteen years old during the current calendar year; or to have completed the third year of ESO, or exceptionally, to have completed the second year; or to have been proposed by the teaching team through the Guidance Council. ○ Intermediate Level VET Cycles: Graduate in Compulsory Secondary Education or Basic Technician, or having passed a specific preparatory training course for access to intermediate training cycles in public or private centres authorised by the competent administration and having reached the age of seventeen in the year in which the course is completed; or having passed an access test organised by the educational administrations and having reached the age of seventeen in the year in which the test is taken. ○ Higher Level VET Cycles: Baccalaureate or equivalent qualifications; or Intermediate VET qualification; or having passed a specific training course for access to Higher-Level VET cycles in public or private centres authorised by the educational administration; or Higher VET Technician qualification or equivalent; or having passed the entrance exam to Higher-Level VET cycles; or holding a University Degree or equivalent. Grade E: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Having passed an Intermediate Grade D or a Higher Grade D depending on the type of grade E (intermediate or higher). </p>
Education and training	<p>VET is organised into Grades A, B, C, D and E.</p>
Funding	<p>State centres offer VET grades free of charge.</p>

Teacher qualifications	Doctorate, Bachelor's, Engineering or Architecture degree, or the corresponding Bachelor's degree or other equivalent qualifications for teaching purposes.
Expected learning outcomes	To learn competences in an environment linked to the professional world. To qualify students for activity in a professional field, as well as to provide them with tools that enable them to adapt to possible changes in their working lives.
Future progression	Basic VET can lead to Intermediate VET or Baccaureate. Intermediate VET can lead to Higher VET or the Baccaureate. Higher VET can lead to university studies.
Quality assurance	The evaluation of the quality of the Vocational Training System is carried out in accordance with the indicators established in the European Quality Assurance Framework for Vocational Training (EQAVET). For this purpose, the High Inspectorate of Education and the Education Inspectorate are involved in the inspection, supervision and evaluation of the Vocational Training System, under the terms established in Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education, and without prejudice to the competences of other bodies. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, in a coordinated and joint manner with the regional administrations, within the framework of a Technical Committee for Quality and Evaluation of Vocational Training, draws up a common framework for evaluation and quality assurance and the state system of indicators for the evaluation of Vocational Training, determines common instruments for quality verification and evidence gathering for evaluation at state level and agrees on proposals for their implementation.

Grade D: Basic Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Basic VET is compulsory secondary and free of charge. Currently, there are 34 basic vocational qualifications belonging to 19 professional families. In order to access this training cycle, students must be fifteen years old, or be fifteen years old during the current calendar year, or have completed the third year of ESO, or exceptionally, have completed the second year, or have been proposed by the teaching team through the Guidance Council.

According to Organic Act 3/2022 on the Organisation and Integration of Vocational Education and Training (LOOIFP), Basic VET consist of three areas and a project:

- Communication and Social Sciences, with these subjects:
 - Spanish Language;
 - Foreign Language for Professional Initiation;
 - Social Sciences;
 - Co-official language, in the territories where this applies.
- Applied Sciences, with the following subjects: ▪ Applied Mathematics; ▪ Applied Sciences.
- Vocational Field, which shall include at least the training necessary to obtain a vocational certificate of Degree C of level 1.

It may also include other teaching that contributes to the development of Compulsory Secondary Education competences.

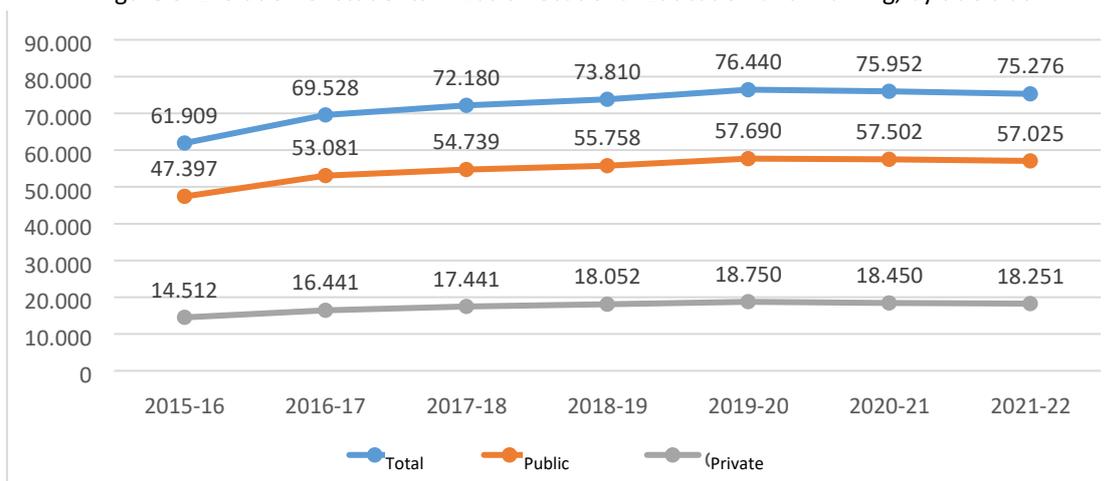
In order to pass Basic Vocational Education and Training it is necessary to have passed all the modules and subjects of the first year; and, in the case of having pending modules, these must not exceed 20% of the weekly timetable, they must be enrolled and the student must participate in the activities for their recovery. In any case, the qualification obtained by studying Basic Vocational Education and Training is Basic Technician and is achieved when students pass the VET cycle. In addition, they also obtain the diploma of Graduate in Compulsory Secondary Education. Students who do not manage to pass their studies obtain an academic certification of the professional modules passed. This certification has academic and partial cumulative accreditation effects of the professional competences acquired.

In the 2021-22 academic year, there were 2,776 Basic VET centres in the whole of Spain, of which 2,221 were public centres, 547 private subsidised centres and 8 private non-subsidised centres. There are 7,359 intermediate vocational training centres in the whole of Spain, of which 5,438 are public, 1,485 are subsidised private and 425 are non-subsidised private. On the other hand, there are 89 Basic intensive VET centres throughout Spain, of which 52 are public centres and 37 are private centres.⁶

The number of students enrolled in Basic Vocational Education and Training during the 2021-22 academic year was 75,276. This number is higher in public than in private centres over the last seven academic years. Moreover, during this period, the number of enrolments has been growing progressively, both in public and private centres, and there was only a small decrease in enrolments in the 2021-22 academic year.

⁶ Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Figure 6. Evolution of students in Basic Vocational Education and Training, by title track



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

Grade D. Intermediate Level Vocational Education and Training (VET)

There are currently 62 intermediate-level qualifications⁷.

The curricular content of this cycles is organised into different types of professional modules:

- Professional modules: in general, intermediate level VET cycles are those linked to level 2 competence standards of the National Catalogue of Professional Skills.
- Modules associated with transversal skills and abilities, career guidance and entrepreneurship;
- At least one inter-modular project, to be developed throughout the courses of the cycle;
- Optional professional modules.

The basic content of the curriculum of these courses is established and designed by the Government, through the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports (MEFPD), after consultation with the Autonomous Communities. The education administrations of the Autonomous Communities are responsible for adapting and establishing their curriculum environment, while respecting the regulations. They may incorporate additional training, considering the socio-economic reality of the territory under their jurisdiction and the prospects for economic and social development, with the aim of ensuring that the courses at all times respond to the qualification needs of the socio-productive sectors of their environment. The training complements, if agreed, may not increase the initially planned duration of the degree by more than 10% in the case of the general system, or 40% in the case of the intensive system.

The centres and bodies that may provide Vocational Education and Training are listed in Article 78 of Organic Act 3/2022, although they must be registered in the regional administrative register. In addition, subject to administrative authorisation and general registration, the following centres may provide these courses: public centres; private

⁷ At: <https://www.todofp.es/que-estudiar/ciclos.html>

centres authorised and accredited for this purpose by the competent administration; integrated vocational training centres; and national reference centres.

Access to Intermediate Vocational Education and Training is conditional on being at least a Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate or Basic Technician, or having passed a specific preparatory training course for access to Intermediate-Level training cycles in public or private centres authorised by the competent administration and being at least seventeen years old in the year in which the course is completed; or having passed an access test organised by the educational administrations and being seventeen years old in the year in which the test is taken.

Successful completion of an intermediate level training cycle requires the positive assessment of all the professional modules.

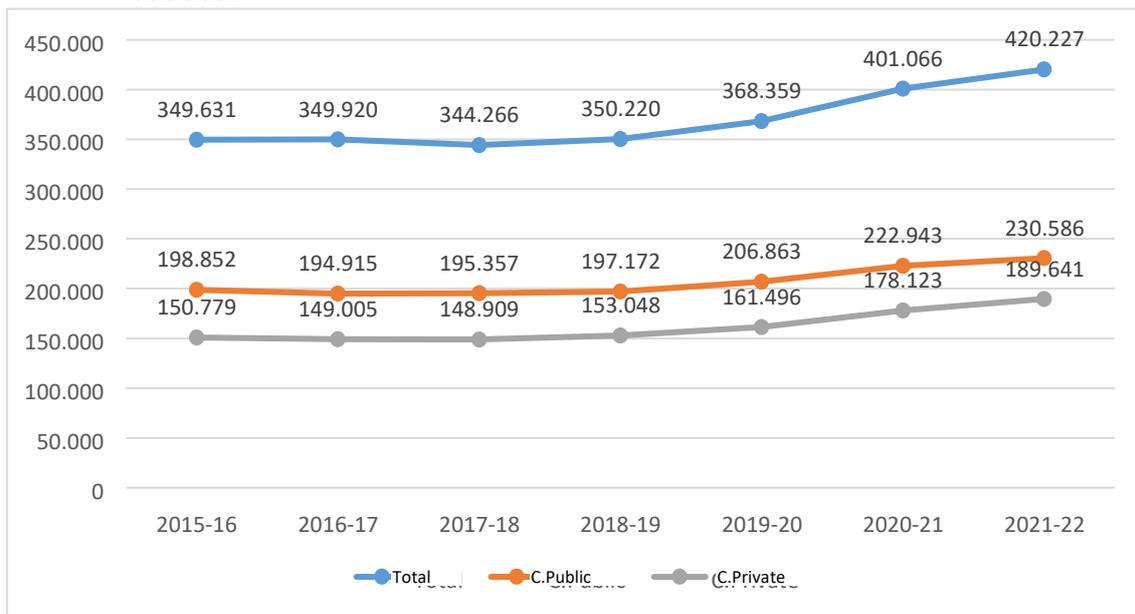
The possibility of recognising competences acquired by students through work experience may lead to the total or partial exemption of a module. In order to do so, a full-time experience of one year in activities related to the studies being undertaken by the student must be accredited.

Promotion to the following year is conditional on the result of the assessment. In any case, students must have passed all the modules of the first year; and, in the case of having pending modules, they must enrol and participate in the activities for their recovery.

Students have to pass all the modules of these courses obtain a formal Technician diploma in the corresponding professional family. This qualification can also be obtained by taking the tests organised by the official training centres least once a year. Students who do not pass all the modules that make up these courses receive an academic certificate for the professional modules passed. The certification obtained has the effect of partial cumulative accreditation of the professional competences acquired.

In the 2021-22 academic year, the number of students enrolled in Intermediate Vocational Education and Training was 420,227, of which 230,586 belonged to public centres and 189,641 to private ones. This number is higher than that of the Basic Level. Furthermore, there has been a positive evolution in these seven academic years, more in public than in private centres.

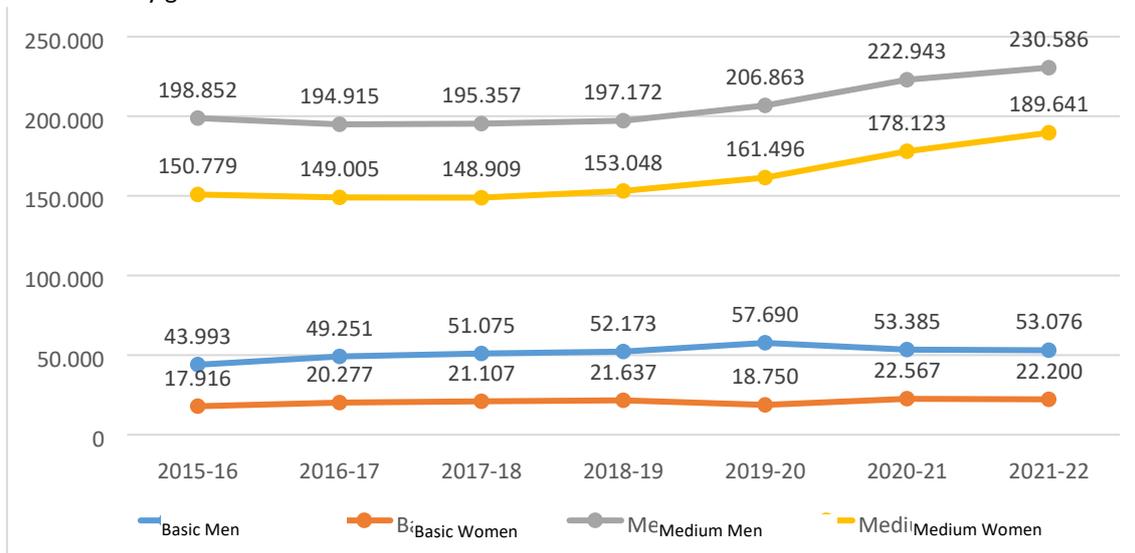
Figure 7. Evolution of students in Intermediate Vocational Education and Training (IVET), by title track



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

The number of men enrolled in VET is higher than that of women, both in Basic and Intermediate VET. Moreover, the number of enrolments, both male and female, has been increasing in recent years, with the exception of Basic VET, which has suffered a small decrease since the 2020-21 academic year.

Figure 8. Evolution of students in Basic and Intermediate Vocational Education and Training by gender



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

Grade D: Higher Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The purpose of Higher VET is to qualify students to work in a professional field, and to provide them with tools that enable them to adapt to possible changes in the labour

market that may occur throughout their working lives. They also correspond to the VET cycles established in Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education (LOE) and each professional family groups together different training cycles. There are currently 89 Higher-Level qualifications⁸ belonging to 25 of the 26 professional families.

The curricular content of this cycles is organised into the same types of professional modules as Intermediate VET and the curriculum of these courses are established and designed in the same way: the basic content by the Government, through the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports (MEFPD) and administrations of the Autonomous Communities are responsible for adapting and establishing their curriculum environment.

The centres and bodies that may provide Vocational Education and Training are also listed in Article 78 of Organic Act 3/2022, and they must be registered in the regional administrative register. In addition, subject to administrative authorisation and general registration, the following centres may provide these courses: public centres; private centres authorised and accredited for this purpose by the competent administration; integrated vocational training centres; and national reference centres.

Flexibility must also characterise the system of access and admission to this training cycle in order to allow the configuration of training pathways adapted to personal needs and interests, as well as the transition from training to work and vice versa. Access to Higher VET is possible with any of the following qualifications: Baccalaureate or equivalent qualifications; Intermediate Vocational Education and Training qualification; and Higher VET qualification or equivalent or having passed a specific training course for access to Higher-Level training cycles in public or private centres authorised by the educational administration or being in possession of a University Degree or equivalent.

The application for admission is submitted to the centre that offers the chosen courses by means of an application form. When there are not enough places in the centre applied for, the educational administrations establish reserves of places according to the following criteria: a minimum of 5% is for those who can prove they are top-level or high-performance sportspeople (according to Article 2 and 3 of Royal Decree 971/2007); a percentage for applicants with disabilities (Article 75 of the LOE) and the remaining places are distributed as follows: between 60 and 70% for students with the Bachiller diploma, between 20 and 30% for students who have passed the access course; and between 10 and 20% for students who access by other routes. In the event that the reserve is not filled in any of the options, vacancies are allocated proportionally to the rest of the reserves.

With regard to the assessment of the Higher VET cycles, this is carried out by means of the objectives expressed as learning outcomes in the VET teaching, the assessment criteria of each of the modules and the general objectives of the training cycle.

This qualification can also be obtained through direct examinations, which are an alternative to classroom or distance learning, and which are aimed at those persons who

⁸ See <https://www.todofp.es/que-estudiar/ciclos.html>

have a significant level of training in the professional field. These tests are held at least once a year by the educational administrations of the Autonomous Communities, and in order to sit them you must be 20 years of age, unless you are 19 years old and hold the diploma of Technician. In addition, each of these qualifications allows access to university studies at Bachelor's level, by passing the admission procedures established by the universities.

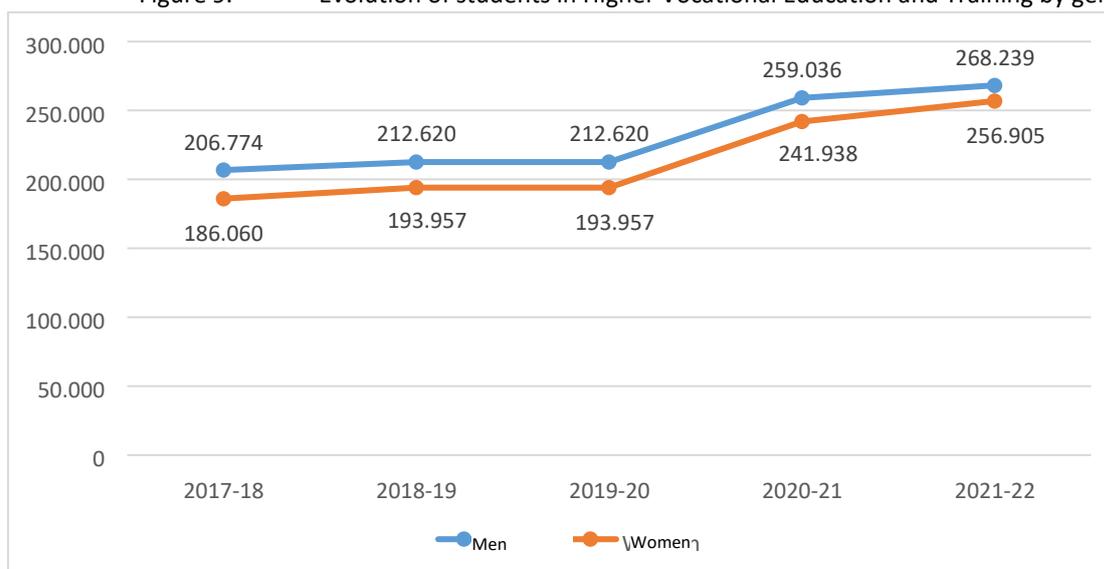
Students who do not pass this cycle in its entirety will obtain accreditation of the professional modules they have passed. In this document there is a relation between these and the units of competences accredited. Furthermore, students who are partially enrolled in certain professional modules may request an academic certificate issued by the educational administration accrediting the modules passed, so that the training corresponding to obtaining the qualification or a Professional Certificate may be accumulated.

The MEFPD allows the validation and exemptions of studies between the different VET degrees. The validations are recognised for those who have officially accredited a competence and the modules corresponding to this activity, as long as they can prove that they have passed it. The validated professional modules are graded with a 5, for the purposes of obtaining the average mark. Exemptions may be total or partial through the recognition of professional competences acquired through professional experience, provided that they accredit full-time work experience for one year, linked to the studies undertaken.

In the 2021-22 academic year, there will be 8,387 Higher VET centres in Spain as a whole, of which 5,744 are public centres and 2,643 are private centres.

The number of women enrolled in Higher VET is lower than that of men. Moreover, in both public and private centres, the number of men is higher than that of women, except in the 2021-22 academic year in private centres. Furthermore, the number of students enrolled in Higher VET is in the process of increasing progressively year after year.

Figure 9. Evolution of students in Higher Vocational Education and Training by gender



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

In addition, the number of students enrolled in 2021-22 Higher Vocational Education and Training is higher among students aged 23 years and over, specifically, 136,436. This is followed by students aged 19 and 20 years, with 50,876 and 54,478, respectively. This same pattern of behaviour is reproduced equally in both men and women.⁹

Grade E: Specialisation courses

They are intended to complement and deepen the competences of those who already have a vocational training qualification or who fulfil the access conditions determined for each of the courses. They are modular in nature and may form part of post-compulsory secondary education or higher education, depending on the level of previous qualifications required for access.

These courses may be associated with the same or different standards of professional competence than those included in the diplomas required for access and will have a basic duration of between 300 and 900 hours and, where appropriate, may be carried out on a dual basis.

The conditions of access to the full course of specialisation for obtaining the qualification shall be those established in the corresponding basic curriculum.

Those who successfully complete an Intermediate Vocational Education and Training specialisation course will obtain the title of Specialist of the corresponding professional profile.

On the other hand, those who pass a Higher Vocational Education and Training specialisation course will obtain the title of Master of Vocational Education and Training of the corresponding professional profile.

⁹ Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

1.3.5. University Education

University Education is regulated by Organic Act 6/2001 on Universities (LOU), amended by Organic Act 4/2007. These courses, together with Higher Vocational Education and Training, form part of Higher Education.

Following the adaptation to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), university education is divided into three cycles:

- Bachelor's Degrees, the purpose of which is to provide general training in one or more disciplines, aimed at preparing students for the exercise of professional activities. Bachelor's Degrees are made up of 240 ECTS credits, except for those subject to specific legislation or European Union Law regulations, which must have 300 or 360 ECTS credits. Their structure is 60 credits per year. The Bachelor's degree has a level 2 in the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and a level 6 in the European Qualifications Framework.
- Master's degrees, the aim of which is the acquisition of advanced training of a specialised or multidisciplinary nature, either oriented towards academic or professional specialisation. These courses lead to the award of University Master's degrees and have 60, 90 or 120 credits. The Master's degree has a level 3 in the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and a level 7 in the European Qualifications Framework.
- Doctorate, aimed at acquiring the competences and skills related to scientific research. Doctoral studies are organised through programmes and end with the preparation and defence of a doctoral thesis. The maximum duration is three years for full-time students and five years for part-time students. In any case, an extension of one year is allowed, extendable for another year for full-time students, and two years, extendable for another year for part-time students. The PhD degree has a level 4 in the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and a level 8 in the European Qualifications Framework.

Chart 6. Characteristics of University Education

Legal framework	Organic Act 6/2001 on Universities (LOU), amended by Organic Act 4/2007.
Admission	<p>Bachelor's degree: the requirement to pass an entrance exam that will be taken into account together with the marks obtained in the baccaulaureate. Until now, access to official university studies has been open to those who hold a Baccaulaureate or equivalent title, a Higher Vocational Training Technician or similar qualification, a Bachelor's Degree, a Master's Degree or equivalent qualification, or who have completed partial university studies abroad or in Spain.</p> <p>Master's degree: official Spanish university degree of Bachelor or Master's</p>
	<p>degree or equivalent; or University Master's degree; or degrees at the same level as the Spanish Bachelor's or Master's degree; or degrees from educational systems that do not form part of the EHEA, which are equivalent to the Bachelor's degree, without the need for homologation of the degree, but which do require verification by the university.</p> <p>Doctorate: Bachelor's degree or equivalent qualification; and Master's degree or equivalent qualification, provided that they have passed at least 300 ECTS credits in these courses as a whole; or Doctor's degree obtained in accordance with previous university regulations.</p>
Education and training	<p>Bachelor's degree: these are made up of 240 ECTS credits, except for those which, subject to specific legislation or the rules of European Union Law, must have 300 or 360 ECTS credits. Its structure is 60 credits per year and degree.</p> <p>Master's degree: 60, 90 or 120 credits.</p> <p>Doctorate: these are organised through programmes and end with the preparation and defence of a doctoral thesis. The maximum duration is three years for full-time students and five years for part-time students. In any case, an extension of one year is allowed, extendable for another year for full-time students, and two years, extendable for another year for part-time students.</p>
Teacher qualifications	<p>University Assistant: to be enrolled in doctoral studies.</p> <p>Assistant Doctors, Contracted Doctors, Titled University Lecturers and Professors: Doctor's Degree.</p> <p>Collaborating Teachers: Graduates.</p>
Expected learning outcomes	<p>Bachelor's degree: the aim is to obtain general training in one or more disciplines, oriented towards preparation for the exercise of activities of a professional nature.</p> <p>Master's degree: the aim is to acquire advanced training, of a specialised or multidisciplinary nature, either oriented towards academic or professional specialisation.</p> <p>Doctorate: the aim is the acquisition of competences and skills related to scientific research.</p>
Funding	<p>Public universities, tuition fees only.</p> <p>Private universities, tuition fees and monthly fees.</p>
Future progression	<p>Bachelor's degree: Official University Master's Degree and University-Specific Degrees.</p> <p>Master's degree: Doctorate.</p>
Quality assurance	The bodies responsible are: General Conference on University Policy (Council of Universities), National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) and its counterparts in the autonomous communities; Social Council of each university; Services Inspectorate of each university.

The university system carries out the public service of higher education through research, teaching and study. The universities are endowed with their own legal personality and carry out their functions under a system of autonomy and coordination.

Universities may be public or private. In this regard, the creation of public universities and the recognition of private universities is formalised by means of a Law of the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Community in whose territorial area they are to be established, and by means of a Law of the *Cortes Generales*, at the proposal of the Government, in agreement with the Governing Council of the Autonomous Community in whose area they are to be established. This process requires a prior report from the General Conference on University Policy in accordance with Articles 4 and 5 of Organic Act 6/2001 on Universities (LOU). This report must be declared favourable or unfavourable for the creation or recognition of universities based on a series of requirements that must be met according to Royal Decree 420/2015. However, universities must apply for institutional accreditation of their centres to ANECA or to the external assessment body of the Autonomous Community. In both cases, a binding evaluation report will be issued to the Council of Universities, which will issue the accreditation resolution that will be sent to the university, the autonomous community and the ministry with competence in the matter.

Public universities are made up of schools, faculties, departments, university research institutes, doctoral schools, and the centres or structures necessary for the performance of their functions. Private university centres are integrated into a private university, as its own centres, or they must be attached to a public university. Private universities draw up and approve their own rules of organisation and operation, but they must respect the provisions of the LOU.

In order to guarantee the quality of universities and university centres, both public and private, they must be registered in the Register of Universities, Centres and Degrees (RUCT), which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities

Data for the academic year 2021-22 indicate that the Spanish university system is made up of 86 universities:¹⁰

- 50 public universities: 47 on-campus and 1 non-campus. In addition, there are 2 public universities that offer specialised postgraduate programmes (Master's and doctorate).
- 36 private universities: 31 face-to-face and 5 non-face-to-face.

Undergraduate University Education

Official University Degree Courses have a duration of 240 credits of the *European Credit Transfer System* (ECTS), except for those subject to specific legislation or to the rules of European Union Law, which may have 300 or 360 credits. Their sequential structure is set at 60 credits per year and degree, with the exception of international

¹⁰ Statistics from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities .

joint degrees subject to the European Commission's European University Programme, or those mentioned in the Sixth Additional Provision of Royal Decree 822/2021.

The aim of these courses is to offer general training, in one or more disciplines, oriented towards preparation for entry into working life. The qualification to which it leads is the University Degree, which constitutes level 2 of the MECES and is defined by: having acquired advanced knowledge and demonstrated an understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects; applying their knowledge; collecting and interpreting data and information on which to base their conclusions; managing complex situations; communicating with all types of audiences; and identifying their own training needs.

The access system is regulated by the Government, following a report by the General Conference on University Policy, and is then adapted and developed by the autonomous education administrations in their respective areas of management. In this respect, Organic Act 3/2020 stipulates that students must pass an entrance exam that will be considered together with the grades obtained in the baccalaureate. Up to now, access to official university studies has required a Baccalaureate or equivalent qualification, a Higher Vocational Training Technician or similar, a Bachelor's or Master's degree, or an equivalent qualification, or having completed partial university studies abroad or in Spain.

The content of the university entrance examinations allows a distinction to be made between general subjects and optional subjects. The general subjects include: History of Spain, Spanish Language and Literature II, First Foreign Language II, Co-official Language and Literature (in the autonomous communities that have a co-official language); general subjects of modality: Science (Mathematics II), Humanities (Latin II), Social Sciences (Mathematics II applied to Social Sciences), and Arts (Foundations of Art II). Optional subjects: Science (Biology, Technical Drawing II, Physics, Geology, Chemistry), Humanities and Social Sciences (Business Economics, Geography, Greek II, History of Art, History of Philosophy), Arts (Performing Arts, Audio visual Culture II, Design), and a Second Foreign Language.

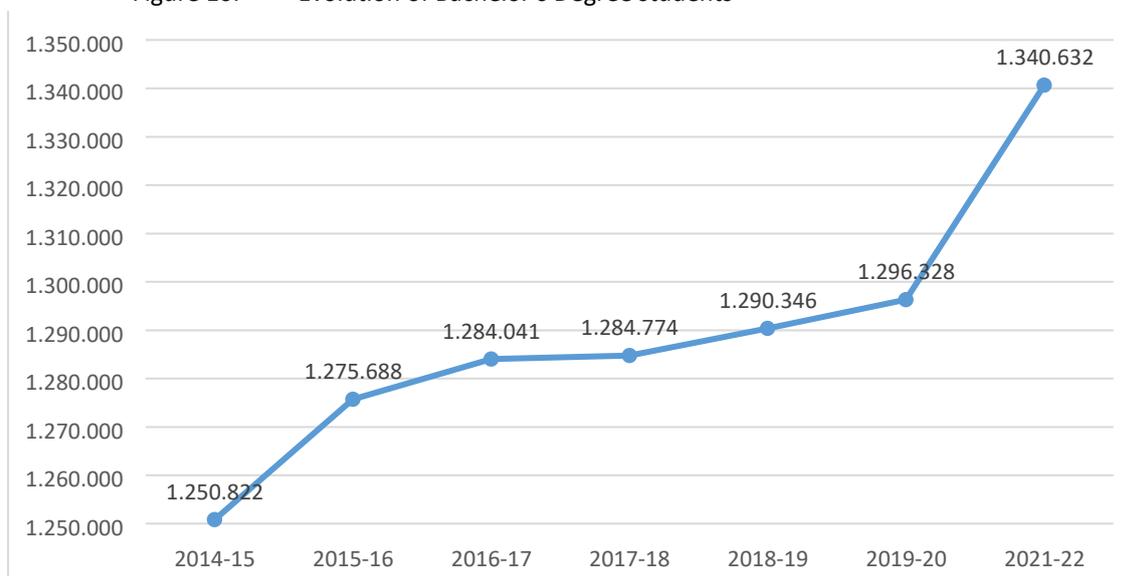
The access criteria have been readjusted for those over 25 and 45 years of age, as they are not required to have a qualifying academic qualification to gain access to university, but they do have to take an entrance exam. In addition, individuals over 40 years of age who can prove a certain amount of work or professional experience will not be required to have a qualifying academic qualification to gain access to university.

The universities have the autonomy to design their teaching curricula and the degrees they offer, although these must be verified by the Council of Universities and authorised by the corresponding Autonomous Community, following a report from ANECA or the homologous agency in the Autonomous Community (if such an agency exists). In addition, they also have full autonomy to set the conditions for the promotion of their students, as well as their minimum and maximum periods of permanence. In order to pass a subject, a limited number of examinations must be taken, ranging from four to six, with a maximum of two examinations per year. However, the Bachelor's degree is only awarded when the student has achieved all the credits established for

their degree (240 ECTS credits normally established, or the 300 or 360 credits in the exceptional cases mentioned above).

Finally, it should be noted that there has been a clear evolution from the 2014-15 academic year to the present in the number of students enrolled in Bachelor's Degree courses, reaching the figure of 1,340,632 students (see Figure 10).

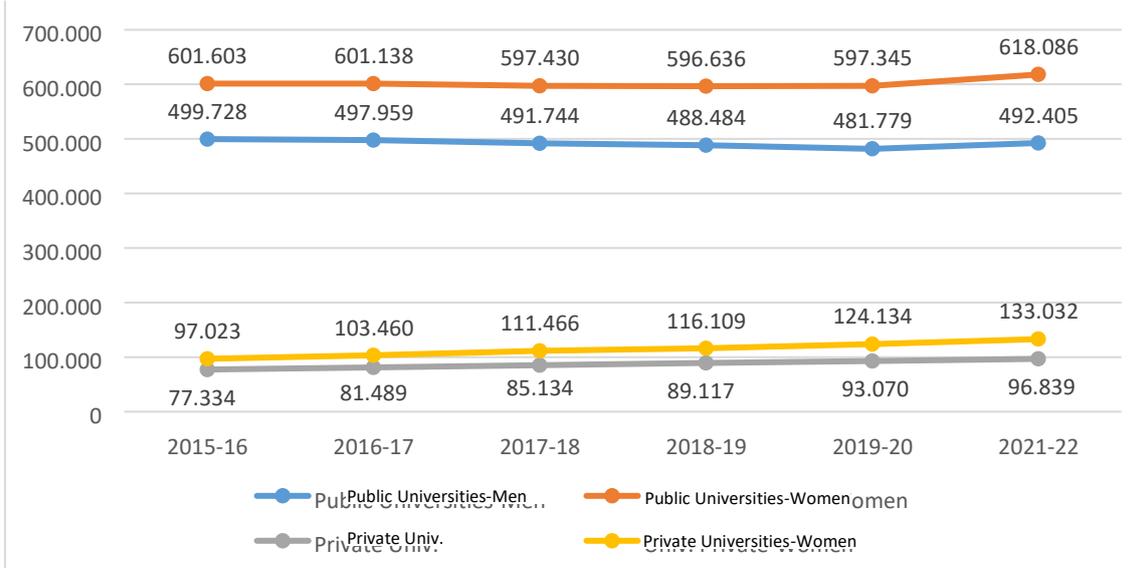
Figure 10. Evolution of Bachelor's Degree students



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

The enrolment data disaggregated by gender and university control (see Figure 11) show an increase in female enrolments, both in public universities (125,681 more female students in the 2020-21 academic year) and in private universities (36,463 more female students in the same academic year). This trend comes after a small decline in female enrolments in public universities in recent academic years, but which picks up in 2021-22. This is in contrast to female enrolments at private universities, which have only increased since the 2015-16 academic year. As for men, their enrolment has only increased in private universities, which contrasts with their gradual decline in public universities (except in the academic year 2021-22).

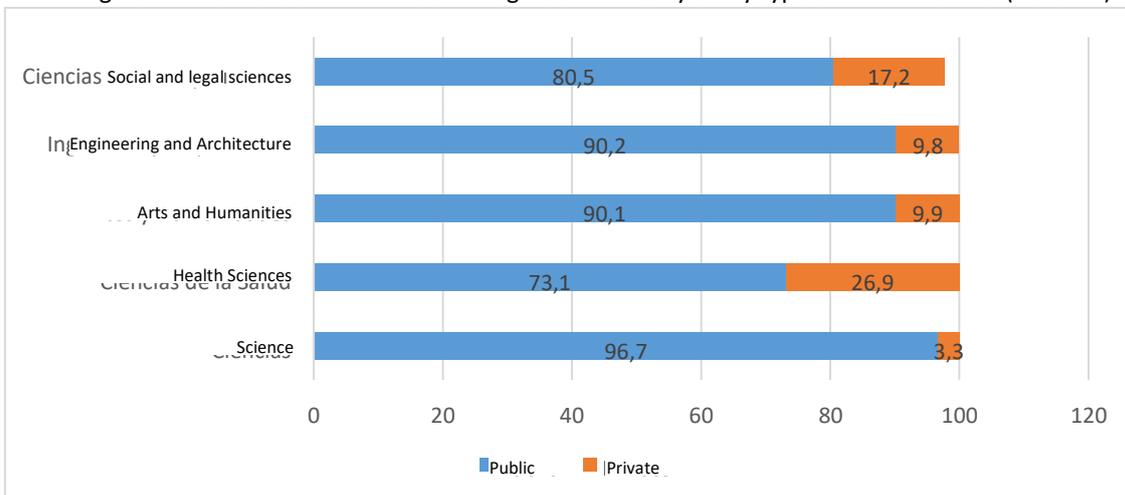
Figure 11. Evolution of Bachelor's Degree students by university control and gender



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

With regard to the distribution of students by type of studies and control of the centre, it should be noted that the highest enrolment in private universities is in Health Sciences Degrees and the lowest in Science Degrees. In public universities, the highest percentage is in Science Degrees, followed by Engineering and Architecture, Arts and Humanities, and Social and Legal Sciences.

Figure 12. Distribution of Bachelor's Degree students by study type and univ. control (2020-21).



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

University Master's Degrees

The Master's syllabuses have 60, 90 and 120 ECTS credits, and last one or two academic years. These courses are assigned to one of the thirty-two fields of knowledge specified in Annex I of Royal Decree 822/2021. In any case, an Official Master's Degree may include one or more specialisations that must be included in the verified report of the degree syllabus. Therefore, they incorporate complementary and specific training in

a thematic or professional area in accordance with the training project. However, the number of ECTS credits of the specialisation may not exceed 50% of the total number of credits.

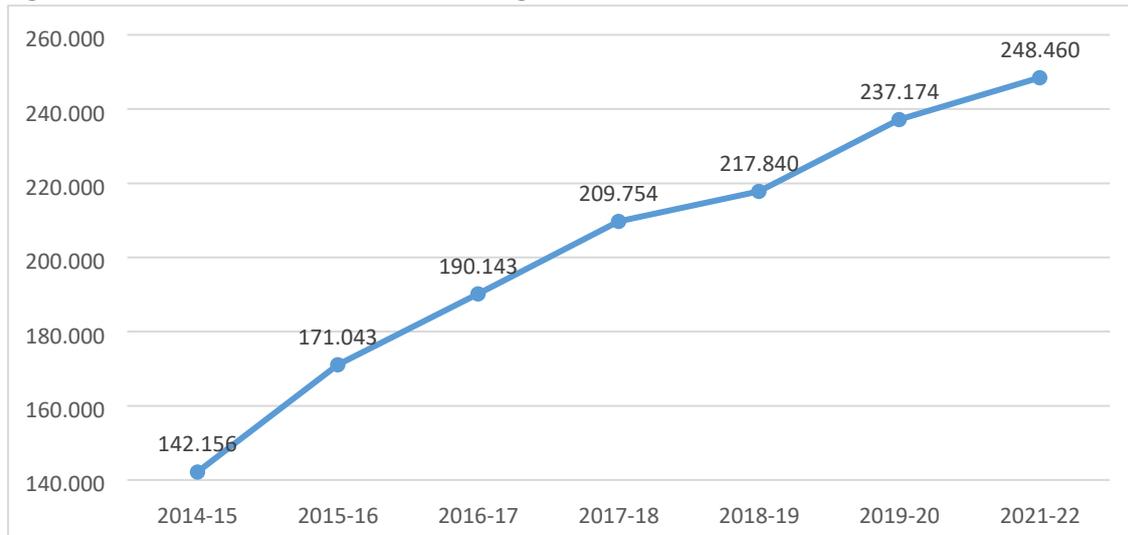
Official University Master's Degrees have two purposes: a) to acquire knowledge of advanced training, of a specialised or multidisciplinary nature; b) to promote the initiation in research tasks. According to this, a series of results are expected, among which the following stand out: to acquire advanced and proven knowledge, to apply and integrate their knowledge, to evaluate and select the appropriate scientific theory and the precise methodology of their fields of study, to predict and control the evolution of complex situations, to communicate with all types of audiences, to be able to participate in research projects and scientific collaborations, and to assume responsibility for their own professional development.

The requirements for access to the official Master's Degree are: to be in possession of an official university degree of Spanish Graduate or Master's Degree or equivalent; or University Master's Degree; or degrees of the same level as the Spanish Bachelor's or Master's Degree; or degrees from educational systems that do not form part of the EHEA, which are equivalent to the Bachelor's Degree, without the need for the degree to be recognised, but which must be verified by the university. In addition, if the university centre allows it, Bachelor's Degree students who have yet to pass the Final Degree Project (TFG) or up to 9 ECTS credits (maximum) may also enrol in an Official University Master's Degree.

The curricula of the Official University Master's Degrees are the responsibility of the universities themselves. Therefore, they draw up the syllabuses, considering that they must include compulsory and optional subjects, external placements (if any), Master's Final Project (TFM), and other academic activities, depending on the characteristics of each degree. To complete the Master's degree, the defence and approval of a TFM is required, which can have between 6 and 30 ECTS credits. Despite university autonomy, syllabuses must be verified by the Council of Universities under the protocols drawn up by ANECA or its counterpart in the Autonomous Communities. In addition, they must be authorised by the corresponding Autonomous Community for their implementation. Once this process has been completed, the degree is made official by agreement of the Council of Ministers at the proposal of the head of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities and then published in the Official State Gazette (BOE).

The promotion of students in this type of course requires the successful completion of all the subjects in the syllabus, and this qualifies them to present and defend their TFM. However, accredited work and professional experience can be used by students to have a series of credits recognised within the syllabus. In any case, in order to obtain the Official Master's Degree, it is necessary to pass the TFM. As can be seen in the following Figure, since 2014 there has been a constant increase in Master's degree courses.

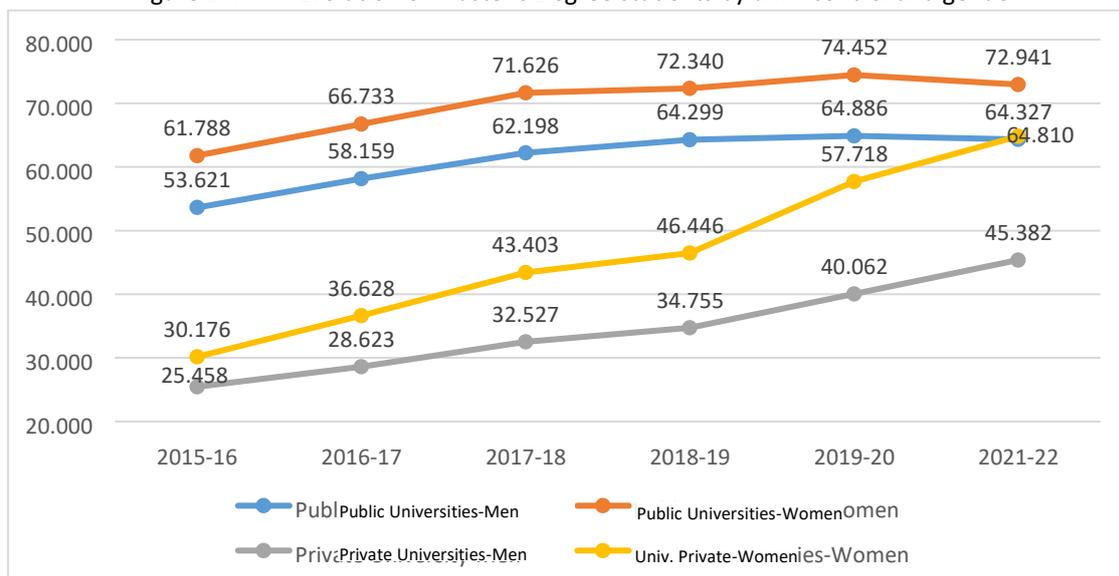
Figure 13. Evolution of students in Master's Degrees



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

The enrolment of women in Master's studies is, once again, higher than that of men, both in public universities (7,614 female students in the 2020-21 academic year) and private universities (19,428 more female students). Moreover, the difference in favour of women has increased in recent years. On the other hand, the majority of Master's studies correspond to public universities (55.7% in the academic year 2021), but their weight is much lower than that of Bachelor's studies. The weight of private enrolment in the total has reached 42.4% in the academic year 2020-21.

Figure 14. Evolution of Master's Degree students by univ. control and gender

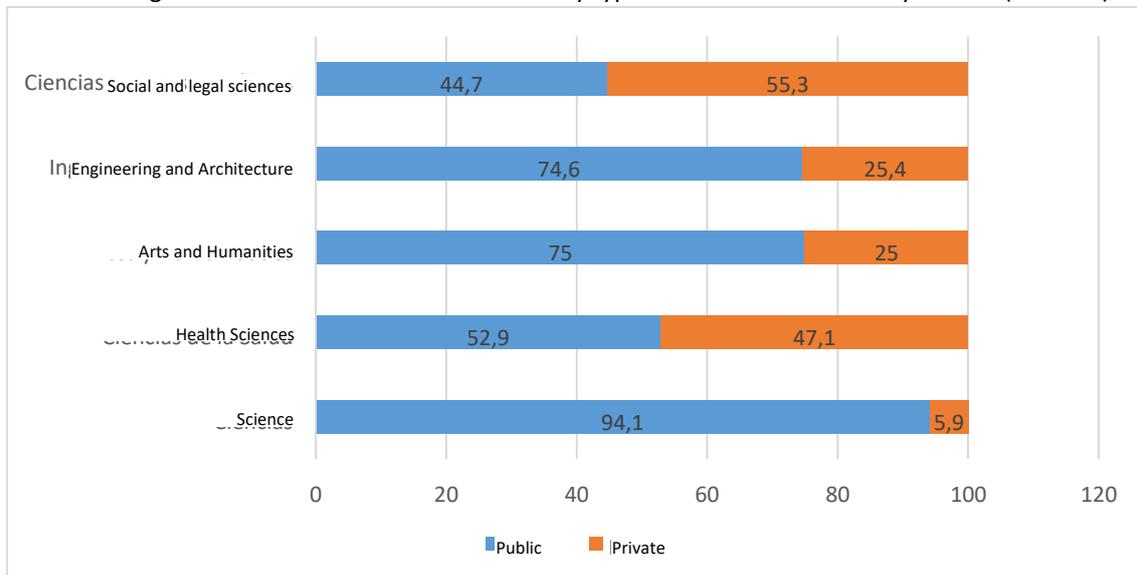


Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

With regard to the distribution of Master's students in private universities, the highest enrolment rate is found in Social and Legal Sciences, followed by Health Sciences.

On the other hand, in public universities the highest enrolment rate is found in Master's degrees in Arts and Humanities, and Engineering and Architecture.

Figure 15. Distribution of students by type of studies and university control (2020-21)



Source: Statistics from the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

University-Specific Degrees

In Spain there are no official programmes outside the structure of Official University Degrees and Master's Degrees. However, universities can offer training actions linked to the so-called "Títulos Propios" [University-Specific Degrees]. The conditions of access and evaluation of these programmes are established by each university, but given their heterogeneity, the plenary session of the Council of Universities agreed on their organisation, endorsed by the General Conference on University Policy.

Chart 7. Organisation of University-Specific Degrees

University-Specific Degree	Duration	Access by qualification	Evaluation	Final Work
Master's degree	Minimum 60 credits (at least in one academic year)	Yes	ECTS credits	Mandatory
Specialisation Diploma	30 or more credits	Yes	ECTS credits	Optional
Expert	15-30 credits	Yes	Credits	No
Certificate	Less than 15 credits	Yes	Credits	No
University extension diploma	More than 30 credits	No	Credits	No
University extension certificate	Less than 30 credits	No	Credits	No

Source: Eurydice Spain-REDIE (INEE, MEFPD).

Successful completion of each of these programmes leads to an unofficial degree or certificate issued by the university that delivers them. However, there is the possibility of registering these degrees in the Register of Universities, Centres and Degrees, provided that they meet a series of criteria such as verification and accreditation.

1.3.6. Artistic Education

Artistic Education is regulated in Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education and in Royal Decree 628/2022, of 26th July, amending Organic Act 3/2020, of 29th December. To this category belong elementary music and dance education, Professional Artistic Education in music, dance, and Intermediate and Higher-Level training cycles in Plastic Arts and Design and Higher Artistic Education (Music and Dance, Dramatic Art, Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage, Design and Plastic Arts).

Chart 8. Characteristics of Artistic Education

Legal framework	Organic Act 2/2006 of 3rd May on Education. Royal Decree 628/2022 of 26th July amending Organic Act 3/2020 of 29th December.
Admission	Intermediate-Level Artistic Education: Compulsory Secondary Education Graduates who also accredit the necessary aptitudes by passing a specific test, or those who hold the Baccalaureate or Vocational Training Technician qualification and pass a test that allows them to demonstrate the necessary aptitudes to study these courses; those who hold the Artistic Education Technician qualification; and those who pass the test for this purpose. Higher-Level Artistic Education: Baccalaureate or equivalent; or having passed the university entrance exam for those over 25 years of age; or Higher Technician qualification. In addition, they must pass a test specific to the qualification and speciality they wish to enter.
Education and training	Intermediate-Level Artistic Education is organised in specific training cycles, which are organised through modules. Higher-Level Artistic Education includes studies in Music and Dance, Drama, Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage, Design and Plastic Arts (Ceramics and Glass). These courses correspond to level 2 (Degree) of the MECES, and have the following designation "Higher Technician", followed by the speciality. The name of the Master's degrees is "Master in Artistic Education", followed by the specific name of the degree. The organisation and structure of these degrees is similar to that of University Degrees.
Teacher qualifications	Postgraduate pedagogical and didactic training (Master's Degree in Teacher Training for Secondary, Baccalaureate, Vocational Education and Training and Language Teaching).
Expected learning outcomes	Competences to prepare students professionally in their chosen artistic speciality.
Future progression	Intermediate-Level Artistic Education: Higher-Level of Professional Artistic Education and Vocational Training Education of the education system. Higher-Level Artistic Education: Masters and Doctorate.

Quality assurance	Intermediate-Level Artistic Education: The bodies responsible for the quality of this education are: the High State Inspectorate, the National Institute for Educational Evaluation, which depends on the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports (MEFPD), educational inspection bodies in the
	Autonomous Communities, and bodies that evaluate the education system in the Autonomous Communities. Higher-Level Artistic Education: The educational administrations are responsible for promoting systems and procedures for the internal and periodic external evaluation of the quality of these courses. The reference criteria are those defined by the European Higher Education Area.

Intermediate Artistic Education

Intermediate Artistic Education is structured in training cycles, grouped into professional families, which offer competences to prepare students professionally in their chosen artistic speciality. In order to access these courses, the following is necessary: firstly, to hold the Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate Certificate; and secondly, to accredit the necessary aptitudes by passing a specific test. In addition, those who hold the Baccaureate or Vocational Training Technician qualification, who must also pass a test to demonstrate the necessary aptitudes to study these courses, and those who hold the Artistic Education Technician qualification, and pass the test for this purpose, may also be admitted.

Artistic education is structured in specific training cycles, which are organised through modules. For example, elementary music and dance education will have the system of organisation and operation determined by the educational administrations. In this case, they are organised in a Degree spanning six years. In order to be promoted from one year to the next, students must obtain a positive assessment in modules that make up at least 75% of the teaching load of the first year.

Students who pass Intermediate Artistic Education will obtain the title of Technician in Plastic Arts and Design in the corresponding speciality. This qualification gives access to the Higher-Level training cycles of Professional Artistic Education and Vocational Education and Training of the education system. This qualification allows students to obtain, on the one hand, the Baccaureate degree, provided that the subjects necessary to achieve the general objectives of the Baccaureate have been passed, and these will be determined by the Government; or, on the other hand, to continue with Higher Studies in their respective speciality.

Finally, it should be noted that there were 3,411 students enrolled in Intermediate Level Plastic Arts and Design Education in the 2021-22 academic year in the whole of Spain, of which 1,448 are men and 1,993 are women.¹¹ In public centres, the number of students enrolled is 3,121, of which 1,319 are men and 1,802 are women. In private schools, the number of students is 290, of which 129 are male and 161 are female. Therefore, the number of female students is higher than the number of male students.

¹¹ Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

With regard to Intermediate-Level Music Education, there are 47,003 students enrolled throughout Spain, of whom 21,819 are men and 25,184 are women.¹² In public schools, the number of students enrolled is higher than in private schools. Specifically, there are 42,515 students in public schools, of whom 19,806 are men and 22,709 are women. And 4,488 are enrolled in private schools, of which 2,013 are male and 2,475 are female.

Higher Artistic Education

The aim of Higher Artistic Education is to provide artistic training to guarantee the ability of future professionals in music, dance, drama, plastic arts and design. This type of education is made up of studies in Music and Dance, Dramatic Art, Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage, Design and Plastic Arts (Ceramics and Glass). Furthermore, they correspond to level 2 (Degree) of the MECES, and have the denomination of "Higher Technician", followed by the speciality. The name of the Master's degrees is "Master in Artistic Education", followed by the specific name of the degree.

The structure of Higher Artistic Education is similar to that of University Education, as they have 240 ECTS credits (60 for each academic year). The design of the curriculum is the responsibility of the Government, after consultation with the Autonomous Communities and the Higher Council for Artistic Education. Subsequently, the educational administrations complete the basic curriculum and approve the syllabus corresponding to each degree, for their territorial area. In this process, the MEFPD (through the High State Inspectorate) supervises that the syllabuses are drawn up in accordance with the regulations. In any case, they must contain theoretical and practical training (basic, compulsory and optional subjects), external internships and end-of studies work.

To access these studies, it is necessary to have a Baccaureate or equivalent qualification; or to have passed the university entrance exam for students over 25; or to have a Higher Technical Degree. In addition, it is necessary to pass a test specific to the qualification and speciality to which access is sought. For example, access to Higher Education in Music and Dance requires a professional degree in music or dance, and the grade obtained in the entrance exam is also considered.

These studies are taught in specialised institutions. For example, Higher Studies in Music and Dance are taught at conservatories or higher schools of music and dance; Higher Studies in Drama at higher schools of drama; Higher Studies in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at higher schools of conservation and restoration of cultural heritage.

The educational administrations are responsible for establishing the conditions for the promotion of students in the syllabuses of each degree in these courses. However, the Graduate diploma is obtained after passing Higher Artistic Education, and is a

¹² Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

reflection of the corresponding field and speciality, and is official and academically and professionally valid throughout the national territory. This qualification accredits that the holder has attained the competences included in level 2 of the MECES, which corresponds to level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework.

On the other hand, official Master's Degrees in Artistic Education comprise a course load of between 20 and 120 ECTS credits, and last for one or two academic years. Successful completion of this pathway leads to the award of a University Master's Degree, with the specific name that, in each case, appears in the Register of Universities, Centres and Degrees. The holder of these degrees attains the competences included in level 3 of the MECES, which corresponds to level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

Furthermore, Official Artistic Education allows access to Doctoral Programmes, without prejudice to other admission criteria which, where appropriate, are determined by the universities themselves. Likewise, higher artistic education centres must promote, by means of the procedures established by the educational administrations, research programmes in the field of their own disciplines.

Finally, the number of students enrolled in Higher-Level Plastic Arts and Design Education is 14,810, of which 4,989 are men and 9,821 are women. In public schools, there are 13,759 enrolments, of which 4,590 are male and 9,169 are female. In private schools 1,051, 399 students are male and 852 are female. Again, the number of women enrolled in Higher VET is higher than that of men.¹³

The number of students enrolled in Higher-Level Music Education as a whole is 9,280, of whom 5,335 are male and 3,945 are female. In public schools the total number of students is 6,841, of whom 3,884 are male and 2,957 are female; and in private schools the number of students enrolled is 2,439, of which 1,451 are male and 988 are female.¹⁴

1.3.8 Sports Education

Sports Education is based on sporting modalities and, where appropriate, their specialities. They are structured in two Degrees, Intermediate and Higher, and may be referred to the National Catalogue of Professional Skills. In such a way that they are organised in blocks and modules of variable duration, made up of areas of theoretical-practical knowledge appropriate to the different professional and sporting fields.

Chart 9 shows the legal framework of Sports Education, as well as other defining characteristics of this type of education.

¹³ Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

¹⁴ Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Chart 9. Characteristics of Sports Education

Legal framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic Act 2/2006 of 3rd May on Education, amended by Organic Act 3/2020 (LOMLOE); • Royal Decree 1363/2007, of 24th October, which establishes the General Organisation of General Sports Education; • Royal Decree 737/2015, of 31st July, amending the annexes that establish the Qualification Requirements for Teachers of the Sports Education Modules of various royal decrees of Sports Technician qualifications; • Royal Decree 567/2020, of 16th June, establishing Certain Professional Qualifications of the Professional Family of Physical and Sports Activities.
Admission	<p>Intermediate-Level Education: Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate; or pass the test, which is carried out by the educational administrations, to study these courses directly, which also involves accrediting sporting merits, professional or sporting experience.</p> <p>Higher-Level Education: Baccalaureate degree or equivalent, or Sports Technician or similar, in addition to a test specific to the sporting modality or speciality and the accreditation of certain sporting merits.</p>
Education and training	<p>Intermediate-Level Sports Education is organised in two cycles (initial or level 1 and final or level 2), and has a series of common training modules and specific training modules for each speciality. All teaching cycles include a practical training module in which students complete their training in a real sporting and professional environment outside the educational centre itself.</p> <p>Higher-Level Sports Education is organised in a single Higher-Level cycle, and its syllabus, independently of its speciality, is structured in training modules grouped in a common block (made up of the modules common to all sports modalities or specialities) and a specific block (made up of the modules specific to the modality or speciality, the practical training module and the final project).</p>
Teacher qualifications	<p>Postgraduate pedagogical and didactic training (Master's Degree in Teacher Training for Secondary, Baccalaureate, Vocational Education and Training and Language Teaching).</p>
Expected learning outcomes	<p>The aim of Intermediate-Level Sports Education is to prepare students to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to professionally perform the functions of sports initiation, sports technification and management of sports activities or practice. Therefore, these studies provide students with the tools to carry out a professional activity in the world of sport through specialisation in a specific sporting modality, and facilitate their adaptation to the world of work.</p> <p>The aim of Higher-Level Sports Education is for each student to obtain specialised training to enable them to carry out a qualified performance of different professions.</p>
Future progression	<p>Intermediate-Level Sports Education: Higher-Level Sports Education in the same speciality, as long as they pass the entrance exam for these studies, or have a Baccalaureate, Higher Vocational Education and Training or University Degree; Baccalaureate Education; Intermediate Vocational Education and Training cycles; other Intermediate-Level Sports Education; or join the labour market.</p> <p>Higher-Level Sports Education: university studies.</p>

Quality assurance	<p>Intermediate-Level Sports Education: The bodies responsible for the quality of this education are: the High State Inspectorate, National Institute for Educational Evaluation, which depends on the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports (MEFPS), educational inspection bodies of the Autonomous Regions, and bodies that evaluate the Education System in the Autonomous Regions.</p> <p>Higher-Level Sport Education: The educational administrations are in charge of promoting systems and procedures for internal and periodical external quality assessment of these courses. The reference criteria are those defined by the European Higher Education Area.</p>
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Source: Prepared by the authors.

Intermediate-Level Sports Education

The aim of Intermediate-Level Sports Education is to provide the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out professionally the functions of sports initiation, sports technification and management of sports activities or practice. Therefore, these studies provide students with the tools to carry out a professional activity in the world of sport, through specialisation in a specific sporting modality, as well as facilitating their adaptation to the world of work.

Intermediate-Level Sports Education is organised in two cycles (initial or level 1 and final or level 2), and is made up of common training modules and specific training modules for each speciality. All teaching cycles include a practical training module in which students complete their training in a real sporting and professional environment outside the educational centre itself. The Government is responsible for the basic curriculum, after consulting with the Autonomous Communities and having heard the corresponding collegiate bodies. Furthermore, the Government regulates the system of validations and equivalences between Sports Education and the rest of the official education and studies. The aspects of the curriculum regulated by the basic regulations which require revision and updating may be amended by the MEFP, following a report by the Higher Sports Council and the State School Council, maintaining in all cases the basic nature of the curriculum resulting from the said schooling.

In order to access this education, one must have the Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate Certificate or pass the test carried out by the educational administrations, which also involves accrediting sporting merits, professional or sporting experience.

These courses are taught in the following centres: public or private centres, authorised by the competent educational administration; integrated vocational training centres, which meet the requirements of the regulations governing these courses; and the teaching centres of the Military Education System, by virtue of the agreements established between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Defence. Furthermore, exceptionally, the educational administrations may authorise centres promoted by Spanish sports federations to teach the specific block of a specific cycle of

sports education, provided that the entire training offer is guaranteed by means of an agreement with another centre.

On completing this intermediate-level sports cycle and passing all the modules, students obtain the accreditation of Sports Technician in the corresponding sporting modality or speciality. In addition, this qualification enables students to continue their studies in: Higher-Level Sports Education¹⁵ in the same speciality; Baccaureate studies; Intermediate Vocational Education and Training cycles; other Intermediate-Level Sports Education; or, alternatively, they can join the labour market.

On the other hand, students who do not pass the entirety of the requirements of each of the Sports Education cycles will only receive an official academic certificate of the modules they have passed. This certificate will have a recognition of the professional competences acquired in relation to the National System of Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training.

Finally, it should be noted that the number of students enrolled in the 2021-22 academic year was 10,221, of whom 8,139 were male and 2,082 were female. In public schools there were 3,848 students enrolled, of whom 2,932 were men and 916 were women, while in private schools there were 6,373, of whom 5,207 were men and 1,168 were women.¹⁶

Higher-Level Sports Education

Higher-Level Sports Education is included within Higher Education as a non-university post-secondary level. Its purpose is to provide each student with specialised training in order to qualify them for the qualified performance of different professions. They also constitute level 1 of the MECES.

This teaching modality is organised in a single Higher-Level cycle, and its syllabus, regardless of its speciality, is structured in training modules grouped in a common block (made up of the modules common to all sports modalities or specialities) and a specific block (made up of the modules specific to the modality or speciality, the practical training module and the final project).

In order to access these courses, it is necessary to have a Baccaureate or equivalent qualification, or a Sports Technician or similar qualification, in addition to a specific test of the sporting modality or speciality and the accreditation of certain sporting merits. Passing the specific test or the accreditation of the sporting merits that replace this test, together with the related modules, will accredit the required sporting competences and, where appropriate, the corresponding units of competence of the National Catalogue of Professional Skills. However, high-level sportspersons are exempt from taking this test.

¹⁵ Provided that you have passed the entrance exam for these studies, or that you have a Baccaureate, Advanced Vocational Training Technician Diploma or University Degree.

¹⁶ Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Higher-Level Sports Education is taught in public or private training centres authorised by the competent educational administration; integrated vocational training centres that meet the requirements of the corresponding regulations; national reference centres specialising in the sports sector (in accordance with Article 45.1c of Royal Decree 1363/2007); and teaching centres of the Military Education System, in accordance with the agreements established between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Defence. Exceptionally, however, the educational administrations may authorise centres promoted by Spanish sports federations to teach the specific block of a specific cycle of sports education, provided that the offer of the entire training is guaranteed by means of an agreement with another centre, in accordance with the first additional provision of Royal Decree 1363/2007.

Successful completion of the Higher-Level cycle will lead to the award of the accreditation of Higher Sports Technician in the modality or speciality studied. As results of their learning they must have demonstrated specialised knowledge in a professional or study area; be able to apply and integrate their sports knowledge in the definition and development of work procedures in an autonomous manner and with responsibility for the coordination and supervision of technical work; have the ability to analyse the necessary information to evaluate and respond to foreseen and unforeseen situations; be able to communicate their knowledge, ideas, skills and activities in professional contexts to their peers, supervisors, clients and people under their responsibility; and have the necessary learning strategies to advance in their training in an autonomous manner. In addition, the Higher Sports Technician qualification allows access to university studies.

Finally, it should be noted that there were 839 students enrolled in the 2021-22 academic year, of whom 708 were men and 131 were women.¹⁷ In public centres, 296 students were enrolled, 209 of whom were men and 87 women, while in private centres, 543 students were enrolled, 499 men and 44 women.

2. SPAIN'S QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK

Royal Decree 1027/2011, of July 15, which establishes the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education, states in its preamble that the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education (MECES) shares with the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Lifelong Learning (MECU) the objectives of informing society, promoting international mobility and recognition throughout the European Training Area.

Thus, the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Lifelong Learning (MECU) covers qualifications from compulsory education, up to the higher level of vocational training, artistic education, sports education and university education. Consequently, the Spanish

¹⁷ Statistics of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU) completes the general Spanish qualifications framework, which already included the part corresponding to higher education, incorporating training offers not yet developed at the time of publication of Royal Decree 1027/2011, of July 15. MECU formally creates the Spanish framework, includes the provisions of the aforementioned Royal Decree 2017/2011, of July 15, and partially completes its structure, being the starting instrument for the alignment with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) that will be completed in successive inclusions of different training actions.

It is appropriate to complete the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning with the levels still pending, thus responding, on the one hand, to the aforementioned recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, especially when all the countries in our environment already have a reference Qualifications Framework, and on the other hand, to the Government's will to favour greater mobility for citizens in their training and professional pathways, incorporating the commitments derived from the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, and the promotion of lifelong learning.

It is particularly important to note that the regulation uses the definitions with the meaning contained in the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. In this sense, it should be noted that, when the regulation refers to “qualifications”, it does so with the meaning of the term used by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, as stated in Article 2 of the MECU, and in no case is it associated to the definition of professional qualifications (skills) included in the Organic Law 5/2002, of June 19, 2002, on Qualifications (Skills) and Vocational Training.

Likewise, it is relevant for the understanding of the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Lifelong Learning that each level is associated to descriptors of learning outcomes, classified into knowledge, skills and autonomy and responsibility, in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. In response to the European recommendation to facilitate the progressive incorporation of non-formal learning, MECU constitutes a first phase of the definition of the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Lifelong Learning, since it includes the formal training of the educational system, without including the non-formal training that will have to be incorporated in a second phase.

2.1. History and Development of the NQF (MECES - MECU)

As regards the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, it should be noted that, prior to its elaboration, Spain already had a National System of Skills and Vocational Education and Training (SNCP) referring exclusively to professional skills (occupational competence standards), not to educational levels, elaborated by the National Institute of Skills (INCUAL) and included in the National Catalogue of Professional Skills, regulated by the Organic Act 5/2002, of 19th June, on Qualifications

and Vocational Education and Training. This law, currently repealed and replaced by Organic Act 3/2022, of 31st March.

In order to achieve its main objective, the SNCP entrusts the INCUAL with the elaboration of the National Catalogue of Professional Skills. This Institute was created by Royal Decree 375/1999 of 5th March 1999, it is attached to what at the time was the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and it is functionally dependent on the General Council for Vocational Education and Training (currently the INCUAL is dependent on the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports). Among its functions are: to act as a technical instrument to support the General Council for Vocational Education and Training in the observation of skills and their evolution, the determination and accreditation of skills, the development of the integration of vocational skills, and the monitoring and evaluation of the National Vocational Education and Training Programme. However, its fundamental mission is to elaborate and update the National Catalogue of Professional Skills (CNCP), which is the basis for integration between the systems of Vocational Education and Training in the Educational field (Vocational Training Diplomas) and Vocational Training for Employment (Professional Certificates). It also serves as a reference for the Assessment and Accreditation of Professional Competences acquired through work experience and nonformal learning.

The CNCP is regulated by Royal Decree 1128/2003, of 5th September, and by Royal Decree 1416/2005, of 25th November, amending Royal Decree 1128/2003. The CNCP is made up of the most significant professional skills, identified in the production system, ordered according to the criteria of professional skills (occupational standards), unit of competence and professional competence.

After the commitment made at the conference of ministers responsible for education in Bergen, Spain approved its Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (MECES). Royal Decree 1027/2011, of 15 July, established the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education with the objectives of informing society, promoting international mobility and recognition throughout the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

In 2022, Royal Decree 272/2022 of 12th April on the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning was approved. The MECU covers four qualification levels, while the MECES covers the remaining four, to make up eight qualification levels.

Thus, the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU) covers qualifications from compulsory education, up to the higher level of vocational training, artistic education, sports education and university education.

Consequently, the Spanish MECU complements the general Spanish qualifications framework, which already included the part corresponding to higher education, by incorporating VET training programmes provision not yet developed at the time of publication of the Royal Decree 1027/2011, of 15 July 2011.

MECU formally creates the Spanish framework, includes the provisions of the aforementioned Royal Decree 2017/2011, of 15 July, and partially completes its structure, being the starting instrument for the alignment with the European

framework (EQF), which will be completed in successive inclusions of different training actions.

Finally, the approval of the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Lifelong Learning offers a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications it integrates and the corresponding descriptors and completes the existence of a Spanish Framework of Qualifications together with the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education. For this purpose, this standard will have to pass the process of “certification of compatibility” with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, which involves the evaluation by international experts of the regulation.

Subsequently, once the Spanish Qualifications Framework has been certified in relation to the European Framework, the “self-certification” procedure will be regulated, consisting of the issuance of the document that accompanies each qualification or certification included in this Framework, with the information on the level and sublevel to which it corresponds. The self-certification process shall include, for each of the qualifications, certifications or accreditations that are referenced in the framework, the criteria that have led to such inclusion. Among them, those corresponding to knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility necessary to implement the corresponding learning in the academic or professional field shall be taken into account. For this purpose, the participation of technological or training experts, or both, as appropriate, as well as auditing, will be taken into account.

2.2. General description and objectives

In Spain, two qualifications frameworks coexist. On the one hand, the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU) which covers the official qualifications and certifications of the Spanish non-university education and training system. On the other hand, the Spanish Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (MECES), which refers to Higher Education qualifications. Both identify and classify qualifications according to learning outcomes and the labour market; and all qualifications included in these frameworks are based on the principles of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

Chart 10. Equivalences of framework levels

FRAMEWORKS	LEVELS							
EQF	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
MECU	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
MECES					1	2	3	4
QF-EHEA					Short / Higher VET Cycle	1 st Cycle	2 nd Cycle	3 rd Cycle

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

The MECU and MECES share the objectives of informing society and promoting international mobility and recognition throughout the European Higher Education Area. In any case, the main objectives of the MECU include the following:

- Facilitate the understanding of qualifications by describing them in terms of learning outcomes.
- Improve information to the public on national qualifications and facilitate and promote mobility.
- Support lifelong learning and link initial vocational training with vocational training for employment.
- Improve access to and participation in this type of training, especially for people with disabilities.
- Facilitate the identification, validation and recognition of all types of learning outcomes, including those related to non-formal and informal learning.
- Facilitate transition and progression between the different training sub-systems.
 - Develop procedures for the recognition of non-formal learning;
 - Reduce early school dropout.

2.3. NQF Design and Structure (MECES - MECU)

The Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning is structured in eight levels, with levels 5 to 8 being regulated through the MECES. Thus, Royal Decree 272/2022 of 12th April establishes those not included in Royal Decree 1027/2011 of 15th July, although the reference of qualifications included in level 5 is incorporated. In total, it is structured in 8 levels and the level descriptors, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, and are inspired by the descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, but adapted to the national context.

The MECU aims to link and coordinate the various education and training subsystems and to include qualifications obtained in compulsory, post-secondary and higher education, as well as integrating the validation of both formal and informal learning processes.

The qualification levels listed and described in the MECU are as follows:

- Level 1 of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning includes the certification corresponding to Primary Education.
- Level 2 of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning includes the certification of passing Compulsory Secondary Education, when the School Leaving Certificate has not been obtained; or the certification of VET Programmes for students with special educational needs or specific groups.
- Level 3 of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning includes:
 - o Level 3A corresponds to the Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate or Basic Technician qualification.
 - o Level 3B corresponds to the Professional Certificate Level 1 (Grade C).
- Level 4 of the Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning has three sublevels:

- Level 4A includes the following titles:
 - Baccalaureate.
 - Vocational Training Technician.
 - Technician in Professional Music Teaching.
 - Technician in Professional Dance Teaching.
 - Plastic Arts and Design Technician.
 - Sports Technician.
- Level 4B corresponds to the Professional Certificate Level 2 (Grade C).
- Level 4C corresponds to the Specialisation courses in Vocational Education and Training of the educational system, whose access requirement is to be in possession of a Vocational Training Technician qualification (Grade E).
- Level 5 of the Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning also has three sublevels:
 - Level 5A refers to the following titles:
 - Higher Technician in Vocational Training.
 - Higher Technician in Plastic Arts and Design.
 - Senior Sports Technician.
 - Level 5B corresponds to the Professional Certificate Level 3 (Grade C).
 - Level 5C includes the VET Specialisation courses of the education system whose access requirement is to hold a Higher VET qualification (Grade E).

On the other hand, the levels of qualification described in MECES are as follows:

- Level 1: Higher Technician (specified in level 5 of the EQF). This corresponds to level 5 of the MECU.
- Level 2: University degree or Higher Technician in Higher Artistic Education. The first one includes the qualifications whose purpose is to provide students with general training in one or more disciplines, aimed at preparing them for the exercise of activities of a professional nature. The second one refers to qualifications aimed at providing students with advanced training in artistic education (art, dance, music, etc.). It corresponds to level 6 of the MECU.
- Level 3: University Master's degree that corresponds to the qualifications that allow students to acquire advanced training, of a specialised or multidisciplinary nature, oriented towards academic or professional specialisation, or to promote initiation in research tasks. It corresponds to level 7 of the MECU.
- Level 4: Doctorate includes the qualifications that aim at advanced training of the student in research techniques. It is the highest professional qualification, and corresponds to level 8 of the MECU.

Level 1 to 5 qualifications are offered by pre-university education institutions, while level 6 to 8 qualifications are offered by higher education institutions. Level 5 qualifications overlap in the two frameworks, MECU and MECES, because they refer to

higher technicians, which are pre-university education. Moreover, levels 4 and 5 of the catalogue of qualifications correspond to levels 6 and 7 of the MECES.

EQF	MECES	MECU	QUALIFICATIONS
8	4	8	Doctorate
7	3	7	Master's degree
6	2	6	University degree or Higher Technician in Artistic Education
5	1	5	A. Higher Technicians (Grade D). B. Profesional Certificates 3 (Grade C). C. Specialization courses (Grade E)
4		4	A. Baccalaureate. A. Technicians (Grade D). B. Profesional Certificates 2 (Grade C). C. Specialization courses (Grade E).
3		3	A. Compulsory Secondary Education. A. Basic Technicians (Grade D) B. Profesional Certificate 1 (Grade C)
2		2	1st Cycle Compulsory Secondary Education VET programmes for NEETs
1			Primary Education

Chart 11. Entry and Progress in the MECU and MECES

Level	Minimum requirements for access to the qualification	Certifications to progress
1	Primary education: 6 years of age or older.	Students who complete this stage of Primary Education do not obtain any certification. The only document of accreditation value is the student's academic record, which contains the results of the assessment and academic progress during this stage.
2	<p>Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO): to be 12 years of age or older, and to have completed Primary Education.</p> <p>Basic Vocational Education and Training: to be 15 years old or to be 15 years old during the current calendar year; or to have completed the third year of ESO, or exceptionally, to have completed the second year; or to have been proposed by the teaching team through the Guidance Council.</p>	<p>At the end of ESO, all students, regardless of whether they pass or fail, receive an official certificate stating the number of years completed and the level of competences acquired.</p> <p>Basic Vocational Education and Training students who do not manage to pass their studies obtain an academic certification of the professional modules passed. This certification has academic and partial cumulative accreditation effects of the professional competences acquired in relation to the National System of Skills and Vocational Education and Training.</p>
3	<p>Compulsory Secondary Education: having completed the 1st year of ESO.</p> <p>Basic Vocational Education and Training: to be 15 years old, or to attain the age of 15 during the current calendar year; or to have completed the third year of ESO, or exceptionally, to have completed the second year; or to have been proposed by the teaching team through the Guidance Council.</p>	<p>The Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate Diploma is awarded to pupils who complete this cycle and who have acquired, in the teacher's opinion, the competences established in the current regulations. This diploma is unique and is issued without qualification.</p> <p>The Basic Vocational Education and Training qualification is Basic Technician and is achieved when students pass the training cycle. In addition, they also obtain the title of Graduate in Compulsory Higher Education.</p>
4	Baccalaureate: To be 16 years of age or older, and to have obtained the Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate Diploma, or any of the Technician or Higher Vocational Training Technician, or Technician in Plastic Arts and Design, or Sports Technician or Higher Sports Technician diplomas.	Students who complete the Baccalaureate having passed the subjects of both years receive the Baccalaureate diploma. Exceptionally, the teaching team may award the Baccalaureate to pupils who, having failed a subject, meet all of these conditions: that the pupil is considered to have acquired the established objectives and competences; that there has been no continuous and unjustified non-attendance in the subject; that the pupil has taken the tests and carried out the activities necessary for their assessment; and that the arithmetic average of all the subjects taken is equal to or higher than five. Furthermore, in accordance with Article 23 of Royal Decree 243/2022, students may also obtain the Baccalaureate diploma by passing the common subjects when they

	<p>Intermediate Vocational Education and Training: Graduate in Compulsory Secondary Education or Basic Technician, or having passed a specific preparatory training course for access to Intermediate-Level training cycles in public or private centres authorised by the competent administration and being 17 years old in the year in which the course is completed; or having passed an access test organised by the educational administrations and being 17 years old in the year in which the test is taken.</p>	<p>have one of the following diplomas: Vocational Training Technician (General Baccalaureate modality), Technician in Plastic Arts and Design (Arts modality), and Technician in Music or Dance (Arts modality).</p> <p>The Intermediate Vocational Education and Training qualification is that of Technician in the corresponding professional family, and for this students have to pass all the modules of these courses, although it can also be obtained by passing the tests organised for their direct attainment, which are held at least once a year. Students who do not pass all of the modules that make up these courses receive an academic certificate of the professional modules passed, and have the effect of accumulative partial accreditation of the professional competences acquired.</p>
5	<p>Higher Vocational Education and Training: Baccalaureate or equivalent qualifications; or a Technician or Intermediate Vocational Training Technician qualification; or having passed a specific training course for access to Higher-Level training cycles in public or private centres authorised by the educational administration; or a Higher Vocational Training Technician qualification or equivalent; or having passed the entrance exam to Higher-Level training cycles; or holding a University Degree or equivalent.</p>	<p>Students who complete a Higher-Level training cycle receive the title of Technician or Higher Technician, which is official and academically and professionally valid throughout the territory. This qualification can also be obtained through direct examinations, which are an alternative to classroom or distance learning, and which are aimed at individuals who have a significant amount of training in the professional field. These tests are held at least once a year by the educational administrations of the Autonomous Communities, and in order to sit them you must be 20 years of age, unless you are 19 years of age and hold the title of Technician. For the purposes of the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education, this qualification has an educational level of 5B. Students who do not pass this cycle in its entirety will obtain the accreditation of passing the professional modules they have passed. It states the relationship between these and the units of competences accredited by the National Catalogue of Professional Skills.</p>
6	<p>Degree: the need to pass an entrance exam that will be taken into account together with the marks obtained in the baccalaureate. Until now, access to official university studies has been open to those who hold a Baccalaureate or equivalent, a Higher Vocational Training Technician or similar, a Bachelor's Degree, a Master's Degree or equivalent qualification, or who have completed partial university studies abroad or in Spain.</p>	<p>The Graduate degree is only awarded when the student has achieved all the credits established for their degree, i.e. the 240 ECTS credits normally established, or the 300 or 360 credits in exceptional cases mentioned above.</p>
	<p>Master's degree: official Spanish university degree of</p>	<p>The Master's degree is only awarded once the student has passed the compulsory and optional</p>

7	<p>Graduate or Master's degree or equivalent; or University Master's degree; or degrees at the same level as the Spanish Bachelor's or Master's degree; or degrees from educational systems that do not form part of the EHEA, which are equivalent to the Bachelor's degree, without the need for homologation of the degree, but which do require verification by the university.</p> <p>Doctorate: Bachelor's degree or equivalent qualification; and Master's degree or equivalent qualification, provided that they have passed at least 300 ECTS credits in these courses as a whole; or Doctor's degree obtained in accordance with previous university regulations.</p>	<p>subjects, the external internships (if any), the Master's Final Project (TFM), and other academic activities, depending on the characteristics of each degree.</p>
8	<p>Doctorate: Bachelor's degree or equivalent qualification; and Master's degree or equivalent qualification, provided that they have passed at least 300 ECTS credits in these courses as a whole; or Doctor's degree obtained in accordance with previous university regulations.</p>	<p>The title of Doctor is only awarded to students who pass the presentation and defence of their doctoral thesis before a panel of judges set up for this purpose.</p>

2.4. Qualifications Framework: Definition of Qualification, Levels and Level Descriptors

Royal Decree 1027/2011 of 15th July 2011 establishing the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (MECES) defines the terms levels, qualifications and descriptors as follows:

- Qualification: Any degree, diploma or certificate issued by an educational institution attesting to the acquisition of a set of learning outcomes, following the successful completion of a training program in a legally recognized institution in the field of higher education.
- Learning outcome: That which a learner is expected to know, understand or be able to do.
- Level (in a Qualifications Framework): The reference defined in terms of generic descriptors for the classification of different higher education qualifications, expressed in learning outcomes, to which a particular qualification can be ascribed by appropriate comparison.
- Descriptor: A set of learning outcomes that characterizes a particular level in a qualification framework.

Royal Decree 272/2022 of 12th April establishing the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU) contains also the following definitions:

- Qualification: the formal outcome of a process of assessment and validation obtained when a competent authority establishes that an individual has achieved learning outcomes corresponding to specified standards.
- Learning outcomes: statements of what an individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process; defined in terms of knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy.
- Knowledge: the result of the assimilation of information through learning. A body of facts, principles, theories and practices related to a particular field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, knowledge is described as theoretical or factual.
- Skills: the ability to apply knowledge and use techniques to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (manual dexterity and use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
- Responsibility and autonomy: the learner's ability to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and responsibly.
- Competence: demonstrated ability to use personal, social and methodological knowledge, skills and abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development;
- Credit means the confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes, has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, supported by appropriate assessments, and may be expressed by a quantitative value (credits or credit points) reflecting the estimated workload normally required by an individual to achieve the relevant learning outcomes;
- Credit systems: the transparency tool to facilitate the recognition of credits. These systems may include, inter alia, equivalencies, waivers, units/modules that can be accumulated and transferred, the autonomy of providers who can individualize pathways, and the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy.

The establishment of learning outcomes constitutes an essential part of the development and implementation of the MECU and the MECES. The level of implementation of learning outcomes varies depending on the education level. In vocational training is currently fully developed.

2.5. Types of qualification in the NQF (MECES - MECU)

MECES includes official degrees from university education, higher artistic education, higher vocational training, higher professional education in plastic arts and design and higher sports education, as well as other equivalent degrees.

MECU covers the official qualifications and certifications from the Spanish non-university education system included in article 3 of the Organic Law 2/2006, of May 3, on Education: primary education, compulsory secondary education, baccalaureate, vocational training, artistic education and sports education, those other qualifications that have been declared equivalent, as well as qualifications in the field of higher education under the terms regulated in Royal Decree 1027/2011, of July 15, which remains as the regulatory standard for this field. Professional certificates regulated in the field of Vocational Training for Employment are also included.

2.6. Assignment of Qualifications to NQF Levels, Legal Basis

The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), in collaboration with other assessment bodies of the Autonomous Communities, is in charge of validating and filing those interpretations of the definitions of the levels of the MECES in the university education system and qualifications.

Thus, official university education is set out in syllabuses that are drawn up by the universities themselves, in accordance with the regulations and conditions applicable in each case. However, these syllabuses must be verified by the Council of Universities and authorised for implementation by the corresponding Autonomous Community, in accordance with Article 35.2 of Organic Act 6/2001, amended by Act 4/2007, on Universities. The degrees must then be registered in the Register of Universities, Centres and Degrees (RUCT) and accredited, in accordance with Royal Decree 1393/2007.

The verification and accreditation procedure involve sending the syllabus to the Council of Universities for verification, and when this occurs, it is sent to ANECA or the corresponding assessment body, for the purposes of drawing up the assessment report, which will be mandatory and decisive. After that, the Council of Universities will communicate the verification resolution to the Ministry of Education, to the Autonomous Community or Autonomous Communities concerned and to the proposing University or Universities. The corresponding Autonomous Community will then have to authorise the Ministry of Education and Science to submit the proposal to the Government for the establishment of the official nature of the degree and its registration in the RUCT, whose approval by resolution of the Council of Ministers will be published in the Official State Gazette. Only then will the Rector of the University order the publication of the syllabus in the "Official State Gazette" and in the Official Journal of the corresponding Autonomous Community.

In the field of VET, the Secretary General for Vocational Training is in charge of defining the specificities related to all the vocational educations and training qualifications.

All VET qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes, and have a clear division between knowledge, skills and broader competences. Statements of learning outcomes usually contain the following components: a verb indicating what the learner is expected to know or be able to do at the end of the learning period; an object indicating what the learner performs at or with; and, in some cases, indications of the nature of the performance providing links to assessment criteria.

The Secretary of State for Education and Vocational Training is responsible for defining the specificities related to the remaining non-university education qualifications.

2.7. NQF Registration

The registration of qualifications is done, according to their typology, in the following registers:

- Higher Education Tertiary Diplomas (levels 6, 7 and 8):
https://www.universidades.gob.es/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/20221216_MECES-Indice.pdf .
- VET Diplomas and Certificates (levels A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 5A, 5B and 5C):
<https://www.todofp.es/que-estudiar.html> –
- All Plastic Arts and Design Diplomas:
<https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano/catalogo/gestion-titulos/estudios-no-universitarios/titulos-espanoles/europass.html>
- HE Music and Arts Diplomas : <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano/catalogo/gestion-titulos/estudios-no-universitarios/titulos-espanoles/certificados-meces-artisticas.html>
- Sports Diplomas: <https://www.csd.gob.es/es/csd/enseñanzas/enseñanzas-deportivas-de-regimen-especial>

2.8. Qualifications management and quality assurance

According to Article 140 of Organic Act 2/2006 on Education, the evaluation of the Spanish education system contributes to achieving the following objectives: improving the quality and equity of education, orienting educational policies, increasing the transparency and efficiency of the education system, providing information on the degree of compliance with the improvement objectives established by the educational administrations, and providing information on the degree of achievement of Spanish and European educational objectives.

Title X of Organic Act 3/2022, Articles 111 and 112, as well as Royal Decree 659/2023, Title IX, Articles 216 to 224, establish the elements for the evaluation and quality of the Vocational Education and Training System. This title includes guidelines at macro and

micro level (quality of the centres, Chapter II) for the implementation of quality. Thus, it includes the elaboration of evaluation plans for the actions and services of the service, external verification mechanisms for programmes and centres and the elaboration of the Report on the State of the Vocational Education and Training System, as the main instruments for monitoring and quality assurance. In addition, the Technical Committee for Quality and Evaluation of Vocational Education and Training (Article 127 of Royal Decree 659/2023), a body for territorial cooperation, has been set up. In this Committee, the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports, together with the regional administrations, will draw up a Common Framework for Evaluation and Quality Assurance and define the indicators for the evaluation of Vocational Education and Training, the common instruments for gathering evidence and the carrying out of studies and research into the evaluation of the Vocational Education and Training System. The Framework for Evaluation and Quality Assurance of the Vocational Education and Training system will include the indicators included in the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), as well as others that will allow the monitoring of the Vocational Education and Training system and are included in Article 218.3 of Royal Decree 659/2023.

2.8.1. Quality evaluation of non-university education

The non-university education system has two ways of guaranteeing the quality of studies: educational inspection and evaluations. The former aims to ensure compliance with the law, guarantee the rights and duties of all those involved in the teaching and learning processes, contribute to the improvement of the education system and quality, and promote equity in education. The latter tend to contribute to the improvement of the quality of education, guide educational policies, increase transparency and efficiency, and provide information on the degree of compliance with and achievement of the objectives set.

The bodies responsible for quality assurance in non-university education are:

- The High State Inspectorate, which is exercised through the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports. It is responsible for verifying compliance with the requirements established by the State in the general organisation of the education system in terms of modalities, stages, cycles and specialities of education, but also for verifying the inclusion of the basic aspects of the curriculum within the curricula established by the education administrations. It also ensures compliance with the conditions for obtaining qualifications, the basic conditions that guarantee the equality of Spaniards in the exercise of their rights and duties in the field of education, and the granting of subsidies and scholarships.
- The National Institute for Educational Evaluation (INEE), which reports to the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports, is the body responsible for the evaluation of the Spanish education system. The functions of this institution are set out in Organic Act 2/2006 on Education and Royal Decree 498/2020. These include: the coordination of the general evaluation policies of the

education system, the establishment of methodological and scientific standards that guarantee the quality of teaching, the establishment of a common evaluation framework and the conduct of evaluations in collaboration with the corresponding bodies of the education administrations, the development of the State System of Education Indicators, among others.

The methods used to carry out these quality assurance evaluations of non-university education are as follows:

- At the national level, the education system is evaluated through the following aspects:
 - The State System of Education Indicators is composed of 19 indicators, divided in turn into several sub-indicators corresponding to 3 dimensions (schooling and educational environment, educational funding, and educational outcomes). Some Autonomous Communities (e.g. Andalusia, Aragon, Balearic Islands and Navarre) have applied the indicators set by the State when drawing up their reports, but others have generated their own system of indicators.
 - The general evaluations of the education system, in the last year of Primary Education and Compulsory Secondary Education, to obtain representative data, both for the pupils of the centres of the Autonomous Communities and for the State as a whole. These evaluations are informative, formative and guiding in nature for educational centres and informative for families and for the educational community as a whole.
 - Participation in international educational evaluation projects. Specifically, Spain participates in various international educational evaluation projects:
 - OECD INES (International Indicators of Education Systems Project).
 - OECD PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment).
 - TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).
 - OECD PISA for Schools.
 - IEA PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study).
 - OECD TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Study).
 - IEA ICCS (International Civic and Citizenship Study).
 - OECD SESS (Survey on Social and Emotional Skills).
 - IEA ICILS (International Computer and Information Literacy Study).
- At a regional level, each education administration, within its sphere of action, exercises certain competences such as, for example, supporting and facilitating the self-evaluation of schools, drawing up and implementing school evaluation

plans and plans for the assessment of the management function, and promoting actions that encourage students to attain the established competences.

In addition, the Autonomous Communities, through their educational administrations, may carry out evaluations of the educational institutions in their respective territories. Therefore, each Autonomous Community is responsible for the design and implementation of external evaluation mechanisms for the educational institutions in their territory and may also establish their own self-evaluation or internal evaluation model. They may also draw up their own plans for the evaluation of the public teaching function in order to improve the quality of teaching and the work of the teaching staff.

On the other hand, the quality assurance system for non-university education also includes Higher Vocational Education and Training and Artistic Education. Thus, the quality assessment of the VET system is carried out according to the indicators established in the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).

The General State Administration (AGE) establishes and coordinates a system of evaluation of the Vocational Education and Training system to ensure its quality and promote educational innovation, and does so in collaboration with the administrations with competences in this area and the most representative business and trade union organisations. This evaluation seeks to identify, describe and analyse the most relevant elements that determine the quality of the supply and implementation of vocational training programmes and actions. In this way, decisions can be taken to guarantee the quality of these studies.

Moreover, the National Government, with the collaboration of the Autonomous Communities, must draw up a report to be submitted to the General Council for Vocational Education and Training and the State School Council, as well as publishing a biennial report on the state of the Vocational Education and Training system. In addition, every four years, the Report on the state of the Vocational Education and Training system must include a study on the supply of training cycles and their adequacy to student demand, the percentage of employability of Vocational Education and Training students and the present and future human capital needs of the public and private sector. Likewise, the educational administrations are also responsible for promoting internal and external evaluation systems and procedures to guarantee the quality of Arts Education.

2.8.2. Quality evaluation of University Education

The evaluation of the quality of University Education must combine the autonomy granted to Spanish universities with the accountability of the regional and national education administrations. Furthermore, Article 25 of Royal Decree 822/2021 establishes that official university degrees must be subject to external assessment

procedures in accordance with the Criteria and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA.

With regard to procedures to guarantee the quality of University Education, all curricula must be subject to verification, monitoring and amendment, as well as renewal through accreditation procedures. To this end, the quality agencies jointly establish quality assessment protocols. In turn, the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities has established an Integrated University Information System (SIIU) that serves to cover the information needs of the Spanish university system and the administrations with powers in this area. In this way, external assessment bodies are provided with the information they need to carry out the procedures established to guarantee the quality of this type of teaching. In the same way, the SIIU compiles statistics and information on observation, analysis and foresight, in collaboration with the universities and quality agencies.

In any case, as mentioned above, the universities are responsible for guaranteeing the quality of their teaching. To this end, they submit an annual report on their teaching and research activities to the Autonomous Community to which they belong and to the General Conference on University Policy. The latter is the university policy coordination and cooperation body and is responsible for establishing and assessing the general lines of university policy, articulating them with the EHEA, planning, informing, consulting and advising on the general and multi-annual programming of University Education, approving the coordination criteria for assessment activities. It also draws up a biannual report on the situation of the Spanish university system and its funding, presenting proposals for its quality improvement.

Together with the General Conference on University Policy, the Council of Universities serves as a channel for collaboration, cooperation and coordination in the university sphere. Therefore, it is responsible for reporting on the legal and regulatory provisions that affect them, providing advice to the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, to the General Conference on University Policy itself, formulating proposals to the government, or verifying the adaptation of study plans to the guidelines and conditions established by the government for official degrees.

Spanish universities also carry out an internal evaluation of their activities, teaching staff and student outcomes in order to ensure the quality of their teaching. The university services inspectorate is responsible for monitoring the fulfilment of their duties and the organisation of their teaching and administrative staff; it carries out informative and disciplinary proceedings; and it processes requests for reports to monitor and evaluate the performance of teaching staff. And the Social Council is the body that approves the annual action plan to, among many other things, guarantee the quality of university activity and advise the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) and the evaluation bodies of the autonomous communities.

In the latter regard, the regional education administrations also have competence to guarantee the quality of University Education. For this reason, they create evaluation agencies in their respective areas of competence to ensure compliance with basic quality

standards in the design and implementation of teaching, and among those who apply to take part in a recruitment process or access to the civil service.

ANECA promotes the improvement of university activity in all its dimensions and its functions are specified in Article 6 of Royal Decree 1112/2015. In any case, these evaluation, accreditation and certification processes correspond to internationally recognised protocols, and comply with the European criteria and guidelines (ESG) for quality assurance of the EHEA. ANECA's activity is articulated through different programmes, specifically:

- VERIFICA: evaluates curriculum proposals for degree programmes designed under the EHEA umbrella.
- MONITOR: monitors a verified programme until it has to reapply to renew its accreditation period.
- ACREDITA: evaluates official university degrees for the renewal of accreditation.
- RECONOCIMIENTO DE CALIDAD: grants specific recognition of quality in certain university areas, articulated through ANECA quality certificates.

In addition, ANECA has voluntary programmes for the evaluation of university institutions, such as:

- DOCENTIA: guarantees the training and competence of university teaching staff through the evaluation of their teaching activity.
- AUDIT: certifies the implementation of the institutions' internal quality assurance systems (IQAS) in the centres according to their teaching, research, transfer and sustainability dimensions.
- ACREDITACIÓN INSTITUCIONAL: this is an alternative to the accreditation model for official Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

ANECA also has mandatory programmes for the evaluation of university teaching staff:

- PEP: evaluates the teaching and research activities and academic training of applicants for the different positions of university lecturer (assistant lecturer, contract lecturer and private university lecturer, established by the LOMLOU in 2007).
- ACADEMIA: evaluates the teaching, research, training and academic management activities of applicants for access to the civil service teaching bodies (full professor and university professor).
- CNEAI: evaluates the research activity of university lecturers and staff in the CSIC scientific scales with a view to the recognition of a productivity bonus.

But ANECA's activity is not limited to this; it also carries out other evaluation activities in the field of university education such as:

- Evaluations by agreements: ANECA, through agreements, carries out the scientific-technical evaluation of the proposals for funding applications from institutions and centres belonging to the higher education and research system that request it, as well as the research, teaching and transfer performance of their assigned staff.

- Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities Scholarships and Grants: on behalf of the Ministry, ANECA evaluates the applications submitted in the different annual calls for training and mobility grants for university teaching staff.
- Evaluation of official non-university higher education degrees.
- Recognition of quality, which means that it not only evaluates the processes of accreditation of common minimum quality standards, but also the institutional strategies of excellence of each university institution through the awarding of the Comprehensive Quality Recognition (RIC), the ANECA International Quality Seals (SIC), or other seals.

2.9. Foreign qualifications and mobility

This section refers to the recognition of professional qualifications, the recognition of qualifications and foreign mobility.

2.9.1. Recognition of professional qualifications

The homologation of foreign studies is the declaration of equivalence between a qualification in another country and a qualification in the current Spanish education system. The homologation procedure has academic and professional effects and involves the payment of a fee for initiating the procedure. This process can be requested by any citizen who has completed and passed studies abroad and implies recognition.

The recognition of foreign studies involves the declaration of equivalence in order to be able to continue with the studies in a Spanish educational centre. Therefore, when we talk about "validating" it means that there will be a continuation in Spain of the studies that are being validated. In Spain, the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports the body responsible for regulating the recognition and validation of non university studies, and the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities for university studies. For this, the applicant must meet the following criteria:

- The studies pursued must be officially valid in the country of study.
- All studies undertaken abroad must be approved.
- Subjects or areas of knowledge established by the Ministry of Education must be taken, as these are the ones that are sufficiently equivalent in academic terms to the Spanish reference system.
- The recognition of an academic year for a Spanish course is done globally and, therefore, all the subjects taken must be provided.

With regard to the qualifications that can be recognised in Spain, the following stand out:

- Under the competence of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports:
 - o Compulsory Secondary Education.
 - o Baccalaureate.
 - o Vocational education and training.

- Professional artistic education.
- Higher artistic education.
- Sports education.
- Under the competence of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities ○ Bachelor's Degree. ○ Master's Degree. ○ Doctorate.

2.9.2. Recognition of professional qualifications

The recognition of professional qualifications allows access in Spain to the same profession for which the applicant is qualified in their country of origin, and to exercise it with the same rights as Spanish nationals. The recognition procedure only has professional effects and does not imply, in any case, the payment of any fee (it is free of charge). It can only be applied for by EU, EEA and Swiss nationals. Moreover, it is only applicable to EU, EEA and Swiss diplomas, or diplomas previously recognised in another EU Member State.

The procedures for the recognition of professional qualifications are laid down in Directive 2005/36 on the recognition of professional qualifications, as amended by Directive 2013/56 of 20th November. These directives set out the rules by which a host EU Member State must grant recognition for access to or pursuit of a profession. And through this recognition regime, the free movement of professionals within the EU is facilitated. To this end, a system of general recognition of qualifications and a system of automatic recognition (the latter is only foreseen for doctors, nurses, dentists, veterinary surgeons, midwives, pharmacists and architects) are foreseen.

2.9.3. Foreign mobility

The European and international dimension of education in Spain

Spain is no stranger to these issues and for this reason, Spanish educational legislation is strongly committed to the European and international dimension of education, taking on the challenge of opening up to the outside world. The aim is to facilitate the access of Spanish residents abroad and foreigners to the studies offered in the Spanish education system, as well as to promote and disseminate Spanish culture and the Spanish language.

3. REFERENCING AND SELF-CERTIFICATION OF THE NQF TO THE EQF AND QF-EHEA

3.1. Introduction

The approval of MECES initiated a process of transformation and correlation of the Spanish education system with the European qualifications framework, although it posed certain limitations and introduced some dysfunctionalities:

- Firstly, the qualification levels in the Royal Decree were not exactly the same as those in the European Higher Education Framework (EHEA). In the

Spanish qualifications framework, levels 5 and 6 of the EQF correspond to first cycle university and non-university higher education qualifications, level 7 to second cycle qualifications, and level 8 to doctoral degrees.

- Secondly, the Royal Decree left out the rest of the courses included in the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU). The scope of application of MECES is made up of official qualifications from University Education, Higher Artistic Education, Higher-Level Vocational Education and Training, Higher-Level Professional Education in Plastic Arts and Design and Higher-Level Sports Education, as well as other qualifications declared to be equivalent.

- Thirdly, the approval of Royal Decree 967/2014, of November 21, established the requirements and procedure for the homologation and declaration of equivalence to degree and official university academic level and for the recognition of foreign higher education studies, and the procedure to determine the correspondence to the levels of the Spanish Framework of Qualifications for Higher Education of the official degrees of Architect, Engineer, Graduate, Technical Architect, Technical Engineer and Diploma. It allowed to determine the corresponding level of the university degrees prior to the establishment of the MECES.

- Currently, in the case of the former “pre-Bologna” university degrees, it is possible to obtain a self-certification document detailing the MECES and EQF levels through an electronic service, providing that it has been approved by the Council of Ministers, published in the BOE and registered in the Registry of Universities, Centres and Degrees (RUCT). <https://www.universidades.gob.es/correspondencia-entre-titulos-universitarios-oficiales-pre-bolonia-y-niveles-meces/>

Royal Decree 22/2015, of 23rd January, amended Royal Decree 1027/2011, of 15th July, clarifying the process of correspondence between the 4 levels of higher education (MECES) and the European Qualifications Framework (see Table 16).

Table 16. Correspondence from MECES to MECU and MECU to EQF

Correspondence from MECES to MECU and MECU to EQF		
Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (MECES)	Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU)	European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
Level 1 Senior Technician	Level 1 Senior Technician	Level 5
Level 2 Degree	Level 2 Degree	Level 6
Level 3 Master	Level 3 Master	Level 7
Level 4 Doctor	Level 4 Doctor	Level 8

3.2. General referencing approach from the NQF (MECES - MECU) to the EQF

In April 2022, Royal Decree 272/2022 was approved, establishing the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU). This regulatory framework completes and orders the Spanish General Qualifications Framework, which already had a Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (MECES), approved by Royal Decree 1027/2011 of 15th July, as mentioned above.

Royal Decree 272/2022, which establishes the MECU, takes up the recommendations made by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. Specifically, the following:

- Recommendation 2008/C111/01/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union, which lays down the foundations of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.
- The European Parliament Resolution of 17th May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2016/2789 (RSP). The resolution reminds Member States of the commitment to review and adapt national legislation for the recognition of national qualifications at European level and prior learning. This commitment responds to the commitments adopted in the Lisbon Convention, as set out in the 2015 Yerevan communiqué.
- Council Recommendation 2017/C189/03 of 22nd May 2017, which repeals Recommendation 2008/C111/01/EC and serves as a reference in the regulation of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU).

The MECU covers qualifications from compulsory education up to the higher-level of Vocational Education and Training, Artistic Education, Sports Education and University Education. Therefore, it also updates and incorporates training offers that had not yet been developed in the MECES.

In this way, Royal Decree 272/2022, of 12th April, completes the structure of the MECES set out in Royal Decree 2107/2011, and becomes the reference instrument for aligning training offers with the European Framework (EQF), and the incorporation of new training actions.

During the process of drafting Royal Decree 272/2022,¹⁸ of 12th April, the Autonomous Communities were consulted through the General Commission of the Education Conference and the Sectorial Conference of the System of Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training for Employment. In addition, the State School Council, the General Council for Vocational Education and Training and the State Council issued a report. Likewise, the Royal Decree was consulted and submitted to all the ministries and administrations competent in the subjects of the different qualifications and training offers. It was also submitted for assessment to the Social Dialogue Round Table, both for

¹⁸ The opinions of the State Council no. 557/2011 on the Draft Royal Decree establishing the Spanish Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (MECES) and 1108/2013 on Royal Decree 272/2022 of 12th April establishing the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU) have been consulted.

vocational training and other areas of the education system. The participation of business representatives, trade unions and associations took place through the State School Council, the General VET Council and the Dialogue Table. In addition, prior public consultations were held via the ministerial website between 26th February and 12th March 2019 and between 15th March and 4th April 2019.

The result was the approval of Royal Decree 272/2022, of 12th April, which covers both official qualifications and certifications from the Spanish non-university education system (Primary Education, Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate, Vocational Education and Training, Artistic Education and Sports Education, and the qualifications declared equivalent); Higher Education qualifications in the terms regulated by Royal Decree 1027/2011, of 15th July; and Professional Certificates in the field of the former Vocational Education and Training for Employment regulated in the regulations in force until the entry into force of Organic Act 3/2022. All this allowed:

- The provision of a joint vision of the existing teachings and qualifications in the education and vocational training system within a National Qualifications Framework.
- The creation of a transparent qualification framework in which to identify and compare the levels, positions and mobility between courses and qualifications in the Spanish education and training system.
- The facilitating and updating of the partnership process between the National Qualifications model and the European Qualifications model.

To complete the model, it is worth noting the approval of Organic Act 3/2022, of 31st March, on the Organisation and Integration of Vocational Education and Training, which repealed Organic Act 5/2002 and which completes and organises the qualification system. Organic Act 3/2022 integrates the two models of Vocational Training, educational and for employment, allowing for training itineraries leading to accreditations, certifications and qualifications with state and European correspondence.

Therefore, we are faced with an approach of continuous improvement and adaptation to the European context of the teachings regulated in the Spanish education and vocational training system, as well as of the qualification framework.

3.3. Concept of qualification

Royal Decree 272/2022, which establishes the MECU, not only completes and guides the qualification model, but also resolves the confusion with the term "qualification" that had arisen in the different regulations. It also helps to align its meaning with that of the EU countries, correcting the errors of interpretation that have occurred over time.

Table 17 sets out the definitions of "qualification" in different regulatory frameworks: Organic Act 5/2002 of 19th June 2002 on Qualifications and Vocational

Education and Training (now repealed); Royal Decree 27/2011 of 15th July 2011 establishing the MECES; and Royal Decree 272/2022 establishing the MECU.

Table 17. Qualification regulations

Regulations	Definition of "qualification"
Organic Act 5/2002 (repealed by Organic Act 3/2022)	<p>Qualification: competence for the performance of a professional activity officially accredited by diplomas, certificates or accreditations.</p> <p>Exclusively in its use in reference to the Spanish Qualifications Framework (MECU), any qualification or certificate issued by an educational institution that accredits having acquired a set of learning outcomes, after having successfully passed a training programme in a legally recognised institution within the scope of the Vocational Education and Training System.</p>
MECES	<p>Qualification: "any degree, diploma or certificate issued by an educational institution attesting to the acquisition of a set of learning outcomes, following the successful completion of a training programme in a legally recognised institution in the field of higher education."</p>
MECU	<p>"Qualification" means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process that is obtained when a competent authority establishes that a person has achieved learning outcomes corresponding to specified standards.</p> <p>"International qualification" means a qualification awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, sector or company), or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body, which is used in more than one country, and which includes learning outcomes assessed with reference to standards set by an international body</p>

According to European recommendations, qualifications play an important role in improving employability, facilitating mobility and access to higher education. The acquisition of competences determines that a person has achieved learning outcomes. The concept of qualification, linked to the development of competences, is therefore underpinned by another key concept, namely "learning outcomes". In line with the European Qualifications Framework, the MECU defines learning outcomes as "statements of what a person knows, understands and is able to do at the end of a learning process; they are defined in terms of knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy". Thus, all teaching should include learning outcomes, articulated in terms of "knowledge", "skills", "autonomy and responsibility", which allow us to make the correspondence between MECU and EQF.

The matching process is further reinforced by the eight-level design of the EQF structure. The eight MECU levels are based on differentiated learning outcomes for each level and serve as a conversion tool between the different national qualifications frameworks. This framework helps to improve the transparency, comparability and transferability of qualifications acquired by individuals and enables the comparison of qualifications from different countries and institutions.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

4.1. NQF reference criteria vs. EQF

The Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU) is structured in eight levels. Article 4 of Royal Decree 272/2022, of 12th April, includes and describes levels 1 to 4, which did not appear in MECES (Royal Decree 1027/2011, of 15th July). Likewise, the qualifications included in level 5 are referenced, complementing level 5A. And the levels included in MECES, levels 5 to 8 corresponding to Higher Education, are incorporated.

The MECU (NQF) describes, for each of the eight levels, competences on knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility. MECU generates for the 8 levels (adapted to the EQF levels) a normative framework that facilitates the association and linking of each level to the EQF levels. Each level of qualification in the Spanish framework is related to a set of regulatory standards that ensure the quality and transparency of the procedure.

Likewise, the MECU reflects, for each level of qualification, the access routes from the education and training system, the details of which are developed in the general and specific regulations for each of the courses. Chart 12 below deals with the arguments that explain the conformity of the correlation of qualification levels, taking into account the 10 criteria elaborated by the EQF Advisory Group. During the referencing process, coordination and consultation meetings have been held with the Vocational Education and Training Secretariat of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports, which has made it possible to define the content of each of the ten criteria.

Chart 12. Criteria and procedures for national correlation of qualifications and EQF

Criteria and procedures for national referencing of qualifications and EQF	
1	Competent authorities clearly define and publish the legal responsibilities and competences of all relevant national bodies involved in the correlation process.
2	There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualification levels of national qualifications frameworks or systems and the descriptors corresponding to an EQF level.
3	National qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes, and linked to validation arrangements for non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, credit systems.
4	The procedures for including qualifications in the national qualifications framework or describing their place in the national qualifications system are transparent.
5	National quality assurance systems for education and training refer to national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles of quality assurance as specified in Annex IV of this Recommendation.
6	The correlation process must have the express agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the referencing report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practices.
7	The referencing process involves the participation of international experts.
8	The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing, and the

	evidence supporting it, shall be published by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall address separately each of the criteria. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter.
9	Within six months of the referencing or update of the correlation report, Member States and other participating countries shall publish the correlation report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portals.
10	Following the referencing process, all new documents issued for qualifications that are part of national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, diploma supplements, certificate supplements) or qualification registers issued by competent authorities should include a clear reference, via national qualifications systems or frameworks, to the corresponding EQF level.

4.2. Response to the EQF criteria and procedures

4.2.1. Criterion 1

Competent authorities clearly define and publish the legal responsibilities and competences of all relevant national bodies involved in the correlation process.

The political-institutional structure on which the design and implementation of education policy rests responds to the multilevel model characteristic of the Spanish State. The Spanish regulatory framework identifies the national administrations involved in the development of the education and training system, as well as their roles in the design of the National Qualifications Framework (MECU and MECES) and in the correlation process. Council Recommendation 2017/C 189/03 points out that the European Qualifications Model depends to a large extent on the existing national governance, hence the importance of the participation and coordination of the different levels of educational administration and of the social and business actors, as well as the effectiveness of the National Coordination Points.

Regarding who and how carried out the comparative analysis between national level descriptors and those in the EQF, we have to go back to the process of publication of the Spanish National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Both Royal Decree 272/2022 and Royal Decree 1027/2011 underwent a consultation process which involved different administrative bodies and took into account the reports and opinions of the following Administrative processes:

1. Royal Decree 272/2022

a) Public consultation:

Prior to the drafting of this general provision, in accordance with the provisions of article 26.2 of the Government Act "a public consultation was held, through the website of the competent department", in which the opinion of the subjects potentially affected by the future rule and of the most representative organisations was sought on:

- i. the problems that the new rule intended to solve,
- ii. the need and opportunity for its approval,
- iii. the objectives of the rule, and
- iv. the possible alternative regulatory and non-regulatory solutions.

b) Hearing and public information for the citizens affected:

Once the text of the draft general provision was drawn up, and prior to its approval, it was essential for the proposing management body to submit its content to the hearing of the citizens affected and to obtain any additional contributions that could be made by other persons or entities.

This hearing was carried out directly, through the Department's website, or through the legally recognised organisations and associations that grouped or represented them and whose purposes were directly related to the purpose of the provision, in accordance with Article 105.a) of the Constitution and Article 26.6 of the Constitution. Constitution and Article 26.6 of the Government Act.

c) Consultation with the Autonomous Communities:

The participation of the Autonomous Communities in the procedure for drafting State regulations derived from the principle of cooperation, collaboration and coordination between Public Administrations, which is included in Article 3.1.k) of Law 40/2015, of 1 October, on the Legal Regime of the Public Sector.

The project was submitted to the consultation of the Autonomous Communities through the Sectorial Conference of Education, and the aforementioned consultation was accredited in the file, through the corresponding certificate issued for this purpose, as well as the minutes of the aforementioned consultation.

d) Consultation on the Report on the Draft Royal Decree establishing the Spanish Qualifications Framework with the Permanent Committee of the General Council for Vocational Training composed by representatives from:

- Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
- Public State Employment Service
- Autonomous Regions
- Business Organisations: CEOE and CEPYME
- Trade Unions: UGT, CCOO, CYGA
- State Foundation for Employment Training
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fish and Food
- Ministry of Economy and Enterprise
- Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism
- Ministry of Health, Consumer Affairs and Social Welfare

e) Consultation on the Report on the Draft Royal Decree establishing the Spanish Qualifications Framework with the General Committee on Education of the Conference on Education composed by representatives from:

- Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
- Vice-ministers and Director Generals from the Autonomous Regions

3. Administrative processing: reports and opinions.

Prior to their approval by the competent body, the General Technical Secretariat of the Department, completed a series of mandatory formality procedures:

- Report by the General Technical Secretariat of the Department, in accordance with the provisions of article 26.5 paragraph 4 of Law 50/1997, of 27 November, of the Government. This report complied with this procedure.
- Report of the Office of Coordination and Regulatory Quality, compliance with the provisions of article 26.9 of Law 50/1997, of 27 November, of the Government and article 2 of Royal Decree 1081/2017, of 29 December, which established the operating regime of the Office of Coordination and Regulatory Quality.
- Report of the Ministry of Territorial Policy and Public Function, necessary in accordance with the provisions of Article 26.5 paragraph 6 of Law 50/1997, of 27 November, of the Government when the regulation could affect the distribution of competences between the State and the Autonomous Communities. The report issued by the Directorate General of Autonomous and Local Legal Regime of 22 March 2019 was included in the file.
- Report of the Ministry of Science and Universities, in accordance with the provisions of article 26.5 paragraph 1 of Law 50/1997, of 27 November, of the Government. The report was requested from the aforementioned Department on 27 February 2019.
- Report from the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security, in accordance with the provisions of article 26.5 paragraph 1 of Law 50/1997, of 27th November, of the Government. This report was issued by the aforementioned Department on 30 May 2019.
- Opinion of the Council of State. Article 22.3 of Organic Law 3/1980, of 22 April 1980, on the Council of State. This procedure was carried out by this ministerial department as a culmination in the processing of the administrative file.

2. Royal Decree 1027/2011

a) Consultation with the Autonomous Communities.

- Consultation with the General Conference on University Policy. Article 27 bis of Organic Law 6/2001, of 21 December, on Universities, modified by Organic Law 4/2007, of 12 April, assigned to the Conference, among others, the function of establishing and assessing the general lines of university policy, its articulation in the European Higher Education Area and its interrelation with scientific and technological research policies. The management body promoting the regulatory initiative provided the file with accreditation that such consultation was carried out, as well as the draft minutes of the session.
- Consultation with the Autonomous Communities.

The consultation of the General Conference on University Policy, in which those responsible for university education in the Governing Councils of the Autonomous Communities participated, was considered to be completed.

b) Court of the parties concerned

This procedure was completed through the report of the collegiate participation bodies that integrated the different agents that intervened in the educational process, which in this case was the following:

- Report of the Council of Universities, in accordance with the provisions of article 28 of Law 6/2001, of 21 December, on Universities, modified by Organic Law 4/2007, of 12 April, which attributed to this Council, among others, the function of reporting on the legal and regulatory provisions that affect the university system as a whole.

The file accompanied by a certificate from the Secretary General of the Council of Universities, stated the Council's report on the draft Royal Decree, as well as the minutes or report of the session at which the Council met.

- Opinion of the State School Council, in accordance with the provisions of Article 15.1.a) of Royal Decree 694/2007, of 1 June, the Permanent Commission of the aforementioned Council was consulted on a mandatory basis in the draft regulations to be approved by the Government in the development of education.
- Report of the General Council for Vocational Training, a consultative body responsible for reporting on any matters relating to vocational training that may be submitted to it by the public administrations (Article 2.1 d) of Royal Decree 1684/1997, of 7 November, approving the Regulations of the General Council for Vocational Training.
- Report of the Higher Council for Artistic Education, by virtue of article 4 b) of Royal Decree 365/2007, of 16 March, regulating the Higher Council for Artistic Education, the latter must report on the project through its Permanent Commission. It was also necessary for the General Secretariat of the Council to accredit the participation of the Councillors representing the different groups.
- Given the content of the Draft Royal Decree, it was considered advisable that it was brought to the attention of the Higher Council for Sports. This procedure was carried out by the management body promoting the regulatory initiative.

c) Administrative processing

- Report of the General Technical Secretariat of the Department. Article 24.2 of Law 50/1997, of 27 November, of the Government establishes, as mandatory, the report of the General Technical Secretariat prior to the approval of any provision of a general nature.
- Prior report from the Ministry of Territorial Policy. According to Article 24.3 of Law 50/1997, of 27 November, on the Government, "a prior report from the Ministry of Public Administrations is required when the regulation could affect the distribution of powers between the State and the Autonomous Communities". In the present case, there was no doubt about the impact of the project on the system of competences, which is why the request for this report was mandatory. Following the enactment of Royal Decree 542/2009, of 7 April,

which restructures the ministerial departments and Royal Decree 640/2009, of 17 April, which develops the former, this competence corresponded to the Ministry of Territorial Policy.

- Report of the Economic and Social Council. In accordance with the provisions of article 4 of Royal Decree 900/2007, of 6 July, the proposal of the MECES had the report of this body. In accordance with the provisions of Article 7.1.2 of Law 21/1991, of 17 June 1991, which created the Economic and Social Council, this procedure was carried out by this General Technical Secretariat.
- Opinion of the State Council which, since it is a regulatory provision, delivered by its Standing Committee (Article 22.3 of Organic Law 3/1980 of 22 April 1980 on the State Council).

In 2020, the Government integrated the Vocational Education and Training System and unified competences in a single ministerial department. This organisational and functional change is a key step towards the creation of a Vocational Education and Training System, which responds to the principle of lifelong learning. In addition, it also contributes to the creation of an integral and global framework for the whole of the education system and the vocational training system, up to the higher education levels, which is taken over by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities.

Although it is the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports, through the General Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training, that drives the development and implementation of the MECU, it is necessary to bear in mind that the development of the qualification framework is only possible thanks to the cooperation with the Ministries of Universities and, in very specific cases, of Industry, Trade and Tourism, and of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, among others.¹⁹ And it also relies on the participation of the Autonomous Communities and local entities, through the institutional coordination bodies and consultative bodies in which they are represented. Social agents are also involved in the development of the MECU through their representation in participatory bodies, such as the State School Council, the General Council for Vocational Education and Training, the Council for Artistic Education and the Council for Universities, or directly through business and trade union organisations, education assessment agencies, professional associations and corporations, among others.

The authorities that have direct roles in the referencing process, namely in the design, implementation and evaluation, are outlined below:

Governing and higher bodies:

- **General Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training.** Article 8 of Royal Decree 829/2023 of 5th December, which restructures the Ministerial Departments, states that the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and

¹⁹ At the time of writing this report, the current government is in office due to the elections held on 23/07/2023.

Sports responsible for policy on education and vocational training in the education system and for employment, with the exception of university education. The integration of the education system and the vocational training system in the same ministerial structure has an impact on the integral and global approach given to the Qualification Framework in Spain.

Royal Decree 1009/2023, of December 5, establishes the basic organic structure of the ministerial departments, and, pending restructuring and updating, Royal Decree 498/2020, of 28th April, develops the Basic Organic Structure of the Ministry of Education, and Vocational Training. Article 5 states that the General Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training of the aforementioned Ministry is responsible for the adoption and development of the Spanish Qualifications Framework, in coordination with the Directorate General for Evaluation and Territorial Cooperation. The person in charge of the General Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training will be responsible for validating and filing the interpretations of the definitions of the levels of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning that arise in both thematic and professional areas.

In line with the specifications of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23rd April 2008, the National Coordination Point was created. In this sense, it is the General Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training that assumes the role of National Coordination. Among the functions of the National Coordination Point are the following: linking the qualification levels foreseen in the national qualifications system with the levels foreseen in the European Qualifications Framework, ensuring that a transparent methodology is applied in level mappings and their publication, guiding and facilitating access to information on mappings and promoting the participation of stakeholders, experts and institutions, among others.²⁰

- **General Secretariat for Universities.** Decree 291/2023, of 18th April, amends Royal Decree 431/2020, of 3rd March, which develops the Basic Organic Structure of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. Article 2.2 sets out the functions of the General Secretariat for Universities, among which the "processing of the procedure to determine the correspondence to the levels of the Spanish Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (MECES) of official university degrees belonging to previous academic orders, as well as professional and Higher Education degrees that have been declared equivalent to the latter" should be highlighted.

Institutional coordination bodies:

²⁰ See National Focal Point www.educacionyfp.gob.es

- **Sectoral Conference on Education.** The participation of the Autonomous Communities and, specifically, of the education administrations, is articulated through the Sectoral Conference on Education. Within the Sectoral Conference, the General Education Commission is created as a support body. The Commission is made up by the deputy ministers, the heads of similar bodies in the Autonomous Communities or directors general commissioned by the ministers. In addition, there are permanent cooperation bodies, including different commissions.

According to Article 3 of the Regulations of the Sectoral Conference on Education, one of the functions of this body is to "report, with the scope that corresponds in each case, on the regulations that the State must adopt in the exercise of its powers and which must be submitted to the consideration of the Autonomous Communities". Such is the case of the MECU, whose draft regulations were submitted for consultation to the Education Commission in the session of 4th March 2019. In the session of 22nd March 2019, the Education Commission was informed of the Draft Royal Decree on the MECU. And finally, the Vocational Education and Training Commission, in the session of 5th October 2021, informed the Autonomous Communities of the status of the Spanish Qualifications Framework (MECU). Finally, the Sectoral Conference on Education will promote agreements to improve the quality of the education system.

- **Sectoral Conference on Vocational Education and Training for Workers:** this is the former Sectoral Conference on the System of Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training for Employment, which aims to integrate the two VET systems, education and training for the realm of work, and is the cooperation body for coordinating policies on vocational training for workers and achieving maximum coherence and integration in terms of the implementation of the decisions taken.

Consultative and participatory bodies:

- **The State School Council**²¹ is the body for the participation of the educational community in the general programming of education and for advising the Government. Royal Decree 694/2007, of 1st June 2007, regulates the State School Council and Order ESD/3669/2008, of 9th December 2008, approves its operating regulations.

This body exercises its functions throughout the education system, with the exception of University Education and Higher Artistic Education. Its main activity is consultative, advisory and making proposals to the Government in relation to the different aspects of the education system. It also issues opinions and reports

²¹ See the reports on the state of the education system drawn up by the State School Council for the years 2022-2020. <https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/mc/cee/publicaciones/informes-del-sistemaeducativo.html>

on draft laws or regulations on educational matters, as occurred with the Draft Royal Decree 272/2022, of 12th April, MECU, whose opinion was issued on 12/03/2019.²²

In addition to the State Council, there are Regional School Councils and Municipal School Councils. The presidents of the Regional School Councils are members of the Participation Board of the State School Council. It is important to highlight the high degree of representativeness of the State Council by including, in addition, teachers, parents, pupils, administration and services staff, school heads, trade union organisations, employers' organisations, representatives of the State education administration, representatives of universities, representatives of local bodies, persons of recognised prestige in the field of education, representatives of women's organisations and the presidents of school councils at Autonomous Community level as councillors.

The additional provision of Organic Act 3/2022 of 31st March on the Organisation and Integration of Vocational Education and Training introduces the participation of the State School Council in the Vocational Education and Training system, reinforcing the institutional link between the education system and vocational qualifications.

- **General Council for Vocational Education and Training (CGFP).** This body was created by Act 1/1986 of 7th January and Royal Decree 1684/1997 of 7th November implements the Regulations of the General Council for Vocational Education and Training. In 2020, in parallel to the process of integration of vocational training systems, the competences of vocational training were unified in a single ministerial department, the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports, without prejudice to the competences of the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, established by Royal Decree 499/2020 of 28th April. From that moment on, the General Council for Vocational Education and Training is attached to the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports, through the General Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training.

Article 115 of Organic Act 3/2022, of 31st March, on the organisation and integration of Vocational Education and Training establishes that the General Council for Vocational Education and Training is the body for participation, assessment and evaluation of the Vocational Education and Training System, without prejudice to the competences of the State School Council.

Article 225 of Royal Decree 659/2023, of 18th July, which develops the organisation of the Vocational Education and Training System, highlights the tripartite nature of the General Council for Vocational Education and Training, with the participation of the most representative business and trade union organisations and public administrations. Furthermore, it will operate as an advisory body to the Government on vocational training.

²² See the 2020 State of the Education System Report (academic year 2019-2020).

Among the functions it must perform are the following (Article 226 of the aforementioned Royal Decree): draw up and propose strategies and priority lines of action within the framework of the Vocational Education and Training System at the state level; report on the projects for training offers of the vocational training degrees; evaluate the procedure and results of accreditations and competences acquired through work experience or other means; make proposals and recommendations and inform on the report on the state of the system; establish coordination with the General Council of the National Employment System; among others.

- **Council of Universities.** This body is attached to the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, through the General Secretariat for Universities, and is responsible for academic coordination, as well as cooperation, consultation and proposals on university matters. Royal Decree 1677/2009, of 13th November, approves the Regulations of the Council and highlights, among its functions, the reporting of the legal and regulatory provisions that affect the university system.
- **Other advisory councils.** The Higher Council for Artistic Education shall act as an advisory body to the State.

4.2.2. Criterion 2

There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualification levels of national qualifications frameworks or systems and the descriptors corresponding to an EQF level.

In order to respond to criterion 2, it is necessary to demonstrate a clear link between the qualification levels included in the MECU and the descriptors of the EQF, which subsequently allows for comparison and correlation with each of the qualifications linked to each level. For the development of this process, the following aspects were studied in depth:

- a. Firstly, the structure of qualifications in the MECU was analysed, considering three aspects:
 - The curriculum of the education being referred to, the level to which each education was assigned, the nature of each qualification (academic and vocational).
 - The relationship with other qualifications in terms of progression, within the set of qualifications in the education system.
 - The descriptors linked to the learning objectives and learning outcomes for each of the courses.
- b. Secondly, although the regulation already includes the reference between the MECU and the EQF levels, a comparative analysis of the learning objectives of each of the levels in the MECU structure and the level descriptors and their correspondence to the EQF level was undertaken. The comparison between the

learning objectives serves as a basis for identifying evidence in each of the degrees to be correlated.

- c. Thirdly, the triangulation that allows for the correlation between the Spanish qualifications, the situation in the MECU structure and the link with the EQF level. For this purpose, their previous location in the Spanish qualification framework was considered, starting from their position within the education system, and the descriptors of the learning objectives, which refer to the set of knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility.

Below we detail and set out the evidence for each of the phases addressed. First of all, we shall refer to the classifications and levels of the National Qualifications Framework. As mentioned in previous sections, Article 4 of the Royal Decree provides a description of each of the levels and sublevels into which the MECU is organised. The existence of levels and sublevels makes it possible to classify and order the typology of programmes according to their academic and/or professional links, as well as to differentiate qualifications within the same level. It also makes it possible to establish access routes to other courses at subsequent levels.

Chart 13. Academic and Professional Programme and validity and access to other levels

Levels and sublevels		Academic and professional programmes	Validity and access to other levels
Level 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificates corresponding to primary education 	They allow access to Level 2.
Level 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official certificate with the years studied and level of acquisition of competences of Compulsory Secondary Education when the School Leaving Certificate has not been obtained. 	They allow access to Level 3.
Level 3	Sub-level 3 A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate Diploma. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree D- Basic VET Diploma. 	They allow access to Level 4.
	Sub-level 3 B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree C- Professional Certificate -Level 1 (former certificates of professionalism). 	They do not allow access to Level 4 on their own.
Level 4	Sub-level 4 A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baccalaureate Diploma • Degree D- Intermediate VET Diploma. • Professional Music Education Technician Diploma • Professional Dance Education Technician Diploma • Technician in Plastic Arts and Design Diploma • Sports Technician Diploma 	They allow access to Level 5 education.

	Sub-level 4 B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree C- Professional Certificate -Level 2 (former certificates of professionalism). 	They do not allow access to Level 5 on their own.
	Sub-level 4 C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree E- VET Specialisation courses for those in possession of an Intermediate VET diploma 	They do not allow access to Level 5 on their own.
Level 5	Sub-level 5 A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree D- Higher VET Diploma. Higher Technician in Plastic Arts and Design Diploma Higher Sports Technician Diploma 	They allow access to education at Level 6. Corresponds to MECES level 1
	Sub-level 5 B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree C- Professional Certificate -Level 3 (former certificates of professionalism). 	They do not allow access to Level 6 on their own.
	Sub-level 5 C	Degree E- VET Specialisation courses for those in possession of a Higher VET diploma	They do not allow access to Level 6 by themselves.
Level 6		University Degree Higher Degree in Higher Artistic Education.	They allow access to education at Level 7. Corresponds to MECES level 2
Level 7		Degree of at least 300 ECTS credits comprising at least 60 ECTS credits at Master's level, which has obtained this level of qualification by resolution of the Council of Universities. University Master's Degree. Master's Degree in Artistic Education	They allow access to education at Level 8. Corresponds to MECES level 3
Level 8		Doctorate Degree	Corresponds to MECES level 4

Comparative analysis of MECU and EQF:

MECU Level 1 – EQF Level 1

Levels 1 of the MECU and EQF are closely related, as both define basic and general competences focused on the minimum skills necessary to cope in everyday life, with a very limited degree of autonomy and responsibility.

Both the MECU Level 1 and the EQF Level 1 describe the most basic level of competences. Both frameworks emphasise the need for individuals to possess the fundamental knowledge and skills to understand and manage everyday situations and perform simple tasks. Supervision and working in structured contexts are common to both levels, reflecting a training approach aimed at individuals who are starting their development in education or work, with few responsibilities and a low level of autonomy.

Levels 1 of the MECU and the EQF are aligned in their focus on providing individuals with the basic tools to participate in society and to carry out simple everyday tasks. Both frameworks stress the need for constant supervision and a structured environment for learning and work, limiting individuals' autonomy to simple, predefined tasks. The relationship between these two levels is evident, as both seek to equip individuals with the essential skills to function in everyday life in a functional approach.

The relationship is justified and explained in the three main areas: knowledge, skills, and responsibility and autonomy:

- **Knowledge:** In MECU Level 1, it is stated that the individual should possess sufficient knowledge to understand the reality of the immediate environment and to meet the basic needs that arise in everyday situations.

In EQF Level 1, knowledge is described as basic general knowledge, necessary to cope with simple situations.

At both levels, the type of knowledge is basic and general. It is oriented towards understanding the immediate environment and the practical skills essential for performing simple tasks and solving everyday situations.

Both frameworks agree that this level does not require specialised or deep understanding, but functional literacy to meet every day needs.

- **Skills:** In MECU Level 1, skills include reading, writing and basic numeracy, the ability to communicate in a basic way and to analyse the consequences of one's actions in simple contexts, as well as to use information technology in a basic way.

In EQF Level 1, it is described that individuals should possess basic practical skills necessary to perform simple tasks and solve problems by following basic instructions or procedures.

Capacities at both levels focus on basic skills needed for everyday life. In both the MECU and the EQF, emphasis is placed on the ability to perform simple tasks, such as basic communication, the use of tools such as technology at a minimal level, and simple problem solving.

Both frameworks recognise the importance of these skills in facilitating performance in a structured and supervised environment.

- **Responsibility and Autonomy:** In MECU Level 1, it is specified that individuals must work or study under direct supervision in a structured context and must demonstrate appropriate attitudes to manage everyday life.

In EQF Level 1, individuals work or study under direct supervision, following instructions in a structured context.

Both frameworks reflect that, at this level, the individual does not act autonomously. Tasks and responsibilities are carried out under constant supervision and in a highly controlled environment. This is indicative of an extremely low level of autonomy and responsibility, suitable for simple, routine tasks that do not require complex decision-making.

MECU Level 2 – EQF Level 2

Both MECU Level 2 and EQF Level 2 describe profiles of individuals with limited knowledge, skills and autonomy, but sufficient to cope with common situations in specific professional or academic contexts. The similarity between levels 2 of the MECU and the EQF is justified because both describe a profile of limited knowledge and practical skills, with a capacity for autonomy restricted to simple contexts under supervision.

In both MECU and EQF, individuals' performance is situated in common contexts or everyday situations, where the tasks and problems they face are predictable and straightforward. Both frameworks describe individuals at this level as having the ability to perform in familiar and structured situations. This reflects that both frameworks are designed for people who have not yet reached a high level of specialisation or ability to cope with complex or novel situations, which reinforces the similarity between the two levels.

Despite the differences in detail, both frameworks are aligned in their aim to train people who still require support to perform effectively in everyday tasks, but who already show the ability to apply basic knowledge and solve simple problems.

The justification for this similarity can be based on the following points:

Knowledge: MECU and EQF mention that individuals at this level possess basic knowledge in a specific field, be it professional, academic or formative. This knowledge is not advanced, but sufficient to understand and solve common problems in a given area. Thus, both show that an individual's knowledge is limited to fundamental aspects within a particular field, and the learner is not expected to have a deep or general understanding of many disciplines. This focus on specific knowledge demonstrates that the purpose of both frameworks is to establish a solid foundation for solving everyday problems.

Skills: Both levels refer to the ability to apply acquired basic knowledge to perform simple tasks and solve common problems. In the MECU, this is expressed through the application of knowledge to solve problems and the basic use of technologies, while in

the EQF it refers to basic cognitive and practical skills for the use of simple tools. In both MECU and EQF, then, individuals are able to perform basic tasks and solve problems with the support of simple rules and tools. This shows that both levels share a similar expectation of practical skills, focused on everyday, non-complex tasks, which underlines the profile of an apprentice or worker who still requires considerable guidance.

Responsibility and Autonomy: In both frameworks, it is mentioned that individuals at level 2 can work or study under supervision, albeit with a certain degree of autonomy and responsibility. In the ECUF, this responsibility includes elements such as respect for the rules of coexistence and risk prevention, while in the EQF, supervision and moderate autonomy are emphasised.

Although the EQF adds more detail on responsibility for safety and security issues, both frameworks agree that individuals still need to work under direct supervision, reflecting a limited level of autonomy. This similarity in the need for supervision indicates that at both levels, individuals are at a formative stage where they can perform simple functions, but do not yet have sufficient autonomy to act fully independently.

MECU Level 3 – EQF Level 3

MECU Level and EQF Level 3 are comparable as they both describe a profile of a person with broader knowledge and more developed skills in a specific context of work or study, who assumes certain responsibilities and can adapt to different situations with an increasing degree of autonomy.

Both qualification frameworks present an evolution compared to the previous levels, describing individuals who have reached an intermediate level of knowledge, skills and responsibility. These individuals have a broad knowledge of the principles and processes of their field, apply this knowledge to solve problems in predictable environments, and take responsibility for their work or study, adapting their behaviour to circumstances with a degree of autonomy.

Although MECU provides a more detailed description in aspects such as safety, environment and empathy, both levels coincide in the general expectations of knowledge, skills and autonomy, which justifies their being considered equivalent in their approach.

The justification for this similarity can be structured in three key points:

Knowledge:

In the MECU Level 3, it is mentioned that the individual should have knowledge of general facts, principles, processes and concepts in a professional, academic or training field, or in broader areas such as linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, social or artistic.

EQF Level 3 describes similar knowledge, focusing on facts, principles, processes and general concepts in a particular field of work or study.

Both levels coincide in that the individual's knowledge is not only basic, but encompasses general principles and more complex processes that allow understanding

not only of the specific field of study or work, but also of interdisciplinary concepts. This reflects a broadening and deepening of knowledge compared to the previous levels.

Skills:

At MECU Level 3, skills include the application of general knowledge to perform both simple and complex tasks in predictable environments, problem solving through the selection of methods and tools, the use of technologies for different purposes, and the ability to search for and analyse specific information in order to solve relatively simple problems. The ability to create, innovate and take initiatives in the professional or academic environment is also highlighted.

EQF Level 3 mentions a range of cognitive and practical skills needed to perform tasks and solve problems through the selection and application of basic methods, tools and materials.

Although MECU provides a more detailed description, both levels require the individual to apply his or her knowledge to solve problems in specific contexts and by selecting the appropriate tools for each task. Both frameworks indicate that the level of practical skills is more developed than in the previous levels, enabling individuals to deal with somewhat more complex situations and make informed decisions.

Responsibility and Autonomy:

In MECU Level 3, it is mentioned that the individual can work or study both individually and in a team, taking responsibility under moderate supervision and following relatively simple guidelines, but showing initiative and organisational skills. Emphasis is also placed on adapting behaviour to circumstances, with responsibility in areas such as risk prevention, safety, empathy and cooperation, and care for the environment.

In EQF Level 3, this refers to the assumption of responsibility for performing tasks in work or study activities, and the ability to adapt behaviour to circumstances in order to solve problems.

Both levels agree that individuals have moderate responsibility and can perform tasks both individually and in teams, adapting their behaviour to the situations they face. Although MECU adds more detail on responsibility towards the environment and health, the EQF also highlights the importance of increasing autonomy, noting that individuals at this level are able to take the initiative to solve problems, albeit with some supervision.

MECU Level 4 – EQF Level 4

Levels 4 of MECU and EQF are comparable in terms of the breadth of knowledge, specialised skills and increasing responsibility expected of individuals at this level.

Both levels are aligned in terms of their expectation of more specialised knowledge, advanced problem-solving skills, and greater autonomy and responsibility. Both levels describe people who are not only able to manage their own learning or work, but also to supervise others and improve processes in predictable but potentially changing contexts. Responsibility for safety and the environment is a shared element, and both frameworks stress the importance of self-management in professional or academic

development. Although MECU provides a more detailed description in some respects, the structure and purpose of the two levels are clearly equivalent.

Levels 4 of MECU and EQF are closely related as they both describe individuals who have achieved a significant degree of specialisation in an area of work or study, have the ability to apply that knowledge to solve complex problems, and are responsible for supervising the work of others. As individuals move towards greater autonomy and responsibility, both systems reflect a similar progression in terms of skills and knowledge, thus justifying their equivalence.

A more detailed comparison between Level 4 in the both frameworks considering the dimensions of knowledge, capacities and responsibility and autonomy can be further justified and explained:

Knowledge:

In MECU Level 4, specialised knowledge of facts, principles, processes and concepts in broad contexts, whether in professional, academic or training contexts, is mentioned.

EQF Level 4 also requires theoretical and factual knowledge in broad contexts within a specific field of work or study.

Both frameworks emphasise that individuals at level 4 possess deeper and more specialised knowledge, enabling them to understand not only basic concepts, but also principles and processes in a broader area of work or study. This focus on more specialised and contextual knowledge demonstrates a similarity in the way both systems rate progress in terms of theoretical and practical understanding within a field.

Skills:

At MECU Level 4, individuals are able to analyse and apply specific knowledge to solve problems or carry out activities in general contexts or those related to their professional or academic specialisation. Their ability to communicate knowledge, skills and feelings in complex situations, both concretely and abstractly, using varied and complex resources, is also highlighted. In addition, mention is made of their ability to supervise the routine work of others and to take responsibility for evaluating and improving work or study activities.

EQF Level 4 mentions that individuals should have a range of cognitive and practical skills needed to find solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study. Supervision of the routine work of others and responsibility for the improvement of work or study activities are also emphasised.

In both frameworks, cognitive and practical skills are more advanced and oriented towards complex problem solving and supervision of others. This supervision involves not only guiding others in their work, but also taking responsibility for improving the activities performed, reflecting an evolution in leadership and decision-making skills. In addition, both levels emphasise the ability to manage information and communicate effectively, underlining an increased competence in handling both predictable and complex situations.

Responsibility and Autonomy:

At MECU Level 4, the individual assumes self-management of their training in a field of study or vocational field, showing maturity to progress to higher levels of learning. In addition, they are expected to take responsibility for the work of others, critically evaluating new possibilities for improvement. Emphasis is also placed on responsibility for risk prevention, the safety of self and others, and the protection of the environment in the context of the activity in which he/she is engaged.

EQF Level 4 highlights self-management in work or study contexts which, although predictable, may change. It also mentions monitoring the routine work of others and taking responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities.

Both frameworks highlight the capacity for self-management in work or study, implying that individuals at this level have the ability to manage their own development and activities with a considerable degree of autonomy. This self-management is accompanied by the responsibility to monitor and improve the work of others, indicating that these individuals have reached sufficient maturity to lead routine tasks and evaluate the performance of others, thus improving processes. In addition, both systems emphasise responsibility for safety and the environment, showing a focus on sustainability and well-being in the workplace or study.

MECU Level 5 – EQF Level 5

Levels 5 of the MECU and EQF are clearly related in terms of expectations of specialised knowledge, advanced skills and increasing autonomy. Both frameworks describe individuals who possess more advanced knowledge and skills in a specific area, as well as a considerable capacity to manage complex situations and to change independently.

Both MECU Level 5 and EQF Level 5 describe individuals who have achieved an advanced degree of specialisation in their field, with a critical understanding that enables them to manage and transfer knowledge effectively. The cognitive and practical skills required to solve complex problems and adapt to unforeseen situations are similar at both levels, as are the responsibility and autonomy to supervise activities and people, and to continuously improve performance. The ability to act autonomously, to manage personal learning and to innovate are shared expectations in both frameworks, underlining their close relationship.

Levels 5 of the MECU and EQF are aligned in terms of specialised knowledge, advanced creative problem-solving skills and increasing responsibility both in their own domain and in supervising others. Both frameworks state that individuals at this level are autonomous, able to lead and manage complex situations, and to innovate in their areas of specialisation. This justifies that both levels are equivalent and correspond in their objectives and expectations.

The relationship between the two levels is justified along the three main descriptors: knowledge, capacities, and responsibility and autonomy.

Knowledge:

MECU Level 5 describes individuals as possessing specialist knowledge in a professional or study area, with a critical understanding that enables them to interact

and transfer knowledge. It also highlights the development of creativity, personal initiative and entrepreneurship.

EQF Level 5 mentions that individuals should possess extensive theoretical and factual knowledge in a specific field of work or study, being aware of the limits of their specialisation.

Both levels emphasise in-depth and specialised knowledge in a particular area. In the MECU, the ability to transfer knowledge and apply critical understanding to the work or academic context is added, which is reflected in the EQF by mentioning awareness of the limits of specialisation. Both frameworks emphasise that individuals have a deep understanding of their field, which enables them to advance independently in their work or study.

Skills:

MECU Level 5 highlights that individuals are able to analyse the information needed to respond to anticipated and unforeseen situations, seeking creative and innovative solutions. In addition, the ability to communicate knowledge, ideas and activities in professional contexts to colleagues, supervisors, clients and people under their responsibility is noted.

EQF Level 5 describes individuals as possessing the full range of cognitive and practical skills needed to find creative solutions to abstract problems, implying an advanced level of competence in the field of work or study.

Both levels require advanced analytical and problem-solving skills, particularly when faced with complex or unforeseen situations. In both frameworks, creativity and innovation are central to problem solving. In addition, the importance of effective communication in professional contexts, both to supervise and coordinate activities, is emphasised, reinforcing individuals' ability to manage complex situations and transmit knowledge clearly and effectively.

Responsibility and Autonomy:

The MECU Level 5 states that individuals should possess learning strategies that enable them to progress autonomously, with the maturity to innovate and progress to higher levels of training. They are also expected to act autonomously in developing work procedures and in coordinating and supervising technical activities.

EQF Level 5 highlights management and supervision in work or study contexts, especially in situations where unpredictable changes may occur. It also mentions reviewing and developing one's own and others' performance.

Both frameworks reflect that individuals are responsible not only for their own learning and development, but also for the performance of others in their work or academic environment. Autonomy in managing complex activities and the ability to adapt to changing or unforeseen situations are emphasised, reflecting a high level of maturity and responsibility. The EQF adds the idea that these individuals should be able to review and improve both their own performance and that of others, which also aligns with the supervision and coordination mentioned in the MECU.

MECU Level 6 – EQF Level 6

Levels 6 of MECU and EQF (European Qualifications Framework) are closely related, as both focus on the development of advanced knowledge, complex skills and greater responsibility and autonomy in the management of activities and projects in professional or academic contexts. These levels describe individuals who not only have in-depth mastery in their field of study or work, but are also able to handle complex and unforeseen situations and to lead and coordinate teams.

Both MECU Level 6 and EQF Level 6 coincide in the complexity of the knowledge, skills and responsibilities expected of individuals. Both levels describe people with a high degree of specialisation in their area of study or work, able to solve complex problems autonomously and to lead teams or projects in unpredictable contexts. Creativity and innovation are key aspects at both levels, as well as the ability to manage critical decisions and self-manage continuous learning and development. These similarities reflect a clear alignment between the two qualification frameworks.

Levels 6 of the MECU and the EQF are equivalent in terms of the complexity of knowledge, advanced skills and level of autonomy and responsibility expected of individuals. Both frameworks emphasise the ability to apply advanced knowledge in complex and unpredictable situations, creative problem solving, and responsibility in decision-making and team management. This justifies that both levels correspond and are aligned in their objectives and expectations.

The relationship is justified along the three main descriptors: knowledge, competencies, and responsibility and autonomy.

Knowledge:

MECU Level 6 highlights that individuals have acquired advanced knowledge and a thorough understanding of the theoretical and methodological aspects in their field of study, reaching the frontier of knowledge in that area.

The EQF Level 6 also mentions that individuals should possess advanced knowledge in a field of work or study, with a critical understanding of the underlying theories and principles.

Both levels require individuals to have in-depth and specialised knowledge in their area of work or study, with a critical understanding of the principles and theories underlying the field. This implies not only theoretical knowledge, but also practical application reflecting a sound understanding of advanced methodological issues.

Skills:

MECU Level 6 states that individuals should be able to apply their knowledge, understanding and problem-solving skills in complex and specialised areas, using creative and innovative ideas. The ability to collect and interpret data and to deal with complex situations, developing new solutions in the academic or professional environment is also mentioned.

EQF Level 6 focuses on the development of advanced skills that demonstrate the mastery and innovation needed to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study.

Both frameworks align in terms of individuals' abilities to apply advanced knowledge innovatively and creatively in complex and unpredictable contexts. The skills highlighted include the ability to solve problems using advanced methods and innovation, which is central to both the MECU and the EQF. In addition, both levels stress the importance of collecting and analysing data critically, enabling individuals to substantiate their conclusions in a robust manner.

Responsibility and Autonomy:

MECU Level 6 emphasises that individuals should be able to deal with complex situations in the academic or professional environment, develop new solutions, and communicate knowledge and solutions clearly and accurately to different audiences, both specialised and non-specialised. They should also be able to identify their own learning needs and organise their learning autonomously.

EQF Level 6 describes individuals as responsible for managing complex technical or professional activities and making decisions in unpredictable contexts. Responsibility for managing one's own and others' professional development is also mentioned.

Both levels emphasise a high degree of autonomy and responsibility in managing complex projects and activities. In the MECU, emphasis is placed on the ability to communicate effectively and to self-manage one's own learning, while the EQF emphasises responsibility for making decisions in unpredictable situations and for managing the professional development of teams. Both levels reflect a move towards greater independence and leadership in the professional environment, with individuals taking on a guiding and supervisory role.

MECU Level 7 – EQF Level 7

Levels 7 of MECU and EQF have a clear correspondence in terms of the advanced competences they require in relation to specialised knowledge, advanced skills and the degree of responsibility and autonomy. Both levels emphasise the ability of individuals to work in highly specialised contexts, often in research or innovation, and to develop and apply new approaches in complex and challenging situations.

Both MECU Level 7 and EQF Level 7 refer to individuals with advanced and specialised knowledge that enables them to operate at the frontier of knowledge in their field. At both levels, individuals have the ability to solve complex problems and innovate, using advanced methodologies and applying their knowledge in imprecise or multidisciplinary environments. In addition, autonomy and responsibility in the management of complex projects and in the development of both their career and work teams are essential characteristics reflected in both frameworks.

Levels 7 of the MECU and the EQF are aligned in their focus on the specialised knowledge, advanced skills, responsibility and autonomy expected of individuals at this level. Both frameworks emphasise the ability of individuals to work in complex and multidisciplinary contexts, with a strong capacity for innovation and knowledge creation. Strategic project management and decision-making in unpredictable situations are key components that justify the correspondence between these two levels.

The relationship between these two levels can be further explained considering the three main descriptors: knowledge, capacities and responsibility and autonomy.

Knowledge:

MECU Level 7 states that individuals should have acquired advanced knowledge in a scientific and technological research context or in highly specialised fields. This knowledge should enable a detailed understanding of the theoretical, practical and methodological aspects of one or more fields of study.

EQF Level 7 also focuses on highly specialised knowledge, which in many cases is at the cutting edge of knowledge in a field of study or work, providing the basis for original thinking or research.

Both levels reflect that individuals should possess in-depth and specialised knowledge that will enable them to work at the forefront of research or professional practice. This knowledge is expected to be the basis for original contributions to their field of study or work. The ability to handle complex theories and advanced methodologies is key at both levels, underlining the need to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field.

Skills:

MECU Level 7 highlights the ability to apply and integrate knowledge in new or undefined environments, as well as the ability to develop new innovative working methodologies, often in multidisciplinary contexts. In addition, it highlights the ability to evaluate and select scientific theories and make judgements with limited information, including ethical and social reflections.

EQF Level 7 also highlights specialised skills in solving complex problems through research or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and processes. Individuals are expected to integrate knowledge from different areas and to address complex issues in a strategic way.

At both levels, individuals' capabilities include complex problem solving and innovation in knowledge creation. The ability to integrate different areas of knowledge and to apply advanced methodologies in novel or imprecise situations is a central element. This implies that individuals not only apply what they have learned, but are also able to create new solutions adapted to complex and interdisciplinary contexts, which is essential in research and technological development activities.

Responsibility and Autonomy:

MECU Level 7 states that individuals should have sufficient autonomy to participate in research projects and scientific or technological collaborations, including interdisciplinary contexts. In addition, they are expected to be able to take responsibility for their own professional development and specialisation.

EQF Level 7 describes that individuals should be able to manage and transform complex work contexts and take responsibility for developing professional practices or knowledge. Strategic responsibility for team performance is also mentioned.

Both levels underline the importance of complex project management and strategic decision-making in unpredictable contexts. Individuals at this level must not only

manage their own learning and development, but also take responsibility for the development of others and progress in their field of expertise. This implies significant autonomy and the ability to lead complex teams or projects in environments where strategic innovation is required.

MECU Level 8 – EQF Level 8

Levels 8 of MECU and EQF are the most advanced levels in their respective frameworks and are aligned in terms of the competences required for cutting-edge scientific research and innovation leadership.

Both MECU Level 8 and EQF Level 8 define professionals operating at the pinnacle of knowledge and research. These individuals not only master the most advanced aspects of their fields of study, but are also responsible for innovating and transforming existing practices. Their skills include critical evaluation and synthesis of complex ideas, enabling them to solve problems in unpredictable contexts. In addition, at both levels, leadership skills in research teams and complex projects are valued, with an emphasis on ethical responsibility and autonomy.

Levels 8 of the MECU and EQF are closely aligned in their emphasis on cutting-edge knowledge, advanced skills and responsibility in innovation and team management. Both frameworks require individuals to be leaders in their fields, capable of creating new knowledge and innovative solutions through advanced research, always acting with a strong ethical and professional commitment.

The relationship between the two levels can be justified and explained in three key areas: knowledge, competencies, and responsibility and autonomy.

Knowledge:

At MECU Level 8, individuals are expected to have acquired advanced knowledge at the frontier of knowledge, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the theoretical, practical and methodological aspects in one or more fields of internationally recognised scientific research.

In EQF Level 8, knowledge is also situated at the most advanced frontier in a particular field of work or study, and at the point of articulation between different fields of knowledge.

Both levels emphasise that individuals should be operating at the highest level of knowledge in their field of study or work. This includes the ability to integrate knowledge from different disciplines and contribute to the advancement of that knowledge, reflecting a frontier research approach, where new ideas and theories are generated that push the boundaries of existing knowledge. In both cases, professionals are expected to be able to make original and recognised contributions in their fields.

Skills:

MECU Level 8 emphasises the ability of individuals to make an original and significant contribution to research, being able to design and carry out research projects involving critical analysis and synthesis of complex new ideas, with a thorough understanding of the contexts in which they work.

EQF Level 8 also emphasises advanced synthesis and evaluation skills needed to solve critical problems in research or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practices.

At both levels, individuals must possess the most advanced skills for critical evaluation and synthesis of complex ideas, enabling them to solve highly complex problems and generate new solutions. These capacities are not only limited to the scientific field, but also involve the ability to redefine existing practices or to propose new methodologies within their professional or academic field. Ultimately, both frameworks require professionals at this level to be at the forefront of research and innovation.

Responsibility and Autonomy:

At MECU Level 8, individuals are expected to have developed sufficient autonomy to initiate, manage and lead innovative research teams and scientific collaborations, both nationally and internationally, with a multidisciplinary approach. They are also required to work with scientific integrity and social responsibility.

EQF Level 8 describes significant responsibility for leading in complex work or study contexts and developing new ideas or processes. It also highlights the need to demonstrate authority and commitment to academic and professional integrity.

Both levels agree that individuals must demonstrate advanced autonomy and significant authority in the management of complex projects. They are expected to be able to lead teams and transform their fields through innovation and the development of new ideas. In addition, scientific and professional integrity is a crucial component in both frameworks, underlining the importance of ethical and social responsibility in their work, reflecting an ongoing commitment to the advancement of knowledge and its impact on society.

Chart 14. Comparison of MECU and EQF descriptors.

MECU LEVEL 1			EQF LEVEL 1		
Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
<p>1. Sufficient knowledge to understand the reality of the immediate environment and to satisfy the basic needs that arise in everyday situations.</p>	<p>1. Read, write and apply basic calculation techniques.</p> <p>2. Communicate in a basic way, expressing and understanding simple messages and getting by in everyday situations.</p> <p>3. Analyse the consequences of one's own actions in simple contexts.</p> <p>4. Use information and communication technologies in a very basic way to solve simple tasks in everyday life situations.</p>	<p>1. Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context.</p> <p>2. Adequate attitudes to manage in everyday life, as well as to understand the reality of their environment.</p>	<p>Basic general knowledge</p>	<p>Basic skills needed to perform simple tasks</p>	<p>Work or study under direct supervision in a structured context.</p>
MECU LEVEL 2			EQF LEVEL 2		
Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
<p>1. Basic knowledge in a specific professional, academic or training field</p>	<p>1. Apply basic knowledge to carry out simple tasks.</p> <p>2. Solve common problems in a specific area of work.</p> <p>3. Communicate knowledge, skills, feelings and activities in common contexts, through different artistic representations and expressions.</p> <p>4. Analyse the consequences of one's own actions and those of others in ordinary contexts.</p>	<p>1. Work or study, individually or in a team, under supervision, with some degree of autonomy and initiative.</p> <p>2. Responsibility in everyday situations which require a certain capacity for analysis and assessment.</p> <p>3. Respect for the rules of coexistence and democratic values.</p> <p>4. Responsibility with regard to risk prevention, own safety and the</p>	<p>Basic factual knowledge in a specific field of work or study</p>	<p>Basic cognitive and practical skills needed to use useful information to perform tasks and solve common problems with the help of simple rules and tools.</p>	<p>Work or study under supervision with a certain degree of autonomy.</p>

	<p>5. Use the necessary information to solve current problems within their professional, academic or training sphere.</p> <p>6. Use technological resources in a basic way for different purposes and objectives in common contexts.</p>	<p>safety of others and the environmental protection of the area in which the corresponding activity is carried out.</p>			
MECU LEVEL 3			EQF LEVEL 3		
Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
<p>1. Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts in a specific professional, academic or training field or in different fields of study: linguistic, mathematical, scientific-technological, natural environment, social, cultural and artistic.</p>	<p>1. Apply general knowledge to perform relatively simple or complex tasks in predictable environments.</p> <p>2. Solve problems and carry out tasks with the necessary skills through the selection and application of methods, tools, materials and general information in specific contexts.</p> <p>3. Analyse the consequences of one's own actions and those of others in predictable contexts.</p> <p>4. Use information and communication technologies in a basic way for different purposes and objectives in habitual or predictable contexts in the personal, public, professional or academic sphere.</p> <p>5. Search, in a guided manner, and analyse the specific information necessary to evaluate and solve relatively simple problems within the professional, academic or training sphere.</p>	<p>1. Work or study, individually or in a team, assuming responsibilities with some supervision and following relatively simple guidelines, showing some initiative and organisational skills, in a specific professional, academic or training field.</p> <p>2. Adaptation of one's own behaviour to circumstances in a responsible way in order to solve problems and to understand others.</p> <p>3. Strengthening of healthy habits and habits of respect and protection of health, consumption, and care for living beings and the environment, in the area in which the corresponding activity is carried out.</p> <p>4. Empathy and cooperation, responsibility and initiative in the professional, academic or training sphere in common situations.</p>	<p>Knowledge of general facts, principles, processes and concepts in a particular field of work or study.</p>	<p>Range of cognitive and practical skills needed to perform tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying methods, tools, materials and basic information.</p>	<p>Assumption of responsibility for performing tasks in work or study activities</p> <p>Adapting one's own behaviour to circumstances in order to solve problems</p>

	<p>6. Create, innovate and take initiatives, in a professional, academic or training environment.</p> <p>7. Adapt one's own behaviour to the circumstances to solve problems in a specific context with respect to the rules of coexistence and democratic values.</p>	<p>5. Responsibility with regard to risk prevention, own safety and the safety of others and the environmental protection of the environment in which the corresponding activity is carried out.</p>			
MECU LEVEL 4			EQF LEVEL 4		
Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
<p>1. Specialised knowledge of facts, principles, processes and concepts in broad contexts in the professional, academic or training sphere.</p>	<p>1. Analyse and apply specific knowledge and information to carry out a set of activities or solve specific problems defined in general contexts or related to the professional or academic specialisation.</p> <p>2. Communicate knowledge, skills, feelings and activities effectively in foreseeable or complex situations, on concrete and abstract aspects of general topics or subjects or of one's own interest or specialisation, with a variety of resources which enable them to appreciate and express different shades of meaning and intention, by means of varied and complex resources and forms of expression.</p>	<p>1. Self-management of training in a field of study or vocational field, with maturity to progress to further learning and training at higher-levels.</p> <p>2. Responsibility towards training that allows them to value new possibilities and carry out activities autonomously.</p> <p>3. Responsibility towards other people's work, enabling them to critically evaluate new possibilities in order to introduce improvements.</p> <p>4. Responsibility with regard to risk prevention, own safety and the safety of others and the</p>	<p>Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts in a particular field of work or study.</p>	<p>Range of cognitive and practical skills needed to find solutions to specific problems in a particular field of work or study.</p>	<p>Self-management according to defined instructions in generally predictable, but potentially changing, work or study contexts</p> <p>Supervision of the routine work of others, assuming certain responsibilities for the evaluation and improvement of work/study activities</p>

	<p>3. Carry out a relatively autonomous search for and analysis of information and the application of this and other specific knowledge necessary to evaluate and respond to problems within their specific and specialised academic, professional or training field.</p> <p>4. Supervise the routine work of other people by assuming some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities.</p> <p>5. Analyse the consequences of one's own actions and those of others in specific or complex contexts.</p> <p>6. Create, innovate, take the initiative and assume risks in the resolution of problems in the academic, professional or training field and in the management of specific projects in a professional field or area of knowledge.</p>	<p>environmental protection of the environment in which the corresponding activity is carried out.</p>			
MECU LEVEL 5 (Article 5.2. Royal Decree 1027/2011)			EQF LEVEL 5		
Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
<p>Possess knowledge by specialising in a professional or study area, with critical understanding for interaction and knowledge transfer, as well as for the</p>	<p>Possess the ability to analyse the information necessary to evaluate and respond to foreseen and unforeseen situations, by seeking well-founded, creative and innovative solutions within a field of study or profession.</p> <p>Be able to communicate their knowledge, ideas, skills and activities in professional contexts to peers,</p>	<p>Possess the necessary learning strategies to advance in their training autonomously, with the maturity to innovate in their application and progress in learning and training to higher levels.</p>	<p>Extensive factual and theoretical expertise in a particular field of work or study, being aware of the limits of such expertise</p>	<p>Full range of cognitive and practical skills needed to find creative solutions to abstract problems</p>	<p>Management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where unpredictable changes occur.</p> <p>Review and development of own and others' performance</p>

<p>development of creativity, personal initiative and entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Apply and integrate their artistic, technological or sporting knowledge in the definition and development of work procedures, in the artistic or work environment in an autonomous manner and with responsibility for the coordination and supervision of the technical work.</p>	<p>supervisors, clients and people under their responsibility.</p>				
MECU LEVEL 6 (Article 6 Royal Decree 1027/2011)			EQF LEVEL 6		
Learning outcomes		Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy	
<p>a) have acquired advanced knowledge and demonstrated an understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects and methodology of work in their field of study to a depth that reaches the leading edge of knowledge</p> <p>b) be able, by means of arguments or procedures developed and supported by themselves, to apply their knowledge, understanding and problem-solving skills in complex or professional and specialised areas of work requiring the use of creative and innovative ideas</p> <p>c) have the ability to collect and interpret data and information on which to base their conclusions, including, where necessary and relevant, reflection on social, scientific or ethical issues in their field of study;</p> <p>d) be able to cope with complex situations or those requiring the development of new solutions in the academic, work or professional environment within their field of study</p>		<p>Advanced knowledge in a field of work or study that requires a critical understanding of theories and principles</p>	<p>Advanced skills that demonstrate the mastery and innovation skills needed to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work and study.</p>	<p>Management of complex technical or professional activities or projects, assuming decision-making responsibilities in unpredictable work or study contexts.</p> <p>Assumption of responsibility for managing the professional</p>	

<p>e) know how to communicate clearly and precisely knowledge, methodologies, ideas, problems and solutions in their field of study to all types of audiences (specialised or not)</p> <p>f) be able to identify their own training needs in their field of study and work or professional environment and to organise their own learning with a high degree of autonomy in all types of contexts (structured or not).</p>			development of individuals and groups
MECU LEVEL 7 (Article 7 Royal Decree 1027/2011)	EQF LEVEL 7		
Learning outcomes	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and Autonomy
<p>a) have acquired advanced knowledge and demonstrated, in a scientific and technological research or highly specialised context, a detailed and well-founded understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects and methodology of work in one or more fields of study</p> <p>b) be able to apply and integrate their knowledge, understanding, scientific background and problem-solving skills in new and imprecisely defined environments, including multidisciplinary research and highly specialised professional contexts</p> <p>c) know how to evaluate and select the appropriate scientific theory and the precise methodology of their fields of study in order to formulate judgements on the basis of incomplete or limited information, including, when necessary and relevant, a reflection on the social or ethical responsibility linked to the solution proposed in each case</p> <p>d) be able to predict and control the evolution of complex situations by developing new and innovative working methodologies adapted to the specific scientific/research, technological or professional field, generally multidisciplinary, in which they carry out their activity</p> <p>e) know how to transmit in a clear and unambiguous way to a specialised or non-specialised public, results from scientific and technological research or from the field of the most advanced innovation, as well as the most relevant foundations on which they are based</p> <p>f) have developed sufficient autonomy to participate in research projects and scientific or technological collaborations within their thematic field, in interdisciplinary contexts and, where appropriate, with a high component of knowledge transfer</p> <p>g) be able to assume responsibility for their own professional development and specialisation in one or more fields of study.</p>	<p>Highly specialised knowledge, some of it at the cutting edge of knowledge in a particular field of work or study, which lays the foundation for original thought or research</p> <p>Critical awareness of issues of knowledge in a particular field and at the point of articulation between different fields</p>	<p>Specialised problem-solving skills in research or innovation for the development of new knowledge and processes, and for the integration of knowledge in different areas</p>	<p>Managing and transforming complex, unpredictable and strategically challenging work or study contexts</p> <p>Assumption of responsibility for the development of knowledge or professional practices and for reviewing the strategic performance of teams</p>

MECU LEVEL 8 (Article Royal Decree 1027/2011)	EQF LEVEL 8		
Learning outcomes	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility and AUtonomy
<p>a) have acquired advanced knowledge at the frontier of knowledge and demonstrated, in the context of internationally recognised scientific research, a thorough, detailed and well-founded understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects and scientific methodology in one or more research fields;</p> <p>b) have made an original and significant contribution to scientific research in their field of knowledge and that this contribution has been recognised as such by the international scientific community;</p> <p>c) have demonstrated that they are capable of designing a research project with which to carry out a critical analysis and evaluation of imprecise situations in which to apply their contributions and their working knowledge and methodology to produce a synthesis of new and complex ideas leading to a deeper understanding of the research context in which they are working;</p> <p>d) have developed sufficient autonomy to initiate, manage and lead innovative research teams and projects and national or international scientific collaborations, within their subject area, in multidisciplinary contexts and, where appropriate, with a high component of knowledge transfer;</p> <p>e) have shown that they are capable of carrying out their research activity with social responsibility and scientific integrity;</p> <p>f) have shown that they are capable of participating in international scientific discussions in their field of knowledge and of disseminating the results of their research activity to all kinds of audiences;</p> <p>g) have demonstrated within their specific scientific context that they are capable of making advances in cultural, social or technological aspects, as well as of fostering innovation in all areas in a knowledge-based society.</p>	<p>Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a particular field of work or study and at the point of articulation between different fields of work or study</p>	<p>The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, in particular in terms of synthesis and evaluation, needed to solve critical problems in research or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practices.</p>	<p>Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, academic and professional integrity and ongoing commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts, including research.</p>

The following steps and methods were considered for the correlation process:

- a. Phase 1. Analysis of the position of each qualification in the qualifications structure of the MECU. The Spanish education and training system includes a clear framework of qualifications divided into levels in which each of the existing qualifications is included. Specifically:
 - In some of the levels there are sub-levels which allow differentiation between academic and/or professional qualifications.
 - This structure makes it possible to identify specific education and training pathways that can be accessed through different routes, as well as their limits or access requirements.
 - There are links and progressions between the levels and the qualifications that comprise them, as set out in the specific legislation and in the MECU, which makes it possible to identify the clear and recognisable position in the system of progression.
 - The competences are described in such a way that each of the levels and the differences between them can be identified. Thus, a progression in the difficulty of learning objectives is identified which parallels the progression in the education system and its levels.
- b. Phase 2 of correlation and explanation of the applied referencing method. Once the comparative analysis of the knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility of each level within MECU had been carried out, and the parallels with the EQF descriptors had been verified, these competences were identified in each of the degree programmes. In most of the degree programmes, the descriptors for knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility are sufficiently clear to allow the MECU-EQF correlation, largely thanks to the latest amendments introduced by the regulations in the curriculum.

For the correlation process of the MECU and EQF degrees, two correlation methods were adopted:

- Direct correlation. There is a direct correlation when the comparative analysis of degree descriptors and EQF descriptors allows the EQF level to be unequivocally identified. In this case, there is no need to adapt and search for evidence beyond that indicated by the descriptors and the MECU/EQF comparison.
- Indirect correlation based on the "best fit" principle. This method or approach is applied when the correlation of descriptors is less direct. For some degrees, direct correlation was not possible and a search for and interpretation of evidence was necessary. In these cases, the following contextual evidence provided by the review of the national educational framework and its regulations was taken into account to support the referencing of degrees to EQF levels:

- Direct link between the two qualification frameworks made explicit in the regulatory frameworks governing them
 - Information on the positioning of the degree in the system in the following terms: comparison of descriptors and prevalence among them, comparison with neighbouring degrees, structure within the training family, access requirements, duration, among others.
 - Results of the referencing process carried out on higher education degrees.
- c. Results of the correlation of qualifications to EQF levels. Considering all the elements and methods described above, the MECU and the variety of degrees in the education system, two examples of direct correlation and direct correlation or best fit are shown.

As an example of direct correlation, we include the title of Vocational Training Technician in Equestrian Activities which corresponds to level 4 A of the MECU and correlates with level 5 of the EQF. In the analysis of Royal Decree 652/2017, of 23rd June, which develops the contents of this qualification, there is a clear identification of knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility. These concepts are clearly identified in the regulatory text.

Chart 15. Correlation sheet for the title of Vocational Training Technician in Equestrian Activities

SPANISH FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (MECU) AND THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (EQF)			
Code	Educational/training level	Designation	Regulatory standard
N4A/5	VOCATIONAL TRAINING TECHNICIAN	Equestrian activities.	Royal Decree 652/2017 of 23rd June
Link to documentation	https://www.boe.es/eli/es/rd/2017/06/23/652		
List of subjects/modules that make up the study/training programme	Level of descriptors achieved in the Spanish Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.		REFERENCE LEVEL IN THE SPANISH AND EUROPEAN FRAMEWORKS
Identification and Name	Knowledge		MECU level
1319. Equine feeding, general management and first aid.	Specialised knowledge of facts, principles, processes and concepts in broad contexts in professional, academic or training contexts.		Level 4 A
	Skills		

<p>1320. Equine physical maintenance, care and hygiene.</p> <p>1321. Breeding, raising and rearing of equidae.</p> <p>1322. Equine shoeing.</p> <p>1323. Taming and dressage on the colt rope.</p> <p>1324. Training.</p> <p>1325. Riding techniques.</p> <p>1326. Horse shows and competitions.</p> <p>1327. Equestrian guide.</p> <p>1328. Attention to groups.</p> <p>1329. Organisation of itineraries.</p> <p>0020. First aid.</p> <p>1330. Vocational training and guidance</p> <p>1331. Enterprise and entrepreneurship.</p> <p>1332. Workplace training.</p>	<p>Analyse and apply specific knowledge and information to carry out a set of activities or solve specific problems defined in general contexts or those related to professional or academic specialisation.</p> <p>2. Communicate knowledge, skills, feelings and activities effectively in foreseeable or complex situations, on concrete and abstract aspects of general topics or subjects or those of one's own interest or specialisation, and with a variety of resources which enable them to appreciate and express different shades of meaning and intention, using varied and complex resources and forms of expression.</p> <p>3. Perform a relatively autonomous search for and analysis of information and the application of this and other specific knowledge necessary to evaluate and respond to problems within their specific and specialised academic, professional or training field.</p> <p>4. Supervise the routine work of others by assuming some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities.</p> <p>5. Analyse the consequences of one's own actions and those of others in specific or complex contexts.</p> <p>6. Create, innovate, take the initiative and assume risks in the resolution of problems in the academic, professional or training field and in the management of specific projects in a professional field or specific area of knowledge, in order to achieve the proposed objectives.</p> <p>7. Make solvent and responsible use of information and communication technologies.</p> <p>Cooperate and negotiate effectively in situations that require it on matters of a routine nature in their academic, professional or training environments.</p>	
	<p>Autonomy and Responsibility</p> <p>1. Self-management of training in a field of study or vocational field, with maturity to progress in learning and training at higher levels.</p> <p>2. Responsibility towards training that enables them to assess new possibilities and carry out activities independently.</p> <p>3. Responsibility towards the work of others, enabling them to critically evaluate new possibilities in order to introduce improvements.</p> <p>Responsibility with regard to risk prevention, personal safety and the safety of others and the environmental protection of the area in which the corresponding activity is carried out.</p>	
	<p>Level of descriptors in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)</p>	<p>REFERENCE LEVEL IN THE SPANISH AND EUROPEAN FRAMEWORKS</p>
	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts in a particular field of work or study.</p>	<p>EQ LEVEL</p>
	<p>Skills</p> <p>Range of cognitive and practical skills needed to find solutions to specific problems in a particular field of work or study.</p>	<p>Level 4</p>
	<p>Autonomy and responsibility</p>	

	Self-management according to defined instructions in generally predictable, but potentially changing, work or study contexts Supervision of the routine work of others, assuming certain responsibilities for the evaluation and improvement of work/study activities
<p>Methodological note: <i>For the degree, certificate or accreditation here referenced, the learning outcomes, learning standards, terminal skills, as well as the basic curricular contents established by the Spanish State for said training action have been analysed, verifying compliance and location in the corresponding level descriptors and proceeding to their reference in the level corresponding to the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, approved by Royal Decree 272/2022, of 12th April, as well as its location and reference in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), included in the COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22nd May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23rd April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.</i></p>	
<p>CERTIFICATION: The Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports, as the competent authority, CERTIFIES that the qualification/certification/accreditation whose identification data appear in the present form has been referenced at the level of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, which appears in the box Level MECU, and is referenced at the level of the European Qualifications Framework, which appears in the box Level EQF. The validation of this certification is formalised by the electronic signature of the competent authority, which is attached to the annexes of the report REFERENCING SPANISH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (MECU) AND EUROPEAN QUALIFIATIONS FRAMEWORK (EQF).</p>	

Chart 16. Example of application of criteria for a direct correlation of qualifications

Skills	<i>q) Adopt and evaluate creative <u>solutions</u> to problems and contingencies that arise in the development of work processes, in order to solve in a responsible manner the incidents of their activity.</i>
	<i>p) Act with <u>responsibility and autonomy</u> in the area of their competence, organising and developing the work assigned, cooperating or working in a team with other professionals in the work environment.</i>
Autonomy and responsibility	<i>q) <u>Resolve in a responsible manner</u> the incidents related to its activity, identifying the causes that provoke them, within the scope of its competence and autonomy.</i>
	<i>r) Communicate effectively, respecting the autonomy and competence of the different people involved in their work.</i>
<i><u>Supervision</u> of the basic handling of the horse by the participants.</i>	

As an example of indirect correlation, we find the Level 3 Professional Certificate in Internet Services Administration developed by Royal Decree 686/2011, of 113th May. In this case, a search is made for criteria that best fit the knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility. In the characteristics linked to knowledge, there is a correlation between the learning outcomes set out in 5B MECU and 5 EQF. The difficulty lies in the association between skills, autonomy and responsibility in the normative text and their linkage to MECU and EQF. In this case, indirect evidence has been found for the criterion of capabilities expressed through solutions that students must provide in the development of the tasks of their qualification. In the criteria of autonomy and responsibility, descriptions have been considered to identify examples of autonomy, direct supervision and the carrying out of own and others' reviews of the work performed. In order to complete the referencing in this professional qualification, as well as in other indirect qualifications, the association method and procedure proposed in this section has been applied. In this sense, its location within the MECU scheme, the access criteria and the

progression to other degrees, which provide contextual criteria of the degree, have been reviewed.

Chart 17. Correlation sheet for the qualification of Professional Certificate in Administration of internet services

SPANISH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (MECU) AND THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (EQF)			
Code	Educational/training level	Designation	Regulatory standard
CP/ IFCT0509	Professional Certificate LEVEL 3	Administration of internet services	Royal Decree 686/2011, of 113th May
Link to documentation	https://www.boe.es/eli/es/rd/2011/05/13/686		
List of subjects/modules making up the study/training programme	Level of descriptors achieved in the Spanish Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.		REFERENCE LEVEL IN THE SPANISH AND EUROPEAN FRAMEWORKS
Identification and Name	Features		MECU level
MF0495_3: Web services administration MF0496_3: Administration of electronic messaging services MF0497_3: Administration of file transfer services and multimedia contents MF0490_3: (Transversal) Service management in the computer system MP0267: Non-occupational professional practice module of Internet Services Administration	<p>The characteristics of the qualifications placed at this level are defined by the following generic descriptors of learning outcomes, as set out in article 5.2 of Royal Decree 1027/2011 of 15th July:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proven <u>knowledge, specialising</u> in a professional area or field of study, with a critical understanding of interaction and knowledge transfer, as well as the development of creativity, personal initiative and an entrepreneurial spirit. 2. <u>Apply</u> and integrate their artistic, technological and sports knowledge and skills in the definition and <u>development of work procedures</u>, in the artistic or work field, in an <u>autonomous manner</u> and with responsibility for the coordination and supervision of technical work. 3. Possess the <u>ability to analyse</u> the necessary information to evaluate and respond to foreseen and unforeseen situations by seeking well-founded, creative and innovative solutions within a field of study or profession. 4. Being able to <u>communicate</u> their knowledge, ideas, skills and activities in <u>professional contexts to their peers</u>, supervisors, clients and people under their responsibility. 5. Possess the necessary <u>learning strategies</u> to advance in their training autonomously, with the maturity to innovate in their application and progress in learning and training at different levels. superiors. 		Level 5 B
	Level of descriptors in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)		REFERENCE LEVEL IN THE SPANISH AND EUROPEAN FRAMEWORKS
	Knowledge		EQ LEVEL
	Extensive factual and theoretical expertise in a particular field of work or study, while being aware of the limits of that expertise		Level 5
	Skills		
	Full range of cognitive and practical skills needed to find creative solutions to abstract problems.		
	Autonomy and responsibility		
	Management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where unpredictable changes occur.		
	Review and development of own and others' performance.		
<p>Methodological note: For the degree, certificate or accreditation here referenced, the learning outcomes, learning standards, terminal skills, as well as the basic curricular contents established by the Spanish State for said training action, have been analysed, verifying compliance and location in the corresponding level descriptors and proceeding to their reference in the level corresponding to the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, approved by Royal Decree 272/2022, of 12th April, as well as its location and reference in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), included in the COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22nd May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23rd April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.</p>			

CERTIFICATION:

The Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports, as the competent authority, CERTIFIES that the qualification/certification/accreditation whose identification data appear in this form, has been referenced at the level of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, which appears in the box Level MECU, and is referenced at the level of the European Qualifications Framework, which appears in the box Level EQF.

The validation of this certification is formalised by the electronic signature of the competent authority, which is attached to the annexes of the report REFERENCING SPANISH QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (MECU) AND EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (EQF)

Table 24. Example of indirect criteria for the qualification of Professional Certificate in Administration of internet services

INDIRECT CRITERIA ANALYSED TO STRENGTHEN CORRELATION	
Skills	<i>Solutions provided in the qualification exercise:</i> CE1.1 Describe procedures for updating content and version control according to procedures. CE4.4 Describe in detail the techniques for resolving incidents in Web services production environments.
Autonomy	C2: Install, configure and administer the application server on the computer system as a data provider for web services. C1: Administer electronic messaging servers to ensure continuity of service according to security specifications.
Responsibility	C4. Apply audit and incident resolution procedures in the operation of a Web service. CE2.4 Explain the concept, characteristics and functionality of secure server certificates.
Access requirements for the professional certificate	<i>In order to access the training of the training modules of the Professional Certificate of professional qualification levels 2 and 3, learners must fulfil one of the following requirements:</i> a) Hold the Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate Diploma for level 2 or the Baccaureate Diploma for level 3. b) Be in possession of a Professional Certificate in the same level as the training module(s) and/or certificate of professionalism to which you wish to gain access. c) Hold a Professional Certificate level 1 in the same professional family and area for level 2 or a Professional Certificate level in the same professional family and area for level 3. d) Fulfil the academic requirement for access to intermediate level training cycles for level 2 or higher-level training cycles for level 3, or have passed the corresponding entrance exams regulated by the educational administrations. e) To have passed the university entrance exam for over 25 and/or 45-year-olds. f) Have sufficient training or professional knowledge to be able to successfully complete the training.
MECU	<i>Previous: the Professional Certificate Level 2 which corresponds to a Level 4B of MECU, with professional validity and no academic value. It does not allow access to Level 5 courses.</i> <i>Post: Professional Certificate level 5B have professional validity, have no academic value and do not allow access to teachings at Level 6.</i>

4.2.3. Criterion 3

National qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes, linked to provisions for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, credit systems.

4.2.3.1. Identification of learning outcomes in national qualification frameworks or systems

Competence training oriented towards learning outcomes has become a key element in education, vocational training and higher education. Therefore, learning outcomes are an essential requirement to ensure that the competences corresponding to each level of qualification have been acquired, that such learning can be developed in different situational contexts (educational and/or professional) and allow for the

establishment of progression dynamics and individual training pathways (lifelong learning).

Learning outcomes are clearly stated in the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and are a central element for the correlation of competences with the MECU.

However, Vocational Education and Training is where the competence model, based on learning outcomes, has been most developed (Astigarraga and Carrera, 2018).³⁴

Along these lines, Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education, introduces the concept of learning outcomes linked to Vocational Education and Training (within the education subsystem). It introduces important changes, derived from the adaptation of the education system to the challenges of the 21st century, in accordance with the objectives set by the EU and UNESCO for the decade 2020-2030. It also incorporates a comprehensive approach to training and curriculum that focuses on the development of competences and incorporates the principles of Universal Design for Learning.

In the development of the provisions of the new wording of the Organic Act on Education, different regulations have been issued that update and orient the curricula of the education system to the new framework of competences and learning. Specifically, Royal Decree 217/2022, of 29th March, establishes the organisation and minimum requirements for Compulsory Secondary Education, and Royal Decree 243/2022, of 5th April, establishes the organisation and minimum requirements for the Baccalaureate. Both regulations set out the basic aspects of the curriculum for each stage.

Therefore, the implementation of Royal Decree 272/2022 of 12th April, which establishes the MECU, starts from a context that has allowed the education system to adapt to the approach of competences and learning outcomes. The MECU in its Article 2 e) defines learning outcomes as "statements of what a person knows, understands and is able to do at the end of a learning process; it is defined in terms of knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy".

³⁴ Astigarraga, E. and Carrera, X. (2018). Necesidades a futuro y situación actual de las competencias en Educación Superior en el contexto de España, *Revista Digital de Investigación en Docencia Universitaria*, 12(2), 35-58. <http://doi.org/10.19083/ridu.2018.731>

Chart 18. Definition of Learning Outcomes in the European and Spanish Qualifications Frameworks

Definition of learning outcomes in the European Framework and the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning	
Knowledge	The result of the assimilation of information through learning. A body of facts, principles, theories and practices related to a particular field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, knowledge is described as theoretical or factual.
Skills	Ability to apply knowledge and use skills to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, skills are described as cognitive (use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (manual dexterity and use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).
Responsibility and autonomy	Ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and responsibly.

The learning outcomes, assigned to each MECU level, will make it possible to associate learning with the European Framework and to validate the correlation in each qualification, as described in criterion 2. Each MECU level is associated with learning outcome descriptors, classified into knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility, which increase in complexity as the levels are progressed. The learning outcomes introduce a process approach in that they imply progress in learning knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Finally, it should be noted that the organisation of the education system and its orientation to the European framework reached its transformation with the approval of Organic Act 3/2022, organisation and integration of Vocational Education and Training, and its development through Royal Decree 659/2023, of 18th July. Article 22 of the Royal Decree defines the concept of "learning outcome" as "that which a student is expected to know, understand and be able to do associated with an element of competence". This definition reflects the Council Recommendation of 22nd May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23rd April 2008.

Therefore, we find clear evidence of a learning outcomes orientation in the MECU and its structure, which strengthens the correlation with the EQF:

- Each of the qualification levels integrates a set of descriptors specifying learning outcomes for each level.
- The learning outcomes are expressed through "knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility" for each of the 8 levels.
- Learning outcomes can be achieved in different contexts and follow different pathways (education, training or recognition of competences/learning).
- The concept of learning outcomes is expressed in the MECU legislation following the EQF definition.

4.2.3.2. *Identification of learning outcomes in the national qualification framework courses*

The evidence introduced in the MECU is complemented by that reflected in the regulations governing each of the education systems, namely: General and Adult Education, Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education. The legislative framework of education policy in Spain describes and establishes the skills to be developed at each stage. Generally speaking, the curriculum includes the objectives, competences, contents, pedagogical methods and assessment criteria. In the case of Vocational Education and Training, learning outcomes are also considered part of the curriculum.

The educational administrations will establish the curriculum for the different levels of education, including the basic aspects, and the schools will implement and complete, where appropriate, the curriculum for the different stages and cycles. In the following, these evidences are developed for education levels 1 to 5.

a) Primary and Secondary Education

The studies that make up Basic Education are Primary Education, Secondary Education and Basic Level Training Cycles.

Royal Decree 157/2022, of 1st March, establishes the Organisation and minimum teachings in Primary Education, and Royal Decree 217/2022, of 29th March, refers to the organisation and minimum teachings of Compulsory Secondary Education. Both regulations detail, for each of the teachings, the key competences that are the result of the adaptation of the Spanish education system to the competences set out in the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 22nd May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning. This linkage reinforces the commitment and cohesion of the Spanish education system with the education systems of the EU, the correlation of qualifications, and allows mobility within the country and other surrounding countries.

The Basic Education Exit Profile becomes the tool through which the principles and aims of the Spanish education system are defined and the key and specific competences are specified. The Exit Profile is unique and is the same for the whole of the national territory, which ensures the coherence of the objectives of the stages that make up Basic Education.

The exit profile includes the key competences, the competences that students are expected to have acquired on completing each of the stages of their educational pathway, and establishes operational descriptors of these key competences, understood as the applied dimension of the key competences. The operational descriptors of the key competences, together with the objectives of the educational stage, serve as a reference framework for specifying the specific competences in each educational stage, its areas, fields or subjects. This link between operational descriptors (key competences) and specific competences favours the acquisition of key competences defined in the

exit profile and their assessment, and therefore the achievement of the educational objectives for each stage.

As a sequential and progressive model, the standards include the operational descriptors that guide the expected performance in Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education. This makes it possible to give coherence and continuity to both stages and to identify what learning will have been acquired on completion of basic education. Thus, a lifelong learning model is articulated which serves for internal and external assessment of learning and is the basis for promotion between different degrees.

The Royal Decrees contain a series of annexes detailing the key competences of basic education and the specific competences for each educational stage. For example, Annex 1 includes the student's exit profile at the end of Basic Education and includes the key competences, which are: a) Competence in linguistic communication. b) Multilingual competence. c) Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering. d) Digital competence. e) Personal, social and learning to learn competence. f) Citizenship competence. g) Entrepreneurial competence. h) Competence in cultural awareness and expression. In addition, transversality is considered an inherent condition of the exit profile, in the sense that all learning contributes to its achievement.

Annex II of Royal Decree 157/2022, of 1st March, establishing the organisation and minimum teaching in Primary Education, and Annex II of Royal Decree 217/2022, of 29th March, on the organisation and minimum teaching of Compulsory Secondary Education, list the specific competences and their relations with the descriptors of the Exit Profile. All of this is identified for each of the cycles, courses, areas of knowledge and competences. In addition, Royal Decree 217/2022 includes an Annex V that incorporates the specific competences of the Intermediate-Level training cycles.

b) Basic-Level Training Cycles

The Basic Level training cycles are part of basic education. The acquisition of competences is established in the exit profile organised for the following areas:

- a) Communication and social sciences.
- b) Applied sciences.
- c) Vocational field which shall include at least the training necessary to obtain a level 1 qualification from the National Catalogue of Professional Skills.

Annex V of Royal Decree 217/2022 sets out the specific competences for Basic Level training cycles in the following areas: Applied Sciences; Communication and Social Sciences. For each of these, the specific competences and their relationship with the descriptors of the exit profile are described in detail. Successful completion of all the areas included in a Basic Level cycle will lead to

the award of the diploma of Graduate in Compulsory Secondary Education. In addition, in order to justify the competences of the professional field, students will receive a Basic Technician qualification in the corresponding speciality.

c) Baccalaureate

Post-compulsory Secondary Education is made up of: Baccalaureate, intermediate vocational training cycles, intermediate training cycles of Professional Artistic Education (Plastic Arts and Design; Music; Dance) and intermediate cycles of Sports Education.

The Baccalaureate is regulated by Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education, and Royal Decree 243/2022, of 5th April, which establishes the organisation and minimum teaching of the Baccalaureate. In the same way as in Basic Education, this Royal Decree involves the adaptation of the Spanish education system to the competences included in the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 22nd May 2018, especially the key competences for lifelong learning.

The Royal Decree includes an Annex I which lists the key competences of the Baccalaureate,²³ suited to this stage, and which show the progression of the competences achieved in the ESO exit profile. In order to show coherence and progression between qualifications, Annex I lists the operational descriptors foreseen for both ESO and the baccalaureate. An example of the operational descriptors of competence in linguistic communication and their progression is shown below:

Chart 19. Key competences in Basic Education and Baccalaureate.

On completion of basic education, the pupil...	On completion of the Baccalaureate, the student...
CCL1. Can express themselves orally, in writing, signed or multimodal with coherence, accuracy and appropriateness to different social contexts, and participate in communicative interactions with a cooperative and respectful attitude both to exchange information, create knowledge and transmit opinions, and to build personal relationships.	CCL1. Can express themselves fluently, coherently, correctly and appropriately in oral, written, signed or multimodal form in different social and academic contexts, and participate in communicative interactions with a cooperative and respectful attitude both to exchange information, create knowledge and argue their opinions and to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships.
CCL2. Can understand, interpret and critically evaluate oral, written, signed or multimodal texts in the personal, social, educational and professional spheres in order to participate in	CCL2. Can understand, interpret and critically evaluate oral, written, signed or multimodal texts from different fields, with special emphasis on academic and media texts, in order to

²³ The competences for ESO and Baccalaureate listed in Annex I and for which each of the operational descriptors are detailed are: competence in linguistic communication, multilingual competence, mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering, digital competence, personal, social and learning to learn competence, citizenship competence, entrepreneurial competence and competence in cultural awareness and expression.

different contexts in an active and informed way and to construct knowledge.	participate in different contexts in an active and informed way and to construct knowledge.
CCL3. Locates, selects and contrasts in a progressively autonomous way information from different sources, evaluating its reliability and relevance according to the reading objectives and avoiding the risks of manipulation and misinformation, and integrates and transforms it into knowledge in order to communicate it adopting a creative, critical and personal point of view while respecting intellectual property.	CCL3. Autonomously locates, selects and contrasts information from different sources, evaluating its reliability and relevance according to the reading objectives and avoiding the risks of manipulation and misinformation, and integrates and transforms it into knowledge in order to communicate it clearly and rigorously, adopting a creative and critical point of view while respecting intellectual property.
CCL4. Reads with autonomy diverse works appropriate to their age, selecting those that best suit their tastes and interests; appreciates literary heritage as a privileged channel of individual and collective experience; and mobilises their own biographical experience and their literary and cultural knowledge to construct and share their interpretation of works and to create texts of literary intention of progressive complexity.	CCL4. Read on their own relevant works of literature, relating them to their socio-historical context of production, to the previous and subsequent literary tradition and examining the imprint of their legacy in the present day, in order to construct and share their own argued interpretation of the works, create and recreate works of literary intention and progressively shape a cultural map.
CCL5. Put their communicative practices at the service of democratic coexistence, the dialogical resolution of conflicts and the equality of rights of all people, avoiding discriminatory uses, as well as abuse of power, in order to favour not only the effective but also the ethical use of the different communication systems.	CCL5. Put their communicative practices at the service of democratic coexistence, the dialogical resolution of conflicts and the equal rights of all people, avoiding and rejecting discriminatory uses, as well as abuse of power, in order to favour not only the effective but also the ethical use of the different communication systems.

Baccalaureate is structured in four modalities: Arts, Science and Technology, General and Humanities, and Social Sciences. The Arts modality is organised into two tracks: Plastic Arts, Image and Design; and Music and Performing Arts. Annex II of Royal Decree 243/2022, of 5th April, which establishes the organisation and minimum teaching requirements for the Baccalaureate, includes the specific competences for each of the modalities and their relationship with the descriptors of the key competences. This annex includes the assessment criteria described for each and every one of the specific competences and, in addition, the basic knowledge is specified.

In order to obtain the Baccalaureate diploma, students must have passed all subjects in both years of the baccalaureate. Exceptional conditions and procedures will be established for students who have passed all but one of the subjects and who, in addition, are considered to have achieved the objectives and competences associated with this qualification.

It is also possible to obtain the baccalaureate from other courses, as long as some of the following situations exist:

- Those who hold the title of Vocational Training Technician may obtain the title of Baccalaureate by passing the subjects to achieve the general baccalaureate objectives (general baccalaureate qualification).
- Those who hold the Plastic Arts and Design Technical Diploma and pass the subjects necessary to achieve the general objectives of the baccalaureate, in accordance with the system of validations regulated for each course.
- Those who have passed the Professional Education in Music or Dance and the common subjects of the baccalaureate, in the case of the modality of Arts.

d) Vocational Education and Training

In 2022, the approval of Organic Act 3/2022 of 31st March on the Organisation and Integration of Vocational Education and Training creates a comprehensive vocational training system,²⁴ which seeks to promote intermediate and higher labour qualifications. This impetus is the result of a long history of VET in Spain, as well as the commitment to unify (in 2020) the competences of VET in a single ministry. Added to this is the decisive role played by the European Commission, which has made VET a cornerstone of the common policy.²⁵

The long history of VET in Spain has meant that the learning objectives and outcomes have been clearly and constantly incorporated throughout the different plans to promote or modernise²⁶ related to this type of education and its development regulations, which has shaped the current VET model.

Until Organic Act 3/2022 was passed, two VET sub-systems coexisted. The VET subsystem for employment in the workplace was regulated by Act 5/2002 on Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training. It created a framework linked to the National System of VET Qualifications and defined a National Catalogue of Professional skills. On the other hand, The VET subsystem of the education system was established in Chapter V of Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education, as well as its amendments and development regulations, establishing the general characteristics of the VET of the education system, its organisation into training cycles and development of the Initial Vocational Education and Training.

The MECU currently integrates and organises, as we have seen in criterion 2, the qualifications of both VET sub-systems in the structure of levels and sub-levels. The development carried out in the MECU makes it possible to align and associate vocational education and training with the European framework.

²⁴ It should be noted that the integrated approach to vocational training has already appeared in the European framework, within the "Education and Training 2010" programme and in the Lisbon objectives, with the aim of promoting the mobility of workers and the integration of the educational and labour training offer in Europe.

²⁵ Council Recommendation of 24th November 2020 on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social equity and resilience 2020/C 417/01.

²⁶ See <https://planderecuperacion.gob.es/politicas-y-componentes/componente-20-plan-estrategicode-impulso-de-la-formacion-profesional>.

Taking into account the criticisms levelled at the coexistence of two VET models, Organic Act 3/2022, of 31st March, on the Organisation and Integration of Vocational Education and Training, designs and orders a comprehensive VET system in which all training can be accredited, accumulated and capitalizable. This model facilitates the generation of training itineraries, based on units that take into account progression and continuity in the education system. This allows for accreditations, certifications and qualifications with State and European recognition.

As set out in Organic Act 3/2022, of 31st March, and Royal Decree 659/2023, of 18th July, by which the Organisation of the Vocational Education and Training System is developed, the VET model is structured in 5 ascending degrees A, B, C, D and E. The descriptions of the training offers are organised in units designed according to the new National Catalogue of Standards of Professional Skills, aligning them with the catalogues of the EU countries. The learning outcomes are grouped into standards of competence, equivalent to the units of competence contained, until now, in the professional qualifications, organised by professional families and by levels according to the complexity of the tasks.

e) Artistic Education

Organic Act of 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education regulates the Basic Aspects of the Curriculum of the different Education Systems of the Spanish Education System. In its chapter VI, it includes the Professional Education of Plastic Arts and Design, organised in cycles of intermediate and higher education, similar to the VET, and follows a modular structure. Its aim is the incorporation into the professional world. In addition, the law places Intermediate-Level Vocational Education within the framework of Post-compulsory Education and Higher-Level Vocational Education within the framework of Higher Education.

In the case of Artistic Education, the learning outcomes are not explicitly stated, but articulated through two dimensions:

- Assessment criteria on the learning expected by students at the end of the courses and their specialisations.
- The process of access or mobility between degrees that locates and positions the degrees within the MECU.

Firstly, the learning outcomes are not expressly stated in Artistic Education, but are articulated through assessment criteria on objectives, content and skills. The assessment criteria will establish the type and degree of learning acquired with respect to the general objectives and specific objectives of the abilities for each teaching and speciality. The basic aspects of the teaching are set out in the curriculum, which includes the objectives, contents and assessment criteria for the specialities and subjects. It should be noted that the Royal Decrees regulating Dance and Music Education include an Annexe I where the minimum teaching requirements linked to skills, content and assessment criteria appear. In the case of Plastic Arts and Design Education, no such

explanatory annexe is included, but the general and specific competences develop the competences of the diploma from the National Catalogue of Qualifications.

Teachers will assess both student learning and the teaching-learning processes, taking into account the student's context. This assessment will be recorded in an individualised assessment report, with the necessary information to guide the continuity of the learning process.

g) Sports Education

Royal Decree 1363/2007 of 24th October 2007 establishes the General Organisation of Special Regime Sports Education. This regulatory framework was amended by Royal Decree 628/2022, of 26th October, which reformulates other royal decrees to allow the application of Organic Act 3/2020, of 29th December, which amends Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education. These teachings will be structured in two degrees, intermediate and higher, and may refer to the National Catalogue of Professional Skills. In order to access the Intermediate-Level, the Compulsory Secondary Education Graduate qualification will be required, and for the Higher-Level, the Baccalaureate and the Sports Technician qualification, in the corresponding modality or speciality. For some specialities it will also be necessary to pass a test or accredit sporting merit.

In relation to the curriculum, it is organised into competences to be achieved and are oriented towards knowledge, skills and abilities. These dimensions are formulated as learning objectives and not as learning outcomes. However, the association of these teachings with qualifications included in the National Catalogue of VET Qualifications makes it possible to complete these objectives with learning outcomes and to go deeper into the competences to be acquired in these qualifications. Therefore, the qualification is based on knowledge and skills that also introduce a transversal approach.

4.2.3.4. *Adaptation of the system or framework to ECTS credits*

In relation to the adaptation to the credit system, this approach is specific to higher education. The equivalence of the academic load in ECTS credits allows comparability with degrees belonging to the EHEA. In addition, the calculation in ECTS and the similarity in objectives, contents and evaluation criteria serves as a reference for the validation of modules. Within this framework are higher cycle courses such as, for example, Plastic Arts and Design, Specialisation Courses.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The MECU provides for the formal recognition of learning outcomes in three ways:

- Issuing of qualifications (certificates, diplomas or degrees), developed under heading 2 and 4.
- Validation of non-formal and informal learning.
- The granting of equivalences, credits or dispensations, developed in the regulations governing each course.

The MECU states that one of the main tasks of this qualifications framework will be to "promote both the transfer of qualifications and the validation of non-formal and informal training and education between different education and training systems".

Chart 20. Non-formal and informal recognition of learning outcomes in the MECU

MECU	
Non-formal and informal recognition of learning outcomes	
1.	The process by which a competent authority confirms that an individual has acquired learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal learning activities measured against a relevant standard;
2.	It consists of four distinct phases: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the identification, through dialogue, of a person's concrete experience; b. documentation (to make the person's experience visible); c. a formal evaluation of that experience, and d. certification of the assessment results, which may lead to a full or partial qualification.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

However, it should be noted that "Spain is a country with a consolidated [system of validation of non-formal and informal learning](#) (...) widely developed quantitatively and qualitatively" (Martín, 2020: 28).²⁷ Proof of this was the approval of Royal Decree 1224/2009 of 17th July 2009, now repealed, which established the procedure and requirements for the assessment and accreditation of professional competences acquired through work experience or non-formal training.

In 2020, Spain presented at the 52nd EQF Advisory Group meeting the implementation report on validation of non-formal and informal learning, responding to the Council Recommendation of 20th December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01).²⁸

Along these lines, Act 3/2020 of 29th December, which amends Act 2/2006 on Education, introduces Article 5 bis on non-formal education. It establishes that it will "promote the articulation and complementarity of formal and non-formal education with the aim of contributing to the acquisition of competences for the full development of the personality". However, it will be the thirty-second additional provision that points out the recognition and accreditation of professional competences, stating that:

The Government shall promote, without prejudice to the competences of the Autonomous Communities, the procedures for the recognition and accreditation of professional competences acquired through work experience or non-formal and informal learning, in such a way as to enable all citizens to obtain accreditation of their professional competences. To this end, the competent administrations shall promote an increase in the procedures for recognition and the streamlining and flexibility of the processes. (...) the competent administrations shall promote the offer of specific

²⁷ Martín Gómez, F. (2020). *Implementación del año 2012, del Consejo, sobre la validación del aprendizaje no formal e informal. Informe único: España*. Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

²⁸ This Recommendation urged Member States to set up assessment and accreditation processes to validate non-formal and informal learning outcomes, giving new opportunities to citizens who have developed their learning outside formal education and training.

training programmes aimed at persons who, once they have accredited certain professional competences, wish to complete their training and qualifications (...).

With regard to VET, Title VI of the new Organic Act includes and updates the precepts relating to the accreditation of professional competences acquired through work experience or other non-formal or informal channels. The validation procedures in vocational training, acquired through work experience and non-formal and informal training channels, are regulated in Royal Decree 659/2023, of 18th July, which develops the organisation of the Vocational Education and Training System.

Unlike the previous regulation, the new VET law introduces an open and permanent procedure, referring to any competence, whatever the professional field in which the individual has maintained their professional experience.

On the other hand, the current regulatory and qualification framework allows that, in addition to the adaptations and bridges between qualifications within the different education systems, pathways have been incorporated for the validation of non-formal and informal learning by means of tests that allow: free access to qualifications of the education system, the performance of tests through specific calls for each professional competence and the accreditation of professional experience allowing a greater training pathway throughout the education system. Below are some examples of access processes to some courses:

Chart 21. Access by Open Entrance Examination

Access by means of a free examination	
Intermediate and Higher-Level Training Cycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of academic requirements. - To be at least seventeen years of age and nineteen for access to Higher-Level Training Cycles, completed in the year in which the test is taken, or eighteen if you can prove that you hold a technical qualification related to the cycle you wish to access. - The education administration may establish exemption from part of the tests for those who have passed an initial vocational qualification programme, an intermediate level training cycle, are in possession of a Certificate of Professionalism related to the training cycle they intend to take or accredit a certain qualification or work experience. - The education administration may schedule courses aimed at preparing students for entry to the intermediate or higher-levels. The final mark of these courses will be taken into account in the respective entrance examinations.
Intermediate and Higher-Level in Plastic Arts and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of academic requirements - For the Intermediate-Level cycles you must be at least 17 years old, and 19 for access to the Higher-Level, completed in the year of the exam, or 18 if you can prove that you hold a Technical qualification related to the studies.
Baccalaureate or vocational qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They shall periodically organise tests to obtain directly the baccalaureate diploma or one of the vocational training diplomas. In addition, the baccalaureate requires the age of 20; 18 for the technical diploma, 20 for the higher technical diploma or, where appropriate, 19 for those who hold a technical diploma.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In addition to access to different courses of study by means of examinations, the regulations governing the different courses of study include processes for access to qualifications by means of exemption or validation of training and/or work experience. The following chart shows some examples of this.

Chart 22. Access through Exemption or Validation of Training and/or Experience

Access through exemption or validation of training and/or experience	
Adult Education	Recognition of training from the education system that the student accredits and previous knowledge and experience acquired through non-formal education.
Sports Education	Professional experience is incorporated as a specific access requirement.
Baccalaureate	Validation of training modules belonging to Intermediate-Level Training Cycles with baccalaureate subjects will be established in each qualification.
Higher Education Arts and Design	Exemption from training modules and the practical phase in companies, studios and workshops, due to their correspondence with work practice, provided that at least one year of experience related to the knowledge, abilities and skills, and where appropriate units of competence, specific to the modules and/or the specific professional exercise of the corresponding cycle is accredited.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

To conclude this section, guidance and personalised accompaniment in the design of itineraries and validations is key to strengthening lifelong learning and the recognition of knowledge and experiences in new social and work contexts. This objective of continuity and recovery of lifelong learning is reflected in several aspects:

- Art. 4 of the Education Act, as amended by Organic Act 3/2020, by allowing "under-age students over 16 years of age to receive some form of academic or vocational training that they can combine with their work and that allows them to continue their education".
- To encourage pupils who have reached the age limit and have not graduated from ESO to continue their education through different training offers.
- The possibility of certifying the modules passed, with cumulative partial effect, in vocational training cycles.

4.2.4. Criterion 4

The procedures for including qualifications in the national qualifications framework or describing their place in the national qualifications system are transparent.

Information under criterion 1 and criterion 2 and section 2.6 of this report are also relevant for this criterion 4.

The MECU allows for clear identification of the inclusion of qualifications and the place of different qualifications in the education system. The transparency of the system is supported by the regulatory framework described in section 4 and criterion 3 of this section. The process of inclusion is referred to on two levels. On the one hand, with the inclusion of new courses and qualifications in the qualification framework. On the other hand, with the processes of access to qualifications which identify the position of the qualification with respect to the one preceding it and the one to which it has access.

With regard to the inclusion of new teaching and qualifications in the qualifications framework, reference is made to both the education system and the VET training system, identifying general processes and specific processes.

- a) In general, the inclusion of new qualifications shall be adopted by the Government, either at the request of the Autonomous Communities, or on its own initiative, having heard the latter. The curriculum of the new specialisations shall be governed by Article 6 of Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education.
- b) Specifically, alongside this general approach to the inclusion of new qualifications, some courses include specific features in the degrees. For example,
 - a. In music, the instrumental or vocal speciality may be extended on the grounds of "its traditional roots or degree of ethnographic interest and the complexity of its repertoire, or its historical value in European musical culture and degree of implantation in the corresponding territorial area, as well as due to the new demands of a pluralistic society" (First Additional Provision).
 - b. The educational administrations may organise training programmes for professional updating that respond to the emerging needs of society and the market, until they are included in the Catalogue of Qualifications and Accreditations of Vocational Education and Training.

On the other hand, the inclusion of training courses for people with special needs, for whom the ordinary training offer or the measures introduced to cater for diversity are not sufficient, deserves special attention. For example, specific offers are envisaged for Basic Level training cycles.

With regard to the position within MECU, depending on the access routes to the different courses, each degree identifies the processes and requirements for access to other degrees, whether academic, training or professional. Table 33 below shows some illustrative examples.

Chart 23. Qualifications from ESO, Baccalaureate, Intermediate and Higher Level Diplomas/Degrees.

Qualification awarded	Qualification to which access is granted
ESO will allow access to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baccalaureate - Intermediate vocational training - Intermediate-Level Plastic Arts and Design Cycles and Intermediate-Level Sports Education once the corresponding exam has been passed. - It will allow access to the realm of work
The Baccalaureate diploma will allow access to...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University Education, in addition to passing an entrance exam and taking into account the grades obtained in the baccalaureate. - Higher Artistic Education - Higher Vocational Education and Training - Higher-Level Vocational Education and Training in Plastic Arts and Design - Higher-Level Sports Education
The intermediate level vocational training qualification will allow you to...	Direct access to all the modalities of the Baccalaureate (Article 44 of the Education Act).
The Higher Vocational Training Technician qualification will allow...	Access to university studies determined by the Government, following consultation with the Autonomous Communities, and a report from the University Coordination Council.
Degree of Higher Technician in Plastic Arts and Design	It will allow access to higher studies, university or otherwise, to be determined.

4.2.5. Criterion 5

National quality assurance systems for education and training refer to national qualifications frameworks and are consistent with the principles of quality assurance as specified in Annex IV of this Recommendation.

Quality assurance of qualifications in Spain is aligned with the European Qualifications Framework and responds to the specifications set out in Annex IV of the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017. Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education, and Organic Act 3/2020, of 29th December, which amends it, include among their objectives "the evaluation of the education system as a whole, both in its programming and organisation and in the teaching and learning processes and their results" and as a goal "the priority attention to the set of factors that favour the quality of education". Hence, the implementation of a series of measures to guarantee the coherence of the national quality assurance system with European principles and directives.

Firstly, the design of qualifications is approached from a learning outcomes-based approach, as detailed in criterion 3 under this heading. The measurement of learning outcomes is reflected in standardised and transparent assessment models, as set out in the standards indicated for each of the courses, as well as in the education system regulations. This assessment process enables the certification processes of the results

achieved in each of the degree programmes to be tackled with guarantees. Furthermore, all qualifications include in their different Royal Decrees of development the promotion of lifelong learning such as, for example, specialisation courses, and the revision of the curricula of these courses, in order to achieve a permanent updating of professional competences (for example, artistic courses, among others).

Secondly, the parties involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of teaching are involved at all stages of the process. In this respect, two areas can be identified. On the one hand, that corresponding to the institutional level seen in criterion 2. The public authorities, according to their competences, set the minimum teaching, regulate the conditions for obtaining, issuing and validating academic and professional qualifications, and define the learning outcomes and education and training pathways. By way of example, the participation of institutional actors in the process of revising and updating qualifications is shown, specifically in the case of vocational education and training in the plastic arts and design.

Fifth additional provision on the revision and updating of the qualifications of Royal Decree 596/2007, of 4th May, which establishes the general organisation of the professional teaching of plastic arts and design and which is amended by Article 2.9. of Royal Decree 268/2022, of 26th July.

Periodically, the Government shall review and, where appropriate, update the qualifications of the professional teaching of Plastic Arts and Design, after consulting with the Autonomous Communities. The curricular aspects of these qualifications, regulated by the basic regulations, that require revision and updating may be amended by the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports, following a report by the Higher Council for Artistic Education and the State School Council, maintaining in all cases the basic nature of the curriculum resulting from said updating.

Furthermore, these same authorities are responsible for quality assurance through the learning assessment and validation systems established in the different courses, as well as the accreditation and assessment of training centres and teaching profiles, among others. Specifically, the issuing of diplomas as set out in the Organic Act on Education is the responsibility of the educational administrations and will be homologated by the State.

On the other hand, by ensuring the participation of the key players in each of the teaching areas, i.e. educational centres, teachers, parents, tutors and the pupils themselves. In the field of vocational education and training, cooperation between educational administrations and social agents, other public bodies, professional associations, non-governmental organisations, business and trade union organisations²⁹ is particularly important for the development of programmes.

Thirdly, with regard to assessment methods and procedures, these combine self-assessment and external monitoring, and include regular reviews by quality assurance

²⁹ Although it is part of the structure of the Ministry of Labour, it is important to highlight the existence of spaces for coordination between public and private agents within the National Employment System. An example of this is the National Employment Council in which trade unions and employers' organisations are represented.

officers. This aims at a permanent or continuous improvement of the qualification framework and its adaptation to European guidelines.

In relation to the methods and tools for the evaluation of the education system, these are regulated in general terms in Act 2/2006, on Education.

Specifically, Royal Decree 984/2021 of 16th November (now repealed) regulated Assessment and Promotion in Primary Education, as well as Assessment, Promotion and Qualification in Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate and Vocational Education and Training. This assessment framework is now regulated by Royal Decree 243/2022, of 5th April, for Baccalaureate, Royal Decree 157/2022, of 1st March, for Primary Education, Royal Decree 217/2022, of 29th March, for Compulsory Secondary Education.

In relation to some assessment instruments in the quality of the education system and teaching, the introduction of a diagnostic assessment of the basic competences attained by pupils at the end of the second cycle of the Primary Education stage (fourth year) and another similar assessment at the end of the second year of Compulsory Secondary Education is noteworthy. This evaluation process is accompanied by the delivery of a personalised report to the pupils at the end of primary school, which helps them to make the transition between primary and secondary school. This report will have an informative, formative and guiding character for the centres, for the pupils, for their parents, legal guardians and for the educational community as a whole. It is worth mentioning, in this regard, the incorporation of the concept of "learning situations", which introduces a new element in the educational system. Learning situations introduce an evolutionary approach to the learning process of students throughout their education. The drafting of learning reports in the different courses is aimed at finding out the transfer of acquired learning. In addition, they allow the introduction of contextual analyses or learning situations, i.e. to identify the different ways in which pupils learn and to introduce the approaches and tools necessary for inclusive education. Hence the orientation in the latest regulatory reforms of teaching and qualifications towards Universal Design for Learning.

In the field of VET, since 2009, the EQAVET framework has guided the development and quality improvement of VET systems. In Spain, the National Quality Assurance Plan for the Vocational Education and Training System was launched in 2012 following the EQAVET 2009 Recommendation (European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training).

The current Organic Act on Vocational Education and Training includes, in its Title X, the obligation to have a mechanism for the Evaluation and Quality of the System, in accordance with the principles agreed at the European level. And for the first time, an annual report on the state of VET has been made compulsory, in addition to the annual report on the education system. The State School Council plays a key role in this evaluation and reporting process.

Following the EQAVET framework, the existence of a National Reference Point in Spain is identified, which is represented by the General Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports.

Fifthly, the issuing of diplomas is carried out by the public authorities in accordance with the powers assigned to them. Specifically, the Government is responsible for regulating the conditions for obtaining, issuing and validating academic and professional qualifications.³⁰ The requirements and conditions for obtaining them are set out in the regulations governing each of the courses of study, which have been adapted to the lifelong learning approach. The diplomas accredit the level of training and competences acquired.

One of the future challenges of the Spanish education system is to reduce dropout rates and to enable as many pupils as possible to reach Compulsory Secondary Education. However, in cases where this does not happen (Level 2), the regulations include the official certification of the years completed and the level of competences acquired in Compulsory Secondary Education; and, for Basic Training, the academic certification of professional competences acquired in relation to the National System of Skills and Vocational Education and Training (applicable until the approval of the new catalogue of competences).

Some examples of the conditions for qualification are given below, although this has been extensively detailed in section 2 of this report:

Chart 24. Level 4 MECU

LEVEL 4 MECU	
Levels and sublevels	Academic and professional programmes
Sub-level 4 A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Baccalaureate Diploma ● Vocational Training Technician Diploma ● Professional Music Education Technician Diploma ● Professional Dance Education Technician Diploma ● Technician in Plastic Arts and Design Diploma ● Sports Technician Diploma
Conditions Intermediate VET <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The assessment of student learning in the training cycles will be carried out by professional modules. A positive assessment will imply passing all the modules. - Students who do not pass the whole of the VET training cycles will receive an academic certificate of the modules passed, which will have the effect of partial accumulative accreditation of the professional competences of the National System of Skills and Vocational Education and Training. 	

³⁰ Article 6 bis of Act 2/2003, on Education, amended by Organic Act 3/2020, of 29th December and Organic Act 8/2013, of 9th December.

<p>Qualification conditions Professional Music and Dance Education; Plastic Arts and Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Successful completion of Professional Music or Dance Education shall entitle the holder to obtain the Professional Diploma. - They may obtain the Baccaulaureate diploma in their modality of Arts, if they pass the common subjects of the baccaulaureate in this modality, even if they have not completed the baccaulaureate in the modality of Arts in the specific pathway of music and dance. 	
<p>Intermediate level Sports Education</p> <p>Those who pass the Intermediate-Level Sports Education will receive the title of Sports Technician in the corresponding sports modality or speciality.</p>	
Sub-level 4 B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Professional Certificate Level 2
<p>Conditions for obtaining them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pass all the modules included in the certificate. - Partial and cumulative certifications of the modules passed. 	
Sub-level 4 C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specialisation courses of Vocational Education and Training of the educational system whose access requirement is to be in possession of a Vocational Training Technician qualification.
<p>Conditions for obtaining them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialist: passing the specialisation modules 	

Chart 25. Level 5 MECU

LEVEL 5 MECU	
Levels and sublevels	Academic and professional programmes
Sub-level 5 A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vocational Training Technician Diploma ● Degree of Higher Technician in Plastic Arts and Design ● Higher Sports Technician Diploma
<p>Conditions for obtaining a Vocational Training Technician's Degree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The assessment of student learning in the training cycles will be carried out by professional modules. A positive assessment will imply passing all the modules. - Students who do not pass the whole of the VET training cycles will receive an academic certificate of the modules passed, which will have the effect of partial accumulative accreditation of the professional competences of the National System of Skills and Vocational Education and Training. 	
<p>Conditions to obtain a Higher Technical Degree in Plastic Arts and Design; Music and Dance; Dramatic Art; Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage; Plastic Arts and Design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students who have completed the higher studies indicated will be awarded the higher degree corresponding to the studies they have completed, which will be equivalent to the corresponding university degree for all purposes. - That of Plastic Arts and Design to the university diploma or equivalent degree. - The Higher Technical Degree in Plastic Arts and Design will entitle the holder to direct access to higher studies in Design, to higher studies in Plastic Arts and to the Teaching of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage. - The Higher Degree in Plastic Arts and Design will allow access to higher studies in Artistic Education and to University Degree studies, in accordance with the regulations and procedure for access. 	
<p>Higher-Level Sports Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those who pass the Higher-Level Sports Education will receive the title of Higher Sports Technician in the corresponding sports modality or speciality. - The diploma will allow access to university studies to be determined. 	

Sub-level 5 B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Professional Certificate Level 3
Conditions for obtaining them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Passing all modules - Partial and cumulative accreditation of the modules passed. 	
Sub-level 5 C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specialisation courses of Vocational Education and Training of the educational system whose access requirement is to be in possession of a Higher Vocational Training Technician qualification.
Conditions for obtaining them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's Degree in Vocational Training 	

Within the scope of Basic, Intermediate or Higher-Level training cycles or Specialisation Courses, students shall receive academic certification of the professional modules and competences acquired and, where appropriate, of the areas or subjects passed, which shall have academic effects and partial cumulative accreditation of the competences acquired in relation to the National System of Skills and Vocational Education and Training. This certification shall entitle those who request it to the issue by the competent Administration of the corresponding professional certificate or accreditations.

4.2.6. Criterion 6

The referencing process must have the express agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies that the correlation report is consistent with the relevant national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practices.

During the process of elaboration of the Royal Decree 272/2022, of 12 April, establishing the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, the MEFPD has consulted the Autonomous Communities through the General Commission of the Education Conference and the Sectorial Conference of the System of Qualifications and Vocational Training for Employment; the State School Council and the General Council of Vocational Training.

The regulation contributes to guaranteeing the principle of proportionality, as it does not imply restrictions of rights or impose new obligations; the principle of legal certainty, as the regulation contributes to reinforcing this principle, in addition to being coherent with the rest of the legal system. It favours its certainty and clarity; the principle of transparency, as potential recipients have been offered the possibility of participating in the drafting of the regulation, including access to the documents involved in its drafting process, and the fact that the regulation clearly defines its objectives; and it is coherent with the principle of efficiency, as it pursues the general interest by facilitating the comparability of the Spanish Education System with other education systems in the European Union that have developed their National Reference Frameworks; providing it with tools of transparency and quality that favour mobility in the labour market and in lifelong learning.

Statement by the Subdirector General for Centres, Inspection and Programmes

The Subdirector General for Centres, Inspection and Programmes, according to Royal Decree 498/2020 of 28 April, which develops the basic organic structure of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training exercises the educational inspection function within the scope of the Department.

The Sub directorate General for Centres, Inspection and Programmes declares that the description of the quality assurance as presented in the Spanish Referencing Report is in line with national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.

Statement by the National Institute of Qualifications

The National Institute of Skills, INCUAL, created by Royal Decree 375/1999, of 5 March is the technical support body to the General Council of Vocational Training responsible for defining, drawing up and keeping up to date the National Catalogue of Professional Skills and the corresponding Modular Catalogue of Vocational Training.

The INCUAL declares that the description of the quality assurance as presented in the Spanish Referencing Report is in line with national quality assurance arrangements, provisions and practice.

4.2.7. Criterion 7

International experts should be involved in the correlation process and the correlation reports should contain the written statement of at least two international experts from two different countries.

Two international experts from France and Portugal were invited by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training invited to participate in the Referencing process:

- Ms Brigitte Trocmé, from the General Directorate of School Education of the Ministry of Education and Youth from France:

Comments on the Spanish referencing report

“Spanish Report on the Referencing of the National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)”

The Spanish referencing report is a well-structured and comprehensive report that explains in detail a landscape that may appear complex, due to:

- Successive reforms in the VET sector over the last twenty years or so.
- A distribution of responsibilities between General State Administration and Autonomous Communities, across all levels, both at university and non-university level.
- The adoption in 2022 of a qualification framework for lifelong learning (*Marco Español de Cualificaciones, MECU*) that incorporates the qualifications framework for higher education (*Marco Español de Cualificaciones para la Educación Superior, MECES*) adopted in 2014.

This Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning is structured in eight levels, with levels 5 to 8 being regulated through the MECES. The level descriptors, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, are inspired by the descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and adapted to the national context.

The adoption of this framework covering all the levels of the European framework thus improves the transparency and comparability of qualifications.

The report deals in detail with the referencing criteria and the procedures for referencing as set out in the 2017 Recommendation. It might be useful to specify how, and within what timeframe, the levels (national and European) will be indicated on qualification registers certificates, diplomas, diploma supplements or Europass supplement (criterion 10).

The last section, on the issues and challenges ahead for the Spanish national framework and VET system, and the recommendations for tackling them, is particularly interesting, not least because some of these issues may be shared by other member states.

- Ms Teresa Duarte, from the National Qualifications Catalogue Department of the National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Training from Portugal:

Comments on the Spanish referencing report

“Spanish Report on the Referencing of the National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (MECU) to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)”

The Spanish referencing report is an interesting and well-structured document and meets the objectives to be presented to the EQF Advisory Group.

The Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning (Marco Español de Cualificaciones, MECU) was adopted in 2022 and is structured into eight levels, including all levels and types of formal education and training. Before, in 2014, the qualifications framework for higher education (Marco Español de Cualificaciones para la Educación Superior, MECES) was set up and self-certified against the qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area. MECU incorporated MECES and improved the transparency and comparability of qualifications.

Just some general notes before addressing the referencing criteria.

The first chapter “Description of the Country’s Education and Training System” is very informative as it describes the processes of transformation in the educational and training system and describes the structure of this system. Figure 1 is important as it shows the organisation and the complexity of the system that is explained in “1.3. Educational and training levels by teaching”.

The second chapter concerns the Spain’s qualification framework and is a structural chapter of the report. In order to produce a version of the report that is even more comprehensible, it would be important to:

- Anticipate the definition of “qualification”. It is a central concept and it is important to define it earlier in the report. In that sense, it seems more appropriate to include the text written in 2.4. in a broader subpoint that covers the actual definition and the one used in higher education (2011). The “concept of qualification” included in chapter 3, can be anticipated. In that chapter, it is better to clarify the sentence “The eight MECU levels are based on differentiated learning outcomes for each level and serve as a conversion tool between the different national qualifications frameworks”.

- Use the same terminology along the report (harmonisation). The term “Skills” – one of the domains of the NQF – is not always used. In some parts of the report, the terms “competences” and “skills” are used instead of “Skills”.

The fourth chapter “Compliance with criteria and procedures” is a fundamental chapter of the report. We suggest that the subpoints relating to NQF vs QF-EEES self-certification and response to criteria and procedures are not stand-alone but included in earlier parts of the report. This suggestion occurs because the information contained there appears, to a large extent, throughout the report.

Concerning the extent to which the report addresses the criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications frameworks or systems to the European Qualifications Framework, as set out in Annex III of the 2017 Recommendation, in general, the report addresses the 10 referencing criteria. Some notes about the criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10.

Criterion 1 – The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities.

The report describes the attributions of the authorities that have a role in the referencing process, concerning the design, implementation and evaluation of qualifications.

In terms of clarification, it would be interesting to know what were the involvement of these different authorities as well as other stakeholders (social partners, companies, students, ...) in the discussions around the referencing process (for example, the allocation of levels and the comparison between NQF and EQF).

Criterion 2 – There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications frameworks or systems and the level descriptors of the EQF.

The Spanish NQF is a comprehensive framework that is structured on eight levels described in learning outcomes in the three domains of the EQF (knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy).

The report shows that there is a clear link between the qualifications included in the framework and the corresponding level descriptors, which

are based on EQF level descriptors. The fact that the NQF levels are more detailed reflects the specificities of the national system. It would be important in the description, and to avoid misunderstandings, to clarify the difference between “learning objectives” and “learning outcomes”.

The framework includes sublevels: levels 3, 4 and 5 include sublevels A and B and level 4 and 5 include also sublevel C. In order to avoid ambiguities some information could be transformed in intuitive images to better understand the content and access to other levels. For instance, sub-level 4C - it is not very clear the reason why to access to other levels it is necessary to have a level 4 qualification. It is also important to have more information when it is mention that in the sub-level 4C “They do not allow access to Level 5 on their own” and in sub-level 5C “These programmes do not allow access to Level 6 by themselves”.

The report includes information about the comparability of the descriptors between MECU and EQF for each of the levels. In this comparison it would be interesting to have more general information about the similarities and differences in the NQF and EQF descriptor elements, before the presentation of comparative information between the levels.

It is interesting to note that the report includes examples of direct and indirect correspondence between the NQF and the EQF. To an international audience, it would be important to extract some concrete examples from the legal documents to demonstrate the association between the level descriptors.

Criterion 3 – The national qualifications frameworks or systems and their qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and related to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where appropriate, to credit systems.

The report evidences that the Spanish NQF is based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes, and evidences the affinity and compatibility with EQF. The use of learning outcomes is not homogeneous between the different sectors. VET is the subsector where the learning outcomes are more developed and implemented. It is interesting to notice the emphasis given to key competences in primary and secondary education and baccalaureate.

With regard to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, although Spain presented the one-off report in 2020, it would be important to have more information about the organisation of the validation system. Some aspects could be developed/addressed such as: access criteria to VNFIL; qualification levels at which it is possible to acquire qualifications through VNFIL; type of standards used for VNFIL; certification (do validation procedures lead to full or partial qualifications and/or allow access to education and training programs? Are certificates and diplomas obtained through this procedure the same as those obtained through completion of education and training programs?); Role of autonomous communities in VNFIL; the use of ECTS in the validation system; Role of the different stakeholders in the validation process; VNFIL funding sources.

Criterion 4 – The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent.

The report includes information to meet this criterion. The response to criterion 4 should be read in conjunction with other parts of the report or this criterion could be enriched.

Criterion 5 – The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications frameworks or systems and are consistent with the principles on quality assurance as specified in Annex IV to this recommendation.

The report includes important information to meet this criterion. The information contained in “2.8. Qualifications management and quality assurance” could be integrated here.

Criterion 10 - Further to the referencing process, all newly issued documents related to qualifications that are part of the national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, certificate supplements, diploma supplements) and/or qualification registers issued by the competent authorities should contain a clear reference, by way of national qualifications frameworks or systems, to the appropriate EQF level.

The report must respond to this criterion, informing about plans to indicate NQF and/or EQF levels in national certificates and diplomas, diploma supplements or Europass supplement, but also on qualification registers.

My last observation relates with the future plans. These plans are well explained in the last chapter of the report and it is possible to learn about the challenges that Spanish colleagues will face in the near future and the next steps planned.

Their comments have been taken into account while reviewing the final version of the Referencing report with the aim to contribute to clear up ambiguities and producing a version of the report that is as comprehensible as possible for all the international stakeholders.

4.2.8. Criterion 8

The competent authority or authorities shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications frameworks or systems with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing, and the evidence supporting it, shall be published by the competent authorities, including the EQF National Coordination Points, and shall address separately each of the criteria. The same report can be used for self-certification to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area, in accordance with the self-certification criteria of the latter.

For its development, an Evaluation Commission was created to establish. This report provides a description of the referencing process, explaining the methodology developed and the different work stages, developing each of the established referencing criteria.

The Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports will inform the European Union that the referencing process has been completed and provide a link to the Report for publication.

4.2.9. Criteria 9 and 10

It is the commitment and responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports comply with criteria 9 and 10 below:

Criterion 9

Within six months of the correlation or update of the correlation report, Member States and other participating countries shall publish the correlation report and provide relevant information for comparison purposes on the relevant European portals.

Criterion 10

Following the correlation process, all new documents issued for qualifications that are part of national qualifications frameworks or systems (e.g. certificates, diplomas, diploma supplements, certificate supplements) or qualification registers issued by competent authorities should include a clear reference, via national qualifications systems or frameworks, to the corresponding MECU level.

Criterion 9: Information about the referencing process and electronic version of this referencing report will be published on the website dedicated to Vocational Education and Training <https://www.todofp.es/inicio.html> and Europass portal <https://europa.eu/europass/en/eqf-referencing-reports>.

Criterion 10: After completing the referencing process, each competent body shall consider/assess the necessary changes in the legal framework to foresee the inclusion of the corresponding EQF level in the respective certificates/diplomas and their supplements.

4.3. Self-certification of the NQF vs. QF-EHEA

The structure of the MECU and the regulations that develop higher education transparently identify the position of each degree in the MECU structure and the pathways between degrees.

In the (Spanish) National Qualifications Framework, levels 5 and 6 of the EQF correspond to first cycle university and non-university higher education qualifications; level 7 corresponds to second cycle qualifications; and level 8 corresponds to the third cycle or doctorate. Once the Spanish Framework for Higher Education was established, two amendments were made which allowed:

- Establish the association with MECES of previously existing university degrees (Royal Decree 1393/2007 of 19th October).
- Establish a clear position within the MECES of those Bachelor degrees that exceeded the minimum threshold of 240 ECTS credits and that, in case of containing at least 60 ECTS of Master level, could aspire to the qualification of Level 3. These degrees included learning outcomes specific to the Master level (Decree 1027/2011, of 15th July) and, shared with the level 3, direct access to higher Level 4 degrees or qualifications.

Both amendments improve the correlation process. The tables below provides a comparison between EQF and MECU.

Chart 26. Comparison of MECU and EQF levels

Qualification	MECU		EQF
	Sub-level	Level	Level
- Higher Vocational Training Technician Diploma - Higher Technician in Plastic Arts and Design Diploma - Higher Sports Technician Diploma	5 A	5	5
- Professional Certificate Level 3	5 B		
- Specialisation courses of Vocational Education and Training of the educational system whose access requirement is to be in possession of a Higher Vocational Training Technician Diploma.	5 C		
- Graduate Degree - Higher Diploma in Higher Artistic Education	--	6	6

- Graduate degree of at least 300 ECTS credits comprising at least 60 ECTS credits at Master's level, which has obtained this level of qualification by resolution of the Council of Universities.	--	7	7
- University Master's Degree - Master's Degree in Artistic Education			
- Doctorate degree	--	8	8

4.4. Response to the QF-EHEA criteria and procedures

The European Higher Qualifications Framework (QF-EHEA) was adopted in 2005 in Bergen as part of the Bologna Process. The structure consists of one short cycle (level 5) and three cycles, of which the first cycle corresponds to learning outcomes at level 6 (Bachelor), the second cycle corresponds to level 7 (Master) and the third cycle to level 8 (Doctorate). For each cycle a descriptor expressed by learning outcomes is identified, which are defined through knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy. The use of the same structure of descriptors and learning outcomes makes it possible to clearly organise and integrate the different courses that make up the EQF and, in short, to generate a common framework from levels 1 to 8.

Through the MECES, the correlation of university and non-university higher education to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF-EHEA) is articulated, thanks to the use of levels for which a set of descriptors and learning outcomes are identified. As in the EQF, the MECES identifies learning outcomes through a set of knowledge, skills, responsibilities and autonomy which vary for each cycle and level.

In the configuration of Level 5 of MECU, it establishes that level 5 has three sub-levels (5A, 5B and 5C) which correspond to EQF Level 5. This level corresponds to higher and specialised education and training for various professions.

The levels in EQF are described under the descriptors of learning outcomes linked to knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy. In the case of MECES, these learning outcomes are collected under the general heading of characteristics, but in which these criteria are clearly identified.

In this context, it is necessary to point out the specific characteristics of Higher Artistic Education as they are treated differently. As mentioned above, higher vocational education and training, including artistic and sporting education, are included in level 5. Specifically, those corresponding to level 5 A allow access to MECES level 2 university degrees. In this regard, the following degrees are included in level 2 of the MECES: higher studies in Music and Dance, Dramatic Art, Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage and higher studies in Design and Plastic Arts (including Ceramics and Glass).³¹

³¹ These studies are regulated by Royal Decree 1624/2009 of 26th October 2009, Organisation of Higher Artistic Education regulated by Organic Act 2/2006, of 3rd May, on Education.

Therefore, the Bachelor's Degrees in Higher Artistic Education are included, for all purposes, in level 2 of the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education and will be equivalent to the university Bachelor's Degree.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the harmonisation of education and training that has led to the incorporation of the European Higher Education Area in the different European countries is a continuous process of updating. The stage of correlation and association has given way to a stage oriented towards the processes of homologation, validation and equivalence of university degrees.³² The latest regulatory updates include the correspondence to the MECES level of previous Spanish university degrees declared equivalent to the degrees of architect, engineer, graduate, technical architect, technical engineer or diploma holder. The latest amendments incorporate the recognition of higher education degrees obtained in foreign education systems with official university degrees in Spain. They also establish exclusions in terms of homologation, equivalence and validation. This deepens the creation of an area of European mobility in education and broadens the employment prospects of the population of EU member states.

5. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE NQF

5.1. Referencing process: challenges and specific issues. Recommendations.

Throughout this report, the characteristics of the Spanish education system have been described and a comprehensive analysis of the qualification frameworks (MECES and MECU) has been undertaken. Through the different correlation criteria, analysed in section 3, it has been possible to demonstrate the association between the Spanish qualification framework (MECU and MECES) and the European framework, especially for the levels 1 to 5 covered in this report.

It is important to point out that, the approval of MECU facilitates the comparison and correlation of qualifications.

³² Royal Decree 889/2022, of 18th October, which establishes the conditions and procedures for the recognition, equivalence and validation of university degrees from foreign education systems and which regulates the procedure for establishing the correspondence to the Spanish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education of official university degrees belonging to previous academic systems (Official State Gazette, BOE, no. 251, of 19th October 2022).