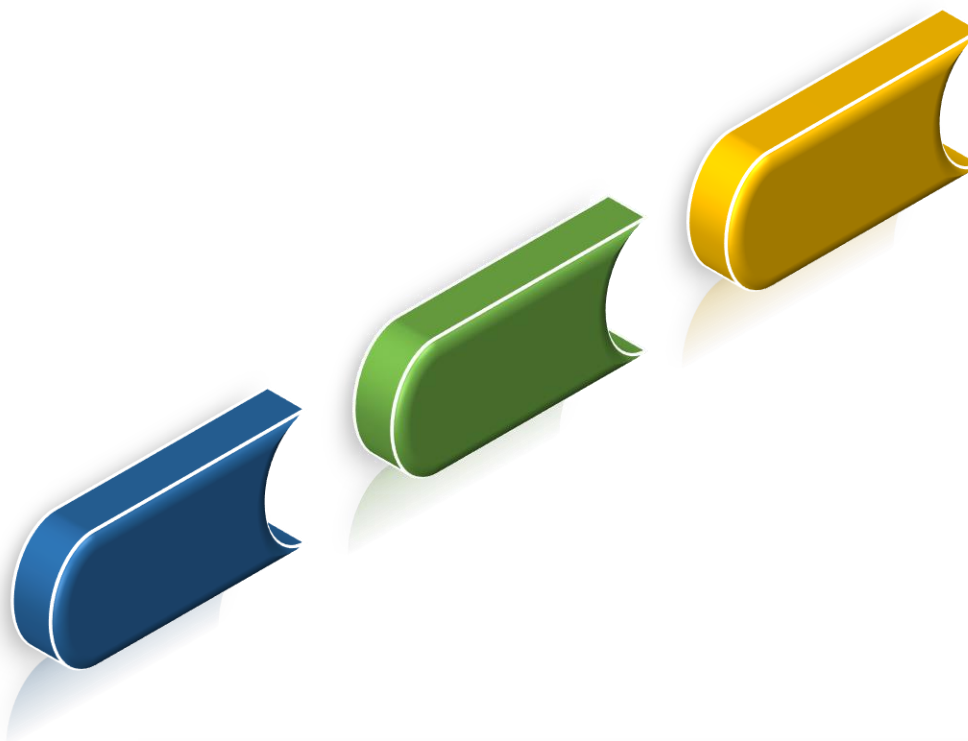


Project **BAQUAL**  
**Better Academic Qualifications through Quality Assurance**



**A manual with examples of good practice in the process of creating qualification standards and programs related to the improvement of teaching competencies of teachers in higher education**



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Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

## Impressum

The handbook with examples of good practice in the process of creating qualification standards and programs related to the improvement of teaching competencies of teachers in higher education was created as a result of the **BAQUAL** project - **Better academic qualifications through quality assurance**.

The coordinator of the project was the [Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia](#), and the project partners were the [Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia](#) and the [Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education of Montenegro](#).

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## 1. About the project

The BAQUAL project was implemented in the period from June 2020 to November 2022 with the aim of encouraging the application of the qualification framework in internal and external quality assurance procedures in higher education in three countries: Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia. The Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia (MSE) was the coordinator and project manager, while the partners in the project were the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia (MON) and the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education of Montenegro (ACQAHE). The Project received grant co-financing under the Erasmus+ programme – Key Action 3 - Support to the Implementation of the EHEA Reforms. Project activities were carried out and directed by the project teams of each partner country, while activities related to the development of qualification standards and programs for the improvement of teaching competencies of teachers in higher education were carried out by working groups of partner countries, and were made up of teachers employed in higher education. The implementation of certain activities of the BAQUAL project was affected by the epidemiological situation caused by the COVID-19 virus, which is why most of the activities were held online.

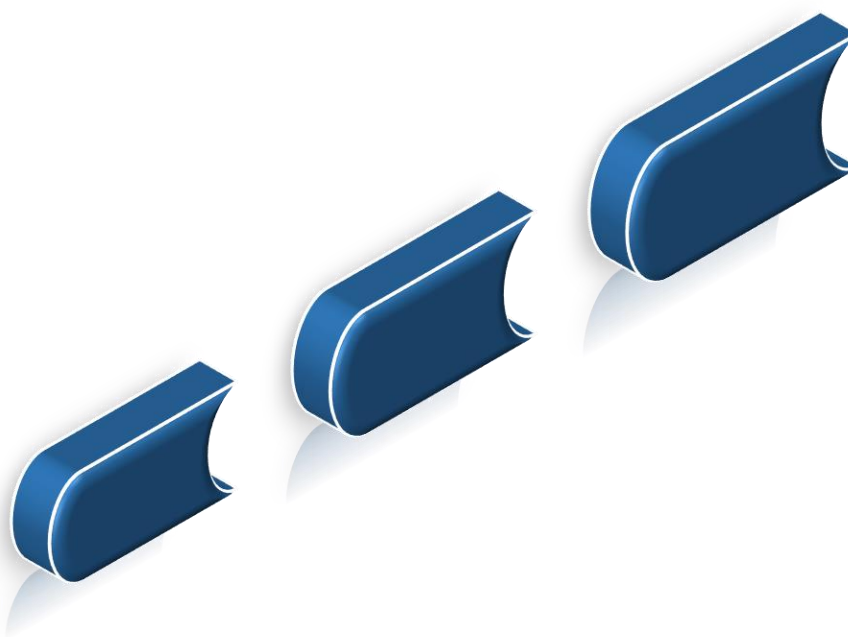
Within the BAQUAL project, the following activities were carried out that contributed to the creation of the program:

- regular meetings of the project partners, during which the partners agreed on the details related to the implementation of the activities and exchanged the acquired experience and knowledge
- regular meetings of working groups of partner countries, during which occupational standards and/or appropriate research, qualification standards and programs were developed
- three online workshops where interested members of the public from Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia received current and interesting information about the need to create standards for qualifications for teachers in higher education (and occupational standards, if applicable), programs for improving teacher competencies and evaluation lifelong learning program for teachers in higher education
- the Croatian working group created the occupational standard Teacher in higher education, while the Montenegrin and Macedonian working groups conducted research on the teaching competencies of teachers in higher education, which wanted to ensure the connection of the qualification standard with the needs of the labor market
- all three countries created a qualification standard for a teacher in higher education and a program for improving the teaching competencies of teachers in higher education based on the qualification standard
- in all three countries, program reviews were prepared based on an external evaluation of the programs



- ACQAHE visited Spain and France as part of study trips during which knowledge and experience were gathered related to the use of national qualification frameworks in the system of quality assurance in higher education, creation and implementation of programs for teacher training in higher education, etc.; the experiences gathered were shared with project teams from other countries.

The official website of the project is [baqual.en](http://baqual.en), it contains information about the project, news about the activities carried out and the results of the project activities, as well as the previously mentioned documents.



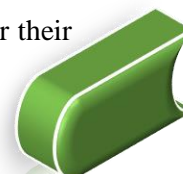
## 2. About qualification frameworks

The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) is an instrument for establishing qualification levels aimed at recognition and understanding of qualifications among national qualifications frameworks. In the framework of this project, it is important to highlight the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), which serves to establish qualification levels within the higher education system in order to recognize and understand qualifications among national qualifications frameworks of the European Area of Higher Education. In order to link with EQF and QF-EHEA, Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia have developed their own national qualification frameworks, which are described in more detail below.

### 2.1. Croatian Qualification Framework (CROQF)

The Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) is an instrument for regulating the system of qualifications in the Republic of Croatia, it guarantees transparency, access to acquiring qualifications, reliable acquiring of qualifications, progression and high-quality qualifications, as well as linking qualification levels in the Republic of Croatia with EQF qualification levels and QF-EHEA and indirectly with qualification levels of qualification frameworks in other countries. CROQF governs the following legislative framework: [Law on the CROQF](#) and [Ordinance on Register of the CROQF](#). The purpose of CROQF is to reform the entire educational vertical, i.e. to achieve a better connection of the education sector with the needs of the labor market and individuals. This will be ensured by the transition from knowledge transfer to learning outcomes, ensuring measurable results and ensuring the quality of education. CROQF also strives to develop basic skills for lifelong learning, and by emphasizing the recognition of professions and qualifications, encourages continuous improvement and lifelong education. The CROQF Register was established to serve the needs of maintaining data on occupational standards and sets of competences, qualification standards and sets of learning outcomes, programs for acquiring and evaluating sets of learning outcomes, programs for evaluating sets of learning outcomes, programs for acquiring qualifications and other data from interests, and for the purpose of connecting and harmonizing them. The key stakeholders in the implementation of the CROQF are the [Ministry of the Science and Education](#), [Ministry of Labour, the Pension System, Family and Social Policy](#) (MLFSP), the [Education and Teacher Training Agency](#) (ETTA), the [Agency for Vocational and Adult Education](#) (AVET), the [Agency for Science and Higher Education](#) (ASHE), [National Council for the Development of Human Resources](#) (NCDHR).

The main tools of CROQF are the occupational standard and qualification standard, as well as a set of competencies and a unit of learning outcomes. The occupational standard is a list of all tasks that an individual performs in a certain occupation, as well as a list of competences required for their

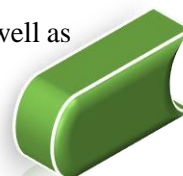


successful implementation. Competence represents knowledge and skills and the associated independence and responsibility, a set of competencies consists of several interconnected competencies. More detailed instructions on the development of the occupational standards and sets of competences are provided in the [Methodology for the creation of occupational standards and sets of competences](#), and the forms for creation are available in the Ordinance on the CROQF Register. MLFSP implements the process of formal evaluation and coordinates the process of professional evaluation of the Commission for evaluation of requests for entry of occupational standards or sets of competencies in the Register. Upon completion of the entire evaluation process, the MLFSP issues a Decision on the admission of occupational standards/set of competencies in the CROQF Register. The qualification standard represents the content and structure of a specific qualification. It includes all the data needed to determine the level, scope and profile of the qualification, as well as the data needed to ensure and improve the quality of the qualification standard. A unit of learning outcomes is the smallest complete unit of related learning outcomes of a certain level, volume and profile. More detailed instructions on the preparation of qualification standards and unit of learning outcomes are provided in the [Guidelines for the Development of Qualification Standards in Higher Education](#) and the [Guidelines for the Development of Qualification Standards in Vocational Education and Training](#), and the forms for the preparation are available in the Regulations on the CROQF Register. Proposals for qualification standards and units of learning outcomes related to higher education levels are formally evaluated by ASHE and coordinate the expert evaluation of the Committee for Evaluation of requests for entry of qualification standards or units of learning outcomes in the Register, and upon completion of the entire evaluation process and positive evaluation, ASHE issues a Decision on registration of qualification standards/unit of learning outcomes in the CROQF Register.

On the website [kvalifikacije.hr/en](http://kvalifikacije.hr/en) you can find basic information about CROQF, the legislative framework, methodology and guidelines for creating CROQF tools, information about completed and ongoing projects that use CROQF tools, current news and announcements of events related to the topic of CROQF.

## 2.2. National qualification framework in Montenegro (MQF)

The National Framework of Qualifications in Montenegro (MQF) is an instrument that enables classification, comparison, development and understanding of qualifications, their connection and a clear overview of the various ways of acquiring qualifications for the needs of the labor market and society. It regulates the system of qualifications in the country at all levels and sectors. The MQF is based on learning outcomes and has the role of modernizing the qualifications system to make it clear and understandable to all target groups. MQF contains all existing qualifications within one system, which are acquired at all levels of formal education (primary, secondary or higher education), as well as



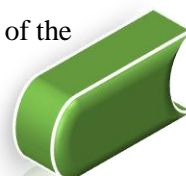
informally. MQF enables the evaluation of non-formal and informal learning and their connection with formal education, thus supporting the concept of lifelong learning. The establishment and development of MQF in Montenegro is in accordance with the activities carried out by the countries of the European Union, other countries of Europe and the world in order to enable lifelong learning and mobility in the field of education and employment for every individual.

In November 2014, at the session of the European Commission's European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group (EQF Advisory Group), a decision was made to adopt the Report on referencing the MQF in Montenegro with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) which made Montenegro one of the 24 (at that time) countries in Europe and the first of the candidate countries for membership in the European Union that successfully completed the referencing process. In this way, the levels of MQF in Montenegro were formally linked with the levels of the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning, and thus directly linked with the national qualification frameworks of other European countries. The qualification levels acquired in Montenegro are comparable to the EQF levels, which enables their recognition and enables the mobility of individuals from Montenegro in the world of work and education in the wider European area.

The system of qualifications in Montenegro is regulated by *the [Law on the National Qualification Framework](#)*, other laws in the field of education, as well as by-laws (*[Regulation on the description of qualification levels and sub-levels](#)*, *[Ordinance on procedures for developing qualifications from the first to fifth level of qualifications](#)* and *[Ordinance on procedures for developing qualifications from sixth to eighth level of qualifications](#)*). The bodies that develop, verify, approve, recognize and classify qualifications in the MQF within their competences are: [Ministry of Education](#), [Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare](#), [Center for Vocational Education](#), [Institute of Education](#), [Examination Center](#), educational institutions/organizers of education, [MONSTAT](#), [National Council for Education](#), [Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education](#), [Council for Qualifications](#) and sectoral councils.

The initiative for the development of the qualification can be submitted by the institution of higher education or another legal body, through the institution of higher education. The initiative is submitted to the competent sector council. When the sector council accepts the initiative to develop a qualification, the Council for Qualifications designates it as a proposal for the development of a qualification. The Council for Qualifications submits the accepted proposal to the competent institution of higher education for the development of the qualification. Developing a qualification includes the preparation of a study program, a part of a program, a program of one or more modules and the creation of standards for a specific qualification. The higher education institution submits the qualification program to the competent authority for accreditation.

After ACQAHE accredits the qualification program, the higher education institution, on the basis of the accredited program, prepares the qualification standard in accordance with the article of the



Act on the National Qualifications Framework. The prepared qualification standard of higher education institutions is submitted to the Council for Qualifications for confirmation and entry into the MQF. After the Qualifications Council adopts the qualification standard, the qualification is entered in the MQF register.

### 2.3. Macedonian Qualification Framework (MQF)

The national qualification system consolidates the requirements for individual qualifications and describes the different ways of obtaining them. It creates a unique and transparent system of recognition of qualifications that can benefit individuals, employers and educational institutions in the development of training programs. In addition, it encourages lifelong learning of individuals because the results of that learning and education can be formally confirmed. Thanks to the linking of the National Qualifications Framework, i.e. the MQF with the EQF, the qualifications will be comprehensible in other European Union countries as well. The National Qualifications Framework (MQF) is an instrument for the establishment of a system of qualifications acquired in a specific country, which provides the basis for the acquisition of qualifications, passability and quality of qualifications. MQF is a mandatory national standard that regulates the acquisition and use of qualifications in the Republic of Macedonia and an instrument for establishing a system of qualifications acquired in the Republic of Macedonia that provides the basis for transparency, access, passability, acquisition and quality of qualifications. More information about MQF can be found at the [link](#).

#### Objectives of MQF:

- clearly define learning outcomes
- establish a system of evaluation of different qualifications within the overall system of qualifications
- encourage and develop lifelong learning
- indicate permeability and progression (horizontal and vertical) through and within all types of education and training (formal, informal and informational)
- enable international comparability of qualifications
- promote the importance of key and professional competencies
- ensure mobility of participants in the education and training process and inclusion in the labor market at the national and international level
- create a unique quality management system
- standardize the quality of service providers
- ensure the cooperation of all interested parties
- ensure compliance with the economic, social and cultural needs of the Republic of North Macedonia and





- be part of the system in correlation with the development of activities of the European Qualification Framework.

#### Principles of MQF:

- learning outcomes are expressed through knowledge, skills and competences
- classification of qualifications into levels and sub-levels
- loan transferability
- comparability with the European Qualifications Framework
- quality assurance in the process of acquiring and developing qualifications
- ensuring the conditions for equal access to education throughout life for the acquisition and recognition of qualifications
- strengthening the competitiveness of the Macedonian economy, which is based on human potential
- establishment of a coordinated quality assurance system for existing and new qualifications
- building a non-formal and informal learning evaluation system.

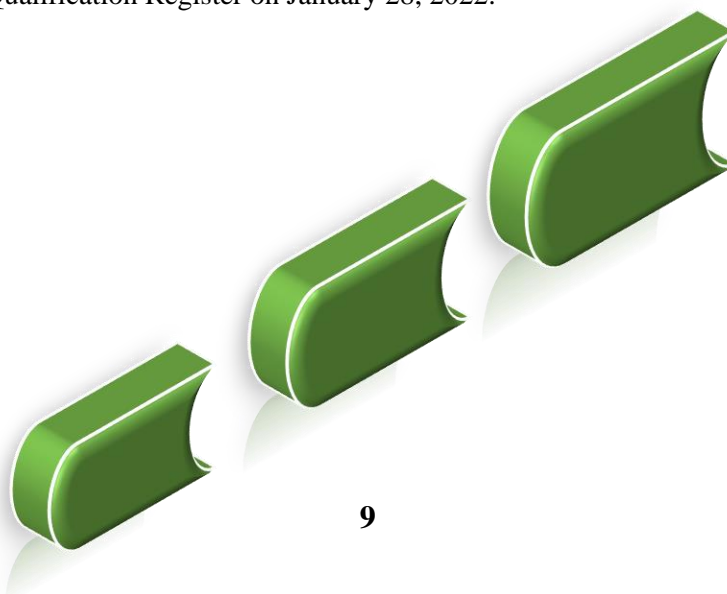
Documents for the work of MQF can be seen at the [link](#). The legal documents for MQF are available at the [link](#).

#### Register of qualifications

An important characteristic of the Macedonian qualification framework is its openness to all types of qualifications at all levels of education and their entry into the Register.

Enrollment in the Register enables visibility of qualifications, transparency of the process and quality assurance process. The qualifications included in the Register are checked every four years.

The qualification standard for teachers in higher education in the Republic of North Macedonia was submitted to the National Committee for the Macedonian Qualification Framework and on January 11, 2022, it was adopted unanimously. It is the first standard submitted electronically on the new digital platform. It is the first standard of level VIII in the Macedonian qualification framework. The standard was entered in the Qualification Register on January 28, 2022.



### 3. The strategic importance of lifelong improvement of teacher competencies in higher education

The standard implies clearly, unambiguously and consistently stated requirements for professional competences (knowledge and skills) needed by an individual to perform tasks efficiently and safely at his workplace. Numerous strategic documents on the national, but also on the European level emphasize the need to ensure adequate and high-quality programs for teachers in higher education, with which they will have the opportunity to continuously improve their teaching competencies.

In 2020, a ministerial conference was held in Rome, and in the [Rome Ministerial Communication](#), the necessity of providing appropriate support to higher education institutions was highlighted in order to be able to improve the initial and continuous professional training of academic and administrative staff; in this way, the staff would be able to respond to numerous challenges with quality<sup>1</sup>. In Appendix III. *The Rome Ministerial Communication*<sup>2</sup> also provides recommendations for the further improvement of learning and teaching in higher education, among which there are also those related to the encouragement of higher education institutions to ensure the continuous professional development of teachers, the mutual exchange of examples of good practice between countries, the creation of a stimulating and sustainable environment at the institutional and national level and continuous work on creating new teaching methods using a multidisciplinary approach. Important document is also [Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European area of higher education](#) (ESG), which was adopted by the ministers of the European area of higher education in 2015, which also highlighted the importance of lifelong education of teachers in higher education, the need to improve their teaching competencies and the importance of developing programs for such training.

In accordance with the mentioned documents, and European trends, the partner countries of the BAQUAL project decided to act and therefore decided to create occupational standards and/or appropriate research and qualifications and lifelong learning programs for teachers in higher education. When creating these documents, the legislative frameworks in the partner countries were taken into account.

#### 3.1. The strategic importance of lifelong improvement of teacher competencies in higher education in the Republic of Croatia

[The Strategy of Education, Science and Technology](#) (further in the text: *The Strategy*) recognizes the importance of quality teaching at universities and points to the problem of „(...) insufficient basic methodical and, more broadly, andragogical education of higher education teachers." Namely, the

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<sup>1</sup> Rome ministerial announcement /Rome Ministerial Communique, str.7.

<sup>2</sup> Rome ministerial announcement /Rome Ministerial Communique, str. 4.



majority of assistants, lecturers, docents and professors do not have such knowledge, so it would be desirable to develop and offer suitable programs for their additional education. Therefore, in the part of the *Strategy* related to higher education, as one of the additional conditions (criteria) for selection into the first teaching profession, mandatory successful completion of the additional methodical-pedagogical education program is proposed. Higher education institutions can stimulate such additional optional training for already selected teachers, because it can be one of the additional elements in the evaluation related to the quality of the institution's work.“<sup>3</sup> Based on the stated goal of the *Strategy*, the Ministry of Education and Culture, in cooperation with experts, implemented the project [\*Developing and improving teaching competencies at higher education institutions\*](#) (Educa-T), which lasted from 2016 to 2018, and within which an analysis of the state and activities was carried out which are conducted at universities in the Republic of Croatia with the purpose of improving the quality of learning and teaching. The authors of the [\*Handbook for the Improvement of Teacher Competences in Higher Education\*](#), which is the result of the project activities of the previously mentioned project, came to the conclusion that „(...) although the leadership of Croatian higher education institutions points out that they are aware of the need to improve the competences for learning and teaching, as well as the need to determine strategic goals that would improve learning and teaching, their universities lack institutional frameworks for the implementation of activities that would support such strategic goals.“<sup>4</sup> Based on the previously mentioned strategic document and the results of the Educa-T project, it was considered justified and well-founded within the framework of the BAQUAL project to create a qualification standard for teachers in higher education and a program for improving teacher competencies for teachers in higher education.

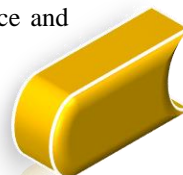
### 3.2. The strategic importance of lifelong improvement of teacher competencies in higher education in Montenegro

The professional development and training of teachers is the basis for quality assurance in the higher education system. In the context of the needs of modern society, teacher education no longer means only their basic - initial education, but also their continuous improvement within lifelong learning in order to acquire new knowledge and acquire different competencies. In Montenegro, the importance of lifelong improvement of teacher competencies in higher education is recognized in the document [\*Strategy for Teacher Education for the period 2017-2024\*](#) (further in the text: the *Strategy*). The vision of teacher education in Montenegro until 2024 is that in all educational institutions, classes are conducted by motivated, respected, competent teachers who they have the necessary professional

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<sup>3</sup> *Education, Science and Technology Strategy*, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Zagreb, 2015., str. 37.

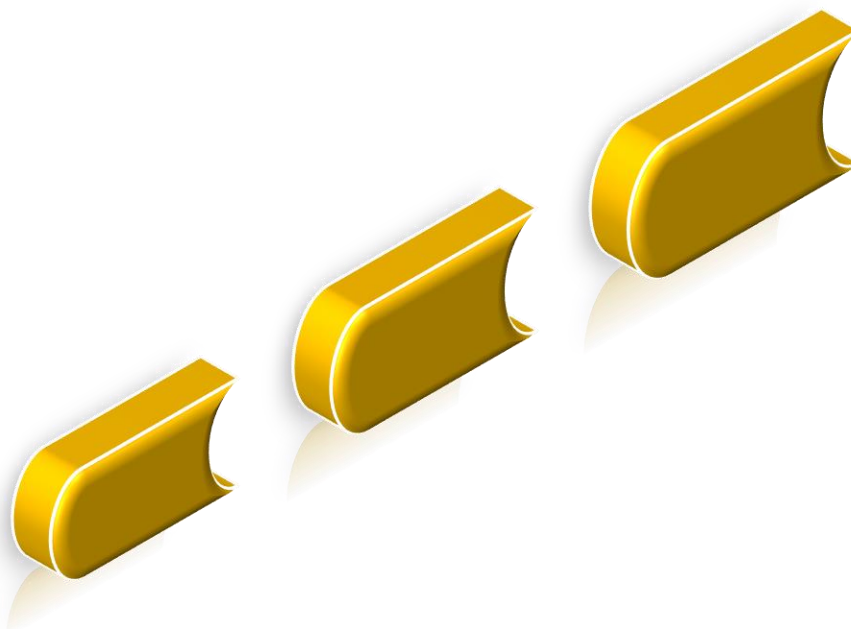
<sup>4</sup> *Handbook for the improvement of the competence of teachers in higher education*, Ministry of Science and Education, Zagreb, 2018., str. 10.



knowledge and appropriate teaching competencies in accordance with the achievements and knowledge of the profession, pedagogy, psychology, teaching methodology and didactics. Within that strategic document, the importance of continuous training of teachers in order to adapt to new trends in education and changes brought by information and communication technologies is particularly emphasized. The apreviously mentioned *Strategy* aims to create policies and practices of initial and continuing teacher education, which will enable teachers to be supported in realizing their complex role and preparation for educational work, on which depends the quality, durability and applicability of the knowledge that pupils/students will acquire at all levels education, on their personal and professional development, social inclusion and readiness for active citizenship.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.3. The strategic importance of lifelong improvement of teacher competencies in higher education in Macedonia

The strategic importance of lifelong improvement of teacher competencies in higher education is primarily presented in the [Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Science 2022-2024](#), which includes all planned activities for the specified period. This *Strategy*, with its long-term goals, continues the [Education Strategy 2018-2025](#). The main document on the basis of which strategies and goals are developed is the [Law on Higher Education](#).



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<sup>5</sup> *Teacher education strategy in Montenegro (2017-2024)*, Ministry of Education, Vlada Crne Gore, str. 3.-4.

## 4. About the process of creating the program

### 4.1. Description of the program development process in the Republic of Croatia

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Croatia implemented the [Educa-T](#) project (*Emphasis on developing and upgrading of competencies for academic teaching*) which was aimed at improving the quality of learning and teaching in higher education, strengthening the role of university teachers and strengthening awareness of the importance of improving the quality of learning and teaching in higher education. Within the mentioned project, a *Handbook for the improvement of the competence of teachers in higher education* was created (further in the text: *the Handbook*). The results of the Educa-T project and the *Handbook*, were the starting point and foundation of the BAQUAL project working group for the development of the occupational standard *Teacher in Higher Education*. Using the *Handbook*, methodologies and guidelines of the CROQF and its knowledge and work experience as a teacher in higher education, the working group created, in accordance with the instructions of the *Methodology for the creation of occupational standards of the MLFSP*, a concept of occupational standards that contained a list of key jobs, knowledge and skills, as well as a job description and a list of conditions of work for teachers in higher education. The working group presented the working version of the occupational standard concept at the first online workshop organized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Science, *Occupational standard and qualification standard for teachers in higher education and competence improvement programs*. The working group received feedback from the participants, teachers in higher education, about the concept of the occupational standard and exchanged experiences in creating it with the members of the working groups of the project partners who created the qualification standard.

After receiving feedback and comments at the held workshop, the working group refined the key tasks, competencies and sets of competencies in accordance with the received information and then created the *Survey on the occupational standard* according to the instructions of the *Methodology*. The next stage of creating occupational standards was the implementation of a guided survey using the created *Survey*. Employees and employers of universities, colleges and polytechnics who responded to the call took part in the online survey. Some of the questions that appeared during the guided survey were related to the key tasks and competencies that the occupational standard should contain, as well as to the use of the standard among people who have just started their career as teachers in higher education and other teachers in higher education. The working group used the processed collected data to refine the concept of the occupational standard proposal and create the final version. After finalizing the proposal for occupational standards, the proposal was entered through the proposal application of the CROQF Registry and went through the process of formal evaluation by MLFSP and expert evaluation by the Committee for Evaluation of Occupational Standards. After receiving a positive opinion from the Commission, the standard was entered in the CROQF Register.



Since the idea is for the qualification standard to be a generally accepted standard at the national level, and it will also serve for the creation and evaluation of the program, a working group was established to create a partial standard for the qualification *Teacher in higher education*, in which involved representatives of various higher education institutions, who are also potential executors of the program. The proposal of the partial qualification standard was made in accordance with the [\*Guidelines for the development of qualification standards in higher education\*](#), and the basis for the preparation was the mentioned *Handbook* from the Educa-T project, the occupational standard [\*Teacher in higher education\*](#), the guidelines of the CROQF and professional knowledge and experience of members of the working group. The working group regularly held online meetings, during which the following parts of the request for entry of qualification standards into the CROQF Register - *Description of qualification standards* and *Proposal of a unit of learning outcomes* were prepared. The first part consists of general information, such as the name of the qualification standard, the minimum volume made in ECTS points, the conditions for accessing the qualification and obtaining the qualification, while the second part of the requirements contains units of learning outcomes, associated learning outcomes, material and personnel conditions necessary for the acquisition /evaluation of an units of learning outcomes, example and evaluation procedure and the like. It is important to note that the work on the creation of occupational standards and qualification standards was also affected by the change in the legislative framework on CROQF at the beginning of 2021, within which the methodologies for creating standards and evaluation procedures were changed.

After drafting the proposal for the partial qualification standard, the proposal was sent for opinion to higher education institutions that implement or are potential implementers of similar programs. Within the form, the higher education institutions, in addition to expressing their opinion on the proposal of the qualification standard, also express their interest in whether they will take over the qualification standard, that is, align the program by which the specified qualification would be obtained with the qualification standard. After submitting the qualification standard proposal for evaluation, the ASHE checks whether the qualification standard proposal complies with the conditions prescribed by the Ordinance on the CROQF Register, the legislative framework related to higher education, and whether it contains all prescribed data and documentation, while the Commission checks the quality of the professional part of the standard.

On the basis of the developed proposal of the qualification standard, a program for improving the teaching competencies of teachers in higher education was developed. It was created by the working group of the higher education institution in accordance with its internal procedures, the relevant legislative framework related to higher education and on the basis of the prepared proposal of the partial qualification standard *Teacher in higher education*. At the same time, the challenge was how to achieve modularity in the implementation of the program and how to implement the recognition of prior learning for participants who have been working as teachers in higher education for some time, and who want to



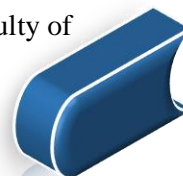
improve further by attending the program. The developed program was sent for review by external reviewers, and then for an opinion by the Committee for Quality of Higher Education.

## **4.2. Description of the program development process in the Montenegro**

Taking into account the fact that the existing legislative framework in Montenegro in the field of higher education does not provide for special training programs, i.e. training for associates and teachers who participate in the teaching process, the working group concluded that there is a need to develop such a program that will enable them additional education. Therefore, the goal of developing this occupational qualification is to improve the pedagogical ability of the academic staff and thus to contribute to the professionalization of that staff to the greatest extent possible. A similar initiative has not existed in Montenegro so far, so it is considered a pioneering undertaking. In accordance with Montenegrin legislation, an initiative for the development of a occupational qualification can be submitted by a higher education institution or another legal body, but exclusively through the higher education institution, to the competent authority - the Council for Qualifications.

Given that one of the project activities involved the implementation of an independent survey on teacher competencies at all institutions of higher education in Montenegro, the working group created two special forms of questionnaires in the first half of 2021 - for teachers and for students. In addition to the aforementioned questionnaires, the national working group also conducted guided interviews with the management of higher education institutions in order to obtain an overall picture of the status of teacher competencies from all relevant actors in this area. The key goal of the conducted research is the evaluation of the current situation in terms of teacher competencies and the assessment of the need to introduce lifelong learning programs intended for academic staff in the field of higher education. The research in question began on May 24, 2021, with the sending of questionnaires electronically to institutions of higher education in Montenegro and lasted for two weeks. Surveys were completed by 535 students and 208 teachers. The surveyed participants were given the opportunity to give answers to closed-ended questions, then to use a Likert scale to express their level of agreement with certain positions offered, as well as to express their opinions about teacher competencies and the quality of higher education, and about the advantages and disadvantages of implementing online classes in open-ended questions during the COVID-19 virus pandemic.

The questionnaires answered by students and teachers included similar questions in order to get a realistic picture of how similar or different certain attitudes are perceived, which relate to teacher competencies and their importance. When it comes to the research sample, surveys were conducted among students and teachers in all seven institutions of higher education in Montenegro: University of Montenegro, University of Donja Gorica, University of the Mediterranean, University of Adriatic Bar, Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature, Faculty of State and European studies and Faculty of



Business Management Bar. In addition to the data obtained through surveys, interviews were also conducted with representatives of the management of higher education institutions, which aimed to provide another angle of observation in relation to the same or similar questions from the questionnaire. Guided interviews were also conducted among the management of all seven institutions of higher education in Montenegro.

After the research, the working group started with the preparation of the analysis, the analysis consists of four parts. The first part is devoted to the research framework, within which the purpose of the research is explained in detail, the legislative framework that regulates the field of qualifications, the structure of the questionnaires that were created for the purposes of the research, the research sample, as well as the conducted interviews. The second part of the analysis includes the evaluation of teachers' competencies based on data obtained through questionnaires for students and teachers, through the previously mentioned six areas in addition to the seventh, which refers to the quality of teaching in pandemic conditions. The third part of the analysis, on the other hand, evaluates teacher competences from the aspect of the management of higher education institutions based on the data obtained through guided interviews. The fourth part of the analysis includes concluding considerations and proposals for measures to improve the situation in the field of teacher competencies in Montenegro in higher education.

The initiative to develop the lifelong learning program qualification, together with the analysis, will be sent to the Council for Qualifications by the University of Montenegro. The implementation of the lifelong learning program at the University of Montenegro represents the final stage and fulfillment of the project's goal. The development of professional qualifications for teachers in higher education is in accordance with the valid legislative in the field of higher education. Namely, Article 97 of the [Law on Higher Education](#) stipulates that institutions can implement special training programs in the field of higher education for the needs of lifelong learning, in order to acquire a professional qualification or a part of a professional qualification, or other qualifications in accordance with the aforementioned *Law* and special regulations of the institution. The term "developing a qualification" means the preparation of a new qualification, i.e. the modification or addition of an existing qualification with the aim of improving it. In accordance with the *Ordinance on the development of qualifications from the sixth to the eighth level of qualifications*, the basis for developing professional qualifications is part of the study program, i.e. the program of one or more modules. For the needs of the BAQUAL project, the Agency plans to develop the above-mentioned qualification through cooperation with a higher education institution.





### 4.3. Description of the program development process in the Republic of North Macedonia

Within the Erasmus+ BAQUAL project, a qualification standard for teachers in higher education of the Republic of North Macedonia was developed. The coordinator of the qualification standard development process was Borčo Aleksov, a representative of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia, and external collaborators of the Ministry - prof. Dr. Tatjana Atanasova-Pachemska, representative of Goce Delcev University from Štip and prof. Dr. Dean Iliev, representative of the University of St. Kliment Ohrid - Bitola.

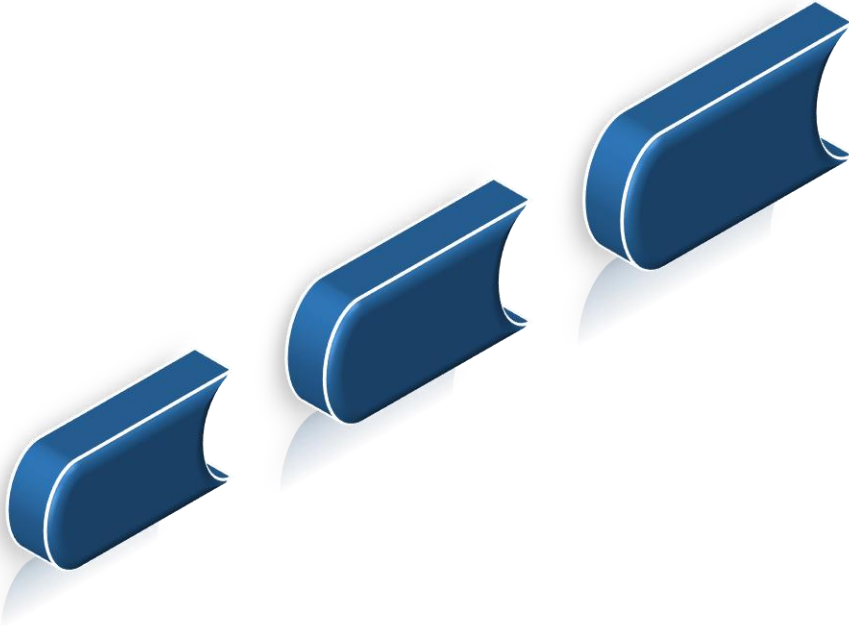
The qualification standard was created on the basis of the following: European Union documents, the legislative framework of the Republic of North Macedonia, the statutes of state and private higher education institutions, in cooperation with colleagues from Croatia and based on the experience of Croatia and other European Union countries. The basics of qualification standards are also defined, which are based on the identified needs of members of the working group, the reflection of teachers in higher education, the reflection of managers of certain higher education institutions in North Macedonia, the data of the State Statistical Office and the data of the employment office. For the purpose of developing qualification standards, a questionnaire was also conducted for teachers and associates employed at universities, in which information related to the teaching profession in higher education was collected. The collected data were processed with AHP and DEA optimization methods, using software solutions, and with the help of which the needs of teachers in higher education were identified and interconnected. The purpose of the conducted research was to work on the creation and development of a system for the practical application of the created qualification standard for teachers in higher education based on the collected information. After the creation, the procedure for adopting the qualification standards was initiated.

The qualification standard for teachers in higher education in the Republic of North Macedonia was submitted for evaluation to the National Committee for the Macedonian Qualification Framework in December 2021, and on January 11, 2022, it was unanimously adopted. The standard was entered in the Register of Qualifications on January 28, 2022. This made it the first qualification standard to be submitted electronically on the new digital platform. It is also the first qualification standard at the eighth level of the Macedonian qualification framework. With the development of the program, the process of introducing qualification standards began, and the start of the program was in February 2022.

*The Professionalization of the Profession of Teacher in higher education (didactic perspective)* program was implemented by an expert team of university professors from the Republic of Macedonia who also developed the first standard for teacher qualifications in higher education. It was actively worked on for nine months, and the program was created as a result of recognized needs and requirements of teachers, similar programs in European countries, as well as the national context and



opportunities. After creation, that program was sent to independent evaluators, external evaluators who submitted their opinions and comments within the stipulated time.



## 5. External evaluation of the program for improving teaching competencies of teachers in higher education

### 5.1. Program review process in the Republic of Croatia

The created program was reviewed by three experts who are familiar with the principles and tools of CROQF and ESG. The review was carried out by experts taking into account the proposal for the qualification standards *Teacher in higher education* and ESGs. The reviewers gave the program a positive rating with several recommendations for its improvement. The higher education institution that created the program received the received reviews, considered their suggestions and started refining the program based on the received reviews. The involved higher education institutions and reviewers in their feedback emphasized that the development of proposals for qualification standards and programs is essential for improving quality assurance in higher education in Croatia.

### 5.2. Program review process in Montenegro

The institution of higher education, as the initiator of the program, submits a request for its accreditation to ACQAHE. An elaboration of a special training program is submitted with the application for accreditation. For the purposes of implementing the accreditation procedure, i.e. evaluation of the program, ACQAHE forms a special committee as an expert body in charge of evaluating the submitted application. The committee consists of at least three members who are chosen from the list of experts, which is determined by ACQAHE based on a public call. The committee has the task of preparing and submitting to ACQAHE a Report on the accreditation of a special training program within 15 days, which should contain recommendations for its improvement. Based on the proposal of the expert committee, ACQAHE makes a decision on program accreditation or a decision rejecting the request for accreditation. Based on a positive decision on the accreditation of a special training program, the Agency issues an accreditation certificate to the institution for a maximum period of five years.

### 5.3. Program review process in the Republic of North Macedonia

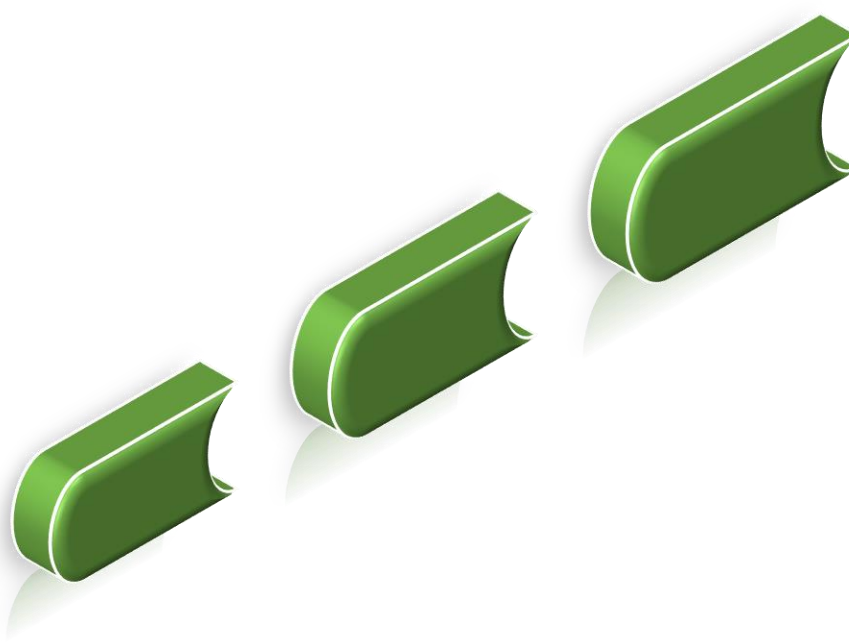
The program is the basis for the development of a lifelong learning system for higher education teachers in the Republic of North Macedonia. The program develops a concept that should be applied in different spheres of activity of higher education teachers, and in the module offered for this program, the context of the didactic perspective is developed. It is particularly significant that the program is



connected to ECTS, which offers the possibility of recognition and exchange in the European context. It is considered good for this program to be mandatory for all teachers who would be involved in further training for the development of competencies of future teachers in higher education in accordance with the adopted qualification standard.

This program is the first of its kind at universities in Macedonia, which provides care for the quality of teaching, as well as didactic-methodical support for higher education teachers, who can carry out their continuing education in the direction of developing their teaching competencies in their home institution and with the support of their colleagues. The review of this module of the program was made by three university professors selected by the Ministry of Education and Science, who determined that the program is complete and purposeful in terms of the development of teaching competencies of higher education teachers in the modern national and university space, context, that the program is modern in terms of the use of new innovative technologies and approaches, flexible and democratic in terms of the time frame and method of implementation, as well as sustainable in terms of building a strategy for taking care of the quality of higher education teaching and providing continuous professional didactic-methodical, technological and communication support to teachers and colleagues in the teaching process. The reviewers recommend and encourage the application of this program to the Universities, which with their developed mechanisms for approving lifelong education programs and quality centers will revive this, but also recommend other programs to achieve quality requirements according to the adopted standard for the profession of teacher in higher education.

Through the Ministry of Education and Science, the expert team will propose this program for verification by the university senates, and appropriate measures will be taken for its promotion and application, together with the standard of qualification for the teaching profession in higher education.



## 6. Conclusion

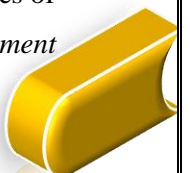
### 6.1. Contribution of the results of the BAQUAL project to the system of higher education in the Republic of Croatia

Development of the occupational standard, feedback from workshops held within the project, development of the proposals for qualification standard, feedback from all involved participants, as well as the collected opinions of higher education institutions on the proposal for the qualification standard *Teacher in higher education*, and reports on reviews of the developed program indicated that the proposal for qualification standards made according to CROQF procedures represented a good basis for creating a program for acquiring and further improving teaching competencies of teachers in higher education. During the development of the occupational standard, proposal for qualification standard, program and program reviews, numerous participants from various higher education institutions were involved. In this way, it was ensured that the mentioned documents, and ultimately the program, meet the needs of the labor market, contribute to quality assurance in higher education and offer an opportunity for further training of teachers in higher education. By creating a program based on the proposal of qualification standard and program reviews, members of the project team, working groups and other participants in the process of creating standard, program and reviews acquired additional knowledge, skills and competencies that will be useful in future quality assurance procedures in higher education using tools CROQF.

The BAQUAL project also opened a discussion and exchanged experiences and opinions with the partner countries in the project on the process of development of qualification standards and the programs. Also, at different stages of the project implementation, other experts involved in the project's activities participated in the discussion and exchange of opinions, which contributed to the creation of a better proposal for qualification standard and program. In addition to the above, the cooperation of the partner countries and other stakeholders also contributed to the promotion of the BAQUAL project and the familiarization of key stakeholders in the higher education system with the results of the project.

### 6.2. Contribution of the results of the BAQUAL project to the system of higher education in Montenegro

The most challenging was the beginning of the implementation of the project activities, because the project team had the task of developing a qualification that did not exist in the Montenegrin system until now, and which was also the most needed. After several meetings of the project team, it was concluded that it is necessary to develop a module - a program for improving the teaching competencies of teachers in higher education. The working group had a series of meetings in the following phases of the project, during which it created the content of the key document - the Initiative for the *Development*

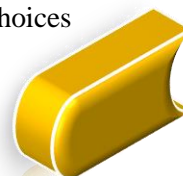


*of Professional Qualifications in the Field of Higher Education*. Learning outcomes and conditions for obtaining a professional qualification are defined as the most significant elements of the mentioned Initiative. At the same time, ACQAHE 's project team devoted itself to examining the legal possibilities for the realization of the project task in practice, i.e. it was consulted in connection with the choice of a higher education institution that can be the host of the Professional Development and Professional Training program for pedagogical work of academic staff. After a series of discussions, consent was obtained in principle for the introduction of the planned program into the curriculum of the University of Montenegro, the state and at the same time the largest university in Montenegro.

The next project phase was focused on conducting research and creating an *Analysis on the competences of teachers at higher education institutions in Montenegro*. Therefore, the project team of ACQAHE believes that this research will represent a basis for decision makers in the field of higher education and that it will open the way to higher quality teaching in higher education. On the other hand, the aforementioned research can also represent the basis for the implementation of a much broader, comparative analysis among the EHEA member countries. Also, it is important to note that the implementation of the study visits, foreseen by the project, contributed to a large extent to the improvement of knowledge in the matter of defining the curriculum for the lifelong learning program. In addition to the above, the study visits were an excellent opportunity to present the BAQUAL project and the possibility of its implementation in the higher education systems of other countries, taking into account a number of benefits that have/will directly affect the improvement of the quality of higher education. Adopting and including such an innovative program in the higher education system will enable the professionalization of academic staff and the modernization of their knowledge in accordance with the latest trends. In addition, future generations of students will be positively influenced by a teacher with developed pedagogical competencies. Of particular importance will be the desire of key decision makers in Montenegro to make such a program mandatory for associates and teachers upon their election to an academic position. Previous experience with project partners has shown that each country has similar tendencies in the field of higher education. Thanks to the excellent cooperation between the partners, there was an exchange of best practices and the laying of the foundations for the future development of similar programs in their countries.

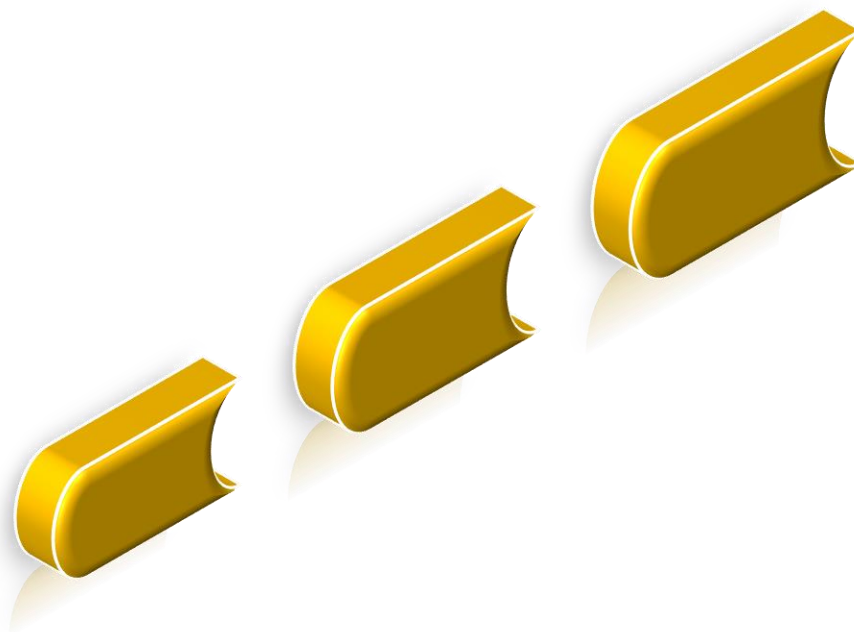
### **6.3. Contribution of the results of the BAQUAL project to the system of higher education in the Republic of North Macedonia**

The implementation of the activities within the BAQUAL project opened up for the first time the question of how to improve the teaching process in higher education, with an insight into the need and choice of opportunities for continuous teacher education at all levels. The standardization of teacher qualifications in higher education will also open discussion processes for adding elements to the choices



of university teachers in the context of the realization of teaching and educational activities, the development of new objective tools for control and management of the quality of education. The educational process at universities and, of course, the improvement of the status of teachers in higher education, but also the position of universities on national and international scales.

Cooperation with the member countries in the BAQUAL project made it possible to see joint opportunities for action in the sphere of improving and strengthening the qualifications of teachers in higher education, launching joint initiatives and forms of cooperation, taking over positive and negative experiences in the areas covered by project activities and to plan future successful collaborations.



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