

ACTION SHEET



Preparation and consensual adoption of an Action Plan to strengthen the National Qualifications System

Line of action:
**ACTIVE EMPLOYMENT
POLICIES**

Areas:
SOCIAL POLICIES

Scope:
PARAGUAY

THE IMPORTANCE OF A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (NSPQ)

The National System of Professional Qualifications (NSPQ) is a device to link the educational and training system of a country with the demands of the labour market and civil society for the sake of greater productivity. A qualifications system organises the elements that can be “bridges to lifelong learning” (OECD, 2008).

The concept of professional qualification encompasses the set of professional skills that can be acquired through formal education and other types of training and through work experience, with value and recognition in the labour market and that respond to available occupations and jobs.

“Learning does not only take place in the classroom, but also in the family, in the labour market, and in training processes,” says Ximena Concha, former director of Chile Valora and EUROsociAL+ consultant. “All this must have a mechanism to facilitate a recognition that society gives the same value to. We must work on defining how the qualification is developed, how it can be acquired, how it can be accredited and validated and how people can have information and guidance to develop a professional career”.

A qualifications system organises all the elements that can be “bridges to lifelong learning” (OECD, 2008). Strengthening the



NSPQ involves improving significant professional skills for job performance, resulting in a higher quality of work and contributing to development. Professional skills can be acquired through formal, non-formal or informal educational processes. In this context, adapting Technical Education and Professional Technical Training (ETFP) to the job market is essential for the training curriculum to connect with labour demands and, on the other hand, for companies to find workers with the skills they need.

A system of qualifications organises all the elements that can be “bridges to lifelong learning” (OECD, 2008)

A person is considered professionally qualified when the result of their work is of a standard that the production system demands at that time. In this sense, qualifications adapt to what the production system requires and pays. Professional qualifications require recognition and evaluation, so as not to comprise solely the obtaining of a formal academic certificate. Quality employment is a key factor for development and social cohesion. Adapting the employment policies of a country to its socio demographic conditions is both a challenge and an opportunity, in order to contribute to the quality of work, economic growth and the reduction of poverty.

EUROSOCIAL+ SUPPORTS THE NSPQ OF PARAGUAY

The socio demographic characteristics of Paraguay, as a developing country, are conducive to strengthening its education and work policies and improving its NSPQ. Most of the population is of working age, but there are social gaps that cause inequality in access to and permanence in training cycles. It is important to promote flexible modalities that combine vocational training and continuity of primary and secondary studies.

That is why the EuroSOCIAL + Programme has provided technical assistance to strengthen the NSPQ of Paraguay within the framework of support to the Interministerial Technical Unit of the National Council of Education and Labour of Paraguay.

Leading institutions in the process of drafting the Action Plan and Roadmap 2020-2030 were the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security of Paraguay, as Technical Education and Vocational Training are the relevant areas for the action proposed. The final objective was to establish a roadmap, in order to generate a shared vision capable of guiding ministerial actions in conjunction with private sector actors (employers, workers and educational and vocational training institutions), under the supervision and coordination of the organising entity of the NSPQ.

To achieve this roadmap —as public policy— the Theory of Change methodology was followed and actions divided into three lines:

- i) main elements of the current situation (critical points and opportunities);
- ii) the system architecture and
- iii) the roadmap itself, based on four key dimensions or components: governance; link with the productive environment and employees; quality and permeability.



WIDENING THE HORIZON OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES

Additionally, the EUROsociAL+ Programme has worked with the countries of the Pacific Alliance (Chile, Mexico, Peru and Colombia) in advancing towards the standardisation of their systems of evaluation and certification of work skills. The objective is to obtain a comprehensive system that enables labour mobility of citizens of these countries among themselves. This process will have a positive impact on migrant populations who seek job opportunities in other countries, encouraging job inclusion and social cohesion among the countries of the Pacific Alliance. EUROsociAL+ has provided support through a consultancy in which similar processes in countries of the European Union and their applicability to the countries mentioned were analysed.

KEY POINTS OF THE ROADMAP

1. Help to improve access and coverage: position EFTP as an option for educational inclusion and integration, reinforcing the strategic link with the productive environment.
2. Develop new skills in young people and adults towards the development of a comprehensive socio-educational life project for people, particularly people without formal studies.
3. Generate a quality offer, relevant and suitable for the requirements of the future of work.
4. Enable horizontal and vertical career progressions that consider the diversity of conditions of students and are based on qualifications in accordance with the productive environment.

One of the key needs identified by the Action Plan is to certify professional skills - a fundamental action in strengthening the NSPQ, the object being to establish tools to assess and recognise people's job skills regardless of how and where they were acquired. Professional apprenticeships are often more closely associated with practice than theoretical training, but as

they do not have the respective formal qualification, companies do not recognise those skills. "We often study one subject but then work in another area and learn different skills. Also this is where certification fulfils its objective", affirms Ximena Concha, one of the authors of the roadmap, together with her colleague Marcela Orellano.