

Short Cycle Higher Education in Europe Level 5: the Missing Link

MAGDA KIRSCH AND YVES BEERNAERT



This project has been funded with
the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme
of the European Commission



SCHE and qualification frameworks L 5 the missing link

Bologna Seminar

Embedding Professional Short Cycle Higher Education in the
(Higher) Education System

Budapest, 20 January 2011



EURASHE SCHE study 2010: Context

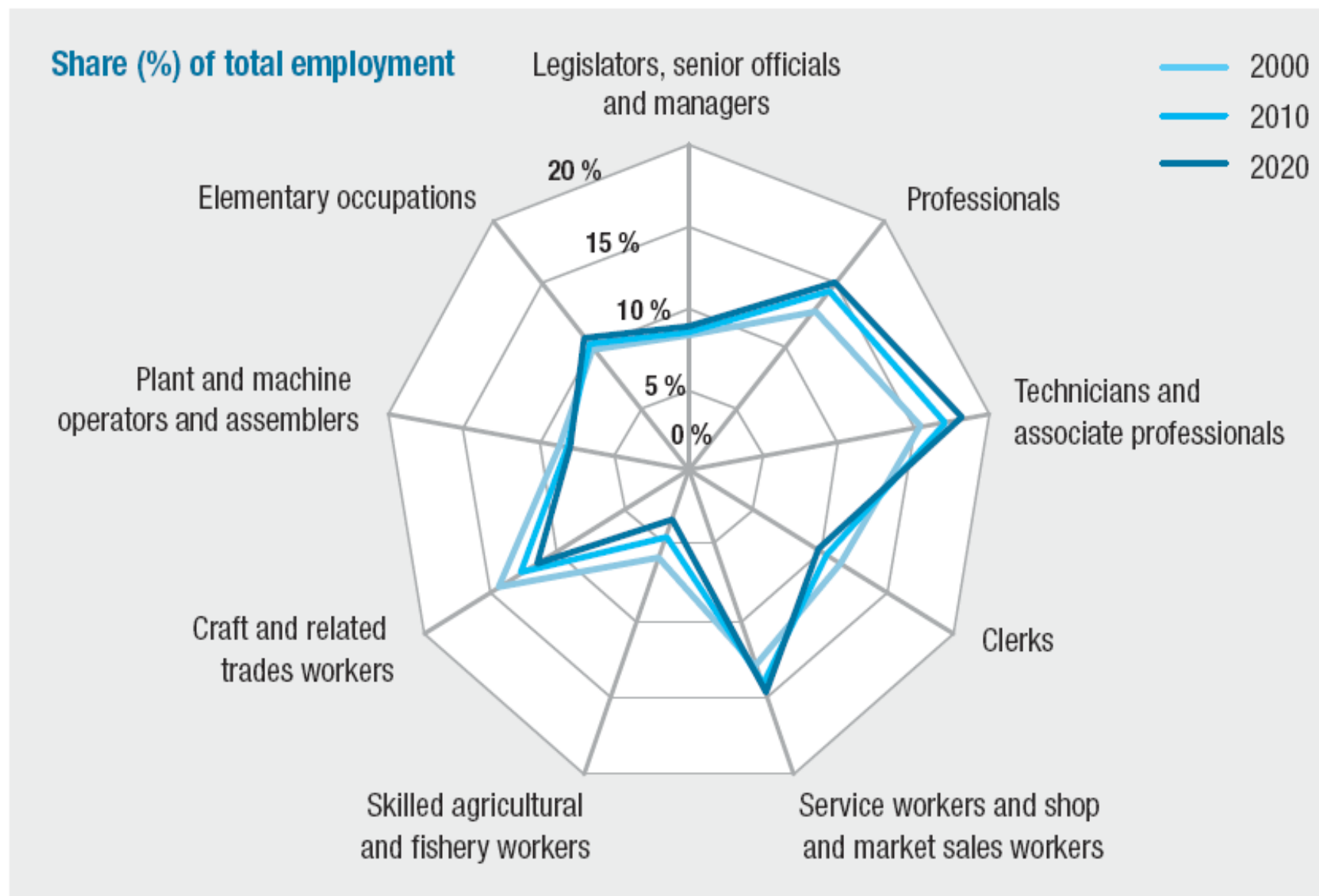
- In 2003 the European Commission commissioned EURASHE to carry out a study on TSC study in Europe.
- In order to monitor progress that has been made in the field of SCHE in Europe, the European Commission has asked EURASHE to carry out a follow-up report.
- Scope EU 31 + TR
- Focus on progression routes for graduates
 - Progression to further studies
 - Progression to the labour market - employability
- Focus on social dimension in HE



2010: Socio-economic context

- 20% of unemployed young people most of them unskilled or low-skilled workers;
- Labour market needs highly skilled technicians;
- Many young people with low SES are ill-prepared to access HE;
- Growing number of adult workers who (have to) return to education to upgrade their skills;
- In view of widening access to education, LLL and meeting labour market needs SCHE is increasingly important;

Figure 21. The changing occupational structure of employment, EU-27+





Definition for SCHE

- European Higher Education Area Framework (3 cycles)
 - within the first cycle, short cycle higher education qualifications typically including or represented by approximately 120 ECTS credits – within national contexts
 - Dublin descriptor
- EQF for LLL (8 levels) = Translation device for NQF
 - Level 5
 - Descriptor for level 5 EQF



SCHE = level 5

- The 2007 London Communiqué ‘Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world’ states: ‘We [the Ministers] are satisfied that national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA will also be compatible with the proposal from the European Commission on a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning”.

Source: Bologna Process (2007) – London Communiqué

- EQF documents assert compatibility for the higher levels of the EQF with the QF-EHEA – Cross referencing was carried out at levels 5 to 8

Source: European Commission (2008). *Explaining the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*

AT			8		no SCHE		(5?)	no
BEDE			8 (5?)		no SCHE yet	(5)		yes
BEFR			8 (5)		SCHE	2009		yes
BENL	8	2009		5	SCHE	2009		yes
BG			8 (5?)		no SCHE?	1999		unclear
CH					no SCHE	(5?)		unclear
CY			8 (5)		SCHE	1970's		yes
CZ			8 (5,6?)		no SCHE	1995		unclear
DE			8		no SCHE		(5?)	no
DK	8	2003		5	SCHE	1997		yes
EE	8	2008			no SCHE yet		(5?)	yes
ES			8 (5)		SCHE			yes
FI					no SCHE		(5)	no
FR	5	?		3	SCHE	1966		yes
GR			8		no SCHE		?	no
HU			8 (5)		SCHE	1998		yes
IE	10	2003		6	SCHE	1970's		yes
IS			(7)	(4)	SCHE	1990		yes
IT			?		no SCHE yet	(4 / 5 ? EQF)		probably
LI			?		no SCHE	(5)		unclear
LT			8		no SCHE		5	no
LV			8 (5)		SCHE	2001		yes
LU			8 (5)		SCHE	?		yes
MT	8	2007		5	SCHE	2005/2006		yes
NL	8	2010		5	SCHE	2006		yes
NO			?	?	SCHE	1970's		yes
PL			?		no SCHE		?	no
PT	8	2010		5	SCHE	?		yes
RO			8		no SCHE		(5)	no
SE			?	?	no SCHE	(5)		no
SI			8 (6.1)		SCHE	1996		yes
SK			8		no SCHE		?	no
TR			8 (5)		SCHE	?		yes



SCHE = EQF level 5?

- Many NQF still under construction;
- Most countries surveyed have an NQF for higher education in line with the QF-EHEA;
- Many countries not having NQF use ISCED
- Countries with NQF all have SCHE or intend to introduce it
- Most countries with NQF 8 levels but FR 5, IE, 10, SC 12
- Level 5 virtually always link between SE and HE
 - 1-4 SE / 5-8 HE
 - 1-5 SE / 6-8 HE
 - 1-3 SE / 4-8 HE



Different meta-frameworks in use: different objectives

- ISCED = an instrument suitable for assembling, compiling and presenting statistics of education: distinction between levels and fields.
- QF-EHEA = to harmonise higher education systems in Europe by introducing common degree structures with an approximate number of ECTS credits to be earned , thus enhancing transparency, recognition and mobility.
- EQF = reference tool to compare the qualification levels of the **different qualifications systems** and to promote both lifelong learning and equal opportunities in the knowledge-based society, as well as the further integration of the European labour market.



Different meta-frameworks in use: position of SCHE

- ISCED = SCHE is at level 5B
 - First stage of tertiary education (not leading directly to an advanced research qualification) - Min. 2 years
 - Qualifications in category 5B are typically **shorter than those in 5A** and focus on occupationally **specific skills geared for entry into the labour market**, although some theoretical foundations may be covered in the respective programme.

difficulties to distinguish between SCHE and Prof. Bachelor

- EQF = SCHE is at level 5 at the EQF
- SCHE = short cycle **within or linked to first cycle**

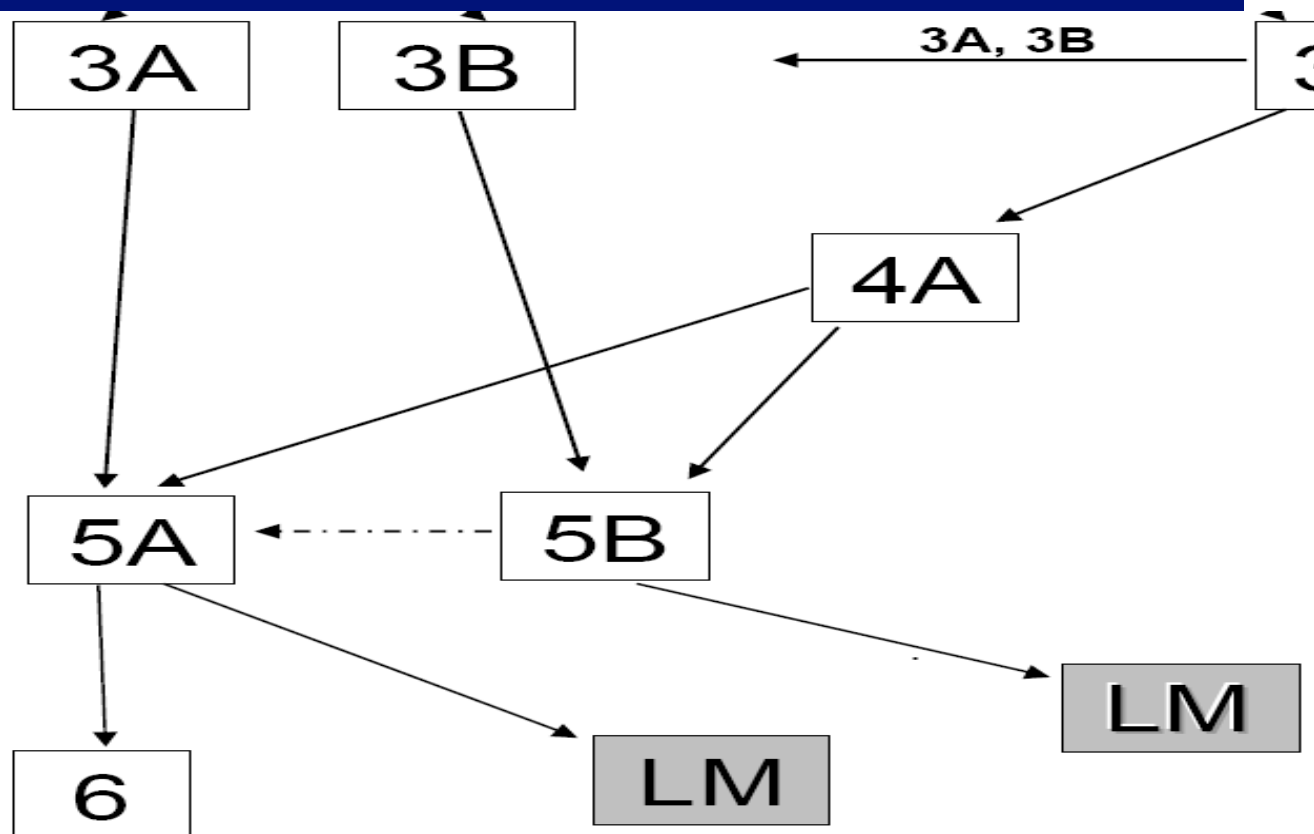
Many respondents confused frameworks



Different meta-frameworks in use: position of SCHE (ctd.)

<i>Short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) Qualification</i>		<i>Level 5 of the EQF</i>
<i>Learning outcomes</i>	<i>ECTS credits</i>	<i>Learning outcomes</i>
<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the higher education short cycle (within the first cycle) are awarded to students who:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle; 1.2. can apply their knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts; 1.3. have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems; 1.4. can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients; 1.5. have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy. 	<p>Approx. 120 ECTS credits</p>	<p>LO relevant to Level 5 within EQF include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge; • a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems; • exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change; • review and develop performance of self and others¹”

Transition pattern ISCED



SCHE is most blurred area in QF-EHEA - ISCED

EQF	QF EHEA		ISCED	
8	Third cycle	Ph.D.	6	
7	Second cycle	Master		
6	First cycle	Bachelor i.a. professional bachelor	5A 5B	Most blurred zone of qualifications
5 i.a. Higher vocational / professional qualifications	Short Cycle within the 1 st cycle	Various titles, degrees:		
4	Some Higher Vocational qualifications organised by HEI		4 Post-secondary non-tertiary	
3			3	
2			2	
1			1	



SCHE is most blurred area in QF-EHEA – ISCED : A few examples

- Some countries have level 5 or are planning to introduce it but do not intend to introduce SCHE (e.g. FI);
- Sometimes credits earned in those level 5 programmes can be transferred to HE programmes (e.g. CH);
- One country has two-year programmes that are not considered to be SCHE (SE) but are at level 6 and equivalent to BA;
- In one country (IE) SCHE/level 5 EQF is provided by HEIs and coexists with the “Advanced Certificate, a further education and training award at level 6 of the Irish NFQ (level 5 EQF) that is not aligned with the QF-EHEA
- In the UK SCHE can also be found at level 4.



Different meta-frameworks in use: differences and similarities

- ISCED and QF EHEA refer to duration /workload – ISCED vague
- EQF : ‘qualification’ is defined as ‘a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

(Source: Official Journal of the European Union, 6.5.2008, C 111/3. *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.* annex 1)

- Qualification can be given by others than educational providers (e.g. sector bodies). The EQF is therefore **much more market-oriented** than the European Higher Education Area Framework.
- Two qualifications frameworks (EQF and QF-EHEA) are not explicitly linked as students or workers who progress from level 6 to level 7 do not automatically progress from Bachelor’s to Master’s degree.



Different meta-frameworks in use: Why some do not consider SCHE to be HE

- First five levels of the EQF follow a vocational logic whereas levels 6, 7 and 8 are drafted according to the Bologna (higher education!) logic. Also in the Dublin descriptor for short cycle higher education the logic of higher education was not followed, according to some countries because there is too much of a focus on employability

(Source: Feutrie, M. (2007) www.ef.uni-lj.si/projekti/eucen/gradivo/Presentation_Michel_Feutrie.ppt)

- *“The essential difference between DDs and QR DH lies in the level of the short cycle. A corresponding logic cannot presently be found in the German higher education system. Although there are - e.g. in the training of educators - approaches towards assigning technical college training to the short-cycle system. However, these training programmes only actually manage to clearly meet the objective of employability. A direct continuation of the studies for a Bachelor's degree – with full credit – is not foreseen, neither in systematic nor institutional terms .”*

(Source: BMBF (2008). Report on the compatibility of the "Qualifications Framework for German Higher Education Qualifications" with the "Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area"(2008). p. 25)



Conclusions

- Not all countries consider SCHE to be HE;
- Not all countries consider descriptor for EQF level 5 to be compatible with QF – EHEA;
- Some countries consider that HE cannot be associated with a vocational/professional orientation;
- SCHE is not always level 5;
- Level 5 is not always SCHE;
- SCHE level 5 is sometimes offered alongside level 5 qualifications that are not in line with QF EHEA.



New paradigm

Are we going towards a new binary system at level 5 of the EQF with on the one hand SCHE (QF-EHEA) more focusing on progression in HE and on the other hand a more vocational profile focusing on the labour market?



Recommendations as to SCHE and QF

- Create a translation tool between ISCED 2011 and EQF LLL / QF EHEA
- Enhance further transparency in HE
- Promote knowledge about the EQF
- Promote strong links between L5 and HE in order to enhance LLL

Thank you for your attention!

Any questions?

