

# INTEGRATED QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER OVERVIEW



01

## INTRODUCTION

02

## INTEGRATED QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER

- About the register
- Registers of qualifications in other countries

03

## NEW UNDERSTANDING OF QUALIFICATIONS

- What is a qualification?
- Who awards qualifications entered in the IQR?

04

## QUALIFICATIONS ENTERED INTO THE INTEGRATED QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER

- What qualifications can be found in the Integrated Qualifications Register?
- What information on qualifications is included in the register?

05

## WHO USES THE REGISTER?

- Students and parents
- Teachers
- Everyone interested in professional development
- Career advisers
- Employers
- Training companies
- Employees of public administration offices

06

## INTEGRATED QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER SERVES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF HUMAN CAPITAL IN POLAND



# INTEGRATED QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER OVERVIEW

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# 01

Achieving satisfaction in professional life often depends on our readiness to acquire new competences. What counts in the labour market are the skills and knowledge that we have acquired at all ages, even after graduation from school or university. There are many ways to learn. We develop our potential while performing our duties at work, household activities or actions related to our hobby. Newly acquired competences enrich our lives and open the path to new jobs, sometimes in a completely different industry.

This new approach to the acquisition of knowledge and experience requires changes in the whole sphere of qualifications – crucial from the point of view of the economy. The modernisation of the qualifications system in Poland results from the needs of the national labour market and education system and is in line with the European Union policy for lifelong learning.

In order to support lifelong learning, the Integrated Qualifications System has been implemented in Poland since 2016. The aim of the system is to assure the quality of the awarded qualifications, regardless of how the skills corresponding to those qualifications were acquired.

All the qualifications included in the Integrated Qualification System are entered into the Integrated Qualifications Register (IQR). This means that they meet the required quality assurance standards and are correctly described. IQR is a database of qualifications that can be used by all interested parties.

## LIFELONG LEARNING

(LIFELONG LEARNING)

is an idea that inspires European Union policies. This policy is based on the assumption that the skills of citizens are of key importance for the future of societies and that, at the current stage of civilisational development, the education gained during youth is no longer sufficient.



# INTEGRATED QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER

## About the register

The Integrated Qualifications Register was established in mid-2016 pursuant to the Act of 22 December 2015 on the Integrated Qualifications System (Journal of Laws of 2018, items 2153 and 2245, and of 2019, item 534). The IQR acts as a special link between different qualifications systems that have been in use autonomously up to now. It gathers important information about all qualifications included in the Integrated Qualification System. The registry provides information on, among other things, specific requirements which need to be met in order to obtain a given qualification and what institutions are authorised to award it. This information is particularly important for qualifications obtained outside school and university, i.e. those obtained in the course of work or through various courses and training.

The IQR is a public register which contains up-to-date, complete and reliable information on qualifications, which is ensured by implementing appropriate procedures. The register covers all the qualifications included in the IQS independently of other qualifications lists in Poland created for the needs of particular ministries, government departments, sectors, communities and institutions. This makes the information about qualifications easily accessible in one place for the interested parties and all the institutions that work together within the Integrated Qualifications System.

The IQR is designed to serve everyone – to be an easily accessible knowledge base of qualifications in Poland for learners, employees planning to gain new qualifications, career advisors, employers, schools and universities, training companies and employment offices.

Soon, through the IQR, Polish qualifications will be included in a wider area of European qualifications. Information about the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF) and Polish qualifications will be exported through the register to European LOQ and ESCO portals.

Since 2018, running the IQR has been the task of the Educational Research Institute (IBE). In addition to the ongoing administration of the register, the Institute is working on introducing new functionalities and improving the register to make it more useful and easier to use. In the future, it will be accompanied by special applications useful in planning professional development.

## Registers of qualifications in other countries

Work on modern qualifications systems has been carried out worldwide for many years. In some countries, qualification registers are widely used by ordinary citizens, companies and public administration. In Europe, advanced systems operate, among others, in Belgium, Scotland, Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark and France. In Scotland, for example, vocational schools, often in the course of classes, inform students about the level of the qualification they are working on and the expected learning outcomes.

In many countries, qualification registers are useful tools for employment agencies and help school counselors and career advisers. An excellent example may be the Danish portal, which acts as a virtual education and career adviser as well as a guide to the education system.

Foreign solutions were a source of inspiration and a reference point for the development of the Polish qualifications register, but the IQR was designed entirely by Polish specialists. Our solutions were determined by national circumstances and have been adapted to the Polish education system. The decision to develop original Polish solutions resulted from the awareness that what worked well in one country will not always work well in another. The Polish IQR is not a copy of any foreign register and as an innovative system developed at the Educational Research Institute met with interest of European specialists in this field.

**ESCO** (*EUROPEAN SKILLS, COMPETENCES, QUALIFICATIONS AND OCCUPATIONS*) is a multilingual classification of European skills, competences, qualifications and occupations developed as part of the Europe 2020 strategy. The ESCO classification identifies and categorises skills, competences and occupations relevant to the EU labour market, education and training, and shows the links between skills, competences, qualifications and occupations. The ESCO classification was created primarily as an instrument supporting the coming together of the world of education and the labour market.

**LOQ** (*LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS IN EUROPE*) – European portal for courses, training programmes, on-the-job learning and qualifications. A source of information on qualifications in Europe. Linked to other EU initiatives such as the Europass and Eures portals.

## NEW UNDERSTANDING OF QUALIFICATIONS

### What is a qualification?

In the Integrated Qualification System, the term “qualification” has a slightly different meaning than the one in common use. In Polish, the word “qualification” is used in plural with reference to knowledge and skills necessary to enter a given profession or assume a specific position.

**Example:** In this sense, this word was used in the following statements:

- Od personelu medycznego oczekuje się wysokich kwalifikacji (*medical personnel are expected to be highly qualified*).
- Kierowca autobusu musi mieć wysokie kwalifikacje, żeby jeździć na trasach zagranicznych (*a bus driver must be highly qualified to drive on international routes*).
- Pracodawcy poszukują najczęściej pracowników wykwalifikowanych, czyli osób potrafiących wykonać bardziej skomplikowane zadania (*employers usually look for qualified employees, i.e. people able to perform more complex tasks*).

In the Act on the Integrated Qualification System, the word “qualification” in the singular is a term which is used to identify the required knowledge, skills and social competences (so-called learning outcomes), the acquisition of which has been reliably verified by an authorised institution. A qualification will be awarded when an institution with appropriate authority verifies that a person has met the requirements for the qualification. Issuing the document confirming the qualification (diploma, certificate, etc.) to a person means that the qualification has been awarded.

**Example:** To obtain a driver’s qualification, it is not enough to demonstrate the knowledge and all the skills necessary to drive safely – one must pass an examination and obtain a supporting document. One can have all the competences required to be a driver, but only upon getting driving licence does one have a driver qualification.

According to the Act on the IQS, qualifications may include e.g.: primary school certificate, maturity certificate, higher education diploma. It is worth noting that documents of this kind are not called “qualifications”.

## Who awards qualifications entered in the IQR?

In Poland, qualifications are awarded:

- in the education system,
- in higher education,
- by various institutions, associations, sector organisations, professional bodies, etc., acting outside formal education.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES -

the Act on the IQS uses this term in line with its common meaning. The Act lists three categories of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and social competences. This enables a comprehensive description of the qualification requirements. It is not possible to completely separate these categories from one another because without certain knowledge one cannot have certain skills.

### QUALIFICATION -

“a set of learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, social skills and competences acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning, in accordance with the given qualification’s requirements, the achievement of which will be assessed through validation and formally confirmed by an authorised awarding body” (Article 2(8) of the Act on the IQS).



#### VALIDATION -

ensuring, in accordance with established rules, that the applicant has achieved the learning outcomes required for the qualification. A positive validation result is a pre-condition for issuing a document confirming the award of a qualification (diploma, certificate, etc.).

#### FORMAL EDUCATION -

education delivered in primary and secondary schools and higher education institutions. Formal education provides full qualifications. In addition, in formal education, partial qualifications can be obtained upon completion of post-graduate studies or upon passing a vocational qualification exam at the District Examination Board (OKE).

#### NON-FORMAL EDUCATION -

structured education or training following programmes that are not part of formal education. Learning in non-formal education can lead to obtaining a partial qualification.

Qualifications included in the IQS may be awarded only by institutions indicated in legal regulations or authorised by the minister competent for a given qualification. Awarding bodies included in the system must have internal and external quality assurance. Information on all the institutions entitled to award qualifications is available in the IQR. Users of the register also have indirect access to more detailed information on awarding bodies in Poland (through their websites).

The Act on the Integrated Qualifications System distinguishes full and partial qualifications. The division into **full and partial** qualifications is shown in the register.

**Full qualifications** are awarded only in the education system and in higher education upon completion of a specific stage of education (e.g. primary school, first cycle programme).

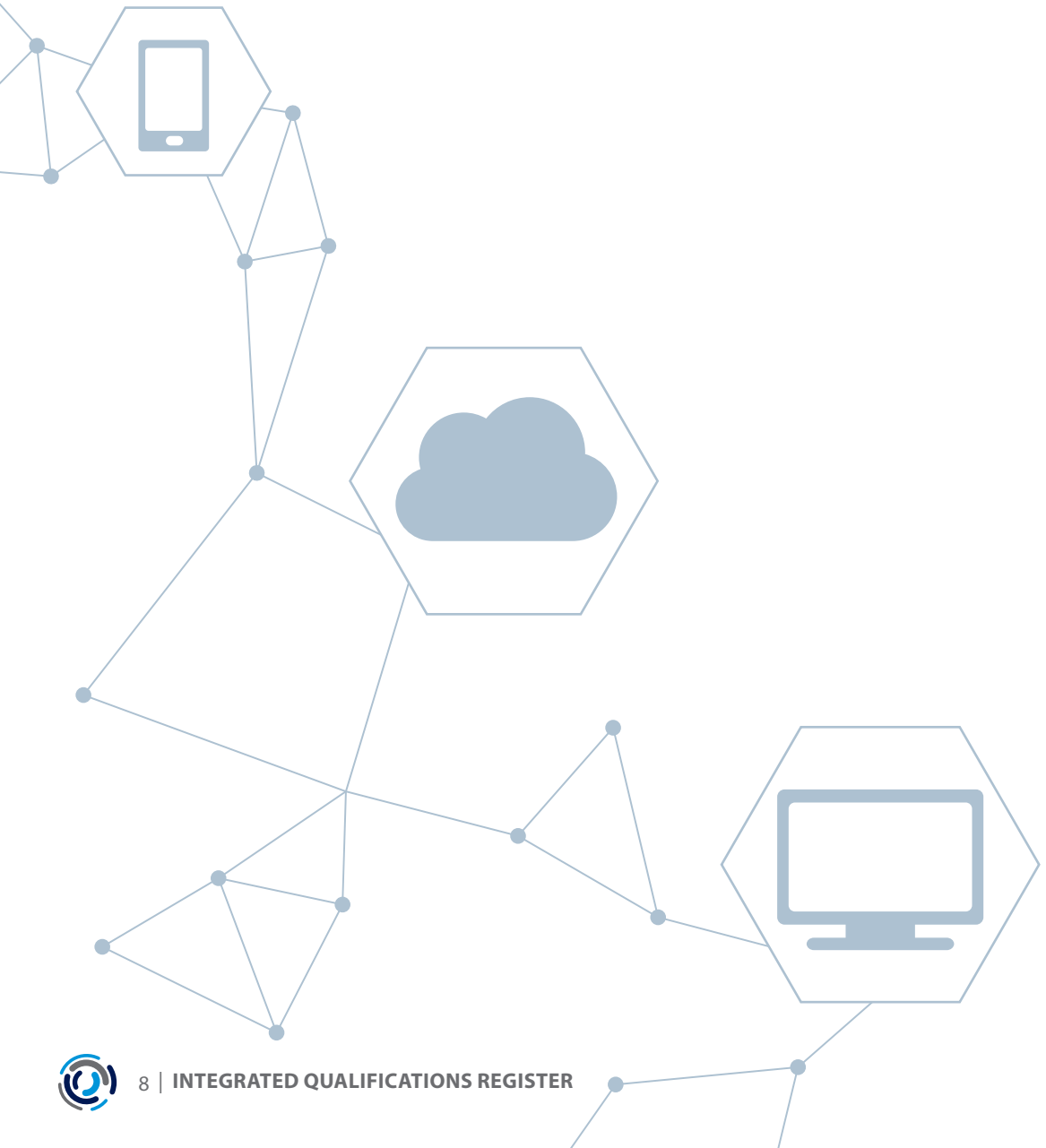
**Example:** The certificate of completion of primary school is issued by the school, the diploma confirming a professional qualification in the occupation "Driver mechanic" is issued by the District Examination Board (OKE), the diploma of completion of higher education – by the higher education institution.

**Partial qualifications** may be awarded not only in education and higher education, but also by institutions, organisations and associations of different nature. For example, a master craftsman diploma in confectionery is awarded by the Chamber of Crafts, the qualification "Joinery" is awarded by the VCC Foundation, and the qualification "Data recovery from HDDs" is awarded by the company VS DATA Witold Sobolewski.

In the IQS, a qualification can only be awarded on the basis of a positive result of verification (validation) that the required learning outcomes for the qualification are achieved. A course or training alone is not enough - what matters is confirmation of the acquired competences.

In accordance with the IQS, when applying for a qualification, prior participation in a structured training should not, in principle, be obligatory.

The Integrated Qualifications System enables applicants to divide the validation into stages. It is also possible to transfer achievements within the IQS, i.e. to recognise the positive result of a previous assessment of the required knowledge and skills, based on previously validated qualification.



## QUALIFICATIONS ENTERED INTO THE INTEGRATED QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER

The Register includes all the qualifications added to the Integrated Qualification System. The “Integrated System” is a set of rules and procedures introduced by law that regulates the operation of various institutions involved in awarding and quality assurance of qualifications. The IQS is intended to increase the reliability of qualifications awarded in Poland.

The creation of an integrated system did not require establishing of new institutions. The only new body that has been created is the Stakeholder Council of the IQS. It supports the Minister of National Education who coordinates the whole system. However, the Act introduced completely new systemic instruments: the Integrated Qualifications Register and the Polish Qualifications Framework (PQF). The register and the framework are tools for system integration.

The Integrated Qualifications System was created as a state policy tool for lifelong learning. Implementation of the system will accelerate the qualitative and quantitative development of qualifications in Poland. The solutions adopted in the Integrated Qualification System are intended to make access to qualifications and applying for jobs in Poland and abroad easier.

A special role in this respect is played by the Integrated Qualifications Register through which everyone interested can easily, in one place, find all important information about high quality qualifications available in Poland.

## What kinds of qualifications can be found in the Integrated Qualifications Register?

- **full qualifications** – awarded in the education system (e.g. primary school certificate, certificate of electronics technician, certificates of apprenticeship issued by chambers of crafts after passing the examination in accordance with the requirements of the vocational training core curriculum, qualifications included in the classification of vocational education occupations) and in higher education (e.g. graduation diploma of 2nd cycle programme in architecture). Information on full educational qualifications from the school education system is transferred to the IQR by the Minister of National Education, while information on full educational qualifications from higher education system is imported to the IQR from the POL-on – the Integrated System of Information on Science and Higher Education, which is run by the Minister of Science and Higher Education.
- **partial qualifications (education system)** – awarded in the school education system – qualifications specified in occupations, awarded within vocational training (e.g. digital printing, inspection and repair of motorcycles). Information concerning these qualifications is forwarded to the IQR and updated by the Minister of National Education.
- **partial qualifications (higher education)** – awarded in higher education upon completion of postgraduate studies. Information concerning these qualifications is transferred to the IQR directly by universities, institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences and research institutes that offer post-graduate programmes.



- **partial qualifications (outside school education and higher education systems):**

- **regulated qualifications** – qualifications established by law (excluding qualifications awarded in the education system and in higher education), e.g. a certificate of a diver, a certificate of a professional probation officer. The decision on including a regulated qualification in the IQS is made by the relevant minister. The minister relays the information about the qualification to the IQR.
- **market qualifications** – qualifications awarded on the basis of various internal regulations determined by professional corporations, sectoral associations, training institutions, various organisations. Examples of such qualifications include: “Working with a child using Maria Montessori’s method” and “Recovering data from HDDs”. The relevant minister relays information about such qualifications to the IQR. This group also includes master craftsman diplomas and certificates of apprenticeship issued by chambers of crafts, which are not regulated in the core curriculum for vocational training. Information about these qualifications is relayed to the IQR by the minister responsible for a given qualification.

#### **POLISH QUALIFICATIONS**

**FRAMEWORK** (PQF), like the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), has 8 levels. The PQF level includes the most general types of tasks which a person qualified at the level is prepared to perform. Assigning one of the eight PQF levels to a qualification allows it to be compared with other qualifications that have been assigned a level, also with qualifications awarded in other countries.

The market group also includes qualifications awarded after completing continuing education courses, training programmes and other (than postgraduate) forms of education offered by universities, institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences and research institutes. Information about these qualifications is relayed to the IQR by the minister responsible for a given qualification.

## **What information on qualifications is included in the register?**

Until the Act on the IQC was enacted, a significant part of the market offer of training did not contain information on what specific



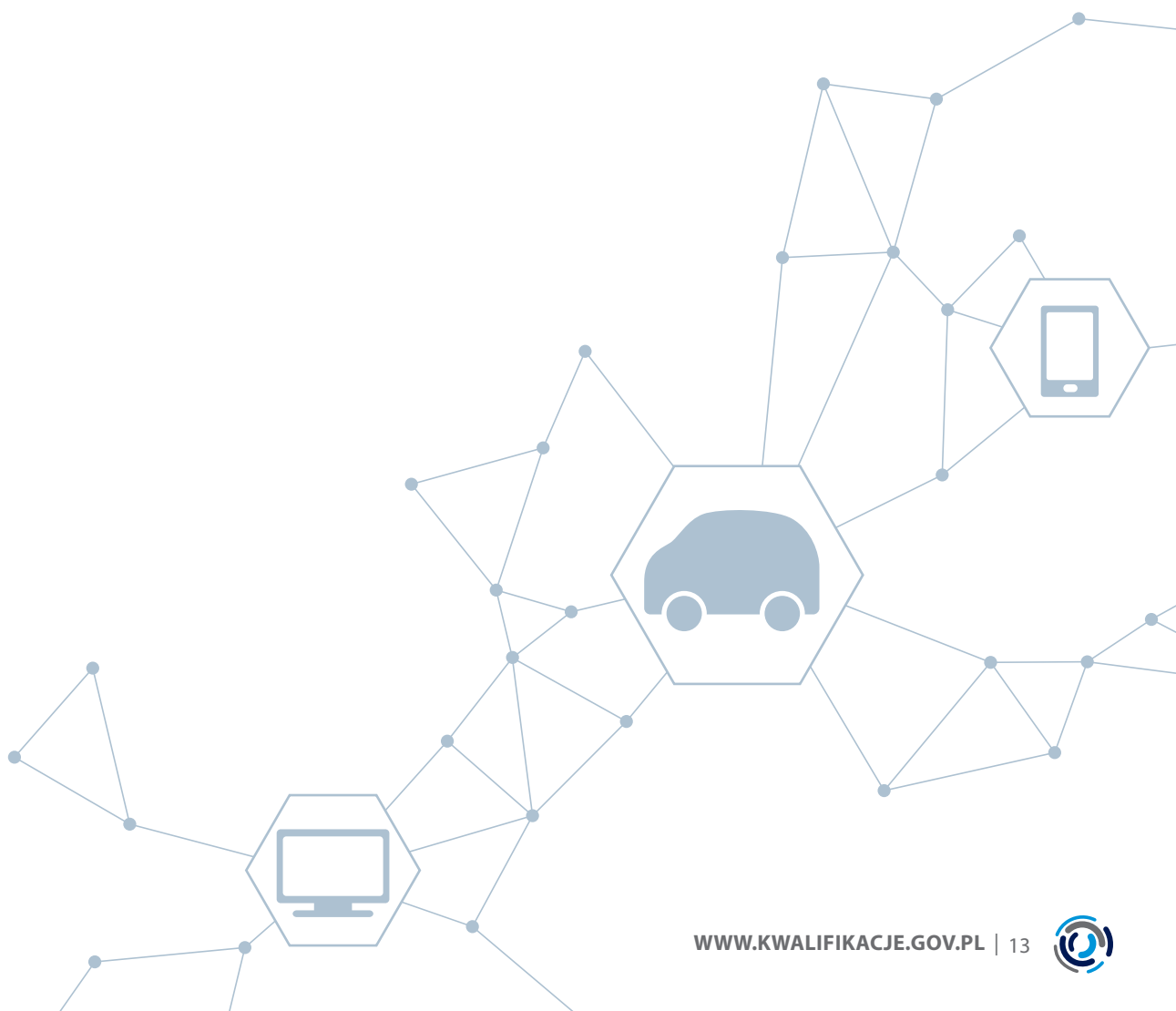


knowledge and skills could be obtained upon completion of a given course. The offers often resembled a jam jar with a nice label, but without information about the ingredients. The training institutions only hinted at the completeness of the content.

The Act on the Integrated Qualifications System specifies clearly what data on qualifications must be made available in the IQR. Those interested in qualifications do not have to rely only on their conjecture, intuition and associations. The following information, among others, is available in the Integrated Register of Qualifications, for each partial qualification awarded outside the education system and higher education:

- full names of the qualification and the awarded certificate;
- PQF level assigned to the qualification;
- a brief description of the qualification covering the activities or tasks that can be performed by the holder of the qualification;
- typical ways of taking advantage of the qualification;
- entitlements associated with the qualification;
- information on the requirements (i.e. formal requirements concerning the completed stage of education) that the applicant must meet;
- details of the required learning outcomes, i.e. the requirements concerning knowledge, skills and social competences together with the assessment criteria, whether the applicant for the qualification in question meets the requirements;
- information on nationwide standards of ensuring that the applicant meets the requirements (validation);

- information on institutions awarding the qualification in Poland, including their contact details;
- information on the entities responsible for external quality assurance of the qualification awarded, including their contact details.



## WHO USES THE REGISTER?

The Integrated Qualifications Register is accessible to all potential users and, in particular, may be of interest to:

### Students and parents

The choice of school is the first serious decision in the life of a young person finishing primary school, so it should be preceded by careful consideration. One has to ask oneself how the predispositions and interests of a fourteen-year-old stand in comparison to the requirements that he or she will have to meet when taking up training in a particular area and then working. The Integrated Qualifications Register may be helpful in finding answers. This is especially true for those who are thinking about continuing their education in vocational schools.

The changes in the vocational education and training system in Polish schools are aimed at creating a closer link between the curriculum and the specific needs of employers and the world of work. Schoolchildren will also be able to acquire certain qualifications that are needed in the local labour market.

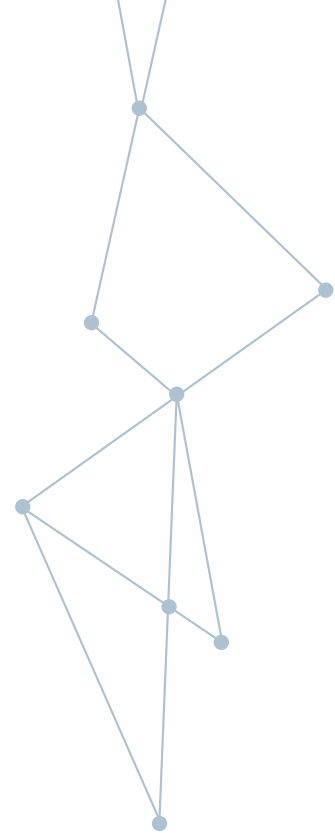
The information on these qualifications in the IQR will make it easier for primary school pupils and their parents to make rational choices.

#### **IQR DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

include, among other things, the introduction of special innovative tools for different user groups to facilitate career planning. In addition to the guidance and gradual expansion of the IQR, the

Educational Research Institute also provides on its website other tools to support career advisers in providing services to different groups of people:

Catalogue of Validation Methods and My Portfolio ([www.kwalifikacje.edu.pl](http://www.kwalifikacje.edu.pl)).



By reviewing the qualification descriptions, the learner can see what specific requirements he or she has to meet and what job prospects the qualification will give him or her.

## Teachers

One of the school's tasks is to prepare students for the right choice of occupation or profession and to help them plan further education.

The information contained in the IQR will make it easier for the teacher to provide individual educational advice. Teachers should know what the Integrated Qualifications Register is and how to use it, also to be able to present it to students and their parents.

## Everyone interested in professional development

The information on qualifications contained in the IQR can be an invaluable help in planning a career or looking for a new career path. This does not only apply to the unemployed, who cannot find a job matching their competences, but to all those who want to open their way to promotion or change the industry they are working in by obtaining a new qualification.

When making the final choice of the direction of one's development, it will be easier to avoid errors and mistakes resulting from a lack of sufficient knowledge of qualifications. By reading the individual descriptions of qualifications, one can gain new inspiration as well as knowledge of the activities and tasks that can be undertaken by people with a particular qualification.

Practical information collected in the IQR also makes it much easier for people who intend to obtain a new qualification to do so: they can learn who awards the qualification, where the nearest institution awarding the qualification can be found and how to contact the institution. The information on the process

of validation, or ensuring that the applicant has the required knowledge, skills and social competences, is also of practical value.

## Career advisers

The Integrated Qualifications System regulates the area of activities related to awarding qualifications offered at the junction of the labour market and education/training. The Register can be an important and very helpful tool for all those working in the field of career guidance, in various types of counselling aimed at both adults and school children.

The usefulness of the IQR for advisers will increase as amendments and additions, based on their and other users' comments and suggestions, are implemented. Over time, advisers will also gain experience on how to use the register to perform their tasks more easily.

Broad range of information in the IQR will allow career advisers to easily find the necessary data concerning the knowledge, skills and social competences required for a given qualification, as well as the ways in which the institutions awarding qualifications ensure that the requirements are met.

## Employers

The IQR can be a helpful tool in the implementation of human resources policy. The resources available in the IQR can be helpful in solving problems related to seeking and recruitment of new employees as well as the professional development of personnel. Detailed information on what a person with a specific qualification will be able to do, and what responsibilities he/she can be entrusted with, will be helpful in determining staffing needs. This is especially true when completely new jobs are created.







What matters to employers is the reliability of qualifications. Descriptions identify specific requirements concerning knowledge, skills and social competences. Standards and criteria of the verification of these requirements are defined. The principle that awarding qualifications included in the IQR is covered by internal and external quality assurance is also important. The greater reliability of the documents confirming qualifications is helpful in making recruitment decisions without additional verification of candidates' competences.

Employers, using the information from the IQR, can accurately define what set of qualifications the staff they want to employ to perform specific tasks should have. This will be helpful in effective recruitment. The data included in the register may facilitate rational planning and support professional development of individual employees. In supporting the development of employees, it is not only the current needs and development plans of the company that are significant – the individual perspectives of people for whom obtaining additional qualifications will create new opportunities in their professional life also play an important part.

## Training companies

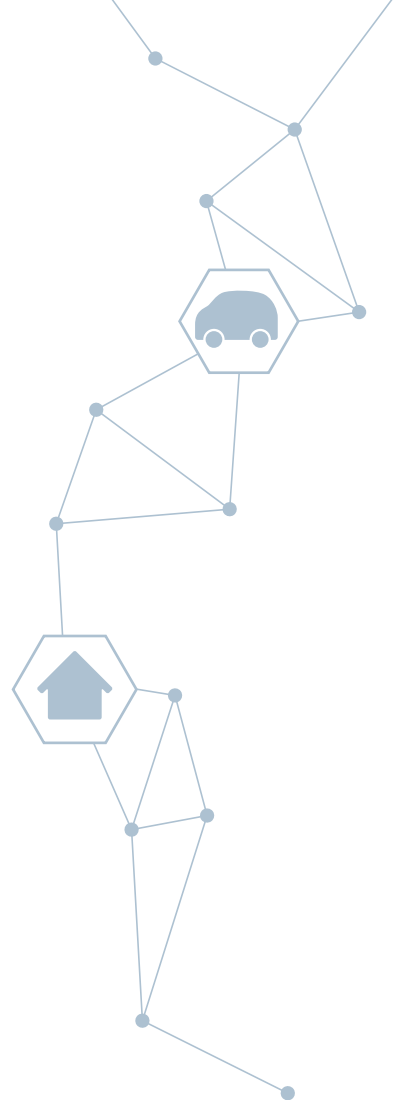
The Integrated Qualifications System, and the IQR in particular, is intended to strengthen the role and position of training services in the national skills development policy. The market of training services is becoming an increasingly important factor in human capital growth and enhances the country's development potential. This sphere of non-formal education is the most flexible segment in the whole area of educational activities. Training companies can respond fastest to new educational needs related to technology development and innovative types of production and services.

The use of the knowledge accumulated in the IQR will make everyday operations of the institutions that provide training,

and their development, easier. Companies offering development services will find it easier to access important information that will help them improve the quality of their offer and the way they operate. The data included in the IQR will enable training companies to create a new range of qualifications and training and to establish cooperation networks.

## Public administration employees

The IQR is one of the sources where central and local governments, and institutions with whom they cooperate, can access information necessary for various types of activities in the field of broadly understood educational policy on the local, regional and national level. This includes public authorities' actions aimed, among other things, at reducing unemployment and counteracting social exclusion as well as closing the competence gaps in the labour market.



## INTEGRATED QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER SERVES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF HUMAN CAPITAL IN POLAND

The document adopted by the government in 2017, “The Strategy for Responsible Development for the period up to 2020 (including the perspective up to 2030)”, states, among other things, that “The sine qua non condition for achieving the objectives of the Strategy is to improve the quality of human and social capital”. It is worth stressing that the state’s activities aimed at the improvement of human capital include implementation of the Integrated Qualifications System. The Strategy also states that “the presented model of economic and social development takes into account the active role of the state and its administration”. It is clear that the central and local government administration at various levels is obliged to actively implement state policies for lifelong learning. The register will be very helpful in these activities.

The IQR will also be useful in the implementation of the Integrated Skills Strategy developed in order to:

- design a coherent policy for building and development of skills;

- coordinating the activities of the parties involved for the development of skills;
- ensure equal access to information concerning skill needs, available skills, career guidance and training offers related to building and development of skills;
- strengthen awareness of the importance of skills for individual, economic and social benefits;
- increase educational and professional activity in all social groups, especially those at risk of exclusion.

Consolidation of activities related to the development of the Polish qualifications system and its most important tool – the Integrated Qualifications Register – is a prerequisite for developing labour market in an innovative way and thus raising the level of prosperity of the whole population.

**Integrated Qualifications Register**  
is a public register accessible on the website:

**[www.kwalifikacje.gov.pl](http://www.kwalifikacje.gov.pl)**



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Since 1 January 2018, the Integrated Register of Qualifications has been maintained by the Educational Research Institute. Work on the development of the IQR is carried out within the framework of EU project "Maintenance and development of the Integrated Qualifications Register". The main objective is to ensure efficient functioning of the Register and its continuous development as a key tool of the Integrated Qualifications System.

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