UKRAINE’S QUALIFICATION CENTERS TAKEOFF WITHIN THE EUROINTEGRATION CONTEXT

Introduction. Qualification centers have emerged as vital institutions in Ukraine, playing a crucial role in the recognition and validation of professional qualifications and supporting career development. They address significant challenges in the modern labor market, such as horizontal mobility, skills mismatch, and qualification gaps [1; 2].

The regulatory framework for qualification centers in Ukraine was established with the enactment of the Law of Ukraine 'On education' in 2017, followed by subsequent Orders issued by the Cabinet of Ministries. As of June 6, 2023, there are currently 27 qualification centers operational across 11 regions of Ukraine. Out of these, 16 centers were established by vocational education and training institutions, 1 by a research institute, and 10 by commercial enterprises or for-profit organizations. Furthermore, there are plans to establish a substantial number of new qualification centers in the near future.

The establishment of qualification centers in Ukraine serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it actively contributes to workforce development by supporting individuals in enhancing their skills and qualifications. Secondly, it signifies a strong alignment with Ukraine's overarching Eurointegration policy, as well as the European Union's focus on skills, common qualifications, and quality assurance [3; 5]. This paper explores the connection between qualification centers and Eurointegration policies, specifically discussing the relationship between the establishment of qualification centers as a framework for validating professional qualifications and Ukraine's Eurointegration objectives.

Key results. Eurointegration efforts emphasize the significance of mobility and employability across European countries [4]. Qualification centers contribute to this objective by providing recognition and validation of skills and qualifications, making it easier for Ukrainian individuals to work, study, or engage in professional activities in European countries. This enhances their opportunities for employment and professional growth within the European context.

Viewed through the lens of Eurointegration, one of the key goals of qualification centers in Ukraine is to ensure alignment with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The EQF serves as a standardized framework for comparing and comprehending qualifications across European nations. By aligning with the EQF, qualification centers enhance the recognition and comparability of Ukrainian qualifications within the European context, facilitating the mobility and integration of Ukrainian professionals into the European labor market.

Harmonizing qualification validation practices with European norms is another vital role of qualification centers. These centers strive to adopt best practices and quality assurance
mechanisms that adhere to European standards. This alignment ensures that Ukrainian qualifications meet the requirements and expectations of European employers, thereby enhancing the credibility and acceptance of Ukrainian professionals in European countries.

One more important aspect is the authority of qualification centers to recognize professional qualifications obtained in other countries. By adhering to European practices and standards, these centers facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications in Ukraine, enabling individuals with European qualifications to integrate into the Ukrainian labor market.

To support Ukraine's Eurointegration policy, potential areas for improvement should be considered. These include increasing collaboration between qualification centers and industry stakeholders, expanding the range of recognized qualifications, and enhancing the accessibility and visibility of qualification center services.

Qualification centers in Ukraine have the potential to play a significant role in promoting pan-European policies on lifelong learning among individuals. These centers can expand their activities beyond assessing the outcomes of informal learning and start offering continuous professional development opportunities, training programs, and upskilling initiatives. By doing so, qualification centers contribute to the ongoing growth and improvement of professionals' competencies, ensuring their relevance in a rapidly changing labor market.

To meet the demands of the future Ukrainian and EU labor market, qualification centers can actively engage with emerging industries and technologies. By offering specialized qualifications and assessments in fields such as artificial intelligence, renewable energy, digital marketing, and cybersecurity, these centers can ensure that professionals are equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in cutting-edge sectors.

Qualification centers have the potential to enhance their impact by forging robust partnerships with educational institutions, including universities, vocational schools, and training centers. These collaborations can yield several benefits:

– integration into the education system (By working closely with educational institutions, qualification centers can seamlessly integrate qualification recognition processes into the existing education system. This integration enables individuals to transition smoothly from education to employment, as their qualifications are recognized and valued by both the education and labor sectors);

– embracing European concepts (Strong partnerships with educational institutions allow qualification centers to embrace European ideas on stocking qualifications, including the incorporation of micro-credentials. This alignment with European practices fosters the recognition and acceptance of diverse qualifications, providing individuals with more comprehensive and flexible pathways for skill development and career advancement);

– cross-border learning trajectories (Collaboration with educational institutions facilitates the implementation of policies pertaining to cross-border individual trajectories of learning. This involves validating qualifications obtained in different countries, enabling individuals to pursue educational and professional opportunities across national borders. Such policies contribute to the broader European agenda of promoting mobility and harmonizing qualification systems).

Ukraine's aspirations for closer integration with the European Union (EU) can stimulate collaboration with international bodies, organizations, networks and experts involved in qualification recognition. Engaging with these stakeholders can offer valuable insights and benchmarks that contribute to the ongoing enhancement of qualification centers in Ukraine.

By establishing partnerships with international qualification recognition bodies, Ukraine's qualification centers can gain access to global expertise and knowledge. These collaborations provide opportunities to learn from best practices implemented in other countries and adapt them to the local context. By staying updated on global trends, advancements, and quality assurance mechanisms, qualification centers can continuously improve their services and ensure they remain aligned with international standards.
Engaging with international organizations in the field of qualification recognition enables qualification centers in Ukraine to expand their recognition networks. This facilitates the acknowledgment and acceptance of Ukrainian qualifications in other countries, creating more opportunities for professionals to seek employment or educational opportunities abroad. It also promotes the mobility of individuals within the European and international labor markets.

Collaborating with international experts brings diverse perspectives and experiences, which can enrich the development and operation of qualification centers. These experts can provide guidance on effective assessment methodologies, quality assurance mechanisms, and strategies for continuous improvement. Their input can contribute to the refinement of qualification recognition processes and the establishment of robust frameworks that meet international standards.

Overall, by actively engaging with international qualification recognition bodies, organizations, and experts, qualification centers in Ukraine can enhance their capabilities, expand their global recognition networks, and align with international best practices. This collaboration supports Ukraine's EU ambitions by strengthening the recognition and mobility of Ukrainian professionals and fostering the integration of qualification systems within the European and international context.

Conclusions. Qualification centers in Ukraine play a crucial role in advancing the country's Eurointegration policy objectives. By aligning their processes and standards with European norms, these centers enhance the recognition and comparability of Ukrainian qualifications within the European context. This alignment promotes labor mobility by facilitating the integration of Ukrainian professionals into the European labor market, and vice versa.

Moreover, qualification centers contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of Ukrainian professionals by ensuring that their qualifications meet the requirements and expectations of European employers. This fosters the credibility and acceptance of Ukrainian professionals in European countries, opening up new opportunities for employment and professional growth.

References: