



Certification in working life (Fagbréf atvinnulífsins)

The Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC) has developed a process for identifying and certifying competences based on specific job criteria and mapping them to ISQF levels. Clearly defined competence criteria are used in close cooperation with stakeholders for identifying the skills required to perform essential functions of particular jobs (see example on Competency profiling in Iceland). The process of making skills visible, validating existing skills and providing gap training when needed leads to certification for a specific job. The jobs that have been in focus until now have been mapped on ISQF level 2 (EQF level 3).

What are the core elements and procedures in the certification model?

Companies or accredited bodies apply for funding. The ETSC supports the development of job profiles, assessment tools, and training of VPL staff. Validation takes place and gap training is provided if needed. On completion, Fagbréf in the specific job is issued and handed out to participants.



The process provides structure and coherence in competence profiling and provides a foundation for the development of competence standards for specific jobs. Within companies, the process makes existing competences visible for validation and can identify where training is needed (gap training). Processes of in-company training become more formalized and the employees can better understand their own competences and what is required of them, in addition to being able to identify how to improve (upskilling/reskilling).

Benefits, sustainability and challenges

The process can be beneficial for both the employer and employee:

For the company:

- Overview of employees' competences – jobs conducted by people with the right skills
- Visible competence standards for job development and recruitment
- Targeted training in line with skills needs (e.g. in response for rapid changes in technology)



- Facilitating decisions linked to job development and salary

For the employee:

- Competences become visible and can thereby be confirmed/validated through a reliable process
- It becomes clearer what competences are needed with regards to training
- Validated competences can enhance job development, job terms and mobility on the labour market
- Increased respect for the job and improved image

The **model presented** is sustainable and emphasizes specific quality criteria with regards to the process conducted (handbook for the process, training of inhouse assessors and project managers).

The process was developed in **close cooperation with the Confederation for employers and the Confederation of employees** and tested in five pilots in close cooperation with companies and several lifelong learning centres. The **model for financing** has been set up with an agreement with the educational funds (company shares), allowing companies to apply for financing for the certification process (validation, gap training, certification). Accredited educational providers can also apply for funding from the educational fund for people with low qualified background. Coordination of the process (project management) can be in the hands of the companies themselves, educational providers, and independent consultants. **Quality criteria** for the process have been developed (coordination, aims and administration; information, data security and publishing of certificates; preparation of VPL and gap training) and guidelines, also for project coordinators. The Education and Training service centre has the role to secure quality, value of results, disseminate information about the process, revise competence criteria, publish the certificates, train VPL staff and accredit coordinating bodies. The development in the next 2-3 years will determine if the process becomes a mainstream pathway within occupational sectors.

Now that the process is sustainable, the **next challenge** is to get the companies and trade unions to implement the process. There is a high interest within occupational sectors, specifically due to the rapid changes on the labour market, but the process and the certificates still needs to earn trust as more sectors join the process. The Icelandic labour market is small and most companies small/medium sized. Finding the time and having stable enough staff is a prerequisite. Updating the job criteria regularly will need a formalized process.

For implementation in individual companies, both employers and employees need to see the benefits of going through the process. Consensus and cooperation is a foundation for building trust between the social partners and with regards to.

Possible further development of the process



The process is well functioning and continuously developing based on labour market needs. The mobility of workers is quite extensive, and companies find it to be challenging to retain workers. The certification process opens opportunities for job development within the company and may also build a **stronger connection between employers and employees**. The method could be expanded, especially to companies and sectors in cooperation with social partners. Competence profiling, VPL, training and certification can support job development, provide information for salary negotiations salary frameworks and increase overall competence development in the labour market. The process benefits people who are unemployed as well as people with an immigrant background.

Cooperation with social partners on further developments could strengthen the process as tool for example with regards to **updating job criterias regularly**. Securing further financing of the process and general coordination of distribution of **competence profiling for the labour market** can facilitate the use of and access to the tool.

1. Links to more information

Information on the ETSC website: <https://frae.is/fagbref-atvinnulifsins/>

Introduction video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y3jSFiMD3c>