

**ILSE - EU Partner Project:  
„Safer Europe by higher qualified Lifeguards“**

Project Title: EU Partnership Project – EQF Seminar  
“Safer Europe by higher qualified Lifeguards”

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## **Report**

In Europe 35 000 – 40 000 people drown each year. Tourists travel all over Europe and need water safety for/during their leisure times and holidays. Therefore standardised information (ISO 20712) and qualified lifeguard service at beaches, in swimming pools and at lakes and rivers are necessary.

Lifeguards must be well educated and should be mobile for taking over vocation in different countries. Therefore an “European Qualification Framework for Lifesaving” was developed by the International Life Saving Federation of Europe (ILSE) and accepted by the EU Directorate General on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009.

This special EQF (s. Annex 1) is the base for co-ordinating and developing a common standard of education in all European Member Associations of the ILSE (37 Full Members, 3 Associate and 1 Corresponding Member). In partnership of 13 Associations all necessary and wishable technical, methodical and didactical aspects were developed and evaluated with best practise methods.

The four Seminars were realised with successful results:

1. in Constanta/Romania in September 2011
2. in Bad Nenndorf/Germany in January 2012
3. in Szczecin/Poland in March 2012
4. in Prague/Czech Rep in January 2013

Theory and practise exercises were carried out in different working groups in seminar rooms, swimming pools, inland open water and beaches (Constanta). All participants were intensively engaged and exchanged (in English as easiest common language) their methods and experiences. This co-operation during the meetings was continued between the seminars by telephone- and email contact. This great engagement emphasises the significance of this project. Never before we had seminars or meeting with a presence of more than 80 participants from 23 ILSE Member Associations. Also many Associations, which do not participate in this project have sent their national experts.

It was interesting to see, that many ideas and innovative examples were on the table, which were also of interest for those member associations, who have already a high developed standard of education. It was remarkable, that there was also a good gender balance. The further development and the increased transparency in this special field of vocational education, training and qualification is an important result of the series of seminars.

The results of this project are a contribution for the development of national qualification frameworks for lifesaving on the base of the European Qualification Framework and consequently an Europe-wide increase of the quantity and the qualification of lifeguards at many European beaches and other bathing areas. The consequence will be an improving of the water safety in Europe.

The contents of the seminars were specified and classified into knowledge, skills and competence, which allowed a much better operation of the global framework. At the same time a help and instruction for putting into practise for all member association was developed.

The different levels \* to \*\*\*\* are described by a raising level of knowledge, skills and competences. It has to be taken into consideration that each following level is based on the content of levels being successfully passed before.

#### Lifesaver\*

A Lifeguard\* is somebody who support and assist in different actions in conjunction with saving life in an aquatic environment. These persons have to pass a basic training including different skills, basic knowledge and competences to support higher qualified Lifesavers in their duties and responsibilities. Details on knowledge, skills and competences of a Lifesaver\* can be found in appendix 1.

#### Lifesaver\*\*

After passing the education as Lifesaver\*, the person will gain additional knowledge, skills and competence to become a Lifesaver\*\*. Such a person is considered as basically trained for saving of life in an aquatic environment. Based on the knowledge from the previous qualification, additional aspects and topics are now included. Skills are trained to support further actions, including now more detailed techniques to enter the water, approach casualties and use different types of rescue equipment. Finally, a Lifesaver\*\* is introduced to Emergency Action Plans (EAP). The competence level includes the following of instructions as well basic decision making. Details on knowledge, skills and competence of a Lifesaver\*\* can be found in appendix 2.

#### Lifesaver\*\*\*

A Lifesaver\*\*\* is a person, who can be regularly assigned to protect life in aquatic environments. In order to act properly in different environments, there are three different Lifesavers\*\*\*, being dedicated to different environments, i.e. pools, inland open water and beach. The pool environment is highly regulated; therefor specific dangers due to e.g. architectural conditions are to be considered. Open Inland water and beach Lifesaver\*\*\* are operating in an outdoor environment. Beaches do provide additional dangers, which led to the separation of the two different streams. Whereas the overall name 'lifesaver' is used for all levels, any lifesaver\*\*\* is called 'Lifeguard' due to his qualification.

After successful education in Level\* and \*\*, there is still common content to all three streams which is marked as "general" in the appropriate appendix. In addition, the different needs are reflected in environment-specific requirements for knowledge, skills and competence.

A Lifesaver\*\*\* is the first level where the competence is raised to take responsibility for completion of tasks during work or study. It is required to adopt the own behaviour to current circumstances in order solve actual problems or situations leading to life threatening conditions in aquatic conditions.

As a fourth stream of the lifesaver\*\*\*, Lifesaving instructor is a qualified instructor to train and exam Level\* and \*\* Lifesavers. Beside the requirements described before, these persons need educational knowledge, skills and competences. A differentiation in comparison the three Level\*\*\* environments is at this level not necessary as education in Level\* and \*\* does not distinguish these environments.

Details on knowledge, skills and competences of all four different Lifesaver\*\*\* can be found in appendices 3 a and b.

## Lifesaver\*\*\*\*

A Lifesaver\*\*\*\* is a well-trained, well-educated Lifesaver, who has reached a high level of knowledge, skills and competences. As introduced at level\*\*\*, there are three different streams reflecting the major distinguished aquatic environments, i.e. pool, open inland water and beach. Based on all knowledge, skills and competences gained during the prior education are enhanced to gain a higher level in the decision making process. As consequence, a Lifesaver\*\*\*\* is not only applying processes and procedures, he is also able to implement, update and maintain adequate processes and procedures. Based on his long-term experience, a Lifesaver\*\*\*\* is able to supervise and lead Lifesaver\* to \*\*\*. Whereas the overall name 'lifesaver' is used for all levels, any lifesaver\*\*\*\* is called 'Chief Lifeguard' due to his qualification.

On level\*\*\*\*, there is also a Chief Lifesaving Instructor. This person is responsible to train and exam all level \*\*\* lifesavers, including the lifesaving instructor.

Details on knowledge, skills and competences of all four different Lifesaver\*\*\*\* can be found in appendix 4.

The partnership project realised a valuable common approach for an advanced vocational lifesaving education and qualification, based on best practises, modern methodical and didactical models, which can be used by all participating and other interested associations in Europe (and other parts of the world.).

The four seminars have exceeded all expectations and it is suggested to develop a second project for the levels 5 – 8 of this vocational European Qualification Framework.