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CERTIFICATION SCHEMES FOR SELECTED PROFESSIONS

Prepared by: Foteini Chrysanthopoulou (IFA)

Contributors: Marco Faieta (UNITE)

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Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	**X**
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including Commission services and projects reviewers)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including EACEA and Commission services and projects reviewers)	

Summary

The report describes the certification schemes, including qualification procedures, criteria and standards for selected professions.

The long-term impact of this output is to improve knowledge, competences and skills of professionals as they represent the main target group.

To evaluate the impact within the project, the quantitative indicators selected are the number of participants in pilot training, the number of available CPD courses for beverage technology and the number of developed certification schemes for selected professions.

Contents

1 Professional Certification scheme

Professional Certification is defined as the process in which professionals prove that they have the knowledge, skills and competencies to perform a specific job or task. It has a two-fold objective; one for the employers and another for the employees. Particularly, Professional Certification provides employers with a trust element on the employee's competencies. On the other hand, it guarantees professionals an independent endorsement which validates the possession of the competences established in a structured and impartial certification scheme.

In the food sector, certification schemes are scarcely available in some countries, related to regulated professions (e.g. Italy with the Order of the Food technologists/professionals) or to science (e.g. IFT, Certification scheme for scientists), despite a main potential.

The Foodcareers website (https://www.foodcareers.eu/), which is maintained by ISEKI-Food Association, offers a certification scheme for the recognition of knowledge and skills of professionals working in specific fields of the food sector. The website was initially developed under the European project "Training Requirements and Careers for Knowledge-based Food Science and Technology in Europe" (TRACK_FAST, FP7 KBBE 227220) and was then re-designed and extended under the FooD-STA project (Erasmus+ KA 554312-EPP-1-2014-1-AT-EPPKA2-KA).

Within the SEA-ABT project (www.sea-abt.eu) the Professional Certification section of the website was completed and tested with 2 free trial applications.

1.1 Certification areas and levels

Currently the Foodcareers framework offers the Professional Certification in two main areas:

- **Food Quality & Safety**

  The certification "Food Quality and Safety" is recognised to the Professional that understands the principles of food quality and safety management encompassing planning, control and improvement activities. The criteria include, but are not limited to, the ability to develop, implement and evaluate quality assurance systems in food, implement controls to manage safe food sources and products in manufacture, understand management of food safety in food production, to know and apply food safety regulations.

- **Food Product Development**

  The certification "Food Product Development" is recognised to the Professional that can successfully transform ideas into high quality and safe products, identify new product opportunities by being fully aware of market place trends and consumer needs and expectations, create new products from the initial concept through to trial phase, taking into consideration commercial constraints and/or improving existing products and processes. The criteria include, but are not limited to, knowledge of requirements of food composition and production processes, understanding how to assess production requirements and optimize operational costs (cost-benefit analysis).

Each professional area includes three levels of roles (or "job titles"), based on the amount of responsibility of the food professional. The job titles available for certification currently are:

- **Food Quality & Safety Technologist**

- **Food Quality & Safety Supervisor**

- **Food Quality & Safety Manager**

- **Food Product Development Technologist**

- **Food Product Development Supervisor**

- **Food Product Development Manager**

Please note that the *Technologist* is the lowest certification level, while the *Manager* the highest one.

2 Criteria and standards for selected professions

The main criterion for the certification is the undergraduate qualification in food or non-food related areas. However, applicants who do not hold an undergraduate degree, but can demonstrate relevant experience in the food industry, are also eligible for application.

Further criteria for the professional certification are the competences that the professional possesses, which are subsequently mentioned as Learning Outcomes (LOs).

These LOs are defined by the European Qualification Framework (https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/content/descriptors-page) as "the statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process", and are described in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. Namely, the EQF level 3 to EDF level 8 describe the education level from the pre-secondary school to PhD, respectively.

A preliminary self-assessment is required by the applicants before application, based on general and specific requirements. The applicant should compare their knowledge and competences, based on their educational background, training courses undertaken prior to the application and working experience, against the LOs. The LOs for each job profile have been classified into three groups:

A. Knowledge: Theoretical and/or factual

B. Skills: cognitive and practical (able to do)

C. Competences: Responsibility and Autonomy (job function)

The applicants are eligible if they attain, at least, 70% of the LOs for each of the groups (A, B and C).

The general requirements for the 3 different certification levels are:

- **Technologist**: A degree in Food Science and Technology (FST) or food-related area plus 2 years of working experience in the selected area (Q&S or Product Development). Demand in working experience will be lower for higher university qualifications and higher for non-food related degrees or no higher education.

- **Supervisor**: A degree in FST or food-related area plus 4 years working experience in the selected area (Q&S or Product Development), one of the years in supervision activities. Demand in working experience will be lower for higher university qualifications and higher for non-food related degrees or no higher education.

- **Manager**: A degree in FST or food-related area plus 8 years working experience in the selected area (Q&S or Product Development), two of the years in management activities. Demand in working experience will be lower for higher university qualifications and higher for non-food related degrees or no higher education.

3 Qualification procedure

The qualification procedure is as follows:

Applicants are required to read the guidelines "Professional Certification Handbook" provided by the Foodcareers website and conduct a preliminary self-evaluation by comparing achieved LOs for each set of criteria (A, B, C) against a Job profile LOs matrix for the required certification.

- Applicants fill in an online application form including five sections: personal information, CPD portfolio with documentation on education/training/professional experience, tables of learning outcomes vs. CPD merits, certification options/application fees/ways of payment, compliance with the IFA code of ethics and other legal statements (veracity of the uploaded documentation, data protection).

  - Section 1: Applicants fill in their personal information and upload a scanned copy of their identity card.

  - Section 2: Applicants upload information on their education, training and professional experience to create their CPD portfolio. This information can be continuously updated and be available for download. Applicants upload the necessary diplomas, certifications and documents to validate their CPD merits.

  - Section 3: Applicants make a self-assessment of the required Learning Outcomes (LOs) vs. their CPD portfolio merits according to the information in the Professional Certification Handbook. To be eligible for certification, applicants will have to show evidences of achievement at least 70% of the LOs of each group (knowledge, skills and competences). In that case, Foodcareers recommends the applicant to continue with the certification process.

  - Section 4: Applicants select the job title they wish to apply for certification.

  - Section 5: Applicants choose their payment method and submit their application.

- The application is then processed by the IFA certification committee (IFA-CC), which comprises of members from the IFA accreditation committee (IFA-AC). The IFA-CC will forward the application to the appropriate IFA national technical committee (IFA-NTC), which will be responsible for evaluating the application and making a recommendation of an award to the IFA-CC. The IFA-NTC will consists of an IFA representative and 1-2 experts from national food associations from the applicant's country. The final decision on the award will be made by the IFA-CC.

- A certificate, at the appropriate level, is awarded if the applicant can demonstrate that they have met at least 70% of the learning outcomes (LOs) in each of the three criteria areas. If an applicant has less than the 70% of the LOs, then a set of CPD learning activities should be taken for theoretical and/or factual knowledge (criteria A) and/or cognitive and practical skills (criteria B). Additional work experience can also be used to

meet the minimum requirements for both cognitive and practical skills (criteria B) and responsibility and autonomy in a job function (criteria C), that should indicate the number of years in a particular job function. The applicant can then submit the application when these requirements have been met.

4 Certification trial

An open call for applications under a free trial scheme was created and disseminated via social media (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) and via Newsletter.

18 persons showed then interest in applying for a professional certification. From the 18 persons, only 4 were selected to test the certification procedure and be awarded, after evaluation, a certification for free. Selection was made in order to cover the two areas and different roles as follows: 2 persons in the area of Food Safety & Quality (Technologist and Manager) and 2 persons in the area of Food Product Development (Manager and Supervisor). However, only 2 of them decided to continue with the procedure; 1 person for the application of Food Safety & Quality Technologist and 1 person for the Food Product Development Manager.

Due to personal data protection issues, the information related to the two trial applicants cannot be included in this report.

The applicants were asked to register to the Foodcareers website and complete the online application. As mentioned above, the application consisted of 5 sections and after the final submission of the application, the Foodcareers website managers were informed by email and therefore forwarded the request to the IFA certification committee.

One identified reviewer was assigned to each applicant and examined the submitted documents provided by the applicant. It was clear to the applicants and the experts that in case their submitted application is not clear, an interview may be useful or needed.
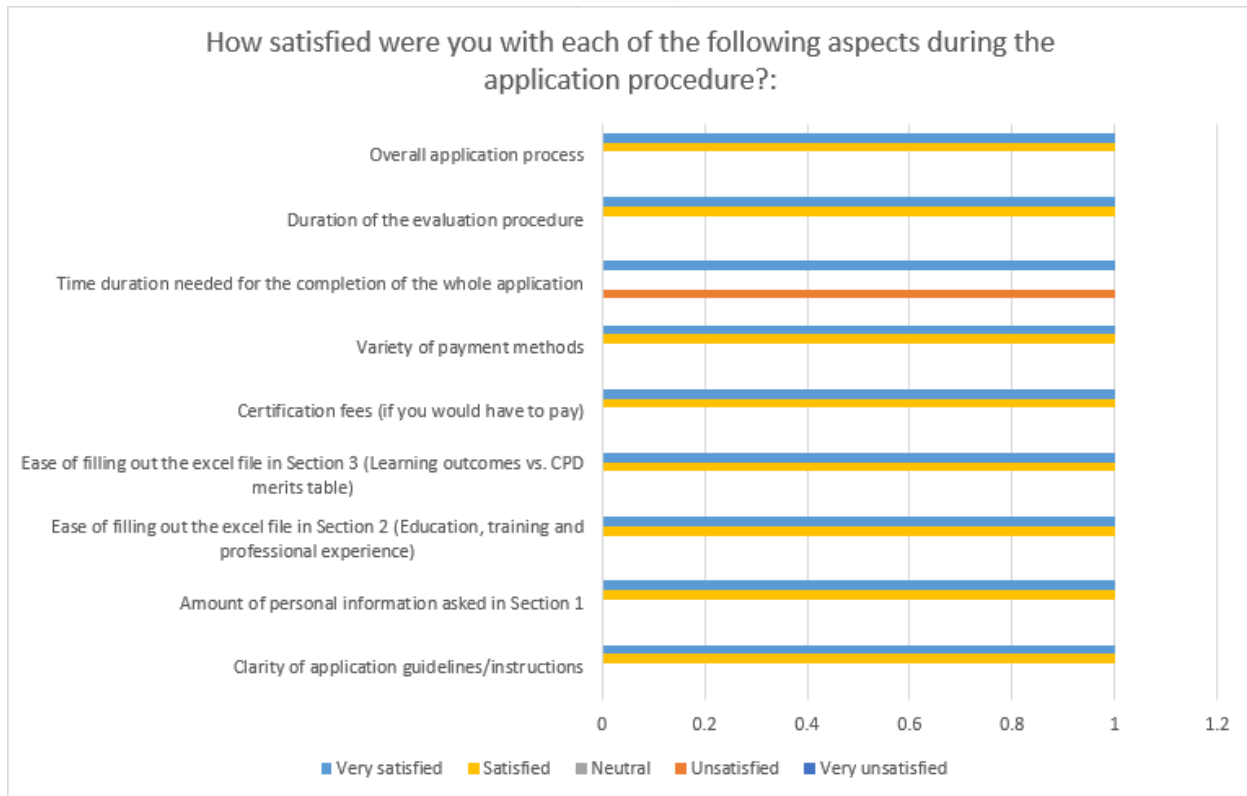
The reviewer of the Food Safety & Quality Technologist application found the respective supplied material inadequate to certify the applicant. Whereas, the reviewer of Food Product Development Manager application approved the supplied material and the applicant was certified at the "Manager" level.

After the decision, both applicants were informed; the unsuccessful applicant was provided with the comments of the reviewer while the successful applicant with the corresponding certificate.

5 Feedback of the applicants

An online feedback questionnaire was sent to the applicants after the completion of their application, regarding the application procedure.

In the question "*How satisfied were you with each of the following aspects during the application procedure?*" the applicants selected an answer among the options *"Very unsatisfied, Unsatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied, Very satisfied"* and the results can be seen in the following figure.

How satisfied were you with each of the following aspects during the application procedure?:

The second question was about the Handbook; "*Did you read the Professional Certification Handbook? Was it helpful during the application process?*" and both applicants answered *"Yes, I have read it and it was very helpful"* among the other 2 options *"Yes, I have read it, but it was not helpful"* and *"No, I have not read it"*.

The applicants were asked "*How likely is it that you would recommend Foodcareers Professional Certification to a friend or colleague?*" and from a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (extremely likely) they answered 4 and 5.

Finally, two open questions were asked to the applicants:

1) *"Is there anything we could have done differently to improve our service to you?"*

2) *"Please add any additional comments and/or suggestions you may have."*

The applicants responded that it would be nice to create a mobile application for the application procedure and that the form needed quite a lot of information which were difficult to be filled in the current application format.

On the other hand, they mentioned that the system was very fast for the document upload.

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