European Security and Defence College

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Sectoral Qualifications Framework - Military Officer Profession

SQF-MILOF Charter

This document describes the context, governance and stages for the development, validation and implementation of the SQF-MILOF, a pan-European Union (transnational) qualifications framework for the military officer profession. The primary aim of the SQF-MILOF is to offer Member States a cross-referencing tool for military qualifications, so that qualifications obtained in one Member State can be compared with similar qualifications granted by another Member State.

European Security and Defence College, Brussels 10/29/2018





SECTORAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR THE MILITARY OFFICER PROFESSION

(SQF-MILOF)

CHARTER

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SQF-MILOF Charter

This document gives an overview of the context, governance and stages for the development, validation and implementation of the SQF-MILOF.

Background

References:

- A. Comparison of courses based on competences, ESDC doc. IG/2014/00 2 (Rev 4), dated 24 September 2014
- B. EU Military Training and Education Annual Report 2015, doc. 11066/16, dated 8 July 2016
- C. Letter from the EUMC Chairman to the Head of the ESDC, doc. CEUMC 126/16, dated 19 July 2016.
- D. Call for contribution Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Military Officer Profession Ref. Ares (2017) 6171521 dated 15/12/2017
- E. Invitation to the kick-off meeting of the Sectoral Qualifications Framework ad-hoc working group, 11 June 2018, Brussels

From 2009 to 2014, in the context of the European initiative for the exchange of young officers inspired by Erasmus, the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) developed the first stage of a Sectoral Qualifications Framework for military officers (SQF-MILOF) at the beginning of their career, which was adopted by the ESDC Steering Committee (SC) on 22 October 2014 (Ref. A).

This initial stage of the SQF-MILOF focused on the competences¹ required by young officers (OF1) graduating from military academies or similar institutions. These competences were associated to level 6 (and 7, if it is part of the Basic Officer Education) of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). A large number of institutions providing officers' basic education and training use this competence tree to define the learning outcomes in common modules and in some national curricula. It has also been used in at least one case as a basis for aligning a full Sectoral Qualifications Framework (SQF) to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

The competence tree of the SQF-MILOF encompasses the knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility an officer should demonstrate in eight areas:

- 1. A military service (wo)man
- 2. A military technician
- 3. A leader and a decision maker
- 4. A combat-ready role model

¹ The partial SQF consisted of the competence profile of a young officer (based on an eight-branch competence tree).

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- 5. A communicator
- 6. A learner and a teacher/coach
- 7. A critical thinker and researcher
- 8. An international security/diplomacy actor

The working group responsible for SQF development took into account the mandate of the Implementation Group (IG) as a 'joint' group and decided to develop a framework that was applicable to all services. Given the specificities of the single services, the IG recognised that it would be necessary to develop subordinate qualification frameworks for those services, too. It was agreed that developing those service-oriented qualifications frameworks should remain under the responsibility of the Single-Service Conferences of Commandants (e.g. EMACS, EUAFA, and the Conference of Superintendents), unless Member States decided otherwise.

During the development of this initiative, there was broad consensus among IG members that a comprehensive military qualification framework should be developed to cover levels 4 to 7 or 8 of the EQF.

On 19 July 2016, at the proposal of the EU Military Training Group (EUMTG) (Ref. B), the EU Military Committee (EUMC) invited the ESDC to consider finalising the SQF, with support from the EU Military Staff (EUMS), for all officer career levels (junior officers in the ranks of Captain and Major and senior officers in the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel) (Ref. C). To date, no mandate was given for the SQF covering the levels of soldier, non-commissioned officer and warrant officer.

On 15 December 2017, the ESDC Secretariat issued a call for contribution (Ref. D) and invited Member States to complete a questionnaire and nominate experts with relevant operational, educational and training expertise to form a European ad-hoc working group (SQF-MILOF WG) which would define the qualifications at all levels of the military officer career. By 28 February 2018, eight Member States had replied to the questionnaire and five had nominated experts to the ad-hoc working group. The Member States' input will be used as a working basis for the development of the SQF.

On 18 April 2018, the ESDC Secretariat invited Member States to participate in the SQF-MILOF working group kick-off meeting, to be held on 11 June 2018 in Brussels (Ref. E).



Context and Relevance

Interoperability of the armed forces is the highest degree of standardisation envisaged by the EU Members States, and defence cooperation is an almost permanent point on the agenda of the European institutions. For example, in 2016, the European Parliament invited the European Council to take concrete steps towards harmonising and standardising the European armed forces, in order to facilitate the cooperation of armed forces personnel under the umbrella of a new European Defence Union (European Parliament, 2016).

In March 2017, concluding the Council on Security and Defence, Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, voiced the Member States' clear interest in strengthening defence cooperation. Along the same lines, when addressing the "Building on vision, forward to action" forum on 13 December 2017, the HR/VP highlighted how important training and education are for creating a common strategic culture, as part of ongoing defence cooperation efforts (EEAS, 2017).

Although education and training are Member States' responsibility, a high level of interoperability can only be achieved with the support of a transparent and critical approach towards the development of military training and education programmes and systems. SQF-MILOF is a tool conceived to support all these cooperative ambitions by offering Member States a platform for cooperation and for exchanging national perspectives on what degree of performance military personnel should reach through learning.

Introduction

SQF-MILOF should be understood and perceived as a supporting element of a broader architecture of qualifications at the EU level. Therefore, a short definition of associated terminology might be useful.

Qualification means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards (Council of the European Union, 2017).

A **qualification framework** is an *instrument for the development and classification of qualifications,* which relates and compares qualifications using a hierarchy of levels of learning outcomes, usually of *increasing complexity as a learner progresses up the levels* (European Training Foundation, 2011).

There are three **types** of qualifications frameworks: intra-national (those within specific sectors within a country), national and transnational (that exist across different countries). The latter can be further subdivided into general/regional (spanning national qualifications frameworks, e.g. the EQF) and sectoral (limited to a particular sector).

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)² is intended to act as an EU-level translation tool for national qualifications covered by National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs). The EQF is not directly used by any state, but serves as a central point of reference to facilitate comparison

² The EQF for lifelong learning was agreed by the Council of the European Union on 22 May 2017 (doc. 2017/C 189/03) and is compatible with the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of Bologna Process.

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(Frontex, 2013) The EQF describes eight reference levels for lifelong learning in terms of learning outcomes. It aims to cover all forms of learning and encompasses qualifications gained in any setting, such as general education, higher education, and vocational education and training. The EQF was designed to enable international sectoral organisations to relate their qualifications systems to a common European reference point and thus show the relationship between international sectoral qualifications and national qualifications systems. (European Coast Guard Functions Academies Network Project, 2016).

Within this context, a **Sectoral Qualifications Framework (SQF)** is similar to the EQF but covers learning related to a particular sector.

Definition

The Sectoral Qualifications Framework for the Military Officer Profession (SQF-MILOF) is a pan-European Union (transnational) qualifications framework for the military officer profession. More specifically, it is:

- Operationally relevant. The SQF-MILOF will be based on the competence profile of a generic European officer. The competence profile should encompass the knowledge and skills needed in the complex and multi-dimensional future operating environment. The competence profile is the expression of what commanders expect from their officers in the event of unexpected and rapidly evolving internal and external security situations with military implications.
- Learning relevant. The SQF-MILOF will describe the learning (profile) outcomes an officer should reach at specific moments in his or her career. It will describe what the officer should know and be able to do, with a certain degree of responsibility and autonomy, in order to match the competence profile for a generic European officer.
- **European Union relevant.** The SQF-MILOF will be aligned and compliant with the EQF for lifelong learning. By referencing national programmes against the SQF-MILOF on the one hand and the EQF on the other, Member States will be able to compare their qualifications with similar qualifications granted by another Member State.
- Nationally relevant. The SQF-MILOF will be aligned and compliant with the NQFs of the EU
 Member States and act as a commonly agreed tool to support the development of Member
 States' educational programmes and course curricula, including the CSDP Reference
 Curriculum for Officers.

Aim

The SQF-MILOF aims to offer Member States a cross-referencing tool for military qualifications, so that qualifications obtained in one Member State can be compared with similar qualifications granted by another Member State.



Objectives

The SQF-MILOF will:

- **Facilitate the comparison** of qualifications issued following professional military education and training programmes in different Members States.
- **Enable the harmonisation** of minimum learning requirements/ outcomes for the military officer profession among the Member States.
- **Promote the development** of educational programmes and course curricula within Member States. These include the CSDP Reference Curriculum for Officers, which will be based on a common understanding of lifelong training and education requirements.
- **Provide a context** within which Member States can ensure that their national programmes are used for the purposes of European officer qualification.
- **Facilitate the exchange** of military students and course participants at any stage of their military career.
- Consolidate interoperability between the armed forces of the Member States by incorporating shared values and competences into the education and training of military officers.
- Facilitate quality assurance of military training and education programmes.
- Facilitate mobility across sectors, and the employability of military personnel in civilian life/ sectors through the link that the SQF-MILOF will make with the NQFs.

Benefits

- **Increased transparency** of national military training and education programmes, which will facilitate the exchange of students at all levels of their military career.
- A consolidated European security and defence ethos in support of coherent objectives for CSDP missions and operations.
- A better understanding of the outcome-based approach to describing learning.
- Greater recognition and transfer of learning outcomes, in the form of qualifications, which will allow more flexible mobility (between military national sectors and between military and civilian sectors). For example, in a military to military case, a qualification awarded to an officer in MS X could be recognised as a qualification required by a Multinational Brigade HQ in MS Y; the job description would make reference to the SQF level.
- Increased quality of education and training activities.

Scope

A comprehensive and exhaustive SQF for the military profession at EU level should address learning relevant to all levels and categories of personnel, across all services and irrespective of arms or specialities. Such a framework should therefore span learning from basic to the most advanced level and apply to non-commissioned officers and commissioned officers alike.

As mandated by the EUMC, the SQF-MILOF is a segment of this comprehensive SQF whose scope is limited to learning relevant to officers, irrespective of service to which they belong, at early and intermediate levels of their careers. This framework will have a joint, inter-service character and



should encompass the aspects of learning common to all services (land, navy, air force, and gendarmerie) among the EU Member States (Fig. 1).

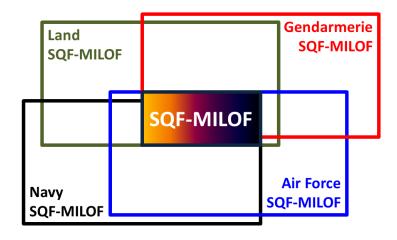


Figure 1 – Generic representation of the SQF-MILOF's joint/inter-service character

<u>In scope</u>. The SQF-MILOF will cover qualifications concerning:

- Military officers at early and intermediate levels of their career (OF1-OF4)
- Competences and learning outcomes relevant to joint/cross-service/horizontal situations
- Basic specific or functional competences and learning outcomes (e.g. cyber awareness)
- Professional military education and training (academic and vocational)

Out of scope. The SQF-MILOF will not cover any elements concerning:

- Military officers at a superior level of their career (OF5)
- General officers
- Non-commissioned officers
- Warrant officers
- Soldiers
- Competences and learning outcomes specific to one service (air, maritime, land)
- Functional or specialised competences (e.g. those specific to arms)
- General education and training or non-military qualifications

<u>Please note</u> that further development of a comprehensive SQF for the military profession and service-oriented SQFs (which is currently out of scope for the SQF-MILOF) could be considered, should the Member States express interest for such instruments (i.e. a Land SQF-MILOF, a Navy SQF-MILOF, an Air Force SQF-MILOF, and a Gendarmerie SQF-MILOF) (Fig. 2).

Main Characteristics

General but not generic. By seeking the compromise of the lowest common denominator
among Member States, it might become general. However, this should not detract from its
specific character and usefulness in the development of national SQFs and education and
training programmes.



- Inclusive and not prescriptive. Although it covers commonalities among countries, it does
 not exclude the specificities of the Member States' national education and training
 programmes. It does not impose how the learning outcomes should be achieved or specify
 content for the training programmes.
- **Joint and not service-specific**. It is inclusive, but related to the common requirements of all services (Fig 1). However, the SQF-MILOF will only fulfil its objectives when a complete cascading system has been implemented, to reflect its relationship with subordinate service SQFs and with Member States NQFs (Fig. 2).
- **Voluntary and not legally binding**. All institutional architecture and decisions taken within the context of developing and implementing the SQF-MILOF at national level remain optional for the Member States.
- Informative and not directive. It is a tool that promotes transparency: the Member States reflect their national perspectives through the SQF-MILOF. It is a compromise between 28 countries. It is not necessarily a technical product; rather a political one. It should not impose common education and training standards and requirements on the Member States.

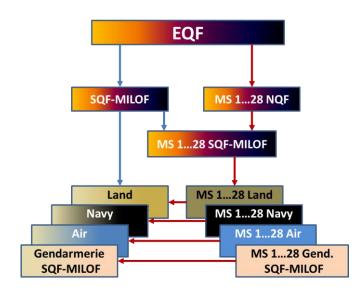


Figure 2 – Cascading system of qualifications frameworks

Audience

When finalised, the SQF-MILOF will serve multiple purposes and cater to a wide audience:

- National human resources departments to update/harmonise military occupational standards and job descriptions (making use of the competence profile)
- National education policy makers to compare national programmes against similar programmes in other Member States and inform exchange opportunities
- Education and training providers to inform the development of curricula
- Quality assurance managers to offer a background for benchmarking



Governance

Overall responsibility for SQF-MILOF development and its monitoring falls to the ESDC SC. Consideration should be given to make the topic of the SQF-MILOF a standing agenda item for ESDC SC meetings throughout the project's life.

The SQF-MILOF is based on the competence profile defined and agreed by the employer, which at the EU level is represented by the EUMC. The armed forces of the Member States will be kept up to date – through the EUMC, as the main beneficiary of military officers – on progress on the development and implementation of the SQF-MILOF.

Development of the SQF-MILOF will be carried out by the SQF-MILOF WG, a dedicated ESDC ad-hoc working group composed of national representatives. The SQF-MILOF WG will convene under the auspices of the ESDC and will act in close coordination with the EUMS. It will meet, in principle, on a quarterly basis, back to back with EUMTG meetings, and will agree on its programme of work during its first meeting. The group will conduct work in residential sessions and at distance, in a collaborative manner, using the ESDC ILIAS online platform. The role of the SQF-MILOF WG is to:

- constitute a community of interest;
- consolidate and discuss national input;
- ensure national issues are integrated into the SQF;
- define descriptors and learning outcomes for all levels of the military officer career;
- facilitate the validation of the SQF with regard to NQFs by liaising with national points of contact (POCs).

To ensure compliance with the EQF, the Bologna and Copenhagen processes, and quality assurance requirements, the SQF-MILOF will be **validated** by internationally recognised experts from the Commission, the EQF Advisory Group and other relevant entities.

The **implementation** of the SQF-MILOF will be carried out under the supervision of the relevant national authorities (human resources and NQF-relevant departments) through the designated POCs. Although beyond the scope of this initiative, national POCs will ensure the **implementation** of the SQF-MILOF by monitoring:

- the development of National Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks (NSQFs) for military officers;
- the referencing of NSQF levels to relevant SQF-MILOF levels;
- the referencing of national education and training programmes to the relevant NSQF and SQF-MILOF levels.

Stakeholders

To ensure the project is legitimate and representative throughout its lifetime, all possible stakeholders should be identified and managed accordingly. A non-exhaustive list is presented below:

- European External Action Service (EEAS) leadership
- European Security and Defence College (ESDC) Steering Committee (SC), Head, Secretariat, Executive Academic Board (EAB), Implementation Group (IG)



- EU Military Committee (EUMC) Chairman, EUMC Working Group (EUMCWG), EUMCWG Headline Task Force (EUMCWG-HTF), EU Military Training Group (EUMTG)
- Political-Military Group (PMG)
- Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) and EU Civilian Training Group (EUCTG)
- EU Military Staff (EUMS)
- European Defence Agency (EDA)
- National defence authorities (ministries of defence, chiefs of defence)
- National and multinational academic and training institutions
- National and European quality assurance institutions
- European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group
- European Commission (Directorates General for Education and Culture (DG EAC), Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW))
- External validation body of experts (to be identified and appointed for validation purposes)
- Single-Service Conferences of Commandants (e.g. EMACS, EUAFA, and Conference of Superintendents)³
- Student associations
- European Organisation of Military Associations (EUROMIL)
- European Army Interoperability Centre (FINABEL)
- NATO International Staff, International Military Staff, Allied Command Transformation
- Centres of Excellence
- PfP Training Centres

Assumptions

The success of the SQF-MILOF depends very much on the validity of the following assumptions:

- Member States will be willing to contribute to the project with substantial input on content
- Member States will nominate representatives and candidates for various responsibilities within the SQF-MILOF WG (e.g. chair, leading and supporting tasks)
- Member States will assume responsibilities and effectively contribute to deliverables
- Member States representatives to the SQF-MILOF WG and stakeholders will actively attend the meetings
- Member States will accept and sign the formal agreement for adopting the SQF-MILOF
- Member States will implement the SQF-MILOF by cross-referencing their national military education and training programmes to the SQF-MILOF and the EQF, through their sectoral NQFs

Risks

The success of the SQF-MILOF may be jeopardised by a number of risks, as described in the following list. Appropriate risk management measures should be taken to avoid failure or unnecessary delays.

³ The service-oriented qualifications frameworks should remain under the responsibility of these communities.



- Insufficient contributions from the Member States, which may limit the basis on which work can be carried out and decrease the value of output.
- Insufficient support from the Member States, which may affect the acceptance of the project and further implementation.
- Lack of personnel contributions from the Member States (SQF-MILOF WG chair and representatives), which may impact the legitimacy and effectiveness of the work done.
- Member States not assuming responsibilities, which may delay the project; the less the Member States are involved, the less likely it is that the final product will be accepted by all Member States.

Stages - Development, Validation and Implementation

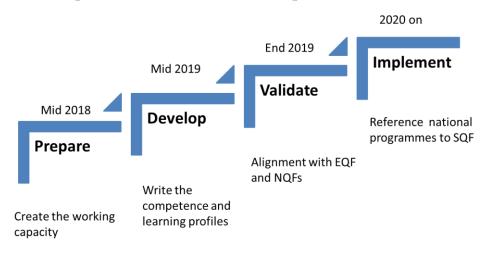


Figure 3 Stages - Development, Validation and Implementation

MAJOR OUTCOME/MILESTONE	DATE	
PREPARE		
National perspectives on competence profile and learning outcomes consolidated	1 April 2018	
SQF-MILOF Charter agreed	11 June 2018	
SQF-MILOF WG programme of work and clear responsibilities established	11 June 2018	
DEVELOP		
SQF-MILOF architecture agreed (levels and equivalence to EQF)	Dec 2018	
Learning Outcomes for all levels of military career agreed	Jun 2019	
SQF-MILOF final structure agreed	Jun 2019	
VALIDATE		
SQF-MILOF validated by an external assessment body	Sep 2019	
SQF-MILOF validated at the national level	Dec 2019	



IMPLEMENTATION	
SQF-MILOF Implementation Protocol signed by Member States	Apr 2020
SQF-MILOF dissemination strategy at national and international level defined	Sep 2020
Guidelines for developing national and service-specific SQF-MILOFs defined	Dec 2020

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European Policies and Initiatives on Education and Employment⁴

- Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single Community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences, which provides a framework helping people to present their skills and qualifications⁵;
- The new priorities of the strategic framework for European cooperation on education and training through to 2020, as established by the Joint Report of 'Education and Training 2020' adopted in 2015. The report calls for further development of the EQF in order to make qualifications more transparent and comparable;
- Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁶, which invites Member States to put in place arrangements for validating non-formal and informal learning linked to NQFs. The arrangements, which should be in line with the EQF, should be in place no later than 2018. According to the Recommendation, individuals should be able to obtain full or partial qualifications on the basis of validated learning outcomes acquired outside formal education and training systems;
- The multilingual European Classification of Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO). Both ESCO and the EQF will use the same format for the electronic publication of information on qualifications (included in Annex VI to the proposal);
- The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in Higher Education developed in the context of the European Higher Education Area and the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) 8;
- The independent European Quality Assurance Register in higher education⁹ developed in the context of the European Higher Education Area, which is a register of quality assurance agencies that comply substantially with the ESG;
- The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) ¹⁰, developed in the context of the European Higher Education Area and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), established through the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009¹¹;

⁴ See EQF 2017 explained

⁵ OJ L 390, 31.12.2004, p.6.

⁶ OJ C 398, 22.12.2012, p. 1.

⁷ http://www.enga.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG 2015.pdf.

⁸ OJ C 155, 8.7.2009, p. 1.

⁹ https://www.eqar.eu/.

 $^{^{10}\} http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/publications/2015/ects-users-guide_en.pdf.$

¹¹ OJ C 155, 8.7.2009, p.11.



- The Bologna process on higher education: 38 of the 48 European countries of the European Higher Education Area participate in the EQF. The proposal is compatible with the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). In particular, the descriptors for levels 5 to 8 of the EQF are compatible with the Dublin descriptors for the three cycles of the QF-EHEA, including the short cycle that is linked or within the first cycle. Current referencing practice shows that most countries have referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in a single process;
- The Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Lisbon Recognition Convention) and the Recommendation on the use of qualifications frameworks in the recognition of foreign qualifications, which refers explicitly to the EQF as a tool to be used in academic recognition;
- Employment policies and initiatives, such as the EURES Regulation and the Council Recommendations on the Youth Guarantee and on Long Term Unemployment;
- Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications¹², amended by Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013. Under the Directive, the Commission can set up common training frameworks as a common set of minimum learning outcomes necessary for the pursuit of a specific profession. The common training frameworks are to be based on EQF levels;
- Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning and repealing the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2017/C 189/03);
- Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, doc. 8299/18, dated 2 May 2018. This Recommendation covers a wide range of education, training and learning settings, formal, non-formal and informal, in a lifelong learning perspective.

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¹² OJ L 255, 30.9.2005, p. 22.



Relevant Web Links

New Skills Agenda for Europe

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en

Supporting and improving education and training in Europe – Glossary, European Commission

http://ec.europa.eu/education/ects/users-guide/glossary_en.htm

Understanding qualifications, CEDEFOP

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/themes/understanding-qualifications

Identifying skills needs, CEDEFOP

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/themes/identifying-skills-needs

European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO)

https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal

Skills in the defence sector, European Commission

http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/defence/industrial-policy/skills_en

European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f%5B0%5D=im field entity type%3A97

European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/vocational-policy/ecvet en

European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)

https://www.eqavet.eu/About-Us/Mission

Military Schools Directory

https://militaryschooldirectory.com/