



ESTONIA

Case from Professional Qualifications System, Estonia

Estonian Qualifications Authority

Validation of professional qualifications in construction sector

In Estonian professional qualifications system there are following **professional qualifications in construction sector**:

- Concrete worker I, II, III
- Construction Site Manager III
- Plater Whitesmith I, II, III
- Construction carpenter I, II, III
- Construction finisher I, II, III (Specialities: plasterer, painter, tile layer, floorer)
- Plumber I, II, III
- Roofer I, II, III
- Mason I, II, III
- Ventilation duct fitter I, II, III

Descriptions of professional activities and competency requirements for professional qualifications and their levels are described in professional standards. **The process of validation and recognition of person's actual competencies that based on standards** is one of the main processes in Estonian professional qualifications system and is called awarding of professional qualifications. Awarding body in construction sector is **Estonian Association of Construction Entrepreneurs**.

The awarding body develops and approves the procedure for the assessment and award of professional qualifications. Awarding body also **forms a professional qualifications committee** which prepares the procedure for awarding, decide on the form and manner for assessment, approve the instruction for the assessment and the examination materials and decide on awarding or refusing to award profession to the person. If necessary, the professional qualifications committee appoints one or several **assessment committee(s)**. Awarding body also issues **professional certificates** that show assessment results - the professional qualification and the level of competencies of a person. All information is kept in State register of Professions.

Quality assurance is carried out by Professional Councils. There are 16 Professional Councils in Estonia and **the supervision for construction sector is carried out by Professional Council of Construction, Real Estate and Geomatics**. Professional Councils are co-ordinated by **Estonian Qualifications Authority**.

Methods of attestation of professional qualifications in construction are following:

1. evidences that based on documents;
2. professional exam (including work observation);
3. combination of methods listed above.

Documents or their copies that a person applying for a professional qualification needs to present are following:

- educational or professional certificates in construction;

- certificates of professional and continuing training;
- description of previous work experience, sometimes also witness testimony from previous employers.

When **describing previous work experience**, the applicant has to refer previous workplaces, construction sites, main job roles and activities. Although previous work experience is very important evidence, self evaluation to assess actual competencies is not widely used yet.

Awarding of first level professional qualification

As prerequisite for applying the first level qualification is successful graduation of construction speciality in a vocational and educational training (VET) institution or 2 years specialised work experience or completion of professional training.

To acquire the first level qualification, applicants need to take an exam to show their actual knowledge and present employers' testimony to prove applicants' skills.

Awarding of second level professional qualification

As prerequisite for applying the second level qualification is a year work experience after the graduation of VET institution or 3 years specialised work experience or completion of professional training.

Methods of validating of the second level qualification are the exam to show their actual knowledge and/or skills and work observation.

Awarding of third level professional qualification

As prerequisite for applying the third-level qualification is 3 years work experience after graduation of VET institution or 5 years specialised work experience or completion of professional and management training.

Validating of the third level qualification has two stages. First is the written test and case studies. In second assessment stage oral questioning with two professional questions are carried out by assessors.

Awarding of Construction Site Manager III professional qualification

Validation of Construction site manager qualification is mainly based on documents. If a specialised training for the applicant is needed in order to acquire the construction site manager qualification, the Professional Qualifications Committee guides the applicant to the necessary professional training.

Costs of the process

The process of awarding of professional qualification for graduates is funded by state. The other applicants cover the cost of the validation themselves or with the help of their employers.

Development of validation process

In Estonia there are many people who have competencies that conform to professional qualifications of construction workers and manager, but they do not have required education level or the number of working years in construction area. Therefore we are planning to start the development of better validation process of competencies gained through informal and non-formal learning. We want to bring in more the competence-based assessment where the most important are actual competencies of a person and not the number of working and study years. One of the developments also includes better guidance system to help applicants to understand what skills or knowledge they need to acquire desired professional qualification.