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for European information professionals

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The present edition of the guide for levels of qualification for information professionals is being published simultaneously to the second edition of the guide of competencies and aptitudes, which is volume 1 of the *Euroguide LIS*. The two volumes cannot be sold separately. They have been accessible online on the ADBS website ([www.adbs.fr](http://www.adbs.fr)) from the summer of 2004.

*Typical occupations information professionals* (in France) has also been the subject of a guide, whose last edition (2001) is the only one presently available until the publication of a new and revised draft (in preparation).

List of guides published:

*Guide interentreprise pour la caractérisation des profils de compétence des professionnels de l'information et de la documentation. Première partie : caractérisation des savoirs et savoir-faire.* Guide n° 5[-1], 1995 (out of print)

*Compétences et emplois des professionnels de l'information et documentation. Deuxième partie : les emplois-types.* Guide n° 5-2, 1996 (out of print)

*Référentiel des métiers-types et compétences des professionnels de l'information et documentation. Nouvelle version révisée (mars 1998).* Guide n° 05, 1998 (out of print)

*Euroguide LIS: Guide to Competencies for European Professionals in Library and Information Services*, by the European Council of Information Associations (ECIA). Guide n° 7, 1999 (out of print)

*Référentiel des métiers-types des professionnels de l'information et documentation, par l'Association des professionnels de l'information et de la documentation (ADBS), commission Métiers et qualifications.* Guide n° 05, 2001

*Euroguide LIS. Vol. 1 – Competencies and aptitudes for European information professionals*, by the European Council of Information Associations (ECIA). Guide n° 8, 2004. Also available online on the ADBS web site : [www.adbs.fr](http://www.adbs.fr)

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## Foreword

Levels of qualification should be considered global and accumulative. As such, any information professional can situate him/herself, at a particular moment of his/her career, at a certain level of qualification that is determined by applying the rules described below, and by using the nomenclature defined in the *Euroguide*.

What is meant here by qualification is the “possession, at a certain level, of the necessary expertise to perform a job.” And, according to the Afnor standard X50-750, the level of qualification is “a person’s place in reference to a scale of qualifications which separates the knowledge and know-how of an occupation (or a group of similar occupations) into different functions. The level of qualification takes into account the individual’s competence (especially technical), the complexity of different responsibilities undertaken as well as his/her degree of autonomy, decisiveness and foresight.” (Cf. vol. 1, p. 64: glossary, “Level of qualification”)

The way that the last sentence of this definition is formulated demonstrates clearly the particular nature of this notion and the difficulty in determining the precise point in the scale where each individual should be placed. The three apparently heterogeneous elements mentioned must, therefore, be “taken into account”:

- competency: technical, relatively objective and observable, and so measurable;
- complexity of different responsibilities undertaken: one might think at first that this is a kind of neutral, physical reality which has neither a positive nor a negative value for an individual. But, if there are “responsibilities undertaken”, then there is, most likely, someone who ordered their completion. Thus, this proves that this person has a certain confidence in him/her. Or, at least, it is the indication of a positive judgement made by a third party;
- the three qualities mentioned at the end (autonomy, decisiveness, foresight) are aptitudes and by nature, difficult to measure. It is rare to find these three aptitudes associated with competencies, as was done here to specifically define professional qualifications.

As any group, that of professionals of information is divided into several levels in such a way that the diversity of situations makes their definition slightly arbitrary. Indeed, there is no clear border that imposes an indisputable rupture between each element of what the observer first sees as a series of ever more proficient qualities. However, observation of the most frequent concrete situations in the practice of this profession has led to the distinction between each of the four levels of qualification.

In addition, this number corresponds to the four professional categories recognised by diverse authorities which manage situations such as those of information professionals.

For example, the British system of National Vocational Qualifications identifies four classes in this sector of activity (the lowest level, which would be the fifth, is not used in professions such as these which are instead based on intellectual pursuits).

The criteria which allow us to distinguish between the four levels and to classify them in a hierarchy are outlined below:

- The more or less great degree of freedom that an individual benefits from in relation to methods, rules and knowledge on which the profession relies, from the person who must keep to the rules without understanding why, to the person who is capable of adopting, modifying and rewriting them;
- The more or less great degree of autonomy that an individual has in the information management system;
- The more or less complex character of operations that he or she undertakes.

The characteristics of the people at one of the four levels, named “assistant”, “technician”, “manager” or “expert” – words stemming from an agreement between professional information associations in Europe – are the following:

### **Preliminary requisite conditions for any level**

An information professional who wants to have his or her qualifications recognised must, in general:

- have reached a particular level of culture and intellectual education, in general attested by the possession of a general, professional or university degree ;
- have acquired at least the basic knowledge (terminology, code of practice) in the different fields of information services, and that this knowledge has been acquired through education or professional experience over a

sufficient period of time;

- have established for him/herself a continuous, professional career plan in order to update regularly his/her knowledge.

The cumulative demands become increasingly strict as one rises from one level to the next.

## **Levels of qualification**

## **Level 1: Assistant in information services**

An individual who assumes to have the qualification of an “assistant in information services” has had some training, by whatever means. First, he/she must recognise the code of practices (methods, standards, etc.), or at least that these standards exist, and he/she can cite them.

He/she knows how to execute one or several tasks that he/she is especially prepared for by dutifully applying the rules that he/she has learned. He/she works under the responsibility of another, more qualified professional. He/she is often part of a team in which a manager defines his/her responsibilities and modifies them as necessary. He/she may find him/herself to be the only information professional in a group exercising another profession (e.g. lawyers, doctors, researchers), and is, in this case, autonomous.

He/she knows how to use basic equipment correctly.

He/she knows how to recognise a characteristic malfunction and to determine in which case an external specialist should intervene.

He/she demonstrates limited professional competencies that, according to the scale provided in the *Euroguide LIS, Volume 1*, can reach:

- level one in each field of the Information (I) group. Nevertheless, it is possible to compensate the weaknesses found in one or several fields by attaining a higher level of competence in one or several of the other fields in the group.

- level one in 10 (of the 20) fields in groups T, C and M, under the condition that he/she achieve level 1 in at least two of the fields of expertise from each group.

He/she otherwise demonstrates aptitudes that are generally considered useful or necessary to professional practice. Those that are most appreciated at his/her level of qualification seem to be adaptability, « an enquiring mind » and perseverance. These are difficult to measure, but an appropriate interview, conducted with experienced professionals, should allow them to manifest themselves.

## **Level 2: Technician in information services**

A professional who assumes to have the qualification of “technician in information services” has received an education, by one means or another, that gives him/her a good understanding of the code of practices (methods, standards, etc.) and the principles that guide them. He/she is capable of applying these advisedly. He/she can interpret and adapt these principles to specific situations.

He/she is able to perform the diverse tasks inherent in an organised document service or required of a professional fulfilling a documentary function in an existing, operating system. He/she may be helped by the collaborators a small team of which he/she leads.

He/she acts autonomously, while answering to a hierarchical superior and following his/her instructions.

He/she can be made responsible for a small or medium sized document service.

He/she knows how to react when faced with a malfunction in the document service and immediately calls outside specialists most qualified to resolve the problem.

He/she has and knows how to use professional competencies that, according to the scale provided in the *Euroguide LIS, Volume 1*, reach:

- level 2 in each of the fields in group I. Nevertheless, it is possible to compensate for the weaknesses in one or several fields by reaching a higher level of competence in one or several of the other fields in the group.
- level 2 in 11 fields (of the 20) in groups T, C and M, under the condition that he/she achieve level 2 in at least two of the fields of expertise from each group.

He/she otherwise demonstrates aptitudes generally considered as useful or necessary to professional practice. He/she especially takes advantage of his/her team spirit, the rigour with which he/she executes the tasks under his/her responsibility, and is known for his/her discretion which leads him/her to place great value on the confidentiality of information that he/she is aware of. As with all aptitudes, these are difficult to measure, but an interview, conducted with experienced professionals, should allow them to manifest themselves.



### **Level 3: Manager in information services**

A professional who assumes to have the qualification for « manager in information services » must have had theoretical education and practical training that give him/her a profound understanding of the code of practices (methods, standards, etc.) and their guiding principles. He/she can also modify and renew them.

He/she is capable of organising and operating a complex information system that responds to a determined need, by using all types of resources and by applying the appropriate techniques.

He/she is prepared to supervise and direct working teams, to manage budgets and to lead projects. He/she demonstrates confirmed experience in team supervision.

He/she has the capacity to innovate and to anticipate, for example by originating and implementing a new document service or by developing a new, cost reducing method for the maintenance of an information system. He/she shows proof of his/her ability to realise services of this type.

He/she has and displays professional competencies that, according to the scale provided in the *Euroguide LIS, Volume 1*, reach:

- level 3 in each of the fields of group I. Nevertheless, it is possible to compensate for the weaknesses in one or several fields by attaining a higher level of competence in one or several other fields of the group;
- level 3 in 12 fields (of the 20) in groups T, C and M, under the condition that he/she achieve level 3 in at least two of the fields of expertise within each group.

He/she otherwise possesses aptitudes generally considered useful or necessary to professional practice and which his functions frequently lead him/her to demonstrate. For example, it is expected that he/she have a sense of organisation, decisiveness and initiative. In addition to his/her proficient competence, these aptitudes contribute greatly to his/her efficiency.

## **Level 4: Expert in information services**

A professional who assumes to have the qualification of “expert in information services” must first demonstrate all of the understanding and ability that are needed to become a “manager in information services” (see level 3).

On top of this is added a particularly profound understanding and experience of a specialisation (or group of complementary specialisations) in the field of information services that make it possible to evaluate every aspect of a situation, to imagine a solution to a new problem, to invent a methodology and to question the theoretical concepts in the particular field of expertise in question.

His/her experience as expert in the field must be sufficiently varied and proven over a long period.

He/she can perform documentary auditing, complete missions of technical expertise and intervene as a consultant to large institutions or organisations.

He/she takes responsibility and participates in the implementation of solutions that he/she has recommended.

Recognised by peers, he/she shares his experience and frequently uses different means of scientific communication (e.g. professional journals, reports, conferences, etc.) to convey this knowledge. He/she can prove that he/she has contributed such interventions in several different locations.

On the scale of competencies provided in volume 1 of the *Euroguide LIS*, his/her competencies reach:

- level 4 in 7 of the fields of expertise in group I and level 3 in the 6 other fields of this group. Nevertheless, it is possible to compensate for the weaknesses in one or several of the fields by attaining a higher level of competence in one or several of the other fields of the group;
- level 4 in 13 of the fields (of the 20) in groups T, C and M, under the condition that he/she attain level 4 in at least two fields of expertise from each group.

His/her aptitudes played a role in the choice of his specialisation. He/she continues to work on developing those aptitudes whose efficiency he/she has recognised in the chosen sector of activity. Whatever this sector is, his/her role at this elevated level of qualification requires him/her to continue to develop generally valued aptitudes such as analytical ability or the ability to synthesize, as well as communication and teaching skills.