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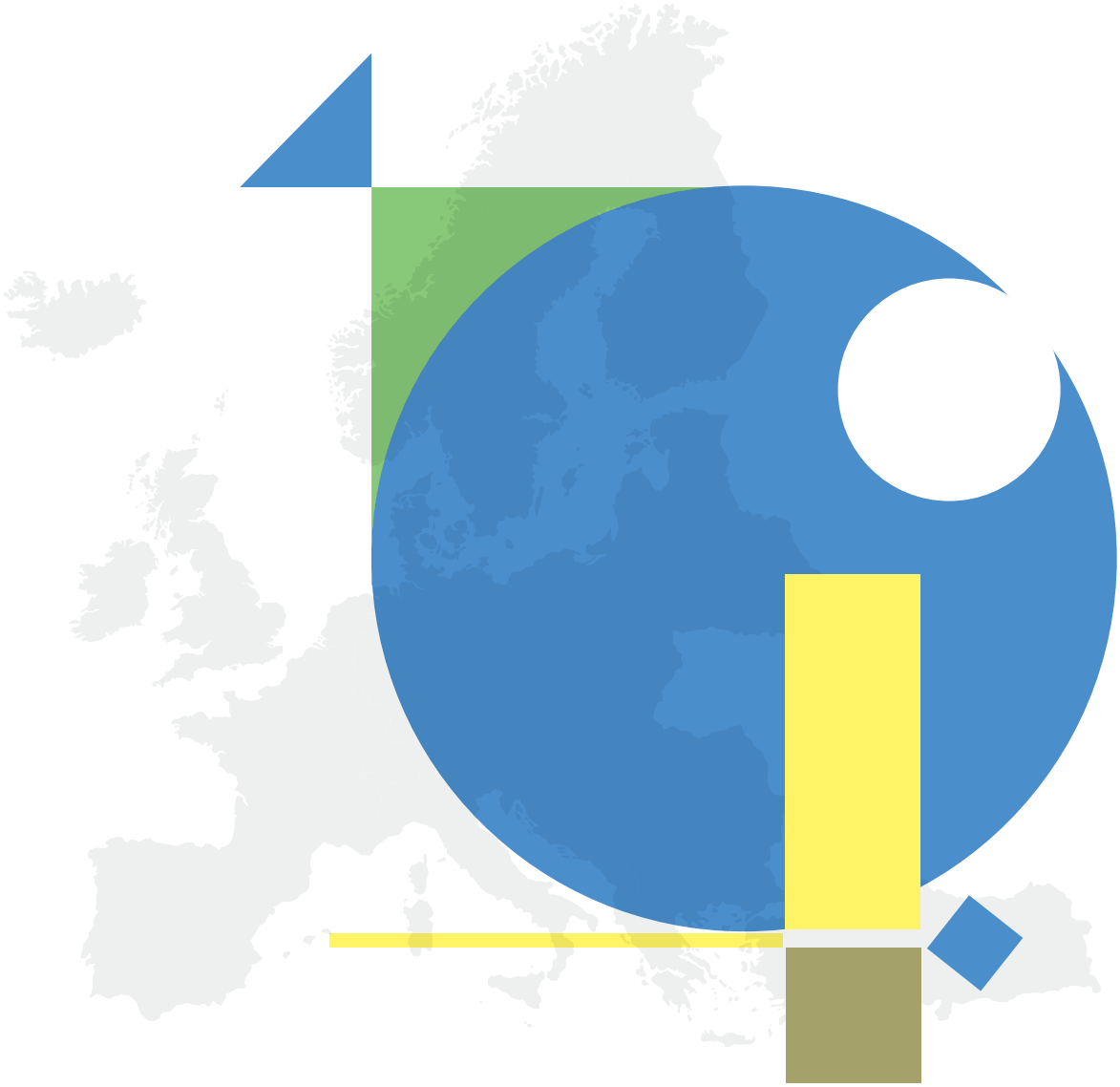

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE 2019

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National qualifications frameworks developments in Europe 2019

Qualifications frameworks: transparency and added value for end users

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The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

Cedefop was originally established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75. This decision was repealed in 2019 by Regulation (EU) 2019/128 establishing Cedefop as a Union Agency with a renewed mandate.

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Foreword

This booklet comes at a time when Europe is devising its plans for recovery from the economic and social crisis induced by the Covid-19 pandemic. The subsequent faster shift to the digital and green economy, and the need for many people to find new jobs in different sectors, will require large-scale upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Recent experience in working and learning remotely may encourage more citizens to look for opportunities beyond regional or national borders.

With the widely accepted European and national qualifications frameworks for lifelong learning (EQF and NQFs), we have powerful tools that make it easier for people to 'carry their skills and credentials' with them to different contexts.

Qualifications reflect a country's specific socioeconomic, education and training and employment policy context. Even if qualifications issued in different countries bear the same title, the knowledge, skills and competences they certify may vary: this is a challenge for employers, education institutions, guidance staff and citizens in the EU. Understanding qualifications across borders has, therefore, been at the heart of European cooperation in education and training from the beginning, aiming to ease mobility for work and learning and to match skills and jobs more effectively.

We are proud to say that Cedefop's expertise in vocational education and training, the most diverse part of any education system, has helped shape a breakthrough concept: using the expected outcomes of learning rather than programme duration, for instance, to build a framework that 'translates' qualifications across national borders. This focus on learning outcomes has led to a 'common language' indicating similarities and differences in qualifications and making it easier to compare them.

National and EU-level debates, prompted by countries' work to create national frameworks linking their qualifications to their 'corresponding' EQF levels, have paid off. They have led to modernising VET qualifications, curricula, teaching and assessment. They have also increased awareness of the skill sets and competence levels necessary to obtain VET qualifications, not least by making the relationships of the latter to university diplomas and degrees more evident.

By encompassing more and more credentials awarded outside formal education and training or through validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills, NQFs are becoming comprehensive qualifications maps. This is a major prerequisite for making seamless lifelong learning paths a reality. But this is not where the process ends.

Globalisation and rapidly changing skill requirements, as those triggered and accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the trends we can observe in the gig economy, point to a new direction. Besides including international qualifications based on a consistent approach, countries will need to open their NQFs even further to (micro)credentials and digital badges. By including them in the NQFs they can encourage people to participate in training, as they see the value of these credentials for their lifelong learning journeys, employability and career advancement.

So far, NQFs have helped strengthen transparency and trust in qualifications across different countries and education and training systems, which is crucial if we want to create a European education and training area. Employers' use of NQFs, however, has been limited. This suggests not enough awareness of their potential to support workforce planning, recruitment, and employee development. People's formal qualifications may not always play a decisive role in these contexts but the actual skills and competences referenced by their credentials do, whether traditional methods or algorithms are used to match people to jobs. NQFs, related databases and certificate supplements need to be promoted in the business world, including qualifications and (micro)credentials awarded by the industry itself.

As our analyses demonstrate, NQFs for lifelong learning are more than just technical tools. The debates that their creation triggered have brought together a variety of actors from very different worlds, who would normally not have an opportunity to communicate with ona another. They have developed into platforms for reform. Maintaining these platforms, reflecting on qualifications and skills policies regionally, nationally and at EU-level will be crucial, as NQFs will need regularly reviewing to remain up to date. NQF implementors will also need to be closely involved in the national skills strategies that the European Commission, with European skills agenda, is promoting; these will help shape and create more agile, forward-looking, flexible and permeable qualification and education and training systems.

In this booklet, which complements our publications series on NQF developments, we have summarised and illustrated the state of play of the 43 frameworks created to date in the EU, EFTA, candidate and potential countries and the UK. We are happy to see that our conceptual contributions and accompanying analyses to support these developments have helped achieve this progress.

Jürgen Siebel
Cedefop Executive Director

Loukas Zahilas
Head of department for VET systems and institutions

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Introduction

The European qualifications framework (EQF) for lifelong learning has existed for more than a decade and is considered the most advanced regional qualifications framework in the world ([1]). Entering into force in 2008 and revised in 2017 ([2]), the EQF has become a common reference point for comparing qualifications across institutional and national borders, aiming to increase the overall transparency, comparability, quality and portability of qualifications throughout Europe.

The EQF has triggered development of learning outcomes-based national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) in Europe. Before 2005, NQFs had been set up in three European countries: Ireland, France and the UK. Important progress has been achieved in all 39 EQF participating countries ([3]) over the years. The EQF, based on learning outcomes, is the central hub linking all NQFs across Europe. Although these frameworks have reached different stages of implementation, an increasing number is now fully operational and firmly integrated into national education, training and qualifications systems in their respective countries. In several countries NQFs are becoming 'allrounders', embedded in the wider policy context on lifelong learning and skills (validation of non-formal learning, quality assurance, monitoring skills supply), as well as in statistical classifications on educational attainment ([4]) However, the picture is uneven and in some countries, NQFs are only partly forming an integrated element of national qualifications systems and policies; their full potential is still unused.

The EQF has promoted two important principles supporting the modernisation of qualifications systems and directly contributing to NQF developments. First, the learning outcomes perspective, focusing on what a holder of a qualification is expected to know, be able to do and understand. Second, the overarching and comprehensive approach of NQFs covering all levels and types of qualifications: formal education and training (VET, general education, higher education, adult education) and those acquired outside the formal system awarded by private providers, sectors and companies. This overarching perspective draws attention to the bridging function of frameworks aiming to support lifelong learning policies and practices. It also helps identify the way qualifications from different subsystems can be combined and supports progression in lifelong learning. Taken forward voluntarily, countries have implemented and adapted these principles to their national contexts, priorities and needs. This is particularly visible in the way national level descriptors have been designed ([5]).

The purpose of this publication is to provide a brief overview and update on these frameworks, their purposes, structures and implementation. Part I of the report offers a general overview of implementation of European NQF developments, with a brief discussion on the contribution and impact these frameworks are having. Part II briefly presents each national framework and the way it has been designed and structured. This description is supported by detailed NQF tables showing not only how qualifications and qualification types have been allocated to the national learning-outcomes-based levels, but also their reference to the EQF levels.

([1]) Other initiatives on regional qualifications frameworks include for instance the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF); the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Qualifications Framework (CQF); the Economic Community of West African States Qualifications Systems; the Pacific Qualifications Framework; the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Qualifications Framework; the Transnational Qualifications Framework for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (TQF VUSSC); and are ongoing on the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) and Gulf Qualifications Framework (GQF), etc.

([2]) See Council of the European Union (2017).

([3]) 27 EU Member States, EFTA countries (Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein and Switzerland), EU candidate countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey), potential candidate countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) and UK.

([4]) In Ireland the National Skills Council annual publication, Monitoring Irelands skill supply, collects and reports outputs of the education and training system using the NFQ. https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/ec0ae46c84/monitoringireland-sskillssupply_slmru.pdf

([5]) See Cedefop (2018).

PART 1

Overview and main tendencies

CHAPTER 1

National qualifications framework developments in Europe: overall progress 2019

Development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe was directly triggered by the 2008 recommendation on European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF), revised in 2017 (EU Parliament and Council of the EU, 2008). EQF is one of the key European transparency instruments whose purpose is to make qualifications more transparent and understandable across countries and systems. This is regarded as support to recognition of qualifications, easing cross-border mobility of learners and workers, and lifelong learning. The core of the EQF is its eight reference levels defined in learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and autonomy and responsibility. Currently, 39 countries cooperate on the EQF on a voluntary basis: 27 EU Member States, EFTA countries (Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein and Switzerland), EU candidate countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey), potential candidate countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo ([6])), and UK. Before 2005, national frameworks were in place in three European countries: Ireland, France and the UK. Now all 39 EQF participating countries are implementing 43 national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) which have reached different stages of implementation.

The following figures reflect the situation by the end of 2019/beginning 2020:

(a) NQF growing scope: 36 countries are working towards comprehensive NQFs covering all types and levels of qualification from formal education and training (vocational education and training (VET), higher education, general education, adult education); and increasingly opening towards non-government-regulated/private qualifications ([7]) (as in Denmark, France, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, UK-Scotland).

(b) 38 countries have officially established or formally adopted their national qualifications frameworks (NQFs); most recently in Italy and Serbia. In Spain, technical work on the design of the framework for lifelong learning (MECU) was completed in 2018; a royal decree setting the legal basis for implementation is pending and it is expected to be adopted in 2020. A qualifications framework for higher education (MECES) has been implemented. Several countries are also strengthening their NQF's legal basis: in Greece a draft presidential decree clarifying operational aspects has been prepared and is awaiting formal adoption. In the Netherlands, a draft NLQF law has been prepared and is expected to be adopted in 2021. France has revised its framework, reflecting the subsequent evolution of the French qualification system. In January 2019, the new framework (*Cadre national des certifications professionnelles*) was adopted, featuring an eight-level structure, closely aligned to that of the EQF;

(c) 36 countries have formally linked ('referenced') their national qualification systems or frameworks to the EQF: Austria, Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway,

([6]) This designation is without prejudice to position on status and is in line with United Nations security resolution 1244 and the International Court of Justice opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

([7]) Non-government-regulated qualifications are not regulated by national or regional legal acts; they are designed and awarded by a range of bodies: private providers, companies, NGOs, trade unions, qualifications regulated by branches/sectors, such as a chamber of commerce or other sectoral organisations (if they are not regulated by legal acts). A number of different terms is used: in some countries this type of qualification is called 'non-formal qualifications', 'private (market) qualifications', or 'supplementary qualifications'.

Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. However, referencing reports are a 'snap shot' at a given point in time. As systems and frameworks constantly evolve, the 2017 EQF recommendation invites countries to review and periodically update the information underpinning reports: the more accurate and up-to-date it is, the more the EQF process is trusted and used to compare qualifications. Six countries have already updated their referencing reports: Belgium (fl), Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands and UK. Ireland is planning to present its updated report in autumn 2020. These updates provide an opportunity to re-engage both with national stakeholders and an international audience. Most of the countries which have linked their NQFs to the EQF have also self-certified their frameworks against the Bologna higher education framework, the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA). Combining both has become the norm;

(d) NQFs and EQF levels are increasingly visible to end-users: 33 countries have started tagging their certificates, diplomas and Europass supplements as well as qualifications in their databases with NQF/EQF levels (Belgium (fl, fr), Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece. France, Hungary, Italy, Cyprus Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden, as well as Iceland, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK. Progress has been more visible in VET than in general education. Some countries have set out to label all their new certificates and diplomas for NQF-registered qualifications (e.g. Denmark, Estonia, Poland and Slovenia). Progress has been uneven across countries and education sectors. Further work on indicating EQF and NQF levels in the coming years will be crucial to the visibility and wider use of the EQF.

CHAPTER 2

Common characteristics of European qualifications frameworks

While different in focus and objectives and embedded in different national contexts, European NQFs share common characteristics.

A total of 36 countries ([8]) are working towards comprehensive/overarching frameworks, aiming to include qualifications at all levels and of types. In most countries, qualifications from formal education and training (general education, VET, higher education and adult education) have been included. In line with their lifelong learning orientation, fully comprehensive frameworks will include qualifications awarded outside nationally regulated qualification systems, with private providers, sectors or companies as is already the case in several countries: Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and UK-Scotland. While having agreed, long-term, to develop a comprehensive framework, Austria illustrates how NQFs are developed through a step-by-step approach. While most of qualifications from formal education and training (except general education qualifications) have progressively been included, levelling of non-legally regulated qualifications (acquired through adult learning, further learning, and youth work) started in late 2019/beginning 2020.The same step-by-step approach can be observed in Italy, where a comprehensive framework was legally adopted in 2018. *The Atlas of work and qualifications* has been set up as a methodological and information tool for the rationalisation of the high number and diversity of regional VET qualifications, with over 4 000 VET regional qualifications classified and included so far. It aims to support national recognition of regional qualifications and related skills. In some countries a qualifications framework for higher education has been developed separately, and now its relationship to other education sectors within an overarching national framework requires further clarification and continuous dialogue; this is the case in Iceland, Portugal and Sweden.

The number of countries opening their frameworks to include non-government-regulated/private qualifications has risen in 2019 and includes Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and UK-Scotland. Preparatory work on inclusion of qualifications from a broader range of awarding bodies has also started in Ireland based on the 2019 Qualifications and quality assurance amendment Act ([9]).

Most countries have introduced eight-level frameworks. Three exceptions can be found in recently developed frameworks: Iceland and Norway have introduced seven levels (with no level descriptor or qualification at EQF level 1), and Slovenia uses 10 levels. These frameworks contrast with some older ones: the Irish has 10 and the Scottish 12 levels. The French original five-level structure was revised in 2019 and a new eight-level structure and level descriptors in three categories, similar to those of the EQF, were introduced. Several countries use sublevels, including Croatia, Cyprus, Iceland, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway and Serbia. The use of sublevels is seen as important to meet the interests of certain stakeholders and sometimes accommodate legacy awards.

([8]) Czechia and Switzerland operate separate frameworks for vocational and higher education qualifications; in UK-England and Northern Ireland, the new regulated framework (RQF) is broader in scope compared to the previous (QCF). It covers all academic and vocational qualifications regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and by the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment Regulation (CCEA). Levels 5 to 8 are comparable with the levels of the framework of higher education qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

([9]) Qualifications and quality assurance amendment Act (2019) strengthens the regulatory role of the Irish State agency responsible for the NQF, QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland), granting the agency the legal powers to establish a new class of awarding bodies, to be known as a 'listed awarding body'. https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/act/2019/32/eng/enacted/a3219.pdf

All countries have introduced learning outcomes-based level descriptors, reflecting EQF level descriptors. Countries have developed national level descriptors (particularly in the third column) to reflect national contexts, values, traditions and objectives ([10]).

The overarching comprehensive frameworks dominating in Europe integrate subframeworks (based on their specific legislation) and refrain from introducing uniform rules for the design and award of qualifications. They have been designed with broad and inclusive level descriptors to embrace a whole range of education and training institutions and provisions from VET, HE and general education, reflecting a broad range of values, traditions and interests. They allow for substantial 'differentiation' within and between subframeworks ([11]) in terms of design of qualification or quality assurance. In many countries, this institutional diversity, and the need to address a wide range of contexts and interests, has put stakeholder mobilisation and commitment at the forefront of developments. While we observe cross-system stakeholder cooperation being increasingly formalised, some countries are less able to mobilise labour market stakeholders.

The new European national frameworks for lifelong learning mainly focus on improving transparency of national qualifications systems at home and abroad; they aim to make it easier for end users to assess and make better use of qualifications, clarifying how qualifications from different institutions and subsystems relate to each other and can be combined to support individual learning careers. This turns NQFs into key instruments for lifelong learning. Evidence collected for this report shows that the communication/transparency/classification role of NQFs remains important in all countries. The reform role of NQFs is getting stronger and is linked to the growing importance of frameworks in relation to implementation of learning outcomes, quality assurance and validation of non-formal and informal learning. European NQFs also prioritise the need for international comparability of qualifications, supporting cross-border mobility of students and workers. This orientation towards enhanced mobility aligns European NQF developments with objectives for broader human and social development, including lifelong learning, rather than within the neoliberal agenda traditional for qualifications frameworks (Allais, 2011 and 2014; Lassnigg, 2012; Mikules and Skubic Ermenc, 2016).

In recent years, important progress has been achieved in embedding and integrating NQFs into national education, training and qualifications systems, reflected in legislation and stakeholder agreement; however, uneven progress across (sub)-systems and countries can be observed. In several countries NQFs are becoming 'allrounders', increasingly embedded in the wider policy context on lifelong learning and skills: validation of non-formal learning, quality assurance, and monitoring skills supply. Evidence shows that, in some countries, NQFs are only partly forming an integrated element of national qualifications systems and policies; their potential is unused.

While the technical and conceptual design of NQFs was at the forefront at the beginning of NQF developments, creating ownership of the process, stakeholder buy-in, consensus building and overcoming resistance to change have been identified as critical conditions for effective NQF development and implementation in Europe. Although a broad range of stakeholders participate in the process, NQFs have so far addressed the needs of education and training, and, to a lesser extent, those of the labour market. Countries have been able to mobilise these stakeholders to varying degrees. This lack of appeal of frameworks to economic actors may hamper their ability to deal, for example, with private qualifications or micro-certificates; these are now considered to play an important role in EU countries' reskilling and upskilling efforts in response to the Covid-19 crisis and beyond ([12]).

([10]) See Cedefop, 2018.
([11]) A subframework is a framework which covers only one subsystem (e.g. higher education, VET, general education, occupational qualifications) while part of an overarching comprehensive framework.
([12]) The new skills agenda was launched on 1 July 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_1196

CHAPTER 3

Growing awareness, use and contribution of frameworks

The monitoring of European NQFs carried out by Cedefop since 2009, supported by a variety of comparative studies ([13]), points to several areas of contribution and impact. Countries have been looking for evidence on the added value frameworks offer to different groups of stakeholders, including students, employers and qualifications designers. Countries carrying out monitoring and evaluation reports include in Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and UK (Scotland and Wales); these help to understand the current challenges and deepen implementation. An impact assessment is currently in process in Malta and planned in Norway and Portugal.

3.1. Improved system transparency and consistency

The introduction of (comprehensive) national qualifications frameworks with explicit learning-outcomes-based levels has helped make national education and qualification systems more readable and easier to understand within and across European countries. Even though implementation is uneven across countries and education sectors, important progress has been achieved in the past 11 years since the formal establishment of the EQF ([14]). In most European countries the NQFs became a permanent and visible feature of national education, training and qualifications systems and established itself as 'common language' and 'a common currency' among stakeholders. Maps of national qualifications show relationships between them as they have become increasingly operational. In particular, the Irish impact assessment study (Indecon, 2017) showed that 80% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that the Irish national framework of qualifications (NFQ) has made the skills and competences of qualifications more visible; 84% strongly agreed/agreed that NFQ has made it easier to see how qualifications relate to each other; and 80% strongly agreed/agreed that the NFQ has made it easier to evaluate qualifications for work or study (Indecon 2017).

In some countries, increased transparency supports further systemic reforms and national qualifications system consistency: identifying gaps in provision of qualifications (in Estonia and Lithuania) or opening to non-government-regulated qualifications (in Denmark, Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia and Sweden). In Switzerland the use of learning outcomes in the description of qualification profiles and ordinances has led to greater consistency of professional regulations. In Portugal vocational qualification profiles were redesigned due to the shortcomings that appeared when describing them in terms of learning outcomes and mapping them to NQF levels.

It is important to understand the content and profile of qualifications in order to support end-users (students, workers employers and others). The development of qualifications databases plays a key role in making national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) operational, giving end-users, employers or others, direct access to the information on qualifications contained in the qualifications frameworks. Evidence collected for this publication suggests that, in 2019, many countries have made progress in creating, filling and mainstreaming their national qualification databases, serving a broad range of

([13]) https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf
([14]) See the EQF referencing reports: https://europa.eu/europass/sl/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

purposes. Almost all countries have some sort of national qualifications database or register in place in a mix between 'pre-NQF databases', which sometimes focus on programmes rather than qualifications, and databases reflecting the qualifications in NQFs themselves. A total of 31 qualifications databases ([15]) in different Member States still differ greatly. Not all currently provide learning-outcomes-based descriptions or indications of NQF/EQF levels and not all are interoperable. Many are only available in national languages. Most databases include qualifications from formal education and training (VET and higher education qualifications) while half include general education qualifications and some non-government-regulated qualifications awarded outside formal education and training: Denmark, France, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and UK-Scotland. Some countries have more than one qualifications database, as is the case for Finland, Netherlands and Norway. In some countries, including Germany, Greece, France, Lithuania and Slovenia, learning outcomes descriptions of qualifications in the database or register are already aligned with Europass certificate supplements (profile of skills and competences). In Liechtenstein the database exclusively consists of Europass certificate supplements. However, as the use of learning outcomes for defining and describing qualifications has significantly increased in the last decade, it is now possible for countries to provide mainstreamed information on the content and profile of qualifications, beyond tagging them with levels. Databases of around 10 countries are now connected to European portals, particularly to the LOQ ([16]) area in the new Europass, and around five to the ESCO ([17]) qualifications pillar. Slovenia has recently linked its database ([18]) to LOQ and ESCO. This makes it accessible to stakeholders from beyond its borders, allowing them to examine its qualifications and compare them to those of their own country.

3.2. Strengthened use of learning outcomes in designing and comparing qualifications

European NQFs share a common conceptual basis – inspired by the EQF – with a focus on learning outcomes and on what a holder of a qualifications knows, understands and is able to do at the end of a learning process. Evidence collected so far by NQF monitoring reports and Cedefop studies (Cedefop, 2016, 2017) shows that NQFs have strengthened the use of learning outcomes and competence approaches in VET and higher education; some countries report on progress in general education. Important progress and use of learning outcomes approaches can be observed in designing non-State regulated/private qualifications to be fit for inclusion in the NQFs.

Learning outcomes are critical to clarifying the scope and orientation of qualifications and to promoting a learner-centred approach to education and training. Together with other elements, like quality assurance, they form the basis of comparability of and trust in qualifications.

The level descriptors outcomes of the frameworks are increasingly used as reference point for designing qualifications, curricula, programmes and as a basis for their levelling. This is an important use of the frameworks as it can strengthen the consistency of programmes and qualifications delivered according to similar standards and requirements. In Ireland 74% of respondents to the survey strongly agreed/agreed that the learning outcomes approach of the NFQ has improved the practice of course and curricula design (Indecon 2017). In several other countries, such as Austria and Slovenia, the use of learning outcomes in the description of qualification profiles and ordinances has led to greater consistency of qualifications regulations; in Estonia and Latvia, the introduction of the EQF and the

([15]) Albania, Austria, Belgium (fl, fr), Croatia, Czechia (refers to NSK register), Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Kosovo, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK. Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy and Iceland are preparing the groundwork. See Part II of this publication and Auzinger et al [unpublished].

([16]) Learning opportunities and qualifications in Europe (LOQ) portal.

([17]) ESCO is the European multilingual classification of skills, competences, qualifications and occupations.

([18]) See the SQF register: https://www.nok.si/en/sqf-register

NQF led to a redesign of VET qualifications with a positive impact on transparency and comparability. The continuing redesign of vocational qualification profiles into specific sets of learning outcomes allows detailed understanding of requirements for qualifications; stakeholders are reported to be more involved in setting qualification standards and contents, thus forging a better link between the content of qualifications and education programmes and labour market requirements.

Evidence also suggests that level descriptors serve as a reference point for quality assurance. This function is growing in several countries and has been identified among key future policy priorities of NQF implementation, as in Ireland ([19]) and Slovenia. ([20]) It is also linked to the inclusion of non-government-regulated/private qualifications. Malta reports that a strong synergy exists between quality assurance standards and the Maltese qualifications framework.

However, a more comprehensive and holistic approach to learning outcomes across education sectors would further help establish parity of esteem and equivalence between qualifications.

3.3. Reference point in validating non-formal and informal learning

The 2012 recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning ([21]) sees the link to national qualifications frameworks as important for the further implementation of validation arrangements across Europe (see Principle 3a). EQF and NQFs, through their focus on learning outcomes, act as a reference point for identifying, documenting, assessing and recognising learning acquired in non-formal and informal settings. The introduction of comprehensive NQFs can help countries move from fragmented use of validation to a more coordinated national approach, provided that institutional fragmentation is overcome and a more holistic approach to the way learning outcomes are defined in different subsystems is ensured (European Commission, 2020, p.136).

The link between validation and NQF forms a part of regular NQF updates and has been explored in the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning since 2010. Although questions in 2010 and 2014 were not the same as in 2016 and 2018 ([22]) the data revealed some trends. There has been a clear increase in the number of countries where learning acquired in non-formal and informal settings is somehow linked to NQFs. The development of NQFs based on learning outcomes has been an important driver of validation initiatives in several countries, including Belgium, Greece, Croatia, Malta and Poland. The NQFs in these countries has supported the shift towards learning outcomes that is a necessary condition for facilitating the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

This has been confirmed by the study supporting the evaluation of the 2012 recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning (European Commission, 2020) ([23]) showing that good progress has been achieved; however, provision of validation of non-formal and informal learning remains fragmented across levels and sectors. Almost all Member States report having strengthened links between validation and the NQF ([24]). One example is Belgium (Flanders) with the decree approved by the Flemish government. An integrated quality framework has been developed that serves as the basis for a system of external quality assurance for all professional qualifications at all levels of the Flemish qualifications framework (FQF). This will ensure that people following professional courses or procedures for recognition of prior learning (RPL) will obtain the same set of competences, when

([19]) 66% of respondents (strongly) agreed that qualifications included in the NFQ meet consistent quality standards wherever they are provided (QQI, 2017).
([20]) According to the Slovenian NQF monitoring report (2020), stakeholders see the quality assurance function of the NQF among the future priorities.
([21]) See Council of the European Union, 2012.
([22]) https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory
([23]) See European Commission, 2020
([24]) According to the study, 'Without developments in the creation of NQFs and the shift to learning outcomes in European lifelong learning systems, most notably, it would have been difficult to observe similar progress' (European Commission, 2020, p. 4).

awarded the same professional qualification. The 2018 inventory ([25]) shows that qualifications from formal education included in the NQFs can be accessed through validation (25 countries). Modules, partial qualifications or credits can also be acquired through validation to varying degrees across Europe. In some countries, any qualification included on the NQF can be acquired through validation of non-formal and informal learning; this applies in France and in Luxembourg (except for general baccalaureate). In a number of countries, qualifications in a subframework can be acquired through validation, as with occupational qualifications in Estonia, national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in Slovenia or CVET qualifications in the National register of qualifications (*Národní soustava kvalifikací* – NSK) in Czechia. Inventory data from 2018 show that in 13 countries it is possible to obtain a qualification (or part of it) in labour market initiatives, an increase from eight in 2016. In contrast, validation initiatives in the third sector are rarely linked to formal qualifications; the focus is often on formative validation rather than gaining a qualification on the NQF. However, it is difficult to establish a causal link between the NQFs and progress in validation of non-formal and informal learning. In some countries, such as Malta, while the NQF is fully operational and used by stakeholders, validation of non-formal and informal learning is only slowly increasing.

In countries like Portugal and Sweden the same institution is in charge of NQF implementation and coordination of validation approaches, potentially improving the coordination and linkages.

3.4. Cross-sectoral stakeholder engagement and coordination

Stakeholder involvement is crucial for developing and implementing a national qualifications framework. NQFs need to put in place institutional arrangements allowing stakeholders to come together regularly to address qualifications and skills issues and policies. Comprehensive frameworks require the involvement of a broad group of stakeholders from all parts of education and training and the labour market to support the coherent implementation and maintenance of the NQF across sectors and institutions; this may mean creating a new meeting place and new dialogue and will contribute to system transparency and coherence, and improving the relevance of qualifications (Raffe, 2011; Raff, 2013). In many countries, comprehensive NQF development has brought together stakeholders from different parts of education and training for the first time. Evidence shows that this cooperation has increasingly being formalised, reflecting national institutional arrangements. Cross-sectoral bodies such as national qualification councils, steering committees or stakeholder councils have been established in Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Montenegro, Poland, Sweden and Turkey with diverse roles and functions. In Austria, the NQF advisory board of seven experts assists the NQF coordinating body in allocating qualifications to levels; the NQF steering group (NQR *Steuerungsgruppe*), has 30 main stakeholder representatives (all federal ministries, social partners, stakeholders from the different fields of education and *Länder*). With opening the framework to non-government-regulated qualifications, six intermediary organisations – NQF service units ([26]) – were set up to advise and support providers of non-government-regulated qualifications in submitting their qualifications for the inclusion in the NQF. They act as 'gatekeepers' and take over the quality assurance function, ensuring that all necessary evidence is available to decide on the NQF level. In Belgium (fr) a CFC Forum (*Instance* CFC) was established as a steering and coordinating authority, composed of various bodies (the executive committee, the management committee, the committee of experts and the board of appeal). In France, the recent legislative changes brought France Compétences, a new national authority for the regulation and financing of continuing VET and apprenticeships, with a quadripartite structure representing the state, the regions, employers and employees. The National Commission for Vocational and Professional Qualifications (*Commission*

([25]) See Cedefop; European Commission; ICF, 2019.
([26]) Accredited by the Ministry of Education in agreement with the Ministry for Economic Affairs.

nationale de la certification professionnelle (CNCP)) is now situated in the *France Compétences* that also acts as a EQF NCP.

Broad stakeholder buy-in is instrumental in creating a sense of ownership and promoting use. In European countries with a less strong tradition of social dialogue, such as Greece, Malta and Slovakia, developing a national framework has been instrumental in opening the door to social partner involvement in qualifications development. However, evidence shows that some countries are less able to mobilise stakeholders, particularly those from the labour market. It is a lso a challenge to sustain their involvement when a framework is more settled and a risk exists that a NQF is taken for granted; periodic reviews are necessary to keep stakeholders engaged, as evidence from some older NQFs shows.

3.5. NQFs opening to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training

Most European NQFs cover qualifications offered within formal education and training (VET, higher education, general education, adult education); these qualifications are regulated and awarded by national authorities. However, there is a growing trend among countries to open up their frameworks to include qualifications awarded in continuing and further education and training, often outside the formal national qualification system and not regulated by public authorities. The number of countries that have opened their frameworks to include non-government-regulated qualifications has risen in 2019/20 and now includes Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Austria Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and UK-Scotland. Since October 2019, the Danish Accreditation Institution has been assessing, at the request of providers, the level of such private and non-government-regulated qualifications, based on their learning outcomes. The aim is to promote market transparency, quality assurance and to open pathways into the formal system for holders of such qualifications. From the beginning, the added value of the Swedish qualifications framework was seen to include certificates and qualifications awarded by private companies and branch/sector organisations and bodies. Quality criteria and procedures for their inclusion have been developed and seven qualifications included with many more are in the pipeline. At the end of 2019, Austria started to level non-government-regulated qualifications, acquired through paths such as adult learning, continuous learning, and youth work. Preparatory work on inclusion of private, non-goverment-regulated qualifications has also started in Ireland following the 2019 Qualifications and quality assurance amendment Act; the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) has statutory power to include qualifications issued by a range of awarding bodies, to be known as a 'listed awarding body', in the NFQ. Private, professional and international awarding organisations will be able to apply to QQI to become listed awarding bodies in order to include their qualifications in the NFQ. The focus on implementing the Icelandic qualifications framework (ISQF) has moved in recent years towards non-formal adult education; quality criteria for curricula in adult education and an accreditation process that includes the levelling of adult education qualifications to the ISQF are being developed.

Some established frameworks, for example in France and the UK, have already had in place procedures allowing 'non-traditional' qualifications to be included in the frameworks. The Scottish framework currently includes approximately 1 000 qualifications awarded outside the formal education and training system; by social partners, trade unions, employers and professional bodies, by international companies (for example in the ICT sector) and other private providers. The same role is attributed to lifelong learning pillar of the Welsh qualifications framework that aims to increase trust in, and recognition of, non-formal learning provision. This is understood as a precondition to support lifelong learning and allow learners to combine initial qualifications with those from continuing training and for specialisation. The French framework is also open to qualifications on demand awarded by public or non-public bodies and institutions, in their own name as well as for specific or industry level qualifications.

3.6. Making vocational education and training at higher qualifications levels visible

Comprehensive NQF development has prompted policy debate on higher vocational education and training; the need for highly qualified specialists has been on the rise in recent years and, according to Cedefop's skills forecasts, this trend is likely to continue. This demand does not only concern university degrees but increasingly focuses on higher level vocational skills, validation and certification possibilities for employed skilled workers. In many countries, such programmes and qualifications are offered outside regulated formal education and training, provision is heterogeneous, often fragmented and non-transparent. This impairs understanding of, and trust in, these qualifications. NQFs, with levels based on learning outcomes, have helped reveal the diversity and increasing importance of VET provision at EQF levels 5 to 8; they also help structure it. Intensive debate on the future of VET at these levels continues in several countries. The Swiss NQF is explicitly designed to accommodate an array of vocational and professional qualifications ranging from level 3 to level 8. Germany amended its legislation in January 2020 to reinforce parity of esteem between academic studies and higher VET by legally assigning to them the same NQF levels. The title *Meister* is now legally equivalent to professional bachelor, and NQF-levelled professional master degrees are equivalent to university master degrees ([27]). In Austria, stakeholders are working towards making higher VET qualifications more visible in an education segment labelled 'higher vocational education and training' (HVET). Discussions on the content and implementation of such a HVET segment continue ([28]). In several countries, higher qualifications levels (EQF levels 6 and above) are now opened to vocational/professional qualifications awarded outside higher education as in Belgium (nl), Czechia, Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Finland and the UK. In a number of countries there is still a 'ceiling' for VET qualifications at EQF level 6, with levels 6 to 8 reserved for higher education qualifications.

3.7. Labour market visibility and use

Several evaluation studies have pointed to the limited visibility and use of NQFs by labour market stakeholders (Allais, 2017). The most successful example of good framework visibility on the labour market is the French NQF and the National register of vocational and professional qualifications (*Repertoire national des certifications professionnelles*, (RNCP) where qualifications levels are linked to levels of occupation, work and pay.

In less regulated labour markets, visibility and use by employers is more challenging, as shown by the evaluation of the UK-Wales framework.

However, some recent studies and NQF surveys show that labour market awareness and use are growing slowly. The impact study of the Irish national framework of qualifications (NFQ) demonstrated in 2009 that NFQ has considerable potential to be used in recruitment, in developing career pathways, in planning work-based learning and training, and in recognising transferable skills (NQAI, 2009). It was reported that its actual use by employers is limited, reflecting low awareness and visibility. In contrast, the recent 2017 policy impact assessment of the Irish NFQ (Indecon, 2017) found that the NFQ has had a positive impact on the quality, transparency and comparability of qualifications and the mobility and employability of holders of qualifications in Ireland. Some 72% of Irish stakeholders participating in the survey considered that vocational qualifications included in the NFQ signal relevant skills and

([27]) Learn more through the relevant web page of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (in German): https://www.bmbf.de/de/das-berufsbildungsgesetz-bbig-2617.html

([28]) See the article by ReferNet Austria, published on 5.5.2020: *Does Austria need a 'higher vocational education and training' education segment?* https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/does-austria-need-higher-vocational-education-and-training-education-segment?src=email&freq=daily

competences required for particular occupations; 51% believed that the NFQ has enabled better matching between people's skills and job vacancies and 63% that the NFQ has improved dialogue between the world of qualifications and the world of work. There was a lower level of agreement that the NFQ has facilitated workforce planning and development. The study also showed that the level of awareness among SMEs was said to be poor, and even among larger enterprises it was said to be far from uniform.

Another example is Estonia. The Estonian Qualifications Authority (*Kutsekoda*) conducted a poll among employers and specialists about awareness and use of the EstQF. The study found that employers are less aware of the Estonian qualifications framework (EstQF) than qualification certificate owners: only 30% of responders were well or very well acquainted with the EstQF, although the percentage among certificate owners was 40%. The EstQF was used as a promotional tool for occupational qualification certificates by half of occupational certificate owners and employers and was useful for people reflecting on their qualifications and compiling their CV. Some 23% of responders have used the EstQF to guide employees to achieve a higher qualification level and 21% have used the EstQF to assess an applicant's qualification.

Malta has reported that the population is well aware of the existence of the Maltese NQF (MQF), with even higher levels for those making active use of it. The country's main job portal JobsPlus uses the framework for issuing work permits, and NQF levels are used in incentive schemes such as scholarships and tax rebates. All vacancy calls for the public sector are issued indicating the MQF/EQF levels of the qualifications required to access a job position, so jobseekers tend to check the MQF levels. This also applies to foreign persons wishing to work in Malta. A new impact assessment is currently underway in Malta to be completed by the end of 2020. The Netherlands reports on the minimum yet increasing use of the Dutch NQF/EQF in the labour market, mainly in vacancies, in some parts of the country and sectors, such as healthcare. In the construction sector in Sweden, the framework is being used to indicate alternative progression routes for those wanting to qualify as construction site managers, and the financial sector, where the framework is seen as an opportunity to highlight the training activities taking place within the sector.

Increasingly, countries are developing tools and guide books to support employers. This is the case for Slovenia, with videos targeting employers, and UK-Scotland where a range of tools have been developed that support employers in using the Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) along with guides to support recruitment and staff selection, identify and plan skills development for staff, or gain recognition of in-house training programmes ([29]).

The use of the NQFs by labour market is an area which requires systematic attention and awareness raising in the coming years.

3.8. Support to qualifications recognition across countries

An important purpose of the EQF and NQFs is to aid comparison of qualifications and qualification levels of different countries; they also support recognition of qualifications and mobility of students and workers. NQFs and supporting qualifications databases give important information about the title and the level of a qualification and its relationship to other qualifications, as well as what the holder of a qualification is expected to know, understand and be able to do. Information on learning outcomes, workload, type of qualification and quality assurance are important elements in formal recognition of qualifications. The subsidiarity text to the Lisbon recognition convention (Council of Europe and UNESCO, 2013) emphasises that frameworks should be used systematically as a source of information supporting recognition decisions. The 2018 Council recommendation on promoting automatic mutual

([29]) Learn more: http://scqf.org.uk/employers/what-are-the-benefits/

recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad ([30]) acknowledges that when NQFs are referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA (with the referencing reviewed and updated when relevant) the conditions for fostering transparency and trust in each other's qualifications systems are created.

Evidence collected for this report shows that recognition bodies in several countries use the NQF to support recognition decisions for further learning: this happens in Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway and Slovenia. Some other countries report that it is too early, or no data exist. The Danish ENIC-NARIC office will refer to Danish NQF levels in recognition decisions in 2020. In some countries, ENIC-NARIC centres ([31]), offering advice on foreign qualifications, are hosted by organisations responsible for the NQF implementation, as in Ireland, Latvia and Malta. NARIC Ireland has compiled a database of comparability statements for hundreds of foreign qualifications ([32]). Each comparability statement includes a comparable award-type and level on the Irish national framework of qualifications (NFQ).

Comprehensive national qualifications frameworks have been consolidated across Europe in recent years, and European and national stakeholders' long-standing back-office work on qualifications, qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and quality assurance are now coming to the fore. The EQF and corresponding NQFs are now integrated in the new front-office, the Europass portal ([33]); this will connect more and more national qualifications frameworks and databases and ensure their interoperability. Students, employers and the wider public will be able to access the descriptions of qualifications and look for learning and working opportunities.

Keeping qualifications and frameworks up to date, relevant and flexible in times of accelerated digitalisation due to Covid 19, labour market restructuring and emergence of newer credentialing methods such as micro-certificates ([34]), open badges, and MOOCs is one of the key challenges for the coming years.

([30]) See Council of the Europena Union, 2018.
([31]) A National information centre (ENIC or ENIC-NARIC) is an entity established by each party to the Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region (commonly known as the Lisbon recognition convention, LRC), in accordance with Article IX.2(1). More information on ENIC-NARIC network: https://www.enic-naric.net/welcome-to-the-enic-naric-website.aspx
([32]) See https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=recognitions
([33]) See https://europa.eu/europass/en
([34]) Developing a European approach to micro-credentials is one of the actions in the new skills agenda: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223

PART 2

National qualifications frameworks

EU Member States

AT

1. AUSTRIA

Austria has in place an NQF with eight levels, 'designed as a comprehensive framework, encompassing all types and levels of qualifications from the formal and non-formal sector, and appreciating the results of informal learning' (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture; Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research, 2012, p.1). Its main objectives are communication and transparency of qualifications, nationally and internationally. The framework helps map national qualifications from all education and training subsystems and learning settings, making qualification levels explicit. It is intended to strengthen coordination between the different subsystems by highlighting existing pathways and developing new ones to open up new progression possibilities. While having no regulatory functions and no legal effect on vocational and other authorisations, the NQF is used as a basis for reform and further development of VET qualifications. Its influence has been observed since the development phase, with NQF principles being applied in the design of new qualifications and in the modernisation of existing ones to ensure mapping to NQF levels; it is also expected to aid the implementation of the Austrian strategy for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Following an extended development process and wide stakeholder involvement, the Federal Law on the national qualifications framework entered into force in March 2016; it establishes the governance structure, as well as the processes involved. The Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (*Österreichischer Austauschdienst* (OeAD)) has been appointed as the main implementation coordinating body. An NQF steering committee has been set up as the central governance body, broadly representing all main stakeholders, and an NQF advisory board has been created to advise and inform the coordinating body on allocation decisions.

An important feature of the Austrian NQF is that levels 6 to 8 are open to VET qualifications acquired outside higher education. A 'Y structure' was defined by law, introducing parallel level descriptors to capture the differences between the two strands at these levels. EQF level descriptors (knowledge, skills and competence) are used for qualifications at levels 1 to 5 and for the 'non-Bologna' strand at levels 6 to 8, with additional explanations to make them understood in the Austrian context. Dublin descriptors are used for qualifications awarded by higher education institutions.

The Austrian NQF has reached operational stage. The NQF manual describing the process and criteria of allocating qualifications to NQF levels was adopted in September 2016 and a comprehensive qualifications register has been put in place. Mapping of qualifications awarded in the formal education and training system started in 2017 and is continuing. To date (March 2020), 42 vocational and professional qualifications have been assigned to levels 4, 5, 6 and 8. Academic higher education qualifications (bachelor, master, PhD/doctoral degrees) are automatically referenced to the NQF (levels 6, 7, and 8) according to the 2016 NQF Act and work is underway to include them in the register. General education qualifications are not yet included. Levelling of non-government-regulated qualifications (acquired through adult learning, further learning, and youth work) started in 2020. It is based on a request made to the six NQF service points, operational since November 2019. The NQF service points serve as gatekeepers of the NQF, acting as quality assurance points and intermediaries between qualification providers and the NQF bodies. A detailed description of the qualification, related learning outcomes and the assessment procedure have to be submitted.

The Austrian NQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified against the qualifications framework in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in June 2012.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Austria.

Table 1. **Austrian national qualifications framework**

NQF levels	Qualification types		EQF levels
8	Doctorate (*Doktorgrade*)	Level 8 professional qualifications in the health sector E.g. Clinical Psychology (*Klinische Psychologie*)	8
7	Master degree (*Master- bzw. Diplomgrade*)		7
6	Bachelor degree (*Bachelorgrade*)	Master craftsman (*Meister*) Engineer (*Ingenieur*)	6
5	VET college / school leaving certificate – 5-year programmes (BHS) (*Reife- und Diplomprüfung der berufsbildenden höheren Schulen*) Level 5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Defence – Staff Non-Commissioned Officer (*Stabsunteroffizier oder Stabsunteroffizierin (StbUO, Erstverwendung)*) Level 5 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Justice – Executive Judicial Officer (*Exekutivdienst in der Verwendungsgruppe E2a im Justizressort) ("Dienstführenden Grundausbildung" – mittleres Management*))		5
4	VET school qualification – 3- and 4-year programmes (BMS) (*Abschluss der berufsbildenden mittleren Schule*) Apprenticeship certificate (*Lehrabschluss*) Level 4 professional qualification awarded by the Federal Ministry of Defence – Career Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) (*Militärberufsunteroffizier oder Militärberufsunteroffizierin (MBUO, Erstverwendung)*) Level 4 professional qualification awarded by regional governments – agricultural technical schools – 3 years (*Abschlussprüfung an der landwirtschaftlichen Fachschule*)		4
3			3
2			2
1			1

Source: The Austrian NQF register: www.qualifikationsregister.at [accessed 30.3.2020]
The NQF Law (2016): https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokumente/BgblAuth/BGBLA_2016_I_14/BGBLA_2016_I_14.pdfsig

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (Österreichischer Austauschdienst – OeAD) hosts the EQF NCP: http://www.oead.at/
- Austrian NQF web page: https://oead.at/en/expertise/qualifications-and-comparability/nqf/
- Austrian NQF register: www.qualifikationsregister.at
- Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture; Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (2011). *Austrian EQF referencing report*. https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

BE

2. BELGIUM

Due to its federal structure, Belgium developed three NQFs, one for each of the three language Communities: Flemish, French and German-speaking. Despite adaptation to the needs of each Community, the three frameworks share important common features, supporting interoperability. An amendment to the Belgian Federal Law on the general structure of the education system was adopted in 2012, stating that the European qualifications framework will be used as a common reference for the three Communities in Belgium; this addresses the challenge of linking the three frameworks, and potentially eases the mobility of Belgian citizens within the country. The three frameworks have been/will be referenced separately to the EQF: the Flemish and French Communities have completed this process and the German-speaking Community is expected to do so in the near future.

2.1 Flemish Community

The Flemish Community of Belgium introduced a comprehensive NQF, the Flemish qualifications framework (FQF), in 2009, with the adoption of the Act on the qualification structure (Government of Flanders, 2009). It is a learning-outcomes-based framework with eight levels, using two main categories of level descriptors: knowledge/skills and context/autonomy/responsibility. The term 'competence' is understood as an overarching concept, used interchangeably with learning outcomes. The FQF covers qualifications from primary up to higher education. An explicit distinction is made between educational and professional qualifications; all eight levels are open to both. A professional qualification is based on a set of competences allowing an individual to exercise a profession and can be achieved both inside and outside the education system. An educational qualification is based on a set of competences an individual needs to participate in society, continue education and/or exercise professional activities. An educational qualification can only be acquired through education programmes in institutions recognised by the Flemish authorities. Educational qualifications in VET are based on one or more professional qualifications standards. In this way, labour market needs are taken up in VET programmes.

The qualifications system and framework aim at making qualifications transparent, so that stakeholders in education, training and the labour market can communicate unambiguously about qualifications and associated competences, and enabling comparison of qualifications nationally and at European level. It acts as a reference for quality assurance, developing and renewing courses, and developing and aligning procedures for recognising acquired competences. It plays an important role in strengthening the learning-outcomes-based approach and aims to strengthen policies and practices on validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The FQF is now operational and well-integrated with education and training legislation. A series of implementation decrees were adopted over the past decade, covering both professional and educational qualifications, leading to detailed procedures for the inclusion of qualifications in the framework. Throughout development and implementation, all main education and training stakeholders and social partners have been involved at all levels, with a high degree of commitment. The Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Allowances (AHOVOKS) coordinates FQF implementation actions and also oversees the quality assurance of professional qualifications. Clarification of the role of social partners in linking professional qualifications to the framework

required substantial effort, but an agreement on how this would be undertaken was reached and proved a success.

A decree on quality supervision for professional qualification tracks, based on a common quality framework and a decree on an integrated policy for the recognition of acquired competences (and the implementation decrees), were adopted in 2019. They provide the framework for the quality control of tracks for professional qualifications issued by organisations outside education. The first proffesional qualifying training tracks and trajectories for validation of non-formal and informal learning are under development.

By February 2020 a total of 489 professional qualifications (*Beroepskwalificatie*) at levels 2 to 7 and 500 educational qualifications (*Onderwijskwalificatie*) at levels 5 to 8 were included in the FQF and published in the Flemish qualifications database. Modernisation of secondary education and of educational qualifications at levels 1 to 4 will be implemented gradually in the coming years. In the context of current reform, the FQF is seen as an instrument for reshaping the structure and content of secondary education. From 2017, NQF/EQF levels are mentioned on diplomas awarded in the new apprenticeship pathway (*dual learning*) in initial VET, initially in a pilot phase and fully implemented since 2019.

The FQF was referenced to the EQF in June 2011, and an updated report was submitted in March 2014. A qualifications framework for higher education linked to the Bologna process was put in place in 2008 and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2009.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Belgium.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Grants (*Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs, Kwalificaties en Studietoelagen – AHOVOKS*) acts as EQF NCP: www.ahovoks.be
- Flemish qualifications framework website: http://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/en/
- Flemish qualifications database: https://app.akov.be/pls/pakov/f?p=VLAAMSE_KWALIFICATIESTRUCTUUR:KWALIFICATIEDATABANK
- AKOV (2014). *Referencing of the Flemish qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework*. https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

Table 2. **Flemish qualifications framework (FQF)**

FQF levels	Educational qualifications	Professional qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree (*Universiteit – Doctor*)		8
7	Academic master degree (*Universiteit – Master*) Advanced master programmes (*master na master – manama*)	Examples: Librarian/information manager (*Bibliothecaris/Informatiemanager*) Physiotherapist (*Kinesitherapeut*) Archivist/information manager (*Archivaris/informatiebeheerder*)	7
6	Academic bachelor degree (*Universiteit – Bachelor*) Professional bachelor degree (*Hogeschool – Bachelor*) Advanced bachelor programme (*bachelor na bachelor – banaba*)	Examples: Dietitian (*Diëtist*) Dental technologist (*Dentaaltechnoloog*) Textile designer (*Textielontwerper*)	6
5	Graduate programme (*Graduaat*)	Examples: Archive expert (*Archiefdeskundige*) Coordinator-advisor of decorative painting (*Coördinator – adviseur decoratieve schilderwerken*) Police inspector (*Inspecteur Politie*)	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (*Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs – ASO*) Upper secondary technical education school leaving certificate (*Technisch Secundair Onderwijs – TSO*) Upper secondary artistic education leaving certificate (*Kunstsecundair Onderwijs – KSO*) Certificate of a specialisation year as a preparation for higher education	Examples: Bartender (*barman*) Electrician (*Elektromecanicien*) Commercial assistant (*Commercieel assistant*) Pastry chef (*Banketbakker*)	4
3	Upper secondary vocational education school leaving certificate (*Beroepssecundair Onderwijs – BSO*)	Examples: Construction welder (*Constructielasser*) Florist assistant (*Assistent florist*) Driver in the fuel service (*Chauffeur in de brandstoffenhandel*)	3
2	Adult basic education Lower secondary education – first stage of secondary education Pre-vocational education	Examples: Animal production assistant (*Assistent dierlijke productie*) Room service employee (M*edewerker kamerdienst*) Bakery and pastry shop employee (*Medewerker brood- en banketbakkerij*)	2
1	Certificate of elementary education (6 years)		1

Source: AHOVOKS, 2020 (email communication).
Flemish qualification database: https://app.akov.be/pls/pakov/f?p=VLAAMSE_KWALIFICATIESTRUCTUUR:KWALIFICATIEDATABANK [accessed 4.3.2020].

2.2 French Community

The French Community of Belgium has developed a qualifications framework for lifelong learning (*Cadre francophone des certifications pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie*, CFC). Although initial work started in 2006, the current framework dates back to 2010, when the French Community (Federation Wallonia-Brussels), the Walloon Region (Wallonia) and the French Community Commission (COCOF) agreed on the principles of the framework and on a structure similar to that applied by the Flemish Community of Belgium. Legal adoption of the CFC took place through a decree in February 2015. It is an eight-level, learning-outcomes-based framework with double entry: one for educational qualifications and one for professional qualifications. In principle, both types can be placed at any level in the framework. Level descriptors are defined in two categories: knowledge/skills and context/autonomy/responsibility. In the first stage of implementation, only qualifications delivered by public providers are included.

The CFC seeks to improve transparency and comparability of qualifications across regional and national borders, to ease mobility and support learner progression, and to help bridge the different parts of the education and training system. While it does not have a regulatory role and is not an instrument for reform, the CFC aims to strengthen the quality of teaching and training, to support the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and to facilitate jobseeking, recruitment and staff development processes. Through its focus on learning outcomes, it supports equal opportunities for citizens.

The CFC is seen as an integral part of an evolving education and training system and is operational. The CFC Forum (*Instance CFC*) was established with the 2015 decree as a steering and allocation authority, responsible for managing the inclusion of qualifications in the framework and for disseminating the added value of the CFC and of the EQF to citizens, social partners, and education and training providers. It has four constitutive substructures (the executive committee, the management committee, the committee of experts, the board of appeal). Allocation of qualifications to CFC levels started in 2017 and continues. A qualifications register has been developed and 174 qualifications have been included in the register to date (March 2020), at levels 2 to 7. CFC/EQF levels are indicated in the register and on Europass certificate and diploma supplements.

The CFC was referenced to the EQF in December 2013. Self-certification to the QF-EHEA is work in progress. An updated referencing report may be prepared in 2020.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Belgium.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- CFC Forum (*Instance CFC*) acts as EQF NCP: http://www.cfc.cfwb.be/
- CFC website: http://www.cfc.cfwb.be/
- Register of qualifications: https://cfc.cfwb.be/index.php?id=certifications
- Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles; Wallonie COCOF (2013). *Report on referencing the French-speaking qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

Table 3. **Qualifications framework of the French Community of Belgium (CFC)**

CFC levels	Educational qualification types	Professional qualifications	EQF levels
8			8
7	Master degree [*Grade générique de Master de l'enseignement supérieur*]		7
6	Bachelor degree [*Grade générique de bachelier de l'enseignement supérieur*]		6
5		Professional diploma, level 5 [*Diplôme de formation, niveau 5*] E.g. Diploma for business managers commercial agents [*Diplôme de chef d'entreprise agent(e) commercial(e)*] Professional foundation diploma for police officers, level 5 [*Diplôme de formation de base d'aspirant.e inspecteur.rice de police*] Skills certificate, level 5 [*Certificat de compétences acquises en formation, niveau 5*] E.g. Certificate of skills acquired in training for professional trainers for adults [*Certificat de compétences acquises en formation de formateur.rice professionnel.le d'adultes*]	5
4	Upper secondary education certificate [*Certificat de l'enseignement secondaire supérieur (CESS)*] Upper secondary vocational education certificate (level 4) [*Certificat de qualification en plein exercice ou en alternance*] Qualification certificate for technical qualifying post-secondary education – seventh year [*Certification de qualification de septième année technique*] Qualification certificate for vocational qualifying post-secondary education – seventh year [*Certificat de qualification de septième année professionnelle*] Qualification certificate (level 4) – education for social promotion E.g. Qualification certificate for laboratory technicians [*Certificat de qualification de technicien.ne chimiste*]	Certificate of apprenticeship (level 4) offered by regional training services [*Certificat d'apprentissage, niveau 4*] E.g. Certificate of apprenticeship for machining technicians [*Certificat d'apprentissage de technicien.ne en système d'usinage*] Professional diploma, level 4 [*Diplôme de formation, niveau 4*] E.g. Diploma for coordination and supervision – haidresser manager [*Diplôme de coordination et d'encadrement de coiffeur.euse manager*] Skills certificate (level 4) offered by public employment/training services [*Certificat de compétences acquises en formation, niveau 4*] E.g. Certificate of skills acquired in training for graphic designers [*Certificat de compétences acquises en formation de graphic designer*] Skills certifcate (level 4) awarded by a consortium for validation [*Titre de compétence, niveau 4*] E.g. Skills certificate – Sales of second hand cars as part of the profession of Automobile Salesperson [*Titre de compétence assurer la vente de véhicules d'occasion faisant partie du métier de vendeur.euse automobile*]	4

CFC levels	Educational qualification types	Professional qualifications	EQF levels
3	Upper secondary vocational qualification certificate (level 3) [*Certificat de qualification en plein exercice ou en alternance*] Upper secondary vocational qualification certificate for special and alternance education (level 3) [*Certificat de qualification spécifique (CQ S) à l'enseignement spécialisé et en alternance*] Qualification certificate (level 3) – education for social promotion E.g. Qualification certificate for hairdressers [*Certificat de Qualification de Coiffeur.euse*]	Certificate of apprenticeship (level 3) offered by regional training services [*Certificat d'apprentissage, niveau 3*] E.g. Certificate of apprenticeship for hairdressers [*Certificat d'apprentissage de Coiffeur.euse*] Professional diploma (level 3) [*Diplôme de formation, niveau 3*] E.g. Diploma for coordination and supervision – supervisor bartender [*Diplôme de coordination et d'encadrement de chef barman/barmaid*] Skills certificate (level 3) offered by public employment/training services [*Certificat de compétences acquises en formation, niveau 3*] E.g. Certificate of skills acquired in training for administrative employees [*Certificat de compétences acquises en formation d'employé/e administratif/ive*] Skills certifcate (level 3) awarded by a consortium for validation [*Titre de compétence, niveau 3*] E.g. Skills certificate – managing incoming and outgoing contacts as part of the profession of call centre operator [*Titre de compétence gérer les contacts entrants et sortants constituant le métier d'opérateur/rice call center*]	3
2	Lower secondary vocational qualification certificate for special and alternance education [*Certificat de qualification spécifique (CQ S) à l'enseignement spécialisé et en alternance*] Qualification certificate (level 2) – education for social promotion E.g. Qualification certificate for electrician fitters [*Certificat de Qualification de Monteur électricien*]	Certificate of apprenticeship (level 2) offered by regional training services [*Certificat d'apprentissage, niveau 2*] E.g. Certificate of apprenticeship for manufacturing agents in the food industry [*Certificat d'apprentissage d'Agent de fabrication du secteur alimentaire*] Skills certificate (level 2) offered by public employment/training services [*Certificat de compétences acquises en formation, niveau 2*] E.g. Certificate of skills acquired in training for production operators in the food industry [*Certificat de compétences acquises en formation d'opérateur de production en industrie alimentaire*] Skills certifcate (level 2) awarded by a consortium for validation [*Titre de compétence, niveau 2*] E.g. Skills certificate – transporting and placing theatre equipment as part of the profession of Assistant Theatre Technician [*Titre de compétence transporter et placer le matériel de spectacle faisant partie du métier d'auxiliaire technique de spectacle*]	2
1			1

Source: The register of qualifications: https://cfc.cfwb.be/index.php?id=certifications [accessed 5.3.2020].

2.3 German-speaking Community

The German-speaking Community of Belgium adopted its qualifications framework (*Qualifikationsrahmen der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft*, QDG) in November 2013 (Belgian Ministry of the German-speaking Community, 2014). Being the smallest part of Belgium (geographically and in terms of population), the QDG reflects the work done in the Flemish and French Communities but it is also inspired by the German qualifications framework (DQR). It is an eight-level, learning-outcomes-based framework that includes qualifications from primary and secondary general education, VET and higher education. The framework builds on the concept of *Handlungskompetenz* (action competence) with qualification levels defined in terms of two categories of descriptors: subject/occupation-specific competences, referring to knowledge and skills; and personal competences, referring to social competence and autonomy.

A main objective for the framework is to strengthen the national and international comparability of qualifications. The geographic location of the region means that citizens are likely to cross regional or national borders for living and working; this makes it a priority to clarify the relationship between own qualifications and those awarded in neighbouring countries. The framework also promotes equivalence between general education and VET, with the learning outcomes or competence-based approach seen as important in increasing transparency and strengthening permeability.

The QDG is at an early operational stage. The Department of VET and Organisation of Education in the Ministry of the Community was appointed as the EQF NCP. The 2013 adoption decree outlines criteria and procedures for the inclusion of qualifications into the framework and a technical commission in charge of levelling and inclusion has been put in place. A total of 21 qualification types have been assigned to QDG levels so far according to the decree. Although the QDG is not referred to in the 2025 education and training vision for the region, the emphasis given to validation and competences over the past years indicates that the learning outcomes orientation underpinning the framework is being taken forward in a systematic manner. Current efforts are aimed at developing a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning linked to the QDG. No register of qualifications has been set up yet, and QDG levels are not yet indicated on certificates and diplomas.

The framework has not yet been referenced to the EQF.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Belgium.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Department of VET and Organisation of Education is the EQF NCP: www.ostbelgienbildung.be
- Belgian Ministry of the German-speaking Community (2014). *Dekret vom 18. November 2013 zur Einführung eines Qualifikationsrahmens der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft [Decree from 18 November 2013 establishing a qualifications framework of the German-speaking Community].*

Table 4. **Qualifications framework of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (QDG)**

QDG levels	General education qualifications	VET qualifications
8	Doctoral or postdoctoral degree/habilitation (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer Promotion oder Habilitation auf Doktoren- bzw. Professorebene*)	
7	Master degree (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines Hochschulstudiums langer Dauer auf Masterebene*)	Master degree on successful completion of dual track higher education (long duration) (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines dualen Hochschulstudiums langer Dauer auf Masterebene*)
6	Bachelor degree (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines Hochschulstudiums kurzer Dauer auf Bachelorebene*)	Master craftsperson certificate on successful completion of a three-year master craftsperson programme (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer dreijährigen Meisterausbildung mit dem Meisterbrief*) Professional bachelor degree on successful completion of dual track higher education (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss eines dualen Hochschulstudiums kurzer Dauer auf Bachelorebene*)
5		Master craftsperson certificate on successful completion of a two-year master craftsperson programme (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer zweijährigen Meisterausbildung mit dem Meisterbrief*) Successful completion of supplementary secondary vocational education (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer Ausbildung im ergänzenden beruflichen Sekundarunterricht*)
4	Successful completion of upper secondary general education (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Oberstufe des allgemeinbildenden Sekundarunterrichts*)	Successful completion of upper secondary technical and arts programmes (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Oberstufe des technischen oder künstlerischen Sekundarunterrichts*) Attestation of competence upon successful completion of year 6 in vocational education (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des sechsten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts mit Befähigungsnachweis*) Successful completion of year 7 (complementary year) in vocational education (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des siebten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts*) Journeyman certificate on successful completion of an apprenticeship (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer mittelständischen Lehre mit dem Gesellenzeugnis*)
3	Successful completion of lower secondary general education (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Unterstufe des allgemeinbildenden Sekundarunterrichts*)	Successful completion of lower secondary technical, vocational or arts programmes (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Unterstufe des technischen, künstlerischen oder berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts*) Certified partial qualification acquired in year 2 of an apprenticeship (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss einer zertifizierten Teilqualifikation im zweiten Jahr der mittelständischen Lehre*)
2	Successful completion of 'common' year 2 in secondary education (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des zweiten gemeinsamen Jahres des Sekundarunterrichts*)	Successful completion of year 3 in vocationally oriented education (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss des dritten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts*) Attestation of competence certifying lower secondary special needs education (*Befähigungsnachweis der Unterstufe des Fördersekundarunterrichts*)
1	Successful completion of primary education, four years (*Der erfolgreiche Abschluss der Grundschule*)	Certificate upon successful completion of year 2 in vocationally oriented education (*Das Studienzeugnis des zweiten Jahres des berufsbildenden Sekundarunterrichts*)

Source: Decree of the Belgian Ministry of the German-speaking Community, of 18 November 2013, establishing a qualifications framework of the German-speaking Community

BG

3. BULGARIA

The Bulgarian national qualifications framework for lifelong learning (BQF) was adopted in 2012 (Decision of the Council of Ministers No 96/2012). It is a single, comprehensive, eight-level framework with an additional preparatory level 0. It includes qualifications from all levels and subsystems of formal education and training: pre-primary, primary and secondary general education, VET, and higher education. Level descriptors are defined in three categories, inspired by those of the EQF but further elaborated: knowledge (theoretical and factual), skills (cognitive and practical), and competences (autonomy and responsibility, learning competences, communicative and social competences, and professional competences).

The overall objective of the BQF is to make the levels of the Bulgarian education system clearer and easier to understand by describing them in terms of learning outcomes. It is hoped that this will raise trust in qualifications, and support mobility and recognition of qualifications. Apart from offering transparency, the BQF is seen as an enabler of national reforms, with implications for setting up a system for validating non-formal learning, improving education and training quality, modernising curricula and strengthening provider accountability. The BQF aims to play a role in supporting lifelong learning and in promoting cooperation between stakeholders.

The BQF is now embedded in national legislation, though implementation is at an early stage. The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for developing and implementing the framework, with the International Cooperation Directorate in this ministry designated as EQF national coordination point. Amendments to national legislation have been adopted to support implementation. The law on pre-school and school education adopted in late 2015 (in force since 2016) is expected to lead to amendment of the BQF at secondary education levels. The VET Act was amended in 2014 and 2018, introducing learning outcomes units, a procedure for validation of competences acquired in non-formal and informal learning, and arrangements for credit transfer and accumulation in VET. State education standards and examination requirements, especially those for acquiring vocational qualifications, have been updated and new ones developed using the learning outcomes approach. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) designs the State educational standards for VET qualifications and is involved in developing and updating the list of VET qualifications included in the BQF. Stakeholders in certain economic sectors (IT, machinery, transport) have started discussions regarding sectoral qualifications at levels 2 to 7 of the BQF, taking into account labour market needs; this could be seen as a step towards development of sectoral qualifications frameworks.

A national consultation with stakeholders – including education providers, students, employers, experts, and government officials – was carried out in 2018 to assess the impact of the framework and to inform further developments (NAVET, 2019). It was found that over 75% of survey participants are somewhat familiar with the NQF. Other findings included the need for more targeted information to employers and citizens, the need to improve awareness of the links between the NQF, the EQF and the State education standards, to link the NQF more closely to the quality of training, and to facilitate the validation and recognition of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. There is relatively little information so far on the conditions and role of the BQF in promoting lifelong learning and supporting access, progression and adult participation in education and training. Implementing the BQF at institutional level is seen as a challenge, particularly in higher education. For the BQF to achieve its aims, sustained implementation efforts are required.

A joint report referencing the BQF to the EQF and self-certifying to the QF-EHEA was presented in May 2013. The referencing report has not yet been pub-

lished. An updated version is expected to be submitted. The law for preschool and school education stipulates that all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents will refer to the relevant BQF level, linked to the corresponding EQF level.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Bulgaria.

Table 5. **Bulgarian national qualifications framework (BQF)**

BQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctor degree (Доктор)	8
7	Master degree (Магистър)	7
6	Bachelor degree (Бакалавър) Professional bachelor degree (Професионален Бакалавър)	6
5	Vocational qualification – national VET level 4 (IV Степен На Професионална Квалификация)	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (Средно Образование Общо Образование) Vocational qualification – national VET level 3 (III Степен На Професионална Квалификация)	4
3	Vocational qualification – national VET level 2 (II Степен На Професионална Квалификация)	3
2	Lower secondary (basic education) certificate (grades 5-7) (Основно Образование) Vocational qualification – national VET level 1 (I Степен На Професионална Квалификация)	2
1	Primary education certificate (grades 1-4) (Начален Етап На Основното Образование)	1
0	Pre-primary education (Подготвително Ниво – Предучилищно Образование)	N/A

Source: National qualifications framework of the Republic of Bulgaria, adopted by Decision of the Council of Ministers No 96/02.02.2012 - Annex 1: http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=719

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The International Cooperation Directorate at the Ministry of Education and Science is the designated EQF NCP: http://www.mon.bg
- Bulgarian Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (2013). *Referencing of the NQF of the Republic of Bulgaria to the EQF and to the qualifications framework for the European higher education area* [unpublished].

HR

4. CROATIA

The Croatian qualifications framework (CROQF) was established through the Croatian qualifications framework Act of 2013, amended in 2018 (Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2013; Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2018). It is a comprehensive framework with eight levels and three sublevels (at levels 4, 7 and 8), described in three categories of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, and level of autonomy and responsibility. It also incorporates credit systems. The CROQF includes qualifications from all levels and subsystems of formal education and training (general education, VET and higher education), and is a basis for developing a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning. Each qualification is defined in terms of profile (field of work or study), reference level (complexity of acquired competences) and volume/workload (credit points).

Apart from offering transparency and allowing for international comparability of Croatian qualifications, the CROQF is the main instrument for aligning the education and training offer with the needs of the labour market, and addressing skill shortages; it also aims to aid communication and coordination between stakeholders in the qualifications system. It is an important tool for reforming national education and training; this includes creating a well-founded quality assurance system and implementing the learning outcomes approach in all education and training subsystems. The framework was taken into account in the comprehensive curriculum reform for primary and secondary education, and in the 2018 amendment of the law on VET, which defines occupational and qualification standards in compliance with the CROQF; it is also linked to planned legislative changes in higher and adult education.

Following adoption of the ordinance on the CROQF register in May 2014, the framework entered an early operational stage. Implementing structures have been set up and responsibilities among stakeholders agreed. The National Council for Development of Human Potential, comprising 25 stakeholder representatives, was appointed in 2014 as the strategic body for developing and implementing the CROQF. Its first five-year term of office has expired and representatives for the second term are in the process of being appointed. The Ministry of Science and Education, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, coordinate development and implementation of the CROQF on a policy and technical level. Twenty-five sectoral councils have been set up as advisory and professional bodies that assess proposals on occupational standards, qualification standards and units of learning outcomes.

The information system of the CROQF register has been established. It consists of three sub-registers: one for occupational standards; one for units of learning outcomes; and one for qualification standards. A new methodology for developing occupational standards was adopted and guidelines for development of qualification standards were revised in 2019. Twenty occupational standards have been included (February 2020) and requests were submitted for inclusion of another 105 at different qualification levels. Qualification standards included in the register are becoming the basis for development or redesign of education and training programmes. An ordinance and guidelines on validation and recognition of prior learning are expected to be finalised once amendments to the Act on adult education are approved. The legislative changes in the different education and training subsystems are expected to support CROQF implementation; the extent of the regulatory function of the framework in each subsystem would need to be further clarified. The public debate on the amendment of the CROQF Act, carried out in 2017, generated a high level of response, indicating a high level of interest in the framework among stakeholders.

Croatia referenced the CROQF to the EQF and self-certified to QF-EHEA in March 2012. An updated referencing report is planned to be presented in 2020, once the first qualification standards are included in the CROQF register.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Croatia.

Table 6. **Croatian national qualifications framework (CROQF)**

CROQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8.2	Doctoral diploma (*poslijediplomski (sveučilišni) doktorski studiji; obrana doktorske disertacije izvan studija*)	8
8.1	Postgraduate research master of science diploma (*poslijediplomski znanstveni magistarski studiji*)	
7.2	Post-master specialist university studies (*poslijediplomski specijalistički studiji*)	7
7.1	Master diploma – graduate university studies (*sveučilišni diplomski studiji*) Professional master diploma – specialist graduate professional studies (*specijalistički diplomski stručni studiji*)	
6	Bachelor diploma – undergraduate university studies (*sveučilišni preddiplomski studiji*) Professional bachelor diploma – undergraduate professional studies (*stručni preddiplomski studiji*)	6
5	Professional higher education diploma – short cycle (*kratki stručni studiji*) VET post-secondary development and training certificate (*strukovno specijalističko usavršavanje i osposobljavanje*) Master craftsman diploma (*programi za majstore uz najmanje dvije godine vrednovanog radnog iskustva*)	5
4.2	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (G*imnazijsko srednjoškolsko obrazovanje*) Upper secondary VET certificate – four years / Upper secondary VET certificate – five years (*Četverogodišnje i petogodišnje strukovno srednjoškolsko obrazovanje*)	4
4.1	Upper secondary VET – three years (*Trogodišnje strukovno obrazovanje*)	
3	Upper secondary VET certificate – two years / Upper secondary VET certificate – one year (*Jednogodišnje i dvogodišnje srednjoškolsko strukovno obrazovanje*)	3
2	Vocational training certificate (*Strukovno osposobljavanje*)	2
1	Primary education certificate – eight years (*Osnovno obrazovanje*) (*)	1

(*) The first eight years of schooling are called primary education. This refers to both ISCED 1 and 2 (primary and lower secondary education).

Source: Adapted from Croatian Ministry of Science and Education (2018). The amended Croatian Qualifications Framework Act, Article 7. http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/sites/default/files/documents-publications/2018-08/Zakon%20o%20HKO-u%20s%20izmjenama%20i%20dopunama.pdf

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The EQF NCP for Croatia is the section for the Croatian qualifications framework at the Ministry of Science and Education.
- CROQF website: http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/en
- CROQF register: https://hko.srce.hr/registar/
- Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Agency for Science and Higher Education (2014). *Referencing and self-certification report.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

CY

5. CYPRUS

Cyprus decided to develop a comprehensive NQF, the Cyprus qualifications framework (CyQF), in 2008 (Decision No 67.445 of 9 July 2008). The Council of Ministers approved the establishment of the framework based on the eight levels of the EQF in 2012 and work on framework design was finalised in 2017. The main role of the CyQF is to classify qualifications according to defined levels of learning outcomes. Its implementation is expected to impact specifically on the promotion of lifelong learning, the recognition and validation of qualifications, enhanced mobility of learners and workers, and improved quality assurance of education and training programmes. The reform potential of the framework is being acknowledged by linking it to wider reforms and procedures for quality assurance, assessment and award of qualifications.

The CyQF includes all levels and types of qualification in all subsystems of education and training. It consists of two distinct strands: one for formal education (primary, lower and upper secondary, tertiary education and apprenticeship schemes); and one for non-formal and informal learning (the system of vocational qualifications (SVQ), developed by the Human Resource Development Authority, and other training programmes). Levels 5 and 7 have been divided into three sublevels each (a, b, and c) to represent better the diversity of qualifications existing in the country. Level descriptors were defined in three categories (knowledge, skills and competence), inspired by those of the EQF but further elaborated, with an emphasis on problem solving, communication, cooperation, learning skills, and understanding and application of knowledge. The EQF level descriptors were adopted unchanged for the SVQ. Including the system of vocational qualifications within the framework (at levels 3 to 6) aims to bring about comparability of qualifications acquired through formal and non-formal learning.

The CyQF is at an early operational stage. The EQF national coordination point was established within the Ministry of Education and Culture to oversee the development and gradual implementation of the framework. It also coordinates the inclusion of qualifications in the CyQF registry. A permanent advisory body – the council of the NQF of Cyprus – has been established as a forum for collaboration between stakeholders; it represents all relevant public services, employer and employee organisations, education and training providers, and the academic community. A new Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (QAAA) was established for higher education in March 2016, and a National Qualifications Authority was created in 2017. The latter is tasked with monitoring and integrating into the CyQF the scheme for validation of non-formal and informal learning (in pilot implementation during 2019), and with monitoring the inclusion of CyQF/EQF levels on certificates, diplomas and Europass documents.

The comprehensive and inclusive nature of the new framework requires systematic collaboration between stakeholders. A national qualification register is under development; this will cover qualifications from general education, VET and higher education, as well as the SVQ at a later stage. So far, standards have been developed for 72 SVQ qualifications. To support CyQF implementation, guidelines, criteria and procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national register are being developed in consultation with stakeholders.

The CyQF was referenced to the EQF in February 2017. An updated referencing report will be submitted once the system for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and its links to the CyQF, are in place.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Cyprus.

Table 7. **Cypriot national qualifications framework (CyQF)**

CyQF levels	Educational qualifications	SVQs	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree (*Διδακτορικός Τίτλος*)		8
7c	Master degree (*Μεταπτυχιακός Τίτλος*)		7
7b	Postgraduate diplomas (*Μεταπτυχιακό Δίπλωμα*)		
7a	Postgraduate certificates (*Μεταπτυχιακό Πιστοποιητικό*)		
6	Bachelor degree (*Πτυχίο*)	SVQ 6	6
5c	Higher certificates and diplomas – three years (*Ανώτερα Διπλώματα και Πιστοποιητικά*)	SVQ 5	5
5b	Post-secondary certificates and diplomas – two years (*Μεταλυκειακά Διπλώματα Διετούς Διάρκειας*)		
5a	Post-secondary certificates and diplomas – one year (*Μεταλυκειακά Διπλώματα Μονοετούς Διάρκειας*)		
4	Upper secondary general education and evening schools certificates – 12th grade or 12th and 13th for some private schools (*Απολυτήριο Μέσης Γενικής Εκπαίδευσης*) Upper secondary technical and vocational education and evening technical schools certificates – 12th grade (*Απολυτήριο Μέσης Τεχνικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης*)	SVQ 4	4
3	Lower secondary education certificate – 10th grade – preparatory year for upper secondary education (*Απολυτήριο Πρώτου Κύκλου Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης – 10η τάξη*) New modern apprenticeship certificate – 10th grade (*Νέα Σύγχρονη Μαθητεία – 10η τάξη*)	SVQ 3	3
2	Compulsory lower secondary education certificate – 9th grade (*Απολυτήριο Πρώτου Κύκλου Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης – 9η τάξη*) Preparatory programme – New modern apprenticeship (*Προπαρασκευαστικό Πρόγραμμα Νέας Σύγχρονης Μαθητείας*)		2
1	Compulsory education certificate – elementary school certificate, or graduates of 7th and/or 8th grade (*Υποχρεωτική Εκπαίδευση*)		1

Source: Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017: http://www.cyqf.gov.cy/index.php/en/diagram

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Cyprus EQF NCP was established at the Ministry of Education and Culture: http://www.moec.gov.cy
- CyQF website: http://www.cyqf.gov.cy
- Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture (2017). *The referencing of the Cyprus qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

CZ

6. CZECHIA

Czechia has yet to decide whether to develop a comprehensive NQF. Work on qualifications has been carried out at subsystem level to varying degrees and partial/sectoral frameworks based on the learning outcomes approach have been developed. The national register of qualifications (*Národní soustava kvalifikací* – NSK) functions as a framework for qualifications obtained through further education, one of the supporting tools for retraining and adult education, and for validation of non-formal and informal learning. A framework of higher education qualifications was also developed. Level descriptors were developed for both of these partial frameworks.

The NSK is fully operational. It is legally grounded in the Act 179/2006 on the verification and recognition of further education results, addressing adults as a main target group and learning outcomes acquired outside formal education and training. All qualifications in the NSK can be acquired via validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. It comprises qualification standards and assessment standards developed by sector councils based on the descriptions of occupations in the national system of occupations. The NSK has eight levels and is currently (April 2020) populated with 1 337 qualifications in 27 different sectors, ranging between EQF levels 2 and 7. The number of people undertaking validation of non-formal and informal learning has increased significantly over the past decade.

The framework of higher education qualifications was designed between 2009 and 2012 and revised in 2016. It was adopted by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports in November 2018, providing a basis for implementation and self-certification to QF-EHEA. It covers qualifications provided by universities, at EQF levels 6 to 8.

The Czech Republic referenced its national qualifications subsystems directly to EQF levels in December 2011. The referencing report was updated in 2015 following minor changes in legislation. In the absence of a comprehensive NQF, qualifications from secondary education were referenced based on the classification of education qualification types (KKOV) and nationally approved curricula. Of qualifications awarded in further education, only those included in the NSK were referenced to the EQF. Tertiary education qualifications were linked to the EQF based on characteristics of the different levels of tertiary education set out in national legislation. From 2017, it is mandatory to include EQF levels on all certificates from general education and VET; EQF levels are also indicated in the NSK register.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Czech Republic.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

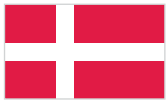
- The National Pedagogical Institute is the EQF NCP: https://www.npicr.cz/
- EQF web page: http://www.nuv.cz/eqf
- National register of qualifications (NSK): http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/en-us/
- NUV (2015). *National referencing report of the Czech Republic.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

Table 8. **Czech education qualification types, NSK levels and links to EQF levels**

EQF levels	Czech qualifications awarded in formal education and training	NSK levels and qualifications (awarded through VNFIL)
8	**Doctoral programme** (*doktor*) – PhD degrees three to four years -beyond master	8
7	**Master programme** (*magistr, inženýr, doktor*) - Mgr, MgA., Ing., Ing. arch., MUDr, MDDr, MVDr, JUDr, PhDr, RNDr, Pharm.Dr, ThLic., and ThDr degrees – one to three years of tertiary education beyond bachelor or four to six years of tertiary education	7 E.g. Head detective (*vedoucí detektiv*) Chemical specialist product manager (*specialista chemie produktmanažer*)
6	**Bachelor programme** (*bakalář*) – Bc and BcA degrees – three to four years of tertiary education **Graduation diploma – Tertiary professional education** (*diplom absolventa vyšší odborné školy ve vzdělávacím*) – DiS degree three to three-and-a-half years of tertiary education **Graduation diploma – Conservatoire** (*diplom absolventa konzervatoře*) – DiS degree – eight years study after five years of primary education or six years study after completion of a lower secondary general education programme	6 E.g. Career counsellor for educational and professional paths (*kariérový poradce pro vzdělávací a profesní dráhu*) Independent research and development electrician (*samostatný elektrotechnik výzkumný a vývojový pracovník*)
5		5 E.g. Travel guide (*průvodce cestovního ruchu*) Agricultural advisor for crop production (*zemědělský poradce pro rostlinnou výrobu*)
4	**Certificate of upper secondary general education with maturita exam** (*vysvědčení o maturitní zkoušce z oboru vzdělání*) – four years of general upper secondary study **Certificate of upper secondary vocational education with maturita exam** (*vysvědčení o maturitní zkoušce z oboru vzdělání*) – four years of vocational upper secondary study **Certificate of supplementary study leading to a maturita exam** (*vysvědčení o maturitní zkoušce z oboru vzdělání*) – two years of study after level 3 VET certificate	4 E.g. Quality management specialist in engineering (*technik řízení jakosti ve strojírenství*) Detective trainee (*detektiv koncipient*)
3	**Cetificate of upper secondary VET** – (*výuční list z oboru vzdělání*)– three years of upper secondary VET study	3 E.g. Glassmaker for pressed glass (*sklář pro lisované sklo*) Locksmith (*zámkař*)
2	**Certificate of lower secondary education** (*vysvědčení o získání základního vzdělání*) – completion of a lower secondary general education programme – nine years **Certificate of upper secondary education with VET certificate** (*výuční list z oboru vzdělání*) – two years of upper secondary study **Certificate of upper secondary education without VET certificate** (*vysvědčení o závěrečné zkoušce*) – one- or two-year education programmes	2 E.g. Production of side dishes (*výroba příloh*) Guard (*strážný*)
1	**Special education** – completion of an education programme in a special school – 10 years	1

(*) In the absence of a comprehensive NQF, Czechia referenced its qualifications subsystems directly to the EQF.

Source: Adapted from NUV (2015); the national register of qualifications (NSK): http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/en-us [accessed 2.4.2020]. The EQF NCP, 2020 (email communication).



DK

7. DENMARK

The Danish NQF provides a systematic and comprehensive overview of all types and levels of qualification awarded and quality-assured by public authorities. As of 2019, it is also open to inclusion of qualifications awarded outside the formal education system. Its main objectives are to support transparency of the qualifications system, to support mobility and lifelong learning by making progression routes visible, and to aid mutual recognition between Danish and non-Danish qualifications.

The eight-level framework is learning-outcomes-based and describes levels in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. Level descriptors were based on existing descriptions of learning outcomes in curricula and programmes, the EQF descriptors, and the Bologna descriptors. A clear distinction is drawn between levels 1 to 5 and levels 6 to 8, with the latter using level descriptors identical to those in the Danish qualifications framework for higher education and including only higher education qualifications accredited according to the latter framework. NQF level 5 has a broader descriptor compared to the corresponding one in the NQF-HE for short cycle degrees, making it also possible to include at level 5 qualifications acquired through certain vocational education and training programmes. Most qualifications levelled to the NQF are accessible or can be acquired through validation of prior learning, which is well-established and regulated in Denmark. The NQF itself has no regulatory functions; inclusion in the NQF and quality assurance of qualifications is linked to the existing legal frameworks for publicly recognised qualifications.

Work on the framework for lifelong learning started in 2006, building on the qualifications framework for higher education; the comprehensive NQF was adopted in 2009. An inter-departmental coordination committee, with representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, the Ministry of Children and Education, and the Ministry of Culture, has been tasked to coordinate the implementation and regular updating of the framework. Stakeholders are consulted on all aspects of the NQF. The first stage was concluded with an evaluation in 2013, assessing the implementation process, how it was received by stakeholders, and how it could be improved (Danish Evaluation Institute, 2013). It was found that there was a good level of awareness of, and overall satisfaction with, the NQF, which was seen as a necessary tool for developing qualifications and programmes at all levels. A need to disseminate further the potential of the NQF to employers and to assist institutions in describing programmes in learning outcomes was highlighted. Follow-up work was carried out in cooperation between the coordinating ministries.

The Danish NQF has reached an advanced operational stage and is well embedded in the national education, training and qualification system. In higher education, it is implemented via the Act on accreditation of higher education institutions. In other subsystems, it is integrated in educational orders. All qualifications from VET, higher education, general education and adult education have been assigned to levels and included in the national register. NQF and EQF levels are indicated in the register and have been gradually added to qualification documents and Europass supplements since 2013, increasing the visibility of the NQF to citizens. The learning outcomes approach is widely accepted and increasingly used to describe curricula and programmes; the framework is seen as supportive to credit transfer decisions.

A process for including in the NQF private and public qualifications which are not subject to supervision by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, the Ministry of Children, Education and Gender Equality, and the Ministry of Culture has been put in place, following an amendment of the Act on accreditation in 2017. As of 1 October 2019, providers can apply to the Danish Accreditation Institution (also in charge of quality assurance and accreditation of higher edu-

cation programmes and institutions) for an assessment of a qualification's level based on its learning outcomes. The process is aimed to create more transparency in the market for private non-formal education as well as public education programmes not regulated by the above ministries. It also aims to promote quality assurance of qualifications outside the formal system of education, strengthen the interaction between the public and private systems, and create a foundation for opening up pathways into the formal system. This is expected to strengthen the relevance of the NQF for the labour market and the social partners. The Danish Accreditation Institution received applications for referencing nine programmes to the NQF in the first round. The evaluation is in process. Several providers have announced their intention to apply in the second round in February 2020.

The Danish NQF was referenced to the EQF in May 2011. The national qualifications framework for higher education was self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2010.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Denmark.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education hosts the EQF NCP: http://ufm.dk/en/the-minister-and-the-ministry/organisation/danish-agency-for-science-and-higher-education
- Danish NQF website: http://ufm.dk/en/education-and-institutions/recognition-and-transparency/transparency-tools/qualifications-frameworks
- Register of qualifications and programmes included in the NQF: https://www.ug.dk/
- The Danish Evaluation Institute et al. (2011). *Referencing the Danish qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the European qualifications framework* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf
- The Danish Evaluation Institute (2009). *Verification of compatibility of the Danish national qualifications framework for higher education with the framework for qualifications of the European higher education area* http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/Qualifications_frameworks/79/2/DK-QF-report-EN_596792.pdf

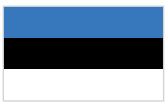
Table 9. **Danish national qualifications framework (DK NQF)**

NQF levels	Certificates and degrees	Certificates for supplementary qualifications (*)	EQF levels
8	PhD degree (*PhD grad*)		8
7	Master degree – Candidatus (*Kandidat og masteruddannelser*) Master degree in arts/fine arts Master degree		7
6	Bachelor degree (*Bachelor og diplomuddannelser*) Bachelor degree in arts Professional bachelor degree (*Professionsbacheloruddannelser*) Diploma degree		6
5	VET certificate Academy profession degrees (*Erhvervsakademi uddannelser*)	Certificate for supplementary single subject courses at academy profession level Adult VET certificate	5
4	General upper secondary school certificate (*Gymnasiale uddannelser*) Certificate for two-year general upper secondary programme (higher preparatory examination) VET certificate	Certificate for supplementary single subject courses at upper secondary level Adult VET certificate Certificate for single subject VET	4
3	VET certificate Certificate for preparatory basic education and training (*FGU*)	Basic programme VET Certificates for supplementary, single subject VET courses Higher preparatory courses, single course subjects General adult education level D Adult VET certificate Certificates for single subject courses in VET	3
2	Leaving certificate for primary and lower secondary school – 10th grade (*10. klasse afgangsprøve*) Certificate for preparatory basic education and training (*FGU*)	Basic VET certificates General adult education (levels E and F, approximates 10th grade) Adult VET certificate	2
1	Leaving certificate for primary and lower secondary school (ninth grade) (*Folkeskolens afgangsprøve*) Certificate for preparatory basic education and training (*FGU*)	Certificate for preparatory adult education Certificate for general adult education (level G, approximates ninth grade)	2

(*) Acquired in formal adult education and training.

Source: Adapted from the website of the Danish Ministry of Higher education and Science, 2020. https://ufm.dk/en/education-and-institutions/recognition-and-transparency/transparency-tools/qualifications-frameworks/types-of-certificates-and-degrees/hardtableview

8. ESTONIA



EE

Estonia has created a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning, the Estonian qualifications framework (EstQF), including all State-recognised qualifications. It has eight qualification levels, with level descriptors defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and responsibility and autonomy, identical to those of the EQF. The overarching framework brings together subframeworks for higher education, VET, general education, and occupational qualifications, with specific descriptors defined using the corresponding national educational standards underpinning quality assurance activities. The ambition of the NQF in Estonia is twofold: to be a tool for transparency and communication and to aid lifelong learning. Its aims include improving the link between education/training and the labour market, increasing consistency in the education and qualifications system, introducing common quality assurance criteria, and supporting validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The EstQF has reached full operational stage. A legal and institutional framework has been set up by the 2008 Occupational qualifications Act (with subsequent amendments) and key responsibilities and roles of different stakeholders have been agreed. The Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Qualifications Authority (*Kutsekoda*) are the main bodies involved in developing and implementing the NQF. A permanent steering group with broad representation, including stakeholders from the different qualifications subsystems and the labour market, was established; initially limited to the referencing process, its mandate was renewed to overseeing implementation and evaluating the impact of the EstQF. Fourteen occupational qualifications councils, coordinated by the Qualifications Authority, are responsible for developing occupational standards and qualifications and their levelling to the EstQF.

Quality criteria for inclusion and positioning of qualifications in the framework have been adopted. To be included, qualifications have to be defined in learning-outcomes-based qualifications standards (curriculum or professional standard) and awarded by nationally accredited institutions. Implementation of the overarching framework has triggered discussions between different stakeholders and has been used to identify gaps and imbalances in the provision of qualifications. For instance, the lack of initial education and training qualifications at EstQF level 5 and the need for these types of qualifications on the labour market, highlighted by different stakeholders, was a focus of public debate and impacted policy decisions. A new VET Law came into force in 2013, along with a new standard for VET; it introduced qualifications at level 5 (both in IVET and CVET), established a new quality assurance framework for VET, and the Estonian VET credit system. Provision of higher occupational qualifications referenced to EstQF level 6 has also been revisited. EstQF and EQF levels are indicated on qualifications from the four subsystems, on Europass certificate and diploma supplements, and in national qualifications databases.

The EstQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in October 2011. Following the VET reform initiated in 2013, a revised and updated referencing report was presented to the EQF advisory group in 2015. Development of the framework and the referencing process have already contributed to building up a more coherent and responsive lifelong learning system, to increased convergence between formal education and the occupational qualifications subsystem, and to increased parity of esteem of different types of qualifications.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Estonia.

Table 10. **Estonian national qualifications framework (EstQF)**

EstQF levels	Qualifications awarded in formal education	Occupational groups and occupational qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree (*Doktorikraad*)	Level 8 occupational qualification – senior specialists, top managers e.g.: chartered engineer, principal architect	8
7	Master degree (*Magistrikraad*)	Level 7 occupational qualification – specialists, managers e.g.: diploma engineer, diploma architect	7
6	Bachelor degree (*Bakalaureusekraad*) Diploma of professional higher education (*Rakenduskõrgharidusõppe diplom*)	Level 6 occupational qualification – specialists, supervisors e.g.: energy auditor, career counsellor	6
5	VET certificate, level 5 (*5. taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus*)	Level 5 occupational qualification – technicians and craft masters, frontline managers, clerical workers e.g.: master carpenter, construction site manager, accountant	5
4	Upper secondary general education certificate (*Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus*) Upper secondary VET certificate (*Kutsekeskhariduse lõputunnistus*) VET certificate, level 4 (*4. taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus*)	Level 4 occupational qualification – skilled workers, machine operators, service and sales workers, clerical support workers e.g.: photographer	4
3	VET qualification certificate, level 3 (*3. taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus*)	Level 3 occupational qualification – skilled workers, machine operators, service and sales workers, clerical support workers e.g.: maintenance worker	3
2	Basic education certificate (*Põhikooli lõputunnistus*) Basic education certificate based on simplified curriculum (*Põhikooli lihtsustatud õppekava lõputunnistus*) VET certificate, level 2 (without basic education requirement) (*2. taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus*)	Level 2 occupational qualification – elementary workers e.g.: cook assistant, cleaner assistant	2
1	Basic education certificate based on curriculum for students with moderate and severe learning disabilities (*Põhikooli toimetuleku õppekava lõputunnistus*)		1

Source: Adapted from Estonian Qualifications Authority et al., 2016.
Estonian Qualifications Authority (Kutsekoda), 2020: https://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/estonian-qualifications-framework-estqf/

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Estonian Qualifications Authority (Kutsekoda) is the designated EQF NCP: http://www.kutsekoda.ee/en
- NQF/EQF web page: https://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/estonian-qualifications-framework-estqf/
- VET curricula database: https://enda.ehis.ee/avalik/avalik/oppekava/OppekavaOtsi.faces
- Estonian education information system (EHIS): www.ehis.ee
- Estonian register of occupational qualifications (professions register) www.kutseregister.ee
- Estonian Qualifications Authority et al. (2016). *Referencing of the Estonian qualifications and qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

9. FINLAND

FI

Finland started to develop a NQF (FiNQF) in 2008, building on previous work on the qualifications framework for higher education, introduced in 2005, which now forms an integrated part of the comprehensive FiNQF. It was a highly inclusive process, in which education providers, including higher education institutions, and other stakeholders have supported NQF development from the start and have contributed to its design. Following several public consultations and renewed proposals, the current NQF was adopted and entered into force in March 2017 (Act 93/2017 and Government Decree 120/2017 on the national framework for qualifications and other competence modules). Its further development and implementation are coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture, with the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) appointed as EQF-NCP.

The FiNQF includes the full range of national qualifications from general education, VET and higher education, within the remit of the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as qualifications from other sectors, such as the police, fire and rescue services, and national defence. Certain competence modules that are defined in learning outcomes and are comparable with qualifications, or constitute a qualification requirement, or are otherwise related to development of competence and professional skill, may also be levelled and included in the framework. These play an important part in Finnish lifelong learning and many relate to access to regulated or specialised professions. The eight-level framework is learning-outcomes-based, and describes qualification levels in an integrated approach, in terms of knowledge, skills, competence and their interrelationships, without an explicit distinction between them. EQF level descriptors were elaborated and complemented to reflect wider national objectives, such as an emphasis on key competences for lifelong learning.

The FiNQF aims to improve the clarity, transparency and effectiveness of the Finnish qualifications system, and to increase comparability of qualifications. It is used as a tool for promoting the learning outcomes approach, recognition of knowledge, skills and competences, and national and international mobility. It is used in combination with other policies on transfer and progression, validation of non-formal and informal learning, and quality assurance, introduced prior to the adoption of the NQF.

The FiNQF has reached operational stage. The initial implementation phase covered all formal qualifications under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and vocational qualifications and higher education qualifications in the other administrative sectors. For the second phase, a working group was appointed in 2018 for the extension of the framework to new qualifications and competence modules regulated by law, to prepare a more detailed specification of the criteria and rationale for inclusion of competence modules, and the necessary legislative changes. A number of new competence modules, identified and proposed by the working group, and subject to consultation, were included in the framework at levels 2 to 7 as of 15 February 2020, following amendment of Government Decree 120/2017. As of March 2020, administrative branches and interest groups can suggest new competence modules for inclusion in the FiNQF; the procedure for application has been made available on the website of the Finnish National Agency for Education.

Referencing of the FiNQF to the EQF and self-certification to the QF-EHEA was completed as one process in 2017. FiNQF and EQF levels are indicated on qualification documents in general education and VET, and on Europass certificate and diploma supplements in VET and, respectively, higher education.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Finland.

Table 11. **Finnish national qualifications framework (FiNQF)**

FiNQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Universities' and National Defence University scientific and artistic postgraduate degrees (licentiate and doctor degrees) (*Yliopistojen ja Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulun tieteelliset ja taiteelliset jatkotutkinnot (lisensiaatin tutkinnot ja tohtorin tutkinnot), Vetenskapliga och konstnärliga påbyggnadsexamina vid universiteten och Försvarshögskolan (licentiatexamina och doktorsexamina)*) General staff officer degree (*Yleisesikuntaupseerin tutkinto, Generalstabsofficersexamen*) Specialist degree in veterinary medicine (*Erikoiseläinlääkärin tutkinto, Specialveterinärexamen*) Specialist training in medicine (*Erikoislääkärikoulutus, Specialistläkarutbildning*) Specialist training in dentistry (*Erikoishammaslääkärikoulutus, Specialisttandläkarutbildning*)	8
7	Master degrees – universities (*Ylemmät korkeakoulututkinnot, Högre högskoleexamina*) Master degrees – universities of applied sciences (*Ylemmät ammattikorkeakoulututkinnot, Högre yrkeshögskoleexamina*) Professional specialisation programmes provided by universities and universities of applied sciences intended for holders of a master degree or a UAS master degree (*Yliopistojen ja ammattikorkeakoulujen erikoistumiskoulutukset, joiden kohderyhmänä ovat ylemmän korkeakoulututkinnon tai ylemmän ammattikorkeakoulututkinnon suorittaneet henkilöt, Universitetens och yrkeshögskolornas specialiseringsutbildningar för personer som har avlagt högre högskoleexamen eller högre yrkeshögskoleexamen*) Advanced pastoral qualification (*Ylempi pastoraalitutkinto, Högre pastoralexamen*) Senior staff officer course (*Esiupseerikurssi, Stabsofficerskursen*) Further studies in war economy and technology (*Sotatalouden ja tekniikan lisäopinnot, Tilläggsstudier i krigsekonomi och i teknik*) Specific qualification on prescribing medicines (*Rajatun lääkkeenmääräämisen erikoispätevyys, Specialistkompetensen för begränsad förskrivningsrätt*)	7
6	Bachelor degrees – universities (*Alemmat korkeakoulututkinnot, Lägre högskoleexamina*) Bachelor degrees – universities of applied sciences (*Ammattikorkeakoulututkinnot, Yrkeshögskoleexamina*) Professional specialisation programmes provided by universities and universities of applied sciences intended for holders of a bachelor degree or a UAS bachelor degree (*Yliopistojen ja ammattikorkeakoulujen erikoistumiskoulutukset, joiden kohderyhmänä ovat alemman korkeakoulututkinnon tai ammattikorkeakoulututkinnon suorittaneet henkilöt, Universitetens och yrkeshögskolornas specialiseringsutbildningar för personer som har avlagt lägre högskoleexamen eller yrkeshögskoleexamen*) Specialised training provided by the church (*Kirkon erityiskoulutukset, Kyrkans specialutbildningar*) Pastoral qualification (*Pastoraalitutkinto, Pastoralexamen*)	6
5	Specialist vocational qualifications (*Erikoisammattitutkinnot, Specialyrkesexamina*) Sub-officer qualification – Fire and rescue services (*Alipäällystötutkinto,pelastusala, Underbefälsexamen (räddningsväsendet)*) Vocational qualification in air traffic control (*Lennonjohdon perustutkinto, Grundexamen i flygledning*) General level (1 and 2) study module for non-commissioned officers (*Aliupseerin yleistason (1 ja 2) opintokokonaisuus, Studiehelheten på mellannivå (1 och 2) för underofficerare*) Master level study module for non-commissioned officers (*Aliupseerin mestaritason opintokokonaisuus, Studiehelheten på mästarnivå för underofficerare*)	5

FiNQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
4	General upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Lukion oppimäärä, Gymnasiets lärokurs*) Matriculation examination (*Ylioppilastutkinto, Studentexamen*) Upper secondary vocational qualifications (*Ammatilliset perustutkinnot, Yrkesinriktade grundexamina*) Further vocational qualifications (*Ammattitutkinnot, Yrkesexamina*) Basic examination in prison services (*Rikosseuraamusalan tutkinto, Examen inom brottspåföljdsområdet*) Fire fighter qualification (*Pelastajatutkinto, Räddningsmannaexamen*) Emergency response centre operator qualification (*Hätäkeskuspäivystäjätutkinto, Examen för jourhavande vid nödcentraler*) Basic course for border guards (*Rajavartijan peruskurssi, Grundkursen för gränsbevakare*) Basic study module for non-commissioned officers (*Aliupseerin perustason opintokokonaisuus, Studiehelheten på grundnivå för underofficerare*)	4
3	Preparatory studies for general upper secondary school (*Lukiokoulutukseen valmistava koulutus (LUVA), Utbildning som förbereder för gymnasieutbildning (LUVA)*) Preparatory education for vocational training (*Ammatilliseen koulutukseen valmentava koulutus (VALMA), Utbildning som handleder för yrkesutbildning (VALMA)*) Advanced syllabus for basic education in the arts (*Taiteen perusopetuksen laaja oppimäärä, Fördjupad lärokurs i grundläggande konstundervisning*)	3
2	Basic education certificate (nine years) (*Perusopetuksen oppimäärä, Lärokursen för den grundläggande utbildningen*) Preparatory education for working life and independent living (*Työhön ja itsenäiseen elämään valmentava koulutus (TELMA), Utbildning som handleder för arbete och ett självständigt liv (TELMA)*)	2
1		1

Source: Finnish National Agency for Education; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018.
Government Decree 120/2017 on the Reference Framework for Degrees and Other Competences (in Finnish and Swedish): https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2017/20170120
Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020: https://www.oph.fi/en/news/2020/framework-qualifications-and-other-competence-modules-expands

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Finnish National Agency for Education acts as EQF NCP: https://www.oph.fi/en/education-and-qualifications/qualifications-frameworks
- Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture: http://minedu.fi/en/frontpage
- Database of study programmes from VET, general and higher education: https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/
- Finnish National Agency for Education; Ministry of Education and Culture (2018). *Referencing the Finnish national qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework and the framework for qualifications of the European higher education area.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

FR

10. FRANCE

The French qualifications system is a mature one, and the framework – up until 2019 identified with the five-level structure of the National register of vocational and professional qualifications (*Repertoire national des certifications professionnelles* (RNCP)) – is operational. The 2018 Law for the freedom to choose one's professional future and subsequent legislation strengthened the legal basis of the French NQF and defined a new eight-level structure and level descriptors in three categories, similar to those of the EQF: complexity of knowledge; skills and know-how; and degree of responsibility and autonomy. The first level of the new framework covers basic knowledge and competences, resulting from an agreement between social partners and the government, that are not directly linked to an occupation, and, thus, not linked to qualifications included in the RNCP. The newly introduced level 2 covers simple activities and limited autonomy. Levels 3 to 8 cover qualifications previously included at the five levels of the RNCP. The previous level I was divided into the new levels 7 and 8, distinguishing between master and doctoral qualifications. Reclassification of level I qualifications to the new levels 7 and 8 was completed by January 2020.

With the 2018 Law for the freedom to choose one's professional future, the French NQF became formally embedded in legislation. Its levels and characteristics are defined by the Decree of 8 January 2019 on the national framework of vocational and professional qualifications. The revision, which is part of wider VET reforms, brings the French framework closer to the EQF, increasing comparability between French qualifications and those in other European countries. The recent legislative changes also brought a new national authority for the regulation and financing of continuing VET and apprenticeships, France Compétences, with a quadripartite structure representing the state, the regions, employers and employees. In January 2019, responsibility for the French NQF, the RNCP, and the Specific register (previously known as 'the inventory', including awards without levels that are complementary to RNCP qualifications) was transferred to the new authority, which encompasses and replaces several structures previously involved in the governance of vocational training and certification, including the National commission for vocational and professional qualifications (*Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle* (CNCP)).

The implementation of the French framework has been closely linked to that of the system for validating non-formal and informal learning (VAE) since 2002, the two being mutually supportive: all qualifications included in the RNCP (with the exception of those linked to some regulated professions) can be acquired through validation and need to have a VAE procedure specified. Validation of non-formal and informal learning is strongly articulated to lifelong learning, training and employment policies. The VAE is integrated in the labour and education code and procedures are defined by legislation. VAE allows the award of whole or parts of qualifications with a vocational and professional orientation and purpose at all levels, without the need to go through formal training. Qualifications obtained through VAE are the same as those awarded via initial or continuous formal education and training or apprenticeship.

Recent policy initiatives and reforms continue to emphasise the need to give high priority to employability and equip candidates with competences better aligned with the needs of the labour market. To facilitate lifelong learning, the notion of 'units/blocks of competences' (*blocs de compétences*) was introduced in 2014, organising competences in qualification standards based on socially meaningful activities.

The five-level structure in use until 2019 was referenced to the EQF in 2010. An updated referencing report will be presented to the EQF advisory group in 2020. The new NQF levels are included in the RNCP database.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – France.

Table 12. **French national framework for vocational and professional qualifications**

NQF levels	Qualifications types	EQF levels (*)
8	Doctoral programmes (*Doctorats*) Qualifications on demand, level 8	8
7	Master degrees (*Master*) Professional diploma in engineering with Master degree (*Titre d'ingénieur*) Qualifications on demand, level 7	7
6	Bachelor programmes (*Licences*) Professional bachelor (*Licence professionnelle*) Qualifications on demand, level 6	6
5	Undergraduate technician certificates (*Brevet de technicien supérieur – BTS*) Undergraduate technician certificates in agriculture (*Brevet de technicien supérieur agricole – BTSA*) Undergraduate certificates in technology (*Diplôme universitaire de technologie – DUT*) Master craftsman qualifications issued by the Chambers of Trades (*Brevets de maîtrise – Chambre des métiers*) Qualifications on demand, level 5	5
4	National baccalaureate diploma – general, technological or vocational education (*Diplôme national du baccalauréat général, technologique ou professionnel*) Professional certificates (*Brevet professionnels*) Applied arts certificates (*Brevet des métiers d'art*) Technician certificates (*Brevet de technicien*) Qualifications on demand, level 4	4
3	Secondary vocational certificates (*Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle – CAP; Brevet d'études professionnelles – BEP* (**)) Secondary vocational certificates in agriculture (*Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle agricole – CAPA; Brevet d'études professionnelles agricoles – BEPA* (**)) Qualifications on demand, level 3	3
2	Simple activities and limited autonomy	2
1	Basic competences	1

(*) An updated referencing report to the EQF has not yet been submitted.

(**) BEP and BEPA are intermediary qualifications granted to young people who have passed the BEP exam and are preparing for *baccalaureate professional*.

Source: Decree 2019-14 of 8 January 2019 on the national framework of vocational and professional qualifications: https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=6A9D2FCF7FB127AC6021BD782B475904.tplgfr34s_2?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000037964754&dateTexte=&oldAction=rechJO&categorieLien=id&idJO=JORFCONT000037964593
The national register of vocational and professional qualifications (RNCP), 2020: https://www.francecompetences.fr/recherche_certificationprofessionnelle/

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The EQF NCP for France is, as of 1 January 2019, hosted by France Compétences: https://www.francecompetences.fr/
- NQF/EQF website: https://certificationprofessionnelle.fr
- The National register of vocational and professional qualifications (RNCP) and the Specific register: https://certificationprofessionnelle.fr/recherche
- CNCP (2010). *Referencing of the national framework of French certification in the light of the European framework of certification for lifelong learning.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

DE

11. GERMANY

Germany has created an eight-level NQF for lifelong learning based on learning outcomes (*Deutsche Qualifikationsrahmen für lebenslanges Lernen* (DQR)). The framework aims to increase transparency and comparability of qualifications and permeability in the education and training system, to increase the skill and learning outcomes orientation of qualifications, to support learner and worker mobility and to promote lifelong learning. It also aims to support the validation of non-formal and informal learning, by acting as a guiding tool in the identification and assessment of skills during validation procedures. One key principle of the DQR is that each qualification level should be accessible via various education pathways. DQR level descriptors differentiate between two categories of competence: professional, subdivided into knowledge and skills; and personal, including social competence and autonomy. The comprehensive notion of 'competence' that lies at the heart of the DQR has an underlying humanistic dimension. It signals readiness to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and methodological competences in work or study situations and for occupational and personal development.

The DQR is the result of lengthy development work which started in 2006. The framework was formally launched in May 2013 by the joint resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder*, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Conference of Ministers for Economics of the *Länder*, and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. Development and implementation of the DQR has been a widely supported initiative and a step-by-step, bottom-up process. Stakeholders from all education and training subsystems, social partners and labour market organisations have played a fundamental role through the German qualifications framework working group (*Arbeitskreis* DQR).

The framework is now fully operational. Key documents and responsibilities for implementation have been agreed among stakeholders. The coordinating body in charge of implementation is the coordination point for the DQR (*Bund-Länder-Koordinierungsstelle DQR*), set up in a joint initiative of the federal government and the *Länder*. It works together with the German qualifications framework working group on the basis of consensus. The 2013 joint resolution is accompanied by a list of allocated qualifications which is updated annually, as well as the DQR manual describing responsibilities, procedures, standards and methods of qualification allocation. A comprehensive database, including all allocated qualifications, has been put in place. The DQR is a non-regulatory framework and its integration into policies of different education sectors is an evolutionary process.

The DQR includes qualifications from general education, higher education and most VET qualifications. VET qualifications (including preparatory VET programmes) have been allocated from levels 1 to 7. Higher DQR levels are thus open to qualifications from different education sectors; for instance, the master craftsperson qualification was placed at DQR/EQF level 6, since it is regarded as comparable to the bachelor degree. The upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (*Allgemeine Hochschulreife*) was allocated to DQR/EQF level 4, together with the dual vocational education and training courses (three-year and three-and-a-half-year). Qualifications from the non-formal/non-regulated sector have not yet been included in the framework, but procedures and criteria for the non-formal sector have been developed. A pilot project has been conducted to test the allocation procedures, and the results and experiences are currently being evaluated.

The DQR was referenced to the EQF in December 2012. As of January 2014, EQF and NQF levels have started to feature on VET certificates, certificate supplements and on higher education diploma supplements. Work on indicating DQR and EQF levels on general education qualification documents started in 2018.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Germany.

Table 13. **German national qualifications framework (DQR)**

DQR levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctorate and equivalent Arts degrees (*Doktorat und äquivalente künstlerische Abschlüsse*)	8
7	Master degrees and equivalent higher education qualifications (traditional German courses of higher education study such as the first degrees of Diplom or Magister, State Examinations) *(Master und gleichgestellte Abschlüsse (Diplom, Magister, Staatsexamen)*) Strategic professional (IT) (certified) (*Strategische/r IT Professional (Geprüfte/r)*) Other advanced vocational training pursuant to the Vocational Training Act or Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (level 7) (*Sonstige berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen nach BBiG/HwO (Niveau 7)*)	7
6	Bachelor degrees and equivalent higher education qualifications (*Bachelor und gleichgestellte Hochschulabschlüsse*) Specialist commercial clerk (certified) (*Fachkaufmann/-frau (Geprüfte/r)*) Business management specialist (certified) (*Fachwirt (Geprüfter)*) Master craftsman (*Meister*) Operative professional (IT) (certified) (*Operative/r Professional (IT) (Geprüfte/r)*) Trade and technical school (advanced vocational training governed by federal State law) (*Fachschule (Landesrechtlich geregelte berufliche Weiterbildungen)*) Advanced vocational training pursuant to § 54 of the Vocational Training Act (level 6) (*Berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen nach 54 BBiG (Niveau 6)*) Other advanced vocational training pursuant to the Vocational Training Act or Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (level 6) (*Sonstige berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen nach BBiG/HwO (Niveau 6)*)	6
5	IT specialist (*IT-Spezialist/in (Zertifizierte/r)*) Service technician (certified) (*Servicetechniker/in (Geprüfte/r)*) Advanced vocational training pursuant to § 54 of the Vocational Training Act (*Berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen nach § 54 BBiG (Niveau 5)*) Other advanced vocational training pursuant to the Vocational Training Act or Crafts and Trades Regulation Code (level 5) (*Sonstige berufliche Fortbildungsqualifikationen nach BBiG/HwO (Niveau 5)*)	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate – General higher education entrance qualification (*Allgemeine Hochschulreife (AHR)*) Subject-linked higher education entrance qualification (*Fachgebundene Hochschulreife (FgbHR)*) Higher education entrance qualification for university of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulreife (FHR)*) Dual VET (three-year and three-and-a-half-year training courses) (*Duale Berufsausbildung (3- und 3 ½-jährige Ausbildungen)*) Full-time vocational school (vocational education and training governed by federal State law) (*Berufsfachschule (Landesrechtlich geregelte Berufsausbildungen)*) Full-time vocational school (vocational education and training governed by federal law in healthcare and elderly care) (*Berufsfachschule (Bundesrechtliche Ausbildungsregelungen für Berufe im Gesundheitswesen und in der Altenpflege)*) Full-time vocational school (fully qualifying vocational education and training pursuant to the Vocational Training Act or Crafts and Trades Regulation Code) (*Berufsfachschule (vollqualifizierende Berufsausbildung nach BBiG/HwO)*) Retraining qualification pursuant to the Vocational Training Act (level 4) (*Berufliche Umschulung nach BBiG (Niveau 4)*)	4

DQR levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
3	Intermediate secondary school leaving certificate – General education, 10 years (*Mittlerer Schulabschluss (MSA)*) Intermediate secondary school leaving certificate – Full-time vocational school (*Berufsfachschule (Mittlerer Schulabschluss)*) Dual VET (two-year training courses) (*Duale Berufsausbildung (2-jährige Ausbildung)*)	3
2	Lower secondary school leaving certificate – General education, nine years (*Hauptschulabschluss (HSA)*) Vocational training preparation (vocational preparation scheme, prevocational training year, introductory training) (*Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung (Niveau 2; BvB, BvB-Reha, BVJ, EQ)*) Basic vocational training – Full-time vocational school (*Berufsfachschule (Berufliche Grundbildung)*)	2
1	Vocational training preparation (vocational preparation scheme, prevocational training year) (*Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung (Niveau 1; BvB, BvB-Reha, BVJ)*)	1

Source: DQR qualifications database (2020): https://www.dqr.de/content/2316.php

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The federal government/Länder coordination point assumes the function of EQF NCP: https://www.dqr.de/content/2327.php
- The DQR website: http://www.dqr.de
- DQR qualifications database: https://www.dqr.de/content/2316.php
- BMBF and KMK (2013). *German EQF referencing report.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

12. GREECE

EL

Greece has developed a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning, the Hellenic qualifications framework (HQF), aiming at a coherent and comprehensive classification of qualifications from all parts and levels of education and training. Law 3879/2010 on the development of lifelong learning and other provisions set the ground for developing the HQF, and introduced levels and the learning outcomes concept as essential elements of qualifications and awards. The HQF has eight levels, with level descriptors defined in terms of knowledge (factual and theoretical), skills (cognitive and practical) and competence (autonomy and responsibility).

From a policy point of view, besides responding to the European qualifications framework initiative, work on the HQF is directly linked to the country's efforts to develop a framework for improving lifelong learning policies and practices, to aid transparency and comparability of qualifications, to allow recognition and certification of all kinds of education and training, and enhance horizontal and vertical mobility. Strengthening the learning outcomes dimension in all subsystems of education and training is considered a precondition for moving towards lifelong learning. This will provide the basis for a more transparent and open qualification system. First stage development has focused on the range of qualifications awarded within the formal system and, in a long-term perspective, it is planned to accommodate non-formal and informal learning.

The HQF is at an early operational stage. Its establishment in the Hellenic education and training community has been supported by several developments in education and training legislation over recent years. The legal basis of the HQF is to be further strengthened; a draft presidential decree clarifying operational aspects has been prepared and is awaiting formal adoption. The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the HQF. The National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) was set up in 2011 as the main body for HQF implementation; it has been designated as EQF NCP. It cooperates with the Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (previously Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency) on quality issues. An advisory committee, comprising representatives from public administration, the education and academic community, social partners and external consultants, was also established to support EOPPEP.

The inclusion of qualifications in the framework is based on qualification types according to the following specifications: title of award, level, awarding body, summary descriptor, volume of learning, purpose, education sector, learning outcomes, employment relevance and progression possibilities. Qualification types from VET, general education and higher education have been assigned to HQF levels. The coexistence, at level 5, of qualifications from post-secondary non-tertiary education and qualifications from initial vocational training has become a subject of reflection among stakeholders. A qualifications register has been developed and includes 724 learning-outcomes-based qualifications from the formal education system. HQF and EQF levels have started to be indicated on new qualifications (e.g. for EPAL apprenticeships, level 5) and on certificate and diploma supplements in VET and higher education. A number of private education bodies have expressed interest in the inclusion of their awards in the framework. A dialogue has also started on the role and contribution of the framework to the recognition and equivalence of qualifications. Future plans include the development, by EOPPEP in cooperation with education and labour market stakeholders, of a methodology for

classifying qualifications acquired through non-formal education, based on knowledge, skills and competences.

A survey was commissioned by EOPPEP in 2017, part of actions aimed at evaluating the impact of the HQF and its referencing to the EQF. It indicated a very high level of awareness and understanding of the framework among education and training providers and end-users (95.2% of respondents were aware of the HQF, 80.2% were aware of its structure, and 74.8% were aware of how it was referenced to the EQF). Most respondents were also favourable regarding the usefulness of qualifications frameworks in general, and in presenting the knowledge, skills and competences of employees.

The HQF was referenced to the EQF in 2015 and self-certification against the QF-EHEA is in progress.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Greece.

Table 14. **Hellenic national qualifications framework (HQF)**

HQF level	VET	General education	Higher education	EQF levels
8			Doctorate (*Διδακτορικό Δίπλωμα*) (Universities)	8
7			Master degree (*Μεταπτυχιακό Δίπλωμα Ειδίκευσης*) (Universities/technological education institutions (TEI)-higher education)	7
6			Bachelor degree (*Πτυχίο Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης*) (Universities/TEI-higher education)	6

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- EOPPEP (The national organisation for the certification of qualifications and vocational guidance) is the designated EQF NCP: http://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/en/
- HQF and the EQF: http://nqf.gov.gr/
- Greek qualifications register: https://proson.eoppep.gr/en/Qualifications
- EOPPEP (2016). *Greece – EQF referencing report* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

HQF level	VET	General education	Higher education	EQF levels
5	Vocational post-secondary school 'degree' (**) for graduates of EPAL apprenticeship class, level 5 (post-secondary level) (*Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου 5 – ΕΠΑΛ*) Vocational training diploma (post-secondary level) (*Δίπλωμα Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου 5) (vocational training institute) (Ινστιτούτο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, ΙΕΚ*) Vocational training diploma (*) (*Δίπλωμα Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου Μεταδευτεροβάθμιας Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, ΙΕΚ*) (post-secondary level) Post-secondary non-tertiary education diploma or 'degree' (**) (*Δίπλωμα ή Πτυχίο Ανωτέρας Σχολής*)			5
4	Vocational school (*Επαγγελματικές Σχολές*) (EPAS, *ΕΠΑΣ*) certificate (*Πτυχίο ΕΠΑΣ*) Vocational upper secondary school (*Επαγγελματικά Λύκεια*) (EPAL, *ΕΠΑΛ*) 'degree' (**) (*Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου 4 – ΕΠΑΛ*) EPAL certificate (*Απολυτήριο Επαγγελματικού Λυκείου – ΕΠΑΛ Επιπέδου 4*)	General upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Απολυτήριο Γενικού Λυκείου*)		4
3	Vocational training school (*Σχολές Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, ΣΕΚ* – SEK) certificate (post lower secondary level) (*Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας Επιπέδου 3 – ΣΕΚ*) (***) IEK certificate (*) (initial vocational training-post lower secondary level) (*Πιστοποιητικό Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, Επίπεδο 1 – ΙΕΚ*)			3
2		Lower secondary school certificate (three years) (*Απολυτήριο Γυμνασίου*)		2
1		Primary school certificate (six years) (*Απολυτήριο Δημοτικού*)		1

(*) This qualification is no longer being awarded since the enactment of Law 4186/2013.

(**) The word 'degree' used with quotation marks is a direct translation from the Greek terminology as it appears in the legislation (*ptychio*). In Greek, the word *ptychio* is used for titles of study from different education levels (higher, secondary, etc.). It is not to be confused with its usage in the English language, where degree refers to a higher education title of study, i.e. bachelor degree.

(***) This programme was discontinued by law 4386/2016. Cohorts already enrolled at that time were able to complete their studies and to acquire the qualification; the last one graduated in 2018/19.

Source: EOPPEP, 2020 (email communication).

HU

13. HUNGARY

The comprehensive Hungarian qualifications framework (HuQF) for lifelong learning was adopted in 2012 through a government decision (Government Decision No 1229/2012 (VII. 6)) which regulated the development phase of the framework. It has eight levels defined in terms of four categories of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and autonomy and responsibility. The HuQF currently encompasses State-recognised national qualifications that can be acquired in general education, higher education (including higher VET programmes and short-cycle programmes at level 5 that are included in the higher education register), vocational qualifications included in the national vocational qualifications register (NVQR), and certain types of adult education certificate under the Act on adult training. The HuQF is also open to including other types of non-formal training, international qualifications and certificates awarded by private providers.

The HuQF is seen as a communication framework. Its main objectives include: improving transparency, transferability and comparability of national qualifications and promoting harmonisation of the different qualifications subsystems; strengthening the learning outcomes approach at each level of education and promoting recognition of learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal settings; improving the relevance of qualifications for the labour market; and supporting national policy coordination and stakeholder cooperation.

The framework has reached an early operational stage. Overall responsibility for developing and implementing the HuQF is shared between the Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry for Innovation and Technology (previously Ministry for National Economy). The Education Authority hosts the EQF NCP. Between 2011 and 2014, HuQF development was carried out as part of three projects of the Social renewal operational programme (SROP) (for VET and adult learning, higher education and general education) providing conceptual clarifications, technical solutions and capacity building across subsystems; an inter-ministerial task force was set up to programme, harmonise and monitor this phase. Development of the NQF has been gradually linked to new legal provisions in all education and training subsystems. Streamlining the operation and further implementation of the HuQF would be an important step to progress the framework to the next operational stage.

HuQF and EQF levels are indicated in the national qualifications database, which contains over 3 000 qualifications, mostly from higher education and VET. HuQF levels are indicated on secondary school-leaving examination certificates (level 4) and on bachelor and master degrees. The VET system has been under reform and HuQF levels have also been indicated on VET qualification documents since 2019. As part of the reform, the national vocational qualifications register (NVQR) is being renewed, and the number of VET qualifications will be reduced.

Introducing and putting in practice the learning outcomes approach in the different education and training subsystems is a key area of work, and the HuQF has been a catalyst in this regard. A modular and competence-based approach to qualifications is present in vocational education and training. The establishment of sectoral skills councils through amendments to the VET act in 2018 reinforces the role of employers in qualification and programme development. In general education, revision of the national core curriculum started in 2017 aiming to incorporate the use of learning outcomes. Implementing the outcome orientation in higher education has been challenging, but significant changes were introduced; a 2016 decree requires all higher education institutions to redefine higher education and higher vocational programmes in line with the HuQF level descriptors and to adjust curricula to the new standards starting from 2017. As of 2018, higher education institutions launched curriculum redesign projects and academic staff development activities financed by SROP for better use of learning outcomes.

The HuQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in February 2015.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Hungary.

Table 15. **Hungarian national qualifications framework (HuQF)**

HuQF levels	Types of qualification	EQF levels
8	PhD/DLA (doctor of liberal arts) (*Doktori fokozat*)	8
7	Master degree (MA/MSc) (*Mesterfokozat*) Advanced postgraduate qualifications (*Felsőfokú szakirányú továbbképzés*) – having as entry requirement a MA/MSc degree	7
6	Bachelor degree (BA/BSc) (*Alapfokozat*) Advanced VET qualifications (*Felsőfokú végzettséghez kötött szakképesítés*) – having as entry requirement a BSc degree Advanced postgraduate qualifications (*Felsőfokú szakirányú továbbképzés*) – having as entry requirement a BA/BSc degree)	6
5	Postsecondary full and add-on* VET qualifications (*Érettségire épülő szakirányú OKJ szakképesítés*) – having as entry requirement the upper secondary school leaving examination Higher VET qualification – having as entry requirement specific higher education qualifications (*szakirányú*)	5
4	Certificate for upper secondary school leaving examination (*érettségi bizonyítvány*) General upper secondary school leaving certificate (*gimnáziumi záróbizonyítvány*) Vocational grammar school leaving certificate (*szakgimnáziumi záróbizonyítvány*) Vocational secondary school leaving certificate (*szakközépiskolai záróbizonyítvány*) Full/add-on* VET qualification of vocational secondary schools (*szakiskolában megszerezhető teljes vagy ráépüléses OKJ szakképesítés*) Partial**/full VET qualification of vocational grammar schools (*szakgimnáziumban megszerezhető rész- vagy teljes OKJ szakképesítés*)	4
3	Leaving certificate and VET qualification (vocational schools for SEN students) (*Speciális szakiskolai záróbizonyítvány és OKJ szakképesítés*) Lower secondary and secondary*** level partial**, full and add-on* VET qualifications (*Alapfokú és középfokú teljes, rész- és ráépüléses OKJ szakképesítés*)	3
2	Primary (general) school leaving qualification (*általános iskolai záróbizonyítvány*) – primary level educational attainment, eight years Leaving certificate of skills development (vocational schools for SEN students) (eight years) (*Speciális készségfejlesztő szakiskolai bizonyítvány*) Partial** VET qualification after Vocational Bridge Programme (*Híd program tanúsítvány*)	2
1	Leaving certificate after six grades of primary school (*6. osztályos általános iskolai bizonyítvány*) – for students who move to general secondary schools covering grades 7 to 12	1

(*) Add-on qualifications build on one or more full qualifications. These consist of additional modules that extend the scope of activities for which the holder is qualified.

(**) Partial qualifications cover a subset of the modules included in a full qualification. They prepare the holder for simpler occupations or for a narrower scope of tasks.

(***) Lower secondary and secondary qualifications have different access requirements.

Source: Hungarian Education Authority, 2020 (email communication).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Education Authority (*Oktatási Hivatal*) hosts the EQF NCP: http://www.oktatas.hu/
- HuQF/EQF web page: https://www.hungarianqualification.eu/qualification_frameworks/eqf
- HuQF qualifications database: https://www.hungarianqualification.eu/search
- Hungarian Education Authority (2015). *Referencing and self-certification report of the Hungarian qualifications framework to the EQF and to the QF-EHEA.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

IE

14. IRELAND

The Irish national framework of qualifications (NFQ) is among the earliest qualifications frameworks developed in Europe. First proposed in legislation in 1999 and launched in 2003, its statutory basis was reaffirmed in the 2012 Qualifications and quality assurance (Education and Training) Act, which also introduced changes in governance and established Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) as a single qualifications and quality assurance body, responsible for promotion, maintenance, implementation, further development and review of the framework. The 2019 Qualifications and quality assurance amendment Act strengthened the legal basis on which all qualifications are included in the NFQ, as well as the regulatory role of QQI.

Development of the NFQ was part of a broader policy agenda of moving towards a lifelong learning society, through a more flexible and integrated system of qualifications, increased quality of awards and a shift in the focus of qualifications from inputs to outcomes. While the initial aims of classification and transparency of qualifications remain important, the majority of stakeholders currently view the quality assurance function of the NFQ as the highest priority, followed by communication, progression and recognition functions. The framework is viewed as an enabler of wider reform, with implications for setting standards, developing awards, teaching, assessment, and programme design.

The main building blocks of the comprehensive NFQ are the 10 learning-outcomes-based levels, level descriptors and award types. The framework currently covers all types and levels of qualifications available through formal education and training. Each NFQ level is based on nationally agreed standards of knowledge (breadth and kind), know-how and skills (range and selectivity) and competence (context, role, learning to learn and insight). Five classes of award type have been determined to describe the purpose, volume and progression opportunities of individual awards: major, minor, supplemental, professional and special-purpose awards.

The NFQ has reached advanced operational stage. This has been achieved through a combination of legislation, institutional reform, and political support, which helped integrate the NFQ in broader education, training and labour market policies. All qualifications awarded by national public bodies (currently QQI, the State Examinations Commission, the institutes of technology, and the universities) have been included in the framework, and work is under way to include qualifications awarded outside the nationally regulated qualification system. With the 2019 Qualifications and quality assurance amendment Act, QQI has been granted new powers to include in the NFQ qualifications issued by a broader range of awarding bodies, such as private, professional and international organisations. A new class of awarding body will be established for this purpose, the 'listed awarding body'. Related policy and procedures will be informed by the quality assurance principles in Annex IV of the 2017 EQF recommendation.

The learning outcomes approach has been implemented in all subsystems. While there is no single national framework for validation of non-formal and informal learning, arrangements for recognition of prior learning leading to NFQ qualifications are in place in all subsystems except general education, and are fully integrated with existing arrangements for qualifications. Visibility and use of the NFQ has increased both inside and outside the education and training environment. Consultation and stakeholder involvement have been key features of the NQF process since the beginning, and have materialised in strong consensus on the importance of the NFQ in the Irish skills and qualifications landscape. Two NQF evaluation studies have been carried out so far: in 2009 and 2017. The latter study found that the NFQ has had a positive effect on transparency and quality of qualifications, access to education and training, progression between education levels and international mobility, recognition of learning acquired outside the formal system, and on matching skills with employment opportunities.

The Irish NFQ was self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2006 and referenced to the EQF in 2009. Following the significant legislative, institutional and technical developments over the past decade, it is envisaged that an updated report covering both referencing of the NFQ to the EQF and self-certification to QF-EHEA will be presented in 2020.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Ireland.

Table 16. **Irish national qualifications framework**

NFQ levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
10	Doctoral degree Higher Doctorate	8
9	Master degree Postgraduate diploma Professional Award	7
8	Honours bachelor degree Higher diploma Professional Award	6
7	Ordinary bachelor degree Professional Award	
6	Advanced certificate e.g. level 6 advanced certificate in horticulture Higher certificate Professional Award	5
5	Level 5 certificate e.g. level 5 certificate in hospitality operations Leaving certificate Professional Award	4
4	Level 4 certificate e.g. level 4 certificate in engineering skills Leaving certificate	3
3	Level 3 certificate e.g. level 3 certificate in information and communication technology Junior certificate (*)	2
2	Level 2 certificate e.g. level 2 certificate in general learning	1
1	Level 1 certificate e.g. level 1 certificate in communications	

(*) The Junior certificate (NFQ level 3) was last issued in 2016. It has been replaced by a Junior cycle profile of achievement (JCPA); the formal inclusion of the JCPA within the NFQ is subject to discussion.

Source: Adapted from QQI: http://www.nfq-qqi.com/index.html

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) hosts the EQF NCP: http://www.qqi.ie
- NFQ/EQF website: https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx
- QQI qualifications database: http://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=awards
- National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2009). *Referencing of the Irish national framework of qualifications to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

IT

15. ITALY

The Italian NQF was legally established in January 2018, via a decree signed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education, University and Research, and published in the Official Journal. It was the result of a lengthy process, involving a broad range of stakeholders at national and regional levels, reforms and technical work.

Since 2003, reforms have been implemented in upper secondary general education, VET and higher education, anticipating the principles of a learning-outcomes-based NQF. Law 92/2012 on labour market reform and Decree 13/2013 were important milestones in this work, including provisions for a national system for certification of competences and services for validation of non-formal and informal learning, and a national repository of education, training and vocational qualifications awarded at national and regional levels and described in terms of learning outcomes. In 2015, stakeholders reached agreement on an operational common framework for national recognition of regional qualifications and related skills – the national framework of regional qualifications – followed by an inter-ministerial decree. The *Atlas of work and qualifications* has been set up as a methodological and information tool for the rationalisation of the high number and diversity of regional VET qualifications, with over 4 000 VET regional qualifications classified and included so far.

The comprehensive NQF is seen as supporting the links between the national repository and the EQF. Its objectives include: improving access, transparency and permeability of the qualifications system; promoting the currency of qualifications; promoting the validation and certification of competences acquired in non-formal, informal and work-based contexts; and contributing to increased quality of education. It has eight levels covering qualifications from general education, higher education, and VET qualifications administered at regional level. Professional and international qualifications are to be included in the future. Level descriptors are defined in the three domains of the EQF (knowledge, skills, and responsibility and autonomy). Sub-descriptors have also been developed by extending the EQF level descriptors to cover all qualifications available nationally.

The EQF NCP – since 2017 hosted by the new National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies (ANPAL) – is responsible for implementing the NQF, for the coordination of the allocation process, and for referencing the NQF to the EQF. It is supported by the National Institute for Public Policies Analysis (INAPP) – formerly ISFOL – which acts as an independent evaluator for levelling and referencing. Guidelines for levelling and inclusion of qualifications into the NQF are being developed.

Formal national qualifications (general education, VET and higher education qualifications) awarded by the Ministry of Education and University and those awarded by the regions in the framework of State-Regions agreements were referenced directly to the eight EQF levels, using the EQF level descriptors. The first referencing report was presented to the EQF advisory group in May 2013. Following the adoption of the comprehensive NQF in 2018, an updated referencing report will be presented by 2021, also covering regional qualifications that were not included in the initial referencing.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Italy.

Table 17. **Italian qualifications referenced to the EQF**

EQF levels	Italian formal qualifications
8	Research doctorate (*Dottorato di ricerca*) Academic diploma for research training (*Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca*) Specialisation diploma (*Diploma di specializzazione*) Second level university master (*Master universitario di secondo livello*) Academic specialisation diploma (II) (*Diploma accademico di specializzazione (II)*) Higher specialisation diploma or master (II) (*Diploma di perfezionamento o Master (II)*)
7	Master degree (*Laurea magistrale*) Second level academic diploma (*Diploma accademico di secondo livello*) First level university master (*Master universitario di primo livello*) Academic specialisation diploma (I) (*Diploma accademico di specializzazione*) Higher specialisation diploma or master (I) (*Diploma di perfezionamento o Master (I)*)
6	Bachelor degree (*Laurea*) First level academic diploma (*Diploma accademico di primo livello*)
5	Higher technical education diploma (*Diploma di tecnico superiore*)
4	Professional technician diploma (*Diploma professionale di tecnico (*)*) Upper secondary education diploma (*Licei diploma liceale*) Upper secondary education diploma – technical schools (*Diploma di istruzione tecnica*) Upper secondary education diploma – vocational schools (*Diploma di istruzione professionale*) Higher technical specialisation certificate (*Certificato di specializzazione tecnica superiore*)
3	Professional operator certificate (*Attestato di qualifica di operatore professionale (*)*)
2	Compulsory education certificate (*Certificato delle competenze di base acquisite in esito all'assolvimento dell'obbligo di istruzione (**)*)
1	Lower secondary school-leaving diploma (*Diploma di licenza conclusiva del primo ciclo di istruzione*)

(*) Competent authority: regions.

(**) Competent authority: Ministry of Education, University and Research or regions, according to type of education pathway.

Source: Adapted from Italian Ministry of Labour; ISFOL (2012).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies (ANPAL) hosts the EQF NCP (as of 2017): http://www.anpal.gov.it/europa/european-qualifications-framework
- The *Atlas of work and qualifications* is available at: https://atlantelavoro.inapp.org
- Portal of the Ministry of Education, University and Research with information on higher education programmes: www.universitaly.it
- Italian Ministry of Labour; ISFOL (2012). *First Italian referencing report to the European qualifications framework.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

LV

16. LATVIA

Latvia introduced a comprehensive NQF, the Latvian qualifications framework (LQF) in 2010 (Cabinet regulations No 931/2010). The LQF is an important tool for describing the Latvian qualifications and education system, for both international and national stakeholders, and for ensuring greater lifelong learning and mobility opportunities for all individuals according to their needs. It aims to increase transparency and consistency of qualifications, and to strengthen the link between education and the labour market. The LQF covers qualifications from formal education (general (LQF levels 1 to 4), vocational (LQF levels 1 to 4), and higher education (LQF levels 5 to 8)), as well as professional qualifications (LQF levels 2 to 4). Level descriptors are based on learning outcomes and defined in terms of knowledge (knowledge and comprehension), skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills) and competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment). They were elaborated taking into account EQF level descriptors, as well as State education and occupational standards (in general and vocational education), and Dublin descriptors and Bloom's taxonomy (in higher education).

The LQF is operational. Its development started in 2009. The Ministry of Education and Science has led development and implementation of the LQF, and the Academic Information Centre was designated as the EQF NCP with a key role in the referencing process and in promoting stakeholder participation. The referencing process was carried out in two stages: the first stage (2009-11) involved establishment of the LQF and its referencing to the EQF; the second stage (2013-18) involved further development of the LQF, strengthening its legal basis, and introduction of several pilot projects supporting the implementation of the framework (e.g. developing sectoral qualifications frameworks and modularisation of vocational education programmes).

Implementation was supported by several large European Social Fund projects with an emphasis on increasing the quality of vocational education and developing a system for sectoral qualifications linked to the LQF. A number of studies were carried out by the Academic Information Centre to assess the progress made. The latest study from 2016 analysed the changes in the education and training system and their influence on the development of the LQF. Work on the framework has been one of the driving forces for promoting the use of learning outcomes. By 2018, the terminology and principles introduced with the LQF have become an integral part of education reforms. Work on implementing the LQF has been complemented by work on developing a system for validation of knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

The LQF is now firmly embedded in the education system, and more adapted to current national and European developments in education and employment. The Vocational Education Law (1999) was amended in 2015 and the five levels of professional qualifications (introduced in 1999 and still in use today) were referenced to levels 2 to 7 of the LQF. Twelve sectoral expert councils were established for the main economic sectors and, in 2018, 15 sectoral qualifications frameworks were legally approved. Discussions were carried out on the levelling of craftsman and journeyman qualifications to the LQF; these are now included in the sectoral qualifications frameworks, which in turn are linked to LQF levels. The Education Law (1998) was amended in 2015 to include the definition of the LQF, its scope and general characteristics. The Cabinet regulations No 322/2017 on the education classification of Latvia specify level descriptors (knowledge, skills and competences) and the correspondence between types of education programme and LQF/EQF levels. The initial placement of some qualifications at LQF levels 1 to 4 has been revised, a new qualification was introduced at LQF level 8 (Professional Doctor diploma in arts), and professional qualifications at

LQF levels 2 to 4 were included. Level descriptors have been reviewed and those at levels 1 to 4 and at level 8 have been slightly amended.

A database of all Latvian qualifications included in the LQF was established in 2016 and is being further developed. Inclusion of reference to EQF/LQF levels in diploma supplements for higher education qualifications has been legally regulated since 2013, and inclusion of LQF levels on newly issued vocational education and professional qualification documents has been mandatory since 2017. Inclusion of levels on general education qualifications is still under discussion.

The LQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in October 2011. An updated referencing report was presented to the EQF Advisory Group in 2019.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Latvia.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Academic Information Centre is the Latvian EQF NCP: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/en/
- Latvian qualifications database: https://www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv/en/
- AIC (2012). *Referencing of the Latvian education system to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area: self-assessment report.* http://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Latvia_report_1st_version_2011.pdf
- AIC (2018). *Referencing of the Latvian Qualifications Framework to the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area – Updated self-assessment report.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

Table 18. **Latvian national qualifications framework (LQF)**

LQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctor diploma (*doktora diploms*) Professional Doctor diploma in arts (*profesionālā doktora diploms mākslās*)	8
7	Master diploma (*maģistra diploms*) Professional Master diploma (*profesionālā maģistra diploms*) Diploma of professional higher education and Diploma of higher professional qualification (*profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms and augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*)	7
6	Bachelor diploma (*bakalaura diploms*) Professional Bachelor diploma (*profesionālā bakalaura diploms*) Diploma of professional higher education and Diploma of higher professional qualification (*profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms and augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*)	6
5	Diploma of first level professional higher education (*pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms*)	5
4	Certificate of general secondary education (*atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību*) Diploma of vocational secondary education (*diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību*) Certificate of professional qualification (at secondary education level) (*profesionālās kvalifikācijas apliecība (vidējās izglītības pakāpē)*)	4
3	Certificate of vocational education (*atestāts par arodizglītību*) Certificate of professional qualification (at vocational education level) (*profesionālās kvalifikācijas apliecība (arodizglītības pakāpē)*)	3
2	Certificate of general basic education (nine years) (*apliecība par vispārējo pamatizglītību*) Certificate of vocational basic education (*apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību*) Certificate of professional qualification (at basic education level) (*profesionālās kvalifikācijas apliecība (pamatizglītības pakāpē)*)	2
1	Certificate of general basic education (*apliecība par vispārējo pamatizglītību*) (special education programmes for learners with (severe) mental development disorders or multiple severe developmental disorders)	1

Source: Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No 322/2017: *Regulations on the education classification of Latvia*. Annex 1. https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291524-noteikumi-par-latvijas-izglitibas-klasifikaciju
AIC (2018). https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf
Latvian qualifications database (2020). https://www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv/en/

17. LITHUANIA

LT

The Lithuanian national qualifications framework (LTQF) was formally adopted through a government resolution in 2010 (amended in 2011 and 2019), and is embedded in the legislation governing education and training and in national strategies. It has eight learning-outcomes-based levels and covers all officially recognised qualifications from formal education and training. Currently, VET and higher education qualifications are included. Revision and inclusion of general education qualifications at levels 1 to 4 is in progress. Discussions have recently been initiated to open the framework to labour market qualifications acquired through non-formal learning. A systemic approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning is under development, with related measures included in recent policy documents, and amendments of legislation, both at national and sectoral levels.

Development of the LTQF has been part of an effort to reform and modernise Lithuanian education and training, and its design was influenced by existing arrangements, in particular the five vocational education levels, and the three levels (cycles) of higher education. The framework addresses five main objectives: better adapting qualifications to the needs of the labour market and society; improving clarity of qualification design for better assessment and recognition; increasing transparency of qualifications to assist individuals in using them; supporting national and international mobility; and promoting lifelong learning.

Level descriptors of the LTQF use criteria characterising professional activities (complexity, autonomy and variability of activities), reflecting the conception of qualification in the country, as 'level of readiness for a specific professional activity' (QVETDC, 2012, p. 31). In addition to characteristics of activities, more detailed descriptors are also defined in terms of cognitive, functional, and general competences, broadly reflecting the EQF distinction between knowledge, skills and competence (now autonomy and responsibility). Implementation of the LTQF is seen as an important part of a strategy to move towards more consistent and comprehensive use of learning outcomes across education and training subsystems.

The LTQF is at an early operational stage. Since 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science has had overall responsibility for the LTQF. The Qualifications and VET Development Centre (QVTDC) has been responsible for day-to-day coordination in cooperation with the Centre for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (SKVC), that supports the implementation of the framework in universities and universities of applied sciences. Development of the LTQF has stimulated cooperation between different stakeholder groups; active involvement of labour market stakeholders has been strengthened.

LTQF levels are used as a reference point and benchmark for review of qualifications and for developing new ones, such as post-secondary VET qualifications at level 5, and modular programmes. While progress has been achieved with regard to qualifications that can be included at LTQF level 5, further clarifying relationships between qualifications at this level remains a challenge for the future. Development of VET programmes and general education curricula in accordance with the NQF are under way. A national qualifications database is in place, including 1500 qualifications from VET and higher education at different qualification levels. LTQF and EQF levels are indicated in the database, and on VET and higher education qualification documents and Europass supplements. The full potential of the framework to aid access, progression, quality assurance and validation policies is yet to be accomplished.

The LTQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2011. A joint referencing/self-certification report was prepared, reflecting the comprehensive character of the framework.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Lithuania.

Table 19. **Lithuanian national qualifications framework (LTQF)**

LTQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma (*Daktaro diplomas*)	8
7	Master diploma (*Magistro diplomas*) Certificate of residency (*Rezidentūros pažymėjimas*)	7
6	Bachelor diploma (*Bakalauro diplomas*) Professional bachelor diploma (*Profesinio bakalauro diplomas*)	6
5	VET qualification, level 5 (*Profesinio mokymo diplomas*) * Study certificate (*Studijų pažymėjimas*) – short-cycle HE programmes	5
4	VET qualification, level 4 (*Profesinio mokymo diplomas*) *Matura* diploma (*Brandos atestatas*) ** (on completion of the upper secondary education programme and passing matura examinations)	4
3	VET qualification, level 3 (*Profesinio mokymo diplomas*) Lower secondary education certificate (*Pagrindinio išsilavinimo pažymėjimas*) ** (completion of lower secondary education programme and testing learning outcomes) (grades 5 to10)	3
2	VET qualification, level 2 (*Profesinio mokymo diplomas*)	2
1	VET qualification, level 1 (*Profesinio mokymo diplomas*)	1

(*) Presently only VET qualifications are awarded at NQF level 5. Short-cycle study programmes, leading to a *study certificate* were introduced in legislation in 2018 (Law on science and higher education); implementation provisions are at a preparatory stage.

(**) The legislation defining provisions for general education curricula stipulates that learning outcomes of lower secondary education programmes are referenced to NQF level 3, while learning outcomes of upper secondary education programmes are referenced to NQF level 4.

Source: Adapted from the Qualifications and VET Development Centre, 2020. https://www.kpmpc.lt/kpmpc/en/information/qualifications-framework/

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Qualifications and VET Development Centre (QVETDC) is the EQF NCP: http://www.kpmpc.lt/kpmpc/en/
- LTQF webpage:https://www.kpmpc.lt/kpmpc/en/information/qualifications-framework/
- Qualifications database: https://www.aikos.smm.lt/en/Pages/Default.aspx
- QVETDC (2012). *Referencing the Lithuanian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area – National report 2012.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

18. LUXEMBOURG

LU

Starting in 2009, Luxembourg introduced a comprehensive NQF (*Cadre luxembourgeois des qualifications*, CLQ) covering all levels and types of qualifications across general education, vocational education and training, and higher education. It is an eight-level outcome-based framework, reflecting the gradual development of a competence-based approach over recent decades. Level descriptors were defined in three categories, starting from the existing qualifications system and taking into account the EQF descriptors: knowledge, aptitudes (cognitive and practical) and attitudes. The 'attitudes' descriptor refers to responsibility, autonomy and context. An overarching and comprehensive notion of competence is used in Luxembourg, meaning 'an organised set of knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes the learner needs to have in order to be able to complete a task, whether in a school context or in life in general' (Ministry of Higher Education and Research; Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth, 2014, p. 41).

The CLQ is seen as a guiding and non-binding tool for lifelong learning. Its overall objective is to aid transparency and understanding of qualifications at home and abroad. Being host to many workers from neighbouring countries, such as Belgium, Germany and France, Luxembourg sees the development of the CLQ as a way to aid comparison and recognition of qualifications. Further, the framework aims to function as a reference point for curriculum development and as a tool to improve overall consistency of education and training provision.

The CLQ has reached an operational stage; however, implementation has been rather slow following the completion of its referencing to the EQF in mid-2012, partly due to the lack of a legislative basis. An important milestone was reached in November 2016, with the adoption of the Law on recognition of professional qualifications (Law 231/2016), which establishes the CLQ as the formal reference point for recognition of professional qualifications acquired outside Luxembourg. This inclusion in legislation signals official commitment to the framework and represents an important step towards full operational status. The formal adoption of the CLQ as a lifelong learning tool is still under discussion.

Started as a systematic description of qualifications from the formal education and training system (with the same standards being used also for validation of non-formal and informal learning), the CLQ may open to qualifications awarded outside the formal system, to address the high number of citizens holding unofficial and non-recognised certificates and diplomas. To accomplish this, specific approaches to accreditation and quality assurance of these qualifications, and to their inclusion in the framework, are being considered. Another key area of future work is the dissemination of the CLQ on a wider scale. The Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth, which also acts as EQF-NCP, coordinates the development and implementation of the framework in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. Cooperation between stakeholders on various aspects of the CLQ has been a feature since the beginning.

The framework was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2012. NQF and EQF levels are indicated on Europass certificate and diploma supplements in VET and higher education.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Luxembourg.

Table 20. **Luxembourg national qualifications framework (CLQ)**

CLQ levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma (Phd) (*Doctorat*) Diploma for specialised training in medicine (*Diplôme de formation spécifique en médecine générale*)	8
7	Master diploma (*Master*)	7
6	Bachelor diploma (*Bachelor*)	6
5	Master craftsman diploma (*Brevet de maîtrise*) Advanced technician diploma (*Brevet de technicien supérieur*) Specialised advanced technician diploma (*Brevet de technicien supérieur spécialisé*)	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (*Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires*) Technical secondary school leaving certificate (D*iplôme de fin d'études secondaires techniques*) Technician diploma (*Diplôme de technicien*)	4
3	Vocational aptitude diploma (*Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle – DAP*) Certificate attesting completion of middle cycle of technical secondary education (*Certificat de réussite du cycle moyen de l'enseignement secondaire technique*) Certificate attesting completion of five years of secondary education (*Certificat de réussite de 5 années d'enseignement secondaire*)	3
2	Vocational capability certificate (*Certificat de capacité professionnelle – CCP*)	2
1	Certificate attesting completion of lower cycle of technical secondary education (*Certificat de réussite du cycle inférieur de l'enseignement secondaire technique*)	1

Source: Law 231/2016 on the recognition of professional qualifications. *Official Journal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*, No 4263, 18.11.2016. http://data.legilux.public.lu/file/eli-etat-leg-memorial-2016-231-fr-pdf.pdf
Ministry of Higher Education and Research; Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth (2014). https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth acts as EQF NCP: http://www.men.public.lu/fr/index.html
- CLQ/EQF web page: https://www.lifelong-learning.lu/Detail/Article/Comprendre/le-cadre-luxembourgeois-des-qualifications/en
- Information on secondary education programmes: http://portal.education.lu/programmes
- Register of higher education diplomas: http://www.mesr.public.lu/enssup/registre_des_titres/index.html
- Ministry of Higher Education and Research; Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth (2014). *Report on referencing the Luxembourg qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

19. MALTA

MT

Work on the comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning (Malta qualifications framework, MQF) started in 2005 (Legal Notice 347/2005) and the framework was launched in 2007 after a consultation period. It is an eight-level learning-outcomes-based framework, with two introductory levels (A and B) assigned below EQF level 1. Its objectives include: aiding transparency and understanding of qualifications nationally and internationally, promoting parity of esteem of qualifications from different learning pathways, and improving overall consistency and coherence of the qualification system. The MQF is seen as a catalyst for education reform, addressing key challenges in education, training and the labour market; it is an important tool in the shift to learning-outcomes-based qualifications and in promoting lifelong learning by improving access, progression and mobility, and validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences. It also has a quality assurance function, supporting the national quality assurance framework for further and higher education institutions.

The MQF encompasses qualifications and awards at all levels, acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning. It is linked to credit systems, in particular ECTS and ECVET. A distinction is made between qualifications and awards, based on the workload required, measured in credit points; qualifications need to have a minimum number of credit points, while awards are related to shorter programmes that have fewer credits compared to qualifications at the same level. Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, and are accompanied by a more detailed set of learning outcomes aimed to facilitate operationalisation of MQF requirements; these are defined in terms of knowledge and understanding, applying knowledge and understanding, communication skills, judgemental skills, learning skills, and autonomy and responsibility.

The MQF is operational. Key responsibilities have been agreed among stakeholders. Important developments took place in 2012 with amendments to the Education Act (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012), new legal provisions on quality assurance in further and higher education, validation of non-formal and informal learning, and strengthening of the legal basis of the MQF as a regulatory framework for classification of qualifications and awards. The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), under the Ministry of Education and Employment, was established as Malta's national quality assurance agency, replacing the Malta Qualifications Council and the National Commission for Higher Education. The NCFHE became the main body in charge of MQF implementation; it is also responsible for establishing a national validation system, and leads development and implementation of occupational standards in cooperation with social partners, the sector skills committee and sector skills units.

MQF levels are used in incentive schemes such as scholarships and tax rebates, as well as on the labour market. MQF level descriptors have been used in drafting and reviewing national occupational standards for over 50 occupations in different sectors, which are used in the validation of non-formal and informal learning and guide curriculum development. A study on levels of awareness of the framework and its links to the EQF, and the ways in which the MQF is used, was conducted in 2016. In 2019, an MQF working group was set up to support further development. The NCFHE has initiated an assessment study to review the impact of the MQF since its inception. Its aims are to analyse the impact of the framework across a wide range of sectors and stakeholders; provide recommendations on possible policy and technical development, on its referencing to the EQF, further implementation, promotion and regulation; and to provide baseline indicators for future reviews.

The MQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2009. The referencing report was revised several times, with the latest version

published in February 2016 (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment and NCFHE, 2016). The MQF is also referenced to the transnational qualifications framework of the small States of the commonwealth (TQF). A national qualifications database is under development, expected to be operational by November 2020.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Malta.

Table 21. **Maltese national qualifications framework (MQF)**

MQF levels	Qualification types		EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree		8
7	Master degree Postgraduate diploma Postgraduate certificate		7
6	Bachelor degree		6
5	Undergraduate diploma Undergraduate certificate	VET higher diploma Foundation degree	5
4	Matriculation certificate Advanced level Intermediate level	VET diploma (iv)	4
3	General education (level 3) SEC grade 1 to 5	VET level 3 (iii)	3
2	General education (level 2) SEC grade 6-7	VET level 2 (ii)	2
1	General education (level 1) School leaving certificate	VET level 1 (i)	1
B	Introductory level B*		
A	Introductory level A*		

(*) These are not yet included in legislation. They were introduced with the 2016 version of the referencing report.
(i) A full VET level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a full secondary school certificate and profile (SSC&P) level 1.
(ii) A full VET level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as four secondary education certificate (SEC) subjects at grade 6 and 7.
(iii) A VET level 3 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as six secondary education certificate (SEC) subjects at grades 1 to 5.
(iv) A VET diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as the matriculation certificate.
Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education and Employment and NCFHE, 2016.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) is the EQF NCP: https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Pages/default.aspx
- The MQF/EQF web page: https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Pages/MQF.aspx
- Register of accredited further and higher education institutions and programmes: http://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/register/Pages/register.aspx
- Malta Ministry of Education and Employment; NCFHE (2016). *Referencing of the Malta qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework and the qualifications framework of the European higher education area.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

NL

20. NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands set up a comprehensive national qualifications framework (the NLQF) building on and integrating its qualifications framework for higher education. The NLQF was adopted in 2011 by approval of the framework proposal (NLQF – EQF Committee, 2011), when the national coordination point (NCP) and its tasks were also established. It is an eight-level framework, with an entry level below EQF level 1, and a sublevel at level 4 (4+). Level descriptors have been influenced by those of the EQF, but were further elaborated. They are defined as knowledge, skills (applying knowledge, problem-solving skills, learning and development skills, information skills, communication skills), responsibility and independence, and also include an explicit 'context' descriptor.

The primary aims of the framework are transparency and comparability through a systematic description of all existing qualifications, classified in two main groups: formal qualifications from general, vocational and higher education, regulated by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare; and qualifications awarded outside public regulation, developed mainly by labour market stakeholders. This double character of the national qualifications system, with private and public provision supplementing each other, is an important feature in NLQF-related developments. While it has been emphasised that the NLQF has no regulatory or reform role, it has influenced the development of quality assurance procedures to support classification of qualifications awarded outside the regulated formal system, and the revision of qualifications and development of new ones, especially in VET. It is also expected to be instrumental in the future development of a credit system covering all education sectors, and it seeks to strengthen the role of validation as an integrated part of the qualifications system.

Benefiting from a strong tradition of the learning outcomes approach and relatively widespread use of validation of prior learning (*Erkenning van Verworven Competentie – EVC*), the NLQF is now fully operational. All government-regulated qualifications have been included in the framework *en bloc* (more than 4 500 qualifications from general education, VET and higher education). Procedures for inclusion of non-regulated qualifications from the labour market are perceived as robust: 88 qualifications of this group were levelled at levels 1 to 7 and included in the NLQF register of non-regulated/private qualifications by May 2020. Inclusion of international qualifications into the NLQF has been explored and one international qualification has been levelled at NLQF level 3 and included in the register. A comprehensive NLQF database for all qualifications that have been assigned an NLQF level is under development.

A revision of legal texts underpinning Dutch education and training was initiated in 2014, and several studies on different aspects of the NLQF have been conducted. A sounding board consisting of key stakeholders was set up following the latest evaluation study (Ockham IPS, 2017), and discussed its conclusions. The need to strengthen the legal basis of the framework, to clarify its role, and to widen communication among stakeholders emerged as crucial for further implementation. Following experience with the classification of non-regulated qualifications, NLQF level descriptors were slightly adapted, with no implications on the initial allocation of qualifications to levels. A draft dedicated NLQF law has been prepared and is expected to be adopted in 2021. This will also regulate the indication of EQF and NLQF levels on qualification documents.

NLQF referencing to the EQF was completed in 2012. An updated referencing report, addressing developments over recent years was presented to the EQF advisory group and adopted in 2019.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Netherlands.

Table 22. **Dutch national qualifications framework (NLQF)**

NLQF levels	Formal qualifications	Other qualifications (*)	EQF levels
8	Doctorate (*Doctoraat*) Designer (*Ontwerper*) Medical specialist (*Medisch specialist*)		8
7	Master degree	Example: Social studies	7
6	Bachelor degree	Examples: Anesthetist employee (*Anesthesiemedewerker*) Certified leader excellent level (*Gecertificeerd leider uitstekend niveau*) Dialysis nurse (*Dialyseverpleegkundige*) Secondary defence formation (*Middelbare defensie vorming*) Officer Royal Military police (*Officier koninklijke marechaussee onderbouw*) Officer Navy force (*Officier korps zeedienst*)	6
5	Associate degree	Examples: Consultant payroll services & benefits (CPB) Hotel service management Operational technician energy production technology (*Operationeel technicus energie productietechniek*) Instructor 5 (*Opleider 5*) Trainer-coach 5	5
4+	Pre-university education (*vwo*) Pre-university education for adults (*vavo-vwo*)		4
4	VET level 4 (*MBO 4*) Upper secondary general education for adults (*vavo-havo*) Upper secondary general education (*havo*)	Examples: Instructor 4 (*Opleider 4*) Airport service agent Application training food technology (*Applicatie opleiding levensmiddelentechnologie*) Industry diploma all-round beautician (*Branchediploma allround schoonheidsspecialist*) Industry diploma medical pedicure (*Branchediploma medisch pedicure*)	4
3	VET level 3 (*MBO 3*)	Examples: Dog grooming (*Hondentoiletteren*) General investigator (*Algemeen Opsporingsambtenaar*) Swimming teacher (*Zwemonderwijzer*) Trainer-coach 3 Industry diploma pedicure (*Branchediploma pedicure*)	3

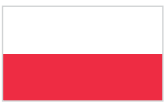
NLQF levels	Formal qualifications	Other qualifications (*)	EQF levels
2	VET level 2 (*MBO 2*) Basic education 3 for adults (*vavo*) Pre-vocational secondary education – theoretical pathway (*vmbo tl*) Pre-vocational secondary education – combined theoretical pathway (*vmbo gl*) Pre-vocational secondary education – advanced vocational pathway (*vmbo kb*) Basic education 3 for adults (*Basiseducatie 3*)	Examples: Military police security (*Marechausseebeveiliger*) Assistant swimming teacher (*Assistent zwemonderwijzer*) Sales employee (*Verkoopmedewerker*)	2
1	VET level 1 (*MBO 1*) Pre-vocational secondary education – basic vocational pathway (*vmbo bb*) Basic education 2 for adults (*Basiseducatie 2*)	Examples: Operating assistant (*Bedieningsassistent*) Kitchen assistant (*Keukenassistent*)	1
Entry level	Basic education 1 for adults (*Basiseducatie 1*)		

(*) Non-regulated qualifications awarded by organisations outside the formal education and training system and relevant for the labour market (e.g. from private training providers, companies, sectors and examination bodies), included in the NLQF following quality assurance procedures. The 'size' of these qualifications varies.

Source: Adapted from van der Sanden, K. et al., 2012. Additional information:
https://www.nlqf.nl/images/downloads/Artikelen/NLQF_Brochure_Engels_2018_site.pdf
The NLQF register of private qualifications: http://www.nlqf.nl/register

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The EQF/NLQF NCP is hosted by the CINOP foundation: https://www.nlqf.nl/english
- NLQF register of non-regulated/private qualifications: http://www.nlqf.nl/register
- Central Register of Vocational Training (CREBO): https://www.duo.nl/open_onderwijsdata/databestanden/mbo/crebo/
- Central Register of Higher Education Study Programmes (CROHO): https://www.duo.nl/zakelijk/hoger-onderwijs/studentenadministratie/croho.jsp
- van der Sanden; K.; Smit, W.; Dashorst, M. (2012). *The referencing document of the Dutch national qualification framework to the European qualification framework.* https://nlqf.nl/images/downloads/NLQF/20122202_Referencing_document_the_Netherlands_NLQF_EQF.pdf
- NLQF-NCP (2019). *Referencing the Dutch qualifications framework (NLQF) to the European qualifications framework – Update September 2019, final version.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf



PL

21. POLAND

Poland started developing a comprehensive NQF (the Polish qualifications framework, PQF) in 2008, aiming to promote lifelong learning, increase access to and quality of qualifications, and respond more directly to the needs of the labour market and society. The PQF is part of the Polish integrated qualifications system (IQS), together with the qualifications register, and arrangements for quality assurance and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The integration and combined use of several instruments for reform in a wider policy strategy, with the overall shift to learning outcomes at its core and addressing all levels and subsystems of education and training, is one of the marks of the Polish approach. The PQF is an important tool for increasing the transparency and consistency of education and training. Beyond its role in describing existing qualifications, it has contributed to the redesign of programmes, standards and curricula, and is embedded in legislation that regulates formal learning. It was formally adopted through the Act on the integrated qualifications system, which entered into force in January 2016.

The PQF consists of eight learning-outcomes-based levels, covering all types of qualifications from general education, VET, higher education and lifelong learning. The framework and the register are also open to regulated qualifications outside the formal system and non-regulated ones from the private sector, provided they meet agreed quality criteria. In an effort to connect subsystems of education and training and to facilitate synergistic developments at sector and subsector level, the PQF introduces level descriptors at three levels of generality. Universal descriptors – expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and social competence – are used for the PQF levels and act as a common reference point for development of more specific descriptors: for the different subsystems (general education, VET, higher education); and for subject areas or economic sectors.

The PQF has now reached an operational stage and is well placed technically, conceptually and legally to support further development of the qualifications system. The IQS Act established the coordination of the IQS and role of stakeholders, the integrated qualifications register, a typology of qualifications, principles for quality assurance and for inclusion of qualifications (including those acquired outside the formal system) into the IQS, and principles and regulations for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Minister of Education is responsible for overall coordination of the PQF; the IQS stakeholder council was set up in 2016 to ensure coherent direction of IQS-related developments, to advise on operation and monitor implementation. Establishment of sectoral skills councils and sectoral qualifications frameworks has started. The Education Research Institute has played a key role in developing the framework and continues to provide expertise and technical assistance to the Minister of Education. By May 2020, 10 265 qualifications had been included in the register, most of which are from formal education (general, VET, and higher education) and were assigned to PQF levels in a first phase. Current implementation actions are focused on the development, levelling and inclusion of qualifications awarded outside formal education and training (regulated and non-regulated/private). Evaluation studies on the functioning of particular structures and processes in the IQS, and research on the regional demand for support in implementing the IQS were completed in 2018. Their results will feed into the revision of the IQS Act, planned for 2020. Starting from 2017, qualification documents issued by schools, district examination committees, chambers of crafts, and universities must include a graphic symbol indicating the PQF level and, from 2019, also the EQF level.

In 2013, the PQF was referenced to the EQF and the national qualifications framework for higher education was self-certified to the QF-EHEA. An update

on PQF developments was presented to the EQF advisory group in December 2016. An updated referencing report will be submitted once changes to the IQS Act have been adopted.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Poland.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Unit of Strategy and Integrated Qualifications System (in the Department of Strategy, Qualifications and Vocational Education) of the Ministry of National Education is the EQF NCP: https://prk.men.gov.pl/en/2en/
- IQS portal: http://kwalifikacje.edu.pl/
- The integrated qualifications register: https://rejestr.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/en/
- Education Research Institute (2013). *Referencing the Polish qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the European qualifications framework.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf
- Education Research Institute (2014). *Self-certification report of the national qualifications framework for higher education.* Warsaw: Education Research Institute. http://biblioteka-krk.ibe.edu.pl/opac_css/doc_num.php?explnum_id=702

Table 22. **Polish national qualifications framework (PQF)**

PQF levels	Qualifications from the formal education system	Regulated and non-statutory qualifications (*)	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma (*Dyplom doktora*) Postgraduate qualification (*Świadectwo ukończenia studiów podyplomowych*)		8
7	Second cycle of higher education diploma (Master) (*Dyplom ukończenia studiów drugiego stopnia*) Integrated first and second cycle diploma (*Dyplom ukończenia jednolitych studiów magisterskich*) Postgraduate qualification (*Świadectwo ukończenia studiów podyplomowych*)	e.g. Diagnosis and psycho-oncological help for oncologically ill people, people after cancer, and their families and surroundings – Psycho-oncologist (*Diagnoza i pomoc psychoonkologiczna osobom chorym onkologicznie, osobom po chorobie nowotworowej oraz ich rodzinom i otoczeniu – Psychoonkolog*) Checking and evaluating responses to examination tasks for matriculation examination in mathematics (*Sprawdzanie i ocenianie odpowiedzi do zadań egzaminacyjnych egzaminu maturalnego z matematyki*)	7
6	First cycle of higher education diploma (Bachelor) (*Dyplom ukończenia studiów pierwszego stopnia*) Postgraduate qualification (*Świadectwo ukończenia studiów podyplomowych*)	e.g. Conducting environmental therapy for children and adolescents (*Prowadzenie terapii środowiskowej dzieci i młodzieży*) Conducting judicial and extrajudicial mediation in business matters (*Prowadzenie mediacji sądowych i pozasądowych w sprawach gospodarczych*) Designing of fire protection – sound warning systems – DSO) (*Projektowanie zabezpieczeń przeciwpożarowych – dźwiękowe systemy ostrzegawcze – DSO*)	6
5	Certificate of professional competence in the profession (*Dyplom potwierdzający kwalifikacje zawodowe / Dyplom zawodowy* (**)) – full qualification Certificate of professional qualification in the profession (*Świadectwo potwierdzające kwalifikację w zawodzie / Certyfikat kwalifikacji zawodowej* (**)) – partial qualification Certified specialist diploma – short cycle (***) (*Świadectwo dyplomowanego specjalisty/specjalisty technologa*)	e.g. Planning, creating and distributing content marketing (*Tworzenie oferty, planowanie i prowadzenie sprzedaży skierowanej do klientów biznesowych – handlowiec*) Conducting training using activating methods (*Prowadzenie szkoleń metodami aktywizującymi*) Conducting skills assessments (*Prowadzenie procesu bilansowania kompetencji*) Data recovery from HDD hard drives (*Odzyskiwanie danych z dysków twardych HDD*) Restaurant work management (*Zarządzanie pracą restauracji*) Planning, creating and distributing marketing content (*Planowanie, tworzenie i dystrybuowanie treści marketingowych*)	5
4	Upper secondary school leaving exam certificate (*Matura*) (four-year general secondary school – *liceum ogólnokształcące*) (*Świadectwo dojrzałości*) Certificate of professional competence in the profession (*Dyplom potwierdzający kwalifikacje zawodowe / Dyplom zawodowy* (**)) – full qualification Certificate of professional qualification in the profession (*Świadectwo potwierdzające kwalifikację w zawodzie / Certyfikat kwalifikacji zawodowe* (**)) – partial qualification	e.g. Designing computer graphics (*Projektowanie grafiki komputerowej*) Designing websites (*Tworzenie witryn internetowych*) Active sales to business customers – sales representative (*Aktywne prowadzenie sprzedaży skierowanej do klientów biznesowych – przedstawiciel handlowy*) Creating clothing templates for the production of industrial clothing (*Konstruowanie szablonów odzieżowych do produkcji przemysłowej odzieży*) Piloting tourist events (*Pilotowanie imprez turystycznych*) Service in health tourism (*Obsługa w turystyce zdrowotnej*)	4

PQF levels	Qualifications from the formal education system	Regulated and non-statutory qualifications (*)	EQF levels
3	Certificate of professional competence in the profession (*Dyplom potwierdzający kwalifikacje zawodowe / Dyplom zawodowy* (**)) – full qualification Certificate of professional qualification in the profession (*Świadectwo potwierdzające kwalifikację w zawodzie / Certyfikat kwalifikacji zawodowej* (**)) – partial qualification	e.g. Assembly of construction woodwork (*Montowanie stolarki budowlanej*) Programming and servicing 3D printing (*Programowanie i obsługiwanie procesu druku 3D*) Preparing food in accordance with market trends and the principles of healthy nutrition (*Przygotowywanie potraw zgodnie z trendami rynkowymi i zasadami zdrowego żywienia*) Programming and operating 3D printing process (*Programowanie i obsługiwanie procesu druku 3D*) Office service (*Prowadzenie obsługi biura*) Preparing dishes in accordance with market trends and healthy eating principles (*Przygotowywanie potraw zgodnie z trendami rynkowymi i zasadami zdrowego żywienia*) Mounting and servicing of connections and indoor installations in fibre optic technology (*Montowanie i serwisowanie przyłączy oraz instalacji wewnątrzbudynkowych w technologii światłowodowej*) Joinery installation (*Montowanie stolarki budowlanej*)	3
2	Lower secondary school leaving certificate (****) (*Świadectwo ukończenia gimnazjum*) Certificate of professional competence in the profession (*Dyplom potwierdzający kwalifikacje zawodowe / Dyplom zawodowy* (**)) – full qualification Certificate of professional qualification in the profession (*Świadectwo potwierdzające kwalifikację w zawodzie / Certyfikat kwalifikacji zawodowej* (**)) – partial qualification Primary school leaving certificate (eight years) (****) *Świadectwo ukończenia szkoły podstawowej (8-letniej)*	e.g. Installation and maintenance of autonomous detectors: carbon monoxide, smoke, heat and gas (*Montaż i konserwacja autonomicznych czujek: tlenku węgla, dymu, ciepła i gazu*) Computer skills certificate – basic level (*Certyfikat umiejętności komputerowych – poziom podstawowy*)	2
1	Primary school leaving certificate (six years) (****) *Świadectwo ukończenia szkoły podstawowej (6-letniej)*		1

(*) State-regulated qualifications awarded outside the formal education and training system and non-regulated qualifications from the private sector (market qualifications) which have a PQF level assigned and have been included in the integrated qualification system (IQS) and the integrated qualification register.

(**) A new structure of upper secondary education is being gradually introduced starting 2019/20, to be completed in 2023/24. Persons who learn based on the core curriculum for vocational education applicable from 1 September 2019 may obtain a certificate of professional competence or certificate of professional qualification in the profession (*Dyplom zawodowy and Certyfikat kwalifikacji zawodowe*, respectively).

(***) Not yet available, but officially possible according to the 2018 Law on Higher Education.

(****) Part of the 2017 reform, lower secondary schools have been phased out; the last group of pupils from these schools graduated in June 2019; pupils graduating from grade 6 of primary school continue education in grade 7 of eight-year primary schools.

Source: Ministry of National Education, 2020 (email communication).
The integrated qualifications register: https://rejestr.kwalifikacje.gov.pl/en/

PT

22. PORTUGAL

The Portuguese NQF (*Quadro Nacional de Qualificações*, QNQ) has been part of a broader education and training reform programme since 2007, aiming to raise the qualification level of the population. Its main objectives are to enhance integration between the different education and training subsystems, improve quality, relevance, transparency and comparability of Portuguese qualifications, along with their understanding abroad, and promote access to lifelong learning and recognition of knowledge and skills.

Several steps were taken to put the national qualifications system into practice and achieve these objectives. The comprehensive NQF (including all levels and types of qualifications) and a national qualifications catalogue (a strategic management tool for non-higher national qualifications and a central reference tool for VET provision) were introduced by Decree-Law No 396/2007 (amended by Decree-Law No 14/2017). This also established a new institutional model, now consisting of the National Agency for Qualifications and VET (ANQEP), the Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of higher education (A3ES), 16 sector qualifications councils, and a network of adult learning centres. The national system for recognition, validation and certification of competences (RVCC) was integrated into the NQF and reformed in 2012 to address better the validation of competences, and training and guidance of youngsters and adults.

The NQF has been in place since October 2010, following ministerial order 782/2009. It is a single reference for classifying all levels and types of qualification acquired via formal, non-formal and informal learning. It has eight levels, with level descriptors defined in terms of knowledge, skills (cognitive or practical), and attitudes (responsibility and autonomy). Higher education qualifications were included in the more detailed framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ-Portugal), which is part of the comprehensive framework.

With the legal framework in place, implementation structures and quality assurance arrangements established, and qualifications assigned to levels, the NQF has reached an operational stage. More than 300 qualifications from 43 education and training areas are included in the national qualifications catalogue at NQF/EQF levels 2, 4 and 5; higher education qualifications are included in a separate database. The VET system is organised around the NQF, which is taken into consideration for access to financial support. Qualification documents from VET and those acquired through validation, and diploma supplements in higher education indicate the corresponding NQF level.

While the first evaluation of its impact is yet to be conducted, the NQF is considered a permanent feature of the national qualifications system, increasingly visible to, and used by, education and training stakeholders. It has been a driving force behind incorporating the learning outcomes approach into Portuguese education and training. National qualifications and curricula in all education sectors have been progressively aligned with the NQF descriptors, a challenging task that is continuing. This also enabled the creation in 2017 of the national credit system for vocational education and training, aligned with some ECVET principles, aimed at increasing permeability between VET and higher education. Future challenges include the integration of international qualifications; dissemination of the NQF and related key concepts among a wide range of stakeholders, especially on the labour market; and the possible review of NQF level 5.

The NQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified against QF-EHEA in June 2011. Two separate referencing reports were presented, for NQF levels 1 to 5 and, respectively, 6 to 8.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Portugal.

Table 24. **Portuguese national qualifications framework (QNQ)**

QNQ levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree (*Doutoramento*)	8
7	Master degree (*Mestrado*)	7
6	Bachelor degree (*Licenciatura*)	6
5	Diploma in technological specialisation (*Diploma de Especialização Tecnológica*)	5
4	Upper secondary education and professional certification (*Ensino secundário obtido por percursos de dupla certificação*) Upper secondary education and professional internship – minimum six months (*Ensino secundário vocacionado para prosseguimento de estudos de nível superior acrescido de estágio profissional – mínimo de seis meses*)	4
3	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (*Ensino secundário vocacionado para prosseguimento de estudos de nível superior*)	3
2	Third cycle of basic education (*3º ciclo do ensino básico obtido no ensino regular*) Third cycle of basic education and professional certification (*3º ciclo do ensino básico obtido por percursos de dupla certificação*)	2
1	Second cycle of basic education (*2º ciclo do ensino básico*)	1

Source: ANQ, 2011.
https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf
ANQEP, 2020 (email communication).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training (ANQEP) is the EQF NCP: http://www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx
- National qualifications catalogue: http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/Qualificacoes
- Qualification database for higher education: http://www.dges.gov.pt/pt/pesquisa_cursos_instituicoes?plid=372
- ANQ (2011). *Report on the referencing of the national qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf
- MCTES (2011). *The framework for higher education qualifications in Portugal – Report of the international committee on the verification of compatibility with the qualifications framework of the European higher education area.* https://wwwcdn.dges.gov.pt/sites/default/files/referencing_report_higher_education_portugal_qf-ehea.pdf

RO

23. ROMANIA

Romania adopted a learning-outcomes-based NQF for lifelong learning, the Romanian NQF (ROQF), in 2013 (Government decision No 918/2013, amended in 2015 and 2018). This aims to bring together nationally recognised qualifications from initial and continuing VET, apprenticeship, general and higher education, and to help integrate the validation of non-formal learning into the national qualifications system. The framework has eight levels, defined by level descriptors identical to those of the EQF: knowledge (theoretical and factual), skills (cognitive and practical), and responsibility and autonomy. Apart from its transparency and comparability function, the ROQF is seen as a tool to support national reforms and modernisation of education and training, opening up the possibility to address issues such as coherence and progression in the education system, the use of validation, adult participation in lifelong learning, and transitions between education and work.

The framework builds on reform in VET and the development of competence-based qualifications since the mid-1990s. Parallel work was carried out in higher education, and a qualifications framework for higher education was established in line with the Bologna process and the EQF. One of the main challenges was to link the development processes, structures and stakeholders from VET and higher education and to improve links with the labour market. An important step was taken in June 2011 through the set-up of a single National Qualifications Authority – NQA (*Autoritatea Națională pentru Calificări*, ANC), responsible for developing and implementing the comprehensive NQF. In 2014, the National Centre for Accreditation was established as a dedicated structure for validation within the NQA, for improved coordination of the validation system.

The ROQF is operational. It is firmly embedded in national legislation, and linked to policy strategies in education, training and employment. The role of the NQA as initiator of legislation and its human resource capacity are positive aspects. Implementation work so far has focused on developing qualification registers, developing and clarifying procedures and methodologies for inclusion of qualifications in the registers, and updating the legal base. The National Register of Qualifications for Higher Education (NRQHE) was established in 2014 for qualifications at NQF levels 6 to 8, and the National Register of Professional Qualifications (NRPQ) was established in 2018 for qualifications at levels 1 to 5. Following the adoption of the 2017 Council recommendation on the EQF for lifelong learning ([35]), the ROQF was revised and the third category of level descriptors, initially named 'competence', was renamed as 'responsibility and autonomy'. As of 1 January 2019, it is required for all qualification documents and supplements, as well as all qualification registers, to include a reference to the corresponding NQF level.

While no evaluations have yet been carried out, it is thought that the framework has an increasing influence on the review of qualifications, curricula and qualification, occupational and training standards. The introduction of the learning outcomes approach in all education and training subsystems has been a challenge, and is a key point for future work. Increased contact and cooperation between different stakeholders and structures is essential for the ROQF to achieve its aims and has been supported through ROQF-related projects.

A first draft EQF referencing report was presented to the EQF advisory group in 2014 and the referencing process was completed in April 2018. The qualifications framework for higher education was self-certified against the QF-EHEA in 2011.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Romania.

([35]) See Council of the European Union, 2012.

Table 25. **Romanian national qualifications framework (ROQF)**

ROQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree (*Diploma de doctor*) – third cycle of higher education Certificate for postdoctoral studies (*Atestat de studii postdoctorale*) – postdoctoral study programmes	8
7	Master degree (*Diploma de masterat*) – second cycle of higher education Combined bachelor and master degree (*Diploma de licenta si master*) – 5 to 6 years	7
6	Bachelor degree / Engineering diploma / Urbanism diploma (*Diploma de licenta / Diploma de inginer / Diploma de urbanist*) – first cycle of higher education Certificate attesting professional competence (*Certificat de atestare a competentelor profesionale*) – Postgraduate programmes for professional training and continuing professional development organised by higher education institutions Graduation certificate (*Certificat de absolvire*) – Postgraduate programmes for professional improvement organised by higher education institutions Graduation certificate (*Certificat de absolvire*) – Professional development programmes organised by authorised training providers Graduation certificate (*Certificat de absolvire*) – Postgraduate programmes for continuing education organised by higher education institutions Professional conversion diploma (*Diploma de conversie profesionala*) – Professional conversion programmes organised by higher education institutions	6
5	Graduation certificate (*Certificat de absolvire*) – Postgraduate programmes for professional improvement organised by higher education institutions Post-secondary certificate / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) – post-secondary non-university tertiary education	5
4	Upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Diploma de Bacalaureat*) – general, technological or vocational high-school, four years of study and Baccalaureate exam VET certificate level 4 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) – technological / vocational high-school, four years of study and certification exam VET certificate level 4 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (*Certificat de calificare/absolvire*) – authorised training provider – adult learning VET certificate level 4 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) – authorised training provider – adult apprenticeship programmes in the workplace	4
3	VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) – authorised training provider – adult apprenticeship programmes in the workplace VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate / Certificate of professional competence* (*Certificat de calificare / Certificat de competente profesionale*) – accredited assessment centre – validation of non-formal learning VET certificate level 3 / Certificate of professional competence* (*Certificat de competente profesionale*) – authorised assessment centre – validation of non-formal learning VET certificate level 3 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (*Certificat de calificare/absolvire*) – authorised training provider – adult learning VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) – at least two years of study in technological/vocational high school and practical exam VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) – vocational training programme in dual system lasting at least three years VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) – VET programme lasting at least three years)	3

ROQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
2	VET certificate level 2 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) – authorised training provider – adult apprenticeship programmes in the workplace VET certificate level 2 / Qualification certificate / Certificate of professional competence* (*Certificat de calificare / Certificat de competente profesionale*) – accredited assessment centre – validation of non-formal learning VET certificate level 2 / Certificate of professional competence* (*Certificat de competente profesionale*) – authorised assessment centre – validation of non-formal learning VET certificate level 2 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (*Certificat de calificare/absolvire*) – authorised training provider – adult learning	2
1	Certificate of professional competence* (*Certificat de competente profesionale*) – authorised assessment centres – validation of non-formal learning Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) – authorised training provider – adult learning Graduation Diploma (*Diploma de absolvire*) (first eight years of compulsory education)	1

NB: The term VET generically includes both the vocational and technological education and training routes available in the national education system, offering qualifications at EQF levels 2 to 5, and the education and training offered by training providers in contexts other than the formal education system, for adult learning, also for qualification levels 2 to 5 EQF, preparing learners for occupations and the labour market.

(*) The *Certificate of professional competence* is awarded to adults who have undergone validation of non-formal learning against training standards or occupational standards.

Source: Ministry of National Education and NQA (2018). Order No 5039/2126/2018 of the Ministry of National Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Justice regarding the approval of the correlation between the NQF levels, study/qualification documents issued, the type of education and VET programme in Romania through which qualification levels can be obtained, the EQF levels and the access requirements for each qualification level. http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/Legislatie/05039-2018.pdf

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Qualifications Authority – NQA (Autoritatea Nationala pentru Calificari – ANC) is the EQF NCP: http://www.anc.edu.ro
- EQF web page: http://site.anc.edu.ro/eqf/
- National register of qualifications for higher education: http://site.anc.edu.ro/registrul-national-al-calificarilor-din-invatamantul-superior-rncis/
- National register of professional qualifications: http://site.anc.edu.ro/rncp/
- Ministry of National Education and NQA (2018). *Referencing the Romanian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

24. SLOVAKIA

SK

Work on the Slovak qualifications framework (SKKR) started in 2009, with a government resolution on EQF implementation (Government resolution No 105/2009). The 2009 Act on lifelong learning, amended in 2012 (Act 315/2012), stipulated the development of a national qualification system and framework; the related tasks became part of the national reform programme, linked to a broader process of reform in VET and lifelong learning. The SKKR aims to provide a transparent and comprehensive classification of all qualifications, to pave the way for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, ease communication within education and training and with the labour market, improve the quality of qualifications, and promote student and workforce mobility.

The initial NQF proposal was deemed to be too much shaped around formal education, and its revision started in 2013, along with wider social partner involvement. The first phase of development was finalised in 2015, with the revision of the SKKR grid, approval of the methodology for linking qualifications to SKKR levels, and development of the national qualifications register (NQR). The SKKR and the NQR are the two closely related components of the Slovak qualifications system: the description of qualifications (general information on the qualification, qualification standard, assessment standard, and guidelines for validation and certification of learning outcomes) forms the content of the NQR; their levelling is the content of the SKKR.

The framework has eight learning-outcomes-based levels and includes qualifications from all subsystems, organised in four subframeworks: for general education, VET, higher education, and occupational qualifications (awarded outside the formal system, as a result of further education, adult education and validation of non-formal learning). Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge (general and vocational/professional), skills (cognitive and practical) and competence (responsibility, autonomy and social competences). Initially, a distinction was made between full and partial qualifications; an amendment to the Act on lifelong learning, which is yet to be put forward for approval in Parliament, foresees a new approach to the design of qualifications based on smaller components.

The SKKR has reached an operational phase. The governance structure has been established and refined, with the State Vocational Education Institute currently hosting the EQF NCP and playing a coordination, technical and methodological role, supported by 24 sector councils. Qualifications were assigned to SKKR levels following analysis of the learning outcomes set in the qualification standards, and their comparison with the national descriptors. By April 2020, around 1 000 qualifications at levels 2 to 8 were described in learning outcomes, and included in the NQR; of these, approximately one-third are obtained in formal education and two-thirds through non-formal and informal learning. Inclusion of qualifications acquired through non-formal learning is the current priority. An evaluation of the functionality of the SKKR and the levelling process was carried out, as well as analysis of existing measures for validation of prior learning and an overview of sectoral and international qualifications in Slovakia. Recommendations have been taken into account in the preparation of new legislation; elements of a conceptual framework for validation of non-formal and informal learning have been included in the draft amendment to the Act on lifelong learning.

The referencing of the overarching SKKR to the EQF was completed in October 2017 and approved by the Slovak government in November 2017. The report on the fulfilment of self-certification criteria against QF-EHEA will be presented at a later stage. NQF and EQF levels are indicated on qualification documents and Europass supplements for all qualifications included in the SKKR.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Slovakia.

Table 26. **Slovak national qualifications framework (SKKR)**

SKKR levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Diploma (*Vysokoškolský diplom*) + Certificate of State exam (*Vysvedčenie o štátnej skúške*) + Diploma supplement (*Dodatok k diplomu*)	8
7	Diploma (*Vysokoškolský diplom*) + Certificate of State exam (*Vysvedčenie o štátnej skúške*) + Diploma supplement (*Dodatok k diplomu*) Certificate of qualification (*Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii*) – non-formal and informal learning	7
6	Diploma (*Vysokoškolský diplom*) + Certificate of State exam (*Vysvedčenie o štátnej skúške*) + Diploma supplement (*Dodatok k diplomu*) Certificate of qualification (*Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii*) – non-formal and informal learning	6
5	*Maturita* certificate (*Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške*) + Certificate of apprenticeship (*Výučný list*) – subframework of occupational qualifications *Maturita* certificate (*Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške*) – subframework of occupational qualifications Certificate of final post-secondary exam (*Vysvečenie o absolventskej skúške*) + Absolutorium diploma (*Absolventský diplom*) Certificate of qualification (*Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii*) – non-formal and informal learning	5
4	*Maturita* certificate (*Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške*) + Certificate of apprenticeship (*Výučný list*) *Maturita* certificate (*Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške*) Certificate of qualification (*Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii*) – non-formal and informal learning	4
3	Certificate of final exam (*Vysvedčenie o záverečnej skúške*) + Certificate of apprenticeship (*Výučný list*) Certificate of qualification (*Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii*) – non-formal and informal learning	3
2	Lower secondary education certificate with supplement (*Vysvedčenie s doložkou*) Certificate of final exam (*Vysvedčenie o záverečnej skúške*) + Certificate of apprenticeship (*Výučný list*) Certificate of qualification (*Osvedčenie o kvalifikácii*) – non-formal and informal learning	2
1	Primary education certificate with supplement (*Vysvedčenie s doložkou*)	1

Source: Adapted from Annex 3 of the *Referencing report of the Slovak qualifications framework towards the European qualifications framework* (State Vocational Education Institute, 2017).
The EQF NCP website: https://siov.sk/medzinarodna-spolupraca/slovensky-kvalifikacny-ramec-a-europsky-kvalifikacny-ramec/

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The State Vocational Education Institute (ŠIOV) is the EQF NCP: http://www.siov.sk/
- Website of the national qualifications system: http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/
- National qualifications register (NQR): http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/kartoteka-kariet-kvalifikacii#/
- State Vocational Education Institute (2017). *Referencing report of the Slovak qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

25. SLOVENIA

SI

Slovenia has put in place a comprehensive qualifications framework (SQF) with 10 levels, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. It covers three categories of qualifications from formal education and training and further learning: educational qualifications from general, vocational and higher education awarded in the formal school system; the system of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) under the remit of the Ministry of Labour; and non-regulated supplementary qualifications, developed and awarded by labour market stakeholders. SQF development has built on a series of education and training reforms since the mid-1990s (in VET, higher education, general education and adult education), including the introduction of an objective-based approach in the formal education system, and introduction of validation and certification of non-formal learning in 2000. Agreement was reached in 2011 on assigning major national qualifications from formal education and training and the NVQs to SQF levels. The main objective of the SQF is to integrate and harmonise Slovenian qualifications subsystems, enhance transparency and comparability of qualifications within Slovenia and the EU, and support lifelong learning. The SQF is expected to improve the accessibility and quality of qualifications for the labour market and the civil society. It also aims to support the assessment and recognition of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills.

The SQF reached full operational stage with the entry into force of the SQF Act in January 2016, which set out practical aspects of framework implementation. The law summarises main responsibilities of ministries and other stakeholders involved in design and award of qualifications at different levels, defines the tasks of the EQF NCP (the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (CPI)) which coordinates the implementation of the framework and the NCP SQF-EQF expert committee. It refers to procedures and methods of allocation of qualifications from formal education and training and national vocational qualifications as defined by sectoral legislation. It also defines referencing of NQF levels to the EQF and QF-EHEA, funding provisions and maintenance of the SQF register. The SQF Act defines procedures for inclusion in the SQF of supplementary qualifications awarded on the labour market. To date (January 2020) 13 supplementary qualifications have undergone the accreditation process successfully and were consequently included in the SQF, at SQF levels 3 to 7. The decision on accreditation and inclusion of supplementary qualifications is made by the NCP SQF-EQF expert committee consisting of seven members appointed by the minister of Labour, in accordance with the SQF Act.

The SQF is well integrated into the national qualifications system and education and training legislation. A communication strategy has been developed, targeting different end-user groups, and the framework is increasingly visible and used, including on the labour market. Level descriptors are used in accreditation procedures for new education programmes and NVQ assessment catalogues or in their reaccreditation. NQF/EQF levels are indicated on certificates, diplomas and Europass supplements from all education and training subsystems, and in the SQF register. The register contains around 1 680 education qualifications, NVQs and supplementary qualifications; it is linked to the EQF portal, enabling comparison between Slovenian qualifications and those of other EU countries. An evaluation of the understanding, awareness and use of the framework among main national stakeholders has been completed. The results will be presented in an international conference. The evaluation of the SQF will inform further implementation and possible update of the referencing report.

The SQF was linked to the EQF and self-referenced to the QF-EHEA in May 2013.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Slovenia.

Table 27. **Slovenian national qualifications framework (SQF)**

NQF levels	Educational qualifications	Vocational qualifications (**)	Supplementary qualifications	EQF levels
10	Doctoral degree (*Diploma o doktoratu znanosti*)			8
9	Master of science degree (*Diploma o magisteriju znanosti/umetnosti*) Specialisation diploma following academic higher education (*Diploma o specializaciji*) (*) Postgraduate research (*)			
8	Master degree (*Diploma o strokovnem magisteriju*) Specialisation diploma following pre-Bologna professional higher education (*Diploma o specializaciji*) (*) Pre-Bologna diploma of academic higher education (*Diploma o univerzitetnem izobraževanju*) (*) Higher education diploma (*Diploma o visokošolski izobrazbi*) (*)	Certificate of completed study programme for further training (level 8)	Certificate of supplementary qualification (SQF level 8)	7
7	Academic bachelor diploma (*Diploma o izobraževanju prve stopnje – univerzitetna, UN*) Professional bachelor diploma (*Diploma o visokem strokovnem izobrazevanju, VS*) Pre-Bologna professional higher education diploma (*) (*Diploma o visokem strokovnem izobraževanju*) Specialisation diploma following old short cycle higher education (*Diploma o specializaciji*) (*)	Certificate of completed study programme for further training (level 7)	Certificate of supplementary qualification (SQF level 7) e.g.: Instructor of Slovenian sign language (*Inštruktor/ica slovenskega znakovnega jezika*)	6
6	Short-cycle higher vocational diploma (*Diploma o višji strokovni izobrazbi*) Old short-cycle higher vocational diploma (*Diploma o višješolski izobrazbi*) (*)	NVQ certificate (level 6) Certificate of completed study programme for further training (level 6)	Certificate of supplementary qualification (SQF level 6) e.g.: Personal data protection expert (*Strokovnjak/inja za varstvo osebnih podatkov*)	5
5	Vocational *matura* certificate (Secondary technical education, four years) (*Spričevalo o poklicni mature*) General *matura* certificate (*Spričevalo o splošni mature*) Master craftsman examination certificate (*Spričevalo o opravljenem mojstrskem izpitu*) Foreman examination certificate (*Spričevalo o opravljenem delovodskem izpitu*) Managerial examination certificate (*Spričevalo o opravljenem poslovodskem izpitu*)	NVQ certificate (level 5) Certificate of completed further training programme (level 5)	Certificate of supplementary qualification (SQF level 5) e.g.: Clarus Advisor (*Svetovalec/ka Clarus*)	4
4	Final examination certificate (Secondary vocational education, three years) (*Spričevalo o zaključnem izpitu, Srednja poklicna izobrazba*)	NVQ certificate (level 4) Certificate of completed further training programme (level 4)	Certificate of supplementary qualification (SQF level 4) e.g: DM Druggist (*Drogerist/ka DM*)	

NQF levels	Educational qualifications	Vocational qualifications (**)	Supplementary qualifications	EQF levels
3	Final examination certificate (Lower vocational education, two years) (*Spričevalo o zaključnem izpitu*)	NVQ certificate (level 3) Certificate of completed further training programme (level 3)	Certificate of supplementary qualification (SQF level 3) e.g.: Maintenance of wastewater treatment plants (*Vzdrževalec/ka čistilnih naprav*)	3
2	Elementary school leaving certificate (nine years) (*Zaključno spričevalo osnovne šole*)	NVQ certificate (level 2)		2
1	Certificate of completing grade 7 or 8 of elementary education (*Potrdilo o izpolnjeni osnovnošolski obveznosti*) Elementary school leaving certificate (*Zaključno spričevalo osnovne šole*)			1

(*) Pre-Bologna diplomas.

(**) Vocational qualifications include NVQs and certificates of completed study programmes for further training (SQF levels 5 to 8) and certificates of completed further training programmes (SQF levels 3 to 5); now being developed.

Source: Adapted from: Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET, 2014; SQF website: https://www.nok.si/en [accessed 22.5.2020].

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET is the EQF NCP: http://www.cpi.si/en/
- SQF/EQF portal: http://www.nok.si/en/
- SQF register: https://www.nok.si/en/sqf-register
- Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (2014). *Referencing the Slovenian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area: final report.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

ES

26. SPAIN

Spain has been developing the Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning (*Marco Español de Cualificaciones*, MECU). The draft comprehensive framework is based on learning outcomes and has eight levels with descriptors defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. It will include qualifications awarded at all levels in the formal education system, and will also integrate qualifications obtained through validation of non-formal and informal learning. MECU is envisaged primarily as a communication and information instrument. One of its main objectives is to make Spanish qualifications easier to understand by describing them in terms of learning outcomes, clarifying relationships between them, and indicating the qualification level on certificates and diplomas. It aims to promote and improve access to, and participation in, lifelong learning, to promote the recognition of qualifications and to facilitate comparability within Spain and Europe. The framework is expected to raise trust and make learner and worker mobility easier.

Technical work on the design of the framework was completed in 2018; a royal decree setting the legal basis for implementation is pending and it is expected to be adopted in 2020. The Ministry of Education and VET has overall responsibility for developing and implementing the framework; a wide range of stakeholders were involved and consulted in the development phase: other ministries, social partners, institutional coordination bodies, consultative bodies, agencies for evaluation, professional associations and regional councils for education. Once the legal basis is in place, qualifications from formal education and training and from the employment administration (*certificados de profesionalidad*) will be given priority.

The Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning is yet to be referenced to the EQF. A qualifications framework for higher education (*Marco Español de Cualificaciones para la Educación Superior*, MECES) was put in place separately and self-certified against the QF-EHEA in 2014. Qualifications are being designed taking into account compatibility between the two frameworks and linking the highest four MECU qualification levels to MECES.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Spain.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The General Secretariat for Vocational Education and Training (Ministry of Education and VET) is the designated EQF NCP: http://www.educacionyfp.gob.es/ministerio.html
- MECU website: www.mecd.gob.es/mecu
- Information on qualifications in the education system can be found on the website of the Ministry of Education and VET: https://www.educacionyfp.gob.es
- The National catalogue of occupational/professional standards (Catálogo Nacional de Cualificaciones Profesionales – CNCP): http://incual.mecd.es/bdc
- The National repertoire of professional certificates (Repertorio Nacional de Certificados de Profesionalidad): https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/que-es-el-sepe/comunicacion-institucional/publicaciones/publicaciones-oficiales/listado-pub-formacion/repertorio-certificados-profesionalidad.html
- Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport (2014). *Verification of compatibility of MECES (the Spanish qualifications framework for higher education) with the framework for qualifications of the European higher education area (FQ-EHEA).* http://www.aneca.es/Sala-de-prensa/Noticias/2014/Informe-sobre-la-Autocertificacion-del-Marco-Espanol-para-las-Cualificaciones-de-la-Educacion-Superior-MECES

Table 28. **Spanish qualifications framework for higher education (MECES) and draft Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning (MECU) levels**

Draft MECU levels	MECES levels	Higher education qualifications	QF-EHEA
8	4	Doctoral degree (*Doctorado*)	Third cycle
7	3	Master degree (*Master*)	Second cycle
6	2	Bachelor degree (*Grado*)	First cycle
5	1	Advanced technician (*Técnico superior*)	Short cycle
4			
3			
2			
1			

Source: Adapted from the Royal decree 1027/2011 of 15 July 2011 on the establishment of the Spanish qualifications framework of higher education: http://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2011/08/03/pdfs/BOE-A-2011-13317.pdf

SE

27. SWEDEN

Sweden has developed a comprehensive, learning-outcomes-based NQF for lifelong learning (SeQF) with eight levels, following the basic structure of the EQF. Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence, and have been adapted to the Swedish context. Initially designed to aid transparency and international comparison of Swedish qualifications, the SeQF is now increasingly seen as playing a role in supporting better cooperation between the education and training system and the labour market. A particular feature of Swedish education and training is its strong adult and popular education, combined with an extensive and diverse system of labour market-based training. The added value of the framework lies in its openness to qualifications awarded by private companies and branch/sector organisations. The SeQF is also perceived as an important tool to support the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The SeQF was intended from the beginning as an inclusive framework, covering qualifications from the formal education system as well as from other providers; emphasis was put on the importance of an open process with continuous dialogue between stakeholders. Preparatory work for the legal basis proved time-consuming but was deemed essential for future success. The formal adoption of the framework took place in October 2015 (Decree with regulations on a qualifications framework for lifelong learning 2015:545). Levelling of qualifications awarded in the formal system was established via the SeQF adoption Decree, which also stipulates an application procedure for inclusion of other qualifications.

The SeQF is at an (early) operational stage. The Ministry of Education and Research has overall responsibility for the framework, and the National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (*Myndigheten for Yrkeshögskolan*, MYH) has had a key role in its development and implementation. MYH was set up in 2009 to manage the new strand of higher vocational education in Sweden: it has a clear position on the role of non-academic qualifications at levels 5 and 6 and it is also tasked with supporting economic sectors to develop models of validation, using the SeQF as a starting point. An advisory council, consisting of 14 stakeholder representatives from education and the labour market, advises the agency on inclusion and levelling of qualifications awarded outside the formal system. Criteria and procedures for inclusion of these qualifications have been developed and published, and the first qualifications have been included. To aid communication of the framework and to promote its use among stakeholders, MYH has been working on developing a common language for the NQF; it published a manual for qualification design, including instructions on writing learning outcomes, and more detailed guidelines on writing learning outcomes will be developed. Key challenges for the future include continued support for the placement of non-formal qualifications in the framework and exploring the possibility of modularisation of qualifications to support lifelong learning.

Several stakeholders have signalled an interest and started to use the framework as a reference in their work, for example as an instrument to identify available qualification pathways and minimum requirements for the training of VET teachers and trainers, and to indicate alternative progression routes in the construction sector.

The SeQF was referenced to the EQF in June 2016; a finalised referencing report will be published in 2020. A separate qualifications framework for higher education was developed and self-certification to the QF-EHEA was carried out in 2012. The relationship between the two frameworks has been discussed extensively; levels 6 to 8 of the SeQF are now open both to academic qualifications, placed on the three levels of the qualifications framework for higher education,

and to non-academic qualifications. Indication of NQF and EQF levels on new qualification documents and on Europass certificate and diploma supplements has started with the higher vocational education sector.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Sweden.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is the EQF NCP: https://www.myh.se/In-English/Swedish-National-Agency-for-Higher-Vocational-Education-/
- Information about the SeQF (in English): https://www.myh.se/In-English/EQF/
- SeQF portal (in Swedish): https://www.seqf.se/
- Register of qualifications: https://www.seqf.se/sv/Sa-funkar-det/Kvalifikationer
- Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (2016). *Referencing report of the Swedish qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework* [unpublished].
- Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (2011). *Certification of Sweden's national qualification framework – Report 2012:12 R* https://www.uhr.se/globalassets/_uhr.se/english/1212r-certification-swedish-nqf-eng3.pdf

Table 29. **Swedish national qualifications framework (SeQF)**

NQF levels	Qualification types (formal education)	Qualifications awarded outside formal education ([36])	EQF levels
8	Degrees, third cycle, Annex 2 to Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (*Examina på forskarnivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100*) Degrees, third cycle, Annex to Regulation 1993: 221 (*Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet Examina på forskarnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet* Förordning (2017:276)*)		8
7	Degrees, second cycle, Annex 2 to Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (*Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100*) Degrees, second cycle, Annex to Regulation 1993: 221 (*Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet*) (*) Degrees, second cycle, in the Annex to Regulation 2007: 1164 (*Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (2007:1164) för Försvarshögskolan*) (**)		7
6	Degrees, first cycle, Annex 2 to Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (*Examina på grundnivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100*) Degrees, first cycle, Annex to Regulation 2007:1164 (*Examina på grundnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (2007:1164) för Försvarshögskolan*) (**) Degrees, first cycle, Annex to Regulation 1993: 221 (*Examina på grundnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet*) (*) Advanced diploma in higher vocational education (*Kvalificerad yrkeshögskoleexamen från yrkeshögskolan*)	e.g.: Performing artist Business administration (*Marknadsekonom*) Montessori educator (*Montessoripedagog*)	6
5	Qualified graduate from upper secondary engineering course (*Gymnasieingenjörsexamen från gymnasieskolan*) Diploma in higher vocational education (*Yrkeshögskoleexamen från yrkeshögskolan*)	e.g.: Key account manager (*Säljare*) Authorised payroll consultants (*Auktoriserad lönekonsult*)	5
4	Degree from a national programme in upper secondary education – qualification title for students starting 2011 onwards (*Gymnasieexamen från gymnasieskolan*) Final grades from a complete national or specially designed programme (*Slutbetyg från ett fullständigt nationellt eller specialutformat program i gymnasieskolan*) Degree from municipal adult education and training at upper secondary level – qualification title for students starting 2011 onwards (*Gymnasieexamen från kommunal vuxenutbildning*) Final grades from municipal adult education and training at upper secondary level (*Slutbetyg från gymnasial vuxenutbildning*) Certificate from the general course at upper secondary level from folk high school (*Intyg om godkänt resultat från allmän kurs på gymnasial nivå från folkhögskola*)	e.g.: Professional certificate in cleaning services (*SRY:s yrkesbevis inom Städservice*)	4
3			3

([36]) These qualifications are added to the table for comparability; They are published on the EQF national coordination point website: https://www.seqf.se/sv/Sa-funkar-det/Kvalifikationer

NQF levels	Qualification types (formal education)	Qualifications awarded outside formal education ([36])	EQF levels
2	Final grades from compulsory school (*Slutbetyg från grundskolan*) Final grades from special school at compulsory level (*Slutbetyg från specialskolan*) Final grades from municipal adult education and training at compulsory level (*Slutbetyg från kommunal vuxenutbildning på grundläggande nivå*) Certificate from upper secondary education for individuals with learning disabilities (*Gymnasiesärskolebevis från gymnasiesärskolan*) Certificate from special education for adults at upper secondary level (*Gymnasiesärskolebevis från särskild utbildning för vuxna på gymnasial nivå*) Grade from Swedish for immigrants course D, or equivalent awarded by a folk high school (*Betyg från utbildning i svenska för invandrare kurs D, eller motsvarande utbildning som bedrivs vid folkhögskola*) Grade from municipal adult education in Swedish for Immigrants course D, or equivalent awarded by a folk high school (*Betyg från kommunal vuxenutbildning i svenska för invandrare kurs D, eller motsvarande utbildning som bedrivs vid folkhögskola*) Certificate from the general course at compulsory school level from folk high school (*Intyg om godkänt resultat från allmän kurs på grundskolenivå från folkhögskola*)		2
1	Final grades from compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities (*Slutbetyg från grundsärskolan*) Final grades from special education for adults at compulsory level (*Slutbetyg från särskild utbildning för vuxna på grundläggande nivå*)		1

(*) The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

(**) The Swedish Defence University.

Source: Adapted from the SeQF website (2020): https://www.seqf.se/

Other European countries participating in the EQF implementation

AL

28. ALBANIA

The law on the Albanian qualifications framework (AQF) was adopted in 2010. A revision of this law (23/2018) was adopted in May 2018. Secondary legislation under the revised AQF law has also been adopted; this concerns sectoral committees, detailed level descriptors and inclusion of lifelong learning qualifications. The AQF is designed as an inclusive/comprehensive framework for classification of all quality assured qualifications. Its descriptors are learning-outcomes based, divided by knowledge, skills and broader competence. The AQF Law distinguishes between three categories of qualifications: general/traditional qualifications, vocational/professional qualifications and qualifications for lifelong learning (LLL). The term 'qualifications for LLL' in the AQF Law is used to distinguish between the formal qualifications that are automatically included in the AQF, based on existing legislation (e.g. VET law, higher education law) and all other qualifications.

The aims of the AQF are to classify and link qualifications, ensure they are relevant to learner and employer needs, and to promote wider quality in qualification and VET systems.

Albania has chosen to arrange the management of the AQF along existing subsectors, with responsibilities divided between two ministries. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, responsible for the subsectors pre-university, general and higher education, and the Ministry of Finance and Economy for the subsector vocational education and training. A NQF coordination body is not foreseen. Instead, a dedicated AQF taskforce, comprising officials from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and Ministry of Finance and Economy, plus experts from the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVETQ), social partners and other actors in charge of further development and implementation of AQF, prepared the revision of the AQF Law and secondary legislation; it will now focus on developing a communication strategy and referencing of the AQF to the EQF.

The Public Accreditation Agency for Higher Education manages quality assurance for this sector. It requires higher education institutions and their programmes to be accredited before they can issue degrees or other qualifications. In vocational education and training, quality assurance of qualifications has been mainly internal. A procedure for VET provider self-assessment has been developed and implemented; the NAVETQ is now developing a procedure for accreditation of VET providers based on the self-assessments.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is provided for in both the VET and AQF Laws. However, implementation so far has been confined to pilot exercises and has not yet been applied country-wide. Meanwhile, a draft Decision of the Council of Ministers on the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning is being drafted.

Albania is a candidate for EU accession and a full member of the EQF advisory group. The AQF is not yet referenced to the EQF. It is also a member of the Bologna process in higher education; it has yet to self-certify against the QF-EHEA.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Albanian Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth is the main source of information and the NCP for AQF development: http://www.arsimi.gov.al
- NAVETQ is responsible for VET within the AQF: http://www.akafp.gov.al/
- VET register: http://www.akafp.gov.al/lista-kombetare-profesionale/

Table 30. **Albanian national qualifications framework (AQF)**

AQF levels	General/traditional qualifications	Vocational/Professional qualifications	Lifelong learning qualifications
8	Doctorate Graduate school study in advanced studies	Executive master/Second level master/Post master Long-term specialisation	Study programmes for continuous education
7	Master of science Master of arts / Master of fine arts / Programme level II study Integrated study programme of the second cycle Four-year study programme (before the enactment of the Bologna process)	Professional master/First level master	Study programmes for continuous education
6	Bachelor Study programme first level		
5		Post-secondary study programme of secondary type Professional non-university programme after secondary education Vocational certificate	Bridge courses (Certificate) Specialisation courses based on professional requirements
4	State *matura* diploma issued at the end of the general secondary education school programme	State *matura* diploma issued upon completion of the vocational high school programme Vocational certificate issued at the conclusion of the four-year study programme for middle technicians/managers Vocational certificate issued at the conclusion of the two-year study programme for middle technicians/managers Vocational certificate issued at the conclusion of the one-year study programme for middle technicians/managers Vocational certificate issued at the end of an apprenticeship programme	Bridge courses Vocational training courses Specialisation courses based on professional requirements
3		Vocational certificate issued at the end of a three-year programme for skilled workers Vocational certificate issued at the end of a one-year programme for skilled workers Vocational certificate issued at the end of an apprenticeship programme	
2		Vocational certificate issued at the completion of the two-year programme for semi-skilled workers	
1	Final school report after the completion of the compulsory nine-year education		Minimum entry requirements to work or social life

Source: Law No 23/2018 on some changes and additions to Law No 10 247 of 3.4.2010 on the Albanian qualifications framework: http://www.akafp.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/LIGJ-nr.-23-2018-date-10.5.2018.pdf

BA

29. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The qualifications framework of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), called the baseline qualifications framework, was adopted by the Council of Ministers, by decision, in March 2011. This decision carries the force of law. The baseline qualifications framework is an eight-level, comprehensive framework, whose descriptors are defined in learning outcomes, comprising knowledge, skills and competence. The descriptors are derived from those of the EQF and QF EHEA.

Baseline qualifications framework in BiH aims are to structure and classify qualifications, support lifelong learning, link qualifications better to labour market needs and provide a link to the EQF.

The Baseline qualifications framework in BiH is coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA), which has a country-wide remit. However, its decision-making powers in education and training are very limited, given the country's constitution, which devolves powers to the Republika Srspka, 12 cantons in the Federation BiH and Brčko District BiH, including in education and training policy.

MoCA chairs the 19-member intersectoral committee, which intends to make policy and to take decisions on the implementation and further development of the qualifications framework. There are representatives from higher education and academia, VET and general education, plus social partners (employers and employment institutes, statistics agencies, students). Its composition reflects the country's three major population groups: Bosniak, Croat and Serb plus one member for other groups, such as Roma. However, the committee has not operated since spring 2015: nomination of representatives has been delayed for political reasons.

Implementation of the qualifications framework in BiH has been partial; the Council of Ministers adopted an action plan in February 2015. Bosnia and Herzegovina is at an early operational stage. It has a strategy and has begun developing tools and systems, but it has no register of qualifications yet; many of the existing qualifications are not based on learning outcomes nor do they relate to standards; providers, employers and learners do not yet use the framework. However, all newly developed VET and HE qualifications are based on learning outcomes and relate to standards.

The Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance accredits providers and study programmes, though formally not yet individual qualifications in higher education. Quality assurance in VET is within the remit of APOSO, the agency covering pre-primary, primary, general secondary education and secondary VET. APOSO develops qualifications standards and assessment criteria, but schools themselves do most of the assessment; external assessment in much of VET remains limited. Based on the external assessment, ministries of Republika Srspka and cantons act as awarding bodies; it is their stamps which appear on certificates. Guidelines for quality assurance and supporting tools have been developed, but are not yet implemented in a systematic way throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Validation of non-formal learning is part of the qualifications framework action plan, but implementation is currently limited. Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities, however, are seeking to develop and implement a VNFIL system in the near future.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a potential candidate for EU accession and has been a full member of the EQF advisory group since October 2015. The country also participates in the Bologna process. Bosnia and Herzegovina presented the State of Play to the EQF advisory group in June 2019 and intends to complete the referencing by the end of 2020.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

Table 31. **The baseline qualifications framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Levels	Type of education and training	Qualification titles (position in the labour market)	Award type (diploma / certificate / education level)
8	Third cycle of higher education	Titles of qualifications and contents of diploma and diploma supplement for levels 6, 7 and 8 will, at a later stage, include relevant NQF/ EQF levels and will be further elaborated by the adoption of the rulebook on use of academic titles and acquisition of scientific and professional titles.	PhD Doctorate diploma and Diploma supplement
7	Second cycle of higher education		Master diploma (MA) Master level diploma and Diploma supplement
6	First cycle of higher education		Bachelor diploma (BA) Diploma issued by the institution of higher education
5	Postsecondary education, including master craftsman exams and similar exams	Highly skilled worker specialised for a certain occupation	Diploma/certificate of completed post-secondary education or passed master craftsman exam and/or similar exam for a certain occupation, with a supplement
4	Secondary general education	Generally skilled worker	Secondary school graduation diploma with a supplement
	Secondary technical education	Specialised skilled worker for technical and related occupation	Diploma/certificate of secondary graduation with a supplement
3	Vocational education and training	Skilled worker for a certain occupation	Diploma/certificate of final examination (matriculation) with practical work, including a supplement
2	Occupational training programmes	Low-skilled worker	Certificate on completed programme or education for lower level occupational qualifications
1	Elementary education	Unskilled worker	Certificate on completed elementary education (nine years)

Source: Adapted from European Training Foundation, 2018. https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/nqf-inventories/nqf-inventory-bosnia-and-herzegovina

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Ministry of Civil Affairs is the EQF NCP: http://www.mcp.gov.ba/?lang=en
- Bosnia and Herzegovina created a website specifically on the EQF: http://www.eqf.ba

IS

30. ICELAND

Work on the Icelandic national qualifications framework (ISQF) has been closely linked to extensive reform of the Icelandic education system. The initial version of the ISQF was presented in 2013 and revised in 2016. The ISQF is a lifelong learning framework, covering all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training, including certified adult training. It aims to make pathways through the education system clearer, to increase student mobility within the country and between countries, and to support further learning. Through its systematic application of learning outcomes, the framework is seen as a tool for reviewing the overall functioning of education and training and supporting long-term reform.

There is currently no single act or decree issued specifically for the ISQF. Its role and mandate are explicitly stated in a series of acts and decrees (the Compulsory School Act No 91/2008, the Upper Secondary Education Act No 92/2008, the Higher Education Act No 63/2006, the Adult Education Act No 27/2010). The initial framework was used as a tool for developing study provisions in the formal school system. The structure was amended, through an agreement signed in October 2016 by all education and training stakeholders; labour market stakeholders and student representatives were also involved in the revision. This resulted in a more inclusive framework with a renewed emphasis on valuing learning acquired outside formal education and training.

The ISQF consists of seven qualification levels, with two sublevels at levels 5 and 6. There is no descriptor or qualification linked to EQF level 1. The framework has a clear division between levels 1 to 4 and levels 5 to 7. The development of these two parts of the framework has partly taken place separately, responding to the EQF and Bologna processes, respectively. The links between them, and the overall coordination between the ISQF and the framework for higher education, are still under discussion. Level descriptors are presented in an integrated way; they reflect knowledge, skills and competences, and the importance attributed to key competences and transversal skills.

The ISQF has reached an operational stage. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture coordinates developments. In 2018, day-to-day responsibilities for framework implementation were transferred from *Rannís* to the Directorate of Education, which is also tasked with certifying provision in upper secondary and adult education. Study programmes and course descriptions at upper secondary and university levels have been based on learning outcomes and linked to ISQF levels. NQF/EQF levels are now being included in all qualifications issued at upper secondary and university level, both for general and vocational pathways. A national database of qualifications is under development.

The focus in implementing the ISQF has moved in recent years towards non-formal adult education. Quality criteria for curricula in adult education and an accreditation process that includes the levelling of adult education qualifications to the ISQF are being developed. A new act on adult education is expected to facilitate this, linked to a need to clarify and simplify the adult education system and to adapt legislation to new challenges in lifelong learning. In the context of work on updating legislation, a discussion on whether to indicate NQF/EQF levels on certificates in adult education is currently taking place. The relationship between the ISQF and adult learning is being debated, particularly with regard to the added value of the framework for low-skilled adults. The ISQF focus on learning outcomes has been beneficial for developing processes for validating non-formal and informal learning, as well as for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

The first version of the Icelandic NQF was referenced to the EQF in December 2013; the referencing report included the self-certification report to the QF-EHEA. An updated referencing report, covering the 2016 revision of the ISQF, is foreseen to be submitted in 2020 or 2021.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Iceland.

Table 32. **Icelandic national qualifications framework (ISQF)**

ISQF levels	Qualification types		EQF levels
7	Doctoral degree (*Doktorspróf*)		8
6.2	Master and candidatus degree (*Meistarapróf*)		7
6.1	Degree at master level but without a research report (*Próf á meistarastigi*)		
5.2	Bachelor degree (*Bakkalárpróf*)		6
5.1	Diploma degree (short cycle) (*Diplómapróf*)		
4	Vocational examination for professional rights – level 4 (*Prót til starfsréttinda á fjórða þrepi*) / Additional studies of vocational subjects (*Viðbótarnám á framhaldsskólastigi*)		5
3	Matriculation examination (*Stúdentspróf*)	Vocational examination for professional rights – level 3 (*Réttindapróf í starfsmenntun*)	4
2	Upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Framhaldsskólapróf*) Other final examinations (*Önnur lokapróf*)	Vocational qualification for professional rights (*Próf til starfsréttinda á þriðja þrepi*)	3
1	Compulsory school final examinations (*Grunnskólapróf*) Special education programmes (*Nám fyrir nemendur á starfsbraut*) Certificate in adult education (*Útskriftarskírteini í fullorðinsfræðslu*)		2

Source: The Directorate of Education, 2020 (email communication).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Directorate of Education acts as EQF NCP: https://mms.is/directorate-education
- ISQF/EQF website: www.haefnirammi.is
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture: https://www.government.is/topics/education/
- Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (2014). *Reference report of the Icelandic qualifications framework ISQF to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning EQF.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

LI

31. LIECHTENSTEIN

Liechtenstein has committed to developing an integrative national qualifications framework for lifelong learning, potentially covering all parts of education and training. The NQF for Liechtenstein (NQFL) is a descriptive framework, aiming to improve transparency and comparability of qualifications, improve employability abroad for Liechtenstein-educated specialists, and increase overall labour force mobility. It is currently organised in a 'Y structure', underpinned by two sectoral qualifications frameworks: one encompassing higher education qualifications (NQFL-HS), mapped to levels 6 to 8 on the right strand of the NQFL; and one for vocational education (NQFL-BBV), mapped to the lower levels and to levels 6 to 8 on the left strand of the NQFL (Ministry of Education, 2017). The first phase of implementation focuses on formal education in VET and higher education, and both subframeworks are operational. General education qualifications are not yet included.

From the beginning, NQFL development was closely coordinated with Switzerland, as the two neighbouring countries have a long tradition of close co-operation in education and training and established a common VET system. The qualifications framework for vocational qualifications (NQFL-BBV) – very similar to the Swiss framework for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ) – is an eight-level framework defined through knowledge, skills and competences. Knowledge is subdivided into the categories of knowledge and understanding. For skills a distinction is drawn between procedural and sensorimotor skills. Competences are divided into professional and personal competences. The Ordinance on the NQFL-BBV, in force since 1 January 2018, paved the way to full implementation. The process of assigning vocational education qualifications to levels is carried out by Switzerland and approved, in a separate procedure, by the Liechtenstein government: 70 vocational qualifications at levels 3 to 5 have been approved up to February 2020. The qualifications framework for higher education (NQFL-HS), adopted in 2013 and embedded in legislation on higher education, is now integrated into the NQFL.

Validation approaches have been developed in initial VET and higher education. The validation process in VET is based on a similar process to that developed by Switzerland, following a similar series of steps. However, only the first step (information and advising) is performed in Liechtenstein; after that the candidates continue in Switzerland. The law on higher education regulates the conditions and process of admission without a *matura* certificate and limitations of crediting learning acquired outside the higher education system.

The NQFL is supervised by the Ministry of Education. The National Agency for International Education affairs (AIBA) has been appointed the EQF national coordination point to carry out administration and coordination tasks.

The NQFL was referenced to the EQF in October 2016 and the qualifications framework for higher education was self-certified against QF-EHEA in 2013. NQF and EQF levels feature on VET certificate supplements.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Liechtenstein.

Table 33. **Indication of qualification types and levels in the Swiss NQF-VPQ and NQFL-BBV**

NQFL-BBV levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Advanced federal diploma of higher education	8
7		7
6	College of higher education diploma	6
5	Federal diploma of higher education	5
4	Federal VET diploma	4
3	Federal VET certificate	3
2		2
1		1

NB:

- Federal certificate of vocational education and training: two-year VET programmes;
- Federal diploma of vocational education and training: three- and four-year VET programmes;
- Federal diploma of higher education (part-time tertiary level professional education and training: federal professional examination;
- Advanced Federal diploma of higher education issued by a college of higher education: federal professional examination;
- Advanced Federal diploma of higher education: formal study programme.

Source: SERI, 2018 and AIBA, 2020 (email communication).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Agency of International Education Affairs (AIBA) is the EQF-NCP: www.aiba.li
- The NQFL/EQF website is available at: http://www.nqfl.li/
- Ministry of Education (2017). *The EQF referencing report for the Principality of Liechtenstein.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf
- Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein (2013). Qualifikationsrahmen für den Hochschulbereich im Fürstentum LiechtensteinNQ.FL-HS [*Qualifications framework for higher education in the Principality of LiechtensteinNQ.FL-HS*] https://www.llv.li/files/sa/pdf-llv-sa-qualifikationsrahmen_fuer_den_hochschulbereich_im_fl_nqfl_hs_2013.pdf

XK

32. KOSOVO

Kosovo's qualifications framework (KQF) was established by law in 2008. It is a comprehensive, lifelong learning framework, covering all types of qualifications: VET, general and higher education. It spans eight levels, which are defined in learning outcomes, categorised by knowledge, skills and competences. There are six types of qualification (see KQF below). Most qualifications are developed in units, in VET and higher education. General education qualifications are not usually unitised at the moment.

Kosovo authorities intend that the qualifications framework acts as a reforming instrument, clarifying links between different types of qualifications, building pathways between them, facilitating lifelong learning and ensuring new qualifications are of quality and relevant to learners and employers. The KQF also functions as the country's qualification international reference point; ensuring national qualifications are understood and accepted abroad, especially in the EU and EEA, is a key objective for a country with a significant diaspora. The KQF has been structured and implemented in consultation with stakeholders. It is coordinated and managed by the National Qualification Authority (NQA), which is accountable to a 13-member governing board, whose members include chambers of commerce, trades unions, NGOs, representatives of the various education sectors (VET, higher education) and the Ministry of Education (MEST). Kosovo is at an operational stage in implementing its NQF.

The NQA supervises VET and adult education qualifications, conducting quality assurance processes for their design, validation, assessment and certification, and to ensure that they meet the quality criteria set for their entry to the KQF. NQA also accredits VET providers: most new qualifications are developed by the providers themselves. NQA does not develop qualifications. To date, approximately 71 VET qualifications have been validated and registered in the NQF, at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. Qualifications, by law, must be developed based on occupational standards or some other form of occupational analysis: 92 occupational standards have been validated so far by the NQA. MEST oversees general educational qualifications, including developing secondary school qualifications such as the upper secondary level *matura* (school leaver). In higher education, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency supervises higher education institutions, accrediting them as providers. Universities develop their own qualifications, quality-assured by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA); 293 qualifications have been included in the KQF.

Kosovo authorities have adopted a national quality assurance framework (NQAF), aligned with the European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training (EQAVET). Credit systems operate in VET and higher education. In VET, NQA applies a VET credit system based on the European credit system for VET; one credit point is awarded for 20 notional learning hours. In higher education, the credit system is inspired by, and aligned to, the European credit transfer system (ECTS).

The 2008 Law on qualifications, which enacted the NQF, provides for development of a national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning; Kosovo uses recognition of prior learning (RPL). All new qualifications developed should be attainable via education and training programmes and RPL routes. Secondary legislation has been developed to specify principles of the country's RPL system; the NQA is coordinating implementation and started the accreditation process for RPL providers for three occupations; welding, electrical installer and hair-dressing. In February 2020 Kosovo presented the one-off report on validation of non-formal and informal learning to the EQF advisory group.

The KQF was referenced to the EQF in 2016. Kosovo is not a member of the Bologna process in higher education.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

Table 34. **Kosovo qualifications framework (KQF)**

KQF levels	Qualifications		EQF levels
	Award type	Qualification type (*)	
8	Doctorate – Bologna 3rd cycle	A	8
7	Master – Bologna 2nd cycle	A	7
6	Bachelor – Bologna 1st cycle	A	6
5	Diploma from formal providers Certificate from non-formal providers	A, C, D, E	5
4	*Matura* certificate (general or vocational education) Vocational education diploma	B, C, D, E, F	4
3	Vocational education certificate (two years) Certificates from non-formal VET providers	B, C, D, E, F	3
2	Certificates from non-formal providers	B, C, D, E, F	2
1	Certificates from non-formal providers	B, C, D, E, F	1

(*) Types of NQF qualifications: higher education qualifications (A); general education qualifications (B); combined national qualifications (C); national professional qualifications (D); qualifications based on international standards (E); customised qualifications (F).

Source: National Qualification Authority. *National qualifications framework Pristina.* https://akkks.rks-gov.net/uploads/national_qualification_framework_handbook_2020.pdf

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Qualifications Authority of Kosovo (EQF NCP): https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/
- KQF/EQF website: https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/nqf/national-qualifications-framework
- Qualifications database: https://akkks.rks-gov.net/en/nqf/registration-of-qualifications
- National Qualifications Authority (2016). EQF referencing report of Kosovo: https://akkks.rks-gov.net/uploads/kosovo_eqf_referencing_report_2016.pdf
- The Kosovo Accreditation Agency (responsible for higher education qualifications): http://www.akreditimi-ks.org/new/index.php/en/
- The Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology: http://masht.rks-gov.net/en

ME

33. MONTENEGRO

Montenegro's NQF was legally established in 2010, via the law on the Montenegrin qualifications framework (MQF). It is lifelong learning in scope and consists of eight qualification levels, with sublevels at levels 1, 4 and 7. The MQF is comprehensive (all levels) and inclusive: it is open for qualifications acquired from formal and non-formal or informal pathways of learning. Levels and sublevels are established by outcomes-based descriptors, based on three categories: knowledge, skills and competence (responsibility and autonomy). Sublevels accommodate qualifications in place before the use of learning outcomes.

The main reform objectives linked with the MQF are to introduce learning outcomes for transparency purposes; link education and training subsectors; to aid validation of non-formal and informal learning; and to support access to qualifications and pursue lifelong learning. The MQF includes three types of qualifications: education qualifications or qualification of level of education, vocational qualifications, and additional qualifications. Education qualifications are obtained via formal education programmes and are wider than vocational qualifications; vocational qualifications may be obtained via either assessment after completing shorter programmes or as part of a formal education programme or validation of non-formal or informal learning and are based directly on one, certain occupational standard; additional qualifications testify to additional skills required by employers; they are acquired after completing formal education and are a prerequisite for working in a specific workplace.

The framework is managed by the Qualifications Council, in cooperation with the National Council of Education and Higher Education Council. The Ministry of Education provides wider strategic direction. The Qualifications Council develops and places qualifications in the MQF; it draws on advice on occupational standards and qualification standards from 15 sectoral commissions, representing branches of the economy.

Quality assurance in general education and VET consists of licensing institutions to offer programmes and conduct validation of non-formal and informal learning; this is done by commissions established by the Ministry of Education. Higher education programmes are accredited by the Higher Education Council. The Vocational Education and Training Centre and the National Examination Centre quality assure qualifications and validate learner external assessments. The Qualifications Council validates qualifications for entry in the database of qualifications. The National Examination Centre trains and licenses assessors for validation procedures. Adult learners may obtain vocational qualifications via part of formal programmes or through examinations after completing shorter programmes or through validation of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge. Validation processes are conducted by licensed providers for qualifications up to level VI, in accordance with National Vocational Qualifications Law (2016). This is not yet possible as an integrated process within higher education.

The Montenegrin qualifications framework is advanced in implementation, with 224 qualifications placed in the qualifications register.

Montenegro is a candidate for EU accession and is a full member of the EQF advisory group. It referenced to the EQF and self-certified against the QF-EHEA in November 2014.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

Table 35. **Montenegrin qualifications framework**

NQF levels	Formal education/educational qualifications	Vocational qualifications (qualifications attained outside formal education and assessed by relevant bodies)	EQF levels
8	Diploma of doctoral studies	NVQ	8
7.2	Diploma of master studies (*) Diploma of master studies	NVQ	7
7.1	Graduate specialist academic and applied studies diploma Higher education diploma (*) First cycle academic and applied studies diploma (*)	NVQ	
6	Diploma of first cycle academic and applied studies	NVQ	6
5	Diploma of post-secondary vocational education	NVQ	5
4.2	Master craftsman examination certificate	NVQ	4
4.1	Upper secondary school leaving diploma (general, gymnasium) Upper secondary school leaving diploma (vocational, four years)	NVQ	
3	Diploma of secondary vocational education (three years)	NVQ	3
2	Diploma of lower vocational education (two years)	NVQ	2
1.2	Certificate of completed primary education (nine years)	NVQ	1
1.1	Certificate of completed first cycle of primary education or completed functional literacy programme	NVQ	

NB: The procedure for additional qualifications will be developed in the next stage.

(*) Pre-Bologna diplomas, until adoption of the Higher Education Act 2002.

Source: Adapted from Montenegrin Ministry of education, 2014.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Montenegrin Ministry of Education is the EQF NCP: http://www.mpin.gov.me/en/ministry
- NQF/EQF website: www.cko.edu.me
- The register of qualifications: http://www.cko.edu.me/ckoview/Default.aspx
- Montenegrin Ministry of Education (2014). *The referencing of the Montenegrin qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

MK

34. NORTH MACEDONIA

North Macedonia's national qualifications framework (NQF) was adopted in 2013. It is a comprehensive, lifelong learning framework, consisting of eight levels, plus three sublevels, at levels 5, 6 and 7, included to allow for qualifications in place before the use of learning outcomes. Level descriptors are based on knowledge and understanding, skills and competence.

The framework's aims are to improve education and training systems through implementation of the learning outcomes approach; to aid access to learning in every context and make learning results explicit for every citizen; to raise the overall level of qualifications of the population; and to strengthen the links between qualifications and employment prospects.

Article 11 of the NQF level law defines two types of qualification: educational qualifications and vocational/occupational qualifications. The former are obtained by completing publicly approved programmes within the formal education system, while the latter are obtained by completing part of approved education programmes (modules, courses), a special programme for adult education, or through validation of non-formal learning.

The NQF law stipulates that the development, adoption, approval and classification of qualifications are under the responsibility of the National Board for NQF, established in October 2015, and 16 sectoral qualifications councils, of which nine have been established. The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy coordinate the NQF, leading its development and implementation. The Ministry of Education and Science is more directly concerned with the content and technical development of the framework, covering qualification standards.

In quality assurance, the Ministry of Education and Science runs accreditation procedures for primary and secondary schools and programmes for adult education. Programmes for secondary education, including VET, are developed by the Bureau for Development of Education and/or the VET Centre and approved by the Minister for Education and Science. Reformed vocational programmes for occupations are based on learning outcomes, and are linked with qualifications standards and occupational standards. Assessments are continuous but with variations; this is the norm in adult education, along with final examination. At secondary level, students prepare for the *matura*, which includes both internal evaluations and some external assessment and examination by the National Examination Centre.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) is implemented for some qualifications through the Chamber of Commerce and for returning migrants. The Centre for Adult Education has developed a concept and roadmap for VNFIL procedures and guidelines, and has trained assessors in line with principles of the 2012 EU Council recommendation. Funding and legislative arrangements are not fully in place yet for system-wide implementation. Special quality arrangements are being developed to facilitate VNFIL in higher education. Qualifications were originally placed in the framework, via an inventory, which counts more than 2 450 qualifications from general education, vocational education and training to higher education. These qualifications are gradually being redefined in line with the requirements of the NQF. A total of 67 vocational qualifications developed with the support of the sector qualifications commissions have been inserted in the register. There is also a discussion on integrating international standards in the NQF.

North Macedonia is a candidate for EU accession. The country is a member of the EQF advisory group and referenced its NQF to the European qualifications framework and self-certified against the Bologna framework in higher education, in 2016.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

Table 36. **Qualifications framework of North Macedonia**

NQF levels		Educational qualifications (formal)	Vocational qualifications (*)	EQF levels
8		Doctorate diploma		8
7	7 A	Second cycle master of science diploma (from 60 to 120 ECTS)		7
	7 B	Second cycle diploma for specialist studies (60 ECTS)		
6	6 A	First cycle university diploma (240 ECTS) First cycle vocational diploma (240 ECTS)		6
	6 B	First cycle university diploma (180 ECTS) First cycle vocational diploma (180 ECTS)		
5	5 A	Short-cycle higher education (vocational) diploma		5
	5 B	Post-secondary diploma for specialist education Craftsman diploma		
4		Upper secondary general education diploma Upper secondary technical diploma Upper secondary arts diploma	Vocational certificate (CVET)	4
3		Vocational diploma (three years)	Vocational certificate (CVET)	3
2		Vocational certificate (two years)	Vocational certificate (CVET)	2
1		Certificate of primary education	State certificate for adult education (literacy and numeracy skills)	1

(*) According to the law on the NMQF, vocational/occupational qualifications can be acquired for part of a formal education programme (modules, courses), by completing a special programme in adult education, or through validation of non-formal learning.

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education and Science, 2016.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Ministry of Education and Science is the EQF NCP: http://www.mon.gov.mk/
- NQF/EQF website: http://www.mrk.mk
- Register of qualifications: http://registar.mrk.mk/
- Ministry of Education and Science (2016). *EQF referencing report of the qualifications framework of the Republic of Macedonia and self-certification to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area:* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

NO

35. NORWAY

Norway has a seven-level national qualifications framework (*Nasjonalt kvalifikasjonsrammeverk for livslang læring*, NKR). It includes certificates, diplomas, and degrees awarded for publicly recognised and accredited education and training from general, vocational and higher education. The decision was made to start level numbering from level 2, to ensure a structure that better parallels the EQF levels; there is no descriptor or qualification linked to EQF level 1. Qualifications in the NKR generally represent full attainment of a formal education or training level, except at level 3 which includes partially completed upper secondary education and training. Levels 5 and 6 have two sublevels each; sublevels 5.1 and 6.1 accommodate full qualifications defined by learning outcomes of lower complexity compared to those at sublevels 5.2 and 6.2. The learning-outcomes-based level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and general competence. At level 4, two parallel sets of level descriptors have been developed: one for vocational education and training and one for general education.

The NKR is intended as a communication tool, for increased transparency of the qualifications system, as an aid to comparison of qualifications, nationally and internationally, and an aid to mobility within the education system and between education and the labour market. Through its focus on learning outcomes, the framework has an important role in improving the quality and relevance of qualifications, and in supporting the development of mechanisms for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Work on the framework started in 2005 for higher education, and in 2007 for all other levels of education and training. The qualifications framework for higher education was adopted in 2009 and is now an integral part of the NKR; the latter was adopted in December 2011. Following amendments of relevant education and training legislation, the NKR was further legally defined in a regulation in December 2017 (FOR-2017-11-08-1846). The overall responsibility for the framework lies with the Ministry of Education and Research; the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) has been assigned as EQF NCP. All main education and training stakeholders, as well as social partners, have been involved at all stages of development and implementation.

The NKR has now reached operational stage; it is considered a permanent and fully integrated part of the Norwegian education and training system, included in laws and regulations and relevant policy documents. Compliance with the framework and the use of learning outcomes has been linked to accreditation and reaccreditation of study programmes in vocational college education (level 5) and higher education (levels 6 to 8). NOKUT uses the NKR to support recognition of qualifications and aims at taking it into account more systematically in methodologies for recognition of foreign education and training. An evaluation of the implementation of NKR will start in 2020.

The question of opening up the framework to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training has been extensively discussed. A 2015 report by a committee of stakeholder representatives had divided views on this matter, and no decision has been taken so far. A public committee has recently provided a Green Paper on lifelong learning for change and competitiveness (NOU 2019:12), which suggested the development of a procedure for assessment of non-formal training programmes against a quality standard to enhance comparison with formal education. The proposal is due to be discussed as part of the government's work on a new competence reform, and may lay a foundation for the future inclusion of qualifications obtained through non-formal learning in the NKR.

The NKR was referenced to EQF levels 2 to 8 and self-certified against the QF-EHEA in June 2014. The NKR regulation states that all new diplomas and certificates from the formal education system can indicate the NQF level, though this is not compulsory. So far, NQF levels are indicated on diplomas from vocational college education. The NQF and EQF levels are indicated on Europass certificate supplements and, usually, on diploma supplements or other supporting documents.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Norway.

Table 37. **Norwegian national qualifications framework (NKR)**

NKR levels	Qualification types		EQF levels
8	Doctoral degrees (*PhD, Dr philos., PhD in artistic development work (from 2018)*) Diploma for artistic development programme (*Diplom, kunstnerisk utviklingsprogram*)		8
7	Master degree (*Mastergrad*) Master of arts Master of business administration (MBA) Master of international business (MIB) Master of technology management Master of laws Candidata/candidatus medicinae Candidata/candidatus medicinae veterinariae Candidata/candidatus psychologiae Candidata/candidatus theologiae		7
6.2	Bachelor degree (*Bachelorgrad*) Diploma for general teacher education programme (*Vitnemål fra allmennlærerutdanning, Vitnemål fra grunnskolelærerutdanning*)		6
6.1	University college degree (*Høgskolekandidatgrad*)		
5.2	Diploma for vocational college education (one to two years, 90 – 120 credits) (*Vitnemål fra fagskoleutdanning*)		5
5.1	Diploma for vocational college education (0.5 to one year, 30 – 90 credits) (*Vitnemål fra fagskoleutdanning*)		
4	A. Certificate for upper secondary vocational education and training (*Vitnemål fra videregående opplæring, yrkesfaglige utdanningsprogram*) Craft certificate (*Fagbrev*) Journeyman certificate (*Svennebrev*)	B. Certificate for upper secondary general education (*Vitnemål fra videregående opplæring, studieforberedende utdanningsprogram*)	4
3	Document of competence for partially completed upper secondary education (*Kompetansebevis*)		3
2	Certificate for primary and lower secondary education (10 years) (*Vitnemål fra 10-årig grunnskole*)		2
-	Not part of the NQF		1

Source: Adapted from *Regulation on the national qualifications framework for lifelong learning and its referencing to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning* (FOR-2017-11-08-1846) – Annex II. https://lovdata.no/static/SF/sf-20171108-1846-03-01.pdf?timestamp=1579568777000

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) is the EQF NCP: https://www.nokut.no/en/about-nokut/international-cooperation/national-coordination-point-ncp-for-the-european-qualifications-framework-for-lifelong-learning-eqf/
- Databases of qualifications and study programmes: https://utdanning.no/ https://www.studyinnorway.no/
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research – Information on the NKR: https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/utdanning/voksnes_laering_og_kompetanse/artikler/nasjonalt-kvalifikasjonsrammeverk/id601327/ (in Norwegian)
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2012), *Referencing the Norwegian qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and self-certification to the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA)* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

RS

36. SERBIA

The Law on the national qualifications framework was adopted in April 2018. The National qualifications framework of Serbia (NQFS) is a comprehensive framework and has eight levels and four sublevels. Levels 6 and 7 are each divided in two sublevels. Level descriptors are categorised by knowledge, skills and attitude and ability domains.

The NQFS is an instrument to implement a system for the identification, creation and classification of qualifications, in accordance with the requirements of the labour market, further learning, science and society as a whole. It is integral to wider strategies aimed at VET and labour market reform.

Qualification types are defined by education sector. Four qualifications types have been defined: general qualifications (primary education and gymnasium education); vocational qualifications (vocational secondary education and training); academic qualifications (accredited academic study programmes (bachelor, master, specialised and doctoral studies)); and applied qualifications (accredited applied study programmes (bachelor, specialised and master). For the moment, Serbia does not foresee partial qualifications being included in the NQF but, through non-formal education in accordance with a qualification standard, it is possible to recognise sets of learning outcomes or individual vocational competences acquired, or to obtain a certificate for a partially accomplished standard of vocational competences.

Different bodies have been established to manage the NQFS. First, the Council for the NQFS to provide recommendations on the process of planning and developing human resources in accordance with public policies on lifelong learning, employment, career guidance and counselling. Second, the Qualifications Agency responsible for reviewing initiatives for the introduction of new qualifications, providing professional support to the sector skills councils, preparing proposals for qualification standards, maintaining the NQFS register, external quality control of the PROAEA (adult education) and monitoring and measuring the effects of the implementation of the NQFS on employment and lifelong learning. Finally, there are the sector skills councils, advisory bodies established on the principle of social partnership, whose main role is to define the need for qualifications in the labour market in Serbia.

The NQFS Law describes specific arrangements and procedures concerning quality assurance. The Qualification Agency is responsible for quality assurance of NQF implementation. Academic and vocational qualifications of NQFS levels 6.1 to 8 are accredited by the National Entity for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education, in accordance with the law governing higher education. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (MoESTD) and the Council for Vocational and Adult Education are responsible for QA of general and vocational qualifications.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is provided for in the NQFS law as recognition of prior learning (RPL); a concept paper for RPL has been developed. Based on this concept, a new bylaw is being drafted to establish a RPL system in conformity with the law on the NQFS. It will focus on the accreditation of the organisations that would have the authority to award qualifications acquired through non-formal education and informal learning at NQFS levels 1 to 3 and 5.

Serbia is a candidate for EU accession, a member of the EQF advisory group and a participant in the Bologna process in higher education. In February 2020 Serbia completed the referencing to the EQF and self-certification against the qualifications framework for the European higher education area.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

Table 38. **The national qualifications framework of Serbia (NQFS)**

NQFS levels		Qualifications	EQF levels
8		doctoral studies volume of 180 ECTS credits (with previously completed integrated academic, i.e. master academic studies)	8
7	7.2	specialised academic studies scope of at least 60 ECTS credits (with previously completed master academic studies)	7
	7.1	integrated academic studies scope of 300 to 360 ECTS credits master academic studies scope of at least 60 ECTS credits, with previously achieved bachelor academic studies scope of at least 240 ECTS credits master academic studies scope of at least 120 ECTS credits (with previously achieved bachelor academic studies scope of 180 ECTS credits) master applied studies scope of at least 120 ECTS credits (with previously achieved bachelor applied studies scope of 180 ECTS credits)	
6	6.2	bachelor academic studies scope of at least 240 ECTS credits, specialised applied studies scope of at least 60 ECTS credits	6
	6.1	bachelor academic studies scope of at least 180 ECTS credits bachelor applied studies scope starting from 180 ECTS credits	
5		craftsman, i.e. specialist education lasting up to two- or one-year non-formal adult education lasting minimum of six months	5
4		four-year secondary school education (vocational education, arts education, general education)	4
3		secondary vocational education lasting three years, non-formal adult education with training duration of minimum 960 hours	3
2		vocational training lasting up to one year, education for work lasting up to two years, informal adult education with 120-360 hours of training	2
1		primary education, primary adult education, primary music education, primary ballet education	1

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, 2020.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development is the EQF NCP: http://www.mpn.gov.rs/
- NQFS/EQF website: http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/en/
- NQFS database: http://noks.mpn.gov.rs/en/qualifications-database
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, 2020. *Report on referencing the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia to the European Qualifications framework for Lifelong Learning and Self-certification to the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

CH

37. SWITZERLAND

Switzerland has established two sectoral qualifications frameworks: one encompassing vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ) and a separate one for qualifications in Swiss higher education (NQF CH-HS) in line with the Bologna process. The NQF-VPQ is explicitly oriented to the EQF and introduces an eight-level structure defined through knowledge, skills and competence. Knowledge is subdivided into knowledge and understanding. For skills a distinction is drawn between procedural and sensorimotor skills. Competences are divided into professional and personal competences. With the legal basis in place since 2014 (Ordinance on the national qualifications framework for vocational and professional qualification, 2014), the NQF-VPQ has reached an operational stage.

Switzerland sees European cooperation on qualifications frameworks, including the EQF and the QF-EHEA, as an opportunity to strengthen the transparency, clarity and comparability of its national qualifications in the European and wider international context. One important policy objective of the NQF-VPQ is to promote equal recognition and valuing of vocational and professional education and training in society in comparison with academic qualifications. The shift to learning outcomes was initiated in Switzerland through the 2004 reform of the Federal Act on vocational and professional education and training; it has been fundamental to the development of vocational and professional qualifications in recent years. Increasingly, validation of non-formal and informal learning has been an integral part of education policies and legal frameworks. Validation procedures, both in VET and higher education, use the standards of qualifications/programmes from formal education and training as reference. Access to validation is considered an individual right, though practices are optional.

Throughout the development phase, the NQF-VPQ has received broad support from stakeholders: cantons, trade associations and social partners. There is agreement among stakeholders that tertiary VET is a particular strength of the Swiss education and training system and that its future development is essential for meeting the needs of the national labour market.

The Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) is national contact point for the EQF and in charge of framework implementation. Guidelines have been developed supporting education and training stakeholders to assign levels to qualifications. At the start of implementation, single qualifications were assigned NQF-VPQ levels. However, experience has shown that most qualifications of a given type are assigned to the same level. Since summer 2016, professional organisations have two options: to apply for simplified referencing of qualifications or to seek individualised referencing of qualifications. For simplified assignment of levels, qualifications are assigned according to a standard level for a type of qualification, proposed by SERI; this reduces workload for the professional organisation submitting the application. A professional organisation can request an individual levelling of a qualification if it feels that a specific qualification might be assigned a higher level within the NQF-VPQ. By January 2020, approximately 550 formal vocational and professional qualifications were assigned to levels 3 to 8 of the NQF-VPQ and the process is expected to continue. There are no vocational qualifications assigned to levels 1 and 2.

The NQF-VPQ was referenced to the EQF in May 2015.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – Switzerland.

Table 39. **Indication of qualification types and levels in the Swiss NQF-VPQ**

NQF-VPQ levels	Qualification type	EQF levels
8	Advanced federal diploma of higher education	8
7		7
6	Federal diploma of higher education; College of higher education diploma	6
5	Federal VET diploma	5
4		4
3	Federal VET certificate	3
2		2
1		1

NB:

- Federal certificate of vocational education and training: two-year VET programmes.
- Federal diploma of vocational education and training: three- and four-year VET programmes.
- Federal diploma of higher education (part-time tertiary level professional education and training: federal professional examination.
- Advanced Federal diploma of higher education issued by a college of higher education: federal professional examination.
- Advanced Federal diploma of higher education: formal study programme.

Source: SERI, 2018 (email communication).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) hosts the EQF NCP: https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home.html
- NQF-VPQ/EQF website: https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/education/mobility/nqf-vpet.html
- The List of assigned vocational and professional qualifications (January 2020) is available at: https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20151046/index.html
- A database of all State-recognised occupations and professions (available in German, French and Italian): https://www.becc.admin.ch/becc/public/bvz
- SERI (2015). *Swiss EQF Referencing report:* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

TR

38. TURKEY

Turkey adopted the regulation on the procedures and principles for implementation of the Turkish qualifications framework (TQF regulation) and the description of the Turkish qualifications framework (TQF document) by the Council of Ministers Decision in 2015. The TQF is a lifelong learning, comprehensive framework, comprising eight levels and covering all types of qualifications. Level descriptors are outcomes-based and titled knowledge, skill and competence.

Turkey's aims for its QF include improving relevance of qualifications, linking education to employment, and contributing to wider productivity of the country's workforce.

In addition to the levels, the TQF uses qualification types to define qualifications. Qualification types classify qualifications which are at the same TQF level but differ in functions, such as associate degree and vocational qualification certificate at level 5; or vocational upper secondary education diploma and skilled worker certificate at level 4.

Three bodies comprise the TQF Coordination Council which has ultimate authority over the TQF in decision-making: the Ministry of National Education, the Council of Higher Education and the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA). A broader stakeholder body, the TQF Council, advises on technical issues. The VQA TQF Department further supports the TQF Council.

Quality assurance procedures and criteria have been developed. They extend to assuring quality of qualifications, criteria for levelling in the TQF, and updating qualifications. The Ministry of Education, the Council of Higher Education and VQA respectively regulate qualifications in general, higher and vocational education. These three bodies developed documents which describe the quality assurance systems for the qualifications under their responsibility. The compliance of these systems with the quality assurance regulation, and therefore with the EQF QA principles, has been confirmed by the TQF Council. The TQF Coordination Council adopted the procedure for the inclusion of qualifications in the TQF. Turkey is ready to start the inclusion in the TQF of qualifications that meet the criteria.

Turkey already has a functioning system of validation of non-formal and informal learning. Assessment and certification are conducted by certification bodies, VocTest centres, authorised by the VQA. Validation is legislated in both the TQF Regulation and TQF Document; these stipulate that all qualifications placed in the TQF can be attained via this route.

Turkey's NQF is at an operational stage, having developed and adopted outcomes-based qualifications and occupational standards and implemented a validation system.

Turkey is an EU candidate country, a member of the EQF advisory group, and participates in the Bologna process in higher education. It simultaneously referenced the TQF to the EQF and self-certified against the Bologna framework in 2017.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

Table 40. **Turkish national qualifications framework (TQF)**

TQF levels	Qualification types awarded in formal education and training system	NVQ	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma (PhD, proficiency in arts, specialty in medicine, dentistry)	Level 8 vocational qualification certificate	8
7	Master diploma (with thesis) Master diploma (without thesis)	Level 7 vocational qualification certificate	7
6	Bachelor diploma	Level 6 vocational qualification certificate	6
5	Associate diploma (academic) Associate diploma (vocational)	Level 5 vocational qualification certificate	5
4	High school diploma Vocational and technical high school diploma Mastership certificate	Level 4 vocational qualification certificate	4
3	Journeyman certificate Lower secondary education certificate	Level 3 vocational qualification certificate	3
2	Primary school certificate	Level 2 vocational qualification certificate	2
1	Pre-school participation certificate		1

Source: https://tyc.gov.tr/

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The VQA is the EQF NCP: www.myk.gov.tr
- TQF and EQF website: http://www.tyc.gov.tr/
- TQF database: http://portal.tyc.gov.tr
- Qualifications framework for higher education, information about programmes: http://www.tyyc.yok.gov.tr/
- VQA (2016). *Referencing of the Turkish qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and self-certification to the framework of qualifications of the European higher education area:* http://tyc.gov.tr/trr.pdf

UK

39. UNITED KINGDOM

Several qualifications frameworks have been operational in the UK: the framework for higher education qualifications in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (FHEQ), the qualifications and credit framework (QCF), the national qualifications framework (NQF), the Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF), of which the framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS) is a constituent part, and the credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW), of which the FHEQ is a constituent part. The FHEQ, QCF and NQF operated in parallel in England and Northern Ireland until 2015. The SCQF and the CQFW are comprehensive frameworks for lifelong learning, covering all levels and types of qualifications.

In October 2015, the regulated qualifications framework (RQF) was introduced for England and Northern Ireland, replacing the QCF and the NQF. The RQF covers all general and vocational qualifications regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and by the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment Regulation (CCEA). The most significant change introduced by the RQF is the lifting of standardised requirements for the design of qualifications. Abolition of the QCF has also influenced the credit and qualifications framework of Wales, where, starting from 2015, the regulated qualifications pillar refers to the RQF level descriptors; non-regulated qualifications (quality-assured lifelong learning) continue to refer to the original CQFW descriptors.

The QCF, the SCQF, and the CQFW were referenced to the EQF in 2010, and a joint report was presented. Following the 2017 Council recommendation on the EQF, the referencing was reviewed to reflect the evolution of the UK qualifications frameworks and developments in education and training over the past decade. With increased decentralisation in education, training and qualifications policy in the UK, three separate updated referencing reports were presented: one for the RQF and FHEQ in England and Northern Ireland, one for the CQFW in Wales, and one for the SCQF in Scotland.

39.1 England and Northern Ireland

In October 2015, the regulated qualifications framework (RQF) was introduced in England and Northern Ireland, replacing the qualifications and credit framework (QCF) and the national qualifications framework (NQF). The RQF covers all general and vocational qualifications regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) in England and the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment Regulation (CCEA) in Northern Ireland. Ofqual was established in 2010 under the Apprenticeships, skills, children and learning Act 2009 (the ASCL Act), which sets out its objectives, responsibilities and governance. CCEA was established by the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and has two arms independent from each other: CCEA Regulation and CCEA Awarding Organisation.

While the QCF had a regulatory role, the RQF is a descriptive framework with a communication function. The QCF requirements for the design of qualifications were lifted, part of a policy to devolve responsibility from national level to awarding organisations and learning providers, allowing qualifications to be developed around the changing needs of employers and learners. The RQF aims to provide a transparent overview of qualifications and to show how they relate to each other. To this end, all recognised awarding organisations must comply with the regulators' criteria for recognition, general conditions of recognition, supplementary rules for certain groups of qualifications and other rules and guidance. Central requirements include that all qualifications have a level and size, are described consistently, and are based on learning outcomes.

The RQF has maintained the eight qualification levels (plus three entry levels) of the QCF, but changes were introduced in the way qualification size is calculated. The size of qualifications is expressed in total qualification time (TQT), which includes guided learning hours (GLH) and non-supervised learning. Credits can be

assigned to a qualification or a component of a qualification, but it is not a requirement. Where a credit value is assigned, it is calculated by dividing TQT by 10. If credits are assigned to a qualification component, a level must also be assigned to that component. The outcome-focused RQF level descriptors are based on those of the QCF and NQF, but have been partly adjusted and simplified to accommodate qualifications from a wide range of learning contexts. They fall under two categories: knowledge and skills. A third descriptor for autonomy and accountability that had been included in the QCF was removed; a learner's autonomy and accountability level can now be assessed as part of a qualification where relevant, without being considered in determining the qualification level.

The RQF is at an operational stage. Over 15 000 qualifications, of which approximately 50% are from general education and 50% from vocational and technical education and training, have been included in the register of regulated qualifications. They are delivered by approximately 158 awarding organisations recognised to operate in England and 99 recognised to operate in Northern Ireland. There is a good level of awareness and use of the RQF among education and training institutions and recognition bodies; qualification levels are widely referred to in job descriptions, school and college prospectuses and statutory licences to practice; they are taken into account in setting national targets for education and training achievement.

Higher education qualifications are part of the framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), managed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. The FHEQ was first published in 2001 and revised in 2008; it has a quality assurance role. It has 5 levels (4 to 8) that are comparable to levels 4 to 8 of the RQF. Qualifications in higher education adhere to a consistent nomenclature of qualification types conveying information about the level, nature and subject of study. They are based on learning outcomes defined in terms of knowledge, understanding and abilities, and attainment. Qualifications within each level can vary in terms of volume of learning and range of intended learning outcomes. Most higher education qualifications consist of modules with a credit value attached, although, as with the RQF, this is not a specific requirement; two FHEQ credits are equivalent to one ECTS credit.

The QCF was referenced to the EQF in February 2010 as a part of the overall UK referencing process. The FHEQ was self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2008. Following re-examination of RQF level descriptors and examination of the FHEQ in relation to the EQF, an updated report covering the referencing of both frameworks to the EQF was presented in June 2019. EQF and RQF levels are indicated in the register of regulated qualifications.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – United Kingdom.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and CCEA Regulation were designated as joint England/Northern Ireland EQF NCP: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual/about http://ccea.org.uk/about_us/what_we_do
- Register of regulated qualifications: https://register.ofqual.gov.uk/
- QCA et al. (2010). *Referencing the qualifications frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European qualifications framework.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf
- Ofqual, CEA Regulation (2019). *Referencing the qualifications frameworks of England and Northern Ireland to the European qualifications framework.* https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

Table 41. **The Regulated qualifications framework (RQF) and the Framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ) (England and Northern Ireland)**

RQF levels	Regulated (general and vocational) qualifications in the RQF	FHEQ levels	Higher education qualifications in the FHEQ	EQF Levels
8	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 8	8	Doctoral degrees	8
7	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 7	7	Master degrees Integrated master degrees First degrees in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science Postgraduate diplomas Postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) Postgraduate diploma in education (PGDE) Postgraduate certificates	7
6	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 6	6	Bachelor degrees with honours Bachelor degrees, Professional graduate certificate in education (PGCE) Graduate diplomas Graduate certificates	6
5	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 5 Higher national diplomas (HND)	5	Foundation degrees Diplomas of higher education (DipHE) Higher national diplomas (HND)	5
4	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 4 Higher national certificates (HNC)	4	Higher national certificates (HNC), Certificates of higher education (CertHE)	
3	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 3 GCE AS and A levels	-	-	4
2	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 2 GCSEs at grade A* – C and from 2017 grade 4-9 (England) Functional skills level 2 (England) Essential skills qualifications (NI)	-	-	3
1	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 1 GCSEs at grade D-G and from 2017 grade 3-1 (England) Functional skills level 1 (England) Essential skills qualifications (NI)	-	-	2
Entry level 3	Entry level certificates (sublevel 3), Functional skills entry level (England) (English, mathematics & ICT), Essential skills qualifications (NI)	-	-	1
Entry levels 1-2	Entry level certificates (sublevels 1 and 2)	-	-	-

Source: Adapted from QAA et al. (2019). *Qualifications can cross boundaries*: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaas/news-and-events/qualifications-can-cross-boundaries-guide-to-comparing-qualifications-in-the-uk-and-ireland.pdf?sfvrsn=3715c981_4

39.2 SCOTLAND

The Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) is one of the oldest comprehensive frameworks in Europe. First announced in the 1998 Government green paper Opportunity Scotland: A paper on lifelong learning, it was formally launched in 2001 as an instrument for transparency and communication of qualifications, and enabler of education and training reforms. Its main functions are to support lifelong learning, make clear the relationships between qualifications, show possible routes for progression and credit transfer, and to enable credit transfer between qualifications. It also supports recognition of prior learning (RPL).

The SCQF is a 12-level inclusive framework, which integrates and builds on existing frameworks and allows the addition of new qualifications. It covers all levels and types of qualifications and all learning contexts. The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS) is a constitutive part of the SCQF. Learning-outcomes-based level descriptors, revised in 2012, are defined in five domains (or 'characteristics'): knowledge and understanding; practice (applied knowledge, skills and understanding); generic cognitive skills; communication, ICT and numeric skills; and autonomy, accountability and working with others. All qualifications in the SCQF (except research degrees) have a credit value attached, with one credit point representing 10 hours of learning.

SCQF governance is ensured by the SCQF Partnership, made up of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Universities Scotland, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA Scotland), and the College Development Network. The SCQF Partnership is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity; it is therefore not part of government or any government agency. Employers are also represented in the SCQF Partnership Board and the Scottish government has an observer status. The SCQF was established on a voluntary basis, and operates outside a legal and regulatory framework, strongly supported by a wide range of tools and resources developed by the SCQF Partnership for different stakeholders. A high degree of framework ownership can be observed in all sectors of education and training, as well as among labour market stakeholders. Employers, including those from the private sector, are explicitly encouraged to have their training provisions credit rated and included under the framework.

The framework is at an advanced operational stage. Between 2001 and 2006, mainstream general, vocational and higher education qualifications were included in the SCQF with priority, and since 2017 the coverage has been expanded to include non-formal and international qualifications. By February 2020, approximately 11 600 qualifications from a range of providers were included in the SCQF database. Of these, approximately 1 000 are qualifications awarded outside the formal education and training system, by social partners, trade unions, employers and professional bodies.

SCQF developments and refinement over time were informed by systematic evaluations in 2013, 2015 and 2016-17, and in response to wider policy developments in education and training. In 2016-17 a review was undertaken, looking at the impact that the SCQF and the SCQF Partnership had made on key stakeholders and their policies and practices, as well as the level of awareness and use of the SCQF. It found that the SCQF is a well-established feature of Scotland's education and qualifications landscape and that its reach and use has increased steadily across all target groups. The SCQFP was shown to have been instrumental in a number of key developments: embedding of SCQF levels in the school curriculum and in Scotland's national training programmes; replacement of SVQ levels with SCQF levels; inclusion of qualifications and programmes from outside formal education and training; establishment of new credit rating bodies;

and development of adult achievement awards allowing for the recognition of skills acquired in non-formal settings.

The SCQF was referenced to the EQF in February 2010 as part of the overall UK referencing process. Following the revision of SCQF level descriptors in 2012 and update of SCQF principles in 2015, a pilot project was carried out in 2015/16 revising the original referencing. Building on this, and reflecting wider changes in Scottish education and training since 2010, an updated report on the SCQF referencing to the EQF was presented to the EQF Advisory Group in December 2018.

For a detailed account of NQF developments see the European inventory of NQFs – United Kingdom.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The SCQF Partnership is the EQF NCP for Scotland: http://www.scqf.org.uk/
- The SCQF database: http://scqf.org.uk/the-framework/search-database/
- QCA et al. (2010). *Referencing the qualifications frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European qualifications framework*: https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf
- SCQFP (2019). *Referencing the Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) to the European qualifications framework (EQF) – Referencing report 2019*: https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

Table 42. **Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF)**

SCQF levels	SQA qualifications			Qualifications of higher education institutions	Apprenticeships & SVQs	EQF levels
12			Professional development award	Doctoral degree	Professional apprenticeship	8
11			Professional development award	Master degree, Integrated master degree, Postgraduate diploma, Postgraduate certificate	Graduate apprenticeship, Professional apprenticeship, SVQ	7
10			Professional development award	Honours degree, Graduate diploma, Graduate certificate	Graduate apprenticeship, Professional apprenticeship	6
9			Professional development award	Bachelor / Ordinary degree, Graduate diploma, Graduate certificate	Graduate apprenticeship, Technical apprenticeship, SVQ	
8		Higher national diploma, Advanced diploma	Professional development award	Diploma of higher education	Higher apprenticeship, Technical apprenticeship, SVQ	5
7	Advanced higher, Awards, Scottish baccalaureate	Higher national certificate, Advanced certificate	Professional development award	Certificate of higher education	Modern apprenticeship, SVQ	
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for work higher	National certificate	Professional development award		Modern apprenticeship, Foundation apprenticeship, SVQ	4
			National progression award			
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for work national 5	National certificate	National progression award		Modern apprenticeship, SVQ	3
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for work national 4	National certificate	National progression award		SVQ	2
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for work national 3	National certificate	National progression award			1
2	National 2, Awards	National certificate	National progression award			
1	National 1, Awards					

Source: Adapted from the SCQF website, 2020: https://scqf.org.uk/about-the-framework/interactive-framework/

39.3 WALES

The credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW) was adopted in 2002 and launched in 2003. It has both communication and reform functions. Its purpose is to act as an overarching structure to provide clarity on existing education subsystems and a common currency for learning achievement, to improve access to education and training, and to support and promote the recognition of credit and qualifications and the articulation of flexible progression pathways. It has eight learning-outcomes-based levels plus three entry levels and it is organised in three pillars: higher education qualifications (levels 4 to 8), regulated qualifications (including general and vocational qualifications) and quality assured lifelong learning (which includes unitised accredited learning and professional learning). The CQFW is an open framework, with a unit-based approach and oriented towards a multitude of awarding bodies and education and training contexts, including school, further education, higher education and work-based learning. This aids inclusion of units developed, for example, by the private sector and as part of continuing and enterprise-based education and training.

Two measures are used to describe qualifications in the CQFW: the level of outcomes of learning and the volume of outcomes, described by the number of CQFW credit points. The CQFW level descriptors were revised in 2009 and are structured in three categories: knowledge and understanding; application and action; and autonomy and accountability. With the introduction of the RQF in England and Northern Ireland in 2015, the revised RQF level descriptors – defined in terms of knowledge and skills – have been adapted for the regulated qualifications pillar of the CQFW. Higher education qualifications are assigned to levels in accordance with the framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), which is a constitutive part of the CQFW. The lifelong learning pillar continues to use the 2009 CQFW level descriptors.

The CQFW has reached an operational stage. The qualifications in Wales (QiW) database, managed by Qualifications Wales, contains all qualifications approved for learners under 19 years of age, excluding higher education, and indicates the CQFW and EQF level of these qualifications. Over 100 000 current and archived qualifications are included. The framework is seen as an enabling tool for the Welsh Government's skills and economic development policies and goals, it is used in the development and award of qualifications, and has been embedded in Welsh Government targets, such as for apprenticeship provision and learner attainment. An evaluation of the CQFW was carried out in 2014 (Welsh Government, 2014), and its positive and constructive role in the Welsh qualification landscape was recognised, particularly in relation to its contribution to the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and learner progression. It found that the CQFW was particularly well-established in the higher education and adult and community learning sectors.

A number of changes were introduced in 2015, including to the CQFW governance structure. Qualifications Wales, was set up as a new government-sponsored but independent regulator for non-higher education qualifications; a strategic operational partnership comprising the Welsh Government, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and Qualifications Wales was established to manage the CQFW, supported by the CQFW advisory group. The advisory group also engages other stakeholders, including learners, learning providers and employers, and was created to ensure more effective and strategic development and implementation of the framework. Changes were also introduced to the lifelong learning pillar of the framework, resulting in the exclusion of informal learning from the scope of the CQFW. A formal review of CQFW is being considered.

The CQFW was referenced to the EQF as part of the overall UK referencing process in February 2010. Following developments over the past decade, an updated referencing report was presented to the EQF advisory group in June 2019.

For a detailed account of NQF developments, please see the European inventory of NQFs – United Kingdom.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- CollegesWales (ColegauCymru) is the EQF NCP: http://www.collegeswales.ac.uk/
- Welsh Government CQFW website: https://gov.wales/qualifications
- The Qualifications in Wales database: https://www.qiw.wales/
- QCA et al. (2010). *Referencing the qualifications frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European qualifications framework*: https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf
- Qualifications Wales (2019). *Referencing the credit and qualifications framework for Wales to the European qualifications framework report*: https://europa.eu/europass/en/reports-referencing-national-qualifications-frameworks-eqf

Table 43. **Credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW)**

CQFW levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree Industry qualifications (e.g. chartered accountant)	8
7	Master degree Vocational qualifications Postgraduate certificate in education Apprenticeships	7
6	Bachelor honours degree Vocational qualifications Professional certificate in education Apprenticeships	6
5	Foundation degree Vocational qualifications Higher national diploma Apprenticeships	5
4	Certificates of higher education Vocational qualifications Higher national certificate Apprenticeships	
3	Welsh baccalaureate advanced Vocational qualifications AS / A level Access to higher education Apprenticeships	4
2	Welsh baccalaureate national Vocational qualifications Essential skills General certificate of secondary education (GCSE) (grades A* to C) Apprenticeships	3
1	Welsh baccalaureate foundation Vocational qualifications Essential skills General certificate of secondary education (GCSE) (grades D to G)	2
Entry level 3	Entry level qualifications Essential skills	1
Entry levels 1-2	Entry point for learners with additional learning needs	-

Source: Adapted from QAA et al. (2019). *Qualifications can cross boundaries*: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaas/news-and-events/qualifications-can-cross-boundaries-guide-to-comparing-qualifications-in-the-uk-and-ireland.pdf?sfvrsn=3715c981_4

Acronyms

CVET	continuous vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESCO	European skills, competences, qualifications and occupations
IVET	initial vocational education and training
LOQ	learning opportunities and qualifications in Europe portal
MOOCs	massive open online courses
NCP	national coordination point
NQF	national qualifications framework
QF – EHEA	qualifications framework in the European higher education area
VET	vocational education and training
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning

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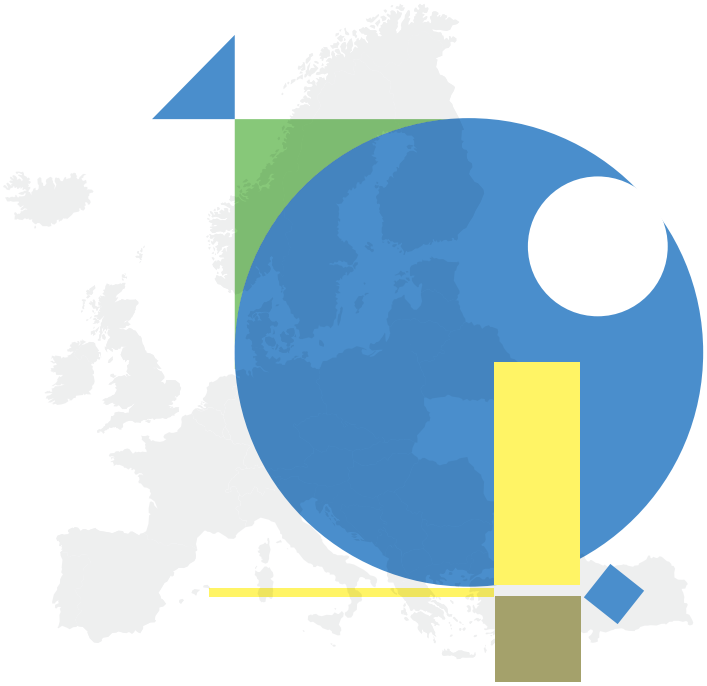

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