



NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

DEVELOPMENTS IN **EUROPE**

ANNIVERSARY EDITION

National qualifications framework developments in Europe

ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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We provide information on and analyses of vocational
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Foreword

Cedefop always worked on transparency and recognition of qualifications since it was set up in Berlin in 1975. While taking many different directions and forms, the motivation for working on these issues has always been to reduce barriers to mobility and progression across national and institutional borders.

Cedefop's work on qualifications frameworks, which can be traced back to the 1980s, stands out as an activity directly influencing policies and practices at national and European levels. Having been directly involved in the conceptualisation and development of the European qualifications framework (EQF) until its adoption in 2008, Cedefop has systematically analysed and supported national qualifications framework (NQF) development across Europe.

Our latest (2014) report covers 42 NQFs in 38 countries, signalling that these frameworks have rapidly become an important part of the European education and training landscape.

The shift towards learning outcomes promoted by the EQF, and the associated NQFs, can be seen as an important contribution to the modernisation of European education and training in general, and VET in particular.

Through this anniversary publication we would like to share with you how EU Member States' NQFs are structured, and what stage of development they have reached in each country when referenced to the EQF. However, NQFs are much more than a technical matter to be summarised in a few infographics.

Qualifications frameworks can give coherence to a world in flux. Education today is challenged by the organisational, institutional and social changes that technological advances and political change have brought in their wake.

The EQF recommendation of 2008 ⁽¹⁾ stems from European countries' determination to retain oversight of all educational activity and all forms of certification. Countries agreed that basing qualifications frameworks on learning outcomes would achieve this oversight better than simply registering learning inputs.

Such frameworks can also be a force for social equity, as they potentially place formal schooling on an equal footing with non-formal or informal learning. The 2008 recommendation on the EQF message is indirect but unmistakable: it matters less how you acquired knowledge, skills and competences; what really matters is what you know and what you are capable of doing.

Thanks to this conceptual foundation, NQFs are able to add value to a learning process and support access to employment. They allow citizens to assess their own qualifications; they allow employers to determine more accurately whether a person's qualifications are up to the job; they make it possible, via the EQF, for national policy-makers to compare qualifications available in their country to those available in other countries, and decide

⁽¹⁾ European Parliament and Council of the EU, 2008.

whether changes are needed. By establishing standards, qualifications frameworks push education and training providers towards better quality; and by treating all competences equally, they open new paths between and within sectors and careers.

Cedefop has accompanied the referencing process of NQFs to the EQF every step of the way. Since 2003, we have helped to formulate relevant concepts, especially learning outcomes. We have provided technical and analytical support to the EQF advisory group, the main European body overseeing the process of relating national frameworks to the EQF.

When requested, we also advise governments on technical and analytical matters. We have organised several major conferences on related themes. We publish studies on particular aspects of NQF development. And, perhaps most important, we monitor NQF developments in all countries, including referencing (linking) NQF levels with those of the EQF. A briefing note (Cedefop, 2014b) summarising the main findings, accompanies this annual exercise.

The current publication, providing an overview of European NQFs and their qualifications, celebrates this long-term work and shows that the Centre can make a difference to European vocational education and training and, more importantly, to European citizens.

James Calleja
Director

Table of contents

Foreword	6
Introduction	10
PART I	
Overview and main tendencies	11
1. NQF in Europe: overall progress	12
1.1. NQFs in Europe: common characteristics and challenges	13
1.2. Impact of NQFs	14
1.2.1. Learning outcomes	14
1.2.2. Stakeholder involvement	14
1.2.3. Institutional reform	14
1.2.4. Bridging institutions and subsystems	14
1.2.5. Developing and renewing qualifications	15
1.2.6. Opening up to the private and non-formal sector	15
1.2.7. Recognition of qualifications	15
1.2.8. Validation of non-formal and informal learning	15
PART II	
National qualifications frameworks	17
1. Austria	18
2. Belgium	20
2.1. Dutch-speaking community	20
2.2. French-speaking community	22
2.3. German-speaking community	22
3. Bulgaria	24
4. Croatia	26
5. Cyprus	28
6. Czech Republic	30
7. Denmark	32
8. Estonia	34
9. Finland	36
10. France	38
11. Germany	40
12. Greece	42
13. Hungary	44
14. Iceland	46
15. Ireland	48
16. Italy	50
17. Latvia	52
18. Liechtenstein	54
19. Lithuania	56
20. Luxembourg	58
21. Malta	60
22. Netherlands	62
23. Norway	64
24. Poland	66
25. Portugal	68
26. Romania	70

27. Slovakia	71
28. Slovenia	72
29. Spain	74
30. Sweden	76
31. Switzerland	78
32. United Kingdom	80
32.1. England and Northern Ireland	80
32.2. Scotland	82
32.3. Wales	84
List of abbreviations	86
References	88

List of tables

1. Austrian NQF	19
2. Belgian qualifications framework of the Flemish-speaking community (FQF)	21
3. Belgian qualifications framework of the German-speaking community (QDG)	23
4. Bulgarian NQF (BQF)	25
5. Croatian NQF (CROQF)	27
6. Cyprus NQF	29
7. Czech education qualification types and NSK levels	31
8. Danish NQF	33
9. Estonian NQF (EstQF)	35
10. Finnish NQF (draft)	37
11. French NQF	39
12. German NQF (DQR)	41
13. Greek qualification types in the NQF (HQF)	43
14. Hungarian NQF (HuQF)	45
15. Icelandic NQF (ISQF)	47
16. Irish NQF	49
17. Linking Italian formal qualifications to the EQF	51
18. Latvian NQF (LQF)	53
19. Lithuanian NQF (LTQF)	57
20. Luxembourg NQF (CLQ)	59
21. Malta NQF (MQF)	61
22. Types of qualifications in the NLQF by mid-2014	63
23. Norway NQF (NKR)	65
24. Polish NQF (PQF)	67
25. Portugal NQF (QNQ)	69
26. Slovenian NQF (SQF)	73
27. Swedish NQF (SEQF, draft)	77
28. Indication of qualifications types to be included in the NQR-CH-BB and approximate level	79
29. QCF/NQF for England and Northern Ireland	81
30. Scottish qualifications framework (SCQF)	83
31. Welsh qualifications framework (CQFW)	85

Introduction

Before 2005, national qualifications frameworks (NQF) had been set up in three European countries: Ireland, France and the UK. In 2015, frameworks have been, or are being, developed in all 38 countries cooperating on the European qualifications framework (EQF). An increasing number of these frameworks are now becoming operational and are starting to make an impact on education, training and (to some extent) employment policies and practices. The introduction of NQFs signals an important shift in policy perspective which can change and improve the way education and training is organised and delivered. The design of NQFs rests on two key-principles:

- (a) NQFs are based on learning outcomes, specifying what learners are expected to know, to be able to do and understand at the end of a learning sequence. This perspective replaces the traditional focus on institutional origin and on the content and profile of qualifications;
- (b) European countries have overwhelmingly chosen to set up comprehensive frameworks, covering all levels and types of qualifications. This allows a broader view and a focus on the relationship between different qualifications and how they fit into a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective.

This publication illustrates how the development and introduction of NQFs is resulting in a new representation of national education and training systems. Part 1 of the report offers a general overview and main tendencies of European NQF developments, with a brief discussion of the impact these frameworks are having. Part 2 briefly presents each national framework and the way it has been designed and structured. This description is supported by detailed tables showing how concrete qualifications and qualifications types have now been allocated to the learning-outcomes-based levels. Where available, and where referencing has taken place, the link to EQF levels is also included. Given that most countries have recently finalised the initial development of their frameworks, this report provides the first-ever comprehensive overview of the allocation of national qualifications and qualification types to learning-outcomes-based NQF levels.

This report shows, and celebrates, that Cedefop has been involved in the conceptualisation and implementation of qualifications frameworks for a long time. In the 1980s Cedefop significantly contributed to European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET) by developing a five-level (partly) competence-based structure. This approach directly influenced work at national level, for example influencing the professional qualifications structures of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania. The work on transparency of qualifications starting in the 1990s, within the forum on transparency, directly led to the initial outline of the EQF in 2003-04, a work which became a catalyst for NQF developments during the past decade.



PART I

Overview and main tendencies

NQF in Europe: overall progress

At the beginning of 2015, 38 European countries ⁽²⁾ had developed/were developing 42 NQFs. The following figures reflect the situation in February 2015:

- (a) 34 countries ⁽³⁾ are working towards comprehensive NQFs, covering all types and levels of qualifications (compared to 30 in 2013);
- (b) four countries have introduced partial NQFs, covering a limited range of qualification types and levels or consisting of distinct frameworks operating separately from each other. This is exemplified by the Czech Republic and Switzerland where separate frameworks for vocational and higher education qualifications have been developed; by France where vocationally and professionally oriented qualifications are included in the framework; and by Italy where the framework is restricted to qualifications from higher education;
- (c) 29 NQFs have been formally adopted (compared to 24 in 2013);
- (d) 18 countries have reached operational stage (compared to 16 in 2013): in seven of these – Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Ireland, France, Malta, the Netherlands and the UK – NQFs are fully operational (compared to five in 2013);
- (e) 32 countries proposed/adopted eight-level frameworks (28 in 2013);
- (f) 27 countries presented referencing reports ⁽⁴⁾ showing how their national frameworks relate to the EQF;
- (g) 24 NQFs are self-certified against the Bologna framework, 15 jointly with EQF referencing;
- (h) nine countries indicate EQF levels on certificates, diplomas or Europass documents (six in 2013).

The EQF has been the main catalyst for rapid development and implementation of NQFs. Almost all countries have seen national frameworks as necessary for relating national qualifications levels to the EQF in a transparent and trustful manner. By February 2015, 24 countries had referenced their national qualifications levels to the EQF: Austria, Belgium (Flemish- and French-speaking Communities), Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and the UK. Three further countries, Greece, Cyprus and Romania, were still in a dialogue with the EQF advisory group on finalising their reports. The remaining countries are expected to follow in the near future. The number of countries in EQF cooperation increased during 2014 from 36 to 38 ⁽⁵⁾, showing that the EQF is seen as increasingly relevant.

The development of NQFs in Europe also reflects the Bologna process and the agreement to implement qualifications frameworks in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA). A total of 24 countries have formally 'self-certified' their higher education qualifications to the QF-EHEA. Countries are increasingly combining referencing to the EQF and self-certification to the QF-EHEA ⁽⁶⁾; Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia have all produced joint reports on both processes, reflecting the priority given to developing and adopting comprehensive NQFs covering all levels and types of qualifications. It is expected that this approach will be chosen by most countries preparing to reference to the EQF in 2015. This development reflects the increasingly close cooperation between the two European framework initiatives, also illustrated by regular meetings between EQF national coordination points and Bologna framework coordinators.

⁽²⁾ These countries are: the EU-28 Member States, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey.

⁽³⁾ In the UK, the frameworks of Scotland and Wales are comprehensive; the qualifications and credit framework in England/Northern Ireland (QCF) includes only vocational/professional qualifications.

⁽⁴⁾ Greece, Cyprus and Romania still need to complete this process.

⁽⁵⁾ The two new countries are Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁽⁶⁾ Self-certification reports verify the compatibility of the national framework for higher education with the QF-EHEA.

1.1. NQFs in Europe: common characteristics and challenges

The initial technical and conceptual design of NQFs has now been finalised in most countries. The following common characteristics can be identified:

- (a) NQFs have primarily (in 34 out of 38 countries) been designed as comprehensive and address all levels and types of qualifications (VET, higher education and general education). The remaining four countries, the Czech Republic, England/Northern Ireland, France and Switzerland have developed frameworks with limited scope or chosen to develop and implement separate frameworks for vocational and higher education. Some countries, such as Germany and Austria, have agreed on comprehensive NQFs but are taking a step-by-step approach where some qualifications (e.g. school leaving certificates at upper secondary level) have still to be included;
- (b) comprehensive European NQFs can mostly be described as 'loose frameworks', designed to be able to embrace the full range of concepts, values and traditions existing in the different parts of education and training covered by the framework. Whether a framework is tight or loose depends on the stringency of conditions a qualification must meet to be included. Loose frameworks introduce a set of comprehensive level descriptors to be applied across subsystems, but at the same time allow substantial 'specialisation' within each subframework⁽⁷⁾. In most countries, inclusion of formal qualifications in the NQFs follows sector-based legislation, not uniform rules covering the entire framework. This is illustrated by the proposed Polish framework where generic, national descriptors are supplemented by more detailed ones for the subsystems of general, vocational and higher education. While not so explicitly addressed by other frameworks, the basic principle applies across the continent;
- (c) NQFs are widely considered to be important in supporting national lifelong learning strategies, notably by opening up to qualifications awarded in non-formal learning contexts, by promoting validation of non-formal learning, and by reducing barriers to progress in education, training and learning. The overarching perspective of comprehensive frameworks is critical for achieving lifelong learning objectives;
- (d) most countries have introduced eight-level frameworks. Three exceptions to this can be found in the recently developed frameworks of Iceland and Norway, which have seven levels, and Slovenia, using 10 levels. The prevailing similarities in structure among most countries demonstrate that international comparability is considered a priority;
- (e) while all countries emphasise that their NQFs are communication and transparency tools designed to improve transparency and comparability of national qualifications systems, many countries also see NQFs as contributing to incremental reform, notably as regards the shift to learning outcomes and improved stakeholder cooperation and dialogue;
- (f) although a broad range of stakeholders participates in the design and development of frameworks, NQFs mainly address the needs of the education and training sector, and, to a lesser extent, those of the labour market;
- (g) all countries have introduced learning-outcomes-based level descriptors, reflecting EQF level descriptors (knowledge, skills, competence). Evidence shows, however, that many countries combine this with links to inputs and emphasise that these two approaches are complementary rather than mutually exclusive;
- (h) Cedefop evidence shows that the roles and functions differ between countries; ranging from (a limited number of) frameworks with a regulatory and reforming function to (a majority of) frameworks of a purely descriptive and classification character whose impact can only be indirect.

(7) For example for VET or higher education.

1.2. Impact of NQFs

Important progress has been made in preparing the NQFs for full operational status: the initial design and development stage is now mostly finished; a formal basis has been agreed and adopted in most countries; the involvement and commitment of stakeholders is progressing; and the shift to learning outcomes is underway. As of February 2015 we can, therefore, conclude that some of the most important conditions for the implementation of the NQFs have been met. This does not mean, however, that success is guaranteed. The impact of a qualifications framework depends on many factors, not always easy to identify and separate. The following areas demonstrate areas where NQFs now are making a difference.

1.2.1. Learning outcomes

The new generation of European NQFs are mainly connected through their emphasis on learning outcomes. Recent research (Cedefop, forthcoming) shows that the principle of learning outcomes has been broadly accepted among European policy-makers and that the NQFs have contributed actively to this shift. While the approach was previously taken forward in a fragmented way in separate institutions and subsystems, the emergence of comprehensive frameworks has made it possible to approach the shift to learning outcomes in a more systematic, more consistent way. In countries like Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway and Poland we can observe that the introduction of frameworks has led to the identification of areas where learning outcomes have not been previously applied or where these have been used inconsistently. The Norwegian NQF pointed to the lack of learning-outcomes-based descriptions and standards for advanced vocational training (*Fagskole*), resulting in work to remedy this weakness.

1.2.2. Stakeholder involvement

The new generation of European NQFs have helped bring together stakeholders from different subsystems in education, not commonly cooperating or speaking to each other, and stakeholders from education and employment. Experiences so far are mostly summarised as positive; countries signal that they want to continue and, if possible, institutionalise these processes. A key question now is whether this initial success can be turned into a permanent feature of the frameworks. While initial development has been limited in time and scope, long-term implementation of a framework will require a different, stronger commitment, especially by engaging stakeholders from the labour market.

1.2.3. Institutional reform

NQFs are contributing directly to institutional reform in some countries. Ireland, Malta, Portugal and Romania exemplify this through their decisions to merge existing and multiple qualification bodies into one covering different types and levels of qualifications. Other countries have also plans to merge qualifications authorities or to establish new institutions (a proposal for a national qualifications council has been suggested in Sweden). This shows that comprehensive NQFs, even in cases where their main role is perceived as promoting transparency, can trigger institutional reform. It is no coincidence that Ireland, following more than a decade of framework development, has now opted for one, coherent quality and qualifications authority. Merging of the four previous bodies seems to reflect the structure and principles of the comprehensive NFQ and will also aid further development and implementation of the framework and strengthen quality assurance underpinning qualifications.

1.2.4. Bridging institutions and subsystems

Several countries see the NQF as tool for strengthening the links between education and training subsystems. This is considered essential for improving permeability and reducing barriers to progression in education, training and learning. The new generation of European NQFs overwhelmingly consists of comprehensive frameworks, addressing all types of qualifications at all levels. This means that they – through their descriptors – must be relevant to a diversity of institutions pursuing a wide variety of tasks according to different traditions and cultures.

1.2.5. Developing and renewing qualifications

The introduction of comprehensive NQFs adds value by creating overview. The introduction of learning-outcomes-based levels, and the placing of qualifications according to these, makes it possible to identify gaps in existing qualifications provision.

Cedefop study *Qualifications at level 5* (Cedefop, 2014a) shows that EQF level 5 (and the relevant NQF levels) has been used as a platform for the development of new qualifications. This is exemplified by the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and the UK. These new qualifications might be initial vocational qualifications, as in Estonia. In other cases, as currently being discussed in the Czech Republic, these qualifications may be academically oriented. Lithuania currently has no qualifications linked to this level, although there had been qualifications of this level awarded in vocational colleges until 2004. The demand for qualifications at this level has now been documented and both the VET and the higher education sector are considering responses: initial VET schools are seeking to revise part of the qualifications they provide and to upgrade them to level 5. Colleges of higher vocational education are seeking to introduce short study cycle programmes and to link these qualifications to level 5.

1.2.6. Opening up to the private and non-formal sector

Most of the new NQFs have limited their coverage to formal qualifications awarded by national authorities or independent bodies accredited by these authorities. This means that frameworks predominantly cover initial qualifications offered by public education and training institutions. While there are exceptions, most NQFs fail to cover qualifications resulting from education, training and learning taking place in the non-formal and private sectors. This is problematic, as important qualifications linked to continuing and further education and training are left out of the picture. Since 2011-12, attention has increasingly been paid to this potential weakness in the scope of frameworks. Some countries, such as Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, have started working on procedures for including non-formal and private sector qualifications and certificates.

1.2.7. Recognition of qualifications

The effect of the qualifications frameworks on mobility of learners and workers is still uncertain (European Commission and GHK, 2013). This reflects that full implementation has yet to be achieved and that referencing to the EQF has yet to be finalised. However, evidence gathered by a study on the (potential) role of qualifications frameworks in supporting mobility of worker and learners (European Commission and DEEWR, 2011) shows that there are great expectations of qualifications frameworks in supporting mobility through better recognition of qualifications. NQFs provide an import link to detailed information on qualifications, notably on learning outcomes but also on workload and the type of qualification in question. These are all essential elements required for recognition of qualifications (Council of Europe and Unesco, 2012). The potential role to be played by qualifications frameworks in this context is expressed in the new (2013) subsidiary text to the Lisbon recognition convention. This text underlines that frameworks should be used systematically as a source of information supporting decisions on recognition.

1.2.8. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The 2012 recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning (Council of the EU, 2012), sees the link to national qualifications frameworks as important for the further implementation of validation arrangements across Europe. NQFs and validation are bound together through their shared emphasis on learning outcomes. The 2012 recommendation states that 'the same or equivalent (learning-outcomes-based) standards to those used in formal education' should be used for validation of non-formal and informal learning. NQFs provide a common reference point for learning acquired inside, as well as outside, formal education and training.

The 2014 update of the European inventory on validation ⁽⁸⁾ confirms the priority given to the linking of frameworks and validation arrangements.

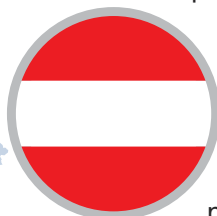
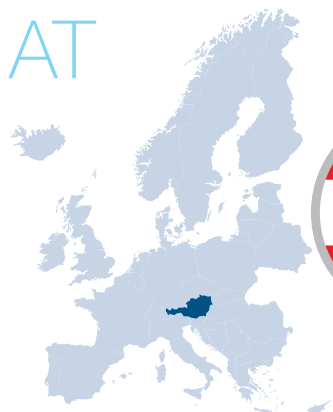
⁽⁸⁾ Cedefop (2014). *Validation of non-formal and informal learning: European inventory on validation: 2014 update*. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory> [accessed 17.3.2015].



PART II

National qualifications frameworks

1. AUSTRIA



Austria has designed an NQF with eight levels, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. Its main objective is to map national qualifications from all education and training subsystems, present them in relation to each other, and to make implicit levels of the qualification system explicit, nationally and internationally. The framework will also aid validation of non-formal and informal learning. It will have no regulatory functions. An important feature of the Austrian NQF is that levels 6 to 8 remain open to VET qualifications acquired outside the Bologna strand. A 'Y structure' was adopted, introducing parallel level descriptors to capture the differences between higher education and VET qualifications at these levels.

The Austrian NQF has still to reach operational stage. Implementation is structured in three 'procedural corridors'. Corridor one deals with allocation of levels to qualifications awarded within formal education and training, i.e. awarded by the State and on the basis of national legislation and regulation. Corridor two focuses on development of quality assured procedures for inclusion of qualifications from the non-formal sector (such as occupation-specific and company-based continuing VET (CVET)). Corridor three aims to develop approaches to validating learning outcomes acquired through informal learning. Even though there seems to be political agreement and support for the implementation of NQF from different stakeholders including social partners, diverging views on certain aspects and technical details has slowed down further implementation. A number of questions need to be resolved, notably regarding the legal basis of the NQF, the procedures for inclusion of qualifications, assigning general education qualifications, and the respective upper secondary school-leaving certificate (secondary academic school (*Allgemeinbildende höhere Schulen*)-*Reifeprüfung*). A political decision on these issues is expected in the near future.

The NQF was referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and self-certified against the qualifications framework in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in June 2012. Only Bologna qualifications awarded in higher education, selected 'reference qualifications' from VET, and those from a pre-vocational programme are currently included in the NQF and linked to the EQF. The selection of reference qualifications is illustrative: comprehensive and formal inclusion of qualifications will commence once a political decision has been made.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Austrian NCP was set up as an organisational entity at the Austrian agency for international cooperation in education and research (Österreichischer Austauschdienst) <http://www.oead.at/nqr> [accessed 24.2.2015].

Austrian EQF referencing report (Bm:uk; BM.W_f, 2012).



Table 1. Austrian NQF

NQF levels	Reference qualifications		EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree <i>Doktorgrade</i>		8
7	Master degree <i>Master- bzw. Diplomgrade</i>	Master builders <i>Baumeister</i> Civil engineers <i>Zivil Ingenieur</i>	7
6	Bachelor degree <i>Bachelorgrade</i>	Master craftsperson qualification <i>Meister</i>	6
5	VET college Reifeprüfung certificate and VET diploma <i>Reife- und Diplomprüfung der berufsbildende höhere Schule</i>		5
4	VET school qualification <i>Abschluss der Fachschule</i> Apprenticeship diploma <i>Lehrabschluss</i>		4
3	Secondary home economics school qualification (two-year course) <i>Abschluss einer Hauswirtschaftsschule</i>		3
2	Secondary home economics school qualification (one-year course) <i>Abschluss einer Haushaltungsschule</i> Pre-vocational school qualification <i>Abschluss der Polytechnischen Schule</i>		2
1			1

Source: Adapted from BM:uk; BM.W_f (2011).

2. BELGIUM



Due to its federal structure, Belgium developed three NQFs, linked to the Dutch-, French- and German-speaking communities respectively. 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 General Structure of the Education System was adopted in 2012, stating that European qualifications framework (EQF) levels 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 mobility of Belgian citizens within the country. The three frameworks will be referenced separately to the EQF: the Flemish- and French-speaking communities have completed this process, the German-speaking community is expected to do so in the near future.

2.1. Dutch-speaking community

Belgium Flanders has implemented a comprehensive NQF, introduced by the Act on the Qualification Structure in 2009 (Government of Flanders, 2009). The framework is learning-outcomes-based and describes levels according to knowledge/skills and context/autonomy/responsibility. Descriptors are used for two main categories of qualifications: educational and professional. 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 education. 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 and in institutions recognised by the Flemish authorities.

The qualification structure (including the qualifications framework) aims at making qualifications transparent, so that stakeholders in education (students, pupils and providers) and the labour market can communicate unambiguously about qualifications and associated competences. It acts as a reference for quality assurance, developing and renewing courses, developing and aligning procedures for recognising acquired competences, and for comparison (nationally and at European level) of qualifications.

The Flemish qualifications framework (FQF) is now operational, following the adoption of a series of implementation decrees in 2011-13 covering both professional and educational qualifications. 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 FQF 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 was referenced to the EQF in June 2011.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training, AKOV (Agentschap voor Kwaliteitszorg in Onderwijs en Vorming) acts as EQF NCP.
<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs/AKOV/#> [accessed 26.2.2015].

Referencing of the Flemish qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework (AKOV, 2014).



Table 2. Belgian qualifications framework of the Flemish-speaking community (FQF)

NQF levels	Educational qualifications	Professional qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctor		8
7	Master (January 2014, 55 included) Master after master (January 2014, two included)	Recognised professional qualifications (January 2014, one included)	7
6	Professional bachelor (January 2014, 19 included) Academic bachelor (January 2014, 21 included) Bachelor after bachelor (January 2014, six included)	Recognised professional qualifications (January 2014, one included)	6
5	Recognised professional qualifications (January 2014, two included)	Recognised professional qualifications (January 2014, 17 included)	5
4	Upper secondary general education Technical secondary education (third stage) Artistic secondary education (third stage) Supplementary general adult education	Recognised professional qualifications (January 2014, 38 included)	4
3	Secondary vocational education, second year (third stage)	Recognised professional qualifications (January 2014, 41 included)	3
2	Adult basic education Second stage of secondary vocational education	Recognised professional qualifications (January 2014, 18 included)	2
1	Primary education		1

Source: Adapted from AKOV, 2014.

2.2. French-speaking community

The French-speaking community of Belgium has developed a qualifications framework for lifelong learning (*cadre francophone des certifications pour l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie*, CFC). An eight-level structure is learning-outcomes-based and describes levels in terms of knowledge/skills and context/autonomy/responsibility. The framework is seen as an integral part of the existing education and training system and seeks to improve overall transparency of qualifications, to ease mobility and support learner progress. The CFC is an important instrument for strengthening use of learning outcomes and for referencing to the EQF, but it does not have a regulatory role and is not seen as an instrument for reforming existing institutions and structures. In the first stage of implementation only qualifications delivered by public providers will be included; opening up at a later to other qualifications will be considered.

Legal adoption of the CFC is still (end 2014) pending, and actual qualifications have yet to be placed in the framework. A steering and positioning authority will be created as soon as legal adoption is carried out. This body will be responsible for implementation and follow-up of the CFC, including the positioning of qualifications. The delay has slowed progress and is currently hindering the CFC move into an operational stage.

The CFC was referenced to the EQF in December 2013. The self-certification to the QF-EHEA is work in progress.



MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The EQF NCP was set up under the responsibility of the French-speaking service for jobs and qualifications (*Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications*, SFMQ) <http://www.sfmq.cfwb.be/index.php?id=1435> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Report on referencing the French-speaking qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (Malarme, 2013).

2.3. German-speaking community

The German-speaking community of Belgium adopted its qualifications framework (*Qualifikationsrahmen Deutschsprachiger Gemeinschaft*, QDG) in November 2013. Being the smallest part of Belgium (geographically and in terms of population) the framework reflects the work done in the Flemish- and French-speaking parts of Belgium but is also inspired by the German qualifications framework (DQR). It is an eight-level, learning-outcomes-based framework that includes qualifications from general education, VET and higher education. The framework builds on the concept of *Handlungskompetenz* (action competence) and distinguishes between subject/occupation-specific and personal competences.

A main objective for the framework is to strengthen 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 will also promote equivalence between general education and VET; the shift to learning outcomes is an important step in increasing transparency and strengthening permeability. The 2014 decree on QDG (Belgian Ministry of the German-speaking community, 2014) envisages that a system of validation of non-formal and informal learning will be linked to the QDG, stating that a central validation point will be set up within the next five years.

The framework has not yet been referenced to the EQF.

MAIN SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Dekret zur Einführung eines Qualifikationsrahmens der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft [Decree establishing a qualifications framework of the German-speaking community] (Belgian Ministry of the German-speaking community, 2014).

Table 3. Belgian qualifications framework of the German-speaking community (QDG)

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

Source: Belgian Ministry of the German-speaking community, 2014.

3. BULGARIA



The Bulgarian national qualifications framework (NQF) for lifelong learning (BQF) was adopted in 2012. It is a single, comprehensive, eight-level framework with an additional preparatory level 0. All levels are described in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences (personal and professional). The framework includes qualifications from all levels and types of formal education and training (pre-primary education, primary and secondary general education, VET, and higher education). The overall objective of the BQF – compatible with the EQF and the QF-EHEA – is to make the levels of the Bulgarian education system clearer and easier to understand by describing them in terms of learning outcomes. Apart from offering transparency, the NQF is seen as important to national reforms. The BQF aims to play a role in supporting lifelong learning and in promoting the participation of adults in learning in Bulgaria.

The BQF is not yet operational. The referencing report was adopted by the Minister for Education and Science in March 2014, paving the way for action, but actual implementation has been delayed. The BQF, as proposed for referencing, is a classification framework. Its future reforming role to support the development and revision of qualifications and quality assurance arrangements is acknowledged. The BQF will be embedded in wider education reforms with legislative changes to strengthen its implementation.

The BQF was linked to the EQF and the QF-EHEA in May 2013.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The International and European Cooperation Directorate at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (<http://www.mon.bg>, accessed 5.3.2014) is the designated EQF NCP. It plays an organisational, coordinative and supportive role in the referencing process.

Referencing of the NQF of the Republic of Bulgaria to the EQF and to the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, 2013).



Table 4. Bulgarian NQF (BQF)

NQF levels	BQF	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree continuing training	8
7	Master degree continuing training	7
6	Bachelor degree Degree of 'professional bachelor in...' continuing training	6
5	Vocational training (IV degree of a vocational qualification)	5
4	Upper secondary education school leaving certificate general/vocational education and training (III degree of a vocational qualification)	4
3	Lower secondary school certificate general/vocational education and training (II degree of a vocational qualification)	3
2	Basic education certificate (five to eight class) general/vocational education and training (I degree of a vocational qualification)	2
1	Primary education certificate	1
0	Pre-primary education	N/A

Source: Adapted from Bulgarian Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, 2013.

4. CROATIA



The Croatian qualifications framework (CROQF) Act (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2013) establishes the CROQF based on learning outcomes, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy. It is a single, comprehensive eight-level framework, which incorporates credit systems. It includes qualifications from all levels and subsystems of formal education and training (general education, VET and higher education); it will also be the basis for validating non-formal and informal learning. Apart from offering transparency, the CROQF is seen as an important tool for reforming national education and training; this includes setting up a system for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning, and creating a well-founded quality assurance system.

The framework has entered an early operational stage. Implementing structures have been set up and responsibilities among stakeholders agreed. The National Council for Development of Human Potential, National Coordination Group and the sectoral councils take on particular responsibilities for putting the framework in place. The National Council (appointed in 2014) comprises representatives of national ministries, regional structures, social partners and national agencies involved in development and award of qualifications in different subsystems of education and training. It oversees policies in education, training, employment and human resource development and monitors and evaluates the impact of the CROQF. The Ministry of Education (also EQF national coordination point) coordinates implementation in cooperation with the ministries of labour and regional development. The CROQF Act foresees the development of two by-laws. The ordinance on CROQF register has recently been adopted; the ordinance on validation of non-formal and informal learning is in preparation.

Croatia linked the CROQF to the EQF and self-certified to QF-EHEA in March 2012.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The EQF NCP for Croatia is the Directorate for International Cooperation and European Integration at the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

A CROQF website has been established <http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/hko-hr> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Referencing and self-certification report (Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2014).

Table 5. Croatian NQF (CROQF)

NQF levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8.2	Doctoral diploma	8
8.1	Postgraduate research master of science diploma <i>poslijediplomski znanstveni magistarski studiji</i>	
7	Master diploma (graduate university studies) <i>sveučilišni diplomski studiji</i> Professional master diploma (specialist graduate professional studies) <i>specijalistički diplomski stručni studiji</i> Post-master specialist university studies <i>poslijediplomski specijalistički studiji</i>	7
6	Bachelor diploma (undergraduate university studies) <i>sveučilišni preddiplomski studiji</i> Professional bachelor diploma (undergraduate professional studies) <i>stručni preddiplomski studiji</i>	6
5	Professional higher education diploma (short cycle) <i>kratki stručni studiji</i> VET post-secondary development and training certificate <i>strukovno specijalističko usavršavanje i osposobljavanje</i> Master craftsman diploma	5
4.2	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate Upper secondary VET certificate (four years) Upper secondary VET certificate (five years) for nursing technicians	4
4.1	Upper secondary VET (three years)	
3	Upper secondary VET certificate (two years) Upper secondary VET certificate (one year)	3
2	Vocational training certificate	2
1	Primary education certificate (eight years) (*)	1

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

Source: Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2013.

5. CYPRUS



Cyprus has designed a comprehensive eight-level NQF including all levels and types of qualifications in all subsystems of education and training, from primary to higher education. The system of vocational qualifications (SVQ), being developed by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA), is an integral, but distinct part of the NQF. Common structures and elements, which will offer opportunities for combining and transferring credits, are being discussed. The main role of the NQF is to classify qualifications according to predefined levels of learning outcomes. The reform potential of the NQF is being acknowledged by linking it to wider reforms and procedures for quality assurance, assessment and awarding of qualifications.

The framework is not yet operational. The NQF will be established at the Ministry of Education and Culture as an in-service department and will be implemented gradually. Stakeholders responsible for accreditation of qualifications will continue to work according to the existing legislative framework for their operation. However, new legislation on the operation of the NQF, which would clarify cooperation among different stakeholders, is thought necessary. A decision of the Council of Ministers is planned; if necessary, a legislative framework may be introduced later. A new permanent advisory body – the council of the NQF of Cyprus – including all relevant stakeholders, is planned.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A Cyprus EQF NCP has been established at the Ministry of Education and Culture. <http://www.moec.gov.cy> [accessed 4.3.2015].

The referencing of the Cyprus qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014).

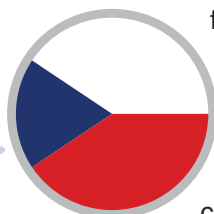


Table 6. Cyprus NQF

NQF levels	Education certificates/diplomas/degrees		SVQ levels	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree			8
7c	Master degree		SVQ 5	7
7b	Postgraduate diplomas			
7a	Postgraduate certificates			
6	Bachelor degree		SVQ 4	6
5c	Higher certificates and diplomas (three years)		SVQ 3	5
5b	Post-secondary certificates and diplomas (two years)			
5a	Post-secondary certificates and diplomas (one year)			
4	Upper secondary general education and evening schools certificates (12th class or 12th and 13th for some private schools) Upper secondary technical and vocational education and evening technical schools certificates (12th class)		SVQ 2	4
3	Lower secondary education certificate 10th class	New modern apprenticeship	SVQ 1	3
2	Lower secondary education certificate 9th class	Preparatory programme (new modern apprenticeship)		2
1	Compulsory education certificate (elementary school certificate, or graduates of seventh and/or 8th class)			1

Source: Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014.

6. CZECH REPUBLIC



The Czech Republic has yet to decide whether to develop a comprehensive NQF. However, partial/sectoral frameworks for vocational qualifications and for higher education qualifications have been developed; the former is already operational. The proposed descriptors for primary and secondary education may also be seen as pointing in this direction; the question now being discussed is whether an overarching framework can help to coordinate and bridge these separate developments. The latest preliminary surveys among various stakeholders are supportive of developing a comprehensive NQF as a tool for communication, mutual cooperation and improving the quality of education and training in general. The promotion and development of a comprehensive NQF is in line, and is coordinated with, the development of the emerging national education ‘strategy 2020’. An expert group has drafted a proposal of descriptors for a comprehensive NQF.

The eight-level framework for vocational qualifications – based on the national register of qualifications (NSK) – is fully operational. The NSK comprises qualification and assessment standards. It is legally grounded in the Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results (Act 179/2006), addressing adults as a main target group and learning outcomes acquired outside formal education and training. The framework is being populated mostly with vocational qualifications on levels 2, 3 and 4. A few vocational qualifications on levels 5, 6 and 7 have also been published. All qualifications in the NSK can be acquired via validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, based on the qualifications and assessment standards included in NSK. The number of people undertaking validation of non-formal and informal learning has increased significantly since 2010.

The Czech Republic referenced its formal qualifications to EQF levels in December 2011. In the absence of the comprehensive NQF, the formal initial qualifications were referenced based on the classification of educational qualification types (KKOV) and nationally approved curricula. Of qualifications awarded in continuing education, only those included in the NSK were referenced to the EQF. Higher education qualifications are linked to the EQF, but not yet self-certified against the QF-EHEA.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The National Institute for Education (NUV) is EQF NCP. NUV manages the operational agenda and creates proposals of the NCP for referencing qualifications levels to the EQF <http://www.nuv.cz> [accessed 5.3.2015].

National referencing report of the Czech Republic (NÚV, 2011).



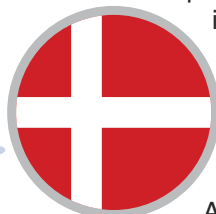
Table 7. Czech education qualification types and NSK levels

EQF levels	Czech qualifications level (*)	NSK levels
8	Doctoral programme PhD, ThD degrees three to four years beyond master (<i>doktor</i>)	8
7	Master programme Mgr, MgA., Ing., Ing. arch., MUDr, MDDr, MVDr, JUDr, PhDr, RNDr, Pharm.Dr, ThLic., and ThDr degrees two to three years of tertiary education beyond bachelor or four to six years of tertiary education (<i>magistr, inženýr, doktor</i>)	7 e.g. Senior detective (<i>vedoucí detektiv</i>) Chemical engineer product manager (<i>inženýr chemie produktmanažer</i>)
6	Bachelor programme Bc and BcA degrees three to four years of tertiary education (<i>bakalář</i>) Tertiary vocational education DiS degree three to three-and-a-half years of tertiary education (<i>diplomovaný specialista</i>)	6 e.g. Career counsellor for educational and professional path (<i>kariérový poradce pro vzdělávací a profesní dráhu</i>) Independent research and development electrician (<i>samostatný elektrotechnik výzkumný a vývojový pracovník</i>)
5		5 e.g. Tour guide (<i>průvodce cestovního ruchu</i>) Agricultural advisor for plant production (<i>zemědělský poradce pro ochranu rostlin</i>)
4	Upper secondary education with maturita exam General education (Gymnázium) – four years of upper secondary study Upper secondary education with maturita exam Vocational education – four years of upper secondary study Supplementary study leading to a maturita exam Two years of study after the apprenticeship certificate	4 e.g. <i>Technik řízení jakosti ve strojírenství</i> (quality management specialist in engineering) Detective trainee (<i>detektiv koncipient</i>)
3	Upper secondary education with apprenticeship certificate Vocational education – three years of upper secondary study	3 e.g. Glassmaker for pressed glass (<i>sklář lisovaného skla</i>) Locksmith (<i>zámkař</i>)
2	Lower secondary education Completion of a lower secondary general education programme – nine years	2 e.g. Production of side dishes (<i>výroba příloh</i>) Guard (<i>strážný</i>)
1	Special education Completion of an educational programme in a special school – 10 years	1

NB: (*) In absence of a comprehensive NQF, the Czech Republic has referenced its formal initial qualifications based on the KKOV and nationally approved curricula directly to the EQF.

Source: Adapted from NUV, 2011.

7. DENMARK



Denmark has developed a comprehensive NQF which provides a systematic overview of all types and levels of qualification awarded and quality-assured by public authorities. The eight-level framework is learning-outcomes-based and describes levels in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. Work on the framework was started in 2006, building on the qualifications framework for higher education established in 2006-07. In 2009, the Danish NQF was adopted by the Minister for Education, the Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, the Minister for Culture and the Minister for Economic and Business Affairs. Main objectives for the framework include developing a transparent education system without dead ends and supporting learners' progression irrespective of their prior learning, age or employment situation. Almost all qualifications described in the NQF are accessible or can be acquired based on validation, which is well established in Denmark and regulated by legislation.

Now considered fully operational, the Danish NQF has undergone gradual implementation. The learning outcomes approach is widely accepted and is increasingly being used to define and describe curricula and programmes. The framework is considered a first step in long-term development. The first stage of development was concluded with an evaluation report in 2013, the results of which will feed into a set of priorities for the next few years. The follow-up to the 2013 evaluation is being carried out in cooperation between three ministries; education, science and employment. A broad range of stakeholders have been involved throughout the development and implementation period. Some social partner representatives have pointed out the need to move into a second and more inclusive development stage. Opening up to private and non-formal qualifications is being considered; a high number of certificates and qualifications operate outside and in parallel to the existing NQF. Denmark started indicating NQF and EQF levels in qualifications documents in 2013, increasing visibility of the NQF to citizens. This work continues.

The Danish NQF was referenced to the EQF in May 2011.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The website for the Danish NQF is <http://ufm.dk/en/education-and-institutions/recognition-and-transparency/transparency-tools/qualifications-frameworks> [accessed 5.3.2015].

The Danish Agency for Higher Education acts as NCP <http://ufm.dk/en/the-minister-and-the-ministry/organisation/danish-agency-for-higher-education/about-the-agency> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Referencing the Danish qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the EQF (EVA, 2011).



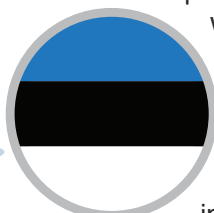
Table 8. Danish NQF

NQF levels	Certificates and degrees	Certificates for supplementary qualifications (*)	EQF levels
8	PhD degree		8
7	Master degree (<i>Candidatus</i>) Master degree in arts/fine arts Master degree		7
6	Bachelor degree Bachelor degree in arts Professional bachelor degree Diploma degree		6
5	VET (journeyman's) certificate Academy profession degrees		5
4	Upper secondary school leaving certificate Certificate for two-year upper secondary programme (higher preparatory examination) VET (journeyman's) certificate	Certificate for supplementary single subject courses at upper secondary level Adult VET certificate Certificate for single subject VET	4
3	VET (journeyman's) certificate	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)	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)	Certificate for preparatory adult education Certificate for general adult education (level G, approximates ninth grade)	2

NB: (*) Acquired in adult education and training.

Source: Adapted from (EVA, 2011).

8. ESTONIA



Estonia has created a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning, the Estonian qualifications framework (EstQF), including all State-recognised qualifications. The overarching framework brings together subframeworks for higher education qualifications, VET qualifications, general education and occupational qualifications with specific descriptors and underpinning quality assurance activities. The NQF is based on eight levels defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility, and autonomy. The ambition of the NQF in Estonia is twofold; to be a tool for transparency and communication and to aid lifelong learning.

The EstQF has reached an early operational stage, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Qualifications Authority being the main bodies involved in its implementation. A legal and institutional framework has been set up by the amended Professions Act from 2008 (Government of Estonia, 2008) and key responsibilities and roles of different stakeholders have been agreed. Quality criteria for inclusion and positioning of qualifications in the framework have been adopted. The framework includes all State-recognised qualifications, which have to meet two basic criteria: they 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 in imbalances in the provision of qualifications. For instance, the EstQF level 5 has been the focus of public debate since the formal adoption of the framework in 2008. The main topic of discussion was that there were no qualifications from initial education and training identified at this level, only occupational qualifications. This fact, supported by views of different stakeholders, that there is a need from the labour market for these type qualifications has resulted in certain policy decisions. A new VET Law, which came into force in mid-2013, foresees qualifications at level 5 (both in IVET and CVET).

A permanent steering group includes stakeholders from different subframeworks (general education, higher education, VET, occupational qualifications) and labour market actors to oversee the implementation and evaluate the impact of the EstQF.

The EstQF was linked to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in October 2011.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Estonian Qualification Authority (Kutsekoda) is the designated EQF NCP <http://www.kutsekoda.ee> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Information on NQF development is available at <http://www.valew.eu/project-valew/project-partners/6-estonian-qualification-authority> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Referencing of the Estonian qualifications and qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework (Kutsekoda et al., 2012).

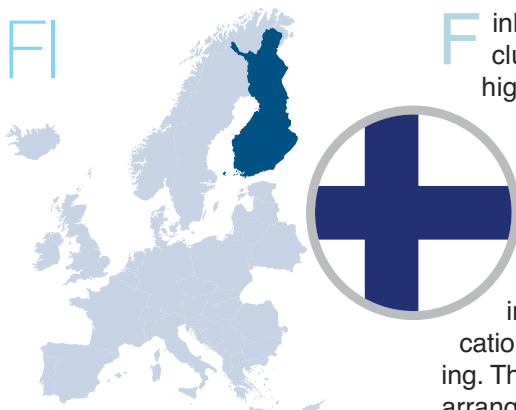


Table 9. Estonian NQF (EstQF)

NQF levels	Education qualifications	Occupational qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctorate	Level 8 occupational qualification Example: chartered engineer, chartered architect	8
7	Master degree	Level 7 occupational qualification Example: diploma engineer, diploma architect	7
6	Bachelor degree Diploma of professional higher education	Level 6 occupational qualification Example: engineer	6
5		Level 5 occupational qualification Example: master carpenter, construction site manager	5
4	Upper secondary general education certificate Upper secondary VET certificate VET based on upper secondary education certificate	Level 4 occupational qualification Example: IT specialist	4
3	VET based on basic education certificate	Level 3 occupational qualification Example: carpenter	3
2	Basic education certificate based on simplified curriculum Basic education certificate VET without basic education requirement certificate	Level 2 qualification Example: cook assistant	2
1	Basic education certificate based on curriculum for students with moderate and severe learning disabilities		1

Source: Kutsekoda, 2011.

9. FINLAND



Finland has been working on a comprehensive NQF since 2008. It will include all officially recognised State qualifications (general, VET, and higher education) at all levels. The proposed eight-level framework is learning-outcomes-based, and describes levels in terms of knowledge, work method and application (skills), responsibility, management and entrepreneurship, evaluation and key skills for lifelong learning. In addition to qualifications awarded within the remit of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Finnish NQF will also include other official qualifications, such as those related to the police. The intention is to open the framework gradually to certificates and qualifications from outside the existing formal system to strengthen lifelong learning. The national strategy for validation is in line with the proposed NQF, with arrangements for validation in all education subsystems and good links between them. Major objectives of the draft NQF include transparency and comparability of qualifications at national and European level.

The development of the Finnish NQF during the period 2008-12 was a highly inclusive process, involving a broad range of stakeholders representing ministries, public authorities, social partners, providers, the third sector and learners. Although the NQF is not yet legally constituted, it is relatively well known. However, it is currently not clear if, when and how the framework will be taken forward into an operational stage. Originally, the proposal was presented to the Parliament in 2010; then, following a change of government, an amended proposal was submitted in 2012. In this proposal the government expected the act to be in force by 1 January 2013, but this deadline was not met and the process is at a standstill.

Preparations for referencing the Finnish NQF to the EQF have been going on in parallel to NQF development. The previously developed qualifications framework for higher education, in line with the Bologna process, will form an integral part of the NQF, and Finland has decided to carry out the referencing to the EQF and the self-certification to the European higher education area (EHEA) as one process. However, due to the delays, there is no information on future referencing.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture <http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/?lang=en> [accessed 4.3.2015].

The Finnish National Board of Education acts as EQF NCP
<http://www.oph.fi/qualificationsframework> [accessed 4.3.2015].

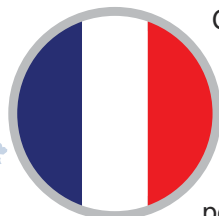


Table 10. Finnish NQF (draft)

NQF levels	Qualifications
8	Licentiate Doctor Specialist medical doctors, dentists and veterinarians General staff officer examination
7	Advanced vocational higher education Master
6	Vocational higher education qualifications Bachelor
5	Specialised VET qualifications Basic qualification for air traffic controllers Vocational qualification for construction production Qualification for police officer Qualification for officer, rescue services
4	Upper secondary education, general and vocational Certificates for prison warders Certificates for police Certificates for rescue workers Certificates for professionals working in alarm-centres
3	(Older) vocationally oriented basic education and VET
2	Compulsory education certificates
1	

Source: Government of Finland (2012).

10. FRANCE



France has an NQF based on a five-level structure which has been in use since 1969; its regulatory role is strong and well-established. The NQF was established in 2002, when the National Committee on Vocational Qualifications (CNCP) and the national register of vocational qualifications (RNCP) were set up. In scope, the French NQF is more limited than the comprehensive NQFs now being developed throughout Europe, as it is focused strictly on vocationally or professionally oriented qualifications (including all higher education qualifications with a vocational and professional orientation and purpose). A common policy on learning outcomes covers the entire vocational system, and all qualifications registered in the RNCP can be acquired through validation; in France this aims specifically at awarding an official, formal qualification. The objectives of the framework are focused on employability, responding to the need for education and training that makes candidates better suited to the labour market. Recent policy initiatives and reforms serve to underscore the high priority given to employability.

Belonging to the first generation of European frameworks, the French NQF is fully operational. Broad involvement of stakeholders is seen as necessary to capture the diversity of qualifications in France and ensure credibility and ownership. CNCP is a platform for cooperation between ministries, social partners and other relevant stakeholders, and no qualification can be included in the official register without the approval of the CNCP and adherence to a set of procedures and criteria. An important characteristic of the CNCP lies in its openness to public and private providers and awarding institutions. The French experience since 2002 illustrates the need for NQFs to evolve continuously to stay relevant; currently, in view of the increasing youth unemployment, one issue being addressed is the question of opening up to the development of qualifications at what would correspond to EQF level 2.

A process involving all stakeholders resulted in the French NQF being referenced to the EQF in 2010, using the original five-level structure as reference point. NQF and EQF levels are included in databases as well as in certificate and diploma supplements. Currently, there is discussion of whether the five-level structure should be replaced, possibly by a more comprehensive structure; however, it is unclear when this could happen.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The EQF NCP for France is the National Committee on Vocational Qualifications (CNCP) <http://www.cncp.gouv.fr> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Referencing of the national framework of French certification in the light of the European framework of certification for lifelong learning (CNCP, 2010).

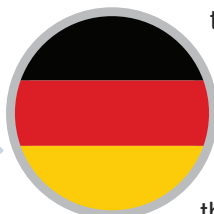


Table 11. French NQF

FR Nomenclature	Qualifications types	EQF levels
I-Doctorat	Doctoral programmes (<i>Doctorats</i>)	8
I-Master	Master degrees (<i>Master</i>) Degrees in engineering (<i>titre d'ingénieur</i>)	7
II-Grade de Licence	Bachelor programmes (<i>Licences</i>) Vocational bachelor (<i>Licence professionnelle</i>)	6
III	Undergraduate technician certificates (<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur – BTS</i>) Undergraduate technician certificates in agriculture (<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur agricole – BTSA</i>) Undergraduate certificates in technology (<i>Diplôme universitaire de technologie – DUT</i>) Master qualifications (<i>Brevets de maîtrise</i>) issued by <i>Chambre des métiers</i>	5
IV	Vocational baccalaureates (<i>Baccalauréats professionnels</i>) Technological baccalaureates (<i>Baccalauréats technologiques</i>) Professional certificates (<i>Brevet professionnels</i>) Applied arts certificates (<i>Brevet des métiers d'art</i>) Technician certificates (<i>Brevet de technicien</i>)	4
V	Secondary vocational certificates (<i>Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle – CAP</i>) Secondary vocational certificates in agriculture (<i>Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle agricole – CAPA</i> ; <i>Brevet d'études professionnelles – BEP</i> ; <i>Brevet d'études professionnelles agricoles – BEPA</i>)	3
	No French qualifications and certificates at this level	2
		1

Source: EQF French NCP.

11. GERMANY



Germany has created an eight-level NQF for lifelong learning based on learning outcomes (*Deutsche Qualifikationsrahmen für lebenslanges Lernen* (DQR)). Level descriptors describe competences required to obtain a qualification. The DQR differentiates between two categories of competence: professional, subdivided into knowledge and skills and personal, including social competence, and autonomy.

The framework was formally launched in May 2013 by the joint resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the conference of Ministers for Economics of the *Länder* and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. Currently the DQR does not comprise all formal qualifications. It includes the main VET and higher education qualifications. Qualifications from general education are not yet included in the framework and consequently not linked to the EQF. Deciding on which levels they will be included has been postponed and will be reviewed after a five-year period. Discussions are under way on assigning remaining qualifications from regulated further training into the DQR; an expert group has started to examine the potential to allocate qualifications from non-formal learning to the DQR.

The DQR is operational; key documents and responsibilities for implementation have been agreed among key stakeholders. The main body in charge of implementation is a coordination point for the DQR, set up in a joint initiative of the federal government and the *Länder*. A joint resolution with a complete list of allocated qualifications has been adopted and a new database launched in mid-2014. Implementation is supported by the DQR manual which describes responsibilities, procedures, standards and methods of qualification allocation, and will be continuously updated. The DQR is a non-regulatory framework and its integration into policies of different education sectors is an evolutionary process.

The DQR was linked to the EQF in December 2012. As of January 2014, EQF and NQF levels are starting to feature on VET certificates and on higher education diploma supplements. For instance, German master craftsperson certificates show the corresponding NQF and EQF level. Like the bachelor degree, they are related to DQR/EQF level 6.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The federal government/*Länder* coordination point assumes the functions of the EQF NCP. Information on DQR development is available at <http://www.dqr.de/> [accessed 4.3.2015].

German EQF referencing report (BMBF, 2013).



Table 12. German NQF (DQR)

NQF levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral studies	8
7	Master, strategic IT professional (certified) (*) <i>Strategischer IT Professional (Geprüfter)</i>	7
6	Bachelor, commercial specialist (certified) (<i>Fachkaufmann (Geprüfter)</i>), business management specialist (certified) (<i>Fachwirt (Geprüfter)</i>), master craftsman (certified), (<i>Meister (Geprüfter)</i>), operative IT professional (certified)* (<i>Operativer IT Professional (Geprüfter)</i>), Fachschule (State-certified...), Fachschule ((<i>Staatlich Geprüfter...</i>))	6
5	IT specialist (certified) (<i>IT-Spezialist (Zertifizierter)</i>), service technician (certified)* (<i>Service-techniker (Geprüfter)</i>)	5
4	Dual VET (three-year and three-and-a-half-year training courses), full-time vocational school (assistant occupations) (<i>Berufsfachschule</i>), full vocational qualification (full-time vocational school) (<i>Berufsfachschule</i>)	4
3	Dual VET (two-year training courses), full-time vocational school (general education school leaving certificate obtained on completion of grade 10 at <i>Realschule</i> or, under certain circumstances, at other lower secondary school types) (<i>Berufsfachschule</i>) (<i>Mittlerer Schulabschluss</i>)	3
2	Vocational training preparation (<i>Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung</i>), employment agency measures (<i>Maßnahmen der Arbeitsagentur</i>), year of pre-vocational training (<i>Berufsvorbereitungsjahr</i>), introductory training for young people (<i>Einstiegsqualifizierung</i>), full-time vocational school (<i>Berufsfachschule</i>), basic vocational training, (<i>Berufliche Grundbildung</i>)	2
1	Vocational training preparation (<i>Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung</i>), employment agency measures (vocational preparation schemes) (<i>Maßnahmen der Arbeitsagentur</i>) (<i>Berufsvorbereitende Bildungsmaßnahmen</i>), year of pre-vocational training (<i>Berufsvorbereitungsjahr</i>)	1

NB: (*) The DQR working group agreed that additional further vocational training qualifications should be allocated in accordance with the procedures described in the DQR manual.

Source: BMBF et al., 2013.

12. GREECE



Greece has developed a comprehensive Hellenic qualifications framework (HQF) for lifelong learning, aiming at a coherent and comprehensive system of qualifications from all parts and levels of education and training. The framework has eight levels and is defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. First stage development has focused on the range of qualifications awarded within the formal system but, in a long-term perspective, the plan is to accommodate non-formal and informal learning. An objective for the period of 2014-15 is to consolidate the HQF as the main lever for reforming the Greek education system.

From policy point of view, apart from responding to the European qualifications framework (EQF) initiative, the HQF work is directly linked to the country's efforts to develop a framework for further improving lifelong learning policies and practices, which will allow recognition and certification of all kinds of education and training. Strengthening the learning outcomes dimension in all parts 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, and will allow individuals to have their learning validated and recognised throughout their lives.

The framework is not yet operational. HQF implementation is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, with the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) as the main actor. A draft presidential decree on HQF has been prepared, which will clarify many operational aspects. The inclusion of qualifications in the framework is defined through qualification type specifications: title, level, awarding body, summary descriptor, volume of learning, purpose, education sector, learning outcomes, employment relevance and progression possibilities. The allocation procedures have been defined but still need to be tested in practice. The framework needs to be populated with qualifications based on learning outcomes. This is work in progress.

The (draft) referencing report was presented in 2014.



MAIN SOURCE OF INFORMATION

EOPPEP is the designated EQF NCP <http://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/en/> [accessed 5.3.2015].

Table 13. Greek qualification types in the NQF (HQF)

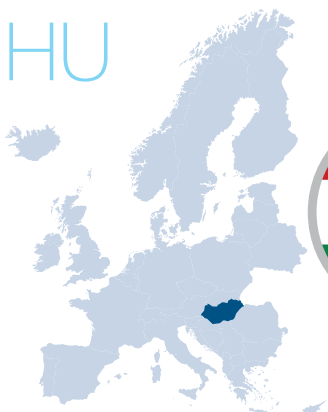
NQF level	VET	General education	Higher education
8			Doctorate (<i>didaktoriko diploma</i>). (Universities)
7			Master degree (<i>metaptychiako diploma eidikefsis</i>) (Universities/technological educational institutions (TEI)-higher education)
6			Bachelor degree (<i>ptychio</i>) (Universities/TEI-higher education)
5	Vocational upper secondary school 'degree' (**) (vocational upper secondary school 'degree'/certificate and apprenticeship class) (**) (<i>ptychio epaggelmatikis eidikotitas-EPAL</i>) Vocational training diploma (Initial vocational training) (post-secondary level) (<i>diploma epaggelmatikis eidikotitas</i>) (vocational training institute) (<i>institutouto epagelmatikis katartisis, IEK</i>) Vocational training diploma (*) (<i>diploma epaggelmatikis katartisis epipedou metadefterovathmias epaggelmatikis katartisis, IEK</i>) (post-secondary level) Post-secondary and not higher education diploma or 'degree' (**) (<i>diploma/ptychio anoteris scholis</i>)		
4	Vocational school (<i>epaggelmatikes sxoles</i>) (EPAS) certificate (post lower secondary level) (<i>ptychio EPAS</i>) Vocational upper secondary school (<i>epaggelmatika lykeia</i>) (EPAL) 'degree' (**) (<i>ptychio epaggelmatikis eidikotitas-EPAL</i>) EPAL certificate (<i>apolitirio epaggelmatikou lykeiou-EPAL</i>)	General upper secondary school certificate (<i>apolytirio lykeiou</i>)	
3	Vocational training school (SEK) certificate (post lower secondary level) (<i>ptychio epaggelmatikis eidikotitas-SEK</i>) IEK certificate (*) (initial vocational training-post lower secondary level) (<i>pistopoiitiko epagelmatikis katartisis epipedou 1-IEK epipedou 1</i>)		
2		Lower secondary school certificate (compulsory) (<i>apolytirio gymnasiou</i>)	
1		Primary school certificate (compulsory) (<i>apolytirio dimotikou</i>)	

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

(**) The word 'degree', whenever used within quotation marks, signifies that it is a direct translation from the terminology in Greek as it appears in the Greek 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, whereby the word degree refers to higher education title of study, i.e. bachelor degree.

Source: Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and EOPPEP, 2014

13. HUNGARY



Hungary designed and adopted a comprehensive Hungarian qualifications framework (HuQF) for lifelong learning in 2012. It has eight levels of learning outcomes defined in four categories: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and autonomy and responsibility. The HuQF embraces all national qualifications that can be acquired in general and higher education and those vocational qualifications in the national vocational qualifications register (NVQR). The inclusion of other formal qualifications (mainly CVET qualifications, master craftsman qualifications, and postgraduate specialisation programmes) will be assigned to levels in the next stage of HuQF implementation. One of the main objectives of the HuQF is to improve transparency, transferability and comparability of national qualifications and promote harmonisation of the different subsystems, helping the national qualification system to become more coherent and supporting national policy coordination.

The framework has been formally adopted and is being implemented. Three implementing projects (VET and adult learning, higher education and general education) have provided conceptual clarifications, technical solutions and capacity building across subsystems. An intergovernmental task force was set up in February 2011 to programme, harmonise and monitor all phases of NQF development and implementation. A new body – the Hungarian Qualifications Board – will be in charge of further development, implementation and maintenance of the framework. Assigning qualifications to NQF levels has started. General education and VET qualifications were assigned to HuQF levels on individual basis; each qualification was analysed in terms of learning outcomes and compared with the level descriptors. Higher education qualifications were grouped and ‘reference qualifications’, representing most typical qualifications and cycles from higher education, were selected for referencing. Implementation of the NQF is closely linked to new legal provisions in education and training subsystems: new VET Law (Law CLXXXVII/2011); new Law on General Education (Law CXC/2011); amended Law on Higher Education (Law CCIV/2011); and the new Act on Adult Training (Law LXXVII/2013). There are also major reforms in of education and training subsystems. Strengthening the learning outcomes approach is an important integral part of these developments.

The HuQF was referenced to the EQF in February 2015.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Education Authority delegates the member of the EQF advisory group, and the role of EQF NCP is also carried out by this background institution.

Referencing and self-certification report of the Hungarian qualifications framework to the EQF and to the QF-EHEA (Educational Authority, 2015).



Table 14. Hungarian NQF (HuQF)

NQF levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8	DLA/PhD	8
7	MA/MSC	7
6	BA/BSc Higher-level NVQR vocational qualification (built on HE diploma)	6
5	Higher-level NVQR vocational qualification Higher education short cycle vocational qualification	5
4	Secondary school-leaving certificate Upper secondary NVQR vocational qualification	4
3	Lower secondary NVQR vocational qualification (10th grade of primary school)	3
2	Primary school leaving certificate Lower secondary NVQR vocational qualification	2
1	(6th grade of primary school)	1

Source: Hungarian Educational Authority, 2015.

14. ICELAND



Iceland has developed a national qualifications framework (ISQF), consisting of seven learning-outcomes-based levels. They are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences, and reflect the importance attributed to key competences and transversal skills. It is a lifelong learning framework, covering all levels and types of qualification, including adult education. It aims to make the pathways through the education system clear, to increase student mobility within the country and between countries, and to motivate for further learning.

Work started in 2006 and has been closely linked to extensive reform of the Icelandic education system, including changes in legislation and education policy. There is currently no single act or decree introducing the ISQF. Its role and mandate are explicitly stated through a series of acts and decrees introduced between 2006 and 2010 (acts on higher education, pre-school education, compulsory education, upper secondary education, and adult education). The ISQF is characterised by a clear borderline between levels 1 to 4 and levels 5 to 7. The development of these two parts of the framework has, partly, taken place separately and responds to the EQF and Bologna processes respectively.

The framework has reached an early operational stage. It is used as a tool in developing study provisions. Work has been done to develop an accreditation process and quality criteria for curricula in adult education. By 2015, all upper secondary study programmes and course descriptions will be based on learning outcomes and linked to ISQF levels. ISQF level 4 (EQF level 5) presents a particular challenge, as it overlaps between upper secondary and higher education levels. It covers additional education at upper secondary school as well as a first level diploma at higher education level, without degree. The aim is to ensure flexibility between the levels.

The Icelandic NQF was referenced to the EQF in December 2013, including a self-certification report to the QF-EHEA (see separate overview table).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Information and documents covering Icelandic developments can be found at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture website <http://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Reference report of the Icelandic qualifications framework ISQF to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning EQF (Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014).



Table 15. Icelandic NQF (ISQF)

ISQF levels	Examples of qualifications			EQF levels
7	Doctoral degree			8
6	Master and candidatus degree			7
5	Bachelor degree			6
4	Diploma at higher education level	Preliminary higher education	Additional studies at upper secondary level	5
3	Matriculation examination		Vocational examination for professional rights	4
2	Upper secondary school leaving certificate Other final examinations	Vocational qualification for professional rights		3
1	Upper secondary school leaving certificate Other upper secondary school final examinations Compulsory school final examinations			1 and 2

Source: Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2014.

15. IRELAND



Ireland has implemented a comprehensive and learning-outcomes-based national framework of qualifications (NFQ) with 10 levels. Each level of the NFQ is based on nationally agreed standards of knowledge (breadth, kind), know-how and skills (range, selectivity) and competence. Competence is subdivided into context, role, learning to learn, insight. The framework covers all types and levels of qualifications available through formal education and training and is open to those awarded by professional and international organisations. Launched in 2003, it is defined as single nationally and internally accepted entity through which all learning achievements are measured and related to each other in a coherent way. Four classes of award-type have been determined: major, minor, special-purpose, and supplemental.

Development of the NFQ was part of a broader policy agenda of moving towards a 'lifelong learning society', in which learners can benefit from learning opportunities at various stages throughout their lives. This led to a need for a more flexible and integrated system of qualifications that could recognise all learning acquired by learners in Ireland.

The NFQ has reached an advanced operational stage, particularly in promoting more consistent use of learning outcomes across different subsystems, especially in sectors led by FETAC ⁽⁹⁾ and HETAC ⁽¹⁰⁾. NFQ implementation in universities and the school sector was by agreement and the impact has been more gradual and incremental. It acts as a reference point for curriculum development as well as a tool for other reforms in education, training and qualifications. Visibility and currency of the NFQ has increased both inside and outside the education and training environment. It is an outward-looking framework with a strong external dimension through interactive research with non-European countries (such as Australia and New Zealand).

Development and implementation of the NFQ was strongly supported by major stakeholders. Since 2012, a change in governance, through the set-up of one single national qualification and quality assurance body (the QQI), has led to reinforced coordination of qualifications and quality assurance. EQF and NFQ levels are indicated on Europass Certificate and Diploma supplements.

⁽⁹⁾ Further Education and Training Awards Council (now made by QQI).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Higher Education and Training Awards Council is the qualifications awarding body for higher education and training institutions outside the university sector (now made by QQI).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The most important information is available on the website of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), which is also NCP <http://www.qqi.ie> [accessed 6.3.2015].

Referencing of the Irish national framework of qualifications (NFQ) to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2009).



Table 16. Irish NQF

NFQ levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
10	Doctoral degree	8
9	Master degree Postgraduate diploma	7
8	Honours bachelor degree Higher diploma	6
7	Ordinary bachelor degree	6
6	Advanced certificate e.g. level 6 advanced certificate in horticulture Higher certificate	5
5	Level 5 certificate e.g. level 5 certificate in hospitality operations Leaving certificate	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	1

Source: National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, 2009.

16. ITALY



Italy does not have a NQF for lifelong learning in place but there has been technical work pointing in this direction in recent years. Since 2003, reforms have been implemented in education and training (upper secondary general education and VET) and higher education, pre-empting the principles of a learning-outcomes-based NQF. The Italian qualifications framework for higher education (QTI) was published in 2010 and self-certification against the QF-EHEA is ongoing.

Italy faces a challenge of integrating different levels of lifelong learning systems into a coherent national qualification system. It is a complex system, governed by different legislation and weighing the competences of regional and national authorities in designing and awarding qualifications. The absence of an explicit and adequately regulated national system of qualifications (even if there are regional qualifications systems) is seen as a barrier to taking forward coherent lifelong learning policies, to validation of non-formal and informal learning, making learning pathways for lifelong learning more visible, and wider recognition of skills. Responsibility for taking forward this initiative is shared between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the Ministry of Education, University and Research; the process is supported by regions and social partners. An important milestone in this work is the recently adopted Law 92/2012 on labour market reform that contains provisions on lifelong learning, approaches to a national system of certification of competences, and services for validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Despite not having a NQF in place, Italy has referenced its formal qualifications (general education, VET and higher education qualifications), which are awarded by the Ministry of Education and University, and those awarded by the regions in the framework of the state-regions agreement directly to the eight EQF levels, using the EQF level descriptors. Other qualifications awarded by the regions, licences for regulated professions and private qualifications, are not included and will be dealt with in the second stage of referencing.

The referencing report was presented to the EQF advisory group in May 2013.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

For policy-related information, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies <http://www.lavoro.gov.it/Pages/default.aspx> [accessed 4.3.2015].

For the technical level, ISFOL; ISFOL acts as NCP <http://www.isfol.it> [accessed 4.3.2015].

First Italian referencing report to the European qualifications framework, EQF (Italian Ministry of Labour and ISFOL, 2012).



Table 17. Linking Italian formal qualifications to the EQF

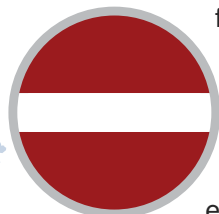
EQF levels	Italian formal qualifications
8	<p>Research doctorate <i>Dottorato di ricerca</i></p> <p>Academic diploma for research training <i>Diploma accademico di formazione alla ricerca</i></p> <p>Specialisation diploma <i>Diploma di specializzazione</i></p> <p>Second level university master <i>Master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

NB: (*) Competent authority: regions.

(*) Competent authority: Ministry of Education, University and Research (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca) or regions, according to type of education pathway.

Source: Italian Ministry of Labour and ISFOL, 2012.

17. LATVIA



Latvia has introduced an eight-level classification framework. Nationally recognised educational programmes from formal education (primary, secondary and higher education) are referred to a Latvian qualifications framework level (LQF) and linked to the EQF level. Master of crafts, journeyman and qualifications acquired in non-formal and informal learning will be attributed levels in the second phase (2013-15) of NQF implementation and consequently referenced to the EQF. The framework has eight levels defined as knowledge, skills and competence. It is seen as an important tool for describing the Latvian education system both for international and national stakeholders, and for ensuring greater lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals according to their needs. In this context, the development and implementation of a comprehensive LQF aims to increase transparency and consistency of qualifications and strengthen the link between the labour market and education.

The present developments build on reforms initiated in the 1990s, particularly the introduction of a five-level structure of professional qualifications in 1999 (through the Vocational Education Law).

The framework has entered an early operational stage. Several large European Social Fund (ESF) projects support further implementation of the LQF. For example, the ESF project Development of sectoral qualification system and increasing efficiency and quality of vocational education (2010-14), has explored professions in 12 sectors by identifying relevant knowledge, skills and competences for professions and placing them on the relevant LQF/EQF levels. Twelve sectoral expert councils have been established for the main economic sectors; they involve representatives of sectoral employer's organisations, trade unions, Ministry of Education and Science, and other relevant ministries. Their main task are developing occupational standards, defining the content of vocational qualifications and vocational examination requirements, and enrolment of students in VET programmes. An ESF project for evaluating higher education programmes and developing recommendations has been launched to promote the quality and efficiency of higher education. Improvement of study programme content in line with the needs of the national economy, implementation and development of academic personnel competence, and setting up a study field accreditation system are the main goals of this project.

The Latvian NQF was linked to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in October 2011.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Information on the referencing process and the self-assessment report is available on the website of the Academic Information Centre, the Latvian NCP: <http://nki-latvija.lv> or <http://nqf-latvia.lv> [accessed 4.3.2015].

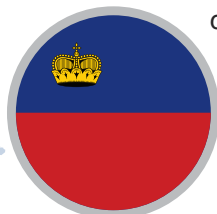
Referencing of the Latvian education system to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area: self-assessment report (AIC, 2012).



Table 18. Latvian NQF (LQF)

NQF levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma (<i>doktora diploms</i>)	8
7	Master diploma (<i>maģistra diploms</i>) Professional master diploma (<i>profesionālā maģistra diploms</i>) Diploma of professional higher education, diploma of higher education (<i>profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms</i>), diploma of higher professional qualification (<i>augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i>), second level professional higher education, total length of full-time studies – at least five years	7
6	Bachelor diploma (<i>bakalaura diploms</i>) Professional bachelor diploma (<i>profesionālā bakalaura diploms</i>) Diploma of professional higher education (<i>profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms</i>), diploma of higher professional qualification (<i>augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms</i>), second level professional higher education, length of full-time studies – at least four years	6
5	Diploma of first level professional higher education (<i>pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms</i>), first level professional higher (college) education, length of full-time studies – two to three years	5
4	Certificate of general secondary education (<i>atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību</i>) Certificate of vocational education (<i>atestāts par arodizglītību</i>) Diploma of vocational secondary education (<i>diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību</i>)	4
3	Certificate of general basic education (<i>apliecība par vispārējo pamatizglītību</i>) Certificate of vocational basic education (<i>apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību</i>)	3
2	Certificate of general basic education (<i>apliecība par vispārējo pamatizglītību</i>) (for students in special educational programmes for students with mental development disorders)	2
1	Certificate of general basic education (<i>apliecība par vispārējo pamatizglītību</i>) (for students in special educational programmes for students with severe mental development disorders or several severe development disorders)	1

18. LIECHTENSTEIN



Since 2011 Liechtenstein has been developing a comprehensive eight-level framework for lifelong learning. NQF developments are coordinated with NQF development in Switzerland and Austria due to close connections with the education and training systems of these neighbouring countries. Most Liechtenstein students (in VET or higher education) do their studies in Switzerland, but some also continue in Austria. Alignment of Liechtenstein NQF developments with framework developments in these countries, and particularly Switzerland, is crucial.

In 2013 a qualifications framework for higher education defined in learning outcomes, in line with the qualifications framework in the QF-EHEA, was adopted and included in higher education law. It will constitute an integral part of the NQF for lifelong learning. It is expected that the NQF will be established by end of 2015 (*). The education strategy 2020 was recently adopted, referring to competences as outcomes of learning becoming the most important resource in the globalised world.

Since May 2011, the coordination and planning process has been under the National Agency of International Education Affairs (AIBA) in Liechtenstein.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Ministry of Education <http://www.4icu.org/institutions/177.htm> [accessed 4.3.2015].

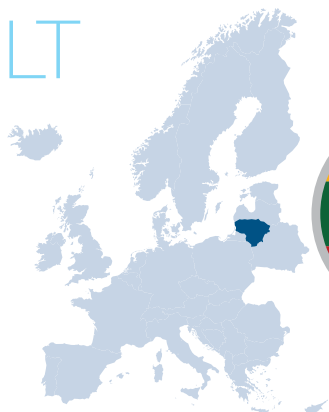
National Agency of International Education Affairs (AIBA) <http://eeagrants.org/Partnerships/Donor-programme-partners/National-Agency-for-International-Education-Affairs-Liechtenstein-AIBA> [accessed 4.3.2015].

(*) An NQF table is not available at this stage.





19. LITHUANIA



An eight-level Lithuanian qualifications framework (LTQF) was formally adopted through a government resolution in 2010. It is based on eight learning-outcomes-based levels and covers all officially recognised qualifications in primary and secondary general education, VET and higher education. Level descriptors are defined according to two parameters: characteristics of activities and types of competences. While the distinction between cognitive, functional and general competences broadly reflects the EQF distinction between knowledge, skills and competence, the criteria on activity can be seen as further development and specification of the autonomy, responsibility and context aspects introduced – explicitly and implicitly – in the EQF descriptors. The combination of the two parameters results in detailed description of each level.

Development of the LTQF is part of a decade-long effort to reform and modernise Lithuanian education and training. The framework aims to play a role in better adapting qualifications to the needs of the labour market and society: to help improve clarity of design of qualifications for better assessment and recognition; increase transparency of qualifications and assist individuals in using them; support national and international mobility; and encourage lifelong learning and allow individuals to build on outcomes of non-formal and informal learning.

The LTQF has now entered an early operational stage. In preparation, work is being prioritised in a limited number of areas, notably qualifications in general and higher education. The need for increased consistency has been observed in both areas.

A joint referencing/self-certification to the EQF and the QF-EHEA was completed in late 2011, underlining the comprehensive character of the framework.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Qualifications and VET Development Centre (QVETDC) was appointed EQF NCP http://www.kmpmc.lt/kmpmc/?page_id=1848 [accessed 6.3.2015].

More information to be found at <http://www.lnks.lt> [accessed 6.3.2015].

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 (QVETDC, 2011).

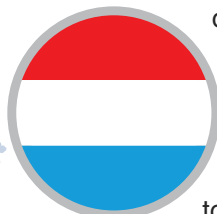


Table 19. Lithuanian NQF (LTQF)

NFQ levels	Qualifications types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree	8
7	Master degree	7
6	Bachelor degree Professional bachelor degree	6
5		5
4	Maturity certificate (on completion of the secondary education programme and passing matura examinations) VET diploma (completion of initial and/or CVET at attainment level 3)	4
3	Vocational qualification certificate (completion of initial and/or CVET at attainment level 2)	3
2	Basic education certificate (completion of basic education programme and testing learning outcomes) (grades 5 to 10)	2
1	Primary education certificate (completion of primary education programme) (grades 1 to 4) Qualification certificate (completion of CVET at attainment level 1)	1

Source: QVETDC, 2012.

20. LUXEMBOURG



Luxembourg has introduced a comprehensive NQF (CLQ) covering all levels and types of qualifications across general education, vocational and higher education. The eight-level framework is outcomes-based and describes levels in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude. The overall objective of the framework is to aid transparency and understanding of qualifications at home and abroad. Being host to many workers from neighbouring countries Belgium, Germany and France, Luxembourg sees the development of the CQF 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 provisions. In a second stage, the CLQ may open up to qualifications awarded outside the existing, official system; this reflects 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 new qualifications will have to be put in place.

While the CLQ can be described as having reached an early operational stage, further steps are needed before the framework can be deemed to have reached full operation. A first challenge is to sort out framework legislation. A five-year strategy for the CLQ (following elections in 2013) is currently being considered and first priority is to clarify the legal basis of the framework. This strategy will also require clarification of the relationship between the CLQ and a wider strategy on lifelong learning.

The framework was referenced to the EQF and QF-EHEA in 2012.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (*Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Formation professionnelle*) acts as EQF NCP
<http://www.men.public.lu/fr/index.html> [accessed 6.3.2015].

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 (Ministry of Higher Education and Research; Ministry of National Education, childhood and youth, 2014).



Table 20. Luxembourg NQF (CLQ)

NFQ levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma Certificate following specific training course in medicine (<i>Diplôme de formation spécifique en médecine générale</i>)	8
7	Master diploma	7
6	Bachelor diploma	6
5	Master craftsman diploma (<i>Brevet de maîtrise</i>) Advanced technician's diploma Specialised advanced technician's diploma	5
4	Secondary school leaving certificate Technical secondary school leaving certificate Technician diploma (<i>Diplôme de technicien</i>)	4
3	Vocational aptitude diploma Certificate attesting completion of middle cycle technical secondary education Certificate attesting completion of five years secondary education	3
2	Vocational capability certificate (<i>Certificat de capacité professionnelle</i>)	2
1	Certificate attesting completion of lower cycle, technical secondary education	1

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Higher Education and Research;
Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth, 2012.

21. MALTA



Malta has been putting in practice its comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning (Malta qualifications framework, MQF) since 2007. It is an eight-level learning-outcomes-based framework defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. The descriptors highlight specific attributes such as communications skills, judgemental skills and learning skills. The framework incorporates credit systems and encompasses qualifications at all levels, provided through formal, non-formal and informal learning. The overall objective of the framework is to aid transparency and understanding of qualifications at home and abroad, promote parity of esteem of qualifications from different learning pathways, including vocational and professional degrees and academic study programmes, and improve overall consistency and coherence of the qualification system. The MQF is seen as an important tool to put lifelong learning and adult learning opportunities into practice by improving access, progressions and valuing of non-formally and informally acquired competences.

The MQF is operational. Key responsibilities of MQF implementation have been agreed among stakeholders. Important developments took place in 2012 with amendments to the Education Act (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012b), which established the legal basis for the National Commission for further and higher education (NCFHE), replacing the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) and the National Commission for Higher Education. This is the main body in charge of MQF implementation. It provides strategic policies for further and higher education, promotes and maintains the MQF, decides on the inclusion of qualifications in the framework, accredits and licences all further (post-secondary) and higher education institutions and programmes, and assists training providers in designing qualifications, assessment and certification. It cooperates with the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education responsible for quality and standards in compulsory education. Further integrating validation of non-formal and informal learning in MQF is an important area of future work, as is implementation of learning outcomes. Recently adopted, the framework for the education strategy for Malta 2014-24 reinforces the intention to implement a learning outcomes approach in all sectors of education and training, linked to MQF.

MQF was linked to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2009. An updated report was presented in 2012.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education is the designated EQF NCP <http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/default.aspx> [accessed 16.3.2015].

Referencing of the Malta qualifications framework (MQF) to the European qualifications framework (EQF) and the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF/EHEA) (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012).



Table 21. Malta NQF (MQF)

NFQ levels	Qualifications		EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree		8
7	Master degree Postgraduate diploma Postgraduate certificate		7
6	Bachelor degree		6
5	Undergraduate diploma Undergraduate certificate Higher education certificate	VET higher diploma ^(f)	5
4	Matriculation certificate Advanced level Intermediate level	VET diploma ^(g)	4
3	General education (level 3) SEC ^(h) grades 1 to 5	VET level 3 ^(d)	3
2	General education (level 2) SEC grades 6 to 7 SEC and profile (B)	VET level 2 ^(c)	2
1	General education (level 1) SEC and profile (A)	VET level 1 ^(b) ^(a)	1

^(a) Attainment of the basic employment passport together with either the adult skills certificate or MQF 8 key competences at level 1 are also considered as a full VET level 1 qualification.

^(b) The MQC recommends that a full VET level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a SEC and profile (A).

^(c) The MQC recommends that a full VET level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as four general education level 2 subjects or a SEC and profile (B) at the MQF level 2 at grades 6 and 7.

^(d) The MQC recommends that a full VET level 3 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as six general level subjects at grades 1 to 5.

^(e) The MQC recommends that a full VET diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as three advanced level subjects.

^(f) The University of Malta awards the higher education certificate to students who do not complete a degree programme.

^(g) SEC stands for secondary school certificate awarded by the University of Malta. SEC can be classified either on MQF level 2 (if grades are 6 or 7 with 7 being the lowest) or on MQF level 3 (if grades are 1 to 5 with 1 being the higher grade).

NB: The NQF is designed in such a way as to be able to include diverse forms of qualifications not yet covered by this framework.

Source: Adapted from Malta Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012.

22. NETHERLANDS



The Netherlands is implementing a comprehensive NQF (NLQF) covering all levels and types of qualifications across general education, vocational and higher education. The eight-level framework with an entry level (lower than EQF level 1) is learning-outcomes-based and describes levels in terms of knowledge, skills, responsibility and independence, supplemented by context descriptor. The framework is understood as a systematic description of existing qualifications aiming at transparency and increased comparability. The framework links to qualifications regulated by the three ministries of education, economic affairs and health/welfare, as well as qualifications awarded outside public regulation and developed by stakeholders (mainly) in the labour market. During 2012-14 significant progress has been made towards including qualifications from this latter group.

The NLQF can now be described as fully operational. In 2014, the Ministry of Education initiated revision of existing legal texts underpinning Dutch education and training to make sure that the role of the NLQF is reflected. This revision will also support inclusion of NLQF and EQF levels in certificates and qualifications. The implementation of NLQF builds on a strong position of the learning outcomes approach and on the relatively widespread use of validation of non-formal and informal learning. The NLQF seeks to strengthen the role of validation and turn it into an integrated part of the qualifications system. The use of validation as an integrated part of the framework will help to connect with a wider range of learning activities and learning settings, for example in the private sector.

The NLQF was referenced to the EQF in October 2011. The NLQF builds on and integrates the qualifications framework for higher education which was self-certified to the European higher education area in 2009.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The NCP is hosted by the (umbrella) organisation CINOP/Knowledge Centre for Recognition of Prior Learning <http://www.ncpnlqf.nl> [accessed 6.3.2015].

The referencing document of the Dutch national qualification framework to the European qualification framework (van der Sanden, K. et al., 2012).



Table 22. Types of qualifications in the NLQF by mid-2014

NQF levels	Adult education	Pre-vocational education	Upper secondary vocational educ.	Upper secondary general educ.	Higher education	Other qualifications (*)	EQF levels
8					Doctor/medical specialist		8
7					Master		7
6					Bachelor	e.g. stress management counselling coaching mediation professional business relationship manager ABN Amro (enterprise counsellor, banking)	6
5					Higher professional education/ associate degree	e.g. consultant payroll services and benefits	5
4+	VWO			VWO			
4	General secondary education for adults		MBO-4 VET	Havo		e.g. international flight attendant Senior employee	4
	Higher general secondary education						3
3			MBO-3 VET			e.g. investigating officer dog grooming swimming instructor	
2	Vavo – Pre-vocational secondary education, theoretical pathway Basic education 3	Vmbo kb/bl/bb (**)	MBO-2 VET			e.g. military police	2
1	Basic education 2	Vmbo bb	MBO-1 VET				1
Entry level	Basic education 1						

(*) These are single qualifications included in the NLQF as of June 2014. These qualifications have been awarded by organisations outside the public, formal education and training system but, following a quality control, attributed levels in the framework. The 'size' of these qualifications varies, but a minimum of 400 hours of nominal study time is required for a qualification to be considered for inclusion.

(**) Kb-advanced VET pathway, bl- pre-vocational learning pathway, bb-basic VET pathway.

Source: Adapted from van der Sanden et al., 2012; additional information provided by the NCP.

23. NORWAY



Norway has developed and adopted a comprehensive seven-level NQF (*Norsk kvalifikasjonsrammeverk*, NKR), reflecting all general, vocational and higher education qualifications of national education and training. The framework is learning-outcomes-based, and describes levels in terms of knowledge, skills and general competence. Work on the current framework started in 2009, building on previous input, and was concluded in December 2011 through the adoption of a government decree. The main objective of the framework is to increase transparency and mobility, contribute to more flexible learning pathways, and promote lifelong learning. It is not seen as an instrument for reform and intends to describe, rather than to change, the existing Norwegian education and training system. The NKR is viewed as a tool for evaluation and further development, and a platform for debate and dialogue, also with the labour market.

The NKR has reached an early operational stage. All main education and training stakeholders and social partners have been involved throughout development and implementation. There is broad consensus on the relevance of the learning outcomes approach and the role it can play in bridging different of education and training areas. The NKR presently covers only qualifications awarded by publicly recognised and accredited education and training institutions. Possible procedures and criteria for inclusion of certificates and qualifications awarded outside formal education are being discussed; they will influence the next stage of development.

The NKR was referenced to the EQF and self-certified against the QF-EHEA in June 2014.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

NOKUT (Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) is EQF NCP <http://www.nokut.no/no/Fakta/Det-norske-utdanningsystemet/Nasjonalt-kvalifikasjonsrammeverk-for-livslang-laring/> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/tema/livslang-laring/nasjonalt-kvalifikasjonsrammeverk.html?id=601327> [accessed 4.3.2015].

The referencing of the Norwegian qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the EQF and self-certification to the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) (NOKUT, 2012).

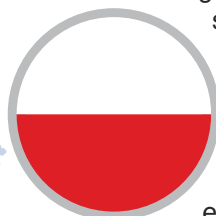


Table 23. Norway NQF (NKR)

NQF levels	Qualifications		EQF levels
8	PhD degree		8
7	Master degree		7
6	Partial bachelor (short higher education)	Bachelor (Bologna first cycle)	6
5	5.1 Certificate of completed post-secondary VET 1 (<i>Fagskole</i>)	5.2 Certificate of completed post-secondary VET 2 (<i>Fagskole</i>) 2	5
4	4A Certificate of completed general upper secondary education	4B Certificate of completed vocational upper secondary education (<i>Fagbrev</i>)	4
3	Certificate of partially completed upper secondary education and training (<i>Kompetansebevis</i>)		3
2	Certificate of primary and lower secondary education		2
1	Not part of the NQF No qualifications included		1

Source: NOKUT, 2012.

24. POLAND



Poland has developed a comprehensive, eight-level NQF (PQF) covering all levels and types of qualifications from general education, VET and higher education. Levels are described in terms of knowledge, skills and social competence. In an effort to connect subsystems of education and training, the PQF introduces descriptors at three levels of generality: comprehensive PQF, subframeworks (general education, VET, higher education), and subject areas or economic sectors. The framework is open to qualifications from the private and non-formal sectors provided they meet agreed quality criteria. As one of several elements in a wider policy strategy, along with the new national register of qualifications, the PQF is seen as a key instrument in broad reform and modernisation of education and training in Poland, aiming to promote lifelong learning and respond better to labour market and societal needs. Improving transparency and overall consistency in a complex education and training system is a further objective. The shift to learning outcomes is an important part of the reform, resulting in continuous redesign of programmes, standards and curricula. Validation is also linked to reform, with high priority given to putting validation arrangements in place. Unlike in many other countries, the reform involves social partner and civil society representatives only to a limited degree. The PQF and related work is mainly in the hands of the public sector, albeit with the participation of a broad range of stakeholders from ministries and other public institutions. The future involvement of stakeholders from other sectors will be important to ownership outside public administration. Based on thorough technical development, the PQF has strong potential for future development; however, moving into an operational phase demands on a clear legal basis. The proposal for a new law covering the PQF and the qualifications register, and also the role of validation, is expected to be presented to the Polish parliament in early 2015, to come into force in early 2016 if adopted. From then on, the PQF would be fully operational.

In 2013, the PQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in a joint process.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange acts as EQF NCP <http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl/eng/index.htm> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Referencing the Polish qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the European qualifications framework (Sławiński et al., 2013).



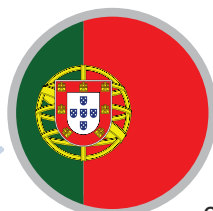
Table 24. Polish NQF (PQF)

NQF levels	Qualifications included in the PQF (indicatory)	EQF levels
8	Diploma certifying the academic degree of Doctor in specific discipline	8
7	Diploma certifying the title of <i>Magister</i> Diploma certifying the title of <i>Magister Inzynier</i> Diploma certifying a title equivalent to <i>Magister</i> or <i>Inzynier</i>	7
6	First cycle vocational title Diploma certifying the title of <i>Licencjat</i> Diploma certifying the title of <i>Inzynier</i> Diploma certifying a title equivalent to <i>Licencyat</i> or <i>Inzynier</i>	6
5		5
4	<i>Matura</i> certificate Vocational certificate Vocational diploma	4
3	Vocational certificate Vocational diploma	3
2	Certificate of completing lower secondary school	2
1	Certificate of completing primary school	1

NB: All these levels will only become official following the adoption of a NQF law (planned for 2015). Levels have yet to be indicated for several qualification types. This applies to certificate for completing basic VET in basic VET schools, certificate for completing technical upper secondary school, certificate for completing general upper secondary school, certificate for completing post-secondary non-tertiary school and college diploma (for example from teacher training colleges).

Source: Stawiński et al., 2013.

25. PORTUGAL



A comprehensive NQF (*quadro nacional de qualificações*, QNQ) has been in place since October 2010. It is a single reference for classifying all levels and types of qualifications obtainable in Portuguese education and training via formal, non-formal and informal learning. It has eight levels and is defined in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude. The NQF forms part of a broader education and training reform programme since 2007, aiming to raise the low qualifications level of the Portuguese population. Its main objectives are to 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.

The NQF has reached an early operational stage. All higher education and VET is already organised based on the NQF descriptors. The databases consider the structure of the NQF and access to the financial support also takes the framework into consideration. Most national qualifications certificates and diplomas indicate the corresponding NQF/EQF qualification level. Higher education qualifications have been included in the more detailed framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ-Portugal), which is part of the comprehensive NQF.

Three main steps were taken to put the NQF into practice. First, a new institutional model was developed: a National Agency for Qualifications and the Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of higher education (A3ES) were established in 2007. Second, a national qualifications catalogue was created in 2007 as a strategic management tool for non-higher national qualifications and a central reference tool for VET provision. Third, the national system for recognising non-formal and informal learning was further integrated into the NQF. This system been reformed in 2012 to address better the validation, training and guidance of youngsters and adults.

The NQF has been a driving force behind incorporation of the learning outcomes approach into the Portuguese education and training system. National qualifications and curricula in all education sectors have been progressively aligned with the NQF descriptors. This is continuing. Much still needs to be done to encourage discussion and raise awareness on learning outcomes among different stakeholders and disseminate the information to a wide spectrum of stakeholders, especially in the labour market, where the NQF is not yet known.

The NQF was linked to the EQF and self-certified against QF-EHEA in June 2011.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training is EQF NCP in Portugal <http://www.en.anqep.gov.pt> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Report on the referencing of the national qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework (ANQ, 2011).



Table 25. Portugal NQF (QNQ)

NQF levels	Qualifications types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree	8
7	Master degree	7
6	Bachelor degree	6
5	Diploma in technological specialisation	5
4	Secondary education and professional certification Secondary education and professional internship – minimum six months	4
3	Secondary education	3
2	Third cycle of basic education Third cycle of basic education and professional certification	2
1	Second cycle of basic education	1

Source: ANQ (2011).

26. ROMANIA



Romania adopted a learning-outcomes-based NQF for lifelong learning, the Romanian NQF (ROQF), in 2013. This aims to bring together nationally recognised qualifications from both initial and CVET, apprenticeship, general and higher education, and help integrate the validation of non-formal learning into the national qualification system. The framework has eight levels, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. Apart from its transparency 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, and transitions between work and education.

The framework builds on reform in VET and the development of competence-based qualifications since the mid-1990s. The National Council for Adult Training (Centrul National de Formare si Perfectionare a Antrenorilor, CNFPA) was established with responsibility for coordinating the national register of (vocational) qualifications and for putting the validation system into practice (authorising validation centres, certifying individual assessors, issuing formal competence certificates). Parallel work was carried out in higher education, steered by the Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education (ACPART). A qualifications framework for higher education has been established in line with the Bologna process and the EQF. One of the main challenges in recent years was to link these two development processes, structures and stakeholders from VET, higher education and the labour market in a more comprehensive framework. An important step was taken in June 2011 through the set-up of a single National Qualifications Authority (Autoritatea Națională pentru Calificări, ANC), responsible for developing and implementing the comprehensive NQF.

The comprehensive NQF is firmly based on national legislation and underpinned by clear governance structure; it is not yet operational (*). Stakeholders need to agree on how to implement it.

A draft EQF referencing report was presented in 2014. The qualifications framework for higher education was self-certified against the QF-EHEA in 2011.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Autoritatea Nationala pentru Calificari (ANC) – National Authority for Qualifications <http://www.anc.edu.ro> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Ministerul Educației Naționale (Ministry of National Education) <http://edu.ro/> [accessed 9.3.2015].

Self-certification report: verification of compatibility of the Romanian national qualifications framework for higher education with the framework for qualifications of the European higher education area (ANC, 2011).

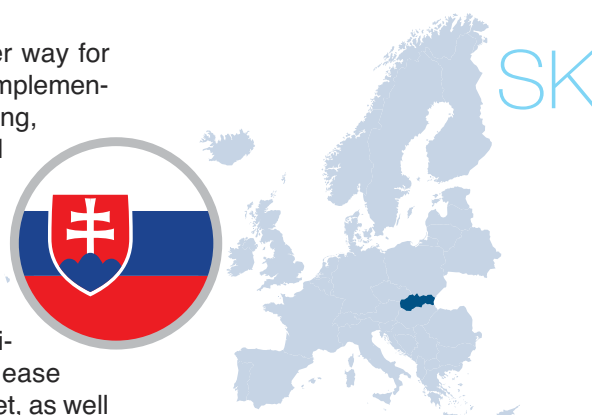
(*) The NQF table and its reference to the EQF will be available after approval of the referencing report by the EQF AG.



27. SLOVAKIA

Work on the Slovak qualifications framework has been under way for some time, based on a 2009 government decision on EQF implementation. This was confirmed by the 2009 Act on Lifelong Learning, amended in 2012 (Law 315/2012), stipulating the legal background for the development of a national qualification system and framework. However, in 2013, strategies for revision of the initial NQF were proposed, as well as suggestions for the creation of the national qualifications system. The system is intended to provide a comprehensive view of all full and partial qualifications, with qualifications and assessment standards, and pave the way for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. It is also intended to ease communication between the education sector and the labour market, as well as support the creation of content and improve quality of provision. The NQF is seen as a tool for transparency, comparing qualifications and supporting transfer and recognition of qualifications within Europe. The revised NQF is intended to include all qualifications: general education, VET, higher education, qualifications gained through validation, and qualifications outside formal education. The framework will be learning-outcomes-based, with revised descriptors covering knowledge, skills and competence (*).

Linking the NQF to the EQF is planned for mid-2015.



MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport
<http://www.minedu.sk/index.php> [accessed 9.3.2015].

The State Institute of Vocational education and training – Štátneho inštitútu odborného vzdelávania (ŠIOV) <http://www.siov.sk/> [accessed 9.3.2015].

The project website for the creation of the national system of qualifications (*Tvorba Národnej sústavy kvalifikácií*) <http://www.tvorbansk.sk/> [accessed 9.3.2015].

(*) An NQF table is not available at this stage.



28. SLOVENIA



Slovenia has designed and broadly consulted on a comprehensive qualifications framework (SQF) with 10 levels, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. Agreement was reached in 2011 on bringing major national qualifications from formal education and training (VET, higher education, general education, adult education) and the system of national vocational qualifications under the remit of the Ministry of Labour into SQF levels. The main objective of the SQF is to integrate and harmonise Slovenian qualifications subsystems, enhance transparency, accessibility, progress and quality of qualifications, and improve transnational understanding and comparability of them.

SQF development builds on a series of education and training reforms since the mid-1990s (in VET, higher education, general education and adult education) and introduction of certification and validation of non-formal learning in 2000.

The SQF is not yet operational. A draft law on SQF (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2014) has been prepared and widely consulted among different stakeholders. However, adoption is delayed due to change of government. This is a technical law, which summarises main responsibilities of stakeholders and ministries involved in design and award of qualifications at different levels, and defines tasks of the EQF NCP. 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 inclusion of supplementary qualifications, referencing of NQF levels to the EQF and QF-EHEA and maintenance of a SQF register and funding.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training is EQF NCP
<http://www.cpi.si> [accessed 4.3.2015].

SQF register, <http://www.nok.si/slovenian-qualifications-framework-register/> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Referencing the Slovenian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (Logaj et al., 2014).



Table 26. Slovenian NQF (SQF)

NQF levels	Qualifications obtained within formal education	Qualifications obtained outside formal education		EQF levels
	Educational qualifications	National vocational qualifications	Supplementary qualifications (*)	
10	Doctoral diploma – <i>Diploma o doktoratu znanosti</i>			8
9	(**) Postgraduate research Master of science diploma – <i>Diploma o magisteriju znanosti</i> (**) Specialisation diploma following academic higher education <i>Diploma o specializaciji</i>			8
8	Master degree – <i>Diploma o strokovnem magisteriju</i> (**) Specialisation diploma following pre-Bologna professional higher education <i>Diploma o specializaciji</i> (**) Pre-Bologna diploma of academic higher education <i>Diploma o univerzitetnem izobraževanju</i> (**) Higher education diploma – <i>Diploma o visoki izobrazbi</i>			7
7	Academic bachelor diploma <i>Diploma o izobraževanju prve stopnje – univerzitetna, UN</i> Professional bachelor diploma – <i>Diploma o izobraževanju visokem strokovnem, VS</i> (**) Pre-Bologna professional higher education diploma <i>Diploma o visokem strokovnem izobraževanju</i> (**) Specialisation diploma following old short cycle higher education <i>Diploma o specializaciji</i>			6
6	Short-cycle higher vocational diploma <i>Diploma o višji strokovni izobrazbi</i> (**) Old short-cycle higher vocational diploma <i>Diploma o višješolski izobrazbi</i>		NVQ certificate (level 6) e.g. hotel reception manager; travel agency manager	5
5	Vocational matura certificate (Secondary technical education, four years) <i>Spričevalo o poklicni maturi</i> General matura certificate <i>Spričevalo o splošni maturi</i> Master craftsman's examination certificate <i>Spričevalo o opravljenem mojstrskem izpitu</i> Foreman's examination certificate – <i>Spričevalo o opravljenem delovodskem izpitu</i> Managerial examination certificate – <i>Spričevalo o opravljenem poslovodskem izpitu</i>		NVQ certificate (level 5) e.g. dental assistant; analyst in pharmaceutical laboratories	4
4	Final examination certificate (Secondary vocational education, three years) <i>Spričevalo o zaključnem izpitu, Srednja poklicna izobrazba</i>		NVQ (level 4) e.g. pharmaceutical logistics process worker; process worker in the production of pharmaceutical ingredients	4
3	Final examination certificate (Lower vocational education, two years) <i>Spričevalo zaključnem izpitu</i>		NVQ (level 3) e.g. biomedical laboratory assistant; operator in pharmaceutical ingredients manufacture	3
2	Elementary school leaving certificate (nine years) – <i>Zaključno spričevalo osnovne šole</i>		NVQ (level 2)	2
1	Certificate of completing grades 7 or 8 of elementary education <i>Potrdilo o izpolnjeni osnovnošolski obveznosti</i> Elementary school leaving certificate – <i>Zaključno spričevalo osnovne šole</i>		NVQ (level 1)	1

(*) Since the accreditation procedure for supplementary qualifications has not yet been approved, these qualifications have not been included in the framework.

(**) Pre-Bologna diplomas.

Source: Adapted from (Logaj et al., 2014).

29. SPAIN



Spain has developed the Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning (ESQF) known as *marco español de cualificaciones* (MECU). It is based on learning outcomes and aims to link and coordinate different education and training subsystems. It has eight levels defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. The framework will include qualifications obtained in compulsory education, in post-secondary and in higher education; it will integrate validation of non-formal and informal learning processes. One of the main objectives of the Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning is to make Spanish qualifications easier to understand by describing them in terms of learning outcomes; it should also clarify relations between them. It is expected that this will improve the extent to which stakeholders are informed about national qualifications, raising trust and making mobility easier. The MECU aims to support lifelong learning, link IVET and CVET, and improve access and participation for everyone, including the disadvantaged.

Developments take into account experiences with the national catalogue of professional qualifications, established by the Law on Qualifications and Professional Training in 2002 (Government of Spain, 2002). Of special attention, and lively discussion, are levels 3 and 4 of the MECU, where formal vocational qualifications/titles, regulated by the Ministry of Education and professional qualifications/certificates under the remit of Ministry of Labour, would be assigned. They are different in scope of learning they require, but can be linked to the same level of the catalogue.

The draft royal decree on the introduction of MECU serves as the legal basis for its implementation, although this decree has yet to come into force (*). It defines levels and level descriptors as the basis for referencing the MECU to the EQF levels. It has been in consultation with main stakeholders and supervised by the national advisory bodies. The draft royal decree recommends the establishment of a Spanish qualifications framework committee, to include representatives of various stakeholders, such as ministries, trade union and business representatives and qualifications framework experts.

The higher four levels of MECU will be linked to the qualifications framework for higher education (*marco español de cualificaciones para la educación superior*, MECES), which has been put in place separately.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Ministry of Education is the main source of information on NQF development, (MECU and MECES), also for all formal qualifications, including VET diplomas <http://www.educacion.es/portada.html> [accessed 9.3.2015].

The Directorate General for Vocational Training is the designated EQF NCP.

The MECU website <http://www.educacion.gob.es/mecu> [accessed 9.3.2015].

(*) An NQF table is not available at this stage.



30. SWEDEN



Sweden has developed a comprehensive, learning-outcomes-based NQF (SEQF) based on eight levels. Each level is described in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. The technical design of the framework was finalised in 2012 but formal adoption has been pending and is expected mid-2015. Preparatory work for the decree has proved time-consuming and has involved formal consultation with all stakeholders. While the framework was initially designed to aid international comparison of Swedish qualifications, the SEQF is now increasingly seen as playing a national role. The development phase (since 2009) and the current formal adoption process have involved a broad range of stakeholders, both from the education sector and from the labour market. A particular feature of Swedish education and training is the very strong adult and popular education, combined with an extensive and diverse system of labour market-based education and training. Sweden has emphasised from the start the need to include non-formal education and training and make it possible to establish links to qualifications in this area. Qualifications and standards included in the SEQF will also be open to validation.

When formally adopted, the SEQF will be able to move into an early operational stage, building on the extensive technical work already carried out. For the framework to be able to operate as a comprehensive NQF, the relationship to the separately developed higher education framework will require further clarification and continuous dialogue. One main point of contention is opening levels 6 to 8 to non-academic qualifications.

Assuming adoption in mid-2015, the SEQF will be referenced to the EQF in autumn 2015. Separate self-certification of Swedish higher education to the QF-EHEA has already been carried out in 2012.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is the designated EQF NCP <http://www.yhmyndigheten.se/hem/higher-vocational-education—hve/> [accessed 9.3.2015].

The Swedish NQF for lifelong learning <https://www.seqf.se/sv/Sa-funkar-det/Ramverken/NQF-LLL> [accessed 9.3.2015].



Table 27. Swedish NQF (SEQF, draft)

NQF levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma	8
7	Master diploma	7
6	Bachelor diploma Advanced diploma in higher vocational education	6
5	Qualified graduate from upper secondary engineering courses Diploma in higher vocational education	5
4	Upper secondary level (new and former)	4
3		3
2	Compulsory education for young and corresponding education for adults, special needs schools and Swedish tuition for immigrants	2
1	Special needs education	1

Source: Based on the Ministry of Education and Research proposal for placing qualifications within the SEQF (Swedish Ministry of Education, 2014).

31. SWITZERLAND



Switzerland sees the link to European cooperation on qualifications frameworks, both the EQF and the QF-EHEA, as an opportunity to strengthen the transparency and comparability of its national qualifications in a European and wider international context. In 2009, Switzerland adopted a NQF for higher education in line with the Bologna-process, including qualifications awarded by universities, universities of applied science, and university colleges for teacher education. In late 2014, a Swiss NQF for vocational and professional qualifications (NQR-CH-BB) was adopted. This latter framework is explicitly oriented to the EQF and introduces an eight-level structure defined through knowledge, skills and competence, further subdivided into vocational and personal competence. While currently limited to vocationally and professionally oriented qualifications, it could be argued that the framework is modelled as a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning with broad and inclusive level descriptors. Throughout the development phase the NQR-CH-BB has received broad support from stakeholders (cantons, trade associations and social partners), organised in a series of round tables.

The legal basis now is in place and implementation of the framework will start. This will be closely related to a national strategy, initiated in 2013, aiming at the further strengthening vocationally oriented education and training at higher levels (NQR-CH-BB five to eight). There is overall agreement among Swiss 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. Following the shift to learning outcomes initiated by the 2004 reform of the Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training, the inclusion of qualifications on individual basis will now start.

Switzerland plans to reference the NQR-CH-BB to the EQF in spring 2015.



MAIN SOURCE OF INFORMATION

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)
<http://www.sbf.admin.ch/index.html?lang=en> [accessed 4.3.2015].

Table 28. Indication of qualifications types in the NQR-CH-BB and approximate level

Level	Qualification type (Abschlussarten)				
8					HFP
7				HF	
6			BP		
5		EFZ			
4					
3	EBA				
2					
1					

NB: **EBA** Eidgenössische Berufsattest (federal VET certificate); two-year basic vocational education.

EFZ Eidgenössische Fähigkeitszeugnis (federal VET diploma); three- or four-year basic vocational education.

BP Berufsprüfung (vocational examination).

HF Höhere Fachschulen (higher technical schools): HF offers courses with high practical and labour market relevance. Focus is on specific problems in service, operation, workshop and production. Higher vocational schools courses are mostly based on completed basic vocational training and last at least two or three years (full-time or part-time).

HFP Höhere Fachprüfung (higher technical examination).

Source: Swiss Department for Economy, Education and Science (2015).

32. UNITED KINGDOM



Five different qualifications frameworks currently operate in the UK. In England and Northern Ireland there is the framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ) established in 2001, the qualifications and credit framework (QCF) established during 2006-08, and the national qualifications framework (NQF) established in 2003. The Scottish qualifications framework has operated since 2001. The credit and qualifications framework of Wales (CQFW) has been in place since 2003. This multitude of frameworks is partly explained by the gradual devolution of powers to the UK nations, in particular giving more autonomy to Scotland and Wales. The many frameworks also reflect the needs and interests of subsystems of education and training, explaining the existence of a separate FHEQ in England and Northern Ireland and the continued coexistence of the QCF and NQF. In contrast, Scotland and Wales have chosen to develop comprehensive frameworks covering all levels and types of qualifications.

The relative complexity of the UK situation has led to publication of the brochure *Qualifications can cross boundaries: a rough guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland* (QAA et al., 2014) explaining to users how the frameworks interact as well as how they link to the Irish framework.

32.1. England and Northern Ireland

There is no single comprehensive NQF covering all levels and types of qualification in England and Northern Ireland. The QCF mainly addresses vocational and pre-VET areas, but without including secondary general education (school leaving certificates) and higher education. The latter qualifications are covered by the framework for higher education (FHEQ).

The QCF is a regulatory credit and qualifications framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It comprises nine learning-outcomes-based levels from entry level (subdivided into entry levels 1 to 3) to achievement at level 8. The levels are defined in three categories: knowledge and understanding; application and action; autonomy and accountability. The QCF recognises skills and qualifications by awarding credit for qualifications and units. It was formally adopted – after a two-year trial period – in autumn 2008. Evaluation of the QCF, including broad consultation, is currently under way to help clarify the future role of the framework, for instance its regulatory functions.

In comparison, the FHEQ is not a regulatory framework but introduces some common objectives (benchmarks) to be pursued voluntarily and provides a language of communication supporting transparency and the positioning of qualifications to each other. There is currently no formal link between these two frameworks, but comparison is aided by use of parallel level approaches supporting transparency.

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, but not referenced to the EQF.



MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) acts as EQF NCP for England <http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/office-of-qualifications-and-examinations-regulation-ofqual.html> [accessed 9.3.2015].

The Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment Northern Ireland acts as EQF NCP for Northern Ireland <http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/> [accessed 9.3.2015].

Referencing the qualifications frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European qualifications framework (QCA et al., 2010).



Table 29. QCF/NQF for England and Northern Ireland

QCF/NQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Vocational qualifications level 8	8
7	NVQ level 5 Vocational qualifications ^(e) level 7	7
6	Vocational qualifications level 6	6
5	NVQ level 4 Higher national diplomas Vocational qualifications level 5	5
4	Vocational qualifications level 4 Higher national certificates	5
3	NVQ level 3 Vocational qualifications level 3 GCSE and A-level Advanced diplomas	4
2	NVQ level 2 Vocational qualifications level 2 GCSE at grade A-C ESOL skills for life Higher diplomas Functional/essential skills level 2 (English, mathematics and information and communications technology)	3
1	NVQ level 1 Vocational qualifications level 1 GCSEs at grade D-G ESOL skills for life Foundation diplomas Functional skills level 1 (English, mathematics and information and communications technology)	2
Entry level	Entry level certificates (sublevel 1-3) ESOL skills for life Functional skills entry level (English, mathematics and information and communications technology)	1

^(e) The difference between vocational qualifications and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) is the following: vocational qualifications do not have to be 100% based on national occupational standards (NOS) and are very often knowledge-based. NVQs are 100% based on NOS as they are qualifications that are evidence of occupational competence and thus must have a direct relationship with the NOS. The QCF qualifications which are 100% based on NOS have NVQ (in brackets) within their title to communicate to end users that this 'new' QCF qualification is for occupational competence and replaces the original NVQ.

Source: QAA et al., 2014

32.2. Scotland

The Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) is a first generation framework and one of the oldest comprehensive frameworks in Europe; it has been operating since 2001 but has since been gradually revised and refined. It is a 12-level overarching framework that covers all levels and types of qualifications, but is not a regulatory framework. Learning-outcomes-based level descriptors, revised in 2012, are defined in terms of knowledge and understanding; practice; applied knowledge and understanding; generic cognitive skills; communication, ICT and numeric skills; and autonomy, accountability and working with others. One of the main objectives of the SCQF is to support lifelong learning, assist in making clear the relationships between Scottish qualifications and those in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond, and show learners and others possible routes for progression and credit transfer. The SCQF is an 'open framework' in the sense that it explicitly addresses the private sector and employers, and encourages these to have their training provisions accredited and included under the framework.

In 2013 an independent evaluation was carried out, looking at the level of awareness, perception and understanding of the SCQF among learners, parents, teaching staff and management. The results show that the SCQF is widely recognised by learners, parents and education professionals in Scotland.

A high degree of ownership can be observed with the SCQF, in all sectors of education and training as well as by labour market stakeholders. SCQF governance is organised as a company by guarantee and also a Scottish charity. The partnership is made up of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Universities Scotland, Quality Assurance Agency, Association of Scotland's Colleges, and Scottish ministers. Employers are represented in the SCQF partnership board.

The SCQF was referenced to the EQF in February 2010 as part of the overall UK referencing process.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The SCQF partnership acts as EQF NCP for Scotland <http://www.scqf.org.uk/> [accessed 9.3.2015].

Referencing the qualifications frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European qualifications framework (QCA et al., 2010).



Table 30. **Scottish qualifications framework (SCQF)**

SCQF levels	SQF qualifications		Higher education qualifications	SVQ, modern apprenticeships	EQF levels
12	Some SQA qualifications are changing between 2013-16. See http://www.squa.org.uk/readyreckoner		Doctoral degree	Professional apprenticeships	8
11			Master degree	Professional apprenticeships SVQ 5	7
10			Honours degree	Professional apprenticeships	6
9			Bachelor/ordinary degrees/graduate diploma, graduate certificate	Technical apprenticeship SVQ 4	6
8		Higher national diploma	Diploma of higher education	Technical apprenticeship SVQ 4	5
7	Advanced higher Scottish baccalaureate	Higher national certificate	Certificate of higher education	Modern apprenticeship SVQ 3	5
6	Higher			Modern apprenticeship SVQ 2	4
5	National 5, intermediate 1			SVQ 1	3
4	National 4, access 3				2
3	National 3, access 3				1
2	National 2, access 2				
1	National 1, access 1				

NB: National 5 courses replace national courses at standard grade credit and at intermediate 2 level and are based on the aims, purposes and values of curriculum for excellence. National 5 courses are designed to develop skills and knowledge in a specific subject area as well as skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. Achieving a national 5 course shows that a learner has demonstrated the specified knowledge and skills in a particular subject at the defined national standard. A national 5 course is allocated 24 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5. Normally, each unit is allocated 6 SCQF credit points.

Source: <http://www.scqf.org.uk/framework-diagram/Framework.htm> [accessed 7.5.2015].

32.3. Wales

The credit and qualifications framework Wales (CQFW) was adopted in 2002 and launched in 2003. Its purpose is to act as an overarching structure to provide clarity of existing education systems and includes all formal and regulated qualifications (including higher education) as well as quality assured lifelong learning (QALL). A nine-level structure (including entry levels) is outcomes-based. The CQFW uses two measures to describe qualifications: the level of outcomes of learning and the volume of outcomes, described by the number of CQFW credit points. The CQFW can be considered an 'open framework' in the sense that its unit-based approach at the outset is oriented towards a multitude of awarding bodies and education and training. This aids inclusion of units developed (for example) by the private sector and as part of continuing and enterprise-based education and training.

The CQFW implementation is positioned as a key part of Wales' lifelong learning policy and strategy aiming to encourage people to become lifelong learners and enable everyone to develop and maintain essential skills, gain new knowledge, skills and competences, and progress in learning and working. An evaluation of the CQFW was carried out in 2014, focusing on strengths and weaknesses of the framework. Overall the CQFW is seen as playing a positive and constructive role in the Welsh qualification landscape and there is support among all stakeholders to continue the work which was started a decade ago. The CQFW is particularly well established in certain sectors, notably higher education and adult and community learning. Engagement is lower for other sectors. The framework is currently governed by the Welsh Government, but stakeholders point out the need to broaden its basis by more directly involving employment and qualifications bodies.

The CQFW was referenced to the EQF as part of the overall UK referencing process in February 2010.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) acts as EQF NCP <http://gov.wales/?lang=en> [accessed 9.3.2015].

Referencing the qualifications frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European qualifications framework (QCA et al., 2010).



Table 31. Welsh qualifications framework (CQFW)

CQFW levels	Qualifications types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree	8
7	Master degree Integrated master degree Postgraduate diplomas Postgraduate certificate in education	7
6	Bachelor and honours degrees Professional graduate certificate in education Graduate certificate	6
5	Diplomas of higher education Higher national diplomas Foundation degree	5
4	Higher national certificates Certificates of higher education Essential Skills Wales	5
3	Vocational qualifications level 3 General certificate of secondary education (GGCSE) and A level Welsh baccalaureate qualification (WBQ) advanced	4
2	Vocational qualification level 2 WBQ intermediate General certificate of secondary education (GCSE) (grades A to C)	3
1	Vocational qualification level 1 General certificate of secondary education (GCSE) (grades D to G) WBQ foundation	2
Entry level	Entry qualification, Essential Skills Wales	1

Source: QAA et al., 2014.

List of abbreviations

AKOV	Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Training (Dutch-speaking community of Belgium)
BQF	Bulgarian qualifications framework
CFC	French qualifications framework for lifelong learning <i>cadre francophone des certifications pour l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie</i>
CLQ	Luxembourg qualifications framework
CNCP	National Committee on Vocational Qualifications <i>Commission Nationale de la Certification professionnelle</i> (France)
CQFW	credit and qualifications framework Wales
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
DEEWR	Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DQR	German qualifications framework <i>Deutsche Qualifikationsrahmen für lebenslanges Lernen</i>
EHEA	European higher education area
EOPPEP	National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (Greece)
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European Social Fund
ESQF	Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning <i>marco español de cualificaciones, MECU</i>
EstQF	Estonian qualifications framework
FHEQ	framework for higher education
FQF	Flemish qualifications framework
HQF	Hellenic qualifications framework
HRDA	Human Resource Development Authority (Cyprus)
HuQF	Hungarian qualifications framework
ISQF	Iceland qualifications framework
KKOV	classification of educational qualification types
LQF	Latvian qualifications framework level
LTQF	Lithuanian qualifications framework
MECES	Spanish qualifications framework for higher education <i>marco español de cualificaciones para la educación superior</i>
MECU	Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning <i>marco español de cualificaciones</i>
MQF	Malta qualifications framework
NCP	national coordination point

NFQ	national framework of qualifications (Ireland)
NKR	Norway qualifications framework <i>Norsk kvalifikasjonsrammeverk</i>
NLQF	Netherlands qualifications framework
NQF	national qualifications framework
NQR-CH-BB	Swiss qualifications framework for vocational and professional qualifications <i>Nationale Qualifikationsrahmen für Abschlüsse der Berufsbildung</i> (Switzerland)
NSK	national register of qualifications <i>Národní soustava kvalifikací</i> (Czech Republic)
NUOV	National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education <i>Národní ústav odborného vzdělávání</i> (Czech Republic)
NVQR	national vocational qualifications register (Hungary)
PQF	Polish qualifications framework
QCF	qualifications and credit framework
QDG	qualifications framework of the German-speaking community (Belgium) <i>Qualifikationsrahmen Deutschsprachiger Gemeinschaft</i>
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework in the European higher education area
QNQ	Portugal qualifications framework <i>quadro nacional de qualificações</i>
ROQF	Romania qualifications framework
SCQF	Scottish credit and qualifications framework
SEQF	Swedish qualifications framework
SQF	Slovenian qualifications framework
SVQ	system of vocational qualifications
VET	vocational education and training

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Cedefop is a European agency based in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki focused on development of vocational education and training. The Centre carries out research that underpins European and national vocational education and training policy, with particular focus on how best to link education and employment.

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