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NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE 2017

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Foreword

Cedefop has been working on transparency and recognition of qualifications since the 1980s and has helped shape the European qualifications framework (EQF), adopted in 2008 and revised in 2017. The long-term priority of the EQF is to strengthen transparency and comparability of European qualifications, to support mobility and progression of students and workers across national and institutional borders.

The EQF has triggered development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) across Europe. NQFs primarily add value by promoting the learning outcomes principle and by adopting a comprehensive approach to cover all levels and types of qualifications (general education, vocational education and training and higher education) and opening up to qualifications awarded in non-formal settings. The dynamic progress of NQFs over the past few years produced comprehensive maps of national qualifications systems and qualifications. This increases transparency across systems and borders, and helps promote comparability of qualifications at European level.

This publication on the latest NQF developments aims to share how 43 NQFs in 39 countries participating in the EQF implementation (28 EU Member States as well as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Kosovo, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey) are structured, and how national qualifications have been allocated to NQF levels and linked to the EQF. NQFs are more than a technical matter to be summarised in a few infographics: they are primarily cooperation platforms and meeting points bringing together stakeholders from education and labour market contexts to discuss qualifications and skills policies, creating conditions for more responsive, flexible and permeable qualification systems.

NQFs are playing an important role in supporting the modernisation of education, particularly vocational education and training (VET). They are making VET (in its complex and diverse profile) more visible in the overall education and training landscape. This need for transparency is emphasised by the fact that the VET sector is more diverse than other sectors and also undergoing significant changes: increasing qualification numbers and blurring lines between initial and continuing VET. Qualifications frameworks are also playing a role in increasing the standing of VET by demonstrating the increased importance of vocationally oriented education and training at higher levels (EQF levels 5-8) and parity of esteem between VET and general education at EQF level 4.

Qualifications frameworks give coherence to the increasingly complex world of qualifications. NQF and EQF levels on certificates, diplomas and in qualifications databases help citizens assess their own qualifications; they allow employers to match person's qualifications better with requirements of the job; national policy-makers can compare – via EQF – qualifications available in their country to those in other countries and decide whether changes are needed; recognition of qualifications becomes easier.

Cedefop has accompanied the referencing process of NQFs to the EQF in every step of its development. Since 2009, Cedefop has monitored and analysed NQF development in all countries participating in EQF implementation and has organised several major conferences on related themes; most recently, a policy learning conference considered the added value and impact of NQFs ([1]). The conference concluded that awareness of EQF and NQFs among end-users – employers, students, guidance practitioners – is progressing but still weak.

This publication, providing an overview of European NQFs and how they link to the EQF, celebrates the tenth anniversary of the EQF process and its contribution to transparency and comparability of European qualifications and trust in NQFs as guardians of the quality of qualifications.

James Joachim Calleja
Director

([1]) Peer learning conference organised by Cedefop in cooperation with the European Commission and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI): *Do national qualifications frameworks make a difference?* Thessaloniki, 9 and 10 November 2017. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/pt/events-and-projects/events/peer-learning-conference [accessed 1.2.2018].

Table of contents

Foreword 4
Introduction 10

PART I
Overview and main tendencies 11
1. National qualifications framework developments in Europe: overall progress 12
2. NQFs in Europe: common characteristics 14
3. Early impact of European national qualifications frameworks 16
   3.1. Improved transparency of national qualification systems 16
   3.2. Reinforced and more consistent implementation of learning outcomes approaches 17
   3.3. Linking qualifications frameworks and validation of non-formal and informal learning 17
   3.4. Greater stakeholder engagement and coordination 18
   3.5. NQFs have opened up to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training 18
   3.6. NQFs and higher vocational education and training 19
4. Areas of limited impact to date 20
   4.1. Visibility and labour market use 20
   4.2. Articulation between institutions and education and training subsystems 20
   4.3. Institutional reform: work in progress 21
   4.4. NQF support to recognition of qualifications across countries: at an early stage 21

PART II
National qualifications frameworks
EU Member States 23
1. Austria 24
2. Belgium 26
   2.1 Flemish Community 26
   2.2 French Community 29
   2.3 German-speaking Community 30
3. Bulgaria 32
4. Croatia 34
5. Cyprus 36
6. Czech Republic 38
7. Denmark 40
8. Estonia 42
9. Finland 44
10. France 46
11. Germany 48
12. Greece 50
13. Hungary 52
14. Ireland 54
15. Italy 56
16. Latvia 58
17. Lithuania 60
18. Luxembourg 62

19. Malta 64
20. Netherlands 66
21. Poland 68
22. Portugal 70
23. Romania 72
24. Slovakia 74
25. Slovenia 76
26. Spain 78
27. Sweden 80
28. United Kingdom 82
28.1 England and Northern Ireland 82
28.2 Scotland 84
28.3 Wales 86

Other European countries participating in the EQF implementation 89
29. Albania 90
30. Bosnia and Herzegovina 92
31. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 94
32. Iceland 96
33. Kosovo 98
34. Liechtenstein 100
35. Montenegro 102
36. Norway 104
37. Serbia 106
38. Switzerland 108
39. Turkey 110

List of abbreviations 112
References 114
Further reading 119

List of tables

1. Austrian national qualifications framework 25
2. Qualifications framework of the Flemish Community of Belgium (FQF) 28
3. Qualifications framework of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (QDG) 31
4. Bulgarian national qualifications framework (BQF) 33
5. Croatian national qualifications framework (CROQF) 35
6. Cypriot national qualifications framework (CyQF) 37
7. Czech education qualification types, NSK levels and links to EQF levels 39
8. Danish national qualifications framework 41
9. Estonian national qualifications framework (EstQF) 43
10. Finnish national qualifications framework (FiNQF) 45
11. French national qualifications framework 47
12. German national qualifications framework (DQR) 49
13. Hellenic national qualifications framework (HQF) 51
14. Hungarian national qualifications framework (HuQF) 53
15. Irish national qualifications framework 55
16. Referencing of Italian formal qualifications to the EQF 57
17. Latvian national qualifications framework (LQF) 59
18. Lithuanian national qualifications framework (LTQF) 61
19. Luxembourg qualifications framework (CLQ) 63
20. Maltese national qualifications framework (MQF) 65
21. Dutch national qualifications framework (NLQF) 67
22. Polish national qualifications framework (PQF) 69
23. Portuguese national qualifications framework (QNQ) 71
24. Romanian national qualifications framework (ROQF) 73
25. Slovak national qualifications framework (SKKR) 75
26. Slovenian national qualifications framework (SQF) 77
27. Spanish qualifications framework for higher education (MECES) and draft Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning (MECU) levels 79
28. Swedish national qualifications framework (SeQF) 81
29. Regulated qualifications framework (RQF) for England and Northern Ireland 83
30. Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) 85
31. Credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW) 87
32. Albanian qualifications framework (AQF) 91
33. The Bosnia and Herzegovina national qualifications framework 93
34. Qualifications framework of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 95
35. Icelandic national qualifications framework (ISQF) 97
36. Qualifications framework of Kosovo (KQF) 99
37. The Y-structure of Liechtenstein qualifications framework (NQFL) 101
38. Montenegrin qualifications framework 103
39. Norwegian national qualifications framework (NKR) 105
40. Serbian national qualifications framework 107
41. Qualification types in the NQF-VPQ and approximate level 109
42. Turkish national qualifications framework (TQF) 111

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Introduction

The European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2018. Entering into force in April 2008 ([2]), the EQF has become a common reference point for comparing qualifications across institutional and national borders, aiming to increase the overall transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications throughout Europe.

The EQF, by acting as a catalyst for development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), has contributed to changing the qualification landscape in Europe. Before 2005, NQF had been set up in three European countries: Ireland, France and the UK. In 2017, frameworks have been, or are being, developed and implemented in all 39 countries cooperating on the European qualifications framework (the 28 EU Member States, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey). Although these frameworks have reached different stages, an increasing number are now becoming operational and make contributions to education and training policies and practices in their respective countries.

The EQF has promoted two important principles supporting the modernisation of qualifications systems and directly contributing to NQF developments:

(a) the learning outcomes perspective, focusing on what a holder of a qualification is expected to know, be able to do and understand. This provides a new perspective on qualification systems and qualifications and their content and profile;

(b) the comprehensive approach covering all levels and types of qualifications: formal education and training (VET, general education, higher education) as well qualifications awarded in non-formal contexts. The comprehensive approach draws attention to progression across sectors and borders.

Taken forward voluntarily, countries have adopted these principles to their national circumstances and needs. The purpose of this publication – which is an update of the 2015 publication on NQF developments in Europe ([3]) – is to provide an overview of these frameworks and their similarities and differences.

Part I 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 II briefly presents each national framework and the way it has been designed and structured. This description is supported by detailed NQF tables showing how qualifications and qualification types have now been allocated to the learning-outcomes-based levels and referenced to the EQF levels.

Building on the visible progress made in the past 10 years at national levels, the revised EQF recommendation was adopted in May 2017 ([4]). The long-term priority of this recommendation in the coming period is to make the EQF more visible to end-users and show its contribution to wider objectives of lifelong learning, employability, mobility and social integration of workers and learners.

([2]) European Parliament; Council of the European Union (2008). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 111, 6.5.2008, pp. 1-7. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:111:0001:0007:EN:PDF [accessed 1.2.2018].

([3]) Cedefop (2015a). *National qualifications frameworks developments in Europe – Anniversary edition.* Luxembourg: Publications Office. http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4137 [accessed 1.2.2018]. This report was published in the context of Cedefop's 40th anniversary celebration.

([4]) Council of the European Union (2017). *Council recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and repealing the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning.* https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ceead970-518f-11e7-a5ca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en [accessed 1.2.2018].

PART 1

Overview and main tendencies

CHAPTER 1

National qualifications framework developments in Europe: overall progress

Developments in national qualifications frameworks in Europe have been rapid. Before 2005, frameworks were in place in three European countries: Ireland, France and the UK. By 2017, and directly triggered by the 2008 adoption of the European qualifications framework (EQF), NQFs have been introduced by all 39 EQF participating countries. The following figures reflect the situation at the end of 2017:

(a) a total of 35 countries are working towards comprehensive frameworks, including all levels and types of qualifications from formal education and training and increasingly opening up to qualifications awarded in non-formal contexts;

(b) most European countries have completed the (initial) conceptual and technical development of their frameworks. The majority of them have formally adopted their NQFs, most recently in Luxembourg, Austria, Poland, Slovenia, Italy and Finland. Of the EU countries, only Spain have yet to finalise developments and/or adoption (5). The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo ([6]), Montenegro, Slovakia and Turkey, candidate or potential candidates for EU membership, also participate in the EQF, having already been referenced to the European framework. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, which joined the EQF process in autumn 2015, have legally adopted their NQFs in various ways, establishing social dialogue platforms, and have achieved some technical progress such as producing outcomes descriptors;

(c) a growing number of countries have reached what we may term as an early operational stage. This is illustrated by frameworks in Croatia, Cyprus, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Kosovo, Montenegro, Poland and Turkey. While still working on putting in place implementation structures and adopting relevant tools and measures, these frameworks are now gradually starting to make a difference at national level;

(d) Cedefop considers 21 NQFs to have reached more mature operational status: Austria, Belgium (Flemish Community), the Czech Republic (a partial framework for vocational qualifications, NSK), Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and the frameworks in the United Kingdom. Despite having put all major features of their framework into practice, the challenge is to strengthen involvement, acceptance and ownership by key stakeholders and visibility for end-users;

(e) 34 countries had formally linked ('referenced') their national qualifications frameworks to the EQF: Austria, Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey

([5]) Italy has established the national repertoire of education, training and professional qualifications that consists of different sections, including a qualifications framework for higher education and national framework of regional qualifications. Development of a comprehensive framework is work in progress. It was formally established in January 2018. Spain is developing the Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning (*Marco Español de Cualificaciones* – MECU).

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

and the United Kingdom (England, Scotland and Wales). The remaining countries are expected to follow in 2018, which means that the first stage of EQF referencing is nearly finished. Completion of the first stage of referencing will be followed by regular updates in the event of major changes by the countries: EQF implementation is a continuing process. Three countries, Belgium-Flemish Community, Estonia and Malta have presented updates, starting this phase (for Malta, this was the fourth update since 2009);

(f) 29 countries participating in EQF implementation have also self-certified their framework against the Bologna framework (qualifications framework for the European higher education area, QF-EHEA); 20 of these have done this together with the EQF referencing process (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Turkey);

(g) 23 countries have introduced EQF/NQF levels in national qualifications documents: Austria, Belgium-Flemish Community, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland; 17 have included levels in their national qualifications databases (Austria, Belgium-Flemish Community, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Switzerland and the UK).

CHAPTER 2

NQFs in Europe: common characteristics

While different in focus and objectives, the following common characteristics of European NQFs can be identified:

(a) 35 countries ([7]) are working towards comprehensive frameworks, addressing all levels and types of qualification from formal education and training (vocational education and training (VET), higher education, general education) and, in some cases ([8]), opening up to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training. While having agreed, long-term, to develop a comprehensive framework, Austria illustrates how NQFs are developed through a step-by-step approach. In Germany, while initially only including vocational and higher education qualifications, the agreement was reached in 2017 to include general education qualifications in the framework (DQR), including *Abitur*, *Baccalaureate* (*Allgemeine Hochschulreife*), professionally oriented *Abitur* (*Fachgebundene Hochschulreife*) as well as the *Fachhochschulreife* to level 4 of the DQR and EQF. The same step-by-step approach can be observed in Italy where important progress has been made towards a comprehensive framework;

(b) the comprehensive frameworks dominating in Europe can be understood as 'loose' in the sense that they integrate sub-frameworks (and their specific legislation) but refrain from introducing uniform rules for the design and award of qualifications. They have been designed to embrace a multiplicity of education and training institutions and provisions, reflecting a broad range of values, traditions and interests. Whether a framework is tight ([9]) or loose depends on the stringency of conditions a qualification must meet to be included (Tuck, 2007, p. 22). Loose frameworks introduce a set of comprehensive level descriptors to be applied across subsystems but allow, at the same time, substantial 'differentiation' within and between sub-frameworks ([10]). This is illustrated by the Polish qualifications framework where generic, national descriptors are supplemented by more detailed and targeted descriptors addressing general, vocational and higher education. In many countries, this institutional diversity, and the need to address a wide range of interests and concerns, has put stakeholder mobilisation and commitment at the forefront of developments;

(c) most countries have introduced eight-level frameworks. Three exceptions can be found in recently developed frameworks: Iceland and Norway, which have seven levels, and Slovenia, using 10. These contrast with some older frameworks: the French framework has five levels, the Irish 10 and the Scottish 12 levels. A number of countries use sublevels, including Croatia, Cyprus, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway and Serbia. The

([7]) Three countries have introduced partial NQFs covering a limited range of qualification types and levels or consisting of individual 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; and by France, where vocationally and professionally oriented qualifications (including higher education qualifications) are included in the framework. In UK-England and Northern Ireland, the new regulated framework (RQF) is broader in scope compared to the previous (QCF). It covers all academic and vocational qualifications regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and by the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment Regulation (CCEA). Levels 5 to 8 are comparable with the levels of the framework of higher education qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

([8]) Examples included Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK.

([9]) Tight frameworks are normally regulatory and define uniform specifications for qualifications to be applied within and across sectors.

([10]) A sub-framework is a framework, which covers only one subsystem (e.g. higher education, VET, general education, occupational qualifications) being part of an overarching comprehensive framework.

use of sublevels is seen as important to meet the interests of certain stakeholders and sometimes accommodate legacy awards;

(d) all countries have introduced learning-outcomes-based level descriptors, reflecting EQF level descriptors. Countries have, however, further developed national level descriptors (in particular the third column) to reflect national contexts, values, traditions and objectives;

(e) while the learning outcomes approach is broadly accepted across Europe it is being interpreted and applied in many different ways (Cedefop, 2016). The learning outcomes approach adds a new perspective, making it possible to take a fresh look at the ordering and valuing of qualifications. Evidence shows, that most countries combine this with inputs and emphasise that they are complementary rather than mutually exclusive;

(f) the main objective of the new European frameworks, reflecting their 'loose' character, is to improve transparency in national qualifications systems; they aim to make it easier for citizens to assess and make better use of national level qualifications, clarifying how qualifications from different institutions and subsystems can be combined to support individual learning careers. This turns NQFs into key instruments for lifelong learning. Many countries have stated, when developing NQFs, that their purpose is not to reform their qualifications systems, but to make national qualification systems more accessible and easier to understand. As European NQFs have developed and moved towards operational status, however, countries increasingly tend to see NQFs as contributing to incremental reform, leading to an expectation that NQFs can and should shape policies and practices in qualifications and skills. European NQFs also prioritise the need for international comparability of qualifications, supporting cross-border mobility of students and workers. This orientation towards enhanced mobility aligns European NQF developments with objectives for broader human and social development, including lifelong learning and reducing inequalities, rather than within the neo-liberal agenda that qualifications frameworks have traditionally been associated with (Allais, 2011a, 2014; Lassnigg, 2012);

(g) while technical and conceptual design is important, creating commitment and ownership of the process, stakeholder buy-in, consensus building and overcoming resistance to change have been identified as critical conditions for effective NQF development and implementation in Europe. Although a broad range of stakeholders participate, NQFs have so far mainly addressed the needs of education and training, and, to lesser extent, those of the labour market. Countries have been able to mobilise these stakeholders to varying degrees;

(h) sustainability and visibility to end-users are two further important conditions for impact. The stronger the political mandate and its integration into mainstream policy processes, the greater its potential as a policy steering and reform tool ([11]).

([11]) Around one-third of countries see NQFs as reform tools and expect them to support the restructuring, strengthening and/or regulation of their national qualifications systems. Examples include Albania, Belgium-Flemish Community, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovakia and Turkey.

CHAPTER 3

Early impact of European national qualifications frameworks

The monitoring of European NQFs carried out by Cedefop since 2009, which is also supported by a variety of comparative studies ([12]), points to several areas where NQFs are starting to make a difference.

3.1. Improved transparency of national qualification systems

The introduction of national qualifications frameworks with explicit learning-outcomes-based levels have helped to make national education and qualification systems more readable and easier to understand within and across European countries (Cedefop, 2016; 2017). In a few cases, where multiple qualifications frameworks have been operating in parallel and partly in competition, as in UK-England, the impact on transparency is less clear. Introducing a common learning-outcomes-based language for describing qualifications across education and training subsystems, national frameworks provide a comprehensive map of national qualifications and relationships between them. Although practice varies between countries, important progress has been achieved in the past nine years ([13]). In some countries, increased transparency supports further systemic reforms, as exemplified by Estonia where a lack of initial qualification at NQF level 5 was identified through development of an overarching framework. The main discussion centred on the fact that there were no initial education and training qualifications identified at this level. Steps have now been taken to fill this gap. Following consultation with stakeholders, a new VET Act came into force in mid-2013, introducing qualifications at level 5 (both in initial and continuing VET).

Such examples demonstrate how the introduction of learning-outcomes-based levels, and the resultant placing of qualifications, makes it possible to identify gaps in existing qualifications provision. Cedefop's study (2014) shows that EQF level 5 (along with the relevant NQF levels) has been used as a platform in developing new qualifications. This is exemplified by Estonia, Lithuania, Malta and the UK. In other countries (such as Portugal or Slovakia) NQF level descriptors are used to review the content and outcomes of qualifications. Comprehensive and integrated qualification registers increasingly underpin the NQFs and make information on qualifications accessible for students, employers and guidance staff ([14]). Portugal exemplifies how NQF level descriptors are used to support the review and renewal of qualifications.

([12]) See the further reading section at the end of this publication.
NQF/EQF-relevant Cedefop studies since the initiation of the EQF process in 2005 include: annual NQF monitoring reports (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2014) including analysis of national developments and country chapters (for 2012 and 2014): http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf [accessed 1.2.2018].
Cedefop's briefing notes also address specific NQF aspects (from 2011 to 2017): http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf [accessed 1.2.2018].

([13]) See EQF referencing reports: https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sl/documentation [accessed 1.2.2018].

([14]) See, for example, the German qualifications database: https://www.dqr.de/content/2316.php or the Slovenian qualifications database: http://www.nok.si/en/ [accessed 1.2.2018].

3.2. Reinforced and more consistent implementation of learning outcomes approaches

European NQFs share a common conceptual basis – inspired by the EQF – with a focus on learning outcomes. Recent research on the shift to learning outcomes (Cedefop, 2016) shows that the outcomes principle has been broadly accepted among national policy-makers and that national qualifications frameworks have contributed significantly to strengthening this dimension. 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 implement learning outcomes in a more system-wide and – to some extent – more consistent way. In countries such as Belgium, Greece, Croatia, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway and Poland, the introduction of frameworks has led to identification of areas where learning outcomes have not been previously applied or where these have been used in an inconsistent way.

The level descriptors of the frameworks are increasingly used as reference points for describing, writing, and levelling of qualification and assessment standards, as well as curricula. This is an important use of frameworks as it can strengthen the consistency of programmes and allows qualifications to be delivered according to similar requirements.

Comprehensive NQFs in Europe can be categorised as outcomes referenced ([15]) (Raffe, 2011; Cedefop, 2015) where the learning outcomes approach – considered essential for levelling and increasing transparency of national qualifications – is linked to national curricula or programmes and accredited providers, accepting that mode and volume of learning matters. However, many frameworks have elements of the outcomes-driven model where learning outcomes are specified independently from curriculum and provider (Raffe, 2011b). This is most visible in some sub-frameworks, as is the case in occupational/professional qualifications in the Belgium-Flemish Community, Estonia, Slovenia or Slovakia. In the Slovenian sub-framework of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) only qualifications and assessment standards are regulated at national level. There are no formally accredited programmes leading to these qualifications.

It follows that the objectives and impact of the NQF will differ across sub-frameworks, while a comprehensive framework will increase consistency of use of learning outcomes across sub-frameworks.

3.3. Linking qualifications frameworks and validation of non-formal and informal learning

The 2012 recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning ([16]) sees the link to national qualifications frameworks as important for the further implementation of validation arrangements across Europe. The 2016 update of the European inventory on validation (Cedefop, European Commission and ICF, 2017) confirms that countries ([17]) now give high priority to linking frameworks and validation arrangements. EQF and NQFs, through their focus on learning outcomes, act as a reference point for identifying, documenting, assessing and recognising learning acquired in non-formal and informal settings. The introduction of NQFs can allow countries to move from fragmented use of validation to a more coordinated national approach. According to the European inventory, there is a link between validation arrangements and formal education qualifications in the NQF in at least one part of education

([15]) Raffe (2011) explores different types of NQFs and examines the role of learning outcomes within them. He elaborates on two contrasting types of NQFs: outcomes-led and outcomes-referenced; he suggests that these are associated with different roles for learning outcomes in pursuing the objectives of NQFs. A communication framework is typically outcomes-referenced. Learning-outcomes-based level descriptors provide a common reference point for diverse qualifications from different sectors and institutions and help coordinate education and training provision and improve coherences and integration of the system.

([16]) http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF [accessed 1.2.2018].

([17]) EU-28, EEA EFTA countries, Switzerland and Turkey are included in the inventory.

in 28 countries; this offers a possibility to acquire a full qualification, or parts of a qualification included in the NQF. Links between validation and an NQF are more common in initial vocational education and training (IVET) and continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and higher education, and are less apparent in general education. Validation of non-formally and informally acquired competences and skills is possible in 17 countries included in the report. Around 75% of countries use the same standards in formal education and validation in at least one sector.

3.4. Greater stakeholder engagement and coordination

Stakeholder involvement is crucial for developing and implementing a national qualifications framework. To become operational, NQFs need to put in place institutional arrangements allowing stakeholders to come together regularly to address qualifications and skills issues and policies. Comprehensive frameworks require the involvement of a broad group of stakeholders from both education and training and the labour market, in effect creating a new meeting place and potentially a new dialogue. This is seen as contributing to system transparency and coherence, and improving the relevance of qualifications (Raffe, 2013). In some countries, comprehensive NQF development has brought together stakeholders from different parts of education and training for the first time. Evidence shows that this cooperation has increasingly being formalised and institutionalised (Cedefop, 2017); this is important to support the coherent implementation and maintenance of the NQF across sectors and institutions. Cross-sectoral bodies such as national qualification councils have been established in Albania, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Montenegro, Poland and Turkey. In Austria, the NQF advisory board of seven experts assists the NQF coordinating body in allocating qualifications to levels; the NQF steering group (NQR-*Steuerungsgruppe*), has 30 main stakeholder representatives (all federal ministries, social partners, stakeholders from the different fields of education and *Länder*). A coordination point for the German qualifications framework was set up in a joint initiative of the Federal Government and the *Länder* in 2013. It has six members, including representatives from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology, the standing conference of the ministers for education and cultural affairs of the *Länder*, and the conference of ministers for economics of the *Länder*. Its main role is to monitor the allocation of qualifications according to levels descriptors, to ensure consistency of the overall structure of the framework. The impact of strengthened cooperation on progression routes across subsystems still needs to be seen.

3.5. NQFs have opened up to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training

Most European NQFs apply to qualifications offered within formal education and training (VET, higher education, general education); these qualifications are regulated and awarded by national authorities. However, there is a growing trend among countries to open up their frameworks to include qualifications awarded in continuing and further education and training, often outside the formal national qualification system. Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden have started working on procedures for including non-formal and private sector qualifications and certificates; the Netherlands has already included an important number of those qualifications. From the start (in 2009), the Swedish national qualifications framework has been seen as a tool for opening up to qualifications awarded outside the public system, particularly in adult education and in the labour market. Linking this 'non-formal' sector to the NQF is perceived as crucial for increasing overall qualifications transparency and relevance in Sweden. Several other countries (including Denmark, Latvia and Finland) have indicated that this opening up towards the non-formal sector will be addressed in a second stage of their framework

developments. Some established frameworks, for example in France, Ireland and the UK, have put in place procedures allowing 'non-traditional' qualifications to be included in the frameworks. The Scottish framework now includes qualifications awarded by international companies (for example in the ICT sector) and other private providers. This is understood as a precondition for supporting lifelong learning and allowing learners to combine initial qualifications with those for continuing training and for specialisation. The French framework is also open to qualifications awarded by non-public bodies and institutions.

3.6. NQFs and higher vocational education and training

In many countries, vocationally oriented education and training at higher levels have been operating in 'the shadows' of universities. This lack of visibility partly reflects high esteem attributed to academic education and less to the vocationally oriented, practice- and research-based education and training ('academic drift'). The learning-outcomes-based levels of the NQFs have played a role by making visible the existence and importance of vocationally oriented education and training at levels 5 to 8 of the EQF; there is now intensive debate on the future of vocational education and training at these levels ([18]). The increased visibility of higher vocational education and training (HVET) can be illustrated by placing of the German master craftsman qualification at level 6 of the German qualifications framework, firmly underlining that vocationally oriented education and training can take place at all levels ([19]). The Swiss national qualifications framework is explicitly designed to support this principle, showing how vocational and professional qualifications operate from level 3 to level 8 of the framework. The rapid development of higher VET policies in many countries can partly be seen as directly influenced by the outcomes-based perspective provided by the NQFs and their learning-outcomes-based levels. This shows that NQFs can make vocational qualifications at these levels more visible and contribute to increased diversity of qualifications designed for different purposes.

([18]) Several research and development projects are currently exploring this area. A good example is the Beehives project: https://www.eurashe.eu/projects/beehives/ [accessed 1.2.2018].

([19]) Supplemented by policies and projects: http://ankom.his.de/pdf_archiv/2009_03_06-Hochschulzugang-erful-qualifizierte-Bewerber.pdf [accessed 1.2.2018].

CHAPTER 4

Areas of limited impact to date

4.1. Visibility and labour market use

Several evaluation studies have pointed to the limited visibility and use of NQFs by labour market actors (Allais, 2017; NQAI, 2009). The most successful example of good framework visibility on the labour market is the French NQF *(Repertoire national des certifications professionnelles* (national register of vocational qualifications)), where qualifications levels are linked to levels of occupation, work and pay (Allais, 2017).

In less regulated labour markets, visibility and use by employers is more challenging. For instance, the evaluation of the UK-Wales framework concluded that too few employers engage in or are aware of the framework. While this reflects a general lack of visibility of the credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW), some stakeholders point to the fact that the UK (England and Northern Ireland) qualifications and credit framework (QCF) ([20]) is the dominant framework in the UK and that some employers may prefer to relate to this and not limit themselves to UK-Wales (Welsh Government, 2014, p. 45).

The impact study of the Irish QF demonstrated that it has considerable potential to be used in recruitment, in developing career pathways, in planning work-based learning and training, and in recognising transferable skills (NQAI, 2009). However, its use by employers is limited, reflecting low awareness and visibility.

A recent study carried out in Germany on the potential use of the German qualifications framework (BMBF et al., 2017) identifies several areas where the framework (DQR) can add value. It can, for example, be used to support human resource development (recruitment and development of employees); this applies especially to small and medium-sized enterprises with limited human resource capacity, but will require capacity building and awareness raising.

UK-Scotland stands out as an exception in this area, having developed and promoted a range of tools that support employers in using the Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) guides to support recruitment and staff selection, identify and plan skills development for staff, or gain recognition of in-house training programmes ([21]). There are examples of employer-led sub-frameworks of vocational/occupational qualifications, as in Estonia, Slovenia and Turkey, with good use and visibility on the labour market, including access to regulated occupations, certification of skills acquired at the workplace, recruitment, workforce development, and guidance.

4.2. Articulation between institutions and education and training subsystems

Several countries see their NQFs as tools for strengthening the links between education and training subsystems. This is considered essential for reducing barriers to progression in education, training and learning, and for strengthening overall permeability of education and training systems. The new generation of European NQFs overwhelmingly consists of comprehensive frameworks, addressing all

([20]) In October 2015 a new regulated qualifications framework (RQF) was introduced for England and Northern Ireland, replacing the QCF and the NQF. The RQF covers all academic and vocational qualifications regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and by the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment Regulation (CCEA). The most significant change introduced by the RQF is the lifting of standardised requirements for the design of qualifications.

([21]) http://scqf.org.uk/employers/what-are-the-benefits/ [accessed 1.2.2018].

types of qualifications at all levels of formal education and training. This means that they – through their descriptors – must be relevant to diverse institutions pursuing a wide variety of tasks according to different traditions and cultures. According to Young and Allais (2009; 2011), one of the fundamental challenges comprehensive frameworks face is to take account of epistemological differences in knowledge and learning that exist in different parts of education. It is generally too early to say whether the NQFs are making a difference in this area: any future impact study needs to address this 'bridging function' and assess whether individual learners are becoming more able to move horizontally and vertically, and combine education and training from different institutions and subsystems, to benefit their lifelong learning careers.

4.3. Institutional reform: work in progress

The logic and objectives of NQFs to achieve more integrated qualification systems, have contributed to institutional reform in a limited number of cases. Ireland, Greece, Malta, Portugal and Romania exemplify this through their decisions to merge multiple qualification bodies into single entities covering all types and levels of qualification. The synergies gained in bringing together related functions under one roof can speed up implementation. Other countries have indicated future institutional reforms in this area, either in the form of mergers of existing institutions or in the form of new bodies, as in Croatia. This shows that comprehensive NQFs, even in cases where their main or initial role is perceived as promoting transparency, can trigger institutional reform.

4.4. NQF support to recognition of qualifications across countries: at an early stage

The effect of the qualifications frameworks on mobility of learners and workers is currently uncertain and there is very little evidence. There are great expectations of qualifications frameworks to support recognition of qualifications. NQFs give important information about the level of qualification and its link to other qualifications, as well as what the holder of a qualification is expected to know, understand and be able to do. The information on learning outcomes, workload, type of qualification and quality assurance are important elements in formal recognition of qualifications. The subsidiarity text to the Lisbon recognition convention (Council of Europe and UNESCO, 2013) underlines that frameworks should be used systematically as a source of information supporting recognition decisions. Recent studies of the European Commission explore obstacles to recognition of skills and qualifications ([22]) and reflect on the potential role of the EQF in supporting recognition of international sectoral qualifications and related initiatives ([23]).

([22]) European Commission; Ecorys (2016). *Study on obstacles to recognition of skills and qualifications: final report.* https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/156689fd-e922-11e6-ad7c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en [accessed 1.2.2018].

([23]) European Commission; ICF (2016). *Study on international sectoral qualifications frameworks and systems.* http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7937&furtherPubs=yes [accessed 1.2.2018].

PART 2

National qualifications frameworks

EU Member States

AT

1. AUSTRIA

Austria has in place an NQF with eight levels, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence, identical to the European qualifications framework level descriptors. Its main objectives are communication and transparency of qualifications, nationally and internationally. The framework aims to map national qualifications from all education and training subsystems and learning settings (formal, non-formal and informal), and to make qualification levels explicit. It is intended to strengthen coordination between the different subsystems by highlighting existing pathways and developing new ones to open up new progression possibilities. While having no regulatory functions, the framework will aid validation of non-formal and informal learning.

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 defined by law, introducing parallel level descriptors to capture the differences between higher education and VET qualifications at these levels. Dublin descriptors are used for qualifications awarded by higher education institutions, while EQF descriptors are used for the 'non-Bologna' strand (and for qualification levels below level 6). Following the 2016 NQF act, all qualifications obtained within the Bologna structure (bachelor, master, PhD) are automatically referenced to the NQF (levels 6, 7, and 8).

The Austrian NQF has reached operational stage. The Austrian Parliament approved the Federal Act on the national qualifications framework in March 2016; this establishes the governance structure, as well as the processes involved. The Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (*Österreichischer Austauschdienst* (OeAD)) has been appointed as the main implementation coordinating body. The NQF steering committee has been set up as the central governance body, broadly representing all main stakeholders, and an NQF advisory board has been created to advise and inform allocation decisions.

The NQF manual describing the process and criteria of allocating qualifications to NQF levels was adopted in September 2016, which opened the NQF for qualifications from formal education. Levels 4, 5 and 6 have been populated with qualifications from formal vocational education and training. The process of allocating qualifications from the formal sector is continuing and preparations are being carried out to open up the NQF for the non-formal qualifications sector starting with 2019.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Austrian NQF register: https://www.qualifikationsregister.at/public/home#
- The Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (Österreichischer Austauschdienst – OeAD) hosts the EQF NCP: http://www.oead.at/nqr
- (Bm:uk and BM.W_f, 2012). *Austrian NQF referencing report.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/referencing-reports-and-contacts

Table 1. **Austrian national qualifications framework**

NQF levels	Qualification types		EQF levels
8	Doctorate (*Doktorgrade*)		8
7	Master degree (*Master- bzw. Diplomgrade*)		7
6	Bachelor degree (*Bachelorgrade*)	Engineer (*Ingenieur*)	6
5	VET college school leaving certificate (*Reife- und Diplomprüfung der berufsbildenden höheren Schulen)*		5
4	VET school qualification (*Abschluss der berufsbildenden mittleren Schule*) Apprenticeship diploma (*Lehrabschluss*)		4
3			3
2			2
1			1

Source: The Austrian NQF register (2017): https://www.qualifikationsregister.at/public/home [accessed 1.2.2018].

BE

2. BELGIUM

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

2.1 Flemish Community

The Flemish Community of Belgium introduced a comprehensive NQF, the Flemish qualifications framework (FQF), in 2009, with the adoption of the Act on the Qualification Structure (Government of Flanders, 2009). It is a learning-outcomes-based framework with eight levels, using two main categories of level descriptors: knowledge/skills and context/autonomy/responsibility. The term 'competence' is understood as an overarching concept, used interchangeably with learning outcomes. The FQF covers qualifications from primary, up to higher education, and an explicit distinction is made between educational and professional qualifications. 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. Education qualifications in VET are based on one or more professional qualifications standards. In this way, labour market needs are taken up in VET programmes.

The qualification structure (including the qualifications framework) aims at making qualifications transparent, so that stakeholders in education (students, teachers 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 of qualifications (nationally and at European level). The FQF also plays an important role in strengthening the learning-outcomes-based approach and aims to strengthen policies and practices on validation of non-formal and informal learning.

The FQF is now operational. A series of implementation decrees were adopted over recent years, covering both professional and educational qualifications, leading to detailed procedures for the inclusion of qualifications in the framework. Throughout development and implementation, all main education and training stakeholders and social partners have been involved at all levels, with a high degree of commitment. Clarification of the role of social partners in linking professional qualifications to the framework required substantial effort, but an agreement on how this would be undertaken was reached and proved a success. By December 2017 a total of 306 professional and 236 educational qualifications were formally included in the FQF and published in the Flemish qualifications database.

The FQF was referenced to the EQF in June 2011, and an updated report was submitted in March 2014. A qualifications framework for higher education

linked to the Bologna process was put in place in 2008 and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2009.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Flemish qualifications framework website: http://vlaamsekwalificatiestructuur.be/en/
- Flemish qualifications database: https://app.akov.be/pls/pakov/f?p=VLAAMSE_KWALIFICATIESTRUCTUUR:KWALIFICATIEDATABANK
- The Agency for Higher Education, Adult Education, Qualifications and Study Grants (*Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs, Kwalificaties en Studietoelagen* – AHOVOKS) acts as EQF NCP: https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/agentschap-voor-hoger-onderwijs-volwassenenonderwijs-kwalificaties-en-studietoelagen-ahovoks
- AKOV (2014). *Referencing of the Flemish qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/referencing_report_belgium_flanders_update_2014.pdf

Table 2. **Qualifications framework of the Flemish Community of Belgium (FQF)**

FQF levels	Educational qualifications	Professional qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree (*Universiteit – Doctor*)		8
7	Academic master degree (*Universiteit – Master*) Advanced master programmes (*master na master – manama*)	Professional qualifications	7
6	Academic bachelor degree (*Universiteit – Bachelor*) Professional bachelor degree (*Hogeschool – Bachelor*) Advanced bachelor programme (*bachelor na bachelor – banaba*)	Professional qualifications	6
5	Higher vocational education 5 *(Hoger Beroepsonderwijs 5)*	Professional qualifications	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (*Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs – ASO*) Upper secondary technical education school leaving certificate (*Technisch Secundair Onderwijs – TSO*) Upper secondary artistic education leaving certificate (*Kunstsecundair Onderwijs – KSO*) Secondary-after-secondary education certificate (*Secundair na Secundair – SenSe*) in upper secondary technical education (*TSO*) Certificate of a specialisation year (7th year) in upper secondary vocational education (*BSO*)	Professional qualifications	4
3	Upper secondary vocational education certificate (*Beroepssecundair Onderwijs – BSO*)	Professional qualifications	3
2	Adult basic education Lower secondary education – first stage of secondary education Pre-vocational education	Professional qualifications	2
1	Certificate of elementary education (6 years)		1

Source: Adapted from AKOV, 2014. Flemish qualification database: https://app.akov.be/pls/pakov/f?p=VLAAMSE_KWALIFICATIESTRUCTUUR:KWALIFICATIEDATABANK [accessed 1.2.2018].

2.2 French Community

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

The CFC is seen as an integral part of the existing education and training system. It seeks to improve overall transparency of qualifications, to ease mobility and support learner progress, and to help bridge the different parts of the education and training system. The framework is an important instrument for strengthening the use of learning outcomes, supporting validation of non-formal and informal learning, and for referencing to the European qualifications framework. It does not have a regulatory role and is not seen as an instrument for reforming existing institutions and structures.

Legal adoption of the CFC took place in February 2015. The division of the framework into two main strands – educational and professional – has implications for stakeholder involvement: the French-speaking service for occupations and qualifications (*Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications*, SFMQ) plays a role in defining and positioning professional qualifications at levels 1 to 4; the academy of research and higher education (*Académie de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur*, ARES) is responsible for defining and positioning educational qualifications at levels 6 to 8; and both entities share responsibility for qualifications at level 5, reflecting professional and educational qualifications at this level. However, qualifications are yet to be placed in the framework before the CFC can become operational. Delays in appointing an implementing body has slowed down overall progress.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The EQF NCP was set up under the responsibility of the French-speaking service for occupations and qualifications (*Service francophone des métiers et des qualifications*, SFMQ): http://www.sfmq.cfwb.be/index.php?id=1435
- Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles; Wallonie COCOF (2013). *Report on referencing the French-speaking qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en/referencing-reports-and-contacts

2.3 German-speaking Community

The German-speaking Community of Belgium adopted its qualifications framework (*Qualifikationsrahmen der Deutschsprachigen 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 Communities but is also inspired by the German qualifications framework (DQR). It is an eight-level, learning-outcomes-based framework that includes qualifications from primary and secondary general education, VET and higher education. The distinction between educational and professional qualifications made in the qualifications frameworks of the other two Communities of Belgium is mirrored in the QDG through a distinction between general education and VET qualifications. The framework builds on the concept of *Handlungskompetenz* (action competence) with qualification levels defined in terms of two categories of descriptors: subject/occupation-specific competences, referring to knowledge and skills; and personal competences, referring to social competence and autonomy.

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

The 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 framework, stating that a central validation point will be set up within the next five years. Although the QDG is not referred to in the 2025 education and training vision for the region, the emphasis given to validation and competences indicates that the learning outcomes orientation underpinning the QDG is taken forward in a systematic manner.

The framework has not yet been referenced to the EQF.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Ministry of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Department of VET and Organisation of Education is the EQF NCP: www.ostbelgienbildung.be
- Belgian Ministry of the German-speaking Community (2014). *Dekret vom 18. November 2013 zur Einführung eines Qualifikationsrahmens der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft [Decree from 18 November 2013 establishing a qualifications framework of the German-speaking Community].* http://reflex.raadvst-consetat.be/reflex/pdf/Mbbs/2014/02/13/126688.pdf

Table 3. **Qualifications framework of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (QDG)**

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

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

BG

3. BULGARIA

The Bulgarian national qualifications framework 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 (theoretical and factual), skills (cognitive and practical), and competences (personal and professional). The framework includes qualifications from all levels and types of formal education and training: pre-primary, primary and secondary general education, VET, and higher education. The overall objective of the BQF is to make the levels of the Bulgarian education system clearer and easier to understand by describing them in terms of learning outcomes. It is hoped that this will raise trust in education and training, and support mobility and recognition of qualifications. Apart from offering transparency, the NQF is seen as an enabler of national reforms, with implications for setting up a system for validating non-formal learning, improving education and training quality, modernising curricula and strengthening provider accountability. The BQF aims to play a role in supporting lifelong learning and in promoting 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 implementation has been delayed. Amendments to national legislation are foreseen to support implementation. A new pre-school and school education bill was adopted in late 2015 and will lead to amendment of the BQF at secondary education levels. A new working group is expected to be set up to prepare the amendment proposal, which is foreseen to be available for public consultation. Two bills amending and supplementing the Law on vocational training further support the BQF, with legal arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning, for learning outcomes units, and for introduction of the VET credit accumulation and transfer system. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVET) is involved in developing and updating the list of VET qualifications included in the BQF. For the BQF to achieve its aims, sustained implementation efforts are required.

The BQF was linked to the European qualifications framework and to the QF-EHEA in May 2013. However, the referencing report has not yet been published as an updated version is expected to be submitted.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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

Table 4. **Bulgarian national qualifications framework (BQF)**

BQF levels	Qualification types	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 qualification – level 4	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate Vocational qualification – level 3	4
3	Lower secondary school leaving certificate Vocational qualification – level 2	3
2	Basic education certificate (classes 5 to 8) Vocational qualification – level 1	2
1	Primary education certificate	1
0	Pre-primary education	N/A

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

HR

4. CROATIA

The Croatian qualifications framework Act establishes the Croatian qualifications framework (CROQF) based on learning outcomes, defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and responsibility and autonomy (Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, 2013). It is a comprehensive eight-level framework framework that also incorporates credit systems. It includes qualifications from all levels and subsystems of formal education and training: general education, VET and higher education. Each qualification in the CROQF is defined in terms of profile (field of work or study), reference level (complexity of acquired competences) and volume/workload (credit points). Apart from offering transparency and allowing for international comparability of Croatian qualifications, the CROQF is 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, creating a well-founded quality assurance system, and implementing the learning outcomes approach in all education and training subsystems.

The framework has entered an early operational stage, following adoption of the ordinance on the CROQF register in May 2014. Implementing structures have been set up and responsibilities among stakeholders agreed. The National Council for Development of Human Potential, comprising 24 stakeholders representatives, was appointed in 2014 as the strategic body for developing and implementing the CROQF. On a policy and technical level, the Ministry of Science and Education coordinates the development and implementation of the CROQF, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Pension System. 23 of 25 sectoral councils have been set up as advisory and professional bodies that assess proposals on occupational standards, qualifications standards and units of learning outcomes.

The information system of the CROQF register has been established. It is a system for registering and integrating occupational standards with qualifications standards through units of competences and units of learning outcomes. The first occupational standard is now publicly available in the register. An ordinance on validation of prior learning is also foreseen, but it is still to be finalised.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The EQF NCP for Croatia is the section for the Croatian qualifications framework at the Ministry of Science and Education.
- CROQF website: http://www.kvalifikacije.hr/hko-en
- CROQF register: https://hko.srce.hr/registar/
- Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (2014). *Referencing and self-certification report.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/CROQF_Referencing_and_SelfCertification_Report.pdf

Table 5. **Croatian national qualifications framework (CROQF)**

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

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

Source: Croatian Ministry of Science and Education, 2017.

CY

5. CYPRUS

Cyprus decided to develop a comprehensive NQF (the Cyprus qualifications framework, CyQF) in 2008. The Council of Ministers approved the establishment of the framework based on the eight levels of the EQF in 2012 and work on framework design was finalised in 2017. The CyQF includes all levels and types of qualification in all subsystems of education and training; it has level descriptors defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. The main role of the CyQF is to classify qualifications according to defined levels of learning outcomes. Its implementation is expected to impact specifically on the promotion of lifelong learning, the recognition and validation of qualifications, enhanced mobility of learners and workers and improved quality assurance of education and training programmes. The reform potential of the framework is being acknowledged by linking it to wider reforms and procedures for quality assurance, assessment and award of qualifications.

The CyQF consists of two distinct strands: one for formal education (primary, lower and upper secondary, tertiary education and apprenticeship schemes) and one for non-formal and informal learning (the system of vocational qualifications, and other training programmes). Including the system of vocational qualifications (SVQ), developed by the Human Resource Development Authority, within the framework (at levels 3 to 6) aims to bring about comparability of qualifications acquired in formal and non-formal learning. Common structures and elements which will offer opportunities for combining and transferring credits are being discussed.

The CyQF is partly operational. The EQF national coordination point was established at the Ministry of Education and Culture as an in-service department, overseeing the development and gradual implementation of the framework. It also coordinates the inclusion of qualifications in the CyQF registry. A new permanent advisory body – the council of the NQF of Cyprus – including stakeholders, has also been established and acts as a forum for collaboration between stakeholders. Consultation with stakeholders and evaluation of the CyQF implementation is planned for 2018.

The CyQF was referenced to the EQF in February 2017.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- CyQF website: http://www.cyqf.gov.cy
- The Cyprus EQF NCP was established at the Ministry of Education and Culture: http://www.moec.gov.cy
- Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture (2017). *The referencing of the Cyprus qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning.* http://www.cyqf.gov.cy/archeia/dimosiefseis/cyqf-referencing-report.pdf

Table 6. **Cypriot national qualifications framework (CyQF)**

CyQF levels	Educational qualifications	SVQ levels	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree (*Διδακτορικός Τίτλος*)		8
7c	Master degree (*Μεταπτυχιακός Τίτλος*)		7
7b	Postgraduate diplomas (*Μεταπτυχιακό Δίπλωμα*)		
7a	Postgraduate certificates (*Μεταπτυχιακό Πιστοποιητικό*)		
6	Bachelor degree (*Πτυχίο*)	SVQ 6	6
5c	Higher certificates and diplomas – three years (*Ανώτερα Διπλώματα και Πιστοποιητικά*)	SVQ 5	5
5b	Post-secondary certificates and diplomas – two years (*Μεταλυκειακά Διπλώματα Διετούς Διάρκειας*)		
5a	Post-secondary certificates and diplomas – one year (*Μεταλυκειακά Διπλώματα Μονοετούς Διάρκειας*)		
4	Upper secondary general education and evening schools certificates – 12th grade or 12th and13th for some private schools (*Απολυτήριο Μέσης Γενικής Εκπαίδευσης*) Upper secondary technical and vocational education and evening technical schools certificates – 12th grade (*Απολυτήριο Μέσης Τεχνικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης*)	SVQ 4	4
3	Lower secondary education certificate – 10th grade – preparatory year for upper secondary education (*Απολυτήριο Πρώτου Κύκλου Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης – 10η τάξη*) New modern apprenticeship certificate - 10th grade (*Νέα Σύγχρονη Μαθητεία – 10η τάξη*)	SVQ 3	3
2	Compulsory lower secondary education certificate – 9th grade (*Απολυτήριο Πρώτου Κύκλου Δευτεροβάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης - 9η τάξη*) Preparatory programme – New modern apprenticeship (*Προπαρασκευαστικό Πρόγραμμα Νέας Σύγχρονης Μαθητείας*)		2
1	Compulsory education certificate – elementary school certificate, or graduates of 7th and/or 8th grade (*Υποχρεωτική Εκπαίδευση*)		1

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

CZ

6. CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic has yet to decide whether to develop a comprehensive NQF. Partial/sectoral frameworks have been developed: the national register of qualifications (NSK), which functions as a framework for the system of validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), and a draft qualifications framework for higher education. Level descriptors were developed for both of these partial frameworks, as well as a set of level descriptors for primary and secondary education, based on core curricula. The question remains whether an overarching framework could help coordinate and bridge these separate developments. 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. Promotion and development of a comprehensive NQF is in line with the *National education strategy 2020*; a proposal on national comprehensive descriptors, reflecting both the EQF descriptors and the existing national sectoral descriptors, was drafted by an expert group in 2013 and updated in 2016.

The NSK, which acts as a framework for vocational qualifications in the VNFIL system, is fully operational and 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 NSK has eight levels and is currently populated with 1 194 qualifications in 29 different sectors, ranging between EQF levels 2 and 7. All qualifications in the NSK can be acquired via validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, based on qualifications and assessment standards. The number of people undertaking validation of non-formal and informal learning has increased significantly since 2010.

The draft qualifications framework for higher education was designed between 2009 and 2012, and revised in 2016. It currently covers qualifications provided by universities, at EQF levels 6 to 8. There were plans to introduce the qualifications framework for higher education into national legislation but these have not yet been successful, hindering implementation.

The Czech Republic referenced its formal qualifications to EQF levels in December 2011 and an updated referencing report was presented in 2015. In the absence of a comprehensive NQF, formal initial qualifications were referenced based on the classification of educational qualification types (KKOV) and nationally approved curricula. Of qualifications awarded in further 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.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Institute for Education (NUV) is the EQF NCP: http://www.nuv.cz/
- National register of qualifications (NSK): http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/en-us/
- NUV (2015). *National referencing report of the Czech Republic.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/national_referencing_report_czech_republic_2015_eng.pdf

Table 7. **Czech education qualification types, NSK levels and links to EQF levels**

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

(*) 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, 2015, and the national register of qualifications (NSK): http://www.narodnikvalifikace.cz/en-us/

DK

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 competences. A clear distinction is drawn between levels 1 to 5 and levels 6 to 8, with the latter including only higher education qualifications that have to be accredited according to the qualifications framework for higher education. The main objectives for the NQF for lifelong learning 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 through validation, which is well-established in Denmark and regulated by legislation.

Work on the framework for lifelong learning 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. This was considered a first step in a long-term development process. The first development stage was concluded with an evaluation report in 2013. The evaluation targeted representatives of stakeholders associated with the framework and provided generally positive feedback on the results achieved. Follow-up work was carried out in cooperation between three ministries: education, science and employment.

The Danish NQF is now fully operational, though implementation has been gradual. The learning outcomes approach is widely accepted and is increasingly being used to define and describe curricula and programmes. The framework and the levelling of qualifications is a visible part of national education databases, indicating that it has become an integrated part of the Danish education and training landscape. 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 to a second and more inclusive development stage. A high number of certificates and qualifications operate outside and in parallel to the existing NQF; opening up to private and non-formal qualifications is being considered. NQF and EQF levels have been gradually added to qualification documents since 2013, increasing visibility of the NQF to citizens.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

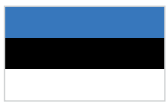
- Danish NQF website: http://ufm.dk/en/education-and-institutions/recognition-and-transparency/transparency-tools/qualifications-frameworks
- Database of qualifications included in the NQF: https://ufm.dk/en/education-and-institutions/recognition-and-transparency/transparency-tools/qualifications-frameworks/types-of-certificates-and-degrees/hardtableview
- The Danish Agency for Science and Education acts as EQF NCP: http://ufm.dk/en/the-minister-and-the-ministry/organisation/danish-agency-for-science-and-higher-education
- EVA (2011). *Referencing the Danish qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the EQF.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/DK_Qualifications_Framework_Referencing_Report_and_Self-certification_Report.pdf

Table 8. **Danish national qualifications framework**

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

(*) Acquired in adult education and training.

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



EE

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 sub-frameworks for higher education qualifications, VET qualifications, general education and occupational qualifications, with specific descriptors and underpinning quality assurance activities. The NQF has eight qualification 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 full operational stage in many respects. 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. The Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Qualifications Authority are the main bodies involved in its implementation. 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 and imbalances in the provision of qualifications. For instance, the lack of initial education and training qualifications at EstQF level 5 has been the focus of public debate since formal adoption of the framework in 2008. This fact, supported by views of different stakeholders that there is a need on the labour market for these types of qualification, 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 subsystems (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 referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in October 2011. Following the 2013 VET reform, the referencing report was revised and updated in 2016. Development of the framework and the referencing process have already contributed to building up a more coherent and responsive lifelong learning system; this is aiding convergence between the formal education system and the professional qualification system.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Estonian Qualifications Authority (Kutsekoda) is the designated EQF NCP: http://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/index
- Information on qualifications and the EstQF: https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/qualifications
- Estonian professions register: https://www.kutsekoda.ee/et/kutseregister/tutvustus
- Estonian information system for education: https://enda.ehis.ee/avalik/avalik/oppeasutus/OppeasutusOtsi.faces and http://qlikview-pub.hm.ee/QvAJAXZfc/opendoc_hm.htm?document=htm_avalik.qvw&host=QVS%40qlikview-pub&anonymous=true
- Estonian Qualifications Authority et al. (2016). *Referencing of the Estonian qualifications and qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework.* https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/2015_referencing_report_revised.pdf

Table 9. **Estonian national qualifications framework (EstQF)**

EstQF levels	Educational qualifications	Occupational qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degree (*Doktorikraad*)	Level 8 occupational qualification Example: chartered engineer, chartered architect	8
7	Master degree (*Magistrikraad*)	Level 7 occupational qualification Example: diploma engineer, diploma architect	7
6	Bachelor degree (*Bakalaureusekraad*) Diploma of professional higher education (*Rakenduskõrgharidusõppe diplom*)	Level 6 occupational qualification Example: engineer	6
5	VET certificate, level 5 (*5. taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus*)	Level 5 occupational qualification Example: master carpenter, construction site manager	5
4	Upper secondary general education certificate (*Gümnaasiumi lõputunnistus*) Upper secondary VET certificate (*Kutsekeskhariduse lõputunnistus*) VET certificate, level 4 (*4.taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus*)	Level 4 occupational qualification Example: IT specialist	4
3	VET qualification certificate, level 3 (*3. taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus*)	Level 3 occupational qualification Example: carpenter	3
2	Basic education certificate (*Põhikooli lõputunnistus*) Basic education certificate based on simplified curriculum (*Põhikooli lihtsustatud õppekava lõputunnistus*) VET certificate, level 2 (without basic education requirement) (*2.taseme kutseõppe lõputunnistus*)	Level 2 occupational qualification Example: cook assistant	2
1	Basic education certificate based on curriculum (for students with moderate and severe learning disabilities) (*Põhikooli toimetuleku õppekava lõputunnistus*)		1

Source: Adapted from Estonian Qualifications Authority et al., 2016.

9. FINLAND

FI

Finland started work on a comprehensive NQF in 2008. Following several public consultations, changes in government and renewed framework proposals, the current NQF (FiNQF) was adopted and entered into force in March 2017 (Act 93/2017 and Government Decree 120/2017 on the national framework for qualifications and other competence modules). It includes qualifications from all levels of the Finnish education system that are part of the general education, VET and higher education sectors. The eight-level framework is learning-outcomes-based, and describes qualification levels in terms of knowledge, work method and application (skills), responsibility, management and entrepreneurship, evaluation and key skills for lifelong learning, and their interrelations, in an integrated way. In addition to qualifications awarded within the remit of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the FiNQF also includes qualifications from other sectors, such as the police, fire and rescue services, and national defence.

The FiNQF aims to improve the clarity and effectiveness of the Finnish qualifications system, increase the national and international transparency and comparability of qualifications, and promote national and international mobility. The framework also has an explicit focus on system development and is seen as a tool for gradual improvement of the quality and relevance of qualifications for the labour market and further study. The national strategy for validation is in line with the NQF, with arrangements for validation in all education subsystems and good links between them.

The development of the FiNQF during 2008-12 was a highly inclusive process, and the relaunch of the framework proposal in 2016 was supported by broad consultation. Education providers, including higher education institutions and other stakeholders, have supported NQF development from the start and have contributed to its design. A qualifications framework for higher education, in line with the Bologna process, was developed from 2005 and is now an integrated part of the comprehensive FiNQF.

Framework implementation is foreseen to take place in two phases. The first phase, which started once the FiNQF was legally adopted, covers all formal qualifications under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and vocational qualifications and higher education qualifications in the other administrative sectors. The second phase is expected to address part qualifications (competence-modules), which play an important part in Finnish lifelong learning; many relate to access to regulated or specialised professions. Opening up the framework to qualifications and competence modules that lie outside the scope of the first phase, has also been discussed.

Referencing to the EQF and self-certification to the QF-EHEA was completed as one process in 2017.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Finnish National Agency for Education acts as EQF NCP: http://www.oph.fi/qualificationsframework
- Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture: http://minedu.fi/en/frontpage
- Finnish National Agency for Education; Ministry of Education and Culture (2017). *Referencing the Finnish national qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework and the framework for qualifications of the European higher education area* [unpublished].

Table 10. **Finnish national qualifications framework (FiNQF)**

FiNQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Licentiate & Doctor degrees – universities and the National Defence University's scientific and artistic postgraduate degrees (*Lisensiaatin ja tohtorin tutkinnot*) General staff officer degree (*Yleisesikuntaupseerin tutkinto*) Specialist degree in veterinary medicine (*Erikoiseläinlääkärin tutkinto*) Specialist training in medicine (*Erikoislääkärikoulutus*) Specialist training in dentistry (*Erikoishammaslääkärikoulutus*)	8
7	Master degrees – universities (*Ylemmät korkeakoulututkinnot*) Master degrees – universities of applied sciences (*Ylemmät ammattikorkeakoulututkinnot*)	7
6	Bachelor degrees – universities (*Alemmat korkeakoulututkinnot*) Bachelor degrees – universities of applied sciences (*Ammattikorkeakoulututkinnot*)	6
5	Specialist vocational qualifications (*Erikoisammattitutkinnot*) Sub-officer qualification – Fire and rescue services (*Alipäällystötutkinto – Pelastusala*) Vocational qualification in air traffic control (*Lennonjohdon perustutkinto*)	5
4	General upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Lukion oppimäärä*) Matriculation examination (*Ylioppilastutkinto*) Upper secondary vocational qualifications (*Ammatilliset perustutkinnot*) Further vocational qualifications (*Ammattitutkinnot*) Basic examination in prison services (*Rikosseuraamusalan tutkinto*) Fire fighter qualification (*Pelastajatutkinto*) Emergency response centre operator qualification (*Hätäkeskuspäivystäjätutkinto*)	4
3		3
2	Basic education certificate (9 years) (*Perusopetuksen oppimäärä*)	2
1		1

Source: Finnish National Agency for Education, 2017.

FR

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 commission on vocational qualifications (*Commission nationale des certifications professionnelles*, CNCP) and the national register of vocational qualifications (*Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles*, RNCP) were set up. In scope, the French NQF is more limited compared to the comprehensive NQFs now being developed throughout Europe: as a framework with strong labour market focus, it does not include general education. It covers vocationally or professionally oriented qualifications, including all higher education qualifications with a vocational and professional orientation and purpose. However, an important characteristic of the CNCP lies in its openness to public and private providers and awarding institutions.

Three main types of qualification are included in the RNCP: those awarded by French ministries in consultation with the social partners (these qualifications are included automatically); those awarded by training providers, chambers and ministries but where no consultative committee is in place; and those set up and awarded by social partners under their own responsibility. The latter two types of qualification are included in the register following approval by the CNCP and adherence to a set of strict procedures and criteria. Over 12 000 qualifications are currently covered by the framework, of which around two thirds are awarded by public authorities, and one third are issued by training providers, chambers and social partners.

The objectives of the French NQF are focused on employability, responding to the need for education and training to prepare candidates for the labour market. Recent policy initiatives and reforms underscore the high priority given to employability. 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.

Belonging to the first generation of European frameworks, the French NQF is fully operational. The broad involvement of stakeholders captures the diversity of qualifications in France and ensures credibility and ownership. CNCP is a platform for cooperation between ministries, social partners and other stakeholders. The French experience since 2002 illustrates the need for NQFs to evolve continuously to stay relevant. As the qualification system has developed considerably, and in view of addressing youth unemployment, two proposals have been put forward in recent years for a revised level structure and its descriptors: one in 2012 for an eight-level structure, and one in 2016 for a seven-level structure. One particular question that has been discussed was opening up the framework to low-level qualifications that would correspond to EQF level 2. However, this issue is politically sensitive as the current levels are linked to wider collective bargaining agreements.

The French NQF was referenced to the EQF in 2010. NQF and EQF levels are included in databases as well as in certificate and diploma supplements.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The EQF NCP for France is the national commission on vocational qualifications (CNCP) http://www.cncp.gouv.fr
- National register of vocational qualifications (RNCP): http://www.rncp.cncp.gouv.fr/
- CNCP (2010). *Referencing of the national framework of French certification in the light of the European framework of certification for lifelong learning.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/Report-FR-NQF-EQF-VF.pdf

Table 11. **French national qualifications framework**

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

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

Source: CNCP, 2017.

DE

11. GERMANY

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

Initially, the DQR included most VET and higher education qualifications, but inclusion of qualifications from general education was postponed for a later stage. Following subsequent discussions, general education qualifications and most remaining qualifications from regulated further training were assigned to DQR levels and included in the DQR database in 2017. The upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (*Allgemeine Hochschulreife*) was allocated to DQR/EQF level 4. Qualifications from the non-formal sector have not yet been allocated to the framework, but the possibility of developing appropriate procedures for the non-formal sector is currently being discussed.

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

The DQR is a comprehensive framework for lifelong learning, implemented step by step. It is now fully operational; key documents and responsibilities for implementation have been agreed among stakeholders. The main body in charge of implementation is the coordination point for the DQR (*Bund-Länder-Koordinierungsstelle DQR*), set up in a joint initiative of the federal government and the *Länder*. The 2013 joint resolution is accompanied by a list of allocated qualifications which is updated annually, as well as the DQR manual describing responsibilities, procedures, standards and methods of qualification allocation. The DQR is a non-regulatory framework and its integration into policies of different education sectors is an evolutionary process.

The DQR was referenced to the EQF in December 2012. As of January 2014, EQF and NQF levels are starting to feature on VET certificates, certificate supplements 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.

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

Table 12. **German national qualifications framework (DQR)**

DQR levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctorate (*Doktor*)	8
7	Master degree (*Master*) Strategic IT professional (certified) (*Strategischer IT Professional (Geprüfter)*) Other further vocational training qualifications according to Vocational Training Act and Handicraft Code (level 7)	7
6	Bachelor degree (*Bachelor*) Commercial specialist (certified) (*Fachkaufmann (Geprüfter)*) Business management specialist (certified) (*Fachwirt (Geprüfter)*) Master craftsman (certified) (*Meister (Geprüfter)*) Operative IT professional (certified) (*Operativer IT Professional (Geprüfter)*) Trade and technical school (State-certified) (*Fachschule (Staatlich Geprüfter)*) Other further vocational training qualifications according to Vocational Training Act and Handicraft Code (level 6)	6
5	IT specialist (certified) (*IT-Spezialist (Zertifizierter)*) Service technician (certified) (*Service-techniker (Geprüfter)*) Other further vocational training qualifications according to Vocational Training Act and Handicraft Code (level 5)	5
4	Upper secondary general education school leaving certificate (*Allgemeine Hochschulreife (AHR)*) Qualification entitling holder to study particular subjects at a higher education institution (*Fachgebundene Hochschulreife (FgbHR)*) Qualification entitling holder to study at a university of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulreife (FHR)*) Dual VET (three-year and three-and-a-half-year training courses) Full-time vocational school (regulated under *Länder* law) (*Berufsfachschule*) Full vocational qualification (full-time vocational school) (*Berufsfachschule*)	4
3	General education school leaving certificate after 10 years at Realschule (*Mittlerer Schulabschluss*) Dual VET (two-year training courses) Full-time vocational school (general education school leaving certificate obtained on completion of grade 10 at Realschule or, under certain circumstances, at other lower secondary school types) (*Mittlerer Schulabschluss (Berufsfachschule)*)	3
2	Lower secondary school leaving certificate after nine years (*Hauptschulabschluss*) Vocational training preparation (*Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung*) Employment agency measures (*Maßnahmen der Arbeitsagentur*) Year of pre-vocational training (*Berufsvorbereitungsjahr*) Introductory training for young people (*Einstiegsqualifizierung*) Basic vocational training (*Berufliche Grundbildung*)	2
1	Vocational training preparation (*Berufsausbildungsvorbereitung*) Employment agency measures (vocational preparation schemes) (*Maßnahmen der Arbeitsagentur*) (*Berufsvorbereitende Bildungsmaßnahmen*) Year of pre-vocational training (*Berufsvorbereitungsjahr*)	1

Source: German Ministry of Education and Research; 2017.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The federal government/*Länder* coordination point assumes the function of EQF NCP. The DQR website: http://www.dqr.de
- DQR qualifications database: https://www.dqr.de/content/2316.php
- Updated list of qualifications included in the DQR: https://www.dqr.de/media/content/Liste%20der%20zugeordneten%20Qualifikationen_01082017.pdf
- BMBF et al. (2013). *German EQF referencing report.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/German_EQF_Referencing_Report.pdf

EL

12. GREECE

Greece has developed a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning, the Hellenic qualifications framework (HQF), aiming at a coherent and comprehensive system of qualifications from all parts and levels of education and training. Building on the 2010 Act on Lifelong Learning that introduced levels and the learning outcomes concept as essential elements of qualifications and awards, the HQF has eight levels, with learning descriptors defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. First stage development has focused on the range of qualifications awarded within the formal system but, from a long-term perspective, the plan is to accommodate non-formal and informal learning. Work on level descriptors for HQF and on a qualifications framework for higher education was carried out separately, but the latter is now part of the comprehensive HQF.

From a policy point of view, leaving out responding to the European qualifications framework initiative, work on the HQF is directly linked to the country's efforts to develop a framework for improving lifelong learning policies and practices to allow recognition and certification of all kinds of education and training, and enhance horizontal and vertical mobility. 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.

The HQF is in an early operational stage and is awaiting formal adoption. A draft presidential decree clarifying operational aspects has been prepared; the legislative framework needs to be finalised and approved for the framework to become fully operational. The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the HQF, and the National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (EOPPEP) was set up as the main body for HQF implementation. EOPPEP cooperates with the Hellenic Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (HQAAA) on quality issues in higher education. 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. Types of qualifications from VET, general education and higher education have been assigned to HQF levels. A qualifications register has been developed and includes 674 learning-outcomes-based qualifications from the formal education system. HQF and EQF levels have started to be indicated on new qualifications and on certificate and diploma supplements.

The HQF was referenced to the EQF in 2015 but has not yet been self-certified against the QF-EHEA.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- EOPPEP (the national organisation for the certification of qualifications and vocational guidance) is the designated EQF NCP: http://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/en/
- Greek qualifications register: http://proson.eoppep.gr
- Further information about the HQF and the EQF: http://nqf.gov.gr/

Table 13. **Hellenic national qualifications framework (HQF)**

HQF levels	VET	General education	Higher education	EQF levels
8			Doctorate (*Διδακτορικό Δίπλωμα*) (Universities)	8
7			Master degree (*Μεταπτυχιακό Δίπλωμα Ειδίκευσης*) (Universities/technological educational institutions (TEI-higher education)	7
6			Bachelor degree (*Πτυχίο Ανώτατης Εκπαίδευσης*) (Universities/TEI-higher education)	6
5	Vocational post-secondary school 'degree' for graduates of EPAL apprenticeship class (**) (post-secondary level) (*Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου 5 – ΕΠΑΛ*) Vocational training diploma (post-secondary level) (*Δίπλωμα Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου 5*) (vocational training institute) *(Ινστιτούτο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, ΙΕΚ*) Vocational training diploma (*) (*Δίπλωμα Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου Μεταδευτεροβάθμιας Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, ΙΕΚ*) (post-secondary level) Post-secondary and not higher education diploma or 'degree' (**) (*Δίπλωμα ή Πτυχίο Ανωτέρας Σχολής*)			5
4	Vocational school (*Επαγγελματικές Σχολές*) (EPAS, *ΕΠΑΣ*) certificate (*Πτυχίο ΕΠΑΣ*) Vocational upper secondary school (*Επαγγελματικά Λύκεια*) (EPAL, *ΕΠΑΛ*) 'degree' (**) (*Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας, Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης Επιπέδου 4 – ΕΠΑΛ*) EPAL certificate (*Απολυτήριο Επαγγελματικού Λυκείου – ΕΠΑΛ Επιπέδου 4*)	General upper secondary school certificate (*Απολυτήριο Γενικού Λυκείου*)		4
3	Vocational training school (*Σχολές Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, ΣΕΚ – SEK* certificate) (post lower secondary level) (*Πτυχίο Επαγγελματικής Ειδικότητας Επιπέδου 3 – ΣΕΚ*)*** IEK certificate (*) (initial vocational training-post lower secondary level) (*Πιστοποιητικό Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης, Επίπεδο 1– ΙΕΚ*)			3
2		Lower secondary school certificate (compulsory) (*Απολυτήριο Γυμνασίου*)		2
1		Primary school certificate (compulsory) (*Απολυτήριο Δημοτικού*)		1

(*) This qualification is no longer being 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 (Πτυχίο). In Greek, the word *Πτυχίο* 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, 2016.

HU

13. HUNGARY

Hungary designed and adopted a comprehensive Hungarian qualifications framework (HuQF) for lifelong learning in 2012. It has eight levels defined in terms of four categories of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and autonomy and responsibility. The HuQF encompasses all State-recognised national qualifications that can be acquired in general education, higher education (BA/BSc, MA/MSc and PhD), and those vocational qualifications in the national vocational qualifications register (NVQR). Other formal and non-formal qualifications (CVET, master craftsman, and postgraduate specialisation programmes) will be assigned to levels in the next stage of HuQF implementation. The main objectives of the HuQF include strengthening the learning outcomes approach at each level of education, improving transparency, transferability and comparability of national qualifications, promoting 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 has reached an early operational stage. Three implementing projects (VET and adult learning, higher education and general education) have provided conceptual clarifications, technical solutions and capacity building across subsystems; an interministerial task force was set up to programme, harmonise and monitor NQF development. Development of the NQF has been closely linked to new legal provisions in all 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). Assigning qualifications to NQF levels has started. Qualifications from higher education, general education and VET have already been linked to HuQF levels, and the framework is open to linking qualifications acquired in non-formal settings in the future. Legislation concerning the institutional settings for the operational phase of the HuQF, as well as sectoral regulations for implementation of the framework, are still under discussion. Strengthening the learning outcomes approach has been identified as a key area for further work.

The HuQF was referenced to the EQF in February 2015.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Education Authority hosts the EQF NCP: http://www.oktatas.hu/
- Hungarian Education Authority (2015). *Referencing and self-certification report of the Hungarian qualifications framework to the EQF and to the QF-EHEA.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/HuQF_referencing_report.pdf

Table 14. **Hungarian national qualifications framework (HuQF)**

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

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

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

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

Source: Hungarian Education Authority, 2016.

IE

14. IRELAND

The Irish national framework of qualifications is among the earliest qualifications frameworks developed in Europe. First proposed in legislation in 1999 and launched in 2003, it is defined as a 'single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards' (NQAI, 2003, p. 9). The main building blocks of the comprehensive NFQ are the 10 learning-outcomes-based levels, level indicators and award-types. 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. Each level of the NFQ is based on nationally agreed standards of knowledge (breadth and kind), know-how and skills (range and selectivity) and competence. Competence is subdivided into context, role, learning to learn and insight. Four classes of award-type have been determined: major, minor, supplemental and special-purpose awards.

Development of the NFQ was part of a broader policy agenda of moving towards a 'lifelong learning society'. This led to a need for a more flexible and integrated system of qualifications, ensuring the quality of awards and shifting the focus of qualifications from inputs to outcomes. While the NFQ was initially conceptualised as a driver of systemic change, it is currently viewed more as an enabler of wider reform, with implications for setting standards, developing awards, teaching, assessment, and programme design.

The NFQ has reached advanced operational stage. This has been achieved through a combination of legislation, institutional reform, and political support, which helped integrate the NFQ in broader education, training and labour market policies. A change in governance occurred in 2012, when Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was set up as a single national qualification and quality assurance body. A learning-outcomes-based approach has been implemented in all subsystems, and although progressing at variable speeds, it has led to increased progression between VET and higher education. Visibility and currency of the NFQ has increased both inside and outside the education and training environment. A review of the framework was initiated by QQI in 2016. Since 2016, as part of broader reform of apprenticeships in Ireland, the initial block levelling of apprenticeship qualifications at EQF level 5 has been revisited. Qualifications associated with apprenticeship programmes in Ireland can now be offered at EQF levels 4 to 7.

The Irish NFQ was self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2006 and referenced to the EQF in 2009. EQF and NFQ levels are indicated on Europass certificate and diploma supplements and on all QQI major, special purpose and supplemental awards.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) host the EQF NCP: http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/Home.aspx
- QQI qualifications database: http://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=awards
- National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (2009). *Referencing of the Irish national framework of qualifications to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning.* http://www.qqi.ie/Documents/Referencing%20Irish%20NFQ%20to%20the%20European%20QF%20for%20Lifelong%20Learning.pdf

Table 15. **Irish national qualifications framework**

NFQ levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
10	Doctoral degree	8
9	Master degree Postgraduate diploma	7
8	Honours bachelor degree Higher diploma	6
7	Ordinary bachelor degree	
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	

Source: Adapted from National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, 2009.

IT

15. ITALY

The Italian NQF was legally established in January 2018, via an NQF decree, signed by the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, and the Regions and published in the Official Journal. It was the result of a lengthy process, involving a broad range of stakeholders; technical work and reforms have been carried out over the past decade. Since 2003, reforms have been implemented in upper secondary general education, VET and higher education, anticipating the principles of a learning-outcomes-based NQF. The Italian qualifications framework for higher education (*Quadro dei Titoli Italiani dell'Istruzione Superiore*, QTI) was published in 2010 and self-certification to the QF-EHEA was completed in 2012.

Given the fragmentation of the education and training system and the complex model of governance in the country, with both regional and national authorities involved in designing and awarding qualifications at different levels and abiding by different legislation, the challenge has been to achieve effective inter-regional coordination and to integrate different education and training subsystems into a coherent national qualification system for lifelong learning. A comprehensive NQF, based on explicit levels of learning outcomes, will help with transparency and comparison between different qualification types awarded by different authorities, facilitate validation of non-formal and informal learning, and support adult participation in lifelong learning.

Law 92/2012 on labour market reform was an important milestone in this work. It contains provisions on lifelong learning, and approaches to a national system of certification of competences and services for validation of non-formal and informal learning. In 2015, stakeholders reached agreement on an operational common framework for national recognition of regional qualifications and related skills – the national framework of regional qualifications – followed by an inter-ministerial decree. A national repertory of qualifications was established by Decree 13/2013 and comprises four different sections: higher education, secondary education, vocational education and training, and the national framework of regional qualifications. The latter two sections have been populated with qualifications and are available to consult online.

Italy has referenced its formal national 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. The first referencing report was presented to the EQF advisory group in May 2013. 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.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Agency for Active Labour Market Policies (ANPAL) hosts the EQF NCP (as of 2017): http://www.anpal.gov.it
- National repertory of qualifications: http://nrpitalia.isfol.it/sito_standard/sito_demo/atlante_repertori.php#
- Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research: http://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/home
- Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies: http://www.lavoro.gov.it/Pagine/default.aspx
- Italian Ministry of Labour; ISFOL (2012). *First Italian referencing report to the European qualifications framework.*

Table 16. **Referencing of Italian formal qualifications to the EQF**

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

(*) Competent authority: regions.

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

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

LV

16. LATVIA

Latvia introduced a comprehensive NQF, the Latvian qualifications framework (LQF) in 2011. It covers qualifications from the formal education subsystems (general, vocational (professional) and higher education), as well as professional qualifications awarded through validation of non-formal and informal learning acquired outside formal education. Level descriptors are based on learning outcomes and defined in terms of knowledge (knowledge and comprehension), skills (ability to apply knowledge, communication, general skills) and competence (analysis, synthesis and assessment).

The LQF is seen as an important tool for describing the Latvian education system, for both international and national stakeholders, and for ensuring greater lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals according to their needs. It aims to increase transparency and consistency of qualifications, and strengthen the link between education and the labour market.

Development of the LQF started in 2009, building on reforms initiated in the 1990s, particularly the introduction of a five-level structure of vocational qualifications in 1999 (through the Vocational Education Law). It was carried out in two stages: the first stage (2009-11) involved inclusion of formal qualifications in the LQF and referencing to the EQF; further development and revision took place in a second stage (2013-15).

The LQF has now entered an operational phase. Several large European Social Fund projects have supported its implementation. Strong emphasis has been placed on increasing the quality of vocational education and developing a system for sectoral qualifications linked to the LQF. The Vocational Education Law (1999) was amended in 2015 and the initial five levels of vocational qualifications (still in use today) were referenced to the eight levels of the LQF. The Education Law (1998) was also amended in 2015 and now includes the definition of the LQF and its general characteristics. Government regulations were amended accordingly, and opened discussions for extending the LQF to craftsman and journeyman qualifications (which were initially not included), as well as other qualifications acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

The LQF was linked to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in October 2011. In 2016, the Academic Information Centre carried out a study to assess the progress made in the development of the LQF; the results are expected to be presented in an updated referencing report in 2018.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Academic Information Centre is the Latvian EQF NCP: http://www.nki-latvija.lv/en/par-lki
- Database of Latvian qualifications: https://www.latvijaskvalifikacijas.lv/en/
- AIC (2012). *Referencing of the Latvian education system to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area: self-assessment report.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/Latvian%20Self-Assessment%20Report%202nd%20version_May%202012.pdf

Table 17. **Latvian national qualifications framework (LQF)**

LQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral diploma (*doktora diploms*)	8
7	Master diploma (*maģistra diploms*) Professional master diploma (*profesionālā maģistra diploms*) Diploma of professional higher education and Diploma of higher professional qualification (*profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms* and *augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*)	7
6	Bachelor diploma (*bakalaura diploms*) Professional bachelor diploma (*profesionālā bakalaura diploms*) Diploma of professional higher education and Diploma of higher professional qualification (*profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms* and *augstākās profesionālās kvalifikācijas diploms*)	6
5	Diploma of first level professional higher education (*pirmā līmeņa profesionālās augstākās izglītības diploms*)	5
4	Certificate of general secondary education (*atestāts par vispārējo vidējo izglītību*) Diploma of vocational secondary education (*diploms par profesionālo vidējo izglītību*)	4
3	Certificate of vocational education (*atestāts par arodizglītību*)	3
2	Certificate of general basic education (*apliecība par vispārējo pamatizglītību*) Certificate of vocational basic education (*apliecība par profesionālo pamatizglītību*)	2
1	Certificate of general basic education (*apliecība par vispārējo pamatizglītību*) (special educational programmes for learners with (severe) mental development disorders or several severe development disorders)	1

Source: The Academic Information Centre (EQF NCP), 2017.

LT

17. LITHUANIA

The Lithuanian national qualifications framework (LTQF) was formally adopted through a government resolution in 2010. It has eight learning-outcomes-based levels and covers all officially recognised qualifications in formal education: general education (primary and secondary), VET and higher education. There are currently no plans to open the framework to qualifications outside the formal education system, although the conceptual model of the NQF includes the possibility to acquire qualifications through validation of non-formal and informal learning. Building a system for validation of non-formal and informal learning is seen as a priority in the country, with related measures included in recent policy documents, such as the national education strategy. Several laws have been amended in the past few years to pave the way for this, both at national and sectoral levels.

Development of the LTQF was part of a decade-long effort to reform and modernise Lithuanian education and training, and its design was influenced by two existing arrangements: the five vocational education levels introduced in 1997, and the three levels (cycles) of higher education. The framework addresses five main objectives: better adapting qualifications to the needs of the labour market and society; improving clarity of qualification design for better assessment and recognition; increasing transparency of qualifications to assist individuals in using them; supporting national and international mobility; and promoting lifelong learning.

Level descriptors of the LTQF, legally adopted by a Government resolution in 2010, use criteria characterising professional activities: complexity, autonomy and variability of activities. An alternative, more detailed, set of level descriptors are used as a working tool in developing qualifications and training programmes. In addition to characteristics of activities, this more detailed set of descriptors are also defined in terms of cognitive, functional, and general competences, broadly reflecting the EQF distinction between knowledge, skills and competence. Implementation of the LTQF is seen as an important part of a strategy to move towards more consistent and comprehensive use of learning outcomes across education and training subsystems.

The LTQF has now entered an early operational stage. LTQF levels are used as a reference point and benchmark for review and renewal of qualifications and for developing post-secondary VET qualifications at level 5. The Qualifications and VET Development Centre has been responsible for day-to-day coordination of the framework since 2009, in collaboration with the Centre for Quality Assurance in Higher Education since 2013. Active involvement of labour market stakeholders in the LTQF has been strengthened, but general education involvement is limited.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Qualifications and VET Development Centre (QVETDC) was appointed EQF NCP: http://www.kpmpc.lt/kpmpc/en/
- QVETDC (2012). *Referencing the Lithuanian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area: national report.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/LTQF_EQF_report_ENG.pdf
- Qualifications database: https://www.aikos.smm.lt/en/Pages/Default.aspx

Table 18. **Lithuanian national qualifications framework (LTQF)**

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

(*) Presently only a VET qualification is awarded at NQF level 5. Discussions on whether these qualifications should be awarded solely within European higher education area or outside of it have strengthened but no policy consensus has been reached yet.

(**) The legislation defining provisions for general education curricula stipulates that learning outcomes of lower secondary education programmes are referenced with a third NQF level, whereas learning outcomes of upper secondary education programmes are referenced with a fourth NQF level.

Source: The Qualifications and VET Development Centre, 2017.

LU

18. LUXEMBOURG

Starting in 2009, Luxembourg introduced a comprehensive NQF (*Cadre luxembourgeois des qualifications,* CLQ) covering all levels and types of qualifications across general education, vocational and higher education. It is an eight-level outcome-based framework, reflecting the gradual development of a competence-based approach over recent decades. Qualification levels are described in terms of knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes. The 'attitude' descriptor refers to responsibility, autonomy and context. An overarching and comprehensive notion of competence is used in Luxembourg contexts, meaning 'an organised set of knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes the learner needs to have in order to be able to complete a task, whether in a school context or in life in general' (Ministry of Higher Education and Research; Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth, 2014, p. 41).

The 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, such as Belgium, Germany and France, Luxembourg sees the development of the CLQ as a way to aid comparison and recognition of qualifications. Further, the framework aims to function as a reference point for curriculum development and as a tool to improve overall consistency of education and training provisions. In a second stage, the CLQ may open up to qualifications awarded outside the existing, official system, to address the high number of citizens holding unofficial and non-recognised certificates and diplomas. To accomplish this, specific approaches to accreditation and quality assurance of these new qualifications will have to be put in place.

The CLQ has reached an operational stage; however, implementation was rather slow following the completion of its referencing to the EQF in mid-2012. An important milestone was reached in November 2016, with the adoption of the Law on recognition of professional qualifications (Law 231/2016), which establishes the CLQ as the formal reference point for recognition of professional qualifications acquired outside Luxembourg. This integration into the legislative structure signals official commitment to the framework and represents an important step towards full operational status. Clarification of the role of the framework within the wider strategy on lifelong learning is expected during 2018.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth acts as EQF NCP: http://www.men.public.lu/fr/index.html
- Information on IVET qualifications of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training: http://portal.education.lu/programmes
- Ministry of Higher Education and Research; Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth (2014). *Report on referencing the Luxembourg qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/Referencing%20report.pdf

Table 19. **Luxembourg qualifications framework (CLQ)**

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

Source: Law 231/2016 on the recognition of professional qualifications. *Official Journal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*, No 4263, 18.11.2016. http://data.legilux.public.lu/file/eli-etat-leg-memorial-2016-231-fr-pdf.pdf

MT

19. MALTA

Malta has been putting in place its comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning (Malta qualifications framework, MQF) since 2007. It is an eight-level learning-outcomes-based framework, with two introductory levels (A and B) assigned below EQF level 1. Level descriptors are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. The MQF encompasses qualifications and awards at all levels, acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning. The framework is linked to credit systems, in particular ECTS and ECVET. A distinction is made between qualifications and awards, based on the workload required, measured in credit points. A qualification at a particular level needs to have a minimum number of credit points, while awards are related to shorter programmes that have fewer credits than the minimum required for a qualification at that level.

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 related to 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, 2012), which established the legal basis for the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), Malta's National Quality Assurance Agency. The NCFHE replaced the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) and the National Commission for Higher Education, and became 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. Integrating validation of non-formal and informal learning into the MQF is an important area of future work, as is implementation of learning outcomes. 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 the MQF.

The MQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in 2009. The referencing report was revised several times, with the latest version published in February 2016 (Malta Ministry of Education and Employment and NCFHE, 2016). The MQF is also referenced to the transnational qualifications framework of the small States of the commonwealth (TQF).

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) is the designated EQF NCP: http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/default.aspx
- Register of accredited further and higher education institutions and programmes: http://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/register/Pages/register.aspx
- Malta Ministry of Education and Employment; NCFHE (2016). *Referencing of the Malta qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework and the qualifications framework of the European higher education area.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/malta_referencing_report_2016.pdf

Table 20. **Maltese national qualifications framework (MQF)**

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

(*) These are not yet included in legislation.

(i) A full VET level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a full secondary school certificate and profile (SSC&P) level 1.

(ii) A full VET level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as four secondary education certificate (SEC) subjects at grade 6 and 7.

(iii) A VET level 3 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as six secondary education certificate (SEC) subjects at grades 1 to 5.

(iv) A VET diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as the matriculation certificate.

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education and Employment and NCFHE, 2016.

NL

20. NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands set up a comprehensive national qualifications framework (the NLQF) in 2011, building on and integrating its qualifications framework for higher education. The NLQF is an eight-level framework, with an entry level below EQF level 1, and a sublevel at level 4 (4+). It covers all levels and types of qualification, in two main groups: formal qualifications from general, vocational and higher education, regulated by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Welfare; and qualifications awarded outside public regulation, developed mainly by labour market stakeholders. Over 47 qualifications from this latter group have been included in the framework since 2012.

The NLQF is a learning-outcomes-based framework, describing levels in terms of knowledge, skills, responsibility and independence, as well as a 'context' descriptor. The 'skills' descriptor is divided into five sub-categories: application of knowledge, problem-solving skills, learning and development skills, information skills, and communication skills. The framework is understood as a systematic description of existing qualifications, aimed at transparency and increased comparability. However, its opening up to the private sector could be seen as a movement beyond a purely descriptive role.

The NLQF is now fully operational. In 2014, the Ministry of Education initiated a revision of existing legal texts underpinning Dutch education and training to make sure that the role of the NLQF is reflected and to support the inclusion of NLQF and EQF levels in certificates and qualifications. Evaluation of the NLQF and the NCP also took place and the results were published in November 2017. Among the outcomes of the evaluation are the recommendations to strengthen the legal basis of the framework, and to widen communication among stakeholders. Development of an NLQF law is now foreseen for the second half of 2018. 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.

NLQF referencing to the EQF was completed in 2012.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

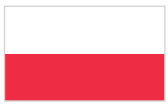
- The EQF/NLQF NCP is hosted by the (umbrella) organisation CINOP: http://www.ncpnlqf.nl
- Register of qualifications awarded outside the public, formal education and training system: http://www.nlqf.nl/register
- Register of qualifications from formal VET (MBO): http://kwalificaties.s-bb.nl
- van der Sanden; K. et al., (2012). *The referencing document of the Dutch national qualification framework to the European qualification framework.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/EQF_Referencing_Netherlands_022012.pdf

Table 21. **Dutch national qualifications framework (NLQF)**

NLQF levels	Formal qualifications	Other qualifications (*)	EQF levels
8	Doctorate (*Doctoraat*) Medical specialist (*Medisch specialist*)		8
7	Master degree	Social studies	7
6	Bachelor degree	Examples: Anesthetist employee (*Anesthesiemedewerker*) Certified leader excellent level (*Gecertificeerd leider uitstekend niveau*) Dialysis nurse (*Dialyseverpleegkundige*) Secondary defense formation (*Middelbare defensie vorming*) Officer Royal Military police (*Officier koninklijke marechaussee onderbouw*) Officer Navy force (*Officier korps zeedienst*)	6
5	Associate degree	Examples: Consultant payroll services & benefits (CPB) Hotel service management Operational technician energy production technology (*Operationeel technicus energie productietechniek*) Instructor 5 (*Opleider 5*) Trainer-coach 5	5
4+	Pre-university education (*vwo*) Pre-university education for adults (*vavo-vwo*)		4
4	VET level 4 (*MBO 4*) Higher general secondary education for adults (*vavo-havo*) Higher general secondary education (*havo*)	Examples: Instructor 4 (*Opleider 4*) Airport service agent Application training food technology (*Applicatie opleiding levensmiddelentechnologie*) Industry diploma all-round beautician (*Branchediploma allround schoonheidsspecialist*) Industry diploma medical pedicure (*Branchediploma medisch pedicure*)	
3	VET level 3 (*MBO 3*)	Examples: Dog grooming (*Hondentoiletteren*) General investigator (*Algemeen Opsporingsambtenaar*) Swimming teacher (*Zwemonderwijzer*) Trainer-coach 3 Industry diploma pedicure (*Branchediploma pedicure*)	3
2	VET level 2 (*MBO 2*) Basic education 3 for adults (*vavo*) Pre-vocational secondary education - theoretical pathway (*vmbo tl*) Pre-vocational secondary education - combined theoretical pathway (*vmbo gl*) Pre-vocational secondary education - advanced vocational pathway (*vmbo kb*) Basic education 3 for adults (*Basiseducatie 3*)	Military police security (*Marechausseebeveiliger*) Assistant swimming teacher (*Assistent zwemonderwijzer*) Sales employee (*Verkoopmedewerker*)	2
1	VET level 1 (*MBO 1*) Pre-vocational secondary education - basic vocational pathway (*vmbo bb*) Basic education 2 for adults (*Basiseducatie 2*)		1
Entry level	Basic education 1 for adults (*Basiseducatie 1*)		

(*) These are single qualifications included in the NLQF (December 2017). They are qualifications awarded by organisations outside the public, formal education and training system, included in the framework following quality assurance procedures. 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. NLQF register containing these qualifications: http://www.nlqf.nl/register

Source: Adapted from van der Sanden, K. et al., 2012. Additional information: http://www.nlqf.nl/nlqf-niveaus; http://nlqf.nl/images/downloads/Annex_7.1.1a_English_leaflet.pdf; http://www.nlqf.nl/register



PL

21. POLAND

Poland started developing a comprehensive NQF (the Polish qualifications framework, PQF) in 2006. The PQF forms part of the Polish integrated qualifications system, together with the qualifications register and arrangements for quality assurance and validation of non-formal and informal learning. It is one of several instruments for reform in a wider policy strategy which aims to promote lifelong learning and support education, training and learning more directly, responding to the needs of the labour market and society at large. Through its focus on learning outcomes, the PQF is an important tool for strengthening the transparency and overall consistency of education and training. Its role goes beyond merely describing existing qualifications, contributing to the redesign of programmes, standards and curricula. The PQF was formally adopted through the Act of 22 December 2015 on the integrated qualifications system, which entered into force in January 2016.

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

The PQF has now reached an early operational stage and is well placed technically, conceptually and legally to support further development of the qualifications system. The Minister of Education is responsible for overall coordination of the PQF, and an advisory stakeholder council was set up in September 2016 including representatives of the employer organisations, trade unions, National Chamber of Commerce and educational institutions from the formal and non-formal sectors, including the Polish Rectors Conference. The Educational Research Institute has played a key role in developing the framework and continues to provide technical assistance to the Minister of Education.

In November 2017, first non-statutory qualification was added to the integrated qualifications register.

In 2013, the PQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the QF-EHEA in a joint process. An updated referencing report focusing on recent developments was presented in December 2016.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange acts as EQF NCP: http://www.buwiwm.edu.pl/eng/index.htm
- Polish Educational Research Institute et al. (2013). *Referencing the Polish qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the European qualifications framework.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/Polish%20Referencing%20Report.pdf

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

PQF levels	Qualifications from the formal system	Regulated and non-statutory qualifications	EQF levels
8	Third cycle of higher education (PhD)		8
7	Second cycle of higher education Integrated first and second cycle Partial qualification for post-diploma studies		7
6	First cycle of higher education Partial qualification for post-diploma studies		6
5	Vocational qualifications Partial occupational qualifications		5
4	Upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Matura*) Vocational qualifications Partial occupational qualifications		4
3	Vocational qualifications Partial occupational qualifications	Assembly of construction woodwork (*Montowanie stolarki budowlanej*)	3
2	Lower secondary school leaving certificate Vocational qualifications Partial occupational qualifications		2
1	Primary school leaving certificate		1

Source: NQF update presentation to the EQF AG, December 2016.

PT

22. 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 qualification 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 attitudes. The NQF has been 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 enhance integration between the different education and training subsystems, improve quality, relevance, transparency and comparability of Portuguese qualifications, along with their understanding abroad, and promote access to lifelong learning and recognition of knowledge and skills.

The NQF has reached operational stage and is already considered a permanent feature of the national qualifications system. The legal framework is in place, qualifications have been assigned to levels, and quality assurance arrangements have been established. All VET is already organised around the NQF: qualifications databases consider the structure of the NQF and access to financial support also takes the framework into consideration. Most national qualifications certificates and diplomas indicate the corresponding NQF 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 national qualifications system and the NQF into practice. First, a new institutional model was developed: a National Agency for Qualifications – now the National Agency for Qualifications and VET, (ANQEP) – 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 was 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 Portuguese education and training. National qualifications and curricula in all education sectors have been progressively aligned with the NQF descriptors, a challenging task that is continuing. There is still a need 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 well-known.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Agency for Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training is the EQF NCP in Portugal: http://www.anqep.gov.pt/default.aspx
- National qualifications catalogue: http://www.catalogo.anqep.gov.pt/Qualificacoes
- Qualification database for higher education: http://www.dges.gov.pt/pt/pesquisa_cursos_instituicoes?plid=372
- ANQ (2011). *Report on the referencing of the national qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/PT%20EQF%20Referencing%20Report.pdf

Table 23. **Portuguese national qualifications framework (QNQ)**

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

Source: Portuguese National Agency for Qualifications and VET (2016).

RO

23. 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 continuing VET, 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. Parallel work was carried out in higher education, and a qualifications framework for higher education was established in line with the Bologna process and the EQF. One of the main challenges was to link the development processes, structures and stakeholders from VET and higher education and to improve links with the labour market. An important step was taken in June 2011 through the set-up of a single National Qualifications Authority – NQA (*Autoritatea Națională pentru Calificări,* ANC), responsible for developing and implementing the comprehensive NQF.

The ROQF is firmly based on national legislation and underpinned by a clear governance structure. The strong role of the NQA as initiator of legislation and its human resource capacity are positive aspects. The framework is at an early operational stage; related legislation has been amended and supplemented regularly, and a new amendment is pending. Criteria and procedures for inclusion of qualifications into the ROQF and the methodologies for assigning qualifications to levels need to be clarified. Establishing good cooperation between different stakeholders and structures is essential for the ROQF to achieve its aims.

A draft EQF referencing report was presented in 2014 and the final referencing report is expected to be submitted to the EQF advisory group in 2018. The qualifications framework for higher education was self-certified against the QF-EHEA in 2011.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Authority for Qualifications (Autoritatea Nationala pentru Calificari – ANC) is the EQF NCP: http://www.anc.edu.ro
- National register of qualifications for higher education: http://www.anc.edu.ro/?page_id=610

Table 24. **Romanian national qualifications framework (ROQF)**

ROQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels([24])
8	Doctoral degree (*Diploma de doctor*) (third cycle of higher education) Certificate for postdoctoral studies (*Atestat de studii postdoctorale*) (postdoctoral studies)	8
7	Master degree (*Diploma de master*) and Diploma supplement (second cycle of higher education) Bachelor degree / Architect diploma (*Diploma de licenta / Diploma de architect*) and Diploma supplement (first and second cycle combined higher education study programmes)	7
6	Bachelor degree / Engineering diploma / Urbanism diploma (*Diploma de licenta / Diploma de inginer / Diploma de urbanist*) and Diploma supplement (first cycle of higher education) Certificate of professional* competence (*Certificat de atestare a competentelor profesionale*) (postgraduate studies) Graduation certificate (*Certificat de absolvire*) (postgraduate studies)	6
5	Short cycle higher education certificate (*Diploma de absolvire/calificare*) and Certificate supplement (short cycle higher education) Post-secondary certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) and Descriptive supplement (post-secondary non-higher tertiary education)	5
4	Upper secondary school leaving certificate (*Diploma de Bacalaureat*) (general, technological or vocational education, four years of study) VET certificate level 4 (*Certificat de calificare*) and Descriptive supplement (technological / vocational high-school) VET certificate level 4 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (*Certificat de calificare/absolvire*) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / training programme) VET certificate level 4 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / apprenticeship programmes in the workplace)	4
3	VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) and Descriptive Supplement (authorised training provider / apprenticeship programmes in the workplace) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate / Certificate of professional* competence (*Certificat de calificare / Certificat de competente profesionale*) and Descriptive supplement (accredited training centre) VET certificate level 3 / Certificate of professional* competence (*Certificat de competente profesionale*) (authorised assessment centre) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (*Certificat de calificare/absolvire*) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / training programme) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) and Descriptive supplement (education unit / technological/vocational high school) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) and Descriptive supplement (education unit / vocational training programme organised in dual system) VET certificate level 3 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) and Descriptive supplement (education unit / professional* education lasting at least 3 years)	3
2	VET certificate level 2 / Qualification certificate (*Certificat de calificare*) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / apprenticeship programmes in the workplace) VET certificate level 2 / Qualification certificate / Certificate of professional* competence (*Certificat de calificare / Certificat de competente profesionale*) and Descriptive supplement (accredited training centre) VET certificate level 2 / Certificate of professional* competence (*Certificat de competente profesionale*) (authorised assessment centre) VET certificate level 2 / Qualification/Graduation certificate (*Certificat de calificare/absolvire*) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / training programme)	2
1	Certificate of professional* competence (*Certificat de competente profesionale*) (authorised assessment centre) Graduation certificate (*Certificat de absolvire*) and Descriptive supplement (authorised training provider / training programme) Graduation Diploma (*Diploma de absolvire*) (basic education unit), 8 years	1

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

(*) The term 'professional' denotes vocational and technological training aimed at the labour market.

Source: National Qualifications Authority, 2017.

([24]) Envisaged EQF levels.

SK

24. SLOVAKIA

Work on the Slovak qualifications framework (SKKR) has been under way for some time, based on a 2009 government decision on EQF implementation. The 2009 Act on Lifelong Learning, amended in 2012 (Law 315/2012), stipulated the legal background for the development of a national qualification system and framework; the tasks related to these developments became part of the national reform programme. In 2013, strategies for revision of the initial NQF proposal, deemed to be too much shaped around formal education, were put forward, along with wider involvement of social partners.

The system is intended to provide a comprehensive view of all qualifications, pave the way for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, ease communication between the education sector and the labour market, improve quality of provision at all levels, and promote student and workforce mobility. It consists of two pillars, the SKKR and the national qualifications register (NQR): their development was closely related. The description of qualifications in terms of qualification standards forms the content of the NQR; their levelling is the content of SKKR.

The first phase of SKKR development was finalised in 2015, with the revision of the SKKR grid and approval of the methodology for linking qualifications to SKKR levels. The framework includes all qualifications: it consists of four sub-frameworks for general education, VET, higher education, and occupational qualifications (awarded outside the formal system, as a result of courses and work experience). It is an eight-level, learning-outcomes-based framework, with level descriptors defined in terms of knowledge (general and professional), skills (cognitive and practical) and competence (responsibility, autonomy and social competences). The architecture of the SKKR consists of the framework grid and a catalogue of qualification cards describing full and partial qualifications. Qualifications were assigned to SKKR levels following analysis of the learning outcomes set in the qualification standards, and their comparison with the national descriptors. Implementation and further development of the framework are work in progress.

The overarching SKKR was referenced to the EQF in October 2017 and the referencing report was approved by the Slovak government in November 2017. The report on the fulfilment of self-certification criteria against QF-EHEA will be presented at a later stage.

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

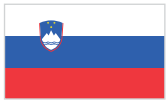
MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The State Vocational Education Institute (ŠIOV) is the EQF NCP: http://www.siov.sk/
- Website of the national qualifications system: http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/
- National qualifications register (NQR): http://www.kvalifikacie.sk/kartoteka-kariet-kvalifikacii#/
- State Vocational Education Institute (2017). *Referencing report of the Slovak qualifications framework towards the European qualifications framework* [unpublished].

Table 25. **Slovak national qualifications framework (SKKR)**

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

Source: Adapted from Annex 2 of the referencing report of the Slovak qualifications framework towards the European qualifications framework (State Vocational Education Institute, 2017).



SI

25. SLOVENIA

Slovenia has put in place a comprehensive qualifications framework (SQF) with 10 levels, defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. SQF development has built on a series of education and training reforms since the mid-1990s (in VET, higher education, general education and adult education) and introduction of certification and validation of non-formal learning in 2000. Agreement was reached in 2011 on assigning major national qualifications from formal education and training (VET, higher education, general education, adult education) and the system of national vocational qualifications (NVQs), under the remit of the Ministry of Labour, to SQF levels. The main objective of the SQF is to integrate and harmonise Slovenian qualifications subsystems, enhance transparency and comparability of qualifications within Slovenia and the EU, and improve accessibility, progress and quality of qualifications with regard to the labour market and the civil society. Although the SQF is not a tool for major reform, level descriptors are used in accreditation procedures for new education programmes or in their reaccreditation.

The SQF reached full operational stage with the entry into force of the SQF Act, in January 2016, which set out practical aspects of framework implementation. This is a technical law, which summarises main responsibilities of stakeholders and ministries involved in design and award of qualifications at different levels, defines the tasks of the EQF NCP, and refers to procedures and methods of allocation of qualifications from formal education and training and national vocational qualifications as defined by sectoral legislation. It also defines referencing of NQF levels to the EQF and QF-EHEA, funding provisions and maintenance of the SQF register. One important development brought by the SQF Act is the definition of procedures for inclusion in the SQF of supplementary qualifications awarded on the labour market. To date (December 2017) six supplementary qualifications have undergone the accreditation process successfully and were consequently included in the SQF, at SQF levels 4 to 7. The decision on accreditation and inclusion of supplementary qualifications is made by an expert panel consisting of seven members appointed by the minister of Labour, in accordance with the SQF Act.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET is the EQF NCP: http://www.cpi.si/en/
- Website of the Slovenian qualifications framework: http://www.nok.si/en/
- SQF register: http://www.nok.si/slovenian-qualifications-framework-register/
- Supplementary qualifications included in the SQF: http://www.nok.si/register-kvalifikacij-sok/?QTitle=&QKind%5B3%5D=3&SOKLevel=&EOKLevel=&ISCED=&SecurityID=7c91902b5f11a753f1c2e6d5f98a56a399259894&action_search=Po%C5%A1lji
- Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (2014). *Referencing the Slovenian qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area: final report.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/Final%20Report%20SI_2014.pdf

Table 26. **Slovenian national qualifications framework (SQF)**

SQF levels	Educational qualifications	NVQs	Supplementary qualifications (*)	EQF levels
10	Doctoral degree (*Diploma o doktoratu znanosti*)			8
9	(**) Post-graduate research Master of science degree (*Diploma o magisteriju znanosti*) (**) Specialisation diploma following academic higher education (*Diploma o specializaciji*)			
8	Master degree (*Diploma o strokovnem magisteriju*) (**) Specialisation diploma following pre-Bologna professional higher education (*Diploma o specializaciji*) (**) Pre-Bologna diploma of academic higher education (*Diploma o univerzitetnem izobraževanju*) (**) Higher education diploma (*Diploma o visoki izobrazbi*)			7
7	Academic bachelor diploma (*Diploma o izobraževanju prve stopnje – univerzitetna, UN*) Professional bachelor diploma (*Diploma o izobrazevanju visokem strokovnem, VS*) (**) Pre-Bologna professional higher education diploma (*Diploma o visokem strokovnem izobraževanju*) (**) Specialisation diploma following old short cycle higher education (*Diploma o specializaciji*)		Certificate of supplementary qualification (SQF level 7)	6
6	Short-cycle higher vocational diploma (*Diploma o višji strokovni izobrazbi*) (**) Old short-cycle higher vocational diploma (*Diploma o višješolski izobrazbi*)	NVQ certificate (level 6)	Certificate of supplementary qualification (SQF level 6)	5
5	Vocational *matura* certificate (Secondary technical education, four years) (*Spričevalo o poklicni mature*) General *matura* certificate (*Spričevalo o splošni mature*) Master craftsman's examination certificate (*Spričevalo o opravljenem mojstrskem izpitu*) Foreman's examination certificate (*Spričevalo o opravljenem delovodskem izpitu*) Managerial examination certificate (*Spričevalo o opravljenem poslovodskem izpitu*)	NVQ certificate (level 5)	Certificate of supplementary qualification (SQF level 5)	4
4	Final examination certificate (Secondary vocational education, three years) (*Spričevalo o zaključnem izpitu, Srednja poklicna izobrazba*)	NVQ (level 4)	Certificate of supplementary qualification (SQF level 4)	
3	Final examination certificate (Lower vocational education, two years) (*Spričevalo o zaključnem izpitu*)	NVQ (level 3)		3
2	Elementary school leaving certificate (nine years) (*Zaključno spričevalo osnovne šole*)	NVQ (level 2)		2
1	Certificate of completing grades 7 or 8 of elementary education (*Potrdilo o izpolnjeni osnovnošolski obveznosti*) Elementary school leaving certificate (*Zaključno spričevalo osnovne šole*)			1

(*) The inclusion of supplementary qualifications in the framework was legislated in 2016.

(**) Pre-Bologna diplomas.

Source: Adapted from Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET, 2014.

ES

26. SPAIN

Spain has started to develop the Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning (*Marco Español de Cualificaciones,* MECU). However, framework development was not concluded in 2017 as foreseen, and MECU is not yet operational.

The Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning is based on learning outcomes and has eight levels with descriptors defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. It aims to link and coordinate different education and training subsystems, support learner progression, support lifelong learning, and improve access and participation for everyone, including the disadvantaged. It is foreseen as including qualifications obtained in compulsory education, post-secondary and higher education, and integrating validation of non-formal and informal learning. One of its main objectives is to make Spanish qualifications easier to understand by describing them in terms of learning outcomes, and to clarify relationships between them. The framework is expected to improve the extent to which stakeholders are informed about national qualifications, raising trust and making mobility easier.

The future framework aims to include, in a first stage, all diplomas and certificates from the education system, while remaining open for inclusion of official qualifications issued by other administrative sectors. However, for MECU development to progress, cooperation of all stakeholders and consultative bodies is required, as well as legislative regulation at national level.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport is currently (2017) working on aligning qualifications in the education system to the EQF levels, in accordance with the EQF recommendation. A qualifications framework for higher education (*Marco Español de Cualificaciones para la Educación Superior*, MECES) has been put in place separately and self-certified against the QF-EHEA. Qualifications are being designed taking into account compatibility and linking the highest four qualifications levels to MECES. The Spanish education system is planned to be referenced to EQF levels by 2018.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Directorate General for Vocational Training (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport) is the designated EQF NCP: http://www.mecd.gob.es/portada-mecd/
- Qualifications in the education system can be found on the website of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport: http://www.mecd.gob.es/educacion-mecd/
- VET qualifications: http://www.todofp.es/que-como-y-donde-estudiar/que-estudiar.html
- MECES Self-certification Report: https://www.ingenierosnavales.com/sites/default/files/noticias/Self-Certification-Report-MECES-VFinal3-031114.pdf

Table 27. **Spanish qualifications framework for higher education (MECES) and draft Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning (MECU) levels**

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

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

SE

27. SWEDEN

Sweden has developed a comprehensive, learning-outcomes-based NQF for lifelong learning (SeQF) with eight levels, following the basic structure of the EQF. Each level is described in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. The broad and inclusive nature of level descriptors makes it possible to open up all levels to different types of qualifications. The formal adoption of the framework took place in October 2015 (Regulation on a qualifications framework for lifelong learning 2015:545), and the parts concerned with the procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the SeQF came into force in January 2016. As the starting point for the development of the SeQF was to establish a comprehensive framework that could include qualifications from the formal education system as well as from other providers, emphasis was put on the importance of an inclusive and open process with continuous dialogue with different stakeholders. Preparatory work for the legal basis proved time-consuming, but was deemed essential for the future success of the SeQF.

While the framework was initially designed to aid transparency and international comparison of Swedish qualifications, the SeQF is now increasingly seen as playing a role in supporting better cooperation between the education and training system and the labour market. A particular feature of Swedish education and training is its strong adult and popular education, combined with an extensive and diverse system of labour market-based education and training. The added value of the framework lies in its openness to qualifications awarded by private companies and branch/sector organisations and bodies; criteria and procedures for the inclusion of those qualifications have been introduced and published, and the first qualifications have been included.

The openness of the SeQF will also support validation of non-formal and informal learning. Levels 6 to 8 include higher education qualifications, but are also open to other types of non-academic qualifications.

The SeQF is in an early operational stage. To strengthen its comprehensive nature as NQF for lifelong learning, continuous dialogue and implementation activities are required. The National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is responsible for implementing the SeQF. An advisory group consisting of a range of stakeholders, including representatives of higher education, advises the agency on the applications, inclusion and levelling of qualifications.

The SeQF was referenced to the EQF in June 2016. Separate self-certification of the Swedish higher education framework to the QF-EHEA was carried out in 2012.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education is the designated EQF NCP: https://www.myh.se/In-English/Swedish-National-Agency-for-Higher-Vocational-Education-/
- Information about the SeQF (in English): https://www.myh.se/In-English/EQF/
- SeQF portal (in Swedish): https://www.seqf.se/
- Register of qualifications: https://www.seqf.se/sv/Sa-funkar-det/Kvalifikationer
- Swedish national Agency for Higher Vocational Education (2016). *Referencing report of the Swedish qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework* [unpublished].

Table 28. **Swedish national qualifications framework (SeQF)**

SeQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Degrees, third cycle, Annex 2 to the Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (*Examina på forskarnivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100*) Degrees, third cycle, Annex to the Regulation 1993: 221 (*Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet Examina på forskarnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet Förordning (2017:276)*)	8
7	Degrees, second cycle, Annex 2 to the Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (*Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100*) Degrees, second cycle, Annex to the Regulation 1993: 221 (*Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet*) Degrees, second cycle, in the Annex to Regulation 2007: 1164 (*Examina på avancerad nivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (2007:1164) för Försvarshögskolan*)	7
6	Degrees, first cycle, Annex 2 to the Higher Education Ordinance 1993:100 (*Examina på grundnivå enligt bilaga 2 till högskoleförordningen 1993:100*) Degrees, first cycle, Annex to the Regulation 2007:1164 (*Examina på grundnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (2007:1164) för Försvarshögskolan*) Degrees, first cycle, Annex to the Regulation 1993: 221 (*Examina på grundnivå enligt bilagan till förordningen (1993:221) för Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet*) Advanced diploma in higher vocational education (*Kvalificerad yrkeshögskoleexamen från yrkeshögskolan*)	6
5	Qualified graduate from upper secondary engineering courses (*Gymnasieingenjörsexamen från gymnasieskolan*) Diploma in higher vocational education (*Yrkeshögskoleexamen från yrkeshögskolan*)	5
4	Degree from a national programme in upper secondary education – qualification title for students starting 2011 onwards (*Gymnasieexamen från gymnasieskolan*) Final grades from a complete national or specially designed programme (*Slutbetyg från ett fullständigt nationellt eller specialutformat program i gymnasieskolan*) Degree from municipal adult education and training at upper secondary level – qualification title for students starting 2011 onwards (*Gymnasieexamen från kommunal vuxenutbildning*) Final grades from municipal adult education and training at upper secondary level (*Slutbetyg från gymnasial vuxenutbildning*) Certificate from the general course at upper secondary level from folk high school (*Intyg om godkänt resultat från allmän kurs på gymnasial nivå från folkhögskola*)	4
3		3
2	Final grades from compulsory school (*Slutbetyg från grundskolan*) Final grades from special school at compulsory level (*Slutbetyg från specialskolan*) Final grades from municipal adult education and training at compulsory level (*Slutbetyg från kommunal vuxenutbildning på grundläggande nivå*) Certificate from upper secondary education for individuals with learning disabilities (*Gymnasiesärskolebevis från gymnasiesärskolan*) Certificate from special education for adults at upper secondary level (*Gymnasiesärskolebevis från särskild utbildning för vuxna på gymnasial nivå*) Grade from Swedish for immigrants course D, or equivalent awarded by a folk high school (*Betyg från utbildning i svenska för invandrare kurs D, eller motsvarande utbildning som bedrivs vid folkhögskola*) Grade from municipal adult education in Swedish for Immigrants course D, or equivalent awarded by a folk high school (*Betyg från kommunal vuxenutbildning i svenska för invandrare kurs D, eller motsvarande utbildning som bedrivs vid folkhögskola*) Certificate from the general course at compulsory school level from folk high school (*Intyg om godkänt resultat från allmän kurs på grundskolenivå från folkhögskola*)	2
1	Final grades from compulsory school for pupils with learning disabilities (*Slutbetyg från grundsärskolan*) Final grades from special education for adults at compulsory level (*Slutbetyg från särskild utbildning för vuxna på grundläggande nivå*)	1

Source: Adapted from the SeQF website (2017): https://www.seqf.se/

UK

28. UNITED KINGDOM

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

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

While these developments show that frameworks develop and change continuously, they also show that their visibility and overall impact depends on the political context in which they operate. The existence of parallel frameworks in England and Northern Ireland may have partly contradicted their ability to support transparency and learning progression, and the introduction of the RQF addresses this problem.

28.1 England and Northern Ireland

In October 2015, the new RQF was introduced in England and Northern Ireland, replacing the qualifications and credit framework (QCF) and the national qualifications framework (NQF). The RQF covers all general and vocational qualifications regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) in England and the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment Regulation (CCEA) in Northern Ireland.

While the QCF took on a regulatory role, the RQF is a descriptive framework: the standardised QCF requirements for the design of qualifications were lifted. This change can be seen as part of a policy to devolve responsibility from national level to awarding organisations and learning providers, allowing qualifications to be developed around the needs of employers. The RQF aims to provide a transparent overview of qualifications and to show how they relate to each other. To this end, it requires all qualifications to have a level and size, described consistently.

The eight qualifications levels (plus three entry levels) of the QCF were maintained, but changes were introduced in the way qualification size is calculated. The size of qualifications is expressed in total qualification time (TQT) and guided learning hours (GLH). A new condition regarding the calculation of credits has also been introduced for those awarding bodies that attach credit to their qualifications: credit is calculated by dividing TQT by 10. The RQF builds on the level descriptors used by the QCF, partly adjusted by using EQF descriptors. The level descriptors have been simplified, are designed for a wide range of learning contexts, and are outcome-focused. They fall under two categories: knowledge and skills.

Higher education qualifications are part of the framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). Levels 4 to 8 of the RQF are comparable with the five levels within the FHEQ, and the two frameworks can be mapped onto each other.

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. With the replacement of the QCF with the RQF, the UK referencing report for England and Northern Ireland has become outdated, and an update is planned.

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

Table 29. **Regulated qualifications framework (RQF) for England and Northern Ireland**

RQF levels	Qualification types	EQF levels (*)
8	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 8	8
7	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 7	7
6	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 6	6
5	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 5 Higher national diplomas (HND)	5
4	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 4 Higher national certificates (HNC)	
3	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 3 GCE AS and A levels	4
2	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 2 GCSEs at grade A* – C and from 2017 grade 4-9 (England) Functional skills level 2 (England) Essential skills qualifications (NI)	3
1	Technical/Vocational qualifications level 1 GCSEs at grade D-G and from 2017 grade 3-1 (England) Functional skills level 1 (England) Essential skills qualifications (NI)	2
Entry level	Entry level certificates (sublevels 1-3) Functional skills entry level (England) (English, mathematics & ICT) Essential skills qualifications (NI)	1

(*) The EQF levels are indicative, as the 2010 referencing report referred to the QCF, not the RQF.

Source: Adapted from the 2017 edition of the 'Qualifications can cross boundaries' leaflet: http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/accreditation/guidance/Qualifications_can_cross_Boundaries.pdf

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) acts as EQF NCP for England: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual/about
- Register of regulated qualifications: https://register.ofqual.gov.uk/
- The Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment Northern Ireland acts as EQF NCP for Northern Ireland: http://ccea.org.uk/about_us/what_we_do
- QCA et al. (2010). *Referencing the qualifications frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European qualifications framework.* http://scqf.org.uk/content/files/europe/QFUK_Joint_Report_-_Updated_March_2010.pdf

28.2 SCOTLAND

The Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) is one of the oldest comprehensive frameworks in Europe. It has been operating since 2001 and has since gradually evolved from an instrument for transparency and communication of qualifications to a reference tool for revision of education and training and for human resource development. It is a 12-level overarching framework that covers all levels and types of qualifications. The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS) is a constitutive part of the SCQF. Learning-outcomes-based level descriptors, revised in 2012, are defined in 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' and explicitly addresses the private sector and employers, encouraging them to have their training provisions credit rated and included under the framework. In 2016, over 800 non-mainstream qualifications were included in the framework, from a range of providers.

A high degree of framework ownership can be observed in all sectors of education and training, as well as among labour market stakeholders. SCQF governance is ensured by the SCQF Partnership, made up of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Universities Scotland, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, and the College Development Network. Employers are represented in the SCQF Partnership Board.

SCQF developments over time were informed by systematic evaluations. A 2013 independent evaluation looking at the level of awareness, perception and understanding of the SCQF showed that the framework is widely recognised by learners, parents and education professionals in Scotland. According to a 2015 evaluation of the use of the SCQF among higher education institutions and colleges, the framework is well embedded in curriculum decision-making processes, aiding the development of progression pathways and highlighting gaps in provision; it is also used in quality assurance processes. In 2016-17 an impact assessment was undertaken, looking at the impact that the SCQF and the SCQF Partnership had made on key stakeholders and their policies and practices. It showed that the SCQF and SCQFP are both well-established features of Scotland's education and qualifications landscape, with the SCQFP instrumental in a number of key developments.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The SCQF partnership acts as EQF NCP for Scotland: http://www.scqf.org.uk/
- The SCQF partnership maintains the SCQF database: http://scqf.org.uk/the-framework/search-database/
- QCA et al. (2010). *Referencing the qualifications frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European qualifications framework.* http://scqf.org.uk/content/files/europe/QFUK_Joint_Report_-_Updated_March_2010.pdf

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

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

Source: Adapted from the SCQF website, 2017: http://scqf.org.uk/framework-diagram-updated/

28.3 WALES

The credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW) was adopted in 2002 and launched in 2003. Its purpose is to act as an overarching structure to provide clarity on existing education subsystems and a common currency for learning achievement. It includes three pillars: higher education qualifications, regulated qualifications (including general and vocational qualifications) and quality assured lifelong learning (QALL). The CQFW is a nine-level structure (including levels 1 to 8, plus three entry levels), in which learning achievement is expressed in learning outcomes. It 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 level descriptors were designed in 2009 and are structured in three categories: knowledge and understanding; application and action; and autonomy and accountability. With the introduction of the RQF in England and Northern Ireland in 2015, the revised RQF level descriptors – defined in terms of knowledge and skills – have been adopted for the regulated qualifications pillar of the CQFW. The QALL pillar continues to use the 2009 CQFW level descriptors.

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 is seen as an enabling tool for the Welsh Government's economic and skills policies and goals, supporting recognition of credit and qualifications across all levels, and the articulation of progression pathways. An evaluation of the CQFW was carried out in 2014, and its positive and constructive role in the Welsh qualification landscape was recognised. A number of changes were introduced, including to the CQFW governance structure, by setting up of Qualifications Wales; this is a new government-sponsored but independent body responsible for non-higher education qualifications, and the establishment of a strategic operational partnership comprising the Welsh Government, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and Qualifications Wales. Changes were also introduced to the QALL pillar of the framework, seeking to clarify the way non-formal and informal learning is recognised. The CQFW is particularly well-established in the higher education, and adult and community learning sectors.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- CollegesWales (ColegauCymru) is the EQF NCP: http://www.collegeswales.ac.uk/
- Welsh Government CQFW website: http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/qualificationsinwales/creditqualificationsframework/?lang=en
- QCA et al. (2010). *Referencing the qualifications frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European qualifications framework.* http://scqf.org.uk/content/files/europe/QFUK_Joint_Report_-_Updated_March_2010.pdf

Table 31. **Credit and qualifications framework for Wales (CQFW)**

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

Source: Welsh Government, 2017.

Other European countries participating in the EQF implementation

AL

29. ALBANIA

The law on the Albanian qualifications framework (AQF) was adopted in 2010. This law is currently under revision; the revised law will be supplemented by secondary legislation to ensure the QF's implementation. The NQF has eight levels, and is comprehensive of all types of qualifications. Its descriptors are learning-outcomes based, divided by knowledge, skills and competence. These descriptors are, though, considered too generic for the national context, and are being revised to become more specific.

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

The AQF handbook distinguishes between types of qualification, the principal distinction being between qualifications for initial education and those for lifelong learning. The former category covers pre-university qualifications, vocational qualifications, and higher education qualifications. The latter category includes short courses for adults and specialised courses for professional development.

A dedicated AQF taskforce, comprising officials from the Ministries of Education and Social Welfare and Youth, plus experts from the National Agency for Vocational Education and Training (NAVETQ), social partners and other actors, has prepared the revision of the AQF Law. The revised law stipulates that management of the AQF will be divided between the ministries in charge of the educational subsectors. A coordinating body is not foreseen.

The Public Accreditation Agency for Higher Education manages quality assurance for this sector. It requires higher education institutions and their programmes to be accredited before they can issue degrees or other qualifications. In vocational education and training, quality assurance of qualifications is mainly internal.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is provided for in both the VET and AQF Laws. However, implementation so far has been confined to pilots and has not yet been applied country-wide.

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

For more detailed information see the Albania entry in the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Albanian Ministry of Education and Sports is the main source of information and the NCP for AQF development: http://www.arsimi.gov.al

Table 32. **Albanian qualifications framework (AQF)**

AQF levels	Qualifications for initial education			Qualifications for lifelong learning (examples)
	Pre-university qualifications	Vocational qualifications	Higher qualifications	
8			Doctoral studies Long-term specialisations Executive master	Continuous professional development programmes Courses designed for managers, higher technicians Bridging courses Vocational training courses
7			Master of arts Master of science Professional master	
6			Bachelor	
5		Professional diploma (two years) Professional certificate (one year) Apprenticeship programmes/ vocational certificate AQF level 5		
4	State *matura* diploma	Professional State *matura* diploma Four-year programmes for technician/mid managers/ vocational certificate AQF level 4 One-year programme for technician/mid managers/ vocational certificate AQF level 4 Two-year programme for technician/ mid manager/ vocational certificate AQF level 4 Apprenticeship programmes/ vocational certificate AQF level 4		
3		One-year programmes for qualified workers/vocational certificate AQF level 3 Apprenticeship programmes/ vocational certificate AQF level 3		
2		Two-year programme for semi-qualified workers/vocational certificate AQF level 2		
1	Certificate of compulsory education (nine years)			

Source: Adapted from European Training Foundation, 2016.

BA

30. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina's qualifications framework, called the baseline qualifications framework, was adopted by the Council of Ministers, via decree, in March 2011. This decree carries the force of law. The baseline qualifications framework is an eight-level, comprehensive, framework, whose descriptors are defined in learning outcomes, comprising knowledge, skills and competence. The descriptors are derived from the EQF's.

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

The baseline qualifications framework is coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA), which has a country-wide remit. However, its decision-making powers in education and training are very limited, given the country's constitution, which devolves powers to the Federation, *Republika Srspka* and the 13 cantons, including in education and training policy. MoCA chairs the 19-member intersectoral committee, which intends to make policy and to take decisions on the baseline qualifications framework. Its composition reflects the country's three major population groups: Bosniak, Croat and Serb plus one member for other groups, such as Roma. Higher education, VET and general education, plus social partners, are represented within these ethnic groups. But, this body meets rarely, last doing so in spring 2015.

Implementation of the baseline qualifications framework has been partial; the Council of Ministers adopted an action plan in February 2015. Bosnia and Herzegovina is between the initial and structured stages. It has a strategy and has begun developing tools and systems, but it has no register of qualifications yet; most existing qualifications are not based in learning outcomes nor relate to standards, and providers, employers and learners do not yet use the framework. Credit remains confined to levels 6 to 8, higher education only.

Quality assurance of qualifications is not much developed in the country, except in higher education, where the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, accredits providers, though not yet either programmes or individual qualifications. Quality assurance in VET is within the remit of APOSO, the agency covering pre-primary, primary, general secondary education and secondary VET. APOSO develops qualifications standards and assessment criteria, but schools themselves do most of the assessment; external assessment in much of VET remains limited. Ministries and cantons act as awarding bodies, it is their stamps which appear on certificates.

Validation of non-formal learning is part of the baseline qualifications framework action plan, but implementation is currently limited. Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities, however, are seeking to develop a VNFIL system through continuing EU support.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a potential candidate for EU accession and has been a full member of the EQF advisory group since October 2015. The country also participates in the Bologna process. It is not far advanced in referencing or self-certifying.

For more detailed information see the Bosnia Herzegovina entry in the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Ministry of Civil Affairs is the EQF NCP: http://www.vijeceministara.gov.ba/ministarstva/civilni_poslovi/default.aspx?id=104&langTag=en-US
- TEMPUS project: Bosnia and Herzegovina qualifications framework for higher education: http://www.bhqfhe.eu/en/

Table 33. **The Bosnia and Herzegovina national qualifications framework**

Level	Type of education and training	Qualification titles (position in the labour market)	Award type (diploma / certificate / education level)
8	Third cycle of higher education	Titles of qualifications and contents of diploma and diploma supplement for levels 6, 7 and 8 will, at a later stage, include relevant NQF/ EQF levels and will be further elaborated by the adoption of the Rulebook on use of academic titles and acquisition of scientific and professional titles ([25]).	PhD Doctorate diploma and Diploma supplement
7	Second cycle of higher education		Master diploma (MA) Master level diploma and Diploma supplement
6	First cycle of higher education		Bachelor diploma (BA) Diploma issued by the institution of higher education and Diploma supplement
5	Postsecondary education, including master craftsman exams and similar exams	Highly skilled worker specialised for a certain occupation	Diploma/certificate of completed post-secondary education or passed master craftsman exam and/or similar exam for a certain occupation, with a supplement
4	Secondary general education	Generally skilled worker	Secondary School graduation diploma with a supplement
	Secondary technical education	Specialised skilled worker for technical and related occupation	Diploma/Certificate of secondary graduation with a supplement
3	Vocational education and training	Skilled worker for a certain occupation	Diploma/certificate of final examination (matriculation) with practical work, including a supplement
2	Occupational training programmes	Low-skilled worker	Certificate on completed programme or education for lower level occupational qualifications
1	Elementary education	Unskilled worker	Certificate on completed elementary education (nine years)

Source: Adapted from European Training Foundation, 2016.

([25]) Title of the bylaw is defined under Article 6 of the Framework Law on Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina No 59/07).

MK

31. THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's NQF was adopted in 2013. It is a comprehensive, lifelong learning framework, consists of eight levels, plus three sublevels, at levels 5, 6 and 7, included to allow for qualifications in place before the use of learning outcomes. Level descriptors are knowledge and understanding, skills and competence.

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

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

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

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

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is foreseen by the NQF law, but only within the range from level 1 to 5B. The Centre for Adult Education is currently developing a model for VNFIL aligned with principles of the 2012 EU Council recommendation.

Qualifications are already placed in the framework, via an inventory, which counts more than 2 450 qualifications, from general education, vocational education and training and higher education.

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

For more detailed information see the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia entry in the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

Table 34. **Qualifications framework of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Ministry of Education and Science is the EQF NCP: http://www.mon.gov.mk/
- Ministry of Education and Science (2016). *EQF referencing report of the qualifications framework of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and self-certification to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/eqf_referencing_report_of_the_macedonian_qualification_framework_and_self-certification_to_the_qf-ehea.pdf
- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia qualifications framework website: http://www.mrk.mk
- Register of qualifications: http://217.119.254.84/education/

IS

32. ICELAND

The Icelandic national qualifications framework (ISQF) consists of seven learning-outcomes-based levels, with two sublevels at levels 5 and 6. An agreement on this division was signed by all stakeholders in education and training in October 2016, replacing the ISQF structure from 2014. The level descriptors reflect knowledge, skills and competences, and the importance attributed to key competences and transversal skills. They are presented in an integrated way. The ISQF is a lifelong learning framework, covering all levels and types of qualification, including adult education. It aims to make pathways through the education system clear, to increase student mobility within the country and between countries, and to increase motivation for further learning. Through its systematic application of learning outcomes, the ISQF is seen as a tool for reviewing the overall functioning of education and training and supporting long-term reform.

Work on the ISQF 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 issued specifically for the ISQF. Its role and mandate are explicitly stated in a series of acts and decrees introduced between 2006 and 2010 (on higher education, pre-school education, compulsory education, upper secondary education, and adult education). The ISQF is characterised by a clear division between levels 1 to 4 and levels 5 to 7. The development of these two parts of the framework has partly taken place separately, responding to the EQF and Bologna processes, respectively. The links between them, and the overall coordination between the ISQF and the framework for higher education, are still under discussion.

The initial framework, developed in 2014, was used as a tool for developing study provisions in the formal school system. The main tasks for 2017-18 are to develop an accreditation process and quality criteria for curricula in adult education. Study programmes and course descriptions at upper secondary and university levels have been based on learning outcomes and are linked to ISQF levels. NQF/EQF levels are now being included in all qualifications issued at upper secondary and university level, both for general and vocational pathways.

The Icelandic NQF was referenced to the EQF in December 2013, including a self-certification report to the QF-EHEA. An updated referencing report is foreseen to be submitted in 2018.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís) acts as EQF NCP: https://en.rannis.is/activities/ https://www.erasmusplus.is/menntun/stodverkefni/islenski-haefniramminn-um-menntun/
- Icelandic qualifications database: www.menntabrunnur.is
- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture: https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/education-in-iceland/educational_system/
- Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (2014). *Reference report of the Icelandic qualifications framework ISQF to the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning EQF*. https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/EQF_Reference_Report_2014.pdf

Table 35. **Icelandic national qualifications framework (ISQF)**

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

Source: Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2017.

XK

33. KOSOVO

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

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

The NQA supervises VET and adult education qualifications, conducting quality assurance processes for their design, validation, assessment and certification, and to ensure that they meet the quality criteria set for their entry to the KQF. NQA also accredits VET providers: most new qualifications are developed by the providers themselves. NQA does not develop qualifications. To date, approximately 27 VET qualifications have been validated and registered in the NQF, at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. Qualifications, by law, must be developed based on occupational standards or some other form of occupational analysis. A total of 73 occupational standards have been validated so far by the NQA. MEST oversees general educational qualifications, including developing secondary school qualifications such as the upper secondary level *matura* (school leaver). In higher education, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency supervises higher education institutions, accrediting HEIs as providers. Universities develop their own qualifications, quality-assured by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA).

Kosovo authorities have adopted a national quality assurance framework (NQAF), aligned with the European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training (EQAVET). Credit systems operate in VET and higher education. In VET, NQA applies a VET credit system based on the European credit system for VET; one credit point is awarded for 10 notional learning hours. In higher education, the credit system is inspired by, and aligned to, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

The 2008 Law on qualifications, which enacted the NQF, provides for development of a national system for validation of non-formal and informal learning, or VNFIL. All new qualifications developed should be attainable via education and training programmes and VNFIL routes. Secondary legislation specifies principles of the country's VNFIL system; the NQA is coordinating implementation through definition of specific policy, guidelines and procedures.

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

For more detailed information see the Kosovo entry in the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

Table 36. **Qualifications framework of Kosovo (KQF)**

NQF level	Contains qualifications associated with			EQF ref. level
	Education/training programmes	Currently available qualifications (type)	Potential work roles/ occupational requirements	
8	Higher education – Bologna 3rd cycle (doctorate)	Doctorate (A)	Entry to, or continuing professional development within, senior levels of management or higher level professional occupations	8
7	Higher education – Bologna 2nd cycle (master)	Master degree (A)		7
6	Higher education – Bologna 1st cycle (bachelor)	Bachelor degree (A)		6
5	Bologna short cycle and/or post-secondary VET	Title of qualifications still unknown (A), (C) Certificates of non-formal providers (D or E)	Specialist/trainer/manager	5
4	Preparation for progression into higher education and/or labour market entry	Matura diploma in general or vocational subjects (B), (C) Vocational education diploma (C)	Qualified worker/supervisor	4
3	Preparation for labour market entry (young people and adults)	Vocational education certificate (C) Certificates of non-formal VET providers (D or E)	Semi-skilled worker	3
2	Progression from lower to upper secondary education (young people), preparation for labour market (adults)	Non existing qualifications of formal education system identified Certificates of non-formal providers (D or E)	Low-skilled worker	2
1	Basic education	Non existing qualifications of formal education system identified Certificates of non-formal providers (E)	Minimum level of basic skills, inc. literacy/numeracy, required for entry to lowest level of employment	1

Source: National Qualifications Authority, 2016.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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

LI

34. LIECHTENSTEIN

The decision to develop an integrated national qualifications framework for Liechtenstein (NQFL) was taken in 2011. The NQFL has eight levels organised in a Y-structure. VET qualifications are allocated to the lower levels, continuing with levels 6 to 8 on the left strand, reserved for professional/higher vocational qualifications; levels 6 to 8 on the right strand of the Y cover academic higher education qualifications. General education qualifications are currently not included. The NQFL is a descriptive framework, aiming to improve transparency and comparability of qualifications, improve employability abroad for Liechtenstein-educated specialists, and increase overall labour force mobility.

From the beginning, NQFL development was closely coordinated with Switzerland, as the two neighbouring countries have a long tradition of cooperation in education and training and established a common VET system. The Swiss national qualifications framework for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ), which was established in 2014, was adopted by Liechtenstein into the NQFL. Competence-oriented level descriptors of the Swiss NQF-VPQ were adopted for the VET strand of the NQFL.

In 2013, a qualifications framework for higher education was adopted and included in the Higher Education Act and in the Higher Education Ordinance. It is defined in terms of learning outcomes and uses Dublin level descriptors, in line with the QF-EHEA. This qualifications framework for higher education has now been integrated into the NQFL, on the right-hand strand of the Y-structure.

An ordinance regulating implementation of the NQFL VET strand was approved by the Government in winter 2018. Higher VET programmes are currently not on offer in Liechtenstein but related provisions were included in the ordinance to accommodate possible future developments. The process of assigning vocational education qualifications to NQFL levels is carried out by Switzerland and approved, in a separate procedure, by the Liechtenstein Government.

The NQFL was referenced to the EQF in October 2016 and the qualifications framework for higher education was self-certified against QF-EHEA in 2013.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The National Agency of International Education Affairs (AIBA) is the EQF NCP: https://www.eeagrants-li.com/
- NQFL website: http://www.nqfl.li/
- Ministry of Education (2016). *The EQF referencing report for the Principality of Liechtenstein.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/nqfl-liechtenstein_final2017.pdf

Table 37. **The Y-structure of Liechtenstein qualifications framework (NQFL)**

Source: Ministry of Education (2016).

ME

35. MONTENEGRO

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

Main reform objectives linked with the NQF are to introduce learning outcomes for transparency purposes; link education and training subsectors; to aid validation of non-formal learning; and to support access to qualifications and pursue lifelong learning.

The Montenegrin NQF includes three types of qualification: educational qualifications, vocational qualifications and additional qualifications. Educational qualifications are obtained via formal education programmes; vocational qualifications may be obtained via either formal programmes or validation of non-formal learning; additional qualifications testify to additional skills required by employers.

The framework is managed by the Montenegro Qualifications Council (MQC), in cooperation with the National Council of Education and Higher Education Council. The Ministry of Education provides wider strategic direction through education policy. MQC develops and places qualifications in the Montenegrin NQF; it draws on advice in VET qualifications from 15 sectoral commissions, representing branches of the economy.

Quality assurance in general education and VET consists of accrediting or licensing institutions to offer programmes; this is done by commissions established by the Ministry of Education. Higher education programmes are accredited by the Higher Education Council. The Vocational Education and Training Centre and the National Examination Centre quality assure qualifications and validate learner external assessments. The MQC validates qualifications for entry in the database of qualifications.

Adult learners may obtain vocational qualifications via formal programmes or through validation, assessed by the national Examination Centre; such validation is established via the National Vocational Qualifications Act.

The Montenegrin qualifications framework is advanced in implementation and qualifications are placed in its levels.

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

For more detailed information see the Montenegro entry in the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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

Table 38. **Montenegrin qualifications framework**

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

(*) The procedure for additional qualifications will be developed in the next stage.

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

Source: Adapted from Montenegrin Ministry of Education, 2014.

NO

36. NORWAY

Norway has a seven-level national qualifications framework (NQF) (*Nasjonalt kvalifikasjonsrammeverk for livslang laring* (NKR)). Work on the framework started in 2005 for higher education, and in 2007 for all other levels of education and training. The Ministry of Education and Research adopted the qualifications framework for higher education in 2009, and the NKR in December 2011. The NKR covers certificates, diplomas, and degrees awarded for publicly recognised and accredited education and training from general, vocational and higher education, so describing the formal education and training system.

The framework describes levels of learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, and general competence.

The qualifications in the NKR generally represent full level attainment, except at levels 5 and 6 where sublevels are defined. This means that preparatory courses and certain courses of short duration from formal education and training are not included in the NKR (such as practical pedagogical education, some continuing and further education programmes). Possible procedures and criteria for inclusion of qualifications awarded outside the formal education and training system were discussed by a committee of stakeholder representatives. Their final report of 30 April 2015 offered no clear conclusions or recommendations on the matter and, so far, no decision has been made concerning possible further extension of the framework to the non-formal sector.

The NKR was referenced to the EQF levels 2 to 8 and self-certified against the QF-EHEA in June 2014.

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) is the EQF NCP: https://www.nokut.no/en/
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research: http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/tema/livslang-laring/nasjonalt-kvalifikasjonsrammeverk.html?id=601327
- NOKUT (2012). *The referencing of the Norwegian qualifications framework for lifelong learning to the European qualifications framework and the self-certification to the qualifications framework in the European higher education area.* https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/the_norwegian_referencing_report_0.pdf

Table 39. **Norwegian national qualifications framework (NKR)**

NKR levels	Qualification types	EQF levels
8	Doctoral degrees (*Phd; Dr. Phil.*) Diploma for artistic development programme (*Diplom, kunstnerisk utviklingsprogram*)	8
7	Master degree (*Mastergrad*) Master of arts Master of business administration (MBA) Master of international business (MIB) Master of technology management Master of laws Candidata/candidatus medicinae Candidata/candidatus medicinae veterinariae Candidata/candidatus psychologiae Candidata/candidatus theologiae	7
6.2	Bachelor degree (*Bachelorgrad*) Diploma for general teacher education programme (*Vitnemål fra allmennlærerutdanning, Vitnemål fra grunnskolelærerutdanning*)	6
6.1	University college degree (*Høgskolekandidatgrad*)	
5.2	Diploma for vocational college education (1.5 to 2 years, 90 – 120 credits) (*Vitnemål fra fagskoleutdanning*)	5
5.1	Diploma for vocational college education (0.5 to 1.5 years, 30 – 90 credits) (*Vitnemål fra fagskoleutdanning*)	
4	Certificate for upper secondary general education (*Vitnemål fra videregående opplæring, studieforberedende utdanningsprogram*) Certificate for upper secondary vocational education and training (*Vitnemål fra videregående opplæring, yrkesfaglige utdanningsprogram*) Craft certificate (*Fagbrev*) Journeyman certificate (*Svennebrev*)	4
3	Document of competence for partially completed upper secondary education (*Kompetansebevis*)	3
2	Certificate for primary and lower secondary education (10 years) (*Vitnemål fra 10-årig grunnskole*)	2
1	Not part of the NQF/ no qualifications at this level	1

Source: Adapted from NOKUT, 2017. http://www.nokut.no/en/Facts-and-statistics/The-Norwegian-Educational-System/The-Norwegian-qualifications-framework/The-Norwegian-table-of-qualifications/

RS

37. SERBIA

Two laws currently govern Serbia's NQF: the law on foundation of the education system regulates NQF levels 1 to 5, while the law on higher education regulates levels 6 to 8. In 2015, Serbia started unifying the two subsystems into one comprehensive framework for lifelong learning. The law on a comprehensive NQF for lifelong learning is in preparation. The comprehensive NQF will have eight levels and four sublevels. Levels 6 and 7 are each divided in two sublevels to differentiate between volume in qualifications; they also accommodate qualifications in place before the use of learning outcomes (see table below). Level descriptors are categorised by knowledge, skills and attitude and ability domains.

Serbia's aims for the NQF are to classify qualifications, facilitate production of new qualifications which better meet labour market needs, support lifelong learning, and establish a reference point for international comparison, particularly via linking to the EQF. The NQF is integral to wider strategies aimed at VET and labour market reform.

Qualification types are defined by education sector. Four qualifications types have been defined: qualifications obtained after completing (a) general primary and secondary qualifications; (b) secondary vocational education; (c) academic higher education; and (d) vocational higher education. For the moment, Serbia does not foresee partial qualifications being included in the NQF. Qualifications are structured in units, but this is to facilitate the learning process; it does not allow certification for acquiring partial qualifications.

The draft NQF law foresees establishment of new institutional bodies for managing the NQF. A NQF council will be tasked with the strategic management of developing and implementing the NQF; a qualifications authority will be responsible for quality assurance at all stages of NQF development and implementation. Sector skills councils will define the need for qualifications in the labour market. Proposed social partner representation in both NQF Council and Sector Councils is weak, a reality found across the VET system.

Development of quality assurance criteria such as identified need for qualifications, qualification standards, and award of qualifications, will be regulated in the NQF law and successive bylaws.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is provided for in legislation; a concept paper for validation has been developed, seeking to align to the 2012 EU Council recommendation. Implementation is at an early stage.

Authorities are developing a database of qualifications, but there is not yet a national register of qualifications. The NQF has not yet been put in place.

Serbia is a candidate for EU accession, and is a member of the EQF advisory group. As a candidate country, it seeks to meet the five Riga medium-term deliverables (MTD): MTD 3 concerns qualifications. Referencing to the EQF is not likely before 2019. The country is a participant in the Bologna process in higher education; it has not yet self-certified against the qualifications framework for the European higher education area.

For more detailed information see the Serbia entry in the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development: http://www.mpn.gov.rs/

Table 40. **Serbian national qualifications framework**

NQF levels	Comparative table of qualifications and types of education	
	Current	Previous
8.2	Doctoral studies (DS, 180 ECTS)	Doctorate of sciences – PdD (until 2005, LPQ 8)
8.1		Master of science (*Magistar*) studies lasting two years (until 2005, LPQ 7.2)
7.2	Specialist academic studies (SAS, 60 ECTS)	Specialist studies lasting 1-2 years (until 2005, LPQ 7.2) Specialisation in health care lasting 2-6 years Sub-specialisation in health care lasting one year
7.1	Integrated academic studies (IAS, max. 360 ECTS) Master academic studies (MAS, 180 + 120 or 240 + 60 ECTS) Master vocational studies (MVS, 120 ECTS)	Basic (graduate) studies lasting 4-6 years (until 2005, LPQ 7.1)
6.2	Basic academic studies (BAS, 180 - 240 ECTS) Specialist vocational studies (SVS, 180 + 60 ECTS)	Higher education with a specialisation lasting up to one year (LPQ 6.2)
6.1	Basic academic studies (BAS, 180 - 240 ECTS) Basic vocational studies (BVS, 180 ECTS)	Highly qualified (HQ) worker The fifth level of professional qualification (LPQ 5)
5	Specialist and craftsman education	Highly qualified (HQ) worker The fifth level of professional qualification (LPQ 5)
4	Four-year secondary education (vocational, artistic, general)	The fourth level of professional qualification (LPQ 4)
3	Three-year secondary vocational education Non-formal adult education (minimum 960 hours of training)	Qualified (Q) worker The third level of professional qualification (LPQ 3)
2	Vocational training (one year) Education for work (two years) Training (120 to 360 hours of training)	Semi-qualified (SQ) worker The second level of professional qualification (LPQ 2)
1	Primary education (8 years) Elementary adult education	Unqualified (UQ) worker The first level of professional qualification (LPQ 1)

Source: Adapted from European Training Foundation, 2016.

CH

38. SWITZERLAND

Switzerland sees the link to European cooperation on qualifications frameworks, including the EQF and the QF-EHEA, as an opportunity to strengthen the transparency and comparability of its national qualifications in the 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 2014, a Swiss NQF for vocational and professional qualifications (NQF-VPQ) was adopted and put into force (Ordinance of 27 August 2014 on the National Qualifications Framework for Vocational and Professional Qualifications).

The NQF-VPQ is explicitly oriented to the EQF and introduces an eight-level structure defined through knowledge, skills and competence. Competence is further subdivided into professional 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. The shift to learning outcomes was initiated in Switzerland through the 2004 reform of the Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training; it has been fundamental to the development of vocational and professional qualifications in recent years.

Throughout the development phase, the NQF-VPQ has received broad support from stakeholders: cantons, trade associations and social partners. There is general agreement among stakeholders that tertiary VET is a particular strength of the Swiss education and training system and that its future development is essential for meeting the needs of the national labour market. Implementation of the NQF-VPQ has been closely related to the 2013 national strategy, aiming to further strengthen vocationally oriented education and training at higher levels (5 to 8).

With the legal basis in place, the NQF-VPQ has reached operational stage. Guidelines have been developed supporting education and training stakeholders to assign levels to qualifications. By January 2018, about 340 of roughly 700 formal vocational and professional qualifications were assigned to levels 3 to 8 of the NQF-VPQ; the process is expected to continue.

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

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

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI): https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/bildung/mobilitaet/nqf-vpet.html
- *Swiss EQF referencing report* (SERI) (2015): https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/e_referencing_report_final_ch.pdf
- List of assigned vocational and professional qualifications: https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/bildung/mobilitaet/nqf-vpet/das-verzeichnis-der-eingestuften-abschluesse.html

Table 41. **Qualification types in the NQF-VPQ and approximate level**

NQF VPET levels	Qualification type	EQF levels
8	Advanced Fed. PET diploma	8
7		7
6	PET college degree	6
5	Fed. PET diploma	5
4	Fed. VET diploma	4
3		3
2	Fed. VET certificate	2
1		1

NB:

- Federal VET certificate, two years' vocational education and training at upper secondary level.
- Federal VET diploma, three-four years' vocational education and training at upper secondary level.
- Federal PET diploma, part-time tertiary level professional education and training.
- PET college degree is a diploma from a college of professional education and training, tertiary level professional education and training (minimum two years' academic study or three years' part-time study with work placement).
- Advanced Federal PET diploma, part-time tertiary level professional education and training.

Source: SERI (2015).

TR

39. TURKEY

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

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

In addition to the levels, the TQF uses qualification types and qualification categories to define qualifications. Qualification types classify qualifications which are at the same TQF level but differ in functions, such as associate degree and vocational qualification certificate at level 5; or vocational upper secondary education diploma and skilled worker certificate at level 4. Qualification categories divide qualifications by purpose: principal qualifications capture comprehensive sets of outcomes, such as school leaving diplomas, while supplemental qualifications are smaller sets of units of outcomes aimed, for example, at adults undertaking skills updating.

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

Quality assurance procedures and criteria are under development but extend to quality-assuring the qualifications, criteria for levelling in the TQF, and updating qualifications. The Ministry of Education, the Council of Higher Education and VQA respectively regulate qualifications in general, higher and vocational education.

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

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

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

For more detailed information see the Turkey entry in the European Training Foundation NQF inventory.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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

Table 42. **Turkish national qualifications framework (TQF)**

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

Source: Adapted from European Training Foundation, 2016.

List of abbreviations

AHOVOKS	Agency for higher education, adult education, qualifications and study grants *Agentschap voor Hoger Onderwijs, Volwassenenonderwijs, Kwalificaties en Studietoelagen* (Flemish Community of Belgium)
AQF	Albanian qualifications framework
BQF	Bulgarian qualifications framework
CFC	qualifications framework for lifelong learning of the French Community (Belgium) *cadre francophone des certifications pour l'éducation et la formation tout au long de la vie*
CLQ	Luxembourg qualifications framework *cadre luxembourgeois des qualifications*
CNCP	National Commission on Vocational Qualifications *Commission Nationale de la Certification professionnelle* (France)
CQFW	credit and qualifications framework for Wales
CROQF	Croatian qualifications framework
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
CyQF	Cypriot qualifications framework
DQR	German qualifications framework *Deutsche Qualifikationsrahmen für lebenslanges Lernen*
EHEA	European higher education area
EOPPEP	National Organisation for the Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance (Greece)
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESQF	Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning *Marco Español de Cualificaciones, MECU*
EstQF	Estonian qualifications framework
FiNQF	Finnish national 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
IVET	initial vocational education and training
KKOV	classification of educational qualification types
KQF	Kosovo qualifications framework
LQF	Latvian qualifications framework
LTQF	Lithuanian qualifications framework
MECES	Spanish qualifications framework for higher education *Marco Español de Cualificaciones para la Educación Superior*
MECU	Spanish qualifications framework for lifelong learning Marco Español de Cualificaciones
MQF	Maltese qualifications framework
NCP	national coordination point
NFQ	national framework of qualifications (Ireland)

NKR	Norwegian qualifications framework *Nasjonalt kvalifikasjonsrammeverk for livslang laring*
NLQF	Dutch qualifications framework
NQFL	national qualifications framework for Liechtenstein
NQF	national qualifications framework
NQF-VPQ	Swiss national qualifications framework for vocational and professional qualifications *Nationale Qualifikationsrahmen fur Abschlusse der Berufsbildung* (Switzerland)
NQR	national qualifications register (Slovakia)
NSK	national register of qualifications *Národní soustava kvalifikací* (Czech Republic)
NUV	National Institute for Education *Národní ústav pro vzdělávání* (Czech Republic)
NVQs	national vocational qualifications
NVQR	national vocational qualifications register (Hungary)
PQF	Polish qualifications framework
QCF	qualifications and credit framework (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)
QDG	qualifications framework of the German-speaking Community (Belgium) *Qualifikationsrahmen der Deutschsprachiger Gemeinschaft*
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework in the European higher education area
QNQ	Portuguese qualifications framework *Quadro Nacional de Qualificações*
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RNCP	national register of vocational qualifications *Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles* (France)
ROQF	Romanian qualifications framework
RQF	regulated qualifications framework (England and Northern Ireland)
SCQF	Scottish credit and qualifications framework
SEQF	Swedish qualifications framework
SKKR	Slovak qualifications framework
SQF	Slovenian qualifications framework
SVQ	system of vocational qualifications
TQF	Turkish qualifications framework
VET	vocational education and training
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning

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