

# LUXEMBOURG

## European inventory on NQF 2016

### Introduction and context

Following an initiative of the Ministry of Education, an outline of a comprehensive national qualifications framework (NQF) was presented to the Council of Ministers in early 2009. Based on an initial governmental go-ahead, detailed work continued during 2010 and 2011, resulting in an eight-level Luxembourg qualifications framework (*cadre luxembourgeois de qualifications* (CLQ)) covering all types and levels of qualifications.

The framework was referenced to the European qualifications framework (EQF) in 2012. Implementation of the CLQ has been slow during 2013-14, partly reflecting the lack of a clear legislative basis and an agreed strategy shared by all stakeholders on how to proceed. The adoption, in November 2016, of a law on recognition of professional qualifications <sup>(1)</sup>, establishes the CLQ as the formal reference point for recognition of professional qualifications acquired outside Luxembourg. This integration into the legislative structure of Luxembourg signals official commitment to the framework and represents an important step towards full operational status.

### Policy objectives

Increased transparency of qualifications is a key objective underpinning the CLQ, seen as contributing to the overall modernisation of national education and training. One element in favour of the CLQ is the geographic and labour market location of Luxembourg. Being host to a large number of workers from neighbouring countries like Belgium, Germany and France, Luxembourg sees the development of the CLQ as a way to aid comparison and recognition. The adoption of the 2016 law on recognition of professional qualifications (op.cit.) confirms this objective and establishes the CLQ as the main reference point to which foreign qualifications should be compared (see articles 68-70). When the

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<sup>(1)</sup> *Journal Officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*, A-N231, 18 November 2016.  
<http://data.legilux.public.lu/file/eli-etat-leg-memorial-2016-231-fr-pdf.pdf>

work started in 2009, development and implementation of the EQF was originally seen as an opportunity to make explicit the existing education and training levels and the relationships between them. This was considered important not only for qualifications users (to support lifelong learning for individuals and to enable employers to see the relevance of qualifications), but also for education and training providers. The explicit levels of learning outcomes introduced by the framework are expected to function as a reference point for curriculum development and may help to improve overall consistency of education and training provision.

In a second stage, the CLQ may open up to qualifications awarded outside the existing, official system. This reflects the high number of citizens holding these 'unofficial' and non-recognised certificates and diplomas.

## Levels and use of learning outcomes

Luxembourg has introduced an eight-level reference structure. While the number of levels corresponds with the EQF, the descriptors reflect the national tradition and context. At each level, descriptors are differentiated according to knowledge, skills and attitude (*connaissances, aptitudes, attitudes*). While the level of detail is higher, the relationship to the EQF can be clearly identified. This is, for example, the case for the third (attitude) column which is based on the principles of responsibility, autonomy and context, as with the EQF.

The decision to use these concepts reflects gradual development of a learning-outcomes- or competence-based approach in VET. During the 1970s and the 1980s this approach was influenced by the German tradition. Experiences related to the development of professional standards played a particularly important role, as education standards were directly deduced from these. In recent years these approaches have been further developed through extensive cooperation with a number of other European countries, notably those with a dual VET system (Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland). Links to France are also strong, partly influencing the way qualifications are designed and described.

Use of learning outcomes (or *competences*) in Luxembourg education and training has varied between subsectors. Recent years have brought about a change; most qualifications are today described through learning outcomes. In

initial vocational education, all qualifications have been described using learning outcomes and can be accessed via the register of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training <sup>(2)</sup>. Higher education is organised in courses lasting one semester, each constituting assessable modules allocated credit points (European credit transfer and accumulation system). These courses are now increasingly defined and described using learning outcomes.

## Stakeholder involvement and institutional arrangements

The NQF process is being coordinated by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education.

Following the first discussions on the framework in the Council of Ministers, broad consultation was launched towards the end of 2010. Besides general approval of the plans for the NQF, main comments were on the legal status of the framework and on the issue of lifelong learning, including the link to non-formal and informal learning. The specific character of the Luxemburgish labour market, and the implications of this for qualifications, were given particular consideration. The high immigration rate and the large proportion of foreign workers make it necessary to pay particular attention to the coherence of the frameworks with those of neighbouring countries.

The attitude of higher education towards the NQF was originally sceptical. Stakeholders from this sector argued that EQF levels 6 to 8 should be mainly based on the Dublin descriptors of the European higher education area (EHEA). Following discussions during 2009 and early 2010, a common set of descriptors have been accepted by all stakeholders. This also provided the basis for common referencing/self-certification to the EQF and to the qualifications framework for the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) in 2012.

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<sup>(2)</sup> See <http://programmes.myschool.lu> [accessed 22 March 2017].

## Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways <sup>(3)</sup>

Existing legislation gives individuals the right to benefit from validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning (under some conditions). This process is known as ‘validation of prior experiential learning’ and has been operational since 2010. Validation can lead to access to, or acquisition of, full or partial qualifications, provided that the candidate can supply evidence that the total length of prior experiential learning amounts to at least 5 000 hours over a minimum of three years and is effectively related to the targeted qualification.

Most formal qualifications that are referenced on the national qualifications framework can be acquired or accessed through validation of non-formal and informal learning. Exceptions are the secondary school leaving certificate (*Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires*) and qualifications at levels 6 to 8, where only partial qualifications can be obtained through validation.

Any type of prior experiential learning relevant to the targeted qualification, whether it is the result of formal, non-formal or informal learning activities in the education and training sector, the labour market or the third sector, can be used to apply for validation. Across sectors, validation helps towards formal qualifications, which makes for a consistent approach that is considered to be one of the main strengths of the Luxembourgish validation system.

The legal framework on validation consists of several laws, covering secondary technical and vocational education, advanced technician diplomas and the University of Luxembourg. The lack of an overarching legal framework with general principles for validation for all sectors is considered to be one of the main weaknesses of the approach in Luxembourg but changes are expected in the coming years.

## Referencing to regional framework

Luxembourg referenced its qualifications levels to the EQF and the QF-EHEA in June 2012.

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<sup>(3)</sup> This section draws mainly on input from the 2016 update to the *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning* (European Commission et al., 2016).

## NQF implementation

Following completion of the referencing of the NQF to the EQF in mid-2012, implementation has slowed. While the CLQ can be described as having reached an early operational stage, the lack of a clear legislative basis was considered a draw-back. This weakness is now partly addressed through the adoption of the 2016 law on recognition, reflecting the particular challenge of Luxembourg as host to many foreign workers. The further implementation of the CLQ will, however, also require clarification of the relationship between the framework and a wider strategy on lifelong learning. This discussion is continuing and is expected to be concluded during 2017.

## Important lessons and future plans

While a solid basis for the NQF has been established in Luxembourg, implementation slowed following the referencing to the EQF in 2012. This was caused by the lack of a clear legal basis and some uncertainty among stakeholders regarding the role to be played by the CLQ at national level. The CLQ can be considered to have reached an early operational stage. The adoption of the 2016 Law on recognition clarifies the position of the CLQ at national level and provides the basis for a development towards a more advanced operational status.

### Further sources of information

The Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (Ministère de l'Éducation nationale et de la Formation professionnelle) acts as national coordination point (NCP): <http://www.men.public.lu> [accessed 22 March 2017].

## Qualifications framework of Luxembourg (CLQ)

NQF levels	Qualifications	EQF levels
8	Doctorate (Doctorate diploma)	8
7	Master (Master diploma)	7
6	Bachelor (Bachelor diploma)	6
5	<i>Brevet de maitrise</i> (Master craftsman certificate)	5
	<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur</i> (Advanced technician diploma)	
	<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur spécialisé</i> (Specialised advanced technician diploma)	
4	<i>Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires</i> (Secondary school leaving certificate)	4
	<i>Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires techniques</i> (Technical secondary school leaving certificate)	
	<i>Diplôme de technicien</i> (Technician diploma)	
3	<i>Diplôme d'aptitude professionnelle</i> (DAP) (Vocational aptitude diploma)	3
	<i>Certificat de réussite du cycle moyen d'enseignement secondaire technique</i> (Certificate attesting completion of middle cycle technical secondary education)	
	<i>Certificat de réussite de 5 années d'enseignement secondaire</i> (Certificate attesting completion of five years secondary education)	
2	Certificat de capacité professionnelle (CCP) (Vocational capability certificate)	2
1	<i>Certificat de réussite du cycle inférieur de l'enseignement secondaire technique</i> (Certificate attesting completion of lower cycle, technical secondary education)	1

Source: Translated from overview provided by Journal Officiel du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, 18 November 2016. <http://data.legilux.public.lu/file/eli-etat-leg-memorial-2016-231-fr-pdf.pdf>

## List of abbreviations

CLQ	Cadre Luxembourgeois des Qualifications – CLQ (Luxembourg qualifications framework)
EQF	European qualifications framework
LLLC	Luxembourg Lifelong Learning Centre
NQF	national qualifications framework
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework for the European higher education area
VAE	<i>validation des acquis de l'expérience</i> [validation of non-formal and informal learning]
VET	vocational education and training

## References

European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2016). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2016. Country report: Luxembourg*. <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory>

Ministry of Education and Vocational Training; Ministry of Higher Education and Research (2012). *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> [accessed 22 March 2017].